



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

SELECT COMMITTEE ON ESTIMATES 2014-2015

(Reference: [Appropriation Bill 2014-2015 and Appropriation \(Office of the Legislative Assembly\) Bill 2014-2015](#))

Members:

MR B SMYTH (Chair)
MS M PORTER (Deputy Chair)
MRS G JONES
MS Y BERRY

TRANSCRIPT OF EVIDENCE

CANBERRA

THURSDAY, 19 JUNE 2014

Secretary to the committee:
Dr B Lloyd (Ph: 620 50137)

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

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Amended 20 May 2013

The committee met at 9.30 am.

Appearances:

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

Community Services Directorate

Howson, Ms Natalie, Director-General

Chapman, Ms Sue, Deputy Director-General

Hubbard, Mr Ian, Chief Financial Officer

Rutledge, Mr Geoffrey, Executive Director, Policy and Organisational Services

Manikis, Mr Nic, Director, Community Participation Group, Policy and Organisational Services

Winter, Ms Jancye, Senior Manager, Office of Multicultural, Ageing and Youth Engagement

Moore, Ms Nicole, Acting Manager, Office for Women

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

Whitney, Mr David, Director, artsACT

Collis, Dr Mark, Executive Director, Office for Children, Youth and Family Support

Pappas, Ms Helen, Senior Director, Statutory Services, Office for Children, Youth and Family Support

Cultural Facilities Corporation

Elvin, Ms Harriet, Chief Executive Officer

THE CHAIR: Good morning, minister; welcome back for day six of the 2014-15 estimates committee, and welcome to all of my colleagues. I hope everybody is hale and hearty now that we are at the top of the sixth, as it were. Today we will be looking at Community Services Directorate output class 3, community participation, the Cultural Facilities Corporation, output class 4, statutory services, care and protection and youth justice, and output class 1, social housing services.

Can you all acknowledge that you have read the privilege statement that is on the desk before you and acknowledge its protections and obligations? Yes, they all have; fantastic. You should be aware that the proceedings are being broadcast as well as recorded and transcribed. A copy of the transcript will be given to you, when available, for corrections or any other commentary you would like to make. With respect to questions taken on notice; we ask that you respond within five business days after today. If, for the ease of tracking questions on notice, you could say at the time something like, "I will take that on notice," that will help us all track them.

Minister, do you want to make an opening statement as the Minister for Multicultural Affairs, Minister for Women and Minister for the Arts?

Ms Burch: Thank you, I will. Our multicultural community makes our city a wonderful place in which to live. Our major cultural showcase, the National

Multicultural Festival, is a living embodiment of our modern multiculturalism here in the ACT. Now in its 19th year, the festival continues to grow in popularity, diversity and in its capacity to connect to all Canberrans, with over 250,000 people visiting the festival and around 10 per cent of these being interstate or overseas visitors. We have estimated that it injected more than \$5 million into the economy.

The Office of Multicultural Affairs administers the festival, the Theo Notaras Multicultural Centre, the work experience and support program for migrants, the ACT multicultural awards, citizenship ceremonies, multicultural grants, community language school grants, and a number of funding agreements for the delivery of services relevant to non-government organisations. The office also administers the access card which is used by asylum seekers accessing government services.

As Minister for Multicultural Affairs, I am very proud of the way in which the community continues to embrace and support refugees and asylum seekers in this city. The office also facilitates a series of significant annual community celebrations such as Diwali, Refugee Week and Ramadan.

In regard to my responsibilities as Minister for Women, the ACT government remains committed to addressing inequities that exist between the genders. We have put in place a number of successful gender-responsive strategies, many with a focus on marginalised women, including women on low incomes and women from multicultural backgrounds, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and women with a disability.

Just to highlight two areas, the new Women's Information Service model aims to reduce duplication while providing a service that includes outreach so that women have improved access to the information they need. Access to information is provided through face to face, phone, email or online presence. In addition to face to face and phone based, the Women's Information Service is operating out of 180 London Circuit. It will also be available through the three family and child centres commencing in July. The ACT women's return to work grants program continues to be successful. From February 2008 to May this year, around 810 applications had been approved and funded.

In arts, the budget provides important funding for the cultural infrastructure for our city, with \$1.8 million provided over two years for a package of work at the Canberra Theatre to improve functionality. This funding builds on a three-year funding package that is already in train to upgrade the centre. Both projects support the viability of the centre as a venue on the national touring circuit, as well as one used by our local community. We are also looking to the future provision of a new theatre. The budget paper provides \$170,000 for feasibility of the new theatre as part of the city to the lake project. We also see funding for some upgrades at Lanyon precinct, and some funding for smaller building works across the Cultural Facilities Corporation.

I will leave my comments regarding children and young people until after the break, chair.

THE CHAIR: Thank you, minister. We might reverse the order this morning. We will start with questions from the shadow minister for multicultural services.

MRS JONES: I want to start with the impact of the WIRC going into the Theo Notaras Centre. I have a couple of questions around that. With the space that is now being used for the WIRC, what was housed in that space?

Ms Burch: It is Women's Information. It is no longer the WIRC.

MRS JONES: WI?

Ms Burch: Yes.

MRS JONES: It sounds very fashionable. What was the space that they are in being used for previously? Did any other organisations on the waiting list miss out on space in the Theo Notaras Centre as a result? What are the average waiting times for cultural groups who are waiting for desk space and how many are on the list at present?

Ms Burch: There are two parts to the question. In regard to accommodation for Women's Information, I will go to Sue Chapman. With respect to general access for community groups, I will go to Jancye or Mr Manikis.

Ms Chapman: With the space that is now being occupied by the Women's Information Service, they did not displace anybody else. It was space that we used for varying things at varying times.

MRS JONES: Meetings?

Ms Chapman: Meetings, and storage in one case. So the space is actually available for the Women's Information Service without displacing anybody else.

Ms Winter: The Theo Notaras Multicultural Centre currently has 30 tenants, composed of multicultural community groups from across Canberra. There is currently no organisation on the waiting list to come into a tenancy, but there are several tenants who would like their own dedicated office space, and they currently share offices. When tenants vacate, we take that into consideration and move them around.

MRS JONES: Can I be provided with a list of who has a desk, and who is sharing and who is not—which organisations?

Ms Winter: Certainly.

MRS JONES: Also, just on the space, because I have not wanted to disturb anything, may I please have a viewing of that space that has now been set up, now that it is well established?

Ms Burch: Women's Information? It is public space. We use it as a drop-in centre.

MRS JONES: Yes, I just wanted to do it in a—

Ms Burch: Yes, we can organise that for you, Mrs Jones.

MRS JONES: way so that I am not turning up with a mask on in the dead of night.

Ms Burch: I am sure the alarms will go off in the dead of night.

MRS JONES: That is right.

Mr Manikis: There are 13 cameras.

Ms Burch: There are 13 cameras, so you will be sprung!

MRS JONES: On that space, it has been brought to my attention that there were some concerns about vulnerable women visiting through the front doors—that there was a security guard present and that may or may not have made them feel comfortable or confident about entering. What has been done about that?

Ms Burch: I might go to Mr Manikis, who—

MRS JONES: Manages that building?

Ms Burch: Yes.

Mr Manikis: We did get some feedback along those lines. However, we also got feedback the other way from some of the women's groups, which was that they wanted a security guard there and that it made the place more secure. We also get very vulnerable refugees and asylum seekers who come up in the lift, and have been doing so for quite some time. It is a very safe environment, by virtue of having a uniformed security guard at the top of the staircase at the entrance to the centre. If we had been receiving more than what we had received in terms of concern that it is a male security guard, we certainly would have requested a female security guard. We are very open to that.

MRS JONES: You have lots of different groups going in and out of there; some of them would prefer a male and some would prefer a female?

Mr Manikis: Yes. Also some of the women's groups were not too concerned about whether it was a male or female. They were just very concerned that there would be someone there. That was the feedback that we had received, and on balance we let the status quo prevail. But if there was more concern that it was impacting on the purpose for which the place had been set up and vulnerable women were not coming to it because there was a male security guard, we would have responded.

MRS JONES: So you have a watching brief, I guess.

Mr Manikis: Yes.

Ms Howson: Mrs Jones, I think the presence of the security guard, while it is evident, is not overbearing. If you do visit the centre, you will get a sense that while you are aware that that support is there if you need it, it is not intimidating in any way, shape or form. It is quite subtle.

Ms Burch: They do not screen or question.

MS BERRY: Is it the same security officer that does the citizenship ceremonies?

Ms Burch: Yes.

MS BERRY: He has been doing that for a very long time now, hasn't he? So he is quite experienced.

MRS JONES: Is it the same person all the time?

Mr Manikis: Yes.

MS BERRY: He has been doing that for many years. So he would be quite experienced.

THE CHAIR: A supplementary from Ms Porter.

MS PORTER: Good morning, minister, good morning, Ms Howson and everyone else. On page 7 of the budget book under strategic indicator 9, reference is made to women feeling safe by themselves in public places during the day and night, which is what Mrs Jones has been referring to. Under this output, what are the plans to ensure that that is the case? How is the government working towards promoting an anti-violence culture in the ACT to ensure that women, as much as possible, feel safe? I understand that you cannot always ensure something, but to the best of our ability?

Ms Burch: We will invite Nicole up to talk to you about that. As she is moving forward, you may recall a discussion at this committee and others around our women's safety audits that are operating through the Office for Women. It is certainly something that we have implemented in many of the events that we manage. For example, the Multicultural Festival has had them for the past three years. There has certainly been a women's safety audit on that. We take that feedback very seriously. We look at lighting, look at where we place the sanctuaries, look at where we place amenities and facilities within that as well. Now Ms Moore's here, I will refer the question to her.

Ms Moore: This is an area that we are investing in. We have an ACT women's grant this year for the Women's Centre for Health Matters specifically around gender and safe use of public spaces in the ACT. That is a project that will expand on the work that we have already done under the women's safety assessments. We will look at developing a digital map of Canberra and how women use spaces to help inform policies around how we do our urban planning and the like.

In addition, we are also developing the second implementation plan under the prevention of violence against women and children strategy. That is also looking at the role of women's safety assessments. That piece of work is not finished. It will be due later this year but it is aligning with the national plan to reduce violence against women and children. So it will take into consideration how women use spaces and how they feel safe generally in the community.

Ms Burch: Just on that and coming back to the Multicultural Festival, in the recent survey 99 per cent of women made a comment that they felt safe at the festival. That is very pleasing to hear. As Ms Moore has mentioned, the federal minister is preparing for a launch of the second action plan for the prevention of violence against women. That, again, is looking at how we collectively implement strategies and then collect the data. One of the key things for the ministers and women's groups is how do we collect the data not only on incidents of abuse and violence, but how do we collect data to show a downward trend or data about what are the policies and the frameworks that work and make a difference?

But it is broader than just the Office for Women and the Office of Multicultural Affairs. If you look within schools it is all around the respectful relationship programs that operate through the schools—things like the white ribbon promotion. All of that just comes together so that as a civil society we collectively say that there is no space in this for us to have any incidents of violence against women.

MRS JONES: I return to my substantive question about the space in the Theo Notaras Centre and how that is operating. Could you give us an explanation of the courses that have been offered? Have any of them been delivered in the space up at the Theo Notaras Centre?

Ms Burch: The Women's Information Service?

MRS JONES: Yes. How many attended? Where were they delivered? Which ones have been completed and delivered? I am assuming because the budget papers do not show any new initiatives that there is just no extra spending in this area.

Ms Burch: For the Office for Women?

MRS JONES: Yes.

Ms Burch: Certainly, there is—

MRS JONES: Basically, you have got the saving of about \$80,000 on the rent but there are no additional—

Ms Burch: There are no new initiatives, but each and every agency will review its offering of programs and make adjustments accordingly. We have from the beginning of this year, as we always have, promoted a "What's on for women" publication. I think the second half of the year publication is just out or just to be released. I think that between Ms Chapman and Ms Moore they can give you some details about where those programs have been offered and the numbers.

Ms Chapman: Thank you, minister. I will start, Mrs Jones, on the people who have used the service. Between February and May of this year we responded to 835 support requests, 502 of which were phone requests and 111 of which were face-to-face appointments or drop-ins. A further 222 requests were received by mail. In the main—

MRS JONES: As in by email?

Ms Chapman: Yes, or by snail mail. Some people still use that, apparently. The main information requests have been about courses and support groups. Ms Moore will be able to tell you more about the specifics of that. They have also raised questions about education and employment advice. As you know, we have return-to-work grants for women and they have been operating very successfully. Some were to do with domestic and sexual violence, some were to do with information about legal services, financial services and accommodation services. But the vast majority was about where women can go to learn more about things, get information and so on, which is actually the role of the Women's Information Service.

MRS JONES: You will get back to me on the attendance numbers of those that you have run up there.

Ms Chapman: We can, I think.

Ms Howson: We will also be reporting for the full year in our annual report shortly. Yes, we can provide that on notice.

MRS JONES: Thank you.

Ms Howson: Do you have anything to add?

Ms Moore: We do have information on what courses were run by the Women's Information Service and also where they have been run from. In the last six months of last year there were courses titled, "When being angry no longer works" and "Emotional mastery." They were run in term 3. In term 4 we ran "Self-esteem and assertiveness—your self-worth and wellbeing." Also, we ran a partnership forum on self-esteem and assertiveness for women who are caring for someone with a disability.

In the six months since the transition we have run a number of courses. Again, we have run "Self-esteem and assertiveness" and "Emotional mastery". We have run "Self-esteem and assertiveness" twice, actually. It is quite a popular course. We have also run the "It's time to talk" domestic violence support group twice. The majority of the courses have been run through 180 London Circuit.

The domestic violence support groups, however, we did not run from that site. We ran that out at the Tuggeranong Child and Family Centre and one at the Housing ACT gateway in Belconnen. We were trying to extend access to women in different parts of the city. The emotional mastery, self-esteem and assertiveness courses ran from the Women's Information Centre site. They usually run mostly after hours for women, but often during the day as well.

From 1 July, we have provided the domestic violence crisis service with funding to deliver the support groups. They will be running out a new program that will deliver three different types of supports for women. The first is an informal support group—a walking group for women who are not yet ready to engage in a therapeutic support model but who do need or would value connecting with other women with a shared experience.

The second group will be a therapeutic support group model similar to what we have now. The third group will be a support group for women and their children who have experienced domestic violence together. That is really aimed at rebuilding relationships and helping families move on.

MRS JONES: You will get back to us with the numbers of attendees?

Ms Moore: Yes.

Ms Burch: Just on that, we do not have them here, but I would be interested to see the numbers. I think I would expect to see some variance from the last two or three years, only because of a change of service. Rather than concentrate on the first six months, it is probably in the second and the third six months that we will see that. As you know, Mrs Jones, there was a little bit of negative static about the change of that service and that was some misinformation. I have heard back from people saying, “I actually thought it was closed, rather than just changed.” Now that people know that it is up and running differently, certainly from different sides, we will see an increase in the back part—

MRS JONES: I think some of the concern was also around the fact that there was not a coherent plan for the delivery at the time that the decision was made to close, and that is part of the process you have obviously been going through. But now that things are getting going again, that will hopefully be sorted out.

Ms Burch: Yes, and as Ms Moore made mention of, a contract with the domestic violence service to really do that. They are the experts in the field. I think it is right and proper that they do that support group.

MRS JONES: Yes.

THE CHAIR: A new question, Ms Berry.

MS BERRY: Good morning, everybody. Targets are shown on page 14. I am particularly talking about the WESP program, the work experience and support program for migrants. In 2013-14, the target was for 85 per cent of participants to successfully complete that course. Was that target met?

Mr Manikis: I will just say that for 2013-14 we have had two programs planned with 20 participants each. In the first program we had 20 participants, of which 19 graduated. Of those 19 graduates, a total of eight, or 42 per cent, had gained short-term employment contracts on completion of their work placement.

Our next program starts on Monday. So 85 per cent well and truly met—given the small numbers, I think there can be variations in the percentage points if there are one or two who drop out. But 19 out of 20 made it—graduated—and we had the bonus of eight of those participants actually getting paid contracts in the workplace.

MS BERRY: Can you just remind the committee how long the WESP program actually goes for and what it does?

Mr Manikis: The WESP program itself has been going for many years. It is free month each time. The first month is Australian workplace experience for the 20 participants. This time that was delivered by the CIT. After a month, it is a certificate II in business. After the completion of that first month the 20 participants are placed in directorates, in ACT government workplaces.

They have a sort of mentor, a supervisor, in the workplace. The advantage of that, of course, is that they are not paid. But the advantage is that they have increased their networks. They get a certificate at the end of it, which they are able to utilise on their resumes, attach to their resumes. They get references. So this program sort of boosts their opportunities to get into employment.

MS BERRY: Do you do surveys about how people feel about the course? At the end of it, do you do exit surveys?

Mr Manikis: We do not do exit surveys, but—

Ms Howson: We should think about that. I think that would be a good idea.

Ms Burch: But there is feedback; it is a small group of 20. I have had the pleasure of sort of seeing them off at the end of their time a number of times. They say how important and how valuable this program has been, which is why, despite many other things changing in the world, this is a constant because of the impact and the positive change that it has. But it is worthy to think about an exit survey.

MS BERRY: It would be nice to have that sort of quantitative evidence, rather than just anecdotal, yes.

MRS JONES: I think if you are looking for references—I have got someone from that course in my office at the moment. It would be good to have that as a dot point for the supervisor to make sure that they do get one, because I am not sure that they will always have the knowledge of how to ask for one—

Ms Burch: Yes.

MRS JONES: to make sure that they are getting a reference. Written references are not always that common anymore, either. So if they want one—

MS BERRY: They are more work statements than references.

MRS JONES: Yes.

Ms Burch: Yes, but when you are starting off on job hunting, to have any validation of your ability and skill is so important.

MRS JONES: I think it is a really, really good program.

THE CHAIR: Ms Porter, your question?

MS PORTER: Yes thank you very much, chair. On page 14 as well, right down at the bottom at point j, there is a cost per head of population. It is an accountability indicator. It notes that the increase for the 2014-15 total was mainly due to the transfer of this funding from Housing ACT for programs that support victims of domestic violence and associated initiatives. Is that in relation to what we were discussing before or are these different initiatives that that it is referring to?

Ms Howson: This is really an administrative adjustment, Ms Porter, to acknowledge the fact that we were funding the Domestic Violence Crisis Service and the Canberra Rape Crisis Centre. Some of their funding was sourced through our Housing GPO budget. We were just making the adjustments to ensure that the funding was aligned with the right output class and accountability indicators. There was a transfer of funds from one program to another, essentially.

MS PORTER: Which direction has it gone in? Now I am totally confused.

Ms Howson: It came from the GPO allocation within Housing ACT.

MS PORTER: It has come across—

Ms Howson: Come across to CSD and particularly aligned with output class 3.1.

MS PORTER: To support victims of domestic violence?

Ms Howson: That is correct.

MS PORTER: Right. It is being used generally then, not specifically targeted at certain areas?

Ms Howson: That is correct. It is funding associated with service funding agreements that we have with those two organisations and for specific services specified in those agreements.

MS PORTER: Another accountability indicator on the same page talks about community capacity building projects. Are these projects specifically targeted at any particular groups, for instance, the women we have just been talking about? Are they particularly benefiting from these or again is this a general—

Ms Howson: I might ask Mr Manikis to talk to that if you do not mind.

Ms Burch: What indicator are you looking at, Ms Porter, No 8?

MS PORTER: Yes, 8. Sorry, I am not making it clear.

Ms Howson: The indicator is an indicator of the general objective within this output class, which is to actually build community capacity within the multicultural community and also support community capacity building for older Canberrans and women. But Nic can talk more specifically about that.

Mr Manikis: These are grants programs such as the multicultural grants program, the

seniors grants program and the women's programs—the grants programs that we have amongst others, I might add, across the CSD. So we report on these grants programs in our annual reports each year. They are designed with different objectives, obviously. Some are connected to the respective constituency of the grants program. Others are broader across the community. For example, in the multicultural grants program, there is a criterion that talks about enhancing social harmony and across the ACT. So there are projects that are not necessarily delivered by multicultural groups, it could be other groups, that do enhance and contribute to social cohesion across the ACT. As for the 15 target there for 2013-14, these are programs. Amongst those, as I have said, are the grants programs that I have talked about.

MS PORTER: Is that target of 15 based on the amount of money you have or is that based on the demand, or how do you decide on that?

Ms Burch: I might ask Mr Rutledge just to add something on that.

Mr Rutledge: Some of them, as Nic was saying, were deliberate constituency-based ones and some are also for community development run by some of our larger organisations such as Northside Community Services, south side, Belconnen, some of those larger ones. As Mr Manikis was saying, it is all about inclusion and cohesion and the number of organisations. A certain amount is tendered each year, and they are sometimes recurrent grants or sometimes they are grant programs, as Mr Manikis was saying.

MS PORTER: I note today, minister, you put out a media release in relation to some grants. I did not have a chance to read it before I came downstairs. It is talking about this particular area. It is talking about multicultural grants. I think it is to do with the ones that you announced were open for people to actually apply for in May of this year. Anyway, I will check that and may ask some other questions later, but I probably will not have the opportunity because we will have gone onwards.

MRS JONES: I had a supplementary on that. With the Canberra Rape Crisis Centre, can you let us know: in the last five years has their funding gone up or down? Are they funded to the same dollar value? And have they lost any staff as a result?

Ms Howson: Yes.

MRS JONES: Yes what?

Ms Howson: I can let you know.

MRS JONES: You can let me know?

THE CHAIR: That was taken on notice. Minister, if you read output class 3.1, the description containing all of the words “multicultural, women, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, ageing” has disappeared. Is there a reason? If someone was looking through the budget papers for the funding for those four areas, it would be very hard to determine where they fell. What was the reason for removing those specific words from the section?

Ms Burch: And having reference to community participation? I am looking at output class 1, which is around community participation. I will go to Mr Manikis who heads up either side. It is around just being inclusive because this is around bringing our community together as one, rather than having a silo approach. It is about how we bring, effectively, all those elements of that group together.

Ms Howson: I will just add to what the minister said, if I may. In terms of alignment of the accountability indicator to our strategic objective, it is that we are focusing on social inclusion outcomes and improving community relationships, and that applies across all of, I guess, the sub-populations that exist within the Canberra community.

As we operate within the community participation branch, we have retained, and will continue to do so, our branding in relation to the Office for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, the Office for Ageing, and the Office for Women. It is very important that, from the community's point of view, they understand there is a place for them to connect to that is dedicated to representing their specific initiatives.

The indicators and the objectives, though, take advantage of the full capacity within that branch, and Mr Manikis can talk a little about where we are moving in the way in which we use our available resources to support the outcomes for those sub-populations.

THE CHAIR: But before we move there, how would a layperson looking at the budget find out how much the Office of Multicultural Affairs was being funded?

Ms Howson: We could certainly provide that. Ian, have you got a copy on you?

THE CHAIR: I know you can provide it, but how would the multicultural community find out what had been funded, and for instance, the Office of Women's Affairs, ATSI, Aged? We have had this discussion several times over the last couple of years.

Ms Howson: Yes, we have.

THE CHAIR: And it seems to be a recommendation that is often ignored by—

Ms Howson: I think the issue here is that it is a difficult question to answer, in that the appropriations are not necessarily allocated for particular program areas, and increasingly—

THE CHAIR: Come on, you have a good idea where the money is going. You know the budget is going through. The government has got the numbers.

Ms Howson: I think that is where it actually does become a little complex.

THE CHAIR: The bids are in.

Ms Howson: The way that we are using our resources to become a more efficient public service is that we might have a proportion of an FTE that is allocated to a particular output class and another proportion of that same FTE allocated to another

output class. So there is some flexibility in the way in which we apply the funding to get the outcomes for government, and what we are trying to move to is accountability around the outcomes rather than accountability specifically around every single dollar and the way that it is applied, if that makes some sense.

THE CHAIR: As a breakdown of the funding for output class 3.1, how much goes on admin, how much goes to the multicultural office, women's office, ATSI office and the aged office?

Ms Howson: We would have to take that on notice.

Ms Burch: Unless, Mr Hubbard, do you have that at your fingertips?

Mr Hubbard: I think, as Ms Howson is expressing, we are changing in some ways how we do make those allocations and how sliced and diced we do the accounting below the actual output class. Over the years, you have probably noticed, as we have provided that information to you, there is a lot more shared overhead, there is a lot more shared actual individuals within those groups who work across the groups. That ability to be able to slice and dice that area is becoming harder and harder and in fact, with the development of the participation group, we have really stopped reporting on particular dollars going to particular policy areas, whether it might be three officers who are working across those differing groups, because it just becomes meaningless after a while trying to slice an FTE up on how much policy work you do, particularly when a lot of the mainstream services have a lot more resources targeted to those individual groups. It is starting to get pretty hard to arrange the accounting. You would almost have to do timesheets for some of these people, and we have definitely moved beyond that. So it is becoming harder and harder to actually provide you with how much policy work is done on each of those different groups within that area.

I could give you something, but it is getting towards meaningless. That is the point I am trying to make, as far as the policy element is concerned, which is what that group does.

THE CHAIR: So how does the committee make a recommendation on whether funding for the Office of Women in the ACT is being funded appropriately and that they have the resources to carry out—

Ms Howson: I think you judge us on our outcomes.

Mr Hubbard: And you can see overall the funding in those groups has been pretty consistent. Overall the funding has remained the same for those. It is how it has worked out, actually allocated, and the outcomes achieved during the year. The numbers become a bit less meaningful than the actual outcomes delivered.

Ms Howson: This is also why you will see in this budget paper, we have made some changes to our indicators because we are trying to get some more meaning in what those indicators stand for. We have still got a way to go, I accept that, and we are doing some work within our directorate at the moment on what we call our own balance scorecard or report card on how we can better account to our community on the things we are actually achieving as opposed to the inputs that are funded, to give

the community more confidence that what we are spending the ACT taxpayers' money on is making a difference to the people that it was intended to make a difference for.

THE CHAIR: So you will take that on notice?

Ms Howson: That breakdown, we can do our best with that, but I—

THE CHAIR: As best you can, yes.

Mr Hubbard: Yes, but it is becoming less meaningful.

MRS JONES: Has the overall packet for the four or five different areas decreased at all in this budget?

Mr Hubbard: Sorry?

MRS JONES: When you add up those different offices, women, multicultural, ageing—what were the other ones?

THE CHAIR: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander.

MRS JONES: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, has that packet shrunk in the last 12 months?

Mr Hubbard: No. If you look at the numbers, you can see they are going up.

THE CHAIR: In 2.4?

Mr Hubbard: Yes, pretty well.

MRS JONES: With CPI, basically?

Mr Hubbard: Pretty well, but I think also in this climate we are trying to reduce our expenditure overall, and we are looking at areas where we can cut down on the overhead, those sorts of things. So my expectation is it will not be down. As we discussed yesterday, except in areas where we are managing significant change and we need to keep the resources focused, in most of the other areas across the agency we are going to try to constrain expenditure, probably below the three per cent that is typical. We are trying to reduce that amount of money because that is the pressure on us.

From the CFO's point of view, I need to see that we are actually constraining and making some adjustments in those areas. One of those adjustments is to bring those groups together and make the efficiencies that you get from bringing them together. That is a deliberate act that we are doing and we are trying to be more efficient.

THE CHAIR: In that case, if you go to something like strategic objective No 6, the number of groups participating in the Multicultural Festival, it is static for five years. Does that mean the festival has peaked, and what numbers did we get for the 2013-14

festival?

Ms Howson: I think we have been talking about this issue for some time, but the footprint for the festival defines, again, the capacity of our ability to engage organisations. What we are trying to do is ensure that as each year comes around, what changes is the opportunity for participation. Nic or Jancye can talk more about how that works.

Ms Winter: Certainly the stallholder numbers were slightly down for the festival for 2014, but only marginally. We went from 430 stalls on the Saturday down to 360. But in saying that, no community group or diplomatic mission that applied to participate was denied a spot at the festival. It really is ranging by the area that we have available to us.

Ms Burch: It is also the change in the timing. We now work from Friday, Saturday and Sunday. Those who have been to the festival over the last decade know that Friday did not exist before. I implemented it in 2010, I think it was. That started, I think, with half a dozen stalls whereas this year there were 133 stalls. Similarly, traditionally Sunday was a very quiet day. It was the community connect day, and this year we had 262 stalls. So there is certainly a stretch over those three days with the stalls, and we are limited by our footprint. One of the feedbacks we have is that everyone loves it but 250,000 people within the footprint is a large number, and that is why some of the stallholders are making the decisions to stretch across the other days as well.

THE CHAIR: How are the relations with the permanent traders in the region? There were some complaints about receiving access passes and disruption to business. How do we negotiate with them and ensure that their businesses are not disrupted?

Ms Winter: Each year we hold an information night for residents and retailers affected across the footprint. We send that invitation out. We held that night in late November 2013. One retailer attended across all the retailers, and no residents attended. Subsequently we hand delivered to every resident and retailer a traffic pass with information attached of road closures as well.

THE CHAIR: A supplementary, Ms Porter, and then Mrs Jones.

MS PORTER: Just to clarify, the media release was about the injection of \$5 million into the ACT economy from the Multicultural Festival.

Ms Burch: Okay, yes.

MS PORTER: From a survey that has been undertaken.

Ms Burch: Yes, sorry. I was scratching my head. The multicultural grants went out about a month ago.

MS PORTER: Yes, in May.

Ms Burch: But the survey results have been put out, and they are showing again that

Canberra embraces 100 per cent this festival. I might give some highlights to this, if I may. The estimate is that more than 250,000 people came through, and that 96.4 per cent of attendees expressed a high degree of satisfaction with this year's festival. Indeed, that is a slight increase from last year. 96 per cent said that they were more likely to attend again and would recommend the festivals to others. Virtually all of the spectators, 99 per cent, said they felt safe through the festival. Over 94 per cent of respondents agreed strongly or agreed that the festival made Canberra feel rich in culture and entertainment.

As to the notion of 99 per cent saying they feel safe during the festival, one of the things that makes me incredibly proud of Canberra and the organisers of the festival is that you can have that number of people in Civic and there are effectively no incidents. It is a safer night than any other night along London Circuit in many ways even though you have got 250,000 people, and it is because they come out to enjoy our multicultural community first and foremost.

MS PORTER: My supplementary was along the lines of what Mr Smyth was asking before. I know you said no groups have been turned away, and I know we talked about the footprint, but I was wondering if any work is being done to contact the embassies, the commissions and the groups that are not participating and asking them why they are not participating or is it something they would like to participate in in the future.

Ms Winter: We certainly do a mail-out about 1 July to all embassies and community organisations throughout Canberra letting them know that applications are open, and we have a very, very high turnout from the embassies and diplomatic missions particularly. We have not particularly sought direct feedback why certain embassies or organisations do not participate at this stage. We certainly advertise through a range of media when the applications are open. Every year we receive very late applications from the embassies and diplomatic missions for a variety of reasons and, again, I stress that we never turn down an application from a community organisation or a diplomatic mission.

Mr Manikis: I will add to that to say that some community organisations have expressed that their groups of volunteers are diminishing in their organisations year in, year out. It takes a pretty big effort to put up a stall on a Friday, Saturday and Sunday. It usually takes on average around five to 10 volunteers to actually do a good job on the stall. Some organisations are feeling the pinch when it comes to putting the word around. They might put in for a stall, but when they put the word around for volunteers they might only get one or two people and then they cannot sustain the stall over the weekend. That is one reason why they do not participate that I have heard of. But there are not that many of those people or those organisations.

THE CHAIR: We have a final supplementary and then we will move on to the arts output.

MRS JONES: In last year's estimates we discussed the extra \$100,000 which had been allocated for the festival just gone and the one coming up. So a couple of things about the future of the festival: where is that additional money going to come from? I think it was for security and food safety and the additional cost that had been applied

for the last number of years. Also, has there been any consideration to the festival being housed in another location, like on the lake? That was raised with me a few times because of the temperature at that time of the year and that it might be a cooler venue on the grass. I just want to know whether that has ever been canvassed. And can I please be provided with a list of those who are mailed out to about the festival, with the emphasis on the community groups?

Ms Burch: As in those who are invited?

MRS JONES: Just a list of the embassies and the community groups that you invite.

Mr Manikis: We go to the website for the embassies, so we can give you a list of the embassies.

MRS JONES: Yes, thank you, and the community groups.

Mr Manikis: And I can give you the community groups as well.

MRS JONES: So the answer to the question about the extra \$100,000?

Mr Manikis: The answer to that question is that \$100,000 was supplied for the infrastructure and other services required to put on the event. We are pursuing major sponsorship at the moment as well. We have had some success with mild levels of sponsorship and we sustain those year in, year out, but we are looking towards a major sponsor at this stage to assist.

MRS JONES: To cover that gap?

Mr Manikis: Well, I am not sure it is a gap.

MRS JONES: In the outyears, it has not been funded.

Ms Burch: We remain committed to the festival, regardless of whether we in source it, budget line source it or sponsorship source it. I think we have had this discussion here—I think the footprint is about right. I think the three days are established as a successful festival. Your comment about it being down at the lake, no-one has raised it with me before. Certainly this year we went into the high car park to try and decongest some of that footprint. And at the end of every festival there is lots of thinking and there are lots of opportunities for traders and the CBD retailers to provide input.

MRS JONES: Yes, I think everyone agrees that is fantastic. I am just wondering about the \$100,000 that was for security and food safety. I think that is what you explained it as last year. It was funded for this year's festival and next year's festival, but there is not any funding in this year's budget for the outyears after this year's festival.

Ms Howson: Those fundamental elements of the festival would remain funded out of the base funding. What we are looking for is how we actually find other sources of revenue to support the festival through either philanthropic or sponsorship-type

models.

THE CHAIR: We might finish there. Thank you very much, officials, and we will move on to the arts portfolio.

Thank you, minister, and our new officials. There is a privilege statement on the table in front of you. Could you please acknowledge that you have read and understood the protections and obligations of the privilege statement. All those present have done so. If you take a question on notice, please make it clear for the record that you have taken it on notice. Minister, would you like to open with a brief statement?

Ms Burch: I made reference earlier to the budget line for arts. It is predominantly focused on the grants and additional funding provided to cultural facilities and corporations and our continued interest in a new theatre.

THE CHAIR: Minister, on 7 May it was reported that the Fringe Festival had made a loss of \$7,500 although you had said in the Assembly that there was not a loss to the Fringe Festival. What is the truth of the matter? Was there a loss or not?

Ms Burch: There was no loss to the ACT government. We provided a grant of \$20,000. That was provided, it was acquitted and our obligations ended at that point.

THE CHAIR: The director claims to have made a personal loss of \$7,500. Has there been any approach for assistance to cover that loss?

Ms Burch: Not to my understanding.

THE CHAIR: Mr Whitney?

Mr Whitney: We have had no communication from Mr Gardner requesting consideration of the risk that he took.

THE CHAIR: Have you checked as to whether or not he was actually out of pocket for \$7,500?

Mr Whitney: We received his acquittal for the \$20,000 deed of grant, and in that deed of grant he indicated where the \$20,000 had been spent and he indicated a shortfall. He has advised that that shortfall was carried by him as the producer of that Fringe Festival.

THE CHAIR: So in that regard, did the Fringe Festival in 2013 have a shortfall?

Mr Whitney: The previous festival, the multifringe 2013 as it was called, did not carry a deficit.

THE CHAIR: Minister, you have constantly repeated that your appointment of the director was based on advice from the directorate. However, some FOI documents included the following:

We have similar experience with Jorian and grants that remain unacquitted,

however his name has always been replaced by a business colleague (read girlfriend). I project an active negative response from the arts community to the announcement and the lack of peer review due to Jorian and his reputation for not paying artists/suppliers and his lack of artistic credibility and judgement.

Minister, on what grounds was your decision to engage the director based?

Ms Burch: Because of his connection to the fringe and that he has run very successful fringe festivals. And I maintain he ran a very successful Fringe Festival this year.

THE CHAIR: Why did you not seek a peer review before you hired the director?

Ms Burch: I made the decision in 2013. It was an option to do that. I think it was linked to the particular stream of money. In 2014 at my discretion I was able to make a direct appointment—I did.

THE CHAIR: So what process will be used to appoint the director in the 2014-15 year?

Ms Burch: That is yet to be determined. It remains within my discretion to make a direct appointment or I could go out for expressions of interest.

THE CHAIR: What lessons have you learnt from the appointment process this year?

Ms Burch: That you have made merry with the appointment of Mr Gardner. Indeed, I refer to an article by Michael Moore where he said, “When privilege has a few go feral.” Even that commentator made reference to the fact that some of the comments made by the Canberra Liberals under privilege were, indeed, excessive.

THE CHAIR: Mr Moore is entitled to his opinion.

Ms Burch: He is.

THE CHAIR: Mr Whitney, do you stand by the comments you made in the briefs that were sent to the minister?

Mr Whitney: In the briefs?

THE CHAIR: In regard to the Fringe Festival.

Ms Burch: If you looked at the FOI, you would find that they were not sent to me, Mr Smyth.

THE CHAIR: All right; the ones that were sent to the minister and the ones that did not get to the minister. Do you still stand by the comments—

Ms Howson: Mr Smyth, would you mind repeating that question to Mr Whitney?

THE CHAIR: Does Mr Whitney stand by the comments that he made that are revealed in the FOI documents?

Ms Howson: I might say that Mr Whitney is entitled to, and should always, provide his advice internally to the deputy director-general and the director-general as he sees fit. I think that is what he has done.

THE CHAIR: Did you pass on those comments to the minister, Ms Howson?

Ms Howson: I did not, no.

THE CHAIR: Why not?

Ms Howson: They were not actually comments that were provided to me, but we did, in fact, advise the minister around our views on the appropriate management of our contract with Mr Gardner, on the basis of our experience with him on previous occasions.

THE CHAIR: What was your experience on previous occasions, and what were those views?

Ms Howson: Our view was that we needed tighter controls, and checks and balances, within the arrangements that were in place, to assure ourselves that we were mitigating a risk in relation to the expenditure being acquitted appropriately.

THE CHAIR: What was that based on?

Ms Howson: Previous experience.

THE CHAIR: A new question?

MS PORTER: Yes, thank you. On page 10, output 3.2, arts engagement, it talks about encouraging participation in and access to the arts. Minister, can you explain to the committee how the directorate encourages community participation in and access to the arts, and what kinds of projects are supported by the government?

Ms Burch: Before I go to Mr Whitney, let me say that we have a very high participation rate of arts across all the disciplines, and we provide a number of supported programs, and funding to key arts organisations or artists themselves, as they are emerging through their discipline and practice, to make sure that we support emerging artists as well as those at the more experienced end.

But it is also opportunities such as the Fringe Festival that give other disciplines of artists an opportunity to participate and to provide entertainment and artistic experience to the community. On the Fringe Festival, I think 18,000 people came through. On any measure, that would be considered successful. And on any measure, given that no complaint has come to my office about the festival, I would say it was a success. Well done to Mr Gardner.

MS PORTER: Mr Whitney.

Mr Whitney: Thank you. The arts fund, which is the principal way of supporting

artists in the territory, has a number of different categories within it. The larger component goes to our key arts organisations. They are on five-year funding. Many of those key arts organisations are housed in arts facilities, and some of them actually have the responsibility of managing those facilities.

In the last year, and projecting into the next two years, we have put a focus on some arts hubs areas. The Tuggeranong Arts Centre has recently had some investment and is now able to service and provide better facilities for the arts community in the south. Belconnen Arts Centre has now, after five years, I think, established itself very strongly; about 40,000 people a year go to the Belconnen Arts Centre for a variety of activities.

The focus on the Street Theatre has provided an extra rehearsal room, improved facilities in the Street Theatre auditorium for sound attenuation, and increased technical capability. That facility is a central hub within the city west area. Its relationship to the ANU, particularly the ANU School of Music, the ANU School of Art and the ANU Arts Centre, is really quite pivotal in terms of the creation of an arts focus there. And the Street Theatre has a very strong program, supported not only by artsACT and the territory government but also by the Australia Council, for creating new voices. So new work that is being produced is able to be presented in that theatre.

Gorman House and the Ainslie Arts Centre have now been merged under the one management structure. Gorman House Arts Centre is now managing those two facilities, so the campus stretches across the two areas. We have undertaken quite a significant review and created a master plan of future development within the Gorman House Arts Centre and the Ainslie Arts Centre, funded by the territory, to do this next step of work. The principle reason for Gorman House is as a home for artists and arts organisations of a very general nature. The Ainslie Arts Centre is principally a home for music and music with young people. Two of the organisations that work there, Music for Everyone and Canberra Youth Music, have come to us and would like to merge their two organisations to create one to be a much more dynamic arts centre. That process is occurring at the moment and will be finished by the end of this year. The construction work that we are doing in both Gorman and Ainslie will also start in term 4 so that we can be as least disruptive as possible to the artists that are there.

With the other development, we have the Kingston arts precinct. With Megalo print studio moving onto that Kingston site, the relationship between Kingston as an arts access site, with the Megalo print facility and now the Canberra Glassworks facility, being there also for about six to seven years, has meant that the idea of an arts facility in the Kingston precinct is looking very strong. Those two key arts organisations both have very open access activity, mainly driven through our arts policy framework, which has, as its first fundamental principle, access to the arts. We believe that those organisations in those larger hubs are delivering that.

Other parts of our arts funding include program funding. Lots of our organisations are either not managing facilities or do not need the large reporting restrictions we put on key arts organisations that might deliver a program annually or every two years. Examples are the Canberra International Music Festival and the International Film Festival. Those organisations are still very strong; they are providing a lot of access for artists to be a part of their program and also teaching workshops and activities

associated with that.

Underneath that, we have a lot of individual project funding areas where people can make an application. A project round is open at the moment; I think it closes next week. Underneath that, we also have some new initiatives that have been maturing over the last couple of years. Artists in schools and artists in residence are two of those programs; we are particularly pleased to see how they are developing and unfolding. With the artists in schools program, we have attracted support from the Australia Council for the Arts, so we can now provide funding into four schools, and with the education directorate, they have provided additional funding so we can work into a fifth school. And this year there was a great project at Bimberi which was supported through the education directorate, with our support as well. This is about getting living artists to actually work in schools and to create that sort of work.

They are some of the examples of the arts projects that we can support through the arts fund.

MS PORTER: Thank you very much, Mr Whitney. I am sure that from all of that there will be a lot of supplementaries from people who are sitting here at this table. I just want to pick up on a couple of things you said. I am tempted to ask you lots of questions, but I will leave it to my colleagues on the committee to delve down into many of those areas.

I want to ask in particular about Belconnen Arts Centre. You talked about how terrific they have become and how popular. I am wondering why the second stage remains unfunded in this budget, in that very strong arts and cultural community—not only in that area, but with people coming across the border and also from Gungahlin. It is a very important hub, as you have just finished saying. It is on the plans. The government did supply it with money to actually draw up the plans, and I believe that they are ready for the development application stage. I am just wondering if you could answer that question. And I have an additional question.

Ms Burch: I may respond. It is a very worthy project. We did invest in it, so our commitment remains strong. The budget is a budget of priorities in many ways; we considered it a shovel-ready project and I remain committed to it. Certainly in the Twitter cabinet the good folk of Belconnen made their presence known on that and asked about it. I think, in summary, that one of my responses was that we remain committed. I look forward to Belconnen Arts Centre being all that it has the potential to be, and that includes phase 2. It is not in this budget, but our commitment remains strong.

MS PORTER: Thank you very much, minister. My second question was about our outreach into the region. I just talked about the fact that we have people coming across the border to the Belconnen Arts Centre, for instance. My interest is in how we connect with, for instance, our amateur theatre community with regard to our outreach to the huge network that we have both within the ACT and in our region, and whether we see a role for us as the ACT government in supporting our region in that way, in the way that we connect with our region in many other parts of government.

Mr Whitney: There is a very strong need for us to provide facilities within the ACT

that can provide support not just for Canberra artists but also for those in the immediate region. Going to the example you talk about with amateur theatre, there is a very strong crossover with the Canberra area theatre awards and also other activities that come to Canberra and present. Queanbeyan is just over the border, but there is a performing space in Tuggeranong and there is a performing space in Belconnen. It is not satisfactory, really, but it is a space that is there. I think our colleagues at the Canberra Theatre Centre are very consistently working through the programs that are presented at the Courtyard Studio. There is activity and engagement with touring activity as well. The Street Theatre has a clear role to provide support for local artists who create work. Invariably those artists are from out of Canberra.

Also, we recently announced, through the minister, an additional \$100,000 for the Canberra Symphony Orchestra for part of their community outreach. That discussion got them working with Musica Viva to take the music from the Canberra Symphony Orchestra, not necessarily as a full orchestra but maybe as a small ensemble, to some of the immediate parts of the ACT and region. This could be small ensembles that interact with the orchestras that are based down in Wagga or it could be going to touring programs down on the coast or out to Goulburn and Yass. There is a very strong relationship, also, through the funding that we give to the ANU through their music education program. The music education program has a very strong connection with the conservatorium in Wagga as well, so there are relationships and connections that happen that way.

I know that a lot of Canberra artists, particularly ceramic-based artists at the Watson Arts Centre, are engaged in activities at Cooma; there is an exchange between arts programs there. And Watson is not just an exhibition space for ceramics; it broadens out to a wider community as well.

So there is a lot of that activity and interaction that occurs as part of an outreach. The principal focus is within Canberra, of course, and with Canberra artists who need to explain to us and display a Canberra-based practice. But clearly there are artists working outside of Canberra. One of the other programs we support, through Asialink, is for an artist each year to get an opportunity to exchange and to work in Asia. These artists then come back and broaden their experiences with the artists in Canberra and lift the whole artistic programs there. So the principal interest is in Canberra, but the outreach is regional, national and international.

THE CHAIR: Just as a supplementary, you mentioned the CAT awards. What assistance does the government give to the CAT awards? We have heard about encouraging people and excellence. Obviously one of the ways you do that is to reward them through their peers acknowledging their efforts. Does the government provide any assistance for the CAT awards?

Mr Whitney: On a case-by-case basis, we have been able to support them over the last few years with their awards ceremony at Llewellyn Hall. Part of the support that we have, through support for the ANU, is to provide a subsidy scheme for activity based in Llewellyn Hall. There is a series of criteria against that. Principally it is about the musical quality or the acoustic nature of the hall and about capacity. So it is a competitive area. The ANU own Llewellyn Hall; we rent it from them to the tune of a couple of hundred thousand dollars a year. The Canberra Symphony Orchestra is the

principal user of that scheme, but other organisations make application and can enjoy that support to further them.

THE CHAIR: Have we specifically made financial assistance to help the people who put on the CAT awards?

Mr Whitney: We certainly have provided funding to pay the rent of Llewellyn Hall in the past, yes.

THE CHAIR: Have we provided assistance beyond the rent?

Mr Whitney: No.

MRS DUNNE: When in the past have they received assistance for Llewellyn Hall?

Mr Whitney: I would have to take that one on notice, to be clear, but I think it was for three years preceding this current year.

THE CHAIR: All right; can you take that on notice and detail all the assistance the CAT awards have received from the government over the last half-dozen years. Ms Berry, a new question?

MS BERRY: I just want to share in Ms Porter's pride in the Belconnen Arts Centre.

Ms Burch: Yes, and rightly so.

MS BERRY: And we will continue to hold the government to its commitment to that.

Ms Burch: I would expect nothing less from you both.

MS BERRY: To the Belconnen Arts Centre cultural and community—

THE CHAIR: There is an outburst of Belco pride here.

MS BERRY: Just staying in Belconnen for a moment, I want to find out a bit about what is happening at Strathnairn.

Ms Burch: It is probably coming to the end of a major effort. There were new roads, new buildings, upgrades to electricity and all sorts of bits.

MRS DUNNE: They have also had an upgrade in their key arts status fund as well, haven't they?

Ms Burch: Mr Whitney can talk to that.

Mr Whitney: The last few years have seen quite a bit of capital investment in Strathnairn. One of the concerns we had was with the organisation itself, which was very firmly rooted in a 1970s-based community model, with all volunteers on the board. That is fine, but the management requirements were a little bit beyond simply the time that people had to spend. So we have provided both the Strathnairn Arts

Centre and the Watson Arts Centre with particular funding this year to engage a full-time officer, in order to pull together that new governance approach and to be more mindful of ensuring that the facilities that we have invested in, particularly artists' studios, are in fact engaged by people who will be able to use them and do the best that we can with those. Strathnairn is probably an example of investing in the capital and now investing in the infrastructure support, through people, to actually make that site work.

There is another very interesting development. As the town of Canberra expands, the Riverview Group are looking at expanding into the large suburban area around that. The huge advantage that we are finding with Strathnairn, working with the Riverview Group, is that there is an existing arts facility and a community facility in the area. So we are working very closely with them in order to strengthen that community facility, so that we can provide capacity for new people moving into the suburban area, as there is already an existing facility that provides a lot of the community spaces.

There is a small shop; there is a little cafe that operates there. There are opportunities for people to go as families. We will also be looking at expanding the area to create community gardens. One of the things we have discovered in Gungahlin is that there is great interest in community gardens. If we can build that around the old farmhouse, an area that was the Strathnairn property before it became an arts facility, that extends and develops on from there.

There are also nature walks down to the Murrumbidgee and a connection through to the river corridor, which is all part of that relationship that is happening there. So we are very proud of Strathnairn. I think it is coming to a point of fruition now after some years of investment in the hard infrastructure, and now in the soft infrastructure.

MS BERRY: Yes, I agree. I was out there on Friday night and the cafe is bringing people there and giving them access to art that they probably would not normally have—people like me, for example. On development and works in progress, on page 203 of the budget paper, can you give us some information about the Kingston visual arts hub and the feasibility study?

Mr Whitney: Certainly. Kingston is the next of the areas that we are looking at investing in and developing as a significant arts facility, with a focus on the visual arts and on the making of visual arts. The Canberra Glassworks in the old powerhouse obviously was the first example of that. There has been recognition over the last number of years that it has been able to satisfy both elite artists and their international experience and beginner artists walking in to undertake programs, so that they can make a paperweight, a tile and then progress on from there. So it has had that degree of involvement and inclusion for some years now.

By moving Megalo onto the same site, with their Wentworth Avenue temporary offices, it has meant that they have been able to engage in a way that they could not when they were in their previous location at the old Watson high school. Just recently, there was an interchange between the two craft practices called *Glint*. So there were glass artists and print artists working together. That was a fantastic outcome with two art forms coming together in a way that was a bit unexpected—the outcomes were a bit unexpected. There will be an exhibition of their work next month, I believe, which

will be terrific.

We have undertaken some previous work with the Kingston precinct. We engaged a cultural planner a couple of years ago, a woman called Susan Conroy, who looked at the opportunity of pulling together our visual arts organisations—people like PhotoAccess, the Canberra Contemporary Art Space and Craft ACT. We are talking to the Watson Arts Centre as well, which is a ceramic-based practice. If we can co-locate the activity that has occurred around that on that Kingston precinct, we think it will add life and vitality to that very exciting development that is happening at the moment.

Recently, the minister announced the feasibility study. We went through a process and engaged Colin Stewart Architects, who are undertaking that feasibility study for us. They are busy consulting with those arts organisations and looking at what the needs are for those arts organisations to move onto the site.

Another critical player in that equation, of course, is the Old Bus Depot Markets. That is a great honey pot. It has been successfully operating out of the same building for 15 years. It works very closely in collusion with the Canberra Glassworks and Megalo. That is the focus that we are talking about.

Part of the precinct will need to have a bit of commercial reality around it. So we need to see what other interest there could be, maybe from a like-minded part of the creative sector—architecture firms, design firms or film industry activity that could occur in the same precinct. That is what this feasibility study will tell us about. We are hoping to get that back by late August or early September this year and then we will work with our colleagues in the Land Development Agency on how we might realise that development on the site. They have a strong interest regarding all of section 49 and how they develop that area. The arts precinct is absolutely a part of that.

MRS DUNNE: I have about 15 supplementary questions.

THE CHAIR: You can talk about it for hours, but we are going to run out of time.

MS BERRY: You answered most of my other questions on that. You have created a really great picture of the overall vision for that hub.

THE CHAIR: Mrs Dunne had supplementaries on a couple of issues and then we will go to Mrs Jones.

MRS DUNNE: They all actually come together. Mr Whitney, you said that in relation to Strathnairn there had been a lot of capital investment and improvement in the facilities there and that you needed to put some professionalism into the board structure. I know that you do not consider that to be a criticism of the board, and I do not either. It is just that there is only so much that volunteers can do.

Across the ACT, artsACT has from time to time made big investments in infrastructure. Why is it that ArtSound lost its key arts organisation funding this year? It did not lose its funding but its funding is static when it actually asked for an increase in funding. Also, what aspirations do you have for ArtSound, given that

someone from your organisation is reputed to have said to ArtSound, “We don’t fund you to play music,” which I think was pretty condescending. In your discussion of section 49 at Kingston, with all the organisations you mentioned, you did not mention ArtSound, which is one of the organisations that is mooted to go there. Does artsACT have a problem with ArtSound at the moment?

Mr Whitney: No, artsACT does not have a problem with ArtSound FM. I also did not mention PhotoAccess. I forgot both—

MRS DUNNE: You did mention PhotoAccess.

Mr Whitney: I apologise. It was a blip. The other activities are visual arts activities and that is what the focus of Kingston is going to be on. However, we are also well aware that with the Manuka Arts Centre PhotoAccess and ArtSound FM are activities that we are looking at relocating to the Kingston site. So there is no problem with ArtSound—

MRS DUNNE: There has been a change in the purpose of funding at ArtSound. Previously they were funded as a key arts organisation and now they are being funded to produce arts material, which they have been clearly doing for many years, for all the time they had been funded. What is the motivation for the apparent change and the somewhat dismissive approach that artsACT seem to have taken to ArtSound when they say, “We don’t pay ArtSound to play music”? I have to declare, Mr Chairman, that I am an ArtSound ambassador; I have been for many years.

Mr Whitney: The status changed for a number of our arts organisations last year, as a result of our arts policy framework. The arts policy framework has a focus on supporting arts access and on the making of art activity. With respect to the driver of that arts policy framework, we needed to look across the arts landscape at what activities were priorities for us in the various categories that they were sitting in and that they were fitting.

We explained this to the ArtSound board when they came in last December, and again in March when they came back for a second discussion about this issue around their changed status. We also changed the status of the Canberra City Band, who were also a key arts organisation. The reporting arrangements for a key arts organisation are quite substantial, whereas for a program organisation the reporting arrangements are a little less onerous—still responsible but a little less onerous.

ArtSound FM are a radio station that are based in the community and do produce radio programs. It is those activities that we choose to continue to support. We have no reason not to support those activities, and we have been very clear with ArtSound FM that that is the activity we wish to continue. The principal supporter for ArtSound FM is the Australian broadcasting foundation. That organisation is the one that funds community radio stations to continue their activity. ArtSound have also been successful in getting support for one of their particular programs, which is the *Silver Memories* program, which is to fund activity broadcast through a new medium—not particularly radio but through online internet broadcasts for seniors in the community.

With those activities we are only interested in supporting programs that are about

training volunteers to work in radio, and for them to progress their career from volunteers maybe further, and also in the production of new music and the support for that new music. With respect to the Friday afternoon live sessions that are broadcast, we are very proud of them, and ArtSound are very proud of them as well. So I am not quite sure why there is the commentary that we do not support them to play music. We certainly do support them to play music, but we also support them to have an arts development focus, and it is that arts development focus that is the principal reason that we fund all of our art activity.

MRS DUNNE: Why was it that I was told that, apart from the deed of grant, there was no formal documentation from artsACT as to the reasons for revising ArtSound's status from a key arts organisation to a funding program? I have been consistently told that they have not been given a specific reason except that, as you said a minute ago, Mr Whitney, you assessed it against the arts guidelines. But the thing is that ArtSound does not have an understanding, and I do not have an understanding, of why it lost its key arts organisation status. There are many organisations around the place who are smarting at having lost their key arts organisation status because whether you like it or not you created a status symbol and then you took it away.

Mr Whitney: The first part of the question was about ArtSound not understanding the change of status and—

MRS DUNNE: They were never given an explanation by artsACT, and there is no documentation to support the explanation.

Mr Whitney: There was a meeting that the chair of ArtSound and the general manager attended at artsACT. I think it was in December last year; I could certainly find out when that meeting was. We had a discussion with them about the result of their application process, and they came back again I think in March this year. I am very happy to organise another meeting with the chair of the organisation and the general manager and to have that discussion with them if there is a need for that to happen.

MRS DUNNE: On the Kingston arts hub, what is the likelihood of ArtSound and PhotoAccess being moved to the Kingston arts hub, and do you have any idea what the cost would be, particularly in relation to ArtSound, because of the huge investment in equipment in those buildings?

Mr Whitney: Both organisations are identified as key stakeholders to be negotiated with in terms of moving onto that Kingston site. The process of that consultation is occurring at the moment. It is our initial belief that they are going to be relocating from Manuka into facilities on the Kingston site.

With respect to the second question, about the cost of relocation, we need to work out, if they are going to be moving, and if they do move, how we can resolve that. When the organisation moved from its previous facilities in the old library at Curtin to the facility now in Manuka, we supported them to move across. I think that was to the tune of \$600,000.

MRS DUNNE: But that was about half the cost of the move and the redevelopment of

their current arts centre. What I would probably be looking for from you, minister, is this: if ArtSound and PhotoAccess are moved to Kingston, will the government undertake to move them lock, stock and barrel? There has to be a serious undertaking to move them lock, stock and barrel, because they cannot be out of pocket again. The move before left them severely out of pocket.

Ms Burch: Given that we are yet to come to the end of the feasibility, we are yet to come to the end of what organisations are moving in and what the built form will be, I think a number of these things are unanswerable. But we have a track record of supporting our arts organisations. If we have supported them before in a move, we will support them again, Mrs Dunne.

THE CHAIR: Who owns the facility at Manuka that they currently both reside in?

Mr Whitney: ArtsACT. It is an asset of artsACT, or CSD-artsACT.

THE CHAIR: What is the future of that facility?

MRS DUNNE: Mr Barr wants it for the extension of—

Mr Whitney: It is part of the master plan for Manuka. There is one building there which is heritage listed, which is the building that provides the offices for ArtSound FM and a training room for ArtSound and PhotoAccess. It is the early mothercare building. I think it was the first mothercare building in the territory. The other buildings have no heritage status at this stage.

THE CHAIR: But they are slated for redevelopment?

Mr Whitney: Correct.

MRS DUNNE: Could I just emphasise, Mr Chairman—

THE CHAIR: Very quickly.

MRS DUNNE: that the track record is that ArtSound were out of pocket after the last move, substantially. My understanding is that they had made an almost equal investment in the move—the \$500,000 or \$600,000 that came from artsACT. I am concerned that they will be out of pocket again and I think we need to emphasise the government's track record here.

Ms Burch: I think you are playing a very good ambassador for ArtSound FM.

THE CHAIR: There you are; a compliment from the minister, Madam Speaker.

Ms Burch: Can we get to CFC?

THE CHAIR: Yes, we will—

MRS JONES: Yes, that is me.

THE CHAIR: Mrs Jones, you want to go to CFC? All right. I just have a final question. The GPO for this output has declined. Why is that?

Ms Burch: Mr Hubbard?

Ms Chapman: Just while Mr Hubbard is coming to the table, members of the committee asked for a tenant list for Theo Notaras. I have a copy here for everybody, so I will table that with the secretary.

THE CHAIR: Thank you, Ms Chapman.

MRS JONES: We also asked for a list of who gets invited to the multicultural—but that is separate.

Ms Chapman: We might take that on notice.

MRS JONES: That is fine.

THE CHAIR: Given the time, you might want to take that on notice, Mr Hubbard, and the total cost—

Mr Hubbard: I can do it quite quickly.

THE CHAIR: You can do it? Go for your life.

Mr Hubbard: With the GPO there, you will notice that it has gone down approximately 178k. What has happened there is that we have got some one-off funding that was used for the Kingston feasibility. That money has obviously been used.

THE CHAIR: On pages 19 and 20 there are some rollovers. Could you give us the detail of each of those rollovers? On page 21 there are some technical adjustments; if you could give us the detail of each of the technical adjustments? In budget paper 3, on page 193, there is the arts facilities capital works. There is \$70,000 for renovations, \$167,000 for building upgrades and \$70,000 for grounds upgrades. Could we have some more detail on those?

Ms Burch: So that is on notice, I am assuming?

THE CHAIR: Yes, I am happy to take those on notice.

Mr Hubbard: Or do you want us to go through it later on? We can.

THE CHAIR: No, we will not have time. If you can take it notice and provide it that would be kind.

MRS DUNNE: Was that for Gorman House, the rollovers?

THE CHAIR: That is what I am trying to find out, yes.

Ms Chapman: That is one of them.

THE CHAIR: There is a string of rollovers.

Ms Burch: We will bring that back on notice.

MRS DUNNE: Thanks.

THE CHAIR: With that we will call CFC.

Mr Whitney: Mr Chair, if I may?

THE CHAIR: Yes, you may, Mr Whitney.

Mr Whitney: A question was asked about the CAT awards. In 2011 artsACT funded them \$10,750 for the hire of Llewellyn Hall; in 2012, \$14,165 for the hire of Llewellyn Hall; and in 2013, \$14,165 for the hire of Llewellyn Hall.

MRS DUNNE: But not this year.

THE CHAIR: All right. We call CFC. Given that you missed out, Mrs Jones, you can start.

MRS JONES: Thank you; I am ready to rock and roll. Which agencies is the Cultural Facilities Corporation working with to look into future cultural facilities in Civic? What are we currently looking at? The statements we have mention a major theatre. Can you give us some more details? In the same vein, can you also explain any more details on the proposed Canberra Theatre Centre upgrade? What is being considered? When will a feasibility study commence and when might some work commence?

Ms Elvin: I will try and break that question—

MRS JONES: I can come back to any bits, if you like.

Ms Elvin: up into different sections. I think the first part was asking about the agencies that we are working with, particularly the Economic Development Directorate and the Environment and Sustainable Development Directorate. Those two directorates, of course, have responsibility for the rollout—

MS PORTER: I do not know whether it is the particular time of the year, but we have been having a lot of difficulty hearing people.

Ms Elvin: I am sorry; I shall try and speak louder. I will come closer to the microphone as well.

Ms Burch: But she can sing beautifully.

Ms Elvin: Thank you, minister. You were asking about the agencies that we are working with.

MRS JONES: Yes, and what any plans are; what you are looking into.

Ms Elvin: We are working particularly with the Economic Development Directorate, which is rolling out the city-to-the-lake initiative, and also the Environment and Sustainable Development Directorate. They, of course, have main responsibility for the city plan. We are working with those directorates, particularly at looking at a major new theatre for Civic. As you are probably aware, in the city plan, which has now been released, an arc has been identified as a cultural precinct on the north-eastern perimeter of City Hill. So that is the area that we are particularly looking at.

MRS JONES: On City Hill itself?

Ms Elvin: When I say “on City Hill”, it is actually on Vernon Circle—

THE CHAIR: Between London Circuit and Vernon Circle.

Ms Elvin: Am I able to show you? This is City Hill and this is the area that we are looking at that is in purple. That has been identified as a cultural precinct. Obviously it includes the current Canberra Theatre Centre. We are looking at the major new theatre within that precinct. Has that picked up all your questions?

MRS JONES: The other part of the question was about what is being considered then as far as the upgrade. Can you paint us a picture of where you would like it to be, where we would like to be in 10 years time, and when feasibility studies will be commencing?

Ms Elvin: Are you asking about the money that has been allocated in this budget for the capital works at the Canberra Theatre Centre?

MRS JONES: Yes.

Ms Elvin: That is doing work on the existing Canberra Theatre Centre. The main component of this is a major lighting package. We have not done any major work on the lighting systems of the Canberra Theatre Centre for many years and now we need to do a major refurbishment of them. That is the majority of the package.

There are also a number of minor components that look at upgrades, sorting out some work health and safety issues and so forth, but the vast majority is lighting. That is quite a separate matter from looking at a new theatre within that precinct. That is something that we are embarking on some further studies on with the Economic Development Directorate.

We have done a number of studies already. Back in 2009 there was a theatre feasibility study. We have done an analysis of the different functions that would need to be included in that new theatre. We have done a precinct study and we have also done some more detailed work looking at that cultural precinct and looking at options for where you might be able to put a new theatre within that precinct.

Ms Burch: The genesis behind considering the new theatre is that it has served us well—it is 60-plus-years-old or thereabouts—but also noting what does not come to

Canberra. Even though we have great offerings through the theatre, both the theatre and the playhouse, it is what we hear cannot come because of the existing seat number capacity, but also some of the back-of-house stuff as well.

MRS JONES: On that, finally, what sort of capacity would we like to be able to create in a new precinct?

Ms Elvin: We are looking at about 2,000 seats, somewhere in the region of 1,800 to 2,200.

Ms Burch: What do we currently have?

Ms Elvin: The current Canberra Theatre is 1,250 seats. So it would be a substantial increase on that. And we feel that 2,000 seats is probably the optimal size to house the capacity that you want without reducing the intimacy between stage and the auditorium. But as the minister says, we are currently missing out on a number of shows coming to Canberra because of the limited auditorium size and also the limited technical facilities of the Canberra Theatre. The theatre is about to have its 50th birthday.

Ms Burch: Fiftieth, sorry. I aged it by a decade. I do apologise.

Ms Elvin: It is a venerable age. I think it is much loved by the community but when we think of the technical requirements of touring productions 50 years ago to what they are now, they have changed a lot. They have become much more complex, and we need to accommodate that.

THE CHAIR: Ms Porter had a supplementary. I think Mrs Dunne had one, as do I.

MS PORTER: I have a quick supplementary on the other work that is on page 193 of the budget paper. You mentioned, Ms Elvin, in this budget for the Canberra Theatre, how the Canberra Theatre is going to be upgraded. But the budget papers also mention upgrades to the Canberra Museum and Gallery. So what is that?

Ms Elvin: That is part of the ongoing capital upgrades program. That is the figure of \$369,000. Is that what you are referring to?

MS PORTER: Yes, that is right, which is cultural facilities. But it does mention, under that, the ACT Museum and Gallery's upgrade at \$259,000.

Ms Elvin: That is right. The majority of that capital upgrades funding will go to the gallery next year, and there are a range of projects that we will be applying it to. I will give you a few examples if that would be helpful.

MS PORTER: In the interests of time probably we will take those on notice, unless there is a particular highlight that you would like to give us.

Ms Elvin: I could mention a few perhaps. We are doing a major audio interpretation contract for our three historic sites, which is a great way in which we can document and record the interpretation of those sites and hopefully translate those guides into

different languages in the future. We are doing some conservation work on the Lanyon woolshed. We are doing some website upgrades. At CMAG we are upgrading our exhibition furniture, our lighting, our audio visual—all things that I think will improve the presentation of those venues and their usage for the community.

THE CHAIR: Before I ask a supplementary—and Mrs Dunne has one—I would like to acknowledge the presence of the chair of the Cultural Facilities Corporation in the gallery, Mr John Hindmarsh, the Canberra equivalent of Lorenzo the magnificent for his patronage of the arts over many decades. You are more than welcome, Mr Hindmarsh.

Ms Burch: Can I echo that? He has been a very sound and good chair of the corporation.

THE CHAIR: He certainly has. Mrs Dunne made the comment about the Kennedy Centre of the ACT. Is the project seen as a better theatre for the ACT or can it, will it and does it have a vision behind it of being the equivalent of a national performing arts centre for the county? Father John Eddy who was the head of the Jesuit household here until he passed some months ago set up the school of Australian studies at Georgetown University and he told me that the thing that changed Washington from being the murder capital of America in the 1960s was the opening of the Kennedy Centre early in the 1970s where contemporary American culture was put on display all day every day. There were free exhibitions, there were a number of theatres. Is there a bigger vision behind a new theatre than just a new theatre for the ACT and if there is not, should we be having that discussion?

Ms Elvin: I certainly think that this is a theatre for the national capital and that always has the status of a national theatre. And when you look at this suite of cultural facilities that we have in the ACT, they are dominated by collecting institutions like visual arts. We do not have an equivalent in terms of the performing arts. So I think our vision should be grander and should contemplate that the national capital deserves a performing arts space of a national status indeed.

THE CHAIR: Mrs Dunne.

MRS DUNNE: I think you took most of my supplementary.

THE CHAIR: That was why I went first.

MRS DUNNE: On that, is the vision that if we have a new theatre it is a replacement theatre or an additional theatre so that we would have a 600, a 1,200 and a 2,000-space?

Ms Elvin: I would certainly like to think that it is an additional facility. We feel that that would give us a suite of facilities that would be suitable for different usages, whether it is community use, whether it is town hall-type usage which I think would be very much what the existing Canberra Theatre could become. At the moment we struggle, to be honest, to accommodate a lot of those town hall-type uses like citizenship ceremonies, end of year dance performances, school graduation ceremonies et cetera. Typically those are very short hires and to try to accommodate

them in a theatre which is also trying to provide a venue for longer hires means we are constantly juggling with dates. So I feel that there is a real opportunity for the new theatre to focus on the longer seasons, say a large musical, and for the existing theatre to become Canberra's town hall, which we do not really have at the moment, and pick up a lot of that town hall usage.

MRS DUNNE: Could you give us an example of the sorts of things that we have not seen because of the technical limitations of the Canberra Theatre?

MRS JONES: *Disney on Ice*.

Ms Elvin: We have actually done ice shows.

MRS DUNNE: That would be a challenge.

Ms Elvin: It is a considerable challenge to set up the stage as an ice rink. It is quite a complex process. We can actually accommodate ice shows. But some of the shows that I know we have missed out on are things like *South Pacific*, an Opera Australia production. It has been immensely successful and has had a number of return seasons. To be honest, with that one I do not think it was so much the technical limitations of the Canberra Theatre but the size. Clearly with stars of the calibre of Teddy Tahu Rhodes and the costs of that touring production, you simply cannot amortise them over a venue that only accommodates 1,250. That is probably the argument for the larger auditorium.

On other things—and I think particularly of the wonderful show *War Horse*, which some of you may have seen—that probably comes down more to technical limitations. But both aspects apply—the technical limitations and the auditorium size limitations—and there are, as I say, productions of that sort of scale and calibre that we know we could get here with a larger theatre.

Ms Burch: In addition, sorry if I can, sometimes it was frustratingly raised at various arts MINCOs that some of the national key arts organisations just do not tour enough to the regional areas. They may just concentrate in Sydney and Melbourne. Very few get across to Perth, very few other than Sydney Dance Co. Very small troupes come here. Whilst we have our limitations, there is a bit of a mindset too in those larger national organisations not to think more broadly.

MRS DUNNE: I just wanted to comment that a few years ago I had the privilege to visit QPAC and they were bumping in the Paris Opera Ballet. I think that the advice at the time was if you were going to build from ground up you have to have the most flexible, up-to-date technology because of the technical requirements of new theatre. It was an amazing thing to spend some time watching them bump in and also the extraordinary flexibility of the stage at QPAC, which we do not have.

Ms Elvin: Indeed, I had the privilege to see that production in Queensland as well. I should say this: it has also enjoyed substantial funding support from Queensland government. It was a major undertaking. But I think we should be aspiring to that sort of production, as the national capital.

THE CHAIR: Ms Berry has a supplementary and we will have to finish then, unfortunately.

MS BERRY: You mentioned some of the work that is being done at CMAG. I understand that CMAG is used by a lot of net-based artists like online comic artists, and ARTSBlog is a place to do their work whilst enjoying a cup of Grant's most excellent coffee. But I have also been told that the wi-fi there used to be unlimited and it is now being capped. What is the reason for that?

Ms Elvin: We needed to introduce regulations on how much wi-fi we could allow, because we were finding that that led to people effectively using a certain table all day, when other people were not able to get a seat. So we felt that by introducing some caps and restrictions it has achieved a balance so that all users could access the space.

MRS DUNNE: It is like time-limited parking; it shares the resources.

Ms Elvin: However, of course, with digital Canberra on the way there should be opportunities throughout the city centre for people to be able to use wi-fi on, as I understand, a very generous basis.

THE CHAIR: With that, we will have a short break. We will resume after morning tea. We thank the minister and your officials from outlook class 3 for attending and acknowledge again the presence of the chair of the Cultural Facilities Corporation.

Sitting suspended from 11.14 to 11.30 am.

THE CHAIR: The committee will now resume the public hearing. Welcome back, minister, with some new faces. Minister, we are now going to look at output classes 4.1 and 4.2, statutory services, care and protection and youth justice as well as Care and Protection Services. I remind officials of the privilege statement on the table. If you could all acknowledge you have read the privilege statement and understand its privileges and obligations. Thank you for that. Minister, would you like to make a brief opening statement on this very important area?

Ms Burch: Thank you, chair, I will. Thank you to the committee, and I also thank the officials here today and then more broadly the staff across the directorate for the work they do in this area. The government has shown its commitment to assisting Canberra's vulnerable children and young people in out-of-home care by providing an additional \$4.1 million for 2014-15. Funding will be used to meet the growth in children and young people in care enabling a continuance of current out-of-care programs for the year and by laying the groundwork for transition to a new out-of-home care system from July next year. The funding will provide piloting of therapeutic assessments for children and young people, an accreditation and monitoring program for out-of-home care, training to support transition to a trauma-informed care system including training of staff and out-of-home care relevant agencies, foster and kinship carers, and improved information management to support young children and people in care.

Yesterday we spoke about our commitment to the human services blueprint. The blueprint will support the delivery of the ACT government's reform priorities as well

as the national disability insurance scheme, red tape reduction for the community sector, new models of social investment and reforms in out-of-home care. Enhancing Canberra's liveability and opportunity, the blueprint provides a systems approach to deliver a one government commitment, including the healthy weight initiative, digital Canberra and service ACT.

The blueprint will inform the development across government policy, for example, the whole-of-government Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander agreement, which I am sure Minister Rattenbury can talk to. Under a recently funded better services initiative, a local services network was launched at west Belconnen. We are also looking to upscale the successful strengthening families approach and a human service gateway. I will leave it there and I look forward to the questions.

THE CHAIR: Thank you, minister. I will go to Ms Lawder and ask her to provide the first question.

MS LAWDER: Can you explain the reasoning behind merging the funding and reporting for care and protection with youth justice this year?

Ms Howson: I will ask Dr Collis to go into a more detailed explanation of this, but essentially what we are looking for is getting better outcomes for young people and children that are in our out-of-home care system. It is unfortunately a fact that, while many young people start with us in the out-of-home care system, they may well move into our youth services system. The intent is that we actually walk with these children through their lives and minimise the number of different interactions, if you like, or case management models that are applied to those children. I will get Dr Collis to go in more detail on that.

Dr Collis: As Ms Howson indicated, the intent is to improve seamlessness of service, with better case management in the areas of child protection and youth justice as a prime aim. It actually appears first in one of the actions that were put in the youth justice blueprint in the early intervention space, and that came out of both the community consultation and the significant evidence undertaken from studies like the Boxer study, which indicated that trauma, abuse and neglect was one of the single greatest drivers of young people ending up in the youth justice system.

The reality is that the blueprint for youth justice has delivered on a number of actions which have really worked at the diversion and the quality of service provision once a child or a young person comes into contact with the justice system, and we have made some really great gains which can be seen in the evidence about the three straight years of declining numbers of young people in Bimberi detention centre. But if we are going to make a paradigm shift in terms of preventing the pressure in the youth justice space, we need to get further down the early intervention road so that we can work there. The intention is to get our youth justice and our care and protection systems to work better together to achieve that.

The other driver of this is to have the child protection space informed better by the models of working with youth. If we look at child protection systems probably across Australia, we would suggest that one of the vulnerabilities in the child protection space is it is a less well-formed model of how we deal with youth when we get a

report or concern. So that is the second driver for it.

MS LAWDER: With the bringing of the two output classes into one, will that bring any changes to the information that is provided for the report on government services?

Ms Howson: No, it will not. We will still be obliged to report against the national minimum data set and the requirements of the report on government services as it is set for all other jurisdictions.

THE CHAIR: Ms Porter had a supplementary on that, and I have got a supplementary as well.

MS PORTER: What you were just explaining to us, Dr Collis, is that what was referred to as the new strategy around out-of-home care that the minister was referring to before? Is that what we are discussing or is that something different? I have a second connected question: output 4.2 on page 17 shows that the number of reports received and proceeding to appraisal that were substantiated has reduced by 200 from the previous year. Is that trend anticipated to scale down with these new arrangements that you are talking about?

Dr Collis: It is a different project. The integration of youth justice and Care and Protection Services is different to the out-of-home care strategy. So we have these two reforms happening. The reality of that is, however, that both strategies are very closely linked because there are numerous points of touch in the out-of-home care sector with youth who are vulnerable and youth who are in the justice system. So they are related but they are different.

If I can put it this way, Ms Porter: that focus on statutory services is internally how we can do our business better and more efficiently and to greater effect. The out-of-home care is more outward focused; it is about how we can work with the community, foster carers and kinship carers to get better outcomes for young people who come into care. So they are associated but different projects.

MS PORTER: The second part of my supplementary would be affected by what you have just been talking about—that we would expect a downward trend in those numbers if those two groups are going to be working together.

Dr Collis: The impact on those numbers we would have to actually look at because there may be paradoxical effects of having more attention on youth than not. But one would, as a general rule, expect that the outcome would be less substantiated harm in the long term. The reduction you see in the papers today, however, reflect more a longer term trend where, in fact, we are seeing slightly fewer substantiated abuse events over time. We have adjusted that because the recent trend has been for a reduction, and we would hope that that would continue.

MS PORTER: The out-of-home-care strategy is a different thing all together. Could we have some information about how that strategy is different to what we have been doing before?

Ms Burch: It is a fundamental shift, and Sue Chapman can go to some extensive

detail on this. We are not alone as a jurisdiction in recognising the need to do things differently. Unless we change, it is estimated we will have a thousand children and young people in our care within a very, very short time. We know the outcomes for kids in care continue to be poor and they continue to have representation. But to your point, Ms Porter, I will go to Ms Chapman.

MS PORTER: I just wanted to clarify the reduction in the numbers that you are talking about and the huge numbers of people that are going to be in care. Those two things in my mind do not seem to marry. So can you give us some explanation?

Ms Chapman: That is what I will go to, Ms Porter.

THE CHAIR: If I could, minister, you just said we may have up to a thousand in care shortly. What time frame is that and how many of the current—

Ms Burch: Ms Chapman can go to that as well.

Ms Chapman: To go to your point first, Ms Porter, there is a continuing trend of growth in out-of-home-care. But in our case, over the last six years the growth is not as rapid. So it is continuing to go up, but for a few years it was like this, so the graph is slowing down a little bit. That is the first thing and that is why it looks like there is an anomaly. The thing that we know is that children who come into care now actually stay in care a lot longer. They will not be leaving care so the one kind of balances out the other. Over a 10-year trajectory, which is what the minister was referring to—we have about 600-ish in care at the moment—if we do not stop them coming into care or if we cannot get them out of care quicker, that trajectory will continue until we will have over a thousand in about a decade.

They do look anomalous, but there is actually an explanation for it. The out-of-home-care strategy is designed to respond to a number of things, one of which the minister has touched on—that is, the outcomes for young people who go into out-of-home-care, such as educational outcomes, employment outcomes even health, are usually worse than the population as a whole. One of the things we have to address is that if they come into care we need to make their experience better and have much more targeted work to allow their outcomes to be as good as the general population. That is one aspect, which the therapeutic assessment model is the kind of thing we are talking about there.

The other thing the strategy is designed to do is to keep them out of care so to work at the front end with families that may be on the brink of having their children taken away from them, to be able to identify them in that early intervention phase and prevent the children from having to leave the family. So it is to support the family in different ways than we have before and put the intensive work there to keep the family together, to teach parents how to be good parents and to deal with issues, for example, if one of the parents is drug addicted how we can help them get into the system to stop that.

MS PORTER: That is something of what we were talking about yesterday.

Ms Chapman: Yes. It is interesting, because the out-of-home-care strategy is very

tightly linked with that early intervention and prevention, whole-of-service, strengthening families mindset that we have under the blueprint. It fits within that bigger strategy. There are probably four major prongs to the strategy. One is: how do we actually work upfront with families to prevent children coming into care? The second is: if they come into care, how can we work with families to restore children or to decide that the family is never going to be able to look after that child and get that child a permanent placement until they are 18, so going straight to giving them a stable life?

The third is working with the whole of the sector. That is our own staff and the sector—Barnardos and the foster carers and the kinship carers and those kinds of people—to understand what effects that early childhood trauma has had on those children and to work with a trauma-informed mindset. That is a fairly big piece of work in terms of getting people to understand that. The Trauma Recovery Centre the minister referred to yesterday will help inform that.

The last thing is that one of the things about young people who come into care is that they often have multiple placements. Part of that is because the way our system is structured at the moment means sometimes we deal with it in CSD and child protection, sometimes the agency deals with it, sometimes we both deal with it and sometimes nobody deals with it. There are many players in the system. One of our aims in the strategy is to make sure that there is a continuous single contact for that child, which might be Barnardos or a carer, rather than CSD intervening. Actually changing the way we contract for services with the sector is another plank of the strategy. So it is a many-pronged strategy and it will take time. You cannot change this overnight. This is a strategy that will go for over five years and into the future.

Right now we are trying to find immediate changes to the system that can help start to build that mindset. The trauma-informed assessment is one of those. Another is working with the sector to determine how quickly we could get parental responsibility, which is a legislative thing that we will have to investigate. But we want to be able to say, “This child is your child. You’re looking after this child until they’re 18. You now have the authority to deal with this child as you would if you were the child’s parent.” There is a major change in mindset, in culture and in the way we would work into the future in this space.

MS BERRY: You mentioned kinship carers and some of the support that you want to provide them—access to training and counselling and support and things like that. How will this strategy work with more informal kinship arrangements and giving support to people like aunties? How will we identify them?

Ms Chapman: The process of identification of who is the right kin is something that Ms Pappas or Dr Collis could talk about. But in terms of this strategy and how it will help kinship carers as well as foster carers, we might do it differently with kinship carers because they are kin and they are not in that foster care relationship. But they need to understand that the young child coming into care that they are caring for will have a lot of trauma in their lives. We want to help them understand how to manage that. Part of the development of the skills to understand that in the trauma-centred approach is that we will do that with the kinship carers. But it will not be the way we would have done it with foster carers because kinship carers are different kinds of

people.

The other thing the Director-General has just reminded me of is the strengthening families piece of work that sits under the blueprint. Again, that is part of that bigger change agenda, and it is about trying to get families to stay out of the statutory system and keep them in the non-statutory system. Part of what we are trying to do with kinship carers so that they do not end up in foster care is a focus of both the strengthening families piece of work and this strategy.

Kinship carers have a different kind of relationship with young people, but they face similar kinds of experiences with those young people because of the trauma they have experienced early in their lives. So we need to provide them with similar—not necessarily the same—kinds of supports.

THE CHAIR: Just to follow upon the original question—

MS BERRY: Sorry, I thought that—

Ms Chapman: Yes, assessing how we identify kinship carers was the other part of the question.

Ms Pappas: Generally, when kinship carers come to our attention, it is as a result of the child also coming to the attention of the statutory service. Somebody in that family is made aware that that child is in that situation. They put their hand up or are approached to put their hand up to care for that child. But that journey is because there has been a statutory involvement. There are lots of informal arrangements where family look after family outside the statutory service. They will have access to universal services and family support services in the community, just as anybody else in the ACT community does.

MRS JONES: When it is time for my question, I will hand it to Mr Wall.

THE CHAIR: Yes, all right. I go back to Ms Lawder's original question about the combining of the two areas. The combined funding now would not seem to have grown even at CPI, let alone at WPI. To even get to WPI, it is probably \$800,000 short of what was given last year. Does that indicate a cut in services of some sort? Are there any staff losses in this area? What services will go by the by if the funding is not increased?

Ms Howson: I can see Mr Hubbard is there. Are you ready to answer that, Ian? I think that one of the issues about the neutrality in that is that in the previous budget cycle, there was a reduction in funding to the youth engagement program more generally, which is in the public domain and has been discussed previously. I will now hand over to Mr Hubbard.

Mr Hubbard: Thanks very much, Mr Smyth, for your question. The combination of bringing the two together, as you see, takes the GPO up to 80,652. The big movements that have occurred there, obviously, are the funding for the initiative around the out-of-home care strategy coming in. What has gone out, which has meant that it is looking a little bit flat, is that we have actually transferred a number of

people out of that area who were doing policy and data—the research function that was in the office.

As part of our structural changes and efficiencies, we are trying to get a policy and data area more centrally. The contribution to that area is valued at about \$1.9 million. That is the biggest change for it being pretty flat. As Ms Howson says, the impact of some alterations around youth services that were flagged in last year's budget are also impacting on it as well.

THE CHAIR: What area is the policy unit now located in? What output class?

Mr Hubbard: That is actually in the central corporate area which is allocated to all areas on an FTE basis as part of the overheads.

THE CHAIR: All right.

Mr Hubbard: It is a much smaller amount, obviously, because the ratio that goes into the office.

THE CHAIR: Can you give us a written reconciliation of the numbers? It may have been useful to have a footnote that said, "This change has come about because this has moved and that is gone."

Mr Hubbard: Okay, there is not too much more than what I have just given you there. They are the big movers—

THE CHAIR: If you can just give us the numbers then, that will be fine.

Mr Hubbard: Okay.

THE CHAIR: Thank you. Ms Berry, any questions? Ms Porter, do you want to ask any questions?

MS PORTER: No, I thought we were asking supplementaries—

THE CHAIR: No, Ms Porter, a new question.

MS PORTER: Thank you. On page 18, the accountability indicators for output 3.1, the budget statements show in indicator f the volume of concerns reported as being 15,000. We were talking about the report numbers before. This was previously recorded under output 4.2. So that does not give us an indication of what went before that number because it was reported somewhere else. We probably need some clarity about what the numbers were before the 15,000. How do we make sure with these large numbers of children that you are talking about that no child is falling through the gaps? Are we are expecting this new strategy to do this?

Ms Howson: Ms Porter, the 15,000 child protection reports and child concern reports, I can tell you, is trending up. In every year we see an increase in the number of concern reports or child protection reports that are received by our organisation.

MS PORTER: So the number is trending up, but the substantiated numbers are trending down; is that what you are saying?

Ms Howson: The number of those reports that proceed to appraisal that are substantiated, certainly, yes at the moment they are trending down.

MS PORTER: Right.

Ms Howson: Trending down is—I mean, in terms of care and protection, in this—

MS PORTER: Not trending down, but getting less per year.

Ms Howson: That is right, yes.

MS PORTER: The slope, as we said, is levelling off.

Ms Howson: These are, as you suggest, key indicators of I guess measures of success around both that broader and more comprehensive change in our service model, which is inclusive of strengthening families and our single human service gateway, as well as the more micro changes in relation to the integrated statutory services. It looks like Dr Collis, you are wanting to say something.

Dr Collis: Yes, I was just going to say that these are targets. They are performance indicators, obviously. We are certainly hoping that despite the increase in child concern reports, with appropriate service changes—such as the human services gateway, the early intervention that we have already talked about and all of those—we would be able to put in supports that would, over time, reduce the demand that goes to young people who have substantiated child abuse occurring. That is a different number. There is not a direct relationship between that and the number of people who come into care, as explained by Ms Chapman before.

MS PORTER: It is just that it is not clear how the trends are going from the indicators or what they are based on. This was previously reported somewhere else and that report is not translated here, obviously. So there is a gap in the information. How can I inform myself about whether this indicator is or is not a good indicator? Do you understand what I am saying?

Dr Collis: Yes, I understand.

MS PORTER: Then my other question is: if there are so many reports, or if we are anticipating that there will be so many reports, is there a danger that there are children that we are not identifying at all, given the number that are not substantiated once they are in place?

Ms Burch: It is probably worth exploring and explaining what a report consists of and to understand that. That will explain why you may have such a high number, but such a low number that is actually being substantiated or referred into service. I will hand over to Helen.

Ms Pappas: A child protection concern report is when there is somebody in the

community that is concerned about the health, wellbeing or safety of a child. They do not need to make any distinction about what that means for them, other than that they have formed a suspicion that something is not quite right and that this might be a child that requires a response. The process for them is to ring the child protection service. Then they are asked a series of questions. Information is gathered that helps child protection workers make a determination about what we have to do with that information.

They go through a process of collecting all of that information and having a look to see, “Do we already have information about this child? What else do we know? Are there siblings? What is the family?” Then they go through a risk assessment. They look at things like, “What is the age of the child? What are the complicating factors? Are there drugs and alcohol? Is there a mental health problem? Is there domestic violence?” They collect all of that information and then make a determination about what the response is.

The response could be to do nothing. It could be to refer out to a community organisation or to go out and do an appraisal. It could be to go out and find out some more information, go and knock on the door, go and interview the child if they are of an appropriate age, go and speak to the parents, talk to the teachers. Do your investigation to make a determination about whether that child is at risk or not. Then from that process, you will make a determination if you are substantiating. A substantiation is a determination about a child that has been, is being or is likely to be at risk of abuse or neglect.

You are not substantiating that an event has occurred. You are substantiating harm to a child. Then a series of other things could happen. So that child could remain at home with their family with some support from the child protection service and support from community organisations or that child, if they are determined to be in immediate danger, might come into care.

Ms Howson: It would be useful to put some quantities around that just to explain the 15,000 concern reports—how that translates into further action in terms of the numbers. I think it is only about a third of those.

Ms Pappas: That is right. Of the 15,000 reports, it is estimated that about 2,400 of them will be appraised. Of the 2,400, about 700 will be substantiated. There is a lot of information that you get that the child protection system does not need to do anything with because it is somebody who is in the community that is concerned. But it is not about a child at harm. It is usually about somebody who needs some support services or how do we link this family. But those children do not need to come into the statutory service.

Where the information is unclear or where, on the balance of probability, it is better to go out, after you have done your risk assessment if it is looking a bit riskier because of multiple factors you might find that there is something or that that family does need some support and you will support them through that process.

Ms Burch: Going back to your earlier point around the various tables, I think Dr Collis might join the dots a little bit for you, Ms Porter.

Dr Collis: On page 17 you will see the indicators for output 4.2 and the 2014-15 targets are not available. Those targets are actually on the previous page in table 18. That is a technical issue in bringing together the two output indicators in integrated statutory services. Next year they will not appear. They will appear in one table; so you will at least get that snapshot of the two years that will happen. That is a little bit confusing this year. It is just a technical thing about how it was presented in this year's budget because we have the integration of those two output indicators.

MS PORTER: Thank you very much.

MR WALL: Just a supplementary about—

THE CHAIR: Ms Berry, do you have a supplementary or are you—

MS BERRY: Yes I did have a supplementary.

THE CHAIR: Ms Berry and then Mr Wall.

MS BERRY: When you are doing an appraisal of a child or when an appraisal has been required, do you get complaints from people that are not factual, that are frivolous? They might not be frivolous but how do you deal with that? I can imagine that there might be people who complain about somebody because they want to cause trouble for that family. This is a tricky subject; that is why I am trying—

Ms Howson: Yes. Helen will answer it but it is a good point that you raise. I just want to take the opportunity because of those 15,000 concern reports that we would receive in one year, as Helen explained, only 2,400 of them are determined by our specialist staff as requiring or warranting any further investigation. You can imagine the amount of time and effort that that is employing the system that could otherwise be used to support families that are in difficulty.

One of the things that we are working towards, again with the approach that we are taking in our common assessment that Mr Wyles explained to the committee yesterday, is to actually give the community that is concerned for children other avenues through which to refer families that they have some concerns about or that they understand need a little bit of extra help. At the moment our worry is that the only place the community feels they can go is to the statutory system, the care and support system.

So that broader reform in the system is critical to ideally reduce these numbers of concern reports coming to the statutory system and we would see a commensurate increase in the number of referrals to family support programs in the community for families that are at a point of crisis or struggling. I just wanted to make that point but I will pass over to Helen.

Ms Pappas: I guess the information that comes to the service is treated on face value. It is difficult to make a determination about whether it is frivolous or not. We have professional staff in our service, social work and psych trained and tertiary qualified people. They use both the tools that are provided to them to help them make a

determination. Even if it is something that we might consider frivolous, we consider: what is the child's experience in this circumstance? If there are arguments between parents, what is the child's experience? We have got to make a determination always with the child at the centre. There is always lots of noise around children and we have a vigilant community in Canberra who are high reporters; so children are very visible in Canberra.

Our staff are very focused on making sure they are they are seeking information about the child in their experience and considering other information that adults will bring to that. From time to time you might go out and, having done an assessment, discover that it is frivolous. But even that experience is enough, perhaps, to get a family connected to a service.

Having a child protection system knock on your door is very confronting for parents. Sometimes it opens the door for those families to stop and say, "Maybe it is time for us to get some support." There are the child and family centres and the child, youth and family support program. There are lots of community-based organisations that do good with families. It is at that point that the child protection system can hand over to a community organisation that can then go on and work with that family. So that process can have benefits for families.

MS BERRY: And that is where the human services blueprint comes in, getting there before.

THE CHAIR: Quick clarification then, Mr Wall.

Ms Burch: Sorry, another bit of feedback that I hear from people who make reports is that they do not hear back once they have put a report in. We cannot go back to those and so often—well, not often—there could be repeat reports made. It is not that there is no appraisal, no assessment or no action being taken, but that cycle of info back to the reporter has not been there. So, again, it is about more community information and understanding and having confidence in our system, which they ought to have because it is a grand system. Once a report is made, we look at every one of them and make a decision.

MS PORTER: I just want to quickly clarify what you said before, Ms Howson. In relation to the other avenues for reporting that you talked about, some of us have statutory responsibility to report. I thought that statutory responsibility points us to child protection, and that is the avenue that we must go through, and that is to a lot of professions. I am just wondering about whether having these other avenues will be somewhat confusing for us.

Ms Howson: It is a very good point again, and we are very mindful of how we support mandatory reporters to make a decision when they will trigger a concern report. Mark, would you like to talk a bit more about that?

Dr Collis: Certainly. You are quite right: there are specified mandatory reporters for sexual abuse and physical harm. I guess where we are heading now is that we are not trying to diminish that mandatory reporting obligation at all but hoping that in some circumstances—for example, if you are a teacher at a school and you have concerns,

we do not want people to only report, but there are a range of community services we would hope that they would also be actively able to engage families in to support at that time. With mandatory reporting, however, a significant number of those child concern reports are, in fact, voluntary reports. They are reports not under the mandated reporting but of general concern or concerns not to do with sexual abuse and physical harm.

MS PORTER: Thank you very much.

THE CHAIR: Ms Berry.

MS BERRY: That is good to know. I am interested in the breakdown on page 15 at 4.1. It says that the average investment per youth service client is going to be approximately \$25,000. Could you provide the committee with a breakdown on the average investment per youth client and what is involved in that investment. I do not need to know exactly how each cent is spent, but what are the programs that are involved in that 25,000 a year?

Dr Collis: I will start with that. That includes, for example, all the programs in the running of Bimberi Youth Justice Centre, the youth justice case management service, the after-hours bail support service and the turnaround program—any of those programs that you have seen listed here that are dedicated to youth. In this environment here, this relates to youth services. In the future, when we integrate the services, that number might change. Those are the programs that that represents. One of the reasons why it varies—and it, in fact, has gone up this year—is that if there are fewer young people in the system, the cost goes up.

Ms Burch: It is just a crude division.

Dr Collis: Yes, a crude division of the number of young people services for the cost. Those are the main programs that sit under the youth services program.

Mr Hubbard: I will give you just the break-up of how we get to the \$24,857. That is based on the budget of youth services divided by the number of youth service clients. For the 2013-14 estimated outcome, we have got \$12,978,000 in expenditure for that service, with 522 clients; that results in your \$24,857. For the following year, the budget goes up to \$13,276,000, and the number of clients goes up to 527.

MS BERRY: Just on that same page, on page 15—I am not sure if we have talked about this before—there is a reduction in the number of custody days annually; it goes down from 8,000 in 2013-14 to 7,500. I do not know how that plays out on the next page, but is that because the plan is that we are keeping people—

Ms Burch: Absolutely. That is to me an indicator of a good success story. The youth justice blueprint and our attention on early intervention and diversion have seen a significant reduction, I think around 22 per cent, in nights in detention. The after-hours bail service has been a significant contributor to that. Another significant reduction is a 45 per cent reduction in custodial nights for young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander folk. Dr Collis may like to talk more on that. But that is where you see a downward trend, and that is exactly where you want to see it go.

MS BERRY: Yes; it is excellent.

Dr Collis: Obviously the minister has got those headline figures, and the trend is continuing down, so the target is being adjusted to reflect the fact that we have been successful at keeping young people out of custodial care. That is why it is going down. Of course, it still takes a certain amount of money to run an organisation like Bimberi, so there are a lot of static costs that are in Bimberi. But yes, that is a reflection of the success that has accrued, and it is continuing to happen.

MS BERRY: Did you say the percentage reduction in the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth?

Ms Burch: The number of custodial nights by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. There was a reduction of 45 per cent in the nights. The numbers remain as you will see in various reports: the representation of Aboriginal kids in Bimberi remains high. But we are significantly reducing the number of nights.

Dr Collis: Since 2010-11, there are half the number of individual Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people in Bimberi than there were in 2010-11. That has decreased over the last two years. At the same time, non-Indigenous young people have reduced about 40 per cent. So the proportion, the percentage, has stayed the same. The actual numbers on both non-Indigenous and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people have come down dramatically. The proportion tells a story that we still need to work around that over-representation, but we can take some heart that, with the community, we have been able to reduce actual numbers and bed nights in custody for Aboriginal young people.

MS BERRY: My concern then with that number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who are spending time in Bimberi is the federal government cut to those services that were run out of the west Belconnen health centre. I know that we cannot forecast what is going to happen, but how will the government be able to assist those kids or provide support to them, given that there has been a cut and that program will not be running anymore?

Ms Burch: We remain committed, across our general whole-of-government approach, to supporting the Aboriginal community and reducing disadvantage. Certainly the program from west Belconnen, that universal access, was working at a very early age, to put the family on a good path. I might go to Ms Howson about how, across CSD, we are looking to that.

Ms Howson: The commonwealth funding has given us an excellent platform to build on in the context of that very localised response at west Belconnen. But more importantly for us, it has been a more culturally aware and competent service in total, and that is where our emphasis is heading. You will see that in the youth justice blueprint there is a very strong emphasis on addressing the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people.

A lot of the measures that have come out of that blueprint are targeting better community youth engagement, building relationship capability within our

organisation, and the employment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander liaison officers. We need to run that sort of model through all of our service systems. The out of home care strategy is putting emphasis on the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and children, and that will flow through in the measures that we are articulating in that strategy. The child and family centres service model and the early intervention model again put an emphasis on the engagement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families.

So just stepping back from where is the most need, if we are becoming a much more targeted service, and a “right service, right time, right duration” service, then, because of the unfortunate situation of the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families, it will have to be a priority for us in everything we do.

Ms Burch: Pulling this back to representation within youth justice and Bimberi, we have reconfigured Narrabundah house, and it is now the Narrabundah house Indigenous supported residential facility. We remodelled and opened that back in August of last year. That is very much linked to youth justice and support for them. That manages Aboriginal males aged 15 to 18 years who are on community-based justice orders. We have a very clear commitment that they are transitioning from custody, being diverted from custody or at risk—and really looking at one of the planks that bring them back to participating in community. It is around an expectation to attend school, to have some training or to be employed. It is very much a case management approach, with supported placements, safe secure placements, but a wraparound approach to make sure that they are skilled up and ready to be employed, if not employed.

THE CHAIR: Mrs Jones indicated Mr Wall could have a question.

MR WALL: A very brief one, just on the decline in the number of Indigenous youth at Bimberi. What impact has the decline of custodial numbers had on the number in community youth justice orders?

Dr Collis: There has been a general overall decline in community youth justice orders as well.

MR WALL: Specifically in terms of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders.

Dr Collis: Yes. That decline is equal across both non-Indigenous and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. There is lower representation in community youth justice for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people than there is in custodial, which is of course a trend across Australia. That is of concern: not only is there an over-representation issue, but there is over-representation at the custodial—

Ms Burch: At the custodial—

MR WALL: I just was not sure if there has been a concerted effort—

Ms Burch: Whether you are moving them, yes.

MR WALL: and the decline has simply shifted across into another measure, or

whether there has actually been, over the whole sector, a decline. If that is trending that way, then that is positive news.

Dr Collis: Mr Wall, can I say, in regard to that, that one of the things the blueprint attempted to do, and our friends in JACS and across the community, and I think that it does not get publicised very much—youth offending is dropping in this jurisdiction, and we are one of the few jurisdictions who can say that. I think there is a lot of work from the police and from the community, and that will be impacting on the fewer people coming into supervision orders as well.

THE CHAIR: Substantive question?

MR WALL: I want to talk about Bimberi very briefly; I know that time is running is out. It was more just about some sort of figures as to the operation of it currently. If you are able to, can you provide what the current capacity of the Bimberi youth corrections centre is in terms of the number of bed spaces and what the current occupancy is, or what the occupancy was as of, say, the beginning of this month? I know it probably fluctuates on a day-to-day basis.

Dr Collis: It does. Bimberi is designed for 40 beds. The current occupancy is 14. In terms of what capacity Bimberi has, that is sometimes dependent upon the makeup of the young people, because we are required to separate sentenced from remand and girls from boys. We are one of the few detention centres that have girls and boys in the one centre. So we have a whole lot of permutations around that 40, but at the moment, as I said, or as of this morning, it was 14, and we have a bed capacity of 40.

MR WALL: What is the break-up between the 14 that are in there at the moment—male, female, sentenced, remand?

Dr Collis: Can you give me a moment. I can say that there is one girl in there as of this morning. And there are seven remandees and seven sentenced.

MR WALL: Okay.

Ms Burch: Can I take this opportunity to mention something that goes to what Dr Collis was saying around accommodating different needs within the service. Do you want to talk briefly on the Bendora unit, which I think has been a great success story around transitioning from—

MR WALL: We have spoken about that before. I just have a few other questions, if I may, given that we have only got a couple of minutes.

THE CHAIR: Perhaps you can finish the line of questioning, and if there is time we will come back to Bendora.

MR WALL: I just want to ask this. Obviously, we are all familiar with the adult facility at the AMC and the issues that are present there, particularly around prohibited substances, drugs and the like. What sorts of programs or initiatives are run within Bimberi to ultimately prevent the incidence of these entering, and what sort of detection rates are there? Is it a problem in Bimberi? Are drugs and prohibited

substances in there?

Ms Howson: It is a risk we are very mindful of, but I would say that there is no problem in Bimberi at the moment. Dr Collis will talk to that process that you asked about.

Dr Collis: In terms of the use of illegal drugs or drugs within Bimberi, as opposed to medications that young people there may have, we have had no incidents of that happening within certainly the last two years. I would have to go back to search beyond that. Can I say that sometimes the way that we deal with this is around the security. We have search procedures for young people who move out into the community and come back in. We have security around visitation, and we make determinations about that. In the past, there have been some incidents of visitors attempting to bring in illicit substances, but they have been detected. From time to time in the community, there is intelligence that says that there is drug usage within the centre; usually this emanates from young people who have various motivations for saying that. Under the Children and Young People Act, we have the capability to urine-test our long-term residents. We recently did that, and there was a—

MR WALL: How recently was that conducted?

Dr Collis: I would have to take that back, but I believe it would have been in the last few weeks.

MR WALL: I put a question in on notice recently, and it indicated that, I think over the last three or four years, there have been no tests conducted. So of those tests that have recently been conducted—

Ms Burch: On residents?

Dr Collis: On residents?

MR WALL: Yes. It was on residents, wasn't it?

Ms Burch: I do not think the question was on residents.

Ms Howson: My understanding is that your request was on staff.

MR WALL: Was it staff?

Ms Howson: Yes.

MR WALL: Okay. There has been a whole suite of them that have gone in, relating to both this facility and the AMC, so forgive me if I have misinterpreted it.

Dr Collis: In regard to that, and that happens, all results came back negative at that time. So we are about as confident as you can be that there is no issue.

MR WALL: Is there testing done on admission into the centre?

Dr Collis: No, there would not necessarily be a test on admission unless there was a reason for that. There could be.

MR WALL: Are any of the clients or the detainees in there currently receiving drug rehabilitation or methadone-like program assistance?

Dr Collis: There are none who are receiving methadone-like drug replacement therapies. I would have to take on notice the question about the number who are receiving alcohol and other drug services and counselling. But there are no such drug replacement therapies within Bimberi.

Ms Burch: I am a bit cautious about identifying numbers, given the small numbers, but, Dr Collis, you may want to talk about the opportunities for support, whether it is for health, mental health, drug and alcohol or anger management. There is a whole suite of programs that will stand up and are available for all the residents, both remand and sentenced.

Dr Collis: Mr Wall, it is not infrequent that a young person arrives at Bimberi drug affected and that frequently we refer to the hospital before admission around that. That is not an uncommon event. Within Bimberi, there are specific alcohol and drug counselling programs provided, and mental health and forensic mental health programs are provided; obviously, medical oversight of those programs happens within Bimberi.

MR WALL: Okay.

THE CHAIR: We might have to call it a day unless you have got a quick one.

MR WALL: No; I will put it on notice. That is fine.

THE CHAIR: Minister and staff, thanks very much for your attendance this morning and for the answers to questions. We will now close and resume at 2 o'clock, when we have the Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs and the Minister for Housing and his officers before us.

Sitting suspended from 12.28 to 2.00 pm.

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

Hubbard, Mr Ian, Chief Finance Officer

Rutledge, Mr Geoffrey, Executive Director, Policy and Organisational Services

Forester, Ms Robyn, Director, Office for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs

Manikis, Mr Nic, Director, Community Participation Group

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

Collett, Mr David, Senior Director, Housing and Community Services

Duggan, Mr Frank, Director, Housing ACT

THE CHAIR: Good afternoon, minister, and welcome to the afternoon session of the Select Committee on Estimates for 2014-2015. We welcome the Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, who is on his own at this stage.

This afternoon we will be examining the expenditure proposals and revenue estimates for the Community Services Directorate, including community relations, where Indigenous affairs appear, and output 1.1, where social housing services appear. Minister, I need to bring to your attention and those of your officers who have heard this speech many times before the pink privilege statement on the table before you. If you could tell us that you are aware of the statement and its obligations and protections?

Mr Rattenbury: Thank you, Mr Smyth; and I am sure the officials are comfortable as well.

THE CHAIR: Thank you, minister. The proceedings are being recorded, broadcast and transcribed today. When we have a transcript we will provide you with a copy of that for any corrections you may wish to make.

Questions taken on notice—the committee would be most appreciative of a written response within five business days. With that, minister, do you have a brief opening statement you would like to make about your ministerial responsibilities?

Mr Rattenbury: Thank you, Mr Smyth. I will just make a few brief remarks, perhaps to put an emphasis on some of the areas the agency has been focused on, and then get to questions as quickly as we can. From the perspective of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander affairs, the government, of course, is committed to closing the gap. That, I think, is a well-recognised concept, but here in the ACT it plays out very practically on issues such as education, housing, health and also issues around Indigenous incarceration rates.

Certainly, the government's key focus in the current time frame is on delivering the

whole-of-government agreement with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community. We see this as an important way of government getting a very clear steer from the community on issues of key focus, perhaps lying over the top of those ongoing closing-the-gap measures. That is currently under consultation. I do not expect it to be completed until later in the year, but certainly the early consultations have been very productive and have revealed some key themes which I will be happy to discuss in more detail if the committee wishes.

The government, of course, has a number of ongoing programs with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community directly, but other key projects that are whole of government are particularly important for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community. Things such as the strengthening families project seek to decrease the worrying statistics of children and young people being moved into care. Because of overrepresentation issues, this is a particularly important program for our Indigenous community. Similarly, the restorative justice and through-care programs—again, because of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander overrepresentation, I see these programs as being particularly important to the Indigenous community—whilst they are not specific Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander programs, nonetheless they are very important for that cohort of people in our community.

The elected body has become a real focal point for government in terms of getting advice and getting some fairly frank and fearless feedback at times. The elected body, as you may be aware, is just about to go to the election. We have had a very good response in terms of the number of candidates nominating and so on. We are particularly encouraged by the way in which the community is perceiving the importance of that body in the fact that people are nominating.

With those few comments on some areas of focus and, I guess, emphasis, I would be happy to go to questions

THE CHAIR: Thank you, minister. I am happy to defer to the shadow minister. Mr Wall, you get the first question.

MR WALL: Thank you, Mr Smyth. Minister, I just wanted to turn to page 14 of the budget statements or portfolio statements. I will start off with table 16; accountability indicator g talking about ministerial councils. I was just wondering whether in the last year there have been any scheduled meetings for the United Ngunnawal Elders Council. What is the activity of that group at the moment?

Mr Rattenbury: The elders council have had a bit of hiatus, but in the last six to 12 months there have been a number of meetings. There is, I guess, a new energy about the group and a new sense of purpose. They have had three meetings in recent times and I think it is positive that that group is reinvigorated.

In terms of the indicators, while we are on that and by way of clarity, you will note that indicator g has been discontinued. I have worked with the directorate on doing that because I was not convinced that it was a particularly effective measure, the support for a number of meetings. Whilst it is important, I do not think that it tells the true story. I have been working with the directorate—and this will perhaps come up in a few of the portfolio areas I have with CSD—to try and enhance the indicators.

This year we have the agreement as the key indicator, but what I hope is that next year, off the back of that agreement, there will be a newer set of indicators which will actually measure progress against the agreement in particular. That is where I would like to go with the indicators.

MR WALL: What areas is the agreement looking at?

Mr Rattenbury: At this stage my approach has been very much to not set a direction. I have taken the view that it is very important that the direction comes from the community. Perhaps the only steer I have given—and it has been a view I have expressed rather than a requirement—is that I think it would be ideal if the agreement was perhaps limited to three or five key goals, a handful, so it is not a whole report that gets written and then goes on the shelf; but rather it provides a real focal point for the government as a whole, depending on what areas end up achieving emphasis, to hold government to account on some key areas that need progress.

Perhaps the other thing I could add then is that in the community consultations the key themes so far that have come out of those discussions have been justice reinvestment, care and protection and economic opportunities in employment—if we were to summarise the key themes that have come through from the community so far.

THE CHAIR: Ms Berry had a supplementary on that point and then back to Mr Wall.

MS BERRY: Is there any consideration being given around changing the way acknowledgement to country or welcome to country occurs in the ACT?

MRS JONES: Or standardising it.

Mr Rattenbury: The issue of recognition of traditional ownership, as I am sure members are aware, has been a difficult issue. The previous government took a decision in 2002 to acknowledge the Ngannawal people, following consensus discussions with Ngannawal elders. As members are no doubt aware, since that time different views have emerged.

My view has been that, rather than the government simply continuing to dictate the same view or perhaps dictating a new view, there is value in seeking to work with the community to work through this to find, if not consensus, at least enhanced understanding in the community of the situation.

I am currently exploring some options on how the government might assist those conversations to take place. You will hear in my language a bit of care around the fact that I am not going to insist things happen. I want the government to enable people to have some of those conversations and hopefully make progress.

MS BERRY: I think that is important.

MRS JONES: Just as a supplementary to that, what are the guidelines at the moment for acknowledgement? Is there a set general view from the government? I think there were a number of different wordings being used, a number of different well-meaning

acknowledgements of different types, and often repeated over and over in the same event, and I am just not sure what the preference is. We would like to be better informed as well.

Mr Rattenbury: Certainly the current government policy remains as it was set in 2002 in that the ACT government acknowledges the Ngunnawal people as the traditional custodians.

MRS JONES: But how does that play out at given functions and events? What is the preference from the government for that?

Mr Rattenbury: Do you mean in terms of the groups or the actual wording of the acknowledgement?

MRS JONES: It is repeated over and over again in different forms—

Mr Rattenbury: By individuals, you mean?

MRS JONES: By individuals in the same event. Is that a preference; I just do not know?

Mr Rattenbury: I understand what you mean, Mrs Jones. I have seen the same sort of thing happen. I guess that in part reflects a community desire for individuals to make that same acknowledgement. That is perhaps saying we should give further consideration to whether it should be done once at the start of an event and encourage others not to, or whether we should, in fact, allow people who desire it to so make that. We cannot stop people, in a sense, but I think there is an interesting question there of what is most appropriate.

MRS JONES: And what is the preference of different local Aboriginal people.

Ms Howson: Mrs Jones, from the public service's point of view, there is an understood protocol and standard acknowledgement that we are required to use in public events. It would also be fair to say that in some of the training that we receive in relation to cultural awareness and cultural competence, there is an encouragement by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to inject a sense of understanding of what that protocol and those words actually mean. You will see variations in the way in which it is expressed, but it certainly comes back to the core issue of acknowledgement of the Ngunnawal people as the traditional custodians in this jurisdiction.

MR WALL: While we are talking about welcome to country ceremonies, a constituent of mine identifies as a Ngambri man and he indicated to me that he has been precluded from doing a welcome to country ceremony at his son's primary school, which is an ACT government school, because he identifies as a Ngambri person rather than a Ngunnawal. This individual has been invited and afforded the opportunity to do welcome to country ceremonies at commonwealth institutions. He has also opened the commonwealth parliament. Why is he able to do functions up there but he is precluded from going into his own son's primary school?

Mr Rattenbury: I would like to probably seek some more details on what happened there.

MR WALL: Okay. Is that an issue best raised with you, minister, or is that best directed to Education?

Mr Rattenbury: I would be happy to take that up. Rather than speculating on it, it would be great to look at the details a bit more carefully. It is a sensitive area and one in which those sorts of examples seem unfortunate.

MR WALL: It just seems that there is an inconsistency in how the territory identifies the traditional owners. I use the example of both sides of the commonwealth parliament. Often when you attend a function, as I know you have, minister, they will say, "We acknowledge that we are on the lands of the Ngunnawal-Ngambri people." They are trying to be a little bit more collaborative and inclusive. I was just wondering if there is a policy that is specifically in place in ACT services that you must be a Ngunnawal in order to do a welcome to country.

Ms Howson: The ACT public service is required to acknowledge the protocol that exists, as I just mentioned. If it was an ACT school it would be the expectation that they are using the existing protocol. I might ask Ms Forester to comment on the process, but my understanding also is that with a welcome to country it is a requirement that we go to the traditional custodians and invite them to nominate their representative in those ceremonies.

Ms Forester: There are two forms of acknowledgement that we encourage. The first, of course, is the welcome to country which is around the protocol of the Ngunnawal, but we also encourage acknowledgement of country as well when people are involved in events that do not necessarily have a Ngunnawal elder at those events. We have quite a number of events throughout the community generally where an acknowledgement of country will be performed. We know that there are a number of organisations, community schools or whatever, that will use people other than Ngunnawal to do those acknowledgements. But, as the minister has said, we would like to have some more information to be able to respond specifically to your question.

MR WALL: I would be happy for you to follow it up outside of the committee. Just one final question back on the line of questioning around reports: I was just wondering what is the current status of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander justice agreement.

Mr Rattenbury: That actually sits in the Attorney-General's portfolio formally, but I can make some observations as I have been involved in the discussions as well. The attorney, through Justice and Community Safety, has been involved in negotiating a new version. The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elected Body has taken the lead in negotiating that with Justice and Community Safety. With elections for the body on now, there has been a pause—for want of a better word—in finalising that agreement. There were some outstanding matters to be resolved.

MR WALL: The previous agreement expired, I believe, 12 months ago or close to 12 months ago. Why has it taken so long to finalise a current agreement?

Mr Rattenbury: I think that would be best directed to the Attorney-General as to the detail of that. He has got the lead on that issue. I can answer it broadly but not specifically.

THE CHAIR: Ms Porter has a supplementary to Mr Wall's question and then a new question.

MS PORTER: It is in terms of a comment in relation to what Mr Wall has just raised. We heard very pleasing information earlier in the hearings, before lunch, about the reduction in numbers of custody days of young Indigenous people in Bimberi and you made reference to restorative justice in your introductory remarks, minister. I just wondered if you thought that there was specific emphasis placed of late on the restorative justice unit of JACS and that, in working with Indigenous young people, restorative justice has helped to reduce, if not numbers of young people in custody, certainly the amount of time that they spent there?

Mr Rattenbury: I certainly believe very strongly that there is real benefit in the restorative justice approach, and I think there is scope and benefit in expanding it further. Certainly, particularly in my role as Minister for Corrections, I am working with the attorney to expand those options both as a response to the accommodation pressures at the Alexander Maconochie Centre and also in the sense of wanting to have a better justice system that delivers for particular cohorts. And I think in the case of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander offenders there is a sense that restorative justice is particularly relevant.

MS PORTER: My substantive question is in relation to Winnunga Nimmityjah. I can never pronounce it properly. It is always a shame that I cannot pronounce it properly. Do you perceive any threats to that service with regard to recent federal government announcements in relation to the refocusing of Medicare Local throughout the country? And do you see any other areas of service delivery for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people that will be affected by any decisions at the federal level with regard to funding for these particular areas of our work?

Mr Rattenbury: In terms of the impact of the budget I think the key answer is that there is a significant level of uncertainty. What we saw in the federal budget was a clear intent to change direction by the federal government but accompanying that is over \$500 million in reduced funding to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander services across the country. From the discussions I have had with service providers around town and various colleagues there is no real clarity on what that will mean. I think the primary effect at this point is uncertainty and concern rather than people having a detailed understanding of what that is going to mean on the ground in terms of service deliveries. At this point that uncertainty is the key fact.

In terms of Winnunga specifically, I have had a number of conversations with staff from Winnunga since the federal budget. Again, their concerns are on two levels: one, in terms of that broader Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander policy approach; and the second, specifically around the Medicare co-payment. They see that as a particular barrier to their cohort of clients, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous. They are complicating the meaning of that. They actually feel that they would like to perhaps

not charge the surcharge because they believe it will act as a disincentive but they also know then that that will put increased pressure on their service provisions. So they are grappling with how best to deal with that policy change.

MS PORTER: Am I wrong in saying that they do get some support through Medicare Local as well and that Medicare Local is having a refocus? You are not aware of that? I just thought that that was the case but I may be entirely wrong. I would be happy if I was entirely wrong because I thought it was going to have an effect on them.

Ms Howson: I am not aware of the detail of any funding arrangement between Winnunga and Medicare Local. So I cannot comment on that, but I can say that the funding for the ACT Medicare Local will continue for the next financial year and then the expectation is that Medicare locals as organisational entities will apply in a new tender round that the commonwealth is putting out in a new structure.

MS PORTER: We did hear yesterday, I think it was, minister, that the west Belconnen program through the child and family centre there will actually be supported into the future at least in the short term.

Mr Rattenbury: By the ACT government?

MS PORTER: By the ACT.

Mr Rattenbury: Yes, in the absence of federal support, the—

MS PORTER: That it will continue.

Mr Rattenbury: Yes. The ACT government formed the view that it is such an important service that we cannot let it not be funded at this point in time.

THE CHAIR: Ms Berry.

MS BERRY: Minister, as you know, the Productivity Commission produces the Indigenous expenditure report that analyses and compares expenditure on services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians. How does the ACT compare to other jurisdictions, and are there any identifiable areas, do you think, where the ACT could improve?

Ms Howson: I am sorry, I was slightly distracted at the beginning of your question. Would you mind—

MS BERRY: You were probably watching me read without my glasses. I will try again. I was talking about the Productivity Commission and how they produce the report on Indigenous expenditure and I wanted to know how the ACT compares with other jurisdictions, and are there any identifiable areas where we could improve?

Ms Howson: I will ask Mr Rutledge to respond to that.

Mr Rutledge: The Indigenous expenditure report has been an interesting process for

governments around Australia, including our own. What it does show is that there is greater expenditure for Indigenous because there is greater need. But it does not really provide a great comparison. If you consider the experience of an Indigenous person in the Northern Territory versus that in the ACT, it is quite different. And when we have discussed this with the elected body, that is where I think that really something like the whole-of-government agreement comes up because they want to set their own targets that are appropriate for Canberra and appropriate for the lived experience of Aboriginal people.

I think what it does show is that school education and early childhood are areas where I would say the ACT invests more than some of the other jurisdictions. That would be, I suppose, the highlight area for us. But I think the whole-of-government agreement will be the opportunity for us to set local targets that will be more meaningful. I have spent a lot of time with the elected body talking about the Indigenous expenditure report, and what I have come to believe is that they just want to know that it is working, that the money is being spent on the right programs. The quantum of the money is not actually the issue for them. It is: is it being spent on the right programs and are we evaluating them? That is where I think we need to be measured, on the results rather than the money going in.

MS BERRY: You just answered the next question as well. That is good. Thank you.

THE CHAIR: Mrs Jones.

MRS JONES: In relation to the ACT Indigenous business development program, which is purported to assist Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to get going with their own businesses, where do these grants appear in the budget papers, how many businesses have been assisted and at what value in the last 12-month period?

Ms Forester: The business development work sits within the Economic Development Directorate. It does not actually sit within our directorate, but they are providing a lot of assistance for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to get businesses established within the ACT. There have been a number of forums and information sessions provided for potential businesses within the community. Again, with the whole-of-government agreement, as the minister has already indicated, one of the key themes that are coming through is economic development and it is something that we are really interested in supporting and ensuring that there is a focus in the agreement around business development and economic development for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community but also ensuring that the community does have an understanding that when we do talk Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander business it is not just what most people would think of, the arts and culture side of things, but it is about any business that an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander person may be interested in going into.

In the ACT, we know that there are a number of businesses that have been established by individuals or by families across a whole range of different areas—things like fencing companies and cleaning companies. One of the gyms in Canberra is owned by an Aboriginal woman. The support that is out there to make sure that we can assist communities is very important and it will be a focus of our whole-of-government agreement.

MRS JONES: So is that reported then in the EDD—

Ms Howson: The investment in those programs would be reported through—

MRS JONES: A line item there.

Ms Howson: I am not sure if it is a line item in their budget statement, but that—

MRS JONES: We will ask when we get the chance. I agree that it obviously has to be broader. As a supplementary to an earlier question, because I am not very au fait with this area and I apologise for that—obviously there is an election going on at the moment—does the elected body have representations outside of Ngunnawal groups? Is it broader than that?

Mr Rattenbury: Yes, it does. The elected body is open to any Indigenous person who lives in the ACT.

MRS JONES: Is that self-identification or group identification?

Mr Rattenbury: It is self. There are seven members on the body. They simply come from the roughly 6,000 Indigenous people who live in the territory. And so it is self-nominating. For the current elections we have had 17 nominations, and that is from people from a range of places across Australia who now call Canberra home.

MRS JONES: In regard to the election process, can residents in the ACT vote?

Mr Rattenbury: Yes, that is right.

MRS JONES: And so they just need to demonstrate residency?

Mr Rattenbury: Correct.

MRS JONES: And self-identification as well?

Ms Forester: To be eligible to vote, you must be resident in the ACT, on the ACT electoral roll or have the ability to be on the ACT electoral roll. That is really around at least a month's residency within the ACT to be eligible to vote.

Mr Rattenbury: Sorry, I am just reminded I was wrong. It is 14 nominations, not 17. At the start of your question, I guess there are two bodies, in a sense. There is the United Ngunnawal Elders Council, which is obviously limited to old people and locals and that has a stronger focus on cultural and heritage matters. Then the elected body is open to the entire Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community and has a broader focus.

MRS JONES: And do other Aboriginal cultural groups have their own representative bodies, apart from the Ngunnawal elders body? Is there an Ngambri elders body, for example, or not that you know of?

Mr Rattenbury: Not formally with the government. There are self-identifying groups, and I have certainly met with some of them and discussed issues with them at times but not in the formal sense.

MRS JONES: So you do not exclude them from the table or anything like that? You do not exclude them?

Mr Rattenbury: No. Of course I talk to them. I have had a number of meetings with them, yes.

THE CHAIR: A new question, Mr Wall.

MR WALL: Minister, while we are on the elected body, I will continue on. Obviously, they put out their report each year. They do it similar to what we do here in the Assembly. They do an estimates-type hearing and make recommendations to the government. Where are we up to in relation to some of the recommendations that have come out of their last report?

Mr Rattenbury: Are there particular ones you wanted to focus on? As I recall there were quite a number.

MR WALL: As you mentioned before, the Productivity Commission report was quite critical about where some of the government funding from both the commonwealth and the territory goes—to what programs. If you break it down, the investment in assisting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the territory is quite substantial in regard to the number of people that it is actually assisting. What are the key recommendations that they have made recently around funding, and what progress has government made in implementing, if at all?

Ms Howson: In terms of the response to your first question, our discussions with the elected body are that we will respond formally and comprehensively through the whole-of-government agreement. We are incorporating the findings and the priority areas that were identified in the annual report provided by the elected body. That is a key informer to our considerations around the whole-of-government agreement. The strategic board has a subcommittee of directors-general that focuses on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander affairs. That subcommittee has asked the Office for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs to come back with some preliminary direction against each of the five priority areas.

One of the priority areas is the evidence of access and impact. The elected body refrained from making quite specific recommendations; rather it focused on these five priority areas, one of them being evidence of access and impact. We would expect to have the agreement itself, as Mr Rutledge pointed out earlier, being much more transparent and precise in the expression of what the priorities for the ACT community are and the government's commitment to those priorities, and be able to report more clearly against those areas.

MR WALL: This is slightly off topic, but one that springs to mind follows on from the extensive discussions we were having yesterday about the implementation of the NDIS. Obviously a significant number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people

are going to be involved in this scheme. What involvement has your office particularly, Ms Forester, had in communicating with Indigenous people about what these changes might mean, and what involvement has the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community had in this transition?

Ms Howson: As we discussed yesterday this process was really kicked off through the enhanced service offer grants. We used that grants process to engage with individuals with a disability to identify and participate in that process of applying for funding that would assist them. In that particular process I know the task force consulted with Robyn and her office so I will hand over to Robyn in a moment.

Working through the networks that Aboriginal communities have confidence in, such as Gugan Gulwan and Winnunga, we were able to outreach to those communities and ensure they had information about the grants and, through that engagement, talk to them more about the national disability insurance scheme. There have also been a number of briefings with the elected body, in terms of how we should engage the community, and through our child and family centres. Robyn, is there anything you would like to add?

Ms Forester: Earlier this year we had a community forum. The elected body hosted a community forum specifically around the NDIS. A number of community people attended that forum. Additional forums will be happening in the future to ensure that everybody is getting access to information with regard to NDIS and other programs out there.

THE CHAIR: With the strategic objectives and indicators, minister, which one refers specifically to Indigenous issues in the ACT?

Mr Rattenbury: In terms of output classes?

THE CHAIR: No, in terms of the strategic objectives and their indicators. Starting on page 3 there are 10 of them. Which is the indicator and the objective that marks progress towards closing the gap for Indigenous people?

Mr Rattenbury: There is not a specific one for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. In terms of the output classes, it comes under the output class of the community participation group, output class 3.

THE CHAIR: Why isn't there a strategic objective and indicator to measure our progress on closing the gap for Indigenous people?

Mr Rattenbury: As I indicated before, that is one of the reasons I have been working with the directorate to change some of the strategic indicators, because I am not satisfied—

THE CHAIR: You spoke about the accountability indicators before.

Mr Rattenbury: Yes.

Ms Howson: The strategic objectives that are relevant are objective 5 and 6. But there

is not, as you have already pointed out, Mr Smyth, a specific strategic indicator that assists with that. It is, as I said this morning, something that we are constantly reviewing. What are the indicators that will give us a better view of the outcomes we are achieving for different subpopulations within the Canberra community?

THE CHAIR: Rightly so, we have a strategic objective and accountability indicator for those with disabilities, for those with developmental problems, for families, for substance re-abuse. Given it still is a big issue and governments at all levels are genuinely trying to make an effort to close the gap, would it not be appropriate, minister, to have a specific indicator?

Mr Rattenbury: As I indicated before I am certainly not satisfied with the current set of indicators. The difficulty has been finding ones that are auditable and actually finding measures that can genuinely go through the rigour of the Auditor-General coming in and going over them and having adequate data for our relatively small community size. That has been a primary struggle in finding appropriate measures—whether it is accountability indicators or strategic indicators, that has been the challenge. But I am not happy with what we have at the moment, no.

Ms Howson: There is a raft of reports, of course, every year from AIHW, from closing the gap, from our own AEDI, the Australian Early Development Index measure. There are numerous bodies collecting data that can inform us. What we find generally is that at the population level it paints, as it should, a very positive picture for the ACT community in terms of closing the gap issues for our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, but because it is at a population level it does mask the vulnerabilities of the more disadvantaged groups within the ACT. Again, the elected body have invested a lot of their effort in advocating, over the course of the last 12 months, for a different set of indicators that will give us more transparency within our community on how we are genuinely closing the gap.

THE CHAIR: I could not agree more. The other question, minister, is: in output class 3.1, which you have referred us to, how much is appropriated for the use of the office of Indigenous affairs in the ACT?

Mr Rattenbury: I will bring the accountants forward.

THE CHAIR: Before we bring the accountant forward, with all respect to Mr Hubbard, for whom of course the estimates always hold a great deal of respect and affection, minister, are you aware of the spend by your government on Indigenous affairs?

Mr Rattenbury: It depends what measure you want to put on it, Mr Smyth. In some regards, if you look right across services, it is a couple of hundred million dollars, in terms of our spending on—

THE CHAIR: Are you sure of that?

Mr Rutledge: 231-plus.

Mr Rattenbury: Thank you. I actually had 222 in mind, so thank you, Mr Rutledge.

THE CHAIR: There you go. Well done, Mr Rutledge. It is just that it is hard to identify. We had a discussion earlier today with Mr Hubbard about the breakdown for not just Indigenous but multicultural, women et cetera. I appreciate the difficulties that are presented—

Mr Rattenbury: I missed that discussion earlier.

THE CHAIR: I thought you may have. I take Ms Howson's answer from this morning, "Our measure is on results not on the inputs," but the inputs still have some effect on the results. As the minister said, it worries me that you do not know how much inside output class 3.1 is spent on Indigenous affairs.

Mr Rattenbury: I will take that as a comment, Mr Smyth.

THE CHAIR: Unless you would like to respond. Perhaps Mr Hubbard can tell us.

Mr Hubbard: Unfortunately, the minister did not have an opportunity to listen to our discussion this morning. I think that would have been of assistance to him.

THE CHAIR: You should always pay attention to estimates.

Mr Hubbard: 3.1, as we went over this morning, is a collection of all those groups who do play a part in the community. The notion was that we want to drive some efficiencies by bringing all those budgets together. I said it was pretty difficult to slice and dice the overheads and all the other contributing factors. But one of the groups that is a bit more transparent in the overall budget is the ATSI group. In that reconciliation that we agreed I would provide you with you will get more clarity on the total cost of that group in that output. We will get that to you as soon as we can.

THE CHAIR: Thank you, Mr Hubbard. Ms Porter.

MS PORTER: My question was really in line, minister, with what Mr Smyth was talking about in relation to that output class, and community relations and community participation. I believe it would be really good if we could get some indication of how you see you are working in encouraging community participation by the Indigenous community with the whole community in the ACT, as it already does, and by encouraging that cross-fertilisation, I suppose.

My experience is with regard to a primary school in my electorate. I noticed that there was a real concentration on working with a particular Indigenous family that was not a Ngunnawal family—a Wiradjuri family, which you would be familiar with—which had been coming into the school and working strongly with that school with cultural exchange, very effectively, I believe. I am not suggesting that this should happen in every single school but a network of schools in that area were doing a lot of work in closing the gap in that area and had a real commitment to it.

In relation to closing the gap, it is about the more we can do in this cross-fertilisation area when it comes to whether we could consider some grants in the area of community organisations, to strengthen capacity and sustainability in addressing

disadvantage in this area in future budgets. I think that would assist in that cultural exchange. We could learn a lot; many people could learn a lot from that process. I believe that the young people in those schools, and in particular those in the primary school that I am referring to, really benefited from that program.

Mr Rattenbury: I appreciate the comment you make, Ms Porter. I think it is a good comment. In some ways it goes to the nature of the Office for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs within the ACT government. It is not a direct service delivery agency per se, in the sense that much of that is delivered through education or health.

MS PORTER: Minister, I understand it is a whole-of-government approach, but certainly you would be lobbying—

Mr Rattenbury: Certainly, I was going to say that the way the office seeks to operate is to really be a catalyser in the sense of trying to identify some of those opportunities that you have touched on—not by being the direct service deliverers but by being slightly removed from that, looking for those opportunities to connect things and to create some of those cross-fertilisation opportunities that you talked about. In terms of grants, we can touch on the detail quickly.

Ms Howson: Ms Porter, that is something that we will give due consideration to. I think it is a good suggestion. The current grants program is really focused more on development of leadership capability. Ms Forester can talk more about that but there are always opportunities at the minister's discretion to reshape the terms of reference around grants programs.

Ms Forester: Yes, we do have a grants program that has been running under our scholarships program, which is really about providing opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to increase their skills and expertise, whether that is to assist them to complete higher tertiary education or to provide them with opportunities to re-enter the workforce. We also have a series a cultural grants that are open, and there are a number of organisations that have benefited from those cultural grants. A lot of that is around arts and culture-type activities. We also have our leadership grants which, again, are open to individuals and organisations to assist them in their leadership and governance development.

THE CHAIR: Ms Berry, any questions?

MS BERRY: Yes, thank you, chair. Minister, I am interested in how many Indigenous liaison officers there are and whether these numbers will be affected by the federal budget.

Mr Rattenbury: We will have to take that on notice, Ms Berry.

Ms Howson: Do you mind me asking whether there is a particular program that you are aware of that has commonwealth funding?

MS BERRY: No, I was just asking more generally. One of the things that has been of concern to me is the federal government cuts and how they are affecting the work that we do with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the ACT, given the

excellent work that we have been doing in west Belconnen and the work that Ms Porter talked about recently. I would like to know whether the federal government budget cuts are affecting the work that we have been doing and succeeding in with that community.

Mr Rattenbury: Let me see if we can get you some more detail on that. Off the top of my head I do not have a concrete answer for you.

THE CHAIR: Mrs Jones.

MRS JONES: Can you, minister, provide an update to the committee on the progress on the additional accommodation at Gugan Gulwan?

Mr Rattenbury: Yes. I had a brief on that the other day. There was an exploration of whether there was a suitable site. It was at Calwell education centre. There was a space there that was possibly suitable but Gugan Gulwan have specified that they do not want to share accommodation. Because of the nature of their services, particularly a lot of children, they feel they need an exclusive occupation of a facility. So the facility at Calwell, unfortunately, again proved to be unsuitable.

What we are now doing in the short term while we continue to search for a better solution is that looking at a number of improvements being made at Gugan's current facility which is improving security particularly. That has been an issue.

MRS JONES: Where is there current facility?

Mr Rattenbury: It is at Erindale. We are making a few upgrades there, and that is work that is underway now, and also just looking at some things like sound insulation so that they can use some of their existing spaces more effectively. CSD is working with Gugan to make some of those improvements which will provide short-term improvement while we continue the longer term search for the right facility.

MRS JONES: And how much is being spent on the current upgrades, or can you get back to us?

Mr Rattenbury: I am sure Mr Collett will be able to help us with the detail of that.

Mr Collett: At the moment we are undertaking the security work the minister referred to within the existing maintenance program. It is a matter of tens of thousands of dollars. We are identifying works that can be done in next year's program of minor works and maintenance around the sound attenuation which is going to be slightly more but until we get the prices in and in fact the finer scope of the works we will not know exactly what that is.

MRS JONES: Can you provide the committee on notice with an estimate so that we can have a figure?

Mr Collett: We will do our best. We have not yet defined the scope of the works. We have had preliminary discussions. I understood it was the nature of the operations at the centre and what the issues are around the lack of sound attenuation between the

various bases. We need to get an architectural firm involved to actually scope the works. Without actually having an extent of additional sheeting to walls, ceiling around existing openings, it is going to be very difficult. I could give you a figure but I could not be held to it.

THE CHAIR: Mr Wall.

MR WALL: I am probably going to state the obvious here but we have spoken before, probably earlier, about the amount of money that is spent both from territory funds and commonwealth funds on Indigenous services in the ACT at \$231 million. We also accept that there are about 6,000 people that identify as Indigenous in the ACT. Breaking it up on a per head basis, we are talking about \$38,500 per person. Given that so much of the disadvantage that affects Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people is not necessarily an issue to do with race but with poverty and socioeconomic stance and the fact that we are spending just shy of \$40,000 a head on Indigenous people in the ACT, why do we continue to have this issue?

Mr Rattenbury: I am not sure that that sort of arithmetic breakdown of it quite tells the full picture.

MR WALL: It has got to be alarming to government, no doubt.

Mr Rattenbury: Except that if I actually looked at the same figures across the entire ACT population—and I do not know the answer—that \$231 million includes all the money we spend on health, which includes people who are going quite well in their lives just going to the doctor or going to hospital and all sorts of things. If I did a similar number for the entire ACT population it would turn out in the tens of thousands as well, I am quite sure. So I am reluctant to step into that analysis as the right way to look at it.

MR WALL: This is funding that is targeted specifically at ATSI programs.

Mr Rattenbury: No, it is not. Geoff, do you want to talk about the detail?

Mr Rutledge: The Productivity Commission have a complex formula and I have had the Productivity Commission come and visit us as officials and also visit the elected body to try to explain it to us. I think the Commonwealth Grants Commission is probably an easier process to explain than the way the Productivity Commission does their calculation. And where the Productivity Commission do not offer an opinion on the \$231 million, they just say that that is the figure. But as Minister Rattenbury was saying, it includes an attribution of mainstream services.

Part of the Defence budget is in there, part of the cost of Parliament House is in there, and part of the cost of the Legislative Assembly is in there—all are allocated across. Then, in addition, we do make an Indigenous-specific expenditure, and that is calculated as well. That is where the discussions with the elected body come in. Even the Productivity Commission, in their notes and interpreting the results, warn against trying to interpret the results in a straight arithmetic way. I think they are unable to explain in plain English how they actually come up with these figures.

There is overrepresentation and additional need. Indigenous programs are designed to fix those. As I said earlier, from talking to the elected body, we as a government have not yet found that Productivity Commission report helpful in that we have not been able to use it to provide new expenditure. And I think we are getting to the point now that we have just submitted our next set of figures. We will get another report in 2014 and we will get another figure, which might be \$48,000, it might be \$50,000. But what will probably drive new expenditure for this government will be what comes out of the whole-of-government agreement.

From what we are hearing, as Robyn mentioned earlier, economic development and justice for investment and overrepresentation in care and protection seem to be the themes, and I think that is where our new expenditure will be focused. That would be where I would see it.

THE CHAIR: If I can refer you to budget paper 3, page 55, the government's own figure of per capita spending in 2014-15 is \$12,690. I appreciate you not wanting to get into the arithmetical comparisons, but \$12,700 to \$38,000 is a reasonable gap. And even if you then refer to table 2.3.1 on page 56, the average spend for the majority of Canberrans is probably \$2,000 or \$3,000 below the \$12,690. I appreciate Indigenous people come from an incredibly low base, there are huge amounts of discrimination and decades and centuries of neglect by this country. Just to follow up, where do you start to get the turnaround? Again, minister, this perhaps goes back to the strategic indicator. When do we start to see the gap genuinely starting to close?

Ms Howson: Just one thing I would say again about those comparisons is that the Productivity Commission report and its inputs into its findings would be quite different to those that are used by the ACT government to calculate. You heard Mr Rutledge mention that some of the commonwealth government's expenditure is incorporated into the Productivity Commission's report.

But having said that, the core question that you ask is: when do we start to see and get the turnaround? There are, on a number of measures that we look at through the closing the gap lens, very positive indicators of good outcomes for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community in the ACT. We probably outperform the country in areas of education, health, early childhood access. While there are other measures within that suite that we still need to do further work on, in terms of a comparison with other jurisdictions around Australia, we are doing very well.

The other point that I would make would drive me back into these very specific target groups that we spoke about this morning. Out-of-home care strategy is looking particularly at the question of overrepresentation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children that are being brought into kinship care or foster care. And we are looking at how we can do better in terms of supporting Aboriginal children to stay in their family settings and be able to achieve the same sorts of early start-to-life outcomes as well as educational attainment outcomes for other non-Indigenous children.

We talked about the youth justice blueprint where we have a very specific focus on the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people that that particular strategy is targeting and address the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander issues. We are getting

results.

I think the answer to your question is not a straightforward one; it is one that requires us to talk about particular target groups and the nature of government's programmatic interventions for those target groups and are they working or are they not working.

THE CHAIR: A final question, Ms Porter.

MS PORTER: It is in relation to Indigenous children who are in foster care or in kin care. You recall me raising with you, minister, the Ginar Maliyan program which is a program which works with foster carers, kin carers and the children that are in their care from Barnardos and Marymead. That recreational program was housed in or running out of a site in Gungahlin which was a semi-rural site. But there were some safety issues around the cottage that they were housed in and using, and that was closed very quickly. They were asked to vacate it very quickly because of those safety issues.

I am not quite sure whether they are housed within the Gungahlin community service or within the Gungahlin child and family centre, but that is where they are running out of now. Because of it being in the town centre, it is not really suitable for the program, which is a very successful program. I am wondering what progress there is to actually restore that site and if that site will not be able to be restored, whether or not another suitable site will be found for them so that they can continue the work that they were doing. They have actually brought together some children who were brothers and who never actually knew one another before. They were brought together. It has been very good. There has also been a lot of exchange between parents and kin carers happening, and it is a fantastic program.

Ms Howson: Yes, it is, and they are currently running the program out of the Gungahlin child and family centre. They were within a property that we had leased to Barnardos. Mr Collett can talk about what is happening with that property, but we may have to take on notice some of your more specific questions about where that program is going.

Mr Collett: As Ms Howson has stated, the program was actually generated more from the community than from the directorate and it was an arrangement that Barnardos had reached with the Indigenous organisation that was providing the support that you described.

MS PORTER: Yes, it came out of the community, that is right.

Mr Collett: We did not have visibility of it until the issue arose. We moved quickly, as I say, to—and this has been reported—provide them with a space from which they could continue the service. I can understand that their preference might be to do it in a rural setting rather than an urban setting. However, my advice is that the program is working successfully and that similar sorts of objectives are being achieved with their current accommodation.

We have been talking to Barnardos about the possibility of bringing that house back into operation. It is a semi-rural property, as you say, and it is an aged property. And

because of the way in which it was used, we did not have regular oversight of its maintenance. So it will take a little work to determine whether it can be brought back into service.

We do not have a lot of properties in that situation. Most of our properties are located where they provide good access to services and to support for public housing tenants. So I would not be able to give any assurances as to the time frame in which we could find a suitable property if, in fact, we could find one.

MS PORTER: One of the advantages of them using the property, of course, was they were able to alert authorities to the fact that there were some people who were using the property inappropriately, and that has since been addressed. Of course, I hear what you are saying, Mr Collett, about the fact that it is running quite successfully out of the current situation. I am sure they are very welcome there and they are very grateful for being there. It is just that a rural setting is better for the young people to be able to ride their bicycles around and do other things that young children like to do. In the other setting they had that freedom to be able to do more outdoor activities to do with their cultural expression. One of the things that are playing out of this program is help for the young people to identify with their culture and to be able to express their culture in that way. So it is terrific that you are looking at other sites or may be able to restore the site that they were previously in. It would be fantastic.

THE CHAIR: Thank you, minister, for your attendance as the Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs. You can now change your hats and immediately reappear as the Minister for Housing. If officials could read the privilege statement and indicate that they understand its protections and obligations. Thank you. We would like a response to any questions taken on notice within the five business days. Minister, would you like to make an opening statement about Housing ACT?

Mr Rattenbury: Yes, Mr Smyth. Again I will make a few brief remarks and then go straight to questions. One of the key things I want to reflect on—and I am sure we will spend time looking at this today—is that there has obviously been a lot of talk in the media recently regarding proposed redevelopments along Northbourne Avenue, and I want to take a minute to talk about that.

As I have indicated in various places, there is a solid commitment from the government that there will be a roof-for-roof replacement of any housing properties redeveloped. And, further, I am working with the Minister for Economic Development on ways to potentially grow the stock out of this transition period. That work is currently underway. I do not have definitive answers on it today as it is subject to ongoing cabinet consideration, but this is an opportunity to work through at least some of those basic facts around the government's intent of roof-for-roof replacement and where some of that is going to be. I am happy to take questions on that.

We have also established a tenant relocation strategy and a task force to go with that. Again, one of the issues we struggle with is that various elements of the media are determined to write a story about this before decisions have even been taken. We have had feedback that tenants are nervous and they are concerned. They are saying that they are not hearing from government but they are reading stuff in the papers. The

challenge for government has been that there have not been formal decisions to communicate but the media has been quite comfortable to speculate. That has been a challenge.

We have established a linking into new communities task force specifically to try and work on some of this, and providers present in that include peak groups such as ACTCOSS and Shelter but also some of the service providers who are dealing with the clients on a day-to-day basis, so groups like the Canberra Men's Centre, St Vincent de Paul and the Northside Community Service, which particularly supports a lot of people at the ABC flats just to the north of the city. I am happy to talk more about that, but I wanted to convey our frustration at some of the angst that has been caused for tenants and also some of the steps we are seeking to put in place.

Other key developments include homelessness, which is in the press with the CEO's sleep-out tonight. The work on Common Ground is proceeding apace. That will provide longer term housing for 20 people experiencing chronic homelessness, and also 20 people in affordable housing units. That project is currently in the construction phase. Because of commonwealth funding requirements, we intend to complete that by the end of this year.

We have also taken a new policy approach with the affordable rental office, which aims to house older lower income Canberrans. We have finalised a review of the rental scheme, which has resulted in a banded structure of rents rather than the simple flat-line approach we took before. We have certainly had very positive feedback on that. Whilst that is a small group of Housing ACT tenants at the moment, I think it certainly gives us some guidance if we see how that goes to think about our future options.

The other key comment I would make is around homelessness funding, but also housing funding in general. We have had a 12-month extension of the national partnership agreement on homelessness, but we have significant policy uncertainty in the space. The federal government did not address key housing questions in the federal budget this year. The minister is clearly taking more time to think about some of the policy directions, but that means we have a number of places of significant uncertainty going forward with things like the national agreement on housing, the national partnership on homelessness and the like. Again, we have some uncertainty in this space, which I am happy to discuss but perhaps will not be able to fully answer questions on.

THE CHAIR: I know there is concern about the ABC flats and Northbourne. I am happy to hand to Ms Lawder for the first question.

MS LAWDER: Minister, the number of social housing properties is set to decrease by 145 over the coming 12 months due to the redevelopment of the Currong flats. Are there any tenants in those flats at the moment?

Mr Rattenbury: Perhaps I can start with where the 145 comes from and then come to the specific question. That is a net figure, and I will just go through the anticipated changes in numbers. These, of course, are forecasts. They include 83 sales of properties, including to tenants through the shared equity scheme; 230 demolitions,

which include the Currong apartments at 212 and 18 others for small-scale developments, so they will be more regular renewal projects; and there are 33 which include the Northbourne Avenue redevelopment with 21 at Dickson Towers and also the transfer of nine properties to CatholicCare—that is the supported accommodation innovation fund—and three affordable rental office units. The last 12 I mentioned go off the Housing ACT books, but they remain in the community housing sector, so they are not a direct loss of properties. Offsetting those reductions is the construction of 201 units that will be added to the public housing portfolio. So that produces the net result of 145. I emphasise that it is a temporary reduction and relates to that renewal of Currong.

In terms of whether there are currently tenants at Currong, in recent years Currong has been dedicated to student accommodation. I took a deliberate decision earlier in the year that all of those students would have a guaranteed tenancy until December this year, which enabled them to complete the academic year. That is the timetable. At the end of those tenancies those leases with students will not be renewed as we will be moving towards the demolition of the Currong apartments.

MS LAWDER: You may not be able to answer this, but what percentage when you redevelop that area of ABC flats will be social housing properties?

Mr Rattenbury: The government has previously given a commitment that it will be 10 per cent minimum.

MS LAWDER: Will that replace in number terms all of those that are removed?

Mr Rattenbury: No, it does not provide a complete replacement. As you may have seen in the press in the last few days—and I will use it to demonstrate the case study—we are finding that tenants are interested in going to different parts of Canberra. So those tenants that are vacating are often going to other places. They are interested in being in a different part of town because of employment reasons or family connection reasons or educational reasons—a whole range of reasons. But, clearly, we have an intent to redevelop a range of sites within inner north Canberra so that there is a continued salt and peppering across the city so that we do not lose that great tradition of Canberra and that we continue to have public housing even in some of the most desirable parts of the city, if I could put it like that.

MS LAWDER: Given the quite high occupancy rate of public housing properties currently, how will you be able to move people from the city areas to other areas?

Mr Rattenbury: Do you mean in terms of people moving to other parts of Canberra?

MS LAWDER: Yes.

Mr Rattenbury: I guess a range of things are happening there. We trying to get a rolling program, and one of the reasons we have started at Dickson Towers is that it is a relatively small number of tenants but it will release a level of capital that will enable us to start the redevelopment of new sites. The intent is to try and get a bit of a rolling redevelopment so that we have new properties for tenants to be moving into and to be turning over our stock in that sense.

THE CHAIR: Ms Porter, a new question.

MS PORTER: In relation to when people are provided with housing when they are in emergency situations or people who are rehoused, as you were discussing in response to Ms Lawder's question, how do you work towards providing a safe environment for people who may be single but who may have their children coming to them on access visits or those who may have one child and are housed in a townhouse situation or a unit-type arrangement? How do you work towards providing a safe environment for those people, some of whom were in very traumatic situations, such as domestic violence, before they left the family home to be rehoused? I have come into contact with numbers of people who may have other issues that have caused them to be rehoused, and the mixture of the different types of tenancies in those locations sometimes creates a situation that makes it worse for everybody rather than better. It is very important for everybody, but I am particularly concerned about children who may be in these situations or who may be visiting in these situations.

Mr Rattenbury: I will take your question in two parts, Ms Porter. First of all I will go to the physical setup. One of the issues with a parent who has visiting rights and the like is ensuring there is sufficient space for visitors. It similarly goes to grandparents. One of the trends for the way housing properties are allocated is that we are increasingly downsizing older people into smaller units and moving them out of three or four-bedroom houses to free those up for families. But the experience is that older people actually want a two-bedroom apartment or townhouse or similar so they can have either a carer or grandchildren to come and visit. At a practical, physical level that is one of the considerations that is taken into account. Similarly, I have had a couple of examples come across my desk recently where parents have part-time custody of their children and we need to make sure there is a suitable property with space for those custody visits.

As to the safety side of your question, this is an ongoing challenge across the portfolio. A range of neighbour issues or the like arise, as they do with non-government housing, frankly, in many places. The way properties are allocated, certain areas would not have children allocated to them. Some areas have a predominance of, for example, single men. Again, I take Dickson Towers as an example. Recently that has tended to be a place where single men have been housed because of the nature of the facilities and putting certain groups of people together. Ms Overton-Clarke might add some further comments.

Ms Overton-Clarke: There are a few ways we work with applicants along the way to make sure we get it right for them. We sit down at the time of allocation and work through with them their issues and their preferences. As part of that, they have the opportunity to have two formal offers for the place they end up living in. As part of that we are very clear from them about issues, say, around domestic violence where an ex-partner may be located, and we take all of that into account. The other arrangements we have include an MOU with the Rape Crisis Centre and the Domestic Violence Crisis Service, so we work with agencies and the AFP on an ongoing basis.

We very much at the time of allocation recognise that in order for tenants to be able to sustain their tenancies they need to be able to make that house into their home. Where

they are located in relation to schools with children is really important. So if they have, say, come out of the homelessness system and their kids are already in a local school, we will take that into account. We really tailor each individual offer as much as we possibly can, particularly in the case of families and children, to make sure their two offers are ones that are good for them.

As the minister said, there are different profiles. In general, two-thirds of our tenants are women, but on Northbourne Avenue and around those areas, it is two-thirds men. There are different types of accommodation that are better suited to different family types. But, certainly in terms of families and mothers with children and fathers with children, we are very cognisant of the issues around how we locate tenants.

MS PORTER: Minister, with regards to the replacement that you were talking about before, I note that the Treasurer spoke when bringing down the budget about the asset sales aspect of how the federal government is offering incentives for us to sell assets and get a bonus on that so we can put all that money back into infrastructure in Canberra. He mentioned social housing as being one of those things where we would perhaps be looking to sell some of those assets and replace them with more environmentally friendly, sustainable types of living into the future. Would that give you the opportunity to look at the types of responses we can give through social housing to the older women you were talking about before—it could be older men, of course—who have grandchildren coming to visit with them and also people in the situation that I was describing before?

Mr Rattenbury: Yes, there is certainly a significant opportunity around the renewal of public housing stock to provide more suitable accommodation. I think we will see less one-bedroom or bedsit-type facilities provided. They do not tend to meet current needs, the current aspirations of tenants. Certainly there is a clear policy from Housing these days not to have large scale multi-unit developments in the way we have seen in the past, whether it is on Northbourne Avenue or other parts of Canberra, such as Red Hill. A range of evidence shows that they are not the most effective ways and they carry a range of social problems with them. The approach now is to develop sites that tend to be more a dozen or perhaps 15 units together, and the experience is that they are much more effective. They provide a better living environment and, of course, as you have touched on, they are more modern, they are more comfortable, they are better insulated and all of those sorts of things.

MS PORTER: And the replacement will be the same number of actual spaces or beds, whichever terminology you use? Even though it will be a different shape, there will not be any loss of spaces available?

Mr Rattenbury: No, the government is very clear in its intent—there will be no loss. Ideally, through this process, if we are able to be innovative to leverage resources in an effective way, we will perhaps see a modest increase in stock. I make no great promises in that space, but certainly at least and ideally some more replacement stock.

MS PORTER: Because we have heard from other witnesses that have come before us on the community days that there is quite an issue in relation to the waiting periods.

Mr Rattenbury: There certainly is. We have seen a significant number of people

added to the housing waiting list in recent years. There is pressure there; there is no doubt about that.

THE CHAIR: Mrs Jones has a supplementary, as does Ms Lawder.

MRS JONES: Just on the appropriateness of housing, I have got an acquaintance in a public housing house who has a very big block, and she is—

Mr Rattenbury: A very big?

MRS JONES: A very big backyard, a big block. She is a grandmother raising some grandchildren, and with her own children around as well, so they do have a need for space. But the maintenance of the grass on that property is very difficult. What is available to her to assist with that maintenance? Is there anything? If there is not, what are the options for assessment of a more appropriate block if that was her preference?

Mr Rattenbury: Taking those in turn, certainly tenants are expected to look after the properties.

MRS JONES: Of course they are.

Mr Rattenbury: There are people who struggle and there are a range of community service organisations around. Home Help, I think, is the name of a service. Colleagues are nodding. People, particularly older people, can approach them and they can assist. That is the first part of it.

The second part is that for somebody like that it is open to them to approach Housing ACT and consider a property transfer to something more suitable.

MRS JONES: Yes.

Mr Rattenbury: Some of the two-bedroom units might be appropriate—or three-bedroom townhouses. They still do have outdoor space, perhaps just not with the gardening burden.

MRS JONES: It is enormous. Yes.

MS LAWDER: I have a supplementary on older people.

THE CHAIR: Ms Lawder, a supplementary.

MS LAWDER: I understand there was a 2012 election commitment to provide 20 two-bedroom units for older tenants downsizing.

Mr Rattenbury: Yes.

MS LAWDER: Was that delayed from 2013-14? If so, why was it delayed?

MRS JONES: Was it delivered?

MS LAWDER: Is it delivered? Is it a couple a year?

Mr Rattenbury: That initiative—

MRS JONES: Is that the Rivett site?

Mr Rattenbury: Sorry.

MRS JONES: Was that the Rivett site?

Mr Rattenbury: No.

MRS JONES: Right.

Mr Rattenbury: That specific initiative is reflected in this year's budget.

MS LAWDER: Will it be delivered at three units per year or something, or is it all this year?

Ms Howson: Over the next three years.

MS LAWDER: Over the next three years?

THE CHAIR: It is very hard to hear. A new question, Ms Berry.

MS BERRY: It is along the same theme, which will probably be popular today. There is a view out in the community—and you referred to this earlier—that many of the public housing tenants in Northbourne flats might prefer to live in Belconnen, Gungahlin or some of the other outer suburbs. Personally, I understand if people want to move into Belconnen; it is a great place to live. But do you think that for those tenants it is the kind of housing available, or is it a genuine preference not to live in the inner parts of the city? I am really asking for a broad view of things.

Mr Rattenbury: I think it is a range of factors, Ms Berry. Certainly the accommodation on places like Northbourne Avenue is not of a modern standard. I am not going to use some of the derogatory terms that others will, because I think these are people's homes, and there are communities there. I think that is very valid. But as I touched on before, people like to move for a range of reasons. Older people might have their children and, therefore, grandchildren now residing in Belconnen, and so they would like to go to Belconnen for that reason. Others want to stay in the inner areas. Our intention is to provide a range of housing options in the inner areas as well and to give those options.

What we just saw—and it is a small sample at this point—with the Dickson Towers vacation is that people literally went all over the city. They went to Woden; they went to Tuggeranong; I think one or two went to Gungahlin, if I remember correctly. And some stayed and have just moved across the road. The approach we are taking is that we will work with individual tenants individually to discuss those preferences and then look to find the best fit.

The other thing I would say that is relevant in this space is that, whilst there is a large number of tenants in both the ABC flats and the Northbourne corridor, we do not intend to do them all at once. That is something that is perhaps not well understood. It will be a gradual process—in the order of 70 to 80 people a year, give or take; it might be a bit more in one year and less in some others. This means that Housing has the capability to deal with people at an individual level rather than having some mass-type transfer. That graduated approach enables a focus on quality and care for the individual in a way that I think is not well understood.

MS BERRY: I am glad that you talked about these places being people's homes; I really do not like the term "roof-for-roof replacement". I know that is just a technical description, but I think that is the thing that probably frightens people. On people living in the inner parts of Canberra, there are some very posh apartments, particularly around new Acton and Kingston. Is the government maintaining salt and peppering in public housing in these areas, or is it just the suburbs where the policy applies?

Mr Rattenbury: No. If you look at the map now, and if you took the inner areas of, say, Ainslie, Braddon and some of those kinds of areas, for example, you would see that Ainslie, I think, is the suburb with the most public housing properties in it. That is a bit of a historical thing. There are even some of the redevelopments through areas like Braddon now, without naming specific buildings. If you think about buildings in places like Lowanna Street, Ijong Street and places like that, that have been redeveloped in recent years, the government does own properties in those facilities. So the answer to your question, in short, is yes.

MS BERRY: Good. And how is the ratio of public housing stock to population going? Are we keeping up with population growth? We are talking about the numbers here.

Ms Overton-Clarke: We have the highest proportion of public housing of any jurisdiction in the country, so we have relatively a very high amount of public housing.

MS BERRY: That is something we should be proud of, I think.

Ms Overton-Clarke: Absolutely. In terms of how that compares proportionally with the number of houses, I think it has reduced very slightly. It has reduced a percentage point or two as Canberra has grown. As you are aware, it has grown very much in the last 20 years. So it has reduced slightly, proportionally, compared to all dwellings, but we maintain—

MRS JONES: What is that number?

Ms Overton-Clarke: I can get that number for you, but I do not have it on hand. It is of the order of seven per cent of all households.

MS BERRY: And as for social housing in the inner north along with this change—I know it is going to be staggered so I do not want to put any fear in anyone—I have two questions. With the options for people to live in the inner city, how far from the actual city to the rail project will they be living? And what are the social justice outcomes of having people live in the city rather than out in the suburbs?

Ms Overton-Clarke: The actual distance has not yet been specifically determined, because we are still looking at where all of those parcels of land would be and we are talking to private landowners. So the actual land components have not yet been decided. But we are very mindful that we want to make sure we are close to public transport—800 metres to a kilometre from the tram, bus or whatever. And, as the minister was saying, certainly in terms of how we purchase properties and where we purchase them and build across Canberra—it is very much all of those things weighted together. There are families who prefer to live in areas that are closer to schools, which may well be suburban areas, versus singles who prefer to live in the middle of or close to a town centre. It is really important for us to maintain a variety of housing types across the city.

MS BERRY: I understand the comments you were making before about people choosing to live out in the suburbs because of relationships, family, schools and things like that. I do not want to tell you how to suck eggs or anything, but there are lots of people in public housing who need more assistance, so living closer to services in the inner city would be more beneficial for them. I guess that is the question that I am asking: for those people, will there be enough housing for the people who need it in the city?

Ms Overton-Clarke: It is probably better to talk about the way that we are responding to those who need more assistance. Rather than on a locational basis, it is actually about the supports that housing managers are giving. With that recognition, we are moving to a differential type of response for public housing tenants. We are recognising that there are different types of tenants, some of whom need assistance more than others. Part of this work, which we have termed “modernising tenancies”, is actually about housing managers working much more closely with the NGOs and community services, both within government and in the non-government sector, wherever those tenants are. We really have a very good network across Canberra, both through the regional community services and through charities which provide a network of support. So whilst we will be part of the west Belconnen trial—that is, the trial of the human services blueprint—and we are really excited about that, really the support has got more to do with the type of tenant that we have than specifically about the location that we are in.

I can ask Mr Duggan to talk a bit more about that modernising tenancies approach if you would like more information.

MS BERRY: I will leave it for the moment and let some other people ask some questions.

MRS JONES: I have a supplementary. We had some discussions, minister, with Minister Barr about the cost of living for people who are in their own homes at the moment. Are there any calculations going on from Housing about any expected extra pressure for households that are somewhat marginal at the moment because of the increased rates burden? As we described it at the beginning of the week, some people are really using everything that they have, and the fear is that there will be a tranche of people for whom it may become too hard to stay in their own homes. Some of them obviously can go into private rental, but that puts pressure on the private rental market.

My question to you is: is there any proactive consideration being given to any new tranche of people who may be applying for public housing? What is the formula that you use to determine the proportion of public housing that we have in the ACT? Is there a rigour behind that or is it more of a historical legacy regarding the fact that we had a housing program for new employees to come to the territory many years ago? What is your take on what is enough? We have been discussing it for a week and a half now.

Mr Rattenbury: Again, I will try to take that in parts. In terms of pressure on people, cost of living issues and the like, certainly the approach on housing is that people are charged 25 per cent of their income as their rent. There is at least an annual assessment of that for all tenants. On top of that there are a number of rebates that are available to tenants for particular reasons. The maximum amount that someone is charged is 25 per cent and then there are people that are paying less than that as a proportion of their income. So as their income moves, that can change as well. As you may be aware, the definition of housing stress sits at 30 per cent of your income. So it is designed to sit below that point of someone being in housing stress.

MRS JONES: That is how you assess the cost of living in the public house, but I am talking about assessing an increased demand for public housing as a result of the rates policy, if that occurs. Are you studying what you will do if that is the case?

Mr Rattenbury: We could probably debate whether the change in the rates policy is going to drive an increase in public housing demand. I disagree with the premise.

MRS JONES: I am not asking for your agreement with the premise; I am saying I have demonstrated already in this committee—when you were not here, I am afraid, and I am happy to go through those numbers again—that there are plenty of people in this city who are working people and who are going to find it more difficult if we have a 10 per cent increase per year. I am more than happy to debate who that is going to affect and by how much, but there will be some people who are pushed out of housing and on to rental. Are you saying that you are not doing any assessment of whether there will be an increase as a result over the next few years of rates increases? It is becoming harder to afford to buy here. That is an undisputed fact.

Mr Rattenbury: We could have a very large debate about the affordability of housing in the ACT, median salaries and the like. From a public housing point of view, which is what this portfolio is responsible for, I have explained how we charge rent. Certainly, Housing seeks to provide as many properties as it can.

That said, it is clear—and you touched on this earlier in your question—that the bulk of the public housing properties perhaps come from a historical legacy, at a time when there was a greater investment in public housing than is currently the case. Certainly, in terms of cost of living what we have seen in the last 12 months is that rents across the ACT, for example, have dropped. That varies in terms of the lower end and the higher end of the market. We have seen generally larger drops at the lower end of the rental market, but in the order of a six or seven per cent fall in rent in the last 12 months in the ACT. In terms of having a discussion about the cost of living and affordability, there is one measure that suggests at the moment we are seeing a

correction after the hyperpressure in recent years.

MRS JONES: In rents, you are saying?

Mr Rattenbury: Yes.

MRS JONES: That may also be to do with job losses and so on and softness in confidence in the market.

Mr Rattenbury: It could be. It could be to do with the fact—and this is for other ministers to discuss—that there has been a significant push to increase the availability of land and houses in recent years. Again we may be seeing a correction because of a supply side driver.

MRS JONES: We also have had reported in the budget a 15,000 block shortage. Even though the LDA claim to be delivering, they are not actually reaching their targets. So there is another whole debate to be had. But it is complex.

Mr Rattenbury: We have seen housing prices dropping in the ACT in recent times. All of these things have pluses and minuses. For those people who bought their houses 12 months ago when the pressure was on, they are now facing negative equity issues.

MRS JONES: For those people who have already paid stamp duty they are having to pay rates, which is a replacement for something they have already paid. So it is a long story and I understand that.

Mr Rattenbury: Which is why the transition is set over 20 years. Any change will produce transactional impacts.

MRS JONES: My claim is that at 10 per cent a year it is going to be tough for some people to survive. My substantive question is—

Mr Rattenbury: What about when it triples, Mrs Jones?

MRS JONES: If it triples then you will see more people selling up because they cannot survive. It is not actually a laughing matter. I am sorry that you think it is flippant because I am not here just to pursue some political angle. I know people who are struggling to make ends meet now. I understand that the Treasurer wants to make this change, but my claim is that it is going to put some people out of the housing that they are in because they are living at minus money already. Not that long ago I was in that situation where I was struggling to survive, but I do not want to go into that. I am just saying it is real; it is not unreal. And I know you care; I do believe that.

THE CHAIR: Ms Lawder has a question.

MS LAWDER: We started off talking about the number of public housing properties. You said, for example, Ainslie had a high proportion. In the budget papers for the Community Services Directorate, on page 40 item b. of the table shows that the estimated outcome for 2013-14 is 11,816 properties. In response to a recent question

that I placed on notice, I received a list from your department, which gives a total of 10,856 properties for the ACT, which is a difference of 940 properties. It was question on notice No 271 that you signed on 2 June. Where does the 940 properties difference come from?

Mr Rattenbury: They will be in a range of places. Ms Lawder, does the question on notice refer to the number of tenancies or the number of properties?

MS LAWDER: Housing ACT properties by suburb.

Mr Rattenbury: I would have to check this but I think the difference of around 900 reflects community housing properties and properties that are head leased by community organisations. I suspect that is the definitional issue there.

MS LAWDER: So the social housing in the budget is public and community combined?

Mr Rattenbury: Yes.

MS LAWDER: As a general ballpark figure you think there are around 900-ish community housing—

Mr Rattenbury: That is the number I have in my head.

MRS JONES: I have a substantive question. Minister, can you explain the proof of income test and the rental rate that people are charged? You have said it is 25 per cent of income. My understanding was that there were two measures and it was whichever was lower that was being used a couple of years ago. Has that now changed?

Ms Overton-Clarke: It is actually a fairly complicated formula. It depends on individuals. Depending on whether you are an individual or a family, it is calculated quite differently. There are a number of benefits that are included as income and a number that are not, including some commonwealth supplements. So it is not actually—

MRS JONES: Can you perhaps on notice provide to the committee a breakdown of how that works? From a policy angle, we would like to understand it.

Ms Overton-Clarke: It is on the website but I am very happy to provide that.

MRS JONES: Also with regard to income, how often does the proof of income get reported to the ACT? Did you say that was annually?

Ms Overton-Clarke: Yes, that is right.

MRS JONES: What happens if someone does not report their income?

Ms Overton-Clarke: They go onto a market rent scheme. Essentially everyone is charged market rent and then a rental rebate is applied after their application is assessed.

MRS JONES: So if they do not provide the annual reporting—

Ms Overton-Clarke: Rebate application then they—

MRS JONES: then they will pay market rent?

Ms Overton-Clarke: That is right, which is quite a good incentive to put in their rebate.

MRS JONES: How many people has that applied to in the last 12 months?

Ms Overton-Clarke: Ninety-five per cent of our tenants are on a rental rebate.

MRS JONES: I asked how many of them did not produce the proof of income and were then subsequently charged full market rate for a period of time?

Ms Overton-Clarke: I can get you that figure. It is a very low number.

MRS JONES: Thank you very much.

THE CHAIR: Ms Lawder, do you have a question?

MS LAWDER: Yes, I do. In the same table on page 40, in accountability indicator g., why are you expecting the average cost per dwelling of public housing to increase by 13 per cent over the coming year?

Mr Rattenbury: There are a range of factors that drive this and I will touch on a couple of them. One of them is simply increasing costs for a range of maintenance and basic building costs. The second factor that is driving this is the reduction in the number of properties. Because this is an average, with the reduced number of properties there is some upwards pressure on the average cost per property in that space.

The third factor is that in other parts of the budget there are increased overall costs for housing because of costs associated with demolition of properties. Those costs are in the order of \$10 million. They are then flowing through into the average cost because the average cost is basically a figure of the number of properties divided by Housing ACT's total expenses. Does that give you a feel for it?

MS LAWDER: Sure. You have a contract with Spotless to manage some of the contract. Is that contract adjusted to be less, given that there would be fewer properties for Spotless to manage?

Mr Collett: The contract with Spotless is a management fee and then reimbursement for the expenses that they provide. Both the overall spend, the overall budget, and the cost of the management of that which goes directly to Spotless are based on the size of the maintenance program, not the size of the portfolio.

THE CHAIR: A supplementary from Ms Berry.

MS BERRY: I am not sure whether this is the right place to ask about the contract with Spotless and whether or not they are meeting their obligations. I understood that they were managed to employ a certain number of people on supported wages. I cannot quite recall but I remember I asked this question last year and I wondered whether you could give us some information on that.

Mr Collett: Yes, I can. I can report that they are meeting their obligations. Whilst it has been a modest program in itself, it has been quite successful. We started off in earlier years with targets which were provided as a target rather than an obligation and with bonuses for achieving. After a number of years of Spotless working with the cohorts that we had identified, we were confident enough to move to include those as a contractual obligation in the current contract. It has moved from a target to something that they are contractually obligated to provide.

The program works for public housing tenants, people with a disability, young people and apprentices, and people with an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander background. Spotless have been broadly meeting their targets, and in fact exceeding their targets, in a number of those. We are in fact talking to Spotless about subcontracting initiatives that would see them increasing their capacity to engage those cohorts in employment.

MS BERRY: Are we able to have a breakdown of the targets and the different categories of people who are employed?

Mr Collett: I think I provided them previously, but I am certainly happy to provide them again and to provide information on how Spotless is performing against those targets.

MS BERRY: That would be useful. Did you say “subcontracting”?

Mr Collett: Yes.

MS BERRY: So you are asking Spotless to subcontract? You have a contract with Spotless and you want them to subcontract out to somebody else?

Mr Collett: No, we do not want them to. Largely, they subcontract; they do not have the licensed electricians, plumbers or staff. So their capacity to employ people in those target cohorts is limited because the bulk of the employment is actually by their subcontractors—the carpenters and those teams. If Spotless can be directly involved in the provision of some of the services, particularly around horticultural maintenance and common area cleaning, it gives an increased capacity to employ people in those targets.

MS LAWDER: I have a supplementary question on Spotless. Minister, you advised in response to another question on notice that Spotless is currently undertaking a property condition audit of all public housing properties that will include disability access, which will take five years. Is that part of the basic Spotless contract or is that a separate contract?

Mr Collett: That is part of the basic Spotless contract; so that is another refinement, I guess we could say, of the new contract that Spotless was successful in tendering for. We have moved what was an add-on to something which is core to their contract. It is probably worth noting that that is a revolving program. So we will move through our stock every five years, but we will continue to assess the condition of our stock as we have done under the previous contract. It is important to understand just what the standard of our properties is across the board, particularly in terms of disability modifications. It forms the basis of working out what our annual planned and programmed maintenance budget will be.

Mr Rattenbury: Ms Lawder, just to be clear, that condition audit is not just for disability. It is for the whole stock. It has a range of things in it including things like the EER rating. Disability is one component of the condition audit.

MS LAWDER: I just wonder why five years? Given that you have the ability to inspect every property twice each year, why is it going to take five years to do this?

Mr Collett: The inspections that you are talking about, in terms of having the capacity to do them twice a year, are carried out by the housing managers. They are targeted at looking at the condition of the property in terms of the tenancy, checking on the welfare of the tenants, household composition, income and a whole range of other areas including needs for special support that we might offer to our tenants or help them to access. The work that is done in terms of the condition audits is done by specialist contractors with training in building, energy efficiency and other qualifications. Its purpose is quite different in terms of assessing the economic life and the physical condition of the property.

MS LAWDER: The answer to that question on notice stated that there was currently no central record kept about disability properties. What process do you go through to allocate people with a disability who need a disability property and to try to match them to a property that has disability access? How do you manage that if you do not currently have some kind of record of properties with disability access?

Mr Collett: The vast majority of the disability modifications to properties have been carried out for people who have alerted us to their need after they have moved into public housing properties, either because of a degeneration in their condition or because the circumstances around their disability are due to a medical or a physical accident or to an emergency.

The turnover in people with disabilities from their properties has been much lower than the general tenancy turnover, not surprisingly, because they find it more difficult to find accommodation that has those modifications. Whilst there is a capacity within HomeNet, which is our IT system, to record disability modifications, and it has been done, it has not been done in a consistent and uniform way.

Now that NDIS and other changes in the disability space have increased our focus in that area, we are keen to make sure that we do make best use of the properties that we have provided disability modifications to. So we have included that in the condition assessment inspections that we are undertaking.

MS LAWDER: When you do get that information, will your computer system be able to adequately reflect all different types of modifications?

Mr Collett: Absolutely, and we will be able to run reports on that.

THE CHAIR: A supplementary on this issue from Ms Porter.

MS PORTER: Some time ago—I think long before I came into this place—I went to a series of seminars at COTA about housing for older people. One of the issues that was raised at the seminars was why we cannot build housing stock, and particularly in our renewal program that you were talking about, that has built-in accessibility already so that you will not have to go and change it afterwards.

It seems to me to be a waste of money to have to remodel for wider doorways, accessible bathrooms, making sure that there are no steps and things like that where it is possible—ramps instead of steps to an upper level. Those kinds of things should be built in because you never know at any stage when someone is going to be, as you have just rightly said, Mr Collett, needing to have an accessible home. Of course, as we are increasingly an ageing population, we need to be aware that this is the time of our lives when we are more likely to need that kind of home. I just wondered, minister, if you would like to comment on that.

Mr Collett: The point that you made, Ms Porter, is a very good one. That is part of the reason why under the nation building and job creation program all of the housing rebuilt for older persons—part of the downsizing program that Ms Overton-Clarke mentioned previously—was fully adaptable to class C standards to allow people to age in place. That was part of the attraction of those units and why they were so popular with their older tenants. In fact, it is the reason why our default design standards for any form of housing calls for it to be accessible under national standards and class C adaptable. Wherever we have got ground floor units or units that do not have significant constraints in terms of the site, that is what we are doing.

In 2013-14, 56 per cent of our stock, of our build, was accessible and 44 per cent was class C adaptable. Our target for 2014-15 is 21 per cent accessible and 79 per cent adaptable to class C standards. Yes, the increased need for people on a temporary or permanent basis to have improved mobility in their houses has been built into our design standards and into our program.

Mr Rattenbury: I might comment on that outside the public housing space, more with my Minister for Ageing hat on. I think that the challenge for us is also to work out how we motivate the private sector to also build this into an increasing number of private dwellings that are being constructed. Certainly, I had a recent conversation with the Housing Industry Association about this. Out of that some interesting discussions are flowing. A few people have approached me to say, “We have some ideas.” In suburbs like Molonglo where there are lots of new properties, I think we need to make sure that this is built in because, as you rightly touched on, it is much cheaper to do it up-front than to retrofit later.

MS PORTER: Thank you.

THE CHAIR: Minister, if you go to page 38 of the portfolio statement there is table 2, output class 1, social housing services. There is a substantial increase, some \$16 million. The total cost has gone from \$159 million to \$176 million. On the face of it, it looks fantastic until you read the notes that say that most of that \$16 million increase is, in fact, inclusions for depreciation and amortization. The real increase when you take the \$16.6 million out is only \$506,000, which is certainly less than WPI and it less than CPI. Does this mean that housing is going backwards in real terms or are you cutting back on services in some way?

Mr Rattenbury: Before I go to the accountants, as I touched on before, Mr Smyth, the bulk of that increase in costs actually is laid out on page 43 of the budget paper. You can see in the middle of that page under “other expenses” the substantial increase there this year. That goes to the earlier remark I was marking about the demolition costs that have been put in this year’s budget. That goes to the first part of your question. As to the second part of your question, Ian, have you—

THE CHAIR: Sorry, where are the other costs?

Mr Rattenbury: On page 43.

THE CHAIR: “Other expenses”, the \$17 million?

Mr Rattenbury: Yes. The increase you see there from 2013-14 to 2014-15 reflects a large part of that.

THE CHAIR: Sure. But does that not make it worse then or am I misreading this, Mr Hubbard?

Mr Hubbard: Can I get your question again, sorry?

THE CHAIR: Total costs have gone from \$159 million to \$176 million, except that in the notes it says that in the \$176 million is included \$16 million for depreciation and amortization. If we take that off, it brings it back to \$159,740.

Mr Rattenbury: Just before you respond, part of the actual bottom line for Housing ACT has been a reduction of the federal funding under NAHA. This year we have seen a further cut of \$1 million from the commonwealth to our budget. So that simply explains part of the loss, the impact on our revenue. That has been over the last couple of years an increasing ongoing reduction. It is now in the order of \$5 million compared to what it was three to four years ago. We have actually seen a loss of commonwealth funding in this space.

Mr Hubbard: I will pick up your question, Mr Smyth, and thanks for it. If you go down the expenses, you can see basically that employee expenses have gone up. You will see that they have gone up in the order of almost \$1 million. Supplies and services are probably the next area that has gone up. That is really related to property costs, increases in charges such as rates et cetera. That has picked up another \$4 million to \$5 million.

In fact, the most significant increase in the expenses is that increase of around

\$10 million or \$11 million in there. As the minister said earlier, that increase in expenses has really got to do with the provisioning for the write-off and demolition of the properties that we have put for replacement. There is a significant write-off of the value of some of the buildings that we are intending to demolish. Probably the biggest part of that \$11 million is actually the write-off of that value that is currently on the books. That is a technical adjustment we have to make through the accounts and that adds up to the increase in expenses that you are talking about.

THE CHAIR: When do you lose the asset value then? Do you do an annual revaluation?

Mr Hubbard: No, we are writing off the assets that we are planning to demolish. When we actually do, separately, asset revaluations each year, we do them for two purposes. As colleagues here have talked about, they are to get a good assessment of the market rent. That then reflects into the value of the properties. We do that asset revaluation each year because it is material. It is a very large property portfolio. We get independent valuers to do that and then that is brought into the balance sheet as you would normally in a big property portfolio.

THE CHAIR: Thank you. Ms Porter.

MS PORTER: Thank you very much, chair. Minister, on page 189 of budget paper 3, right up the top of the page in the summary of 2014-15 budget construction projects you will note that there is housing for older people in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community. Could you talk a bit more about that?

Mr Rattenbury: Yes, certainly. That is a matter that has arisen specifically from recommendations of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elected Body who particularly identified this as a need in the community, otherwise some of those older Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people would remain inappropriately housed. It is about providing culturally appropriate accommodation and also about addressing a specific gap, I suppose, in that part of our community.

MS PORTER: Will this be located like we were discussing before? Will it be salt and peppered through the community or will these be, because of the nature of the combination of the housing and the homes, in the community? I lived for a long, long time, as you are aware minister, with Indigenous people in a community in the Northern Territory. The way that I experienced community was very different to how I experience community here, which is us living in these little boxes isolated from one another for most of the time when we are at home.

This is not my experience of Indigenous communities. I know that we are talking about urban Indigenous communities here as opposed to the remote area living. But culturally, I would have thought that it would be more appropriate if there could be a more community style of living. Could you describe the vision for us a little bit more?

Mr Rattenbury: Yes, I think you have really hit on it there, Ms Porter, in a sense that the intent is to move to a cluster style model for the reasons that you have touched on in your comments. As I said earlier, it has been driven by the advice from the elected body. We will continue to consult with the Indigenous community to get it right but

there is a clear intent to go to a cluster approach so that there is a sense of community, that sense of shared living that is culturally relevant for our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community members.

The model we are looking at is a five by three living approach. Again, it goes to some comments I made earlier about the need for having space for carers, space for visiting relatives and the like.

THE CHAIR: Is there a location yet?

Mr Rattenbury: I do not believe we have one.

Ms Overton-Clarke: No. We are searching for a location. We thought that we had a provisional one but it has not sort of eventuated; so we are looking. We will firm that up with the new elected body once it comes in.

THE CHAIR: And how many units?

Ms Overton-Clarke: Five by three bedrooms.

THE CHAIR: And what consultation will be undertaken with the community?

Ms Overton-Clarke: As the minister said, we are doing that through the elected body. This has been something that they have been asking for over the last couple of years. We have been working with them quite closely, including taking them on bus tours to different sites to really sort of get a feel from them about what they think would be most appropriate.

Mr Rattenbury: In respect of the second half of your question, Mr Smyth, then of course there is the consultation for the construction process and the usual planning steps there.

Ms Overton-Clark: That is what we are also very cognisant of. We want to involve them in the design of the buildings as well.

THE CHAIR: Ms Berry.

MS BERRY: I wanted to have a bit more of a chat about social housing. How much social housing would we need to build to guarantee that no Canberra family lived in housing stress? It is not a trick question.

Mr Rattenbury: No; it is a hard question.

MS BERRY: You can say you do not know.

Mr Rattenbury: It goes to some of the issues Mrs Jones was raising before. I will give you a couple of answers. One is that we have got around 2,500 people on our waiting lists—or 2,500 registered; some of them represent family groups. We also know that there are a significant group of people who are sitting just above eligibility for public housing who are working, and I think this goes to the point you were

making before, and who are struggling. They are the ones that would perhaps best be suited for the social housing model where you pay 75 per cent of market rent. The estimate we have of that number of people is—I am just trying to think—about 8,000 families in the ACT, 8,000 households. Is that right?

Ms Overton-Clarke: Yes, that is right.

Mr Rattenbury: So I cannot give an exact answer to your question but perhaps that gives you a feel for the sorts of numbers.

MS BERRY: And the response to those families can be different.

Ms Overton-Clarke: Yes. That work was done before the work that the minister was talking about—the Real Estate Institute figures. The work that we did to identify that cohort was a couple of years ago, so that may or may not have changed now that private rents have shifted in the ACT.

MS BERRY: I know that we have been talking a bit about this, but it seems that it is becoming increasingly apparent that affordable housing, that model, does not provide a link for people in that type of social housing into private rental or into home ownership, because they just cannot afford it; there is too large a gap. Would you say that that is a fair assessment?

Mr Rattenbury: Yes. I just describe it as a price shock gap between public housing and the next—moving into even affordable rental, let alone the private market. There is a cohort of people in the middle there for whom there are significant issues in our community. That is what I am interested in. I spoke earlier about the banded model of rent through the affordable rental office. I am interested there to see whether we have a capacity to—Housing ACT's policy in recent years has been to support those most in need, which is appropriate at one level. It is entirely appropriate that the most needy people get prioritisation, if you like, within the system.

MRS JONES: Triage, yes.

Mr Rattenbury: Yes, but at the same time I am interested in how we can deal with people that are caught in the middle, for want of a better expression, for which—

MS BERRY: I would be interested in your interest in that.

Mr Rattenbury: Sorry?

MS BERRY: I would be interested in your interest in that.

Mr Rattenbury: We have discussed our policy level, but I do not think anybody really has a strong answer to it outside of what would be a very significant capital injection. This goes to where we started your question: how much social housing would you need to build? It would be in the order of billions of dollars of social housing.

Ms Howson: I think one of the things that I could add to that is that across

government we are doing some work on the community housing sector itself and how we can strengthen that sector. We are also exploring a range of different models of financing for investment in the development of new community housing products. That is at the very preliminary stages of some policy work, but we are very interested in how things like social bonds will work, through the investment the New South Wales government is doing in that area, for example. And there are other investment bodies that are interested in exploring models—not necessarily for profit but positive investments into social outcomes—that are occasionally coming to speak to us. So at the very early stages of this work, it is something that the Treasurer is very interested in progressing, and we will be doing more on this over the next 12 months.

Ms Overton-Clarke: The other component is that we are working closely with the Real Estate Institute on an initiative for getting some direct information to potential Housing tenants—applicants who come to Housing to apply for public housing but maybe are not quite aware of what is available in the private rental stock. We have been working closely with the institute to have, through Allhomes, a particular sector of that market available to applicants as they come into the central access point in Belconnen. And we have a single housing register with community housing. So we work very closely across all the different sectors to make sure that those who apply who may not immediately get housed because they are not the high priority clients realise that there are other types of housing that we can offer, and we can help them into that from a single point.

THE CHAIR: Mrs Jones.

MRS JONES: I want to check that 8,000. Is that 8,000 that are assessed to be in housing stress? Is that what you were saying? No?

Ms Overton-Clarke: It is 8,000 who have similar circumstances to those who would be in housing stress, yes.

Ms Howson: I think it is important to emphasise, though, that that data is old, and it has not taken account of some of the information that is now flowing through in terms of affordability. We would expect it to be something less than that.

MRS JONES: One of the community groups who spoke to us was talking about the number of people on the list and saying that if you clear the list, the list will go up again.

Ms Howson: That is right. There is a bit of an art to managing waiting lists to ensure that you have appropriate—

MRS JONES: Criteria.

Ms Howson: Yes, through your system.

MRS JONES: Yes, absolutely. Regarding rent in arrears, from the budget papers my reading is that 82 per cent will be achieved of not in arrears for 2013-14, on page 40.

Ms Overton-Clarke: I think that is 82 per cent who are on a rental repayment plan

who have arrears over \$500.

MRS JONES: Okay. So when someone gets in arrears over \$500 they go on to a rental plan. How many people are on those plans?

Ms Overton-Clarke: It is 82 per cent of those who are in debt over \$500.

MRS JONES: How many people are in debt over \$500? What is the actual number?

Ms Howson: We might need to take that on notice.

Mr Rattenbury: We have 640 tenancies in arrears over \$500.

MRS JONES: That is a little less than the previous year, at 85 per cent, and the budget, of 90 per cent. What actions are going on to get that to a higher compliance rate?

Ms Overton-Clarke: I might get Frank Duggan to talk about the debt project that we have undertaken and are implementing. What we realise is that we need to work much more closely with tenants in terms of their—

MRS JONES: Budgeting?

Ms Overton-Clarke: Exactly, and understanding their obligations and priorities around rental payments at the time of sign-up. When we tracked exactly how tenants escalate into debt, it really showed that that first three-month period of when they first start the tenancy is crucial. I will just hand over.

MRS JONES: Early intervention, yes.

Mr Duggan: We have been very conscious that that is probably the most important phase of someone signing up to their tenancy—that they understand exactly their commitments and the work that they and we need to do in that space. We have actually changed our housing program—I think it has been discussed earlier—into the modernising tenancy approach where we are actually defining the need and then applying the resource against the need. So in future, when you sign up with us, we will take you through the whole process of sign-up, work with you about your financial literacy, and support you as you enter the tenancy agreement. In that period, too, we will escalate our visits, depending on the assessment we have made of you, so that we can engage you more readily—rather than waiting for the third month, when we are obligated to go out and see you. And then, in that space, we will work very proactively with people. The research we have found is that the best thing we can do in that space is get people onto the direct debit process with us.

MRS JONES: Yes. We are all in that space.

Mr Duggan: Yes. We are really trying to build a relationship with the individual, because the more we build the relationship the better we can actually engage them about the issues.

MRS JONES: Is there a social worker involved early on, or is that only if you actually present with an inability to manage?

Mr Duggan: Besides myself and another social worker in the agency at Housing, we are changing our whole model in the framework of the social housing perspective, where we actually do engage people. We are trying to take it into that more engaged process of building relationships with people at an earlier stage and changing our whole models. What we will do in the first six months is hold you in what we call the stability intake team, where our interventions will be higher and our communications with you will be stronger. From that, we will make a decision after six months to put you into the normal tenancy management stream. Or, effectively, if issues are still there, we will introduce another intensive screen where you will actually receive intensive services to try to help you sustain your tenancy.

We are also working with the community sector in this space. We are beginning to do a lot of work around pre-allocations. When you apply for housing, there is a period before you will be housed. We are starting to work with agencies, including the child and family centres. If that is your area of choice or if that is the community centre, for example, Lanyon, we will be working with that community agency in Lanyon and trying to build supports around your family, if that is the issue. Or if you are an older person, we run linkages into your community et cetera so that we can actually engage people into tenancy and sustain it more readily.

Ms Overton-Clarke: One of the other things I will add is that, with the development of the single human services gateway, which was also funded in this year's budget, the sustaining tenancy service, which is through a number of non-government organisations, will come into the gateway. That goes across private rentals as well as public housing rentals. They will be working very closely with the housing managers and other support mechanisms, so we will have both the gateway services and housing managers working closely to support tenants.

MRS JONES: I was just going to ask this. With the change of mentality to more of a one contact with government type of approach that the whole department seems to be taking, minister, is that something that you are working on with Minister Burch, in collaboration? If we are changing the way that we are dealing with people in crisis or in need, and housing is a part of that as well, can you update us on how?

Mr Rattenbury: Yes, certainly. It is all being done through Community Services Directorate, so in that sense, with Natalie as the director-general, she reports to three ministers. In some ways that is—

Ms Howson: It is a luxury. It is a pleasure.

Mr Rattenbury: What it does do is, in some ways, despite the three points there, embed it more deeply in government in the sense that we have all got a finger on it.

MRS JONES: And realising what is going on.

Mr Rattenbury: Yes, so I think it has, in some ways, actually made it even more supported through government, because each of us has got an understanding of the

project.

MRS JONES: Is there work to enable people to have the skills and the ability to move out of public housing at some stage into a home that they own? I mean we are talking about the stresses that are pushing people back in, but are we also, as part of that change of mentality, trying to think about independence and think about back the other way as well?

Ms Overton-Clarke: Certainly one of the schemes we have is the shared equity scheme. At any point you can approach Housing to buy your home. But you can also do it with government taking part of that burden through the shared equity scheme. We do encourage tenants to become home owners.

MRS JONES: Do you perhaps pick off some people, who you think have been good tenants and are well and truly able to manage, to do some one-on-one work with the intention of empowering them as well? Do you do testing of that as a concept? Is there any plan in the future to try and empower people in that way? Maybe you could even do a trial on a few people who are really strong in their tenancies and could do that?

Ms Overton-Clarke: We certainly recognise that some tenants have a number of sources of income. It is certainly not by any means that all tenants have Centrelink payments. There are a number of tenants who have casual wages, who are working as well. Those are the ones where we tend to say, "You don't need that intensive support." The whole reason that we are moving to modernising tenancies is to be able to have a differential approach to tenants.

MRS JONES: That is what I am saying. Is there ever any attempt to assist people to become more independent and move out of public housing if they are capable of that? I think we all know that, historically, there have been some individual cases of some fairly well-off people who have remained in public housing and the policy space has been that there would be no cutting off of supply to them. But we are moving into a more modern space. Are we also then saying this is more something for the very pointy end of need in the ACT and we are trying to push those who do not need it into something that is more appropriate for them?

Ms Overton-Clarke: Yes. We have a cut-off in terms of, if you earn over \$95,000, we work with you to encourage you to move into a different form of accommodation, which often may well be buying the house that you are located in. Yes, we do have that policy.

Ms Howson: I might just add that we are involved in a couple of innovative housing programs at the moment particularly focused on our Disability clients. We are looking at how they can inject equity into the properties in which they live and then, as we all do, grow their own personal wealth as a result of the sale of that property if they choose to move on to others. That is a project that we call project independence.

MRS JONES: That is like where their rental payments go into equity in their own home?

Ms Howson: Yes. It is looking again at different finance models that at least provide incentives for those individuals and their families to invest some equity into the capital asset. As that person then chooses to move to a different style of housing, they can withdraw that equity and use it to leverage their next purchase or their next accommodation arrangement. We are exploring those sorts of things.

As to your comment about incentivising economic participation and participation in the labour market, our strategic indicators go directly to community participation and employment; so seeing housing as a support to optimise—

MRS JONES: Yes, because you have access to a group of people who would benefit if that was possible for them.

Ms Howson: That is right. As we mature into our modernising tenancy model and we start to explore—and we are doing that work, as I mentioned earlier, on how we measure the outcomes that we achieve. The strategic goals of the directorate do centre around participation outcomes—that is, both social and economic participation outcomes. We will start to identify measures in a whole-of-system approach: are we actually supporting people to more effectively participate both socially and economically? I think we will see some of that come through.

You talked about a specific trial. Probably the best place that we will see some of that emerging is through the strengthening families work that we do. As we get into the evaluation around our modernising tenancies, we will start to see where those interventions may not have necessarily led to a person being able to exit public housing but will demonstrate that they are engaged in education and training and/or they are engaged in employment and it is more sustainable.

THE CHAIR: Ms Porter had a supplementary on this, and then we will go to Ms Lawder.

MS PORTER: I think most of what you have said has covered my supplementary—except, Mr Duggan, you spoke a lot about people entering into a tenancy, but the work that you have been discussing is work that you were doing with people who have been in tenancies for a long time as well. So it is not necessarily just to do with families as you identify them as they come into the system. As we are all aware, people go up and down from time to time. In their tenancies, people might be managing quite well and getting on top of things and then every now and again the world can come apart. So there is this continual work that needs to be done. I just want to be assured that that is happening.

Mr Duggan: I am sorry; I probably did not explain it fully, Ms Porter. It is a three-tiered approach, so I did concentrate on the intake and stabilisation for new tenancies. We will analyse how you are travelling. We have done a data profile of all our tenancies at the moment to understand who is okay in their tenancy and who may be at risk or in need. We have analysed that data. It will be a three-tiered approach. One will be the intake and stabilisation. The middle, which is the majority of our tenancies, will be people who are self-empowered to get on with their lives within their tenancy. And then we have the intensive stream. The intensive stream is picking up both those in need—the elderly or culturally and linguistically diverse—and those at risk. Within

that portfolio we will reduce our tenancy allocation to about 50 houses, 50 tenants, and we will have intensive services in there.

We also recognise that at any one time you could be in need but at other times you could be absolutely stable, so we will work within those spaces to try to get people back to sustaining their tenancies and really getting on with their life, as we all do. The actual project goes from the start to during and to the end of your agreement with us.

THE CHAIR: The total arrears currently are how much?

Ms Overton-Clarke: \$1,296,324.97.

THE CHAIR: Thank you. What was it this time last year, at 30 June last year?

Ms Overton-Clarke: I will need to get you that.

THE CHAIR: That is okay. Ms Berry, a supplementary, and then Ms Lawder can have the last question of the session.

MS BERRY: Just regarding people who live in public housing. I have raised a few of these with you, minister, and I know it is complicated, but people who are the primary carer for the tenant in a public housing home and then the tenant passes away and the primary carer, who is usually a son or a daughter of the tenant, has no income other than the income that they received as being a primary carer or, even less than that, they might have had some other health needs. Then because they are not the tenant, they get moved out of the home and they have got nowhere else to live. I know that this has some complications because there are people on the list that might be slightly higher priority. I am probably asking about something that does not really have an answer.

Mr Rattenbury: It does happen. I have had a few examples come across my desk. Do you want to talk about how we deal with it?

THE CHAIR: This is estimates; everything has an answer.

MS BERRY: I know, but it is not an answer that we always want to hear. That is the trick, isn't it, Mr Smyth?

Mr Duggan: I think primarily we treat each circumstance as it is presented. There have been occasions when people have been asked to leave the tenancy. There also have been occasions when we have signed people into the tenancy. That occurs potentially when people have not been on the actual tenancy agreement but have lived with their parent for 10, 15 or 20 years. So we assess the issue, determine what the circumstances are and then deal with it on an individual case-by-case basis. I have signed off quite a lot of people that were retained in the tenancy because it is implied that they have spent almost 20 years caring for the adult and helping the community connectedness in the vicinity, and the housing stock meets their needs.

MS LAWDER: I note you have included in the budget the national partnership

agreement on homelessness funding. Has the ACT signed up to the commonwealth one-year extension?

Mr Rattenbury: The agreement has not been formally signed as such, but certainly the ACT is committed. As I am sure you know, Ms Lawder, it is matched funding. We have certainly indicated to the commonwealth our desire and willingness to match. So we are now just moving through the formalities of actually signing the agreement. There has been a bit of back and forth on the content.

Ms Overton-Clarke: It is only because we have only just received the formal agreement from the commonwealth. That will go to government within the next couple of weeks, but, as the minister has said, we have matched it in the budget in anticipation.

MS LAWDER: Last year's amount, I recall—I think you alluded to this in your opening statement, Minister Rattenbury—included an amount for Common Ground as well?

Mr Rattenbury: Yes.

MS LAWDER: Is that required to be expended by 30 June, or was it the end of the calendar year?

Mr Rattenbury: 30 December, the end of this year, which is why we are aiming to have Common Ground finished by the end of December to match that commonwealth funding requirement.

MS LAWDER: And the contract? 30 December?

Mr Rattenbury: Yes.

MS LAWDER: What happens if it is not finished?

Ms Howson: It will be finished.

Mr Rattenbury: It is not an option we are contemplating.

The sitting suspended from 4.26 to 4.42 pm.

THE CHAIR: Minister, thank you to you and your staff for coming back so promptly. We are back on 3.1, community relations. Specifically, minister, we are looking at ageing and services for seniors in the ACT. Do you want to make a statement?

Mr Rattenbury: Yes, I will make a couple of brief remarks. Ageing is, of course, run through the community participation group. They have been very active in the last 12 months, since last estimates. In particular, in October 2013 the group organised the first-ever Australian conference on age-friendly cities and communities, which attracted delegates from approximately 40 local governments from all states and territories as well as delegates from five state governments. It was a very interesting event. I think Ms Porter went to some of it and other members may have.

Out of that, the ACT government agreed to host an online social media forum to try and move forward an Australian network of age-friendly cities and communities. We have also just presented the first age-friendly awards for businesses, in partnership with the chamber of commerce. I think that was very successful for the first year, with an award for those that employ mature workers and those that were older customer focused. I am pleased with the way that went and hopefully next year we will see even more nominations for it.

We have a range of other events going on, such as the silver screenings program. The group does a lot of what might be called social inclusion projects to bring forward opportunities for older people. Of course, we are now well into the throes of preparing for the second ACT older persons assembly, which is scheduled to be held on 1 October this year. There have been a number of community consultations already, and we will shortly be moving to formalise the list of delegates that will be invited to that event. I will leave it at that quick overview again and we can go to questions.

THE CHAIR: Thanks for that, minister. A number of the groups that appeared on the community days made reference particularly to older women and some of the problems they face, particularly with accommodation. I know there is a crossover with the area we have just finished, but what is specifically being done for older women in regard to crisis accommodation and accessing that?

Mr Rattenbury: There are probably a range of answers there, Mr Smyth. Firstly, we know that around 36 per cent of public housing tenants are older women, so it is quite a substantial proportion of our public housing tenancies. In addition, I spoke earlier about the approach we have taken with the affordable rental office. In that group of clients we had a number of older women as a particular group. So the same issues floated up for them.

What we have seen across the community is the emergence of accommodation for older women as a real issue. They are finding that they end up widowed, divorced or in some other circumstances in their lives; they have perhaps not worked and do not have the asset base, superannuation and the like. This is what really brings the issue to the fore. Outside that, there is the range of crisis accommodation services, which I am happy to go into more detail on, but perhaps that starts to answer the question.

THE CHAIR: Perhaps you could give a little expose on crisis accommodation.

Mr Rattenbury: Yes, certainly. Again, there are a range of providers. One of the interesting examples is an approach taken by the YWCA, who built a house in Spence. Members know about it so I will not talk about it for too long, but that was a very interesting model where they essentially took one large house and created five or six independent units within it but with a common space. That is a really interesting model because there is a benefit and a joy that come from people sharing a space while having their own privacy. I think that is a very interesting model from the Y. I know the government is interested in supporting more projects like that. Of course, there are other crisis services around domestic violence and the range of issues that unfortunately arise in that space.

THE CHAIR: Ms Porter, a new question?

MS PORTER: Yes, I have. The last comment you made about Spence reminds me of the Abbeyfield model.

Ms Howson: For people with a disability.

MS PORTER: No, Abbeyfield was for older women as well.

Ms Howson: From other jurisdictions.

MS PORTER: From Turner or somewhere over there—north Ainslie, I think. I do not know what has happened to that. You talked before about the age-friendly city conference, which was fantastic. We did have some international contributors there at the time. In a general sense, what is coming out of that in policy directions and things that we have learnt? How can greater social inclusion be encouraged from what we learnt at that conference?

Mr Rattenbury: In terms of being an age-friendly city, there were a number of outputs from the conference. The first were some specific ideas that we have taken up. One of them was that, in partnership with TAMS, we are looking at doing two suburbs that we identify in audit and then work on to make them age-friendly suburbs, as a way of trying to think about what it takes to create the physical infrastructure to make a suburb age friendly. Some of it is quite obvious—footpaths, for example. We are doing that project in partnership with TAMS at the moment.

A number of the themes have continued in discussions through the community fora on preparations for the older persons assembly. Certainly, one of the criteria for people becoming eligible for the older persons assembly will be that they went to the conference last year. So we are starting to build up a bit of a continuing dialogue with some key community leaders.

The other thing that became very clear out of the conference is that an age-friendly city is not simply about infrastructure. Again, whilst that might seem obvious, in some ways it is also easy to slip into a space that says it is all about physical assets. That in some ways brings us to your observations about social inclusion. Certainly, the office does a range of things. I touched earlier on the seniors film festival. I refer also to the life's reflections photographic competition, which promotes images of older people and, through that process, encourages particularly shots of people doing things in the community. There are some great photos of people in a range of clubs. I refer also to things like Seniors Week. These all fit into the notion of being an age-friendly city while also going to that issue of social inclusion.

The ministerial advisory council have just revamped their membership. We have some new members on board. There is a real energy in the ministerial advisory council. One of their key considerations is social inclusion. They now have a specific work program that they are developing. They are engaging in the next version of the positive ageing plan. They are bringing that social inclusion theme through into the positive ageing plan.

MS PORTER: How does the advisory committee consult with the community of older persons in order to actually provide advice?

Mr Rattenbury: In a range of ways. Some of them come as representatives of particular sectors. For example, the Council on the Ageing is represented on the group. There are some people who come from the retirement industry, who bring that particular perspective. Others come from a range of backgrounds. Not all of them have a formal basis on which they are represented. What I am pleased about is that members are starting to take the initiative. For example, I recently went to a public housing site for older tenants. One of the MACA members had been in touch with those tenants and they had raised a range of issues. She approached me and said, "Can you come and meet all of these people?" I went and saw them through one of the MACA members making that representation. I have said to them, "Please go out and make whatever connections you can and we will try and support that." So there is a range of ways.

MS PORTER: You mentioned older workers in your introduction.

Mr Rattenbury: Yes, I touched on it.

MS PORTER: What are you doing to encourage older people to remain in the paid workforce or at least encourage the public service to help older people remain in the paid workforce or to obtain positions in the paid workforce, in the public service? Also, what are you doing to encourage the private sector in a similar vein? I am particularly interested in this in light of the fact that there are a lot of reports lately of people who are saying it is very difficult for them if they lose their job to get back into employment. This has been in the media a lot because of the federal government's suggestion that the retirement age be raised to 70. That has brought a lot of people out of the woodwork to talk about this, but it has always been an issue, as far as I can see.

Mr Rattenbury: I think you are right. I think the recent discussion around the retirement age has brought it into focus. But in the entire time I have held the portfolio it has been an issue that is very strongly out there—a sense that older people find it hard to get a job. Related to that, I have had some very interesting conversations with older people who say, "My life expectancy now is 80, 85. I don't want to retire at 65. I'm full of energy. I don't want to spend that long; I don't have enough money." There is a range of factors there.

There is no doubt that there is a reluctance on the part of employers to engage older employees, and there is a range of reasons for that. In terms of the private sector, I spoke about our initiative with the chamber of commerce. Whilst that is a small initiative in a way, it has provided a platform. At the chamber of commerce awards, I presented the award and I was able to give a small speech. That meant I was able to engage those 300 people in the room about the issue. That is what we are trying to achieve—simply to get the conversation going, as much as anything.

From an ACT public service perspective, a number of things have been put in place. There are increasing efforts for job sharing. I will step back from the specifics. There is an endeavour to make the workplace age friendly and recognise that older people often, as grandparents, have caring responsibilities and the like. So measures are being

put in place to try and reflect that—whether it is job sharing, part-time work or the specific inclusion of grandparents leave as part of the employment conditions. Those sorts of things are being put in place to make it more practical for older people to remain in the workplace.

The last thing I mention is that we are involved with the ANU on a piece of research work around making workplaces more age friendly, to provide us with that intellectual rigour, I suppose.

THE CHAIR: Mrs Jones, a new question?

MRS JONES: Yes, I want to go to the grant that was administered. On page 14 of the portfolio budget statement, at point f., what are the details of the one grant to be administered in the current financial year, what is the total cost of the grant and why is only one grant being allocated considering the rising ageing demographic?

Mr Rattenbury: It is actually a grant program, so there are a number of grants within it.

MRS JONES: Do you want to expand the knowledge of the grant program for me?

Mr Rattenbury: Yes, certainly. I will ask Mr Manikis to provide the detail.

MRS JONES: I think it must be ending or changing in the outyears.

Ms Howson: We are changing the measure.

Mr Rattenbury: Just on the measure ending as such, this goes to my earlier observations around the fact that I do not think the administration of grants programs or supporting ministerial councils is a great indicator. We are working on purging those out of the system, if you like.

MRS JONES: As in they will still exist but they will not be reported on?

Mr Rattenbury: Yes, they will not be there as an indicator. As with the tenor of your question, to some extent, it is not a great way of measuring what we are doing.

MRS JONES: No, but will they still be reported in the financial lines?

Mr Rattenbury: They will be in the annual reports. So for the details of the program I will go to Mr Manikis.

Mr Manikis: We have got a participation seniors grant program. This grants program was introduced back in 2004. It is funding to individuals and organisations to develop activities that promote positive ageing in the ACT—that is, to support older Canberrans to maintain their wellbeing and remain active in their community. In the 2014-15 participation seniors grants—so it is continuing—priority will be given to projects that promote Canberra as an age-friendly city, including projects that address social isolation by providing opportunities for the social inclusion of seniors and healthy ageing strategies.

We use an online system for these grants, SmartyGrants. It is an administration system that has served us quite well in the past. In 2013-14 grants program we received 47 applications, and we will get the details of the successful applications in the annual report for 2013-14. Priorities for funding are aligned to the priorities and goals of the ACT strategic plan for positive ageing 2010-14. Specifically, projects are sought that encourage and support older Canberrans to access information about healthy living, support services, products, entitlements, community groups and clubs. So it is access to those things.

MRS JONES: So are these grants to individuals or to organisations?

Mr Manikis: To organisations. Grants can be made for projects that promote information, communication and technology and training for seniors, projects that share existing skills, experiences and knowledge with others, projects that enable participation in planning and developing appropriate and accessible support services, projects that maximise personal and financial safety, and projects that impart new skills, the learning of new skills and expand interests through recreational, educational, volunteer or employment opportunities and planning for retirement as well. The pool of money enables the community groups to get out there and do projects that touch quite a few seniors or have a lot of seniors involved.

THE CHAIR: Mr Doszpot.

MR DOSZPOT: Minister, on page 14 of the same document Mrs Jones was referring to, a number of community capacity-building projects are supported. My question in relation to ageing is: how many of the 15 projects listed there as being supported were ageing related, and what were they?

Mr Rutledge: We will provide a list for you after the hearing, but I know those community development projects support things such as Southside Community Services and Northside Community Services under a social inclusion banner. They are run by those community orgs. I am sure if you asked those organisations they would say that all of their programs are inclusive of older people. How many of them are specific to older people, I will get back to you with that on that list.

MR DOSZPOT: In relation specifically to older people, in budget paper 3, page 203, there is reference to the replacement of the Canberra Seniors Centre. The design works for the replacement of that Canberra Seniors Centre was due for completion in June 2014. In this year's budget it is now being rolled over to June 2015. What is the reason for that?

Ms Howson: I might need to take that on notice, Mr Doszpot. We have excused our Housing colleagues who are actually responsible for the management of that particular piece of work. I am not sure of the specific reason for that rollover. But, in general, it is usually because there have been some delays in getting agreement around the terms of reference. What we see is that the project is virtually complete but in accounting terms we have not been able to—

MR DOSZPOT: This is the Turner site we are referring to?

Ms Howson: Yes.

MR DOSZPOT: Where the actual site belongs to the current community there, as I understand.

Mr Rattenbury: Yes.

MR DOSZPOT: Have any formal arrangements been put in place to protect the ownership of what they currently own and what is going to happen with the new building being planned?

Mr Rattenbury: I have not had a discussion with them for a while, Mr Doszpot. Minister Barr has the lead on this as community facilities.

MR DOSZPOT: But you are involved in—

Mr Rattenbury: Yes, I have certainly had discussions with them about their aspirations of what they want to do. They are interested in moving sites. They find the current site problematic for parking, in particular, because it is right on the edge of the city and a lot of the parking gets taken by all-day parkers, despite efforts by TAMS and others to designate some parking as short term. They are interested in exploring a different site, so that will be part of the equation.

MR DOSZPOT: And they have outgrown it, and that is part of the bigger problem.

Mr Rattenbury: That is certainly another part of it as well.

Ms Howson: Site location is material to design, so it may be that the two issues are related. But we will need to get—

MR DOSZPOT: But I am trying to understand—and I believe the community is trying to understand—what will happen to the management. I believe there have been no discussions on this up to date. They are looking at being able to control their own destiny and having the management of the premises themselves. There is some thought in the community that this would come under the auspices of Community Services rather than them being able to manage it themselves. Has that been discussed or reaffirmed?

Mr Rattenbury: I certainly know that discussion has been around, but that level of detail would be best put to Mr Barr because his agency is responsible for the contract negotiations.

MR DOSZPOT: Would you be supporting such a move yourself?

Mr Rattenbury: A move to what, sorry?

MR DOSZPOT: A move to ensure that there is protection of their current ownership and that that is translated into the new entity, the new building, that is being looked at?

Mr Rattenbury: I think I would want to have a chat to them about what their aspirations are. I have talked to them in the past, but there is a range of possible models. They obviously have a level of equity and a level of ownership of the current property. What the new property looks like and what the arrangements are, there is a range of permutations. I would hate to preclude anything at this point, but it is obviously critical that the seniors have a big say in what that is. They should not be railroaded into saying they do not want—

MR DOSZPOT: Well, I am not trying to railroad you into anything.

Mr Rattenbury: No, I said they should not be railroaded into something that does not suit them.

MR DOSZPOT: Their concern is that a lot of money has been earmarked for assessing where they should go, and yet they do not have a feeling of comfort about their ability to control their own destiny, if that makes sense. Should there be more discussions with them at this point?

Mr Rattenbury: The best thing I could do is take that on board. I have not heard that feedback recently. I ran into the president, David Rymer, at a function recently and he did not mention it. But next time I see him I will specifically mention it.

MR DOSZPOT: I understand that they would appreciate some recognition of what they currently own and making sure that, as the Minister for Ageing, you look to the interests of the ageing community there. You and I have had discussions on these sorts of things before.

Mr Rattenbury: I know my adviser responsible talks to him pretty regularly; I just have not chatted to him about it for a while. I will take this as a reminder to have that conversation.

THE CHAIR: Minister, on page 7 of the portfolio statement, strategic objective No 10 is senior satisfaction with Canberra as an age-friendly city. In the annual survey, were those surveyed offered the option of detailing what was missing or remiss in the city? Is it possible to get any detail?

Mr Rattenbury: I will come to the detail in a minute. This takes us back to this issue that we discussed before—this is a new indicator in trying to find something more concrete. So that is the origins of it.

Mr Rutledge: There were opportunities for them to talk. The topics were age friendliness, perceptions of older people, outdoor spaces and buildings, transportation, housing, social participation, respect and social inclusion, community contribution and employment, communication and information, community support and health services. Generally, I think the results showed that Canberra is an age-friendly city, and that view is held by the vast majority of older people who participated in the survey.

Going to what further could be done, those participating in the survey were able to

respond to that in text. Interestingly, bus services, housing and the weather were things that would make a difference. If we had warmer weather, we would be a more age-friendly city. Those were the things coming out in that survey.

THE CHAIR: How many people were surveyed?

Mr Rutledge: 438 were surveyed. That was done during Seniors Week at the expo, at the family picnic day at the Botanic Gardens and at the Canberra lifestyle and retirement expo. We also particularly targeted the Ngunnawal Elders Council, the Multicultural Community Forum, the Smile Network and some older tenants in public housing.

THE CHAIR: From the survey, is there a report of the things that people suggested might be done, and is that available?

Mr Rutledge: Yes. I believe it is on our website, but I will—

THE CHAIR: It is on the website?

Mr Rutledge: If it is not on the website, it will be on the website.

Ms Howson: It is on the website.

THE CHAIR: Perhaps somebody could provide the secretary with the link.

Ms Howson: We would be happy to send a link through.

Mr Rutledge: Yes, we will send the link through.

THE CHAIR: So that list of suggestions is in that report and is on the website?

Mr Rutledge: Yes.

MR DOSZPOT: Could I just ask a supplementary regarding my last question?

THE CHAIR: No.

MR DOSZPOT: No?

THE CHAIR: Just joking.

MR DOSZPOT: Thank you. We had a couple of discussions on that last topic of replacing the Canberra Seniors Centre. I just want to make sure that both issues that we talked about are taken on notice. First of all, I asked about the design work for the replacement. I think Ms Howson indicated that she will take that on notice. Mr Rutledge indicated that as well.

Ms Howson: Yes.

MR DOSZPOT: So that will be taken on notice?

Mr Rattenbury: Yes; sure.

MR DOSZPOT: And you will also take on notice the further question I asked on that?

Mr Rattenbury: Which was?

MR DOSZPOT: Which was about the comfort, assurance, of the equity concerns.

Mr Rattenbury: Sure. I did not expect to provide an answer on notice, Mr Doszpot. I just took it as a reminder that that issue needed to be chased up. I will chase it up.

MR DOSZPOT: Can we get an answer on that on notice?

Mr Rattenbury: Sure; I will provide something on notice.

MR DOSZPOT: Thank you.

THE CHAIR: Ms Porter, a new question.

MS PORTER: How is your directorate or your area of ageing collaborating, if you are at all, or working with Medicare Local ACT in regard to life planning and advance care plans? And what is your response to the forecast by the federal government that in the future Medicare locals will be in some way rearranged or have their funding changed in some way?

Mr Rattenbury: The government has a specific partnership with Medicare Local ACT on advance care planning. I just launched a new campaign with them, probably six or eight weeks ago now, which included television advertising and a range of other—

MS PORTER: The “Be my voice” one?

Mr Rattenbury: Yes, that is the one. That is an excellent partnership. The communications plan around that campaign and the thought that has gone into how to put it together are very good. That directs people to advance care planning nurses, who actually sit down with people and individually produce an advance care plan. I think most people would think of that as an older person’s service. The reality is that the campaign says that anybody should have an advance care plan, because at any point in your life you could find yourself, unfortunately, needing the kind of medical care where you are not able to speak for yourself any longer. But, clearly, there is a strong expectation that more older people will take it up than younger people.

I am very pleased with that partnership. Obviously, as we also discussed earlier, with the changes to Medicare local we have got 12 months to go, but I would be keen to see that partnership continue in whatever way it can. I would be disappointed to see it go, because it is a big project to get people to get advance care plans. A very minimal number of people do, and it is just ongoing work. It needs to continue in some form.

MRS JONES: How much was spent on that plan?

Mr Rattenbury: Sorry?

MRS JONES: How much was spent on that advertising and the collaboration there?

Mr Rattenbury: I would have to take that on notice, I think. I just cannot remember. I think it is actually being run out of Health.

MRS JONES: Okay.

Mr Rattenbury: We will take that on notice.

MRS JONES: Thank you.

MS PORTER: One of the things that was raised at the forum that I held on end-of-life issues some time ago, I think in March, was the fact that in the advance care planning, I understand that people are sitting down with people to help them, but the people who have been looking into it sometimes are quite daunted by the process. The remark was made by someone from, I think, Medicare Local ACT who was at that forum on that day—it might have been a practice nurse or somebody like that—that it is legislatively quite complex, and there is more than one piece of legislation that informs those plans. I was wondering whether you, as the minister, would be interested in working with the Minister for Health to look into that area of legislation to see whether or not some work could be done in making it simpler. There may be some links that need to be made between forms of legislation or it could be that we need to house it in one piece of legislation rather than across a couple. As we know, this sort of thing happens all the time. I was just wondering if you could think about that. It just needs to be a little bit simpler, a bit more user-friendly, if that is possible.

Mr Rattenbury: That is fine; I will take that on board. I have not heard that feedback before, although just at a personal level I can imagine it is quite daunting to sit down and write—at a personal and emotional level.

MS PORTER: An emotional level, yes.

Mr Rattenbury: Let alone the legislative complexity. I will ask for some information and I will have the directorate talk to the health department about that.

MS PORTER: Thank you very much.

THE CHAIR: Ms Berry.

MS BERRY: Again, I am going to defer my question to Ms Porter, given the work that she has been doing around this issue.

MS PORTER: Thank you. You will get sick of the sound of my voice, I think. But, anyway—

Mr Rattenbury: We are not, Ms Porter; it is okay.

MS PORTER: The other area that I have been doing some work in, as you would be aware, minister, is in regard to older people and pets.

Mr Rattenbury: Yes.

MS PORTER: The group that formed the steering committee out of a couple of forums that I ran—one on the whole issue of keeping your pet as you moved into other accommodation and the second on building proper accommodation to allow for people to keep their pets or actually renovating or in some way redoing accommodation to provide for people with their pets in existing facilities—has now been incorporated, and you will be glad to know it is called Pets and Positive Ageing, PAPA.

THE CHAIR: Another good acronym.

MS PORTER: That is right. With you wearing your housing hat again, minister, I was wondering what you could do to assist older people in particular, as they move into more suitable accommodation, in relation to being able to keep their pet at home. I am not talking about the area that is governed by the federal government here; I am talking about what we can do to help these people keep their pet at home. It has a lot of implications for their wellbeing. There is a lot of research that shows that it is very good for a person to be able to maintain a relationship with their pet, and obviously it is a very good idea that their pet does not have to be re-homed, because there is a lot of grief on both sides of the coin, for the older person and also for the pet. You would be interested to know that we will be having a forum later in the year—this is a bit of advertising and stuff—where a man from interstate is coming to talk about grief and pets. We will be having a forum on that.

MS BERRY: I think that also puts pressure on your other hat.

Mr Rattenbury: Yes. I must say, Ms Porter, I—

MS PORTER: The question is around making sure that people can actually keep them. He got the question before I did the ad.

Mr Rattenbury: I agree with all the points you make about pets. I might say that I have not really had any complaints, either as the Minister for Ageing or through the housing portfolio, about people having to leave their pets behind. Certainly you can have a pet in a Housing ACT property; there is no question about that. The other thing I would point to that strikes me, and I know you know about this, is the changes that took place with the Unit Titles Act that have allowed people to have pets more, I think in recognition of the sorts of issues that you are raising. I am not hearing any feedback of significant problems at the moment.

MS PORTER: I am talking more around the aged persons units. It seems to me that when you have a group of people living in close proximity to one another, this may be an issue in relation to other tenants who do not actually like pets, for whatever reason. It is perhaps a relationship issue more than anything. I just wondered whether there was any work being done to support people, and to support people who do not

actually want to live in proximity to a dog.

Mr Rattenbury: It probably goes to the comments Ms Overton-Clarke was making earlier about tenant selection and trying to match people up into suitable places. Certainly our older tenants are encouraged to take their pets with them when they downsize. I think of something like the development I was talking about before, the Bonython site, where we have got about 30 aged person units on a single site. Those sorts of units are designed to be pet friendly in a sense. There are outdoor spaces and the like. Certainly there is no formal impediment there. Where somebody had a problem, that is where I think we would seek to support them. I think the legislative frameworks are in place now to enable that. The improvements to the Unit Titles Act are very important in that sense. It would be one of those case-by-case things where, if somebody was having a problem, we could seek to step in and assist them.

MS PORTER: Thank you.

THE CHAIR: Mrs Jones.

MRS JONES: Thank you. I have a question about men's sheds. I want to go to the \$100,000 allocation in the budget that will not all be expended in this year; it is on page 203. But before we go to that can you give me an understanding of what your view is on men's sheds and if you have a hope that the network of men's sheds will be able to be expanded in the ACT, because I believe there is interest?

Mr Rattenbury: I think they are great and the more of them we can have the better.

MRS JONES: In general terms, I know when I was campaigning in Gungahlin in the last ACT election there was a real desire to have one in Ngunnawal. Do you know whether there has been any movement on that? I think they were after a bit of land behind the community centre.

Mr Rattenbury: Again, Minister Barr, through Community Services facilities, has the lead on this, so I am not aware of the specifics on that one.

MRS JONES: I will go to Minister Barr.

Mr Rattenbury: I think if you could hang on to that one, Mrs Jones.

MRS JONES: He may not feel like helping me at the moment, but okay.

Mr Rattenbury: I am sorry; I cannot help you with those.

MRS JONES: The funding for the men's sheds: there was a total estimated cost of \$200,000—estimated expenditure for 2014-15 of \$40,000 and \$160,000 for 2014-15 financing. Can you just explain that to us? It seems there has been a change in the model of funding. What is the delay about? Again, that is Mr Barr entirely, is it?

Mr Rattenbury: Yes. If Mr Collett was still here, he would probably be able to assist. It goes to the point Ms Howson made earlier. I understand the budget papers show that the physical completion date is November this year. What we are seeing there in

the rollover to 2014-15 is just the fact that the physical work is not yet completed, so payment will come into this financial year once the milestones in the contract are completed.

MRS JONES: All right. Can I just go to crisis accommodation for older Canberrans? What percentage of people over 55 access crisis accommodation? How does that compare with the year before? Do we have anything being done in particular to address older Canberrans seeking crisis support?

Mr Rattenbury: I will have to take that on notice. I do not have those statistics to hand. First, I do not know if they exist.

MRS JONES: You do not know if there are any statistics on seniors?

Mr Rattenbury: On the percentage of older people. I am not sure if it is disaggregated in that way. We will look and see and, if we have it, we will provide it to the committee.

MRS JONES: Thank you. I might give up at that point and pass over.

THE CHAIR: Mr Doszpot, a new question.

MR DOSZPOT: Thank you, chair. Minister, there are a number of ministerial councils that receive secretarial support and advice. Again, this is on page 14, I think, of whatever we call them these days—the budget statements. Can you tell us what support and policy advice have been provided to the Ministerial Advisory Council on Ageing?

Mr Rattenbury: The council receives, essentially, secretariat support through the community participation group. They organise the meeting venue, the catering and the circulation of agendas—that sort of essential secretariat-type support.

MR DOSZPOT: And that support is being continued?

Mr Rattenbury: Yes, it is. We had a discussion earlier, Mr Doszpot, but just briefly, that work is continuing. I have just discontinued the indicator. My view is that it is not a particularly useful indicator of output, so I am searching for better. That is where you will see we have moved to the measure of the number of people that believe that Canberra is an age-friendly city. I think that is a better measure of the effectiveness of the work we are doing and the number of councils we provide secretarial support for. The work continues and the support is there. There is no question about that.

MRS JONES: And it will be in the annual reports?

Mr Rattenbury: Not in that sense, no.

MR DOSZPOT: On the strategic priority issues, information and communication, objective 1: older Canberrans can access information and communication technology, ICT training and services. Can you tell us how many cyber safety and internet programs were run in public libraries this year for seniors?

Mr Rattenbury: Can we come back to that in TAMS? That is actually a TAMS issue that Libraries ACT would have the answer to. I probably do know the answer. I just cannot think of it off the top of my head.

The other thing we are doing—if I might in this space, Mr Doszpot—is having an intern with the Office for Ageing who has prepared a research report on connecting Canberrans via new technology. He has been specifically looking at issues of internet usage amongst seniors and how that might be improved, in addition to the work that the libraries are doing in those programs.

MR DOSZPOT: I understand that there is some very good work being done by members of your department regarding getting feedback from people on what they require. There are those that can use further training and that should be being done. I look forward to hearing from you from TAMS point of view.

Mr Rattenbury: Vanessa Little, when she is here, will wax lyrical about it.

MR DOSZPOT: I will look forward to that. I guess it is the same thing for health and wellbeing—objective 4: develop and promote activities for seniors and encourage participation. One of the performance measures was to increase the membership of Canberra's four main senior clubs. What has the increase been in 2013 and again in 2014?

Mr Manikis: You are looking—

MR DOSZPOT: It is within the ACT strategic plan for positive ageing 2012-14.

Mr Manikis: Sorry. I was looking at the budget papers. Health and wellbeing, that part of it?

MR DOSZPOT: That is correct, objective 4.

Mr Manikis: Objective 4.

MR DOSZPOT: Develop and promote activities for seniors and encourage participation.

Mr Manikis: What I have here is the 2012-13 round of the seniors' grants contributed towards that, with 21 projects specifically to improve social participation and wellbeing for ACT seniors. Examples of these projects include a movement-based program using a Nintendo console, a Nordic walking group, a business mentoring program and a program where older Canberrans with a Chinese heritage introduce Chinese calligraphy to younger people. Housing ACT endeavours to contact every tenant over the age of 80 when there is extreme heat in the summer months to check on their welfare and to provide referral to community linkages as required.

MR DOSZPOT: I guess what I am seeking in more detail is: how many actual programs? You have given me an indication of these, but can you take it on notice and give me a full listing of how many programs have been done?

Mr Manikis: Yes.

MR DOSZPOT: There are a couple of other related areas. How many arts organisations have been funded to provide programs suitable for access by seniors? Again, if you do not have the information, I understand.

Mr Manikis: We will take it on notice.

MR DOSZPOT: If you could take it on notice I would appreciate that. My final one on that is this: what was the outcome of the study due for completion by 2014 on the investigation of new technologies such as Facebook and Skype to reduce loneliness and isolation and to increase awareness of government programs and opportunities?

Mr Rattenbury: That is the one I was just referring to. The author of the report actually reported to the Ministerial Advisory Council on Ageing yesterday on the outcomes of that report. I just have not had a briefing on that yet.

MR DOSZPOT: Anecdotally, the meetings I have attended this week—they are good meetings and it is good to get the feedback but—

Mr Rattenbury: Which meetings are they; the Older Persons Assembly?

MR DOSZPOT: Yes, which is asking questions related to this. I guess my observation on it is that, while it is good to seek the information, I was hoping there would be a little bit more knowledge by the people within the community about what services are available, because a lot of them actually refer to needing some assistance in these areas.

Mr Rattenbury: Okay.

MR RATTENBURY: Thank you.

THE CHAIR: It being 5.30 we might call it a day. Thank you to both ministers who appeared today, and also the directorates and agency officials who appeared today. As mentioned at the commencement of the hearing this morning, there is a time frame of five working days for the return of answers to questions taken on notice. Members, questions on notice for the outputs considered should be lodged within three days of the receipt of the uncorrected proof transcript, with day one being the first business day after the transcript is received.

The chair's award for lightening the load today goes, in fact, to the minister, Mr Rattenbury. He managed to slip unseen into the committee room so we were able to start with just members and the minister without any support whatsoever of the officials, but the officials came streaming in very rapidly to look after their minister, and I am sure he appreciated it.

The committee adjourned at 5.28 pm.