



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

SELECT COMMITTEE ON ESTIMATES 2015-2016

**(Reference: [Appropriation Bill 2015-2016 and Appropriation
\(Office of the Legislative Assembly\) Bill 2015-2016](#))**

Members:

**MR B SMYTH (Chair)
MS M FITZHARRIS (Deputy Chair)
DR C BOURKE
MS N LAWDER**

TRANSCRIPT OF EVIDENCE

CANBERRA

THURSDAY, 18 JUNE 2015

**Secretary to the committee:
Mrs N Kosseck (Ph 620 50435)**

By authority of the Legislative Assembly for the Australian Capital Territory

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

APPEARANCES

Community Services Directorate.....	449, 497
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Amended 20 May 2013

The committee met at 9.30 am.

Appearances:

Gentleman, Mr Mick, Minister for Planning, Minister for Roads and Parking, Minister for Workplace Safety and Industrial Relations, Minister for Children and Young People and Minister for Ageing

Community Services Directorate

Howson, Ms Natalie, Director-General

Chapman, Ms Sue, Deputy Director-General

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

Wyles, Mr Paul, Director, Early Intervention and Prevention Services

Starick, Ms Kate, Director, Out of Home Care Strategy

Hubbard, Mr Ian, Senior Director, Finance and Budget

Manikis, Mr Nic, Director, Community Participation Group

Sheehan, Ms Maureen, Executive Director, Service Strategy and Community Building

THE ACTING CHAIR (Ms Fitzharris): Good morning. My apologies, the chair is running late but he will be here within the next five or 10 minutes.

Mr Gentleman: I am sure it is nothing to do with the road services across the territory.

THE ACTING CHAIR: Not at all. Welcome to the fifth day of public hearings for the Select Committee on Estimates 2015-2016. In today's proceedings we will examine the Community Services portfolio and Housing ACT.

Please be aware that the proceedings today are being recorded and transcribed by Hansard and will be published. They are also being broadcast and webstreamed live. Could you all look at the privilege statement that is in front of you. I am sure you are familiar with it but could you just confirm that you are all familiar with the privilege implications of the statement?

Mr Gentleman: Yes, we are familiar with it.

THE ACTING CHAIR: Thank you. Before we kick off, minister, would you like to make an opening statement this morning?

Mr Gentleman: Thank you, Madam Deputy Chair. I want to thank the committee for the opportunity today to discuss output class 2.1, early intervention services, 4.1, statutory services, care and protection and youth justice, as Minister for Children and Young People, and 3.1, community relations, as Minister for Ageing.

The ACT government is continuing to step up for children, young people and vulnerable families. Early intervention and prevention services provide a range of services focusing on, but not limited to, children from pre-birth to eight years of age.

These services include the child and family centres at Tuggeranong, Belconnen and Gungahlin. The centres continue to be essential hubs within their communities, providing group programs, outreach services and intensive support services to children and families that promote lifelong growth, development, health and wellbeing.

I am pleased to note that the growing healthy families and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community development program will be expanded in 2015-16. We are providing \$1.2 million over the next two years, which will allow for the expansion of this program at the Tuggeranong Child and Family Centre. The program already runs successfully at the west Belconnen and Gungahlin child and family centres.

Melaleuca Place is approaching its first anniversary. It was my first job to open Melaleuca Place last year. In its first year of operation the multidisciplinary team at Melaleuca Place has assisted 24 children from birth to 12 years of age who have experienced trauma and are clients of statutory services.

Other services include the child, youth and family services program. That is made up of 26 community agencies delivering a range of child, young people centred and family focused services and supports that meet the needs of vulnerable and in-need children and also young people and families across the territory.

We also coordinate the ACT early development centres, with 2015 being a collection year. This three-year census takes place across Australia for kindergarten children as well. The directorate continues to work closely and collaboratively with the funded community organisations to ensure that the most vulnerable in our community are provided with support and are connected with services that meet their needs.

For our most vulnerable children and young people in the ACT, the ACT government is committed to the integration of youth justice services and care and protection services, which will be known from 1 July this year as the new Child and Youth Protection Service. For children, young people, carers and their families this will mean a better service response that focuses on diversion, protection, restoration, transition, permanency and, of course, trauma-informed care.

This government is also committed to the implementation of “A step up for our kids—one step can make a lifetime of difference”, a five-year out of home care strategy. The government has committed \$38.9 million over four years to provide a suite of new programs to support high risk families and the creation of a continuum of care for children in out of home care, and the creation of a therapeutic assessment system.

The new integrated child management system for child and youth protection services will provide caseworkers with better and quicker information to keep children safe, and that will allow us to better track the effectiveness of the child and youth protection services and improve community sector access to the information they need to get services to vulnerable families at the right time. This initiative is critical to achieve the full realisation of both of these transformational reform initiatives, and the consequent savings. That is why we are investing \$2.772 million in capital in the new integrated client management system.

Building on the successes of the blueprint for youth justice in the ACT, we are also committing further funding to the Bendora through-care unit. The strategy governed by the youth justice blueprint continues to reduce the number of young people involved with the youth justice system. These strategies contained in the blueprint have resulted in significant reductions in the number of young people in custody. For those young people who are in custody, the through-care unit will support them in achieving better outcomes to decrease their chances of reoffending.

This government remains committed to programs and initiatives that support the concept of active ageing by ensuring that older Canberrans have access to opportunities and activities that keep their minds and bodies thoroughly engaged and active. The new active ageing framework 2015-18 and associated action plan will guide and support the ACT government directorates to incorporate active ageing principles to enhance government policies and to continue the development of Canberra as a truly age-friendly city.

On 20 March this year I hosted the mature age workers roundtable, with over 60 key stakeholders representing businesses, government, community organisations and seniors. The recommendations that emerged from the roundtable included the adoption of best practice programs and the development of strategies that will provide and stimulate economic benefit to our business sector and, importantly, provide employment opportunities for mature age workers in the ACT.

We are now working, in partnership with the Human Rights Commission and the Illawarra retirement group foundation, to implement a jobs checkpoint plan, a pilot to enable mature age workers and those aged 50 years and over to remain in the workforce. The pilot program will provide quality advice to mature workers to develop new career pathways, initiate skills assessment and provide retraining opportunities.

I have been working with the Community Services Directorate in a ministerial position for almost 12 months. I am incredibly proud of the work all our officers in the directorate do across the Canberra community. Often it is very difficult work with our most vulnerable people and sometimes with little recognition. I would like to put on the record my appreciation for the hard work that they do across our community. I congratulate and support all of our officers and urge them to keep up that heartfelt work in the future. Thank you for the opportunity.

THE CHAIR: Thank you, minister, and my apologies for lateness. If we look at the output class as a whole, it seems to be just “steady as you go”; there is no real growth in funding beyond CPI and there does not appear to be any real growth in delivery across any of the indicators. Why is that? Has the problem stabilised? Has the need for early intervention finished?

Mr Gentleman: Thank you, Mr Smyth, for the question. No, the need for early intervention certainly has not finished at all. The imperative is for early intervention. Of course, we have shown the results through that work, and that will provide savings into the future as well. The more early intervention that we can do and the more support we can provide for vulnerable families means that there is less likelihood of them entering youth justice, for example, in the future.

The budget funds more than \$389 million in the 2015-16 recurrent funding for people who need a helping hand. Our community has been built upon the principle that everyone should have the opportunity to achieve their ambitions regardless of their background or circumstances. So we are investing \$107 million in recurrent funding for—

THE CHAIR: That is okay. The output class, though, government payment for outputs, is \$23 million. It is great to quote the big numbers, but the question was about early intervention services and whether the need has peaked, because it would appear that you are not going to do any more in the coming year than you have done in the current year. You have just talked about the importance of early intervention, yet it is not reflected in any additional funding or any additional programs.

Mr Gentleman: There is certainly additional funding in a step up for our kids. It is our major initiative. As I have said—

THE CHAIR: Is that funded in this output class?

Mr Gentleman: No, not in this output class.

THE CHAIR: With regard to this output class, there does not seem to be any change from this financial year to next financial year. You said in your opening answer to my question that, yes, it was important and early intervention is very critical for getting it right. Why is there no change?

Mr Gentleman: I will pass over to directorate officials.

Ms Howson: My first comment would be that the focus of this output class as an output class is actually on the objective of better outcomes for particularly vulnerable Canberrans. There are a number of output classes that lead to that particular outcome. In this particular year the government has put a significant investment into a different output class but with the same intent.

A step up for our kids, that \$16 million additional funding, is very much focused on reframing the program that supports families. It is about strengthening families. There is, as I said, a significant component of that which will be directed towards the types of early intervention measures that are set out in this output class, Mr Smyth. You really need to look at the output classes collectively to get a picture of the government's investment in early intervention.

THE CHAIR: Where is a step up for our kids? In what output class?

Ms Howson: It is in output class 4.1.

THE CHAIR: But the government payment for outputs in 4.1 went down. It went from \$84 million to \$81 million, and you are saying there is a new \$16 million initiative. So what got axed, and why has the funding gone backwards, if this is as critical as the minister said?

Mr Gentleman: I will pass over to Ian Hubbard.

Mr Hubbard: Thank you for that question, Mr Smyth. If you look at page 27, I will take you on a little journey here, to help with the explanation. That is output class 4.1, which is child and youth protection services. Most of the attention on investment this year, as the minister and Ms Howson said, is going into this part of the office. The office is represented by two outputs, 2.1 and 4.2.

You quite rightly point out that from the estimated outcome of 2014-15 to 2015-16 there has been a drop. Probably the more relevant number to look at is the progress from the 2014-15 budget on the left-hand side of GPO, which is \$80 million, over to the \$81.356 million and then increasing again to \$82.740 million. The reason why the estimated outcome—

THE CHAIR: And then declining to \$80.239 million, and then declining to \$79 million.

Mr Hubbard: I will explain that. I will explain it if you give us a moment. The reason why there was a big jump in the estimated outcome is—if you look at the approp table, we received a Treasurer's advance of \$11 million. When we have allocated the Treasurer's advance, that proportion of the Treasurer's advance goes into that estimated outcome of where we are going to land the total budget at the end of this financial year.

That increase is about 4.6 in that year for the estimated outcome. It is composed of an increase in our workers compensation premium for CSD overall. You have probably heard all the stories about quite dramatic increases in Comcare. The commonwealth decided not to cross-subsidise that entity in the commonwealth anymore, so the cost of Comcare has really come back to the clients, in this case the client being the ACT government. Our share of that was almost \$6 million, which was after budget day last year. That was a bit of a surprise in our budget going forward. We have had to accommodate that into the budget, because you need to pay that bill.

For this output, the proportion of workers comp that went into that which lifts the number from \$80 million up to nearly \$85 million is 2.4. We were also required, I think in 2013-14, to make a late payment to the commonwealth for a program which was to do with young people in older persons' accommodation, YIPRAC. So we needed to defer some bills at the end of last financial year. Those deferrals of bills were then spread across the different outputs. For this output, the deferral was about \$1.9 million.

We also had to cover some costs which we did not factor into the budget at the start of the year for the royal commission into child sex abuse. That was \$300,000 worth.

So the total we had to allocate out of the Treasurer's advance that we received into this particular output was \$4.6 million. There were other impacts, of course. That is the reason why you go from the \$80 million to the almost \$85 million.

In the following year, in the budget year 2015-16, of course, we will not have that funding, the TA funding, going forward in the GPO. That is why you get the drop.

With the drop, going from 80 to 81, you start seeing some of the investments going into that area, which, in the budget papers, includes, as the minister has outlined, a step up for kids. You also get the CHYPS replacement investment going in. You also get the Bendora through-care unit initiative into this particular. And then you also get some adjustments that we need to make through various things to do with the SACS awards payments and things like that.

The overall adjustments going through that output between the end of the year and the start of the next budget year are in the order of \$11 million ins and outs. It is quite a big variance and in some ways it masks some of the impact of the investment.

THE CHAIR: The minister just said there is a \$16 million investment. Where is it? Are you saying the \$16 million investment is all on overheads, so it is things like CPI, workers comp insurance?

Mr Hubbard: No.

MS FITZHARRIS: Could I ask a supplementary?

THE CHAIR: No; just a moment. You say the two output classes together, 4.1 and 4.2. GPO for this year is \$108 million; for next year it is \$105 million.

Mr Hubbard: Yes, but just a little fact to squeeze into the \$16 million: that investment is made over three years. So to be reasonable, it is a \$3 million investment in next year, \$6 million in the second—

THE CHAIR: What was cut to accommodate that? Your GPO has gone down.

Mr Hubbard: It has not gone down—

THE CHAIR: You must have added CPI on top of that.

Mr Hubbard: It is still going up. I take your point that you cannot see it as—

THE CHAIR: It is not going up. Your GPO for 2014-15, if you add 23 million, 431 and 84 million—

Mr Hubbard: No; that is early intervention. I am saying the investment is actually going into 4.1.

THE CHAIR: No. You said, if I may be so rude as to butt in, you had to take the two classes together.

Mr Hubbard: Yes.

Ms Howson: I think that was the comment that I made.

THE CHAIR: If I take the two classes together, as long as my maths is still reasonably good, it is \$108 million for 2014-15 and yet the forecast for next year is only \$105 million. That is not going up. That is not a \$3 million increase.

Ms Howson: If I might just intervene there, chair, it was actually my comment about putting the two output classes together. I was talking about that in the context of the outcomes the government is trying to achieve in the investment that is certainly coming into early intervention—is through output class 4, which is focused on our out of home care strategy. That has been a significant increase, and when we get to that output class, we can outline the details of that for you.

THE CHAIR: A supplementary?

MS FITZHARRIS: Just a quick clarifying question. I notice from last year's budget papers that there is a shift in the output classes. From recollection, part of step up for kids was announced in a midyear budget review, so the 2014-15 figure was not the 2014-15 figure at the 2014-15 budget because that money was added throughout the 2014-15 financial year, which explains—

THE CHAIR: No. With all due respect, no, it does not, because I am quoting the estimated outcome for the 2014-15 year. That would include TA and initial funding. Perhaps, Mr Hubbard, you would like to give us a written reconciliation of the ins and outs.

Mr Hubbard: I have checked that. I think Ms Fitzharris is right.

Ms Howson: We would really appreciate that, chair. I think it is so complex it would be easier to explain it to the committee with—

MS FITZHARRIS: From looking at the last year's budget papers, the output classes have changed. There was a 4.2, which does not appear to be here this year, so it is a bit hard to track last year's, which has, under Care and Protection services, 56 or 55.2 million in GPO, as opposed to this year, 84. So there is a difference there again. That might help explain it since last year's budget.

Mr Gentleman: We will ask Mr Hubbard to come back with a clear reconciliation for you.

Mr Hubbard: Yes, we will give you a full record.

THE CHAIR: Thank you. A new question, Ms Fitzharris, unless there was a supplementary?

Mr Gentleman: Again, whilst we do prepare that document for you, Mr Smyth, and committee members, you can be assured that there is no reduction. There is more money being spent in early intervention.

THE CHAIR: It does not appear to be in the papers, minister.

MS FITZHARRIS: Minister, you mentioned the early development census every three years and that this year is a data collection year. We had some discussions with the health minister yesterday about data collection in the Health Directorate and also how we are tracking on one small aspect of that, the healthy weight initiative. Each

kindy kid in the ACT is surveyed every year through the health department. Can you just explain to us how those two things work together. And does the early development census capture every kindy kid in the ACT or is it a select group?

Mr Gentleman: The census is a national census. It measures the development of children in their first year of school. It is conducted every three years, I think. The 2015 census is the third collection dataset; that was collected from 2009 to 2012. The Council of Australian Governments has endorsed that census as a national progress measure, and it is strongly supported by all three ACT education sectors as well. The early development census measures five domains. They are physical health and wellbeing; social competence; emotional maturity; language and cognitive skills—that is school-based skills—and communication skills and general knowledge. The cycle commenced on 4 May this year and will end on 3 July. I would expect the results in mid-2016.

MS FITZHARRIS: That is every kindy kid across the—

Ms Howson: If I may, minister, I will ask Mr Wyles to set out the process for this year, and those interactions. I would also comment that the opportunity to actually join the datasets with health with this particular survey and methodology provides the ACT community with a very reliable and valid impression of what is happening with children in this community.

MS FITZHARRIS: I have a follow-up question, so you might be able to answer them all. Kindy kids can be tracked over time, but is there a way of also tracking this cohort of kindy kids when they get to year 7 or year 12 as well, and has that been done in the past?

Mr Wyles: We are, as the minister has stated, in the collection period for the 2015 collection. I might just explain how it works. Essentially kindergarten teachers across the three education sectors complete a survey of children in their kindergarten class at this point in the year. The survey is across five domains: physical health and wellbeing, social competence, emotional maturity, language and cognitive skills, and communication skills and general knowledge. In terms of the agreement we have with the commonwealth, all states and territories are expected to get 95 per cent plus completion. Historically in the ACT, in both 2009 and 2012, our completion rate is 99.7, so it is incredibly high. There is the option for parents to opt out, but those numbers are very low.

You talked about the healthy weight initiative. The 2012 data did show that that was an area of concern in the ACT. From 2009 to 2012, we improved on four of those five domains, but it was physical health and wellbeing where we went slightly backwards. That highlights the need for some focus in the area.

The AEDC is a really important dataset. It allows us to drill down to a region and a suburb level. Over time, a picture builds around where children are presenting for school as developmentally vulnerable on one or more of those developmental domains. That will allow state and territory governments to target program and policy initiatives to make those improvements.

In terms of tracking, these are points in time. Every three years, kindergarten children across the country have this census. Some other state and territory governments have begun discussion around data linkage. In particular, South Australia and Western Australia are talking about linking maternal and child health data with AEDC data, with NAPLAN data. That would give a very full view of children and tracking over time. There are clearly some complexity and privacy issues to get to that point.

MS FITZHARRIS: So you are expecting some results next year?

Mr Wyles: Yes. The census is happening now. There is a significant process that the commonwealth, states and territories do in the second half of this year around data cleansing. Then it is really in the first quarter of next year that we will get some public release of the data.

MS FITZHARRIS: Yesterday we talked a bit with Health about how health integrates with everyone else. It was based on a discussion with the Chief Minister and the Head of Service the previous day about digital reform being a priority for the strategic board. She talked also about lots of ways for digital reform, one of them being to use that to integrate data a bit better so we have a richer sense of what is going on in the community—what is working and what is not. Is that getting better each year?

Mr Wyles: Certainly what we have done this year is take the 2012 data and do some regional summaries. Both Health and Education have found it very useful, because you can go down to a suburb level and find where children in particular suburbs in the ACT are presenting as developmentally vulnerable. As I say, that helps large agencies consider how they are targeting and funding into those particular regions.

MS FITZHARRIS: Is it fair to say that Canberra does not really have a postcode disadvantage? It can be hard to find, drill down into. A disadvantage might be on a suburban level as opposed to other jurisdictions that have more of a postcode disadvantage type of thing.

Ms Howson: It is something where we find most often that the macro view of data analysis does really hide some of the underlying disadvantage that is experienced by some members of our community.

There have been improvements. Certainly moving to the SEIFA approach, which is the postcode analysis approach, gives us a much better and more granular picture. Again, you are going to find with our evidence today that we will find it difficult to de-compartmentalise our discussion around our better services initiatives by output classes.

What we are doing under the better services initiative, which is focused on the west Belconnen trial, is looking at some proofs of concept about how we bring different datasets that are available to us here in the ACT together to paint a much more illustrative picture of what is happening in that particular region. And what we can do at west Belconnen, we then hope to be able to replicate across Canberra. Of course, as Mr Wyles said, this particular survey and this type of data are incredibly important to inform where our focus for service intervention needs to be so that we can again

provide the integrity to right service at the right time for the right duration.

Mr Gentleman: That also leads into our service model design as well. Mr Collis might provide some information.

Dr Collis: Just elaborating on Ms Howson's point, the west Belconnen trial is informing us about how local area planning can work and can bring datasets together and make better judgements, particularly at a local level. Over the course of this year, in this output class we have implemented the CFC service redesign model. At the heart of that are local governance mechanisms to get this data together so that Health, CSD providers, community sector providers and the community generally can have the tools to make the decision about where the priorities should be moving forward. The principle behind the better service initiative is localised service, localised governance and decision-making. We are attempting to implement, but the actual technology, methodology and proof of concept that are happening in west Belco are helping us do that across Canberra.

MS FITZHARRIS: Thank you. The Head of Service also mentioned the other day how an agile, flexible public service and getting outcomes across whole of government does not necessarily fit with our output classes, that the outcomes you want to achieve are best measured not necessarily by output classes in that sort of structure. It is interesting that that lines up.

THE CHAIR: Dr Bourke, a new question.

DR BOURKE: Thank you, chair. What is the re-substantiation rate for children in care and how will you address that as an indicator of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander involvement?

Mr Gentleman: I am happy to go to that. It is in class 4, but I am happy to go there if you like.

DR BOURKE: Right.

Mr Gentleman: Care and protection has been strongly supported by the directorate and, indeed, through funding in this budget. I will ask Dr Collis to provide some further information on that.

Dr Collis: Re-substantiation rates are an important statistic to monitor around the effectiveness of decisions to keep children safe. It is an absolutely important measure to keep our eye on.

DR BOURKE: For the benefit of the committee, you might explain what re-substantiation means.

Dr Collis: I apologise for that. With re-substantiation, there are two measures that we look at—that is, for children for whom substantiated abuse occurs, does another substantiation of abuse occur within three months and then within 12 months? These are reported in a number of different formats, nationally and locally. Specifically, this was reported in a half-yearly report that you would have seen tabled, I believe, in the

Assembly, where we have been significantly reducing re-substantiation rates occurring in both those categories. That is indicative that the decision-making is managing the risk and not requiring us to intervene with families broadly, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families in particular, in terms of putting them into out of home care or the child protection system unnecessarily.

The achievements that occurred around that data in recent years have been fairly much the consequence of the quality service improvements that have occurred in the front end of the child protection system. The minister mentioned the integrated management system which provides a knowledge portal for staff, which allows decision-making to be guided by best practice guides. We are training staff to ensure our decision-making is consistent and our supervision of those decisions is appropriate.

The Aboriginal agreement outlines specifically that this is one of the headline targets that we need to meet. The data show that we are, in fact, reducing substantiation of abuse for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children now, but we need to reduce that further. The way we are going to be doing that, in particular, relates to how we are going to put support in the front end of the system. That goes to the step up for our kids, out of home care strategy, particularly the strengthening high-risk families component of that.

The strengthening high-risk families component is intended to provide—at the moment of decisions about whether or not children need to be cared for outside the birth family—a capacity to put intensive in-home support in place so that children can be supported in the family safely. Where that is not possible, strengthening high-risk families is intended to in fact work with the families to create the conditions so that children may be restored to that family as quickly as possible.

That is the intention of one of the elements of the reform of the step up for our kids. This has been particularly well received in our consultation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander service providers, because it was seen that it is at the moment of contact where supports are needed to be put in place rather than decisions made that have ongoing consequences. We would hope that this is where we would be specifically addressing the Aboriginal justice agreement headline priority for reducing re-substantiation rates.

DR BOURKE: Thank you. One of the strategies within that overall early intervention service is stay-at-home visiting, which I imagine is pretty labour intensive and very effective. How is it carried out and how well is it received?

Mr Gentleman: Dr Collis, could you give us some further details on that?

Dr Collis: Dr Bourke, I am going to have to be a little cautious here because we are in the middle of a procurement process which is procuring the services to undertake this particular domain.

Ms Howson: One of the key things is that we are in procurement. In that context the program will not be commencing until next year in the way in which it is described under a step up for kids strategy. We are in the process of preparing for the

implementation of that particular model.

DR BOURKE: I suppose that then begs the question about how you select community organisations to deliver these programs. Maybe you could talk us through that process.

Ms Howson: It does indeed. The issue we have right at the moment is that we are going through an evaluation of tenders. It might be difficult for us to discuss that, but we could certainly go through the criteria.

DR BOURKE: Perhaps at a high level.

Ms Howson: Yes, the criteria that have been set out in calling for tenders. We will just get the official to the table that has been working on that directly.

Ms Starick: As Dr Collis has said, we are currently going through the evaluation for tender. The criteria that were prepared for the evaluation of the tender appeared in the tender documents that were sent out earlier this year. There are weighted and non-weighted criteria. For the strengthening high-risk families we are seeking a demonstration of capability from organisations of their experience in working with children and young people and their families in or at risk of entering out of home care.

We also asked for the respondents to provide their approach in responding to a set of case studies that would demonstrate the integration of their services and how they would interact with families and children and young people to keep families together and how they would integrate with other services that currently exist in the ACT.

The next criterion was about capacity. We asked respondents to demonstrate that they had the resources and capacity to successfully establish and operate a sustainable service in the ACT. This went to questions about viability and infrastructure to assure the ACT government that they were able to be a long-term proposition and organisation here in the ACT.

Criterion 3, which was the criterion that had the highest weighting, was about the service design. We asked respondents to describe in detail the services that they proposed to provide in the ACT and demonstrate how this service would be culturally competent in the ACT.

THE CHAIR: He would be the best paid PA in the service!

Ms Starick: In addition to this we also require that organisations that we enter into contract with, or through the evaluation, are also suitable entities under the Children and Young People Act. We also ask for additional information so that we can determine value for money. The criterion under the continuum of care is reflective of that criterion under strengthening high-risk families as well.

DR BOURKE: Within this scope is there any capacity for a region view rather than merely an ACT view of service delivery in this area? I ask that in the context of the suggestion made by the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elected Body in their submission on Friday about an Indigenous service provider in this space.

Mr Gentleman: Yes, there certainly is that opportunity, Dr Bourke. I would encourage all those with the knowledge and expertise to put forward proposals during this process. In my view, we would see those people that have been working in the area in a regional sense appropriate.

MS LAWDER: A supplementary question?

THE CHAIR: Ms Lawder.

MS LAWDER: I thought I heard Ms Howson say that you were evaluating tenders at the moment?

Ms Howson: That is correct.

MS LAWDER: So if, for example, a grouping had not put in a tender at this point they would not be able to do that now because tenders have closed?

Ms Howson: That is correct. The tenders have closed. As we are going through an evaluation it is not possible at this stage to pre-empt what results we will get from that process.

MS LAWDER: Sure. It is just that I thought Minister Gentleman perhaps suggested they might be encouraging a group to put forward if they had not already.

Mr Gentleman: I think we have in the past, yes.

Ms Howson: Certainly we have encouraged providers from right across Australia to respond to this tender. In fact, we had a number of sessions prior to the tender closing where we briefed providers that are known to be providing services in a range of other areas.

MS LAWDER: But if that particular grouping had not put in a tender at this point it would be too late?

Ms Howson: It depends on the outcome of the evaluation. At the end of the day, we have got to assess against the criteria. If we do not find a suitable provider then we go into another stage of the process, but I cannot pre-empt that at this point.

But to go back to the point that the elected body were making well—and we have heard this through our consultation. Ideally, to have effective outcomes with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community, I think the essence of that is a provider that is trusted and has strong relationships with Aboriginal communities. Going to your point, Dr Bourke, if we are having such a practical hands-on and interventionist approach with families, we need to build on good relationships and trust for that to be effective. That is very much in the forefront of our mind as we are working our way through this process—who will be the providers that will be supported by the Aboriginal community to assist their most vulnerable.

In terms of a long-term view about an Aboriginal organisation that can provide out of

home care services, that is our ultimate aspiration. We would be looking in any decision that we make and the way in which we are designing this program to build capability here in the ACT. What a regional outlook offers us, I think, is the prospect of a much more viable service in that context.

We have modelled our program on a lot of the work that New South Wales are doing, so we believe there will be significant complementarity in the delivery of out of home care services that could be applied regionally. I would see this is a logical maturation of the work that we are doing under step up for kids. In the meantime, there are a number of measures that here in the ACT we are putting into place to strengthen our cultural proficiency and to build more positive and constructive relationships with the Aboriginal community to be able to better support the most vulnerable families.

THE CHAIR: A new question, Ms Lawder.

MS LAWDER: On page 14 of the Community Services Directorate budget paper, it talks about changes to appropriation. I just want you to explain to me where the savings in general savings are coming from.

Mr Gentleman: I might pass it on to Mr Hubbard and Ms Chapman. This covers the whole CSD.

Ms Chapman: The general savings line is made up of a range of things that are a whole-of-government approach. One of those might be increasing the purchasing power and making savings to get office supplies, for example. I am not sure if it is actually in this bit but it is an example. If the whole of the government rather than individual directorates go to purchase a bunch of paper we should be able to get a better deal. The aim for the general savings is that we all benefit from a whole-of-government approach. So instead of us having to pay \$1,000 for our bit of the supply it might be \$800. Improving those kinds of things will help us find savings in the broadest sense.

MS LAWDER: I understand that is what savings are. I am specifically asking what the savings are made up of. Where have they come from?

Mr Hubbard: Thanks for that question. Our savings of \$837,000 is made up of, mainly, as Ms Chapman outlined, whole-of-government savings that we are attempting to make predominantly in the IT area, and that is really about how we go about providing data storage. I think people appreciate the cost of data storage is going down significantly due to the way it is actually configured. There is a lot of talk about moving data into the cloud, and I know that is under investigation at the moment, for a whole bunch of reasons—whether it is at the right price and the right security. That would be whole-of-government savings if we changed from using server farms and then move to the cloud. The savings there are—hold that \$837,000—in the order of \$500,000.

Again as Ms Chapman outlined, we are also looking for savings by doing whole-of-government contracting, and that is in the area of stationery, utilities and multifunction devices—all your standard backup, office-type corporate costs. Procurement Solutions on our behalf are driving those contracts pretty hard and then

in a sense capturing those savings and applying them to the overall budget due to the constrained environment we are in.

We are also having a look at some savings again, around a whole-of-government purchasing of fleet. Basically, again Procurement Solutions are looking at a way we can, by grouping together across all the different agencies, drive our dollar a bit harder in fleet. So that is the majority of where the general savings are.

MS LAWDER: Can you point me to where else in the financial statements the amount you are paying for those things is covered—fleet, the IT?

Mr Hubbard: No, it is in the approp table. The detail of particular allocations, for example classes, is really in the technical adjustments in each of those outputs. They are allocated into those. If you look at the fleet savings overall, it might be \$100,000. I would allocate that through the budget process based on the number of cars we have got. If we are making a saving, just for argument's sake, of \$150 per car I will allocate that saving to the area that has those cars. I use a simple and direct allocation method. Sometimes it is not considered fair but it is very simply applied, the same with most of these other savings. It is really dependent on the volume of use or if it is a headcount-based saving I will allocate it to the areas on headcount. You will not see it in the actual outcome accounts because the numbers are way too small, in effect.

MS LAWDER: That table does include the \$38.9 million over the next few years for step up for our kids. How is that going to assist programs like parents as teachers for which, from my understanding, there is a significant waiting list amongst service providers for those types of programs?

Mr Gentleman: Step up is about early intervention and the assistance we can provide for the most vulnerable people in our community. In relation to how it works with parents as teachers I will ask Ms Howson to give some more detail.

Ms Howson: The step up for kids appropriation will not directly impact on a program like parents as teachers but I might ask Dr Collis to take this question if you do not mind in terms of the child and family centre operation. There was some funding allocated to this program last year and how we are actually managing services like that in our—

MS LAWDER: It is good spending but there are other areas where there is need as well and long waiting lists.

Ms Howson: I will ask Dr Collis to respond to that question of how we are actually meeting demand through our child and family centres.

Dr Collis: The parents as teachers program is fully functioning now as a consequence of prior budget allocations. As of 31 March this year there were 119 families that accessed that program. This course is a very intensive, in-home support program, as you know. The specific question about how a step up for kids will impact upon—

MS LAWDER: As I just mentioned to Ms Howson, I am saying that is good spending but there are other areas where there is additional work needed as well. It is

not specifically how it will affect this but how we are addressing other areas of need such as parents as teachers where there are long waiting lists.

Dr Collis: Can I pass this to Paul who will have a more specific—

MS LAWDER: Sure, why not. Go through the whole list.

Mr Wyles: Dr Collis has talked about the child and family centre redesign. There are a number of drivers for that redesign, including alignment with the human services blueprint and alignment with a step up for our kids. What we have done in that process is develop a suite of programs. Parents as teachers is one of the core programs that are delivered out of child and family centres.

Intensive home visiting may not be appropriate for everyone but we have other complementary programs. One of those programs that we have commenced this year is circle of security. It is a group program operating out of each of the three centres where parents can come. It really targets assisting parents to develop their relationship and attachment with their child, particularly where there are concerns emerging. We also have maternal and child health nurses in the centres. As part of their job they would do home visiting.

When people present at the centres we make an assessment and we direct them to an appropriate program. It might be a program run by child and family centre staff but it might be a program run by health staff, Smith Family staff, Medicare Local staff.

There are not waiting lists for parents as teachers. We book people into those programs. We have increased the number of people who can access those programs.

Ms Howson: If I can just add to this, it is an opportunity to again describe some of the things that we are attempting to do through better integration of better services. When needs of individuals, families or a community are presenting, what we are attempting to do through our human service gateway is ensure that everyone that is asking for something is assessed and referred to a program that will best meet their needs. The overall intent of this redesign across our system is to ensure that we intervene early and that in intervening early we offer information, a group program or access to something that will address the need that is present.

If there is a family that has got needs that go beyond what they may have been asking for in presenting to our service, we are in a position then to refer them, again early, to ensure that families do not escalate into crisis in need which, of course, then makes it very difficult for the services team to be responsive and necessarily meet that need at the right time.

What is happening through all this reform that we are talking about is that, rather than taking a programmatic view, we are actually building on our system to be able to mobilise the resources of the non-government sector and the government sector, focus on a more localised response and build our capacity to actually assess individual need and refer people to the right service that they need at that time.

MS LAWDER: Mr Wyles, did you just talk about perhaps increasing the number of

people able to access the parents as teachers program?

Mr Wyles: Sorry, I did not quite hear the question.

MS LAWDER: Did you just mention at the end of what you were saying that you were increasing the ability of families to access parents as teachers?

Mr Wyles: We have increased the numbers of parents accessing that program, as part of the three full-time equivalent staff that were part of the budget process last year. That was one FTE per centre.

MS LAWDER: So that was reflected in the accountability indicator of 160 families?

Mr Wyles: That is right, up from 120.

MS LAWDER: But you are leaving it at 160 for the coming year? There is no opportunity to review that? I am aware, from providers I have spoken to, of waiting lists.

Ms Howson: We certainly will have a waiting list as such in our program. Again the child and family centre redesign is really ensuring that a family gets a service, and if they are suitable for a parents as teachers service they will be able to access that program at a point in time. It is a time-limited program, is my understanding, and if that is the right match for their need, then they will be referred and at a point in time they will get access to that service. In the meantime we would be looking at all of the other resources that are available to us through child and family centres to assist that family until they were able to attend the parents as teachers program.

MS LAWDER: The increase is good, from 100, was it, to 160? It looks like you are achieving that outcome, which would clearly indicate that there is a lot of demand out there for the program because the estimated outcome was 160 families.

Mr Gentleman: Yes. If you can see growth it is appropriate to engage and enlarge that target, where appropriate.

Dr Collis: Can I also add to that? In the step up for kids investment, the procurement strategy we are having now, as Mr Wyles indicated, this is a particular approach for intensive support. We are, indeed, as part of that procurement, strengthening high risk families purchasing into the sector and giving them more capability in that particular area. So there will be a greater capacity in the strengthening high risk families area to, in fact, provide these high intensive family support behaviour programs that will come as a consequence of building the strengthening high risk families. That will, in fact, be an addition to what is being deployed now through the CFCs.

THE CHAIR: I have a supplementary on that. Minister, you just mentioned that when you see a need you respond to it. What assessment has the government done on unmet need for early intervention services?

Ms Howson: That is a very good question, in the context of—

THE CHAIR: They are all good questions.

Ms Howson: Yes. In relation to the assessment of unmet need, I guess my response to that would be that there will always be a need for a range of initiatives around early intervention prevention. What we are attempting to do, as we explained earlier, is to build our understanding, both from a quantitative and qualitative point of view of the needs of particular communities at a localised level and then be able to mobilise the resources available to meet that need, and identify a gap if that is the case.

The redesign work around better services is giving us our first and best opportunity to really assess the full impact of what is available for communities, what they consider to be the most important issues to resolve for their community, and then be able to draw from that in relation to any gaps in the service system.

THE CHAIR: Has that work delivered you a list of the unmet need or not?

Ms Howson: We are about six months into that process. We are really at the stage of building up that data view, having consulted with the community quite extensively about where they see the need. At this point we do not believe that there is a mismatch between what is available and what the community sees as a priority. But we are at the very early stage of allocating and working with the non-government sector and the private sector around a collaborative response to meet those needs.

It is also inherent in our design that we are trying to mobilise the resources that exist within the community itself—natural support systems. There is a whole range of things that come into the definition of what is early intervention—what early intervention is for one family and what it is for another. This is what we are learning. This is what we are learning; the whole process of better services is a pilot to actually test our thinking on some of this.

THE CHAIR: When will the results of the pilot be available?

Ms Howson: We are evaluating the whole program formally. I am looking to see if I have got someone here. This is an issue that we were expecting to discuss later in the day. I think the first report of the evaluation will be due towards the end of this year. That will be an interim. I will have to take that on notice if you do not mind, Mr Smyth.

THE CHAIR: What output class were you thinking this would be in?

Ms Howson: It is actually Minister Berry's. It is under community services.

THE CHAIR: But specifically for early intervention services, the minister said earlier that early intervention is the key to success. So what is the unmet need for the services currently met that are provided through the early intervention services output class?

Ms Howson: We believe that we are meeting the need that is presenting that each of those particular outputs is designed to address.

THE CHAIR: All right. So there is no waiting list; there are no time delays?

Ms Howson: We do not actually hold waiting lists. As families and individuals present, we will work to find them a service that will meet their need.

THE CHAIR: Again, what output class would you expect that to be. Is that in 3.1? You said it was in Ms Berry's?

Ms Howson: Certainly output class 3.1 is titled "early intervention services". The conversation that—sorry, 2.1—

THE CHAIR: No, 2.1. You said earlier that you thought this was better dealt with by Ms Berry. Which output class would we ask this question in?

Ms Howson: That was in response to your question about the better services evaluation. That particular evaluation is being appropriated through Minister Berry's program.

THE CHAIR: Members, I think we probably need to move on from 2.1. Feel free now to go to output class 4.1, child and youth protection services. We might reverse the order and start at the far end of the line with Mr Wall. Welcome!

MR WALL: Thank you, chair. Minister, in the recent months I have sent two requests to your office for a confidential briefing on the current inquiry that is being undertaken at Bimberi and I have had absolutely no response. Why is that?

Mr Gentleman: Thank you, Mr Wall. This is in relation to the questions you put forward during question time in the last sitting or the sitting before, I think?

MR WALL: Yes, and subsequent to that two requests for a briefing on this matter have been made to your office. There has not been any response to date.

Mr Gentleman: I am sorry, Mr Wall. We intend to provide a formal response to you. I can say that I have taken an active interest in this particular matter. As Mr Wall asked in question time, there were some allegations of inappropriate use in Bimberi. Those allegations included drug use. That was, I think, the formal part of your question, Mr Wall. We take very seriously any allegations of inappropriate behaviour at Bimberi.

Our main priorities of course are for the safety and wellbeing of those that we support in care and also for our staff. At the beginning of looking at this particular incident we heard that there were some verbal allegations received in March of this year by the Community Services Directorate that one or more staff members in the Office of Children, Youth, and Family Support had been involved in supplying drugs to former and possibly current residents at Bimberi.

I can advise that no evidence has been found to support those allegations. So there has been a very strong investigation. I have taken a senior CSD official offline during that investigation period. We engaged an external specialist investigator, KPMG, to report to CSD on a public interest disclosure, as was appropriate.

Staff subject to the investigation were suspended with pay during the process. At the conclusion I can advise, as I said, that no evidence has been found to support the allegation. In regard to our communications, Mr Wall, I will certainly talk to my office about it but we should have responded to you in the last week or so.

MR WALL: On the inquiry itself, minister, what was the exact scope or nature of the inquiry?

Mr Gentleman: It was quite detailed. I will pass over to Ms Howson for the some of the details.

Ms Howson: Thank you, Mr Wall. Of course we take any allegation like this extremely seriously. Our primary interest is the health and wellbeing of our residents in Bimberi as well as well as our staff. We have set out very clear terms of reference for this investigation. I will ask Ms Chapman to outline the terms of reference for you.

Ms Chapman: In the terms of reference that we gave to KPMG, the external investigator, we said that these are the allegations that have been provided to us by the person making the allegations. As the minister said, there were the allegations about drugs being brought into Bimberi by staff for sale to residents and former residents of Bimberi and that also pornography was being downloaded in Bimberi by staff. They were, I guess, the two headline allegations that I asked them to find evidence for or not find evidence for. The investigators were asked to find evidence to support or otherwise those allegations.

They undertook a very forensic review of all of the computer systems in Bimberi. They interviewed a range of witnesses. They did a whole lot of work on mapping relationships with staff—searching for keywords, the whole thing that forensic investigators do which is beyond my ken. They have processes that they use in these kinds of investigations elsewhere. They were the allegations. That was what we asked them to investigate.

We asked them to find whether there was evidence in Bimberi of those allegations. As the minister said, there were no findings that those allegations were correct, that there had been no drugs taken into Bimberi for sale to residents or former residents. So we believe that the investigation is closed with those findings.

Mr Gentleman: Can I add to that, Mr Wall, that at the beginning of this process I did ask for my directorate to advise that the staff at Bimberi had my complete support during this process and that support is ongoing. These are difficult discussions I think at some times. So I wanted to ensure that my office was ready there to provide that support.

MR WALL: What involvement, if any, did the AFP have in the investigation of these allegations, given the criminal nature of them?

Ms Chapman: I understand, Mr Wall, that one of your questions in the Assembly was: was there a raid by the AFP or were other police investigations undertaken?

MR WALL: The question I asked, just for clarity, was, “In recent weeks has there been any internal or AFP-led investigation or raid regarding the illicit drugs at Bimberi?”

Ms Chapman: And the answer is no. The AFP did not conduct an investigation, were not conducting an investigation, and nor did they raid Bimberi. What we did, as we would always do when we have allegations of what could potentially be of a criminal nature, is we inform the ACT police chief officer. We say, “These are the allegations. We are investigating them. This is how we are going to investigate them and do you need information from us? Would it be helpful?” And throughout the investigation we provided them with information as it came to hand.

Then it is really up to ACT police to decide if they think it is a police matter that they would follow up. I do not know what the ACT police service have done with any of the information we have given them. But we also refer potential criminal matters, if we have an allegation, to the police.

MR WALL: How did the department become aware of these allegations? Were they subject to a public interest disclosure?

Ms Howson: We became aware of the allegations through a report that was provided to our HR department and the management of Bimberi. It was then determined in consultation with the public service commissioner that this particular set of allegations was of a serious enough nature to warrant treatment under the Public Interest Disclosure Act.

MR WALL: In relation to the staff involved, both those that have made the allegations and those that were the subject of the allegations, what has been done to ensure, I guess, their safety and their support through this ongoing matter?

Ms Chapman: We have taken that very seriously. For staff about whom allegations were made, they were stood down with pay to ensure that, I guess, the investigators could clearly investigate it. The person who made the allegations was supported to be on leave and we had welfare checks of that individual weekly by my HR department to ensure that that person felt that they were fully supported throughout the process and that their safety was okay.

We also had the manager of Bimberi talk to staff to make sure that they understood why the investigation was being undertaken. Also, as the minister said, we believe it is important that if people do feel they have information, they feel confident and comfortable they can bring their suspicions or their concerns to our attention for us to take action without there being any blame or any incrimination. It is really, really important to us that our staff feel that we will take their concerns seriously, we will act on them appropriately and that people are supported through the process.

MR WALL: When was that individual stood down?

Ms Chapman: Which individual?

THE WALL: The individual that was subject to the allegations?

Ms Chapman: As soon as we knew that this was going to be a PID and we believed that the allegations warranted investigation.

Mr Gentleman: Of course, staff that were involved were—remained on pay.

MR WALL: Okay. So how many staff overall were stood down during the process of this investigation.

Mr Gentleman: Mr Wall, it is probably not appropriate to talk about the number of staff. It is a very small operation in regard to the rest of the ACT public service and it would be probably easy to start identifying staff once you start to talk about numbers. If the committee does not mind, I would prefer not to go into those specific details. If you do want to delve further, I am happy to look at in-camera evidence.

THE CHAIR: We might go there. Just before you continue, Dr Bourke had a supplementary and then we will come back to Mr Wall—unless it has been answered.

DR BOURKE: Thank you, chair. Minister, how many kids are in Bimberi these days?

Mr Gentleman: Eleven today, Dr Bourke. It varies.

THE CHAIR: Sorry, it does not sound like a supplementary, Dr Bourke.

DR BOURKE: It is about Bimberi.

THE CHAIR: Mr Wall is asking a specific question about an investigation. Perhaps we will finish with the investigation and you can ask that as a new question.

Mr Gentleman: Can I recover from that? It is actually nine today. The numbers do change daily but they have been reducing quite dramatically over the last couple of years.

DR BOURKE: I was going to ask about the rationale for its continued existence.

THE CHAIR: No, that is okay. You can do that as a new question. We will go back to the investigation, which is quite a specific issue.

MR WALL: I just want to continue on the subject of drugs and contraband items in Bimberi, minister. Have there been any seizures in the last 12 months of any contraband material, be it mobile phones, weapons or drugs?

Mr Gentleman: I will ask Dr Collis to go through the detail for you.

Dr Collis: There have been, as I understand it, three pieces of contraband.

Ms Howson: It is quite a specific question and if you do not mind we will refer to our brief.

Dr Collis: During the last year there have been four contraband incidents. The objects found were a pencil, a screw and a lump of concrete. So pencils, screws and a lump of concrete were the three, bearing in mind contraband also includes internal security arrangements within Bimberi. If a young person brings a screw into a particular room that is secure and should not have that material, they cannot have that. There was also an unidentified white powder that was identified and this is awaiting AFP analysis.

MR WALL: What is the drug testing procedure at Bimberi?

Dr Collis: For the young people?

MR WALL: For detainees, visitors and staff.

Dr Collis: Under the Children and Young People Act, young people may be required to have a urine analysis by their case worker. That frequently occurs, particularly when they come into Bimberi, to determine whether there are ongoing drug issues that are driving their offending behaviour. There is also a regime of random urinalysis that occurs for the sentenced young people in Bimberi and the people who are on longer term remands. This is for the security of the whole centre to indicate whether there is any potential for young people to be accessing drugs within Bimberi. Clearly that would not be appropriate for people who were in within a couple of weeks because the drug test would indicate usage before they came to Bimberi. The last time that we undertook one of these tests was in March this year. So far since January, when we commenced this regime, to March last year, there has been no positive detection in the urinalysis.

Mr Gentleman: With regard to staff at Bimberi, which was part of your question, Mr Wall, I am taking some advice at the moment on whether it is appropriate in that sense to do drug testing of staff at Bimberi. We are looking at the risk analysis across the centre with a view to seeing whether that is appropriate or not. There is an opportunity under the current legal system to test staff, but there has been no evidence that staff have been involved. At this time we are just taking advice.

THE CHAIR: We might move on to Ms Lawder with a new question.

MS LAWDER: Thank you. On page 9 of the budget book for CSD it shows that the estimated cost for this output class is less this year than the previous year. But if you also look at page 13, in the accountability indicators, one of the ones that are increasing is the number of children and young people for whom the director-general has parental responsibilities. Can you explain why the overall cost for this particular output class has decreased?

Mr Gentleman: There has been quite a change in this budget in relation to CSD with regard to NDIS and also the transfer of some managerial issues. I will ask Ms Howson to give you some more detail.

Ms Howson: Ms Lawder, you are referring to page 9; is that correct?

MS LAWDER: Yes.

Ms Howson: So you are talking about output class 4.1, table 7—

MS LAWDER: Table 7.

Ms Howson: and the government payment for outputs of 84.9 and—

MS LAWDER: And the total, yes.

Ms Howson: This is actually the same scenario as we were describing in the earlier output class. I will ask Mr Hubbard to explain that again. It has certainly got to do with some of the adjustments that were being made around the Treasurer's advance that we have received in this financial year. As the minister suggested, there are some shifts in our presentations as a result of what is happening with a transition to the NDIS.

Mr Hubbard: If you like, I can run you through the same conversation that we had earlier around why that is. Is that your preference? Would you like that?

MS LAWDER: That is okay. I will continue on with the same table—I have a couple of other questions—if it is the same answer as previously.

Ms Howson: Yes. As we said earlier, we are happy to provide a more detailed breakdown of that, but it is essentially an allocation into 2014-15 which has escalated the GPO. Essentially, this year the budget for 2015-16 is reflective of the demand that has been created by the children that are in our care.

THE CHAIR: Just as a supplementary on 2014-15, what is the big number that drives that increase?

Ms Howson: It is around \$11 million.

Mr Hubbard: Yes, that TA that we received. We received additional cash. That is in the approp table as additional, as I explained earlier, Mr Smyth.

THE CHAIR: So what proportion of that 11 million went into output class 4.1?

Mr Hubbard: The proportion of that was in the order of 4.6 million out of that 11. That is why it has moved. If we look at government payments for outputs it has gone from essentially 80 million to 84.9. Apart from a couple of other technical adjustments around indexation, that is the entirety of that movement.

THE CHAIR: So what is the increase there in that output class?

Mr Hubbard: Sorry?

Ms Howson: Against?

THE CHAIR: Against the base of last year or if you take out that one-off adjustment.

Ms Howson: We might need to take that on notice.

Mr Hubbard: Yes, I will give you that in the reconciliation.

Ms Howson: We will take that on notice.

THE CHAIR: All right. Back to Ms Lawder.

MS LAWDER: With step up for our kids, it is focusing on reducing the flow of children and young people into out of home care, and better support for parents. With that in mind—and I always like to see targets increasing—the director-general may have parental responsibility for additional children this year, more out of home care days used by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people. How do you reconcile that you are trying to reduce the flow of children into out of home care, but you are increasing the targets? Can you just explain that?

Ms Howson: I am glad you have asked us to explain that because the indicators do warrant some explanation. I am going to turn to Dr Collis—because I think it would be helpful for the committee—to talk about why we have made those changes and what the collective indicators are measuring.

Dr Collis: The increasing target for children in out of home care, or the total number of young people for whom the director-general has responsibility, is in line with what we projected in the modelling for step up for our kids. In future years we would be adjusting that target to come down to reflect the success we are expecting from that investment.

In relation to the question about item l. in table 11, that is an increase and all of the demand pressures for out of home care will increase this year. I hope we are here next year adjusting those downwards as out of home care, step up for kids becomes implemented. That will commence implementation from 1 January 2016. We are expecting in 2016-17 to start seeing the flow-on benefits of that.

Ms Howson: Some of these indicators indicate an increase. Others actually indicate a reduction. Regarding the total number of children—for example, in l—for whom I have parental responsibility, our projections are that that will increase, but it will increase at a lower rate than it has previously, which is a result of the interventions that will translate from step up for kids. That is why at the top of the table you will see other indicators. For example, in indicator i, which is replaced by j, you will see a significant reduction in the number of children and young people receiving a care and protection service in any one year. Then, of course, you see a further reduction in indicator h—where the number of child protection reports received that are proceeding to an appraisal, and those appraisals substantiate abuse or neglect, have reduced from a target of 700 to an estimated outcome this year of 555, which we expect to sustain next year.

That is a significant reduction as a result of, we believe, a range of the changes that we have made in our early intervention services, such as our child, youth and family support program and our remodelling of the work that we are doing through child and family centres, where we are essentially diverting children from the statutory system and getting support to families before they hit a crisis point where the safety and

wellbeing of children has come to a point where those children need to be removed.

MS LAWDER: One last question on this table: indicator p—the number of permanency places. Presumably that is what we may loosely refer to as adoptions; is that correct?

Ms Howson: It could be an adoption or it could be a placement that is defined as an enduring parental responsibility placement under the act.

MS LAWDER: There is a lot of discussion of people wanting to provide that longer term arrangement for children—adoption or enduring parental responsibility. Why is that not increasing? Why is the number for your target not increasing?

Ms Howson: We are really stepping into this area and, again, until the step up for kids and a few changes that need to be made through our legislation are in place, we are not going to be in as good a position as we might be in 12 months time to accelerate that process.

One of the key intents of step up for kids—if we have worked our way through to the point where a child cannot be permanently restored to their birth family—in the best interest of those children, is to ensure that they are in a permanent, secure, longstanding, loving relationship with a family. The legislation essentially dictates a time period through which that needs to be assessed.

At that point we will be increasing our efforts to where it is appropriate and suitable to move children into enduring parental responsibility arrangements, which shifts the parental responsibility from me, as the director-general, to the new family of that child—or adoption, if that is appropriate under the circumstances.

MS LAWDER: So without a commitment you would vaguely hope that that number may increase?

Ms Howson: We would expect to see it increase, yes.

Dr Collis: Can I just add to Ms Howson's point? As to the target of 20, when we reach that in relation to the population of children in out of home care, to benchmark this, it would put the ACT system clearly as the most effective in Australia with regard to achieving those permanency and adoption rates. Already we are setting ourselves a target which we are really focusing on achieving and we want to get even better than that in the future.

Sitting suspended from 10.59 to 11.16 am.

THE CHAIR: I resume these hearings into the 2015-16 budget. We are on output class 4.1 in the Community Services Directorate. Dr Bourke, you have the call.

DR BOURKE: I will return to the theme that I was talking about before, Bimberi. You have got nine kids there at the moment. I understand that is a significantly lower number than has been in Bimberi in the past. Firstly, how do you account for that drop in numbers, which is of course a very good thing?

Mr Gentleman: It is good, as you say, to see a reduction in numbers at Bimberi. I think there are a number of reasons for that. Many of them are due to the hard work of Community Services Directorate staff, in particular some of the work that occurs at Bimberi through the Bendora care system and its operation to ensure that, when exiting Bimberi, people do not come back into the youth justice system. This is an opportunity for them to pursue a career following quite a bit of work to assist them in life skills, even sometimes simple life skills like cooking and preparing for their day. Bendora has been a great operation in preparing people for work outside the justice system.

I have had the opportunity to visit on several occasions and have seen personally the difference in character of those young people that can now exit the system into a job, but there are many other factors that support the reduction in numbers too. Early intervention is really the most important factor. I will go to directorate staff to give you some more detail.

Dr Collis: Thank you for the question, Dr Bourke. There is the youth justice blueprint which is finishing its first three-year action plan at the end of this year. It has focused on diversion practices and quality practices at Bimberi—that is where we started—because the community task force that we put in place three years ago indicated that that was where the effort needed to go. What we have essentially achieved in that process is, I think, a very sophisticated and successful system of diversionary practices around the way children and young people are sentenced. The capability to keep young people out of short-term remand has been really important.

I think one of the other issues is that we brought together the case planning. The case planning that occurs within Bimberi used to be done in the detention context. Now the community-based case worker continues with the case management while the young person is in Bimberi and out. We built on relationships around that and we have ensured that the experience of that relationship is as continuous as we can make it.

There are a number of successes we have had there. We have worked very closely with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander service providers, particularly the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-run organisations in that community, to give us some advice around how to structure our programs both in and out of Bimberi. That has been invaluable. In particular Winnunga and Gugan have stepped up in terms of the provision of service there but also we have provided significant input from Relationships Australia. The yarning program which we have adapted from an adult setting into Bimberi has been particularly successful. That is for three years.

We are in the process now of moving into the next three-year approach. How do we move further down the stream and assist the young people now who are presenting with the most complex and significant problems? One of the impacts of reducing the numbers in Bimberi is that we can really ensure that the young people who do enter Bimberi typically get assistance on the most significant and complex matters in their life which are driving their offending behaviour. In nearly all cases that complexity relates to early trauma and abuse.

To pick up on a theme that Ms Howson talked about before, we are attempting to

drive everything we do now through the step up for kids which is to be a trauma-informed approach to get in early. On 1 July we move the integration of youth justice and care and protection services together to the new Child, Youth and Protection Service. We have done an end-for-end design to improve case management right across that space so that we can even better get in early to support families and hopefully work in an early intervention space.

The work around the CFCs that we are undertaking in the redesign and under the better service initiative—and all these fit under the better service initiative—is to start moving our effort further and further down the line of early intervention to ensure that the young people have the kinds of life opportunities and kinds of experiences in their families that mean that they will not be driven into antisocial behaviour and the need for custodial or court involvement.

The really pleasing thing in this is not only the impact we are having in the space of reduced numbers in detention—and as of today it is nine young people—but that one of those young people is an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander. But if we look at the data, the ACT have been reducing the offending rate for young people, something that is not often known. We are a standout jurisdiction in that space. We are coming together as a whole community, working around youth justice with the police, with Justice and Community Services, with the community providers initially who put together the youth justice plan which I think has been a really successful piece of public policy decision-making.

We are now in the next consideration. How do we get further down and prevent those nine from being in custody? How do we make that nine less and how do we reduce that experience?

DR BOURKE: You just mentioned that the youth offending rate in the ACT was declining. Can you give us some numbers around that?

Dr Collis: I can. However I have not brought them with me but they are in the Justice and Community Safety statistical profile. Can I take that on notice? It would be useful. I could probably get that to you in a matter of minutes.

DR BOURKE: Minister, what is the capacity of Bimberi? How many detainees can it hold?

Mr Gentleman: We do not look at it in a sense of how many it can hold. We look at how many we can support at any one time and provide the best results for those people that are in that particular style of care. As I mentioned there are opportunities through the Bendora through-care unit to ensure that we can provide better services for that end of, if you like, the Bimberi experience. But I will go to the directorate officials for a total amount.

Ms Howson: From an infrastructure point of view, Dr Collis.

Dr Collis: From an infrastructure point of view there are 40 independent beds in Bimberi and that is arranged around four units. The units are arranged around the degree of risk associated with each young person. Each unit allows, therefore, a

capability to separate young people on risk. It is really important to understand that capacity to separate on risk because one of the things that drive adverse events within a detention centre is the inability to separate high risk young people from medium to low risk young people. Assaults, bullying, harassment and those sorts of issues can be mitigated by ensuring that the risk levels of young people are addressed appropriately by where they are residing in the centre.

THE CHAIR: As a supplementary on that, how many assaults have there been in the last year?

Dr Collis: I would say there have been six.

THE CHAIR: Residents on staff?

Dr Collis: That is total.

THE CHAIR: What is the breakdown?

Dr Collis: Can you give me a few minutes to whip through them? This year there have been four assaults on staff and two assaults on young people—young people on young people.

THE CHAIR: And when you say “this year”, this financial year?

Dr Collis: Yes, this financial year.

THE CHAIR: And how many in the previous financial year?

Dr Collis: In the previous financial year there were 22. This comes from an historical level of 60 to 80.

Ms Howson: Dr Collis, you might also outline what fits in with a definition of assault if you can.

Dr Collis: An assault is governed by a definition of a physical attack on a person where there is either an injury psychological or physical sustained in that regard.

THE CHAIR: Did the four staff and the two youths require medical treatment as a result of the assaults?

Dr Collis: All people involved in an assault are provided with access to medical treatment. There were no requirements for hospitalisation of any of the people involved. The assaults, young person on young person, were relatively minor injuries or not injured at all. The assaults on staff include matters of spitting, and where that happens we follow appropriate workplace health and safety rules about ensuring that people are screened for diseases in that space.

THE CHAIR: Dr Bourke.

DR BOURKE: Minister, given that this facility seems to be running at less than 25

per cent of its built capacity, not necessarily its staffing content, have you given consideration, as I alluded to before, to whether this is something we continue to need in the ACT or whether there are some opportunities in your relationships with your New South Wales colleagues to have a regional approach to detaining youth?

Mr Gentleman: I think the government feels that it should look after its own—and I think we have seen that with the construction of the Alexander Maconochie Centre—from decisions made quite a while ago. The capacity, as I have said, for Bimberi, as we have heard, in a fiscal sense is 40 but the number of staff we need to provide the best services for those people residing there can vary depending on the services that we do provide them. I do keep reiterating about Bendora through-care service. It is important that we give those people in there an opportunity to lead a different life when they exit that care. Whilst staffing numbers may look to remain the same when we start to reduce population in there we can use that resource to improve the outcomes for those people in Bimberi.

Ms Howson: The other point that is very important here is that the results we are getting in the context of youth detention actually relate very much to the whole diversionary framework. To isolate the results for Bimberi from the work that we do within the community with these young people does not tell the whole story. It is really important that our continuum of response to young people is very tightly connected to what we are doing with those young people when they are not in detention. That is where I think we are getting most of our results.

The philosophy around the Bendora through-care unit and that investment is very much one of walking with these young people outside detention, as much as inside detention. The other thing about the environment and the way that it is constructed—and Dr Collis might like to comment on this—is that it does provide a really defined structure that assists in improving particularly the health and wellbeing of these young people, which then allows them to engage in some more constructive programs with us, while they are within our care and under orders, and that again puts them in a very good position to exit.

Extending the population of Bimberi to young people that are not part of that overarching comprehensive program would present to our program a number of risks that we would need to think through very carefully.

DR BOURKE: Is this a restorative justice unit that is within your purview, minister, or does it rest with the Minister for Justice or the A-G?

Mr Gentleman: Justice. But I have been involved with committee work previously in restorative justice across the territory. We have studied and produced a report on how the outcomes from RJ work in other jurisdictions, and provided recommendations to the government which they have taken on board. Restorative justice is a great way of dealing especially with youth issues, where you can provide some early support to young people to avoid them going back into the justice system later on.

THE CHAIR: Ms Fitzharris, a new question.

MS FITZHARRIS: I have a quick supplementary about the numbers in Bimberi. Are

there any young women in Bimberi? Can Bimberi take young women?

Mr Gentleman: Yes, it does include young women. I am not sure if there are any there at the moment, Dr Collis?

Dr Collis: Currently there is one young woman.

MS FITZHARRIS: Have you seen any shift in terms of the numbers of people coming into Bimberi—any change in the gender make-up?

Dr Collis: The numbers or trends are really difficult. We went for a period of months—I think almost a year—without there being any young women in Bimberi at all. The trends from other jurisdictions indicate that they are seeing more young women entering the justice system for more severe offences, and that is increasing the number of young women in detention. That is not a trend that we have seen.

What I will say—and this picks up the idea of how the service systems need to work together—is that what is a typical experience in Canberra is that there will be a cohort of young women who network together, get into trouble and end up in the justice system here. Often there are opportunities that have been missed in the past where we could have been working with those young people. We could have been disrupting the social networks and putting in place social networks which are more appropriate, as we would hope to do with our own children. That goes to the point where early intervention needs to work.

MS FITZHARRIS: That probably flows on to my substantive question. It is hard to put these into output classes, not only within the directorate, but, given the evidence we have had so far in a number of hearings, across all government activity. Is it fair to say that our most expensive institutions to operate are our hospitals, prisons and youth justice? In a sense you are talking about ultimately getting people in a position where their lives are active and they are contributing to the community, rather than finding a path to those very expensive institutions. That is a secondary impact, I guess; more so it is the impact on young lives. Do you have a way of measuring the impact across all of government services of how your efforts will have an impact on police, hospitals and some of the other services that the rest of the government provide?

Mr Gentleman: If you look at the outputs framework in a step up for our kids, that would be the first step in looking at those results. But the studies by professionals, in regard to early intervention and support for our most vulnerable people at that very early time, do show that the results spread right across whole-of-government services, especially, as you mentioned, the tertiary services—hospitals and the justice system—in the future.

The analogy really is as you say—that you are putting the fence at the top of the cliff, rather than the ambulance at the bottom. Therefore the expenditure—and we show this in the argument for a step up for our kids—is far better to be spent at that early intervention time, showing support for those young people right through, and that continuum of care for those people right through their lives, into adulthood.

MS FITZHARRIS: Is there anything else you can tell us about a step up for our

kids? What specifically are you doing over the next 12 months?

Mr Gentleman: Kate will give you the detailed program for the next 12 months in a step up for our kids.

Ms Starick: A step up for our kids gives us a very good framework and description of the strategy that contains the elements that are important for end-to-end system reform. We have developed an implementation plan to deliver on those commitments that are contained within the strategy.

Our implementation plan is designed to deliver services under strengthening high risk families, creating a continuum of care, as well as strengthening accountabilities. It also ensures that the strategy remains financially sustainable, therapeutic and trauma informed; that it delivers on our commitments to carers to provide training, and also for organisations seeking to develop a trauma-informed service; and that it seeks to reset the relationship with carers, kinship carers and foster carers and recognise their place as being central to the care service system in the ACT.

To do that we have developed six projects. The first one, which you have heard a bit about today, is the procurement. This seeks to get services commencing from January 2016. We are seeking to announce the outcome of this tender process in October. The second project is around developing a therapeutic trauma-informed assessment system. This will commence from July this year. This is in line with the integration into the Child and Youth Protection Service.

The third project under the implementation program is a workforce development and training strategy. We are seeking to commence the initial phase of training from July this year, with a focus on kinship carers. When we announced the strategy we ran a number of think-tanks and roundtables. We heard from kinship carers that they would like access to training, so we have prioritised them in the program of our training.

The fourth one is the development of a system of governance and structure. This project includes the tranches of amendments to the Children and Young People Act to develop the regulatory framework, plus those amendments that will enable us to enact different aspects of the strategy, as well as the tendering and then the commencement of independent advocacy services for birth families and a separate advocacy service for carers. The fifth one is the development of an evaluation plan. This will seek to evaluate the progress and the outcomes that we are achieving through a step up for our kids. There will be a midpoint evaluation in 2½ years and then a final evaluation in five years.

The next project is all of those change and transitional elements that we need to put in place to move our staff, systems and processes from their current way of operating into a new way of operating. That is a change management approach. Finally, underpinning all of this there is a communication strategy that links to the whole program as well as the individual projects within them.

Mr Gentleman: Can I add to Ms Starick's comments, especially those in regard to the legislative changes, and take an opportunity to thank Ms Lawder for her help during the last process of bill No 2. With bill No 3, in the not-too-distant future we

hope to be working alongside all members of the Assembly through that process as well.

In regard to a step up for our kids, it also includes \$736,000 in capital funding for Karinya House in 2015-16. This funding is used to set up that capital funding for Karinya House. It will provide additional placements for the mother and baby unit, it will provide services to pregnant women, mothers and families whose children are at risk of entering care. You can see that this is very early intervention into the lives of vulnerable people. The unit will provide 24-hour supervised support for up to three months. That will reduce the likelihood of these children coming into care later on.

The mother and baby unit is a service provided under the strengthening high risk families domain in a step up for our kids. Engagement with services provided by Karinya is voluntary for new mothers, and the domain is largely focused on working intensively with families and providing supports to prevent children from coming into care or returning them home as soon as it is safe to do so.

MS FITZHARRIS: I have a supplementary. Thanks for that on Karinya; that was my next question. In terms of additional placements, how many are there? Is the mother and baby unit a unit they already have and you are supplementing it or is it a new unit within Karinya?

Mr Gentleman: It occurs already, from my understanding.

Dr Collis: The capital funding goes to the extension of a plan they had to consolidate their properties. It became clear to us, at the time when we were looking at whether there was a need to get some intensive support to young mums or young prospective mums in this space, that we could actually use the money far better by helping them extend to another unit in that context.

MS FITZHARRIS: Do you know how many additional placements there are?

Ms Howson: We do know about the configuration of the capital build. Do you know about the number of placements?

Ms Starick: With the funding announced under a step up for our kids it would be four additional beds in the residential unit, with a stay of approximately three months.

MS FITZHARRIS: They do outreach as well, don't they?

Ms Howson: That is right, in addition there is outreach.

MS FITZHARRIS: Has the new facility broken ground yet?

Mr Gentleman: It is under Minister Berry's portfolio.

MS FITZHARRIS: Okay, we can ask her this afternoon. Could you define for us what you mean by "trauma informed"?

Mr Gentleman: It is a very important question, Ms Fitzharris. I was first able to

really get my head around trauma-informed therapeutic services when we launched Melaleuca Place last year. We had a very strong, passionate advocate, Louise Newman. She provided the audience at the Melaleuca launch with a very detailed observation about how trauma-informed research and therapy assist in those young people's lives. I am probably not an expert on how that should be described.

Dr Collis: Thank you for the question. It is very complex because it is becoming a bit of a throwaway line—"trauma informed". But what we mean by "trauma informed" is that the system operates with an understanding that the children who come into care have an experience, and all of those experiences that have brought them into care have been traumatic.

MS FITZHARRIS: I am most used to it in terms of "road trauma" and "physical trauma", but it is broader than that?

Dr Collis: It is more than that, but associated with that. How our system would work is that, at the point of coming into the out of home care system, every child and young person will have a therapeutic assessment which will identify the individual's response to the trauma that led them into care. It is a complicated thing, the trauma. For young people coming into care, being taken away from their bedroom and their toys, it can be very highly traumatic. A carer recently was giving a speech and was saying that with their experience of caring for a child the things they learned very early on included that they had to mow the lawn when the child was not in the house because loud noises impacted upon behaviour.

It is understanding that the behaviour is more than the behaviour—it has come from somewhere—and understanding that we have to address that. Our system needs to communicate with the primary carers, the carers, to give them the information and the tools to care for those children in a way that does not re-traumatise. The system also needs to act in a way that does not allow for children to be re-traumatised by moving placements. In our continuum of care, we are procuring one service across a number of components that we currently have, because we want the child's experience not to be partialled up so that they can float in and out.

MS FITZHARRIS: Compounding; right.

Dr Collis: We also, from a neurobiological point of view, know that the first two years of life are very important for children's brain development in this area. You will see that we have proposed, under the strategy, that we have a capability to make permanent decisions about children more quickly. The evidence is becoming very clear that, neurobiologically, kids are being affected and lifelong effects are occurring as a consequence of that early trauma from going in and out of traumatic experiences. We are trying to reduce that. So it works at a system level and an individual level.

MS FITZHARRIS: How do you do that with under-two-year-olds? How do you get a sense of the trauma they have experienced from them?

Dr Collis: The sense of the trauma may be fairly clear, and usually in under-two-year-olds the immediate trauma might be very clear. For example, the reason that led to the young person coming into care might be to do with neglect, so the experience of

neglect, the experience of physical abuse. It may be even more clear than that; it might have happened pre-birth, we may be working with a child who has some form of medical issues related to drug usage at birth. We might have children who have cannabinoid poisoning and so forth and need special care. For those experiences, we know.

What we do know is that if we can work with mums before birth—under our legislation we can only do that in a voluntary capacity, but we know that most mums will actually work with us in a voluntary capacity at this period of time—we can get really big impacts on the outcomes for the children. That is why strengthening families and Karinya House are a particularly important aspect.

Mr Gentleman: I think that was the surprise for me, Ms Fitzharris, when I listened to the expert evidence from Louise Newman—that there actually are physical changes to those young people from the trauma that they have had through their lives. It actually physically changes the brain. It was quite an eye opener.

MS FITZHARRIS: How would you describe the professionals that do the assessment? Are they psychologists?

Dr Collis: I describe them as champions for the work they do.

MS FITZHARRIS: Yes.

Dr Collis: But yes, the qualifications will come from professions such as allied health—psychologists, social workers, therapists generally. They will be a qualified practitioner. We are standing up that team first up in July, so we are commencing that; all new entry to care children will have a therapeutic assessment, and that will be monitored every year as appropriate.

THE CHAIR: Ms Lawder had a supplementary.

MS LAWDER: Thank you. In Ms Starick's explanation of the strategy, she mentioned some changes to systems. In the table on page 14, there was some money in the financial year that we are just finishing up for the children and young people system upgrade, the CHYPS upgrade, and then in the next few years there is a client management system for child and youth protection services. Is that client management system replacing CHYPS?

Mr Gentleman: Yes. This is a very important question, thanks, Ms Lawder. I will ask Ms Chapman to give you the details in regard to that.

Ms Chapman: Thank you, minister. There is a replacement for CHYPS. We are not calling it CHYPS anymore; it has gone past its use-by date. As a result of a number of recommendations from previous reviews that have been done by oversight bodies, this is actually a really important piece of work.

This year we had a bit of money to do some tweaking on CHYPS to kind of hold it together so that we could keep it going. The initiative that was announced in the budget is a redesign of a system of information. As I think Dr Collis said earlier, this

system is one that is designed to help get information quickly—real time information that is easily accessible to caseworkers and so on, including the people we are working with in the non-government sector who are going to be looking after these foster families and so on—and also able to link to our integrated management system, which is where all our policies and procedures are sitting. So when people are going to make decisions, they can use that on the system to be able to make the right decision based on the right policy at the right time. It is a very large piece of work.

Interestingly enough, this is a system that we think has usefulness for other parts of government as well. We will be talking to our colleagues about their needs for case management, for getting client information in this kind of way.

MS LAWDER: The reviews you talked about included, I think, the 2013 Auditor-General's report. With this new client management system, will there still be paper-based and electronic records?

Ms Chapman: We are hoping—we would like eventually—to have electronic, because paper based is very expensive to archive. I know that much.

MS LAWDER: Yes. What would the person out on the job do? How will they do that?

Dr Collis: It is a very good question; thank you, Ms Lawder. Currently they are under the territory records management act. There is some requirement, as I understand, for there to be some paper records kept.

The money that was in this year's budget will do a number of things. One is that we will replace the legacy systems of CHYPS and also YIJS, the youth justice system. As we are combining our service, we are also combining our client systems together. It will also need to work out the information-sharing protocols, and other adjustments will need to be made so that we can truly go to a mobile service into the future. It will also have a stream of work which we will require to work out how we will migrate information onto the new system so that our workers will have availability of historical information. The largest component is the build of the system, but we have done a lot of work on that from a budget allocation two years ago, when we went out to the market and did a request for proposal. Industry have already come back with solutions, so we know there is a solution to it and we are advanced around that.

But there are a number of pieces of work we need to do, including how this will interact with the territory records management act.

MS LAWDER: One of the Auditor-General's comments was that at the time of that report it was not clearly defined which was the official record, the paper or the electronic file. Has that anomaly been fixed? And which is the official record?

Ms Howson: I think at this stage our policies and procedures would suggest that it is the paper-based record, and that is compliant with the records management act.

MS LAWDER: It also did say in the Auditor-General's report that the majority of the policies and procedures at that time were outdated and electronic links to the key

reference materials did not always work. Again, have they been updated and the links fixed?

Ms Howson: They have indeed. We would like to show you what we have done, but it is a bit dry. There is an enormous amount of effort that has gone into actually redesigning our whole information management system, updating all of our policies and procedures but at the same time redesigning the way in which we build compliance into our systems so that we will essentially have the opportunity to refresh and update policies and procedures on a much more regular basis.

MS LAWDER: Finally, you mentioned a change management approach. How will training requirements for staff in the new system that you are developing, the client management system—have you assessed how that may impact on your workload?

Ms Howson: Yes, we have.

MS LAWDER: How are you going to manage that?

Dr Collis: In the integration of youth justice and care and protection into the child and youth protection service 18 months ago, we started that process of design. We started a change management office, which is a big word for two people, in our organisation, and we adopted a specific change methodology, Prosci. We have been extraordinarily pleased with that change management approach. We have tracked training requirements, the extent to which staff are feeling stressed or under pressure, and how we might deal with that throughout the whole process. We start that whole new system, which is a transformational change, on 1 July, knowing that the staff are not only engaged but excited there.

We will use that very same change management methodology—it has been so successful—in relation to the workforce changes that have to happen to deliver step up for our kids and also the changes that will have to happen with regard to the implementation of the new client record management system.

MS LAWDER: Thank you.

THE CHAIR: Ms Fitzharris has a quick supplementary, and then I will throw my final question to Mr Wall, if he has a quick question. Then we will move to ageing.

MS FITZHARRIS: Do you have a view on whether—is it the Territory Records Act?

Dr Collis: Yes.

MS FITZHARRIS: Whether it is sufficiently up to date to cope with shifts to digital and electronic record keeping?

Mr Gentleman: I think it is something we will have to talk to the Chief Minister and of course the—

MS FITZHARRIS: They were here on Monday, but we did not have any questions

for them, I think, from recollection.

Mr Gentleman: The Chief Minister, and of course the chief of the public service as well.

MS FITZHARRIS: Yes.

Mr Gentleman: It would be interesting to look at it and see whether there are amendments that we can make.

MS FITZHARRIS: Okay.

Mr Gentleman: As the whole of government, I think, in that system.

MS FITZHARRIS: Thanks.

THE CHAIR: Mr Wall to close on output class 4.1.

MR WALL: I have a couple of very quick questions, minister. Page 14 of the budget paper shows Bendora through-care unit with funding of \$291,000 for this coming financial year 2015-16. What exactly is that funding being allocated towards?

Mr Gentleman: That is in relation to the staff for the service. We will ensure that the staff will remain in position and we will review how the service is operating for future funding too.

MR WALL: Inevitably, that will be changed again in future budgets?

Mr Gentleman: It may, yes. It may be worth while to expend more resources in that area. If we are getting really good outcomes, as I have indicated we are starting to see, it may well be resource worthy, yes.

MR WALL: How many staff are intended to be appointed out of that appropriation?

Mr Gentleman: I would have to go to directorate officials for that.

Ms Howson: The overall allocation to Bendora through-care unit is more than 299. The actual FTE that is allocated to the Bendora program—

Dr Collis: The allocation currently is nine staff to staff it at a full-time capacity. You will see in the papers that we have delivered some offsets. It relates to the previous discussion about efficiencies regarding reducing the numbers of young people in Bimberi. These staff will be staff already there at present. Then we will supplement through other areas where efficiencies have been made due to the reduction in numbers in youth justice, to keep those nine staff in Bendora.

MR WALL: I have another quick question. Does Narrabundah House fall under this output class? What is the capacity of that facility? What is the current occupancy of it?

Dr Collis: As I move through the data on this, the capacity is three medium-term to long-term beds.

MR WALL: Yes.

Dr Collis: That is the step down or the diversionary beds where we work with children on a long-term basis. We also have another bed there which we dedicate to after-hours bail support. Late at night, or any time in the day between now and the next court sitting, if a young person does not have accommodation they can go to that is safe before they go to court, we can divert them from Bimberi by having them stay in that bed. I understand that as of last week we had two young people in the medium to long-term beds. The after-hours bail support beds are used intermittently. No-one—

MR WALL: Yes, might be needing to stay the night—

Dr Collis: Yes, that is right. No-one has been using that bed this week or last week, but I can give you that information.

MR WALL: All right.

THE CHAIR: Just for the *Hansard*, I do not know whether we have heard Narrabundah House referred to here. What is Narrabundah House, just for the record?

Dr Collis: Narrabundah House is a residential program. We changed the service model around two years ago. The service model changed for Narrabundah House to be a residential service for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young men aged 15 to 18 who were either coming out of Bimberi and needed intensive support to take the next step into the community or young people, young Aboriginal men, who are in the community who are touching on the justice system. We are attempting to stabilise their accommodation and social supports in a way that prevents them from coming into the statutory youth justice system. That is what Narrabundah House is.

THE CHAIR: We might finish the output class there.

Mr Gentleman: Mr Chairman, before we go off the output class, I once again apologise to Mr Wall in regard to the correspondence he referred to. We have actually interrogated our email system this morning and our physical correspondence. We cannot find the correspondence that Mr Wall advises. We will certainly follow that up.

Dr Collis: Chair, there is a question on notice that we took before about the number of young people in the justice system. I said that it was in the ACT criminal justice statistical profile. Can I table that data for the committee?

THE CHAIR: Certainly.

THE CHAIR: Thank you for that; very efficient. Minister, we will move on to your part of output class 3, community participation. I was wondering whether, straight up, we could have something that would also come in useful for this output class this afternoon. Can we have a breakdown of how much the budget was for ageing, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, multicultural affairs, women's issues,

and the policy recovery and reform units for this year and next year?

Mr Gentleman: Yes. I will ask Mr Hubbard to come up and give you some detail. It is also covered in Minister Berry's portfolio.

THE CHAIR: I appreciate that, but rather than ask the same question four or five times in the course of the day, Mr Hubbard perhaps could give me the information over lunchtime. That would be good.

Mr Hubbard: I have got it.

THE CHAIR: He has got it. As Mr Hubbard comes to the table, the budget for this output class last year, the 2014-15 budget, was \$21,324,000. The expected outcome for this year is down at \$20,840,000, and the budget for the coming year of the GPO then drops further to \$20,439,000. Could you also explain that, Mr Hubbard?

Mr Hubbard: Thanks for that question, Mr Smyth. The budget for community participation, I think as we have canvassed at a previous estimates, is a group. It is mainly made up of the community participation group. That group includes community recovery, youth engagement, Office for Ageing, Office for Women, Office of Multicultural Affairs. Not within that community participation group is the Office of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, which has been separated out into a separate group from the group that Nic Manikis manages. That is an independent group on its own.

We do not actually provide a salary break-up between the Office for Ageing, Office for Women, Office of Multicultural Affairs or the Office of Youth Engagement because, as you are probably aware, the staff work across those areas on a needs basis. I think that Mr Manikis, however, can give you greater optics on that.

To give you an idea of the total amount that is covered by that group, on the staffing and admin side it is, for 2014-15, \$6.2 million, for 2015-16, \$6.5 million and to get the total of the tape you would need to add in the Office of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, which for 2014-15 was \$2.2 million and for 2015-16 was \$2.43 million. Then, of course, there is the grants line in that output, which covers a variety of grants schemes that again Mr Manikis can detail if you would like.

THE CHAIR: What was the total spend of the grants in both years?

Mr Hubbard: The total spend for grants in the budget for 2015-16, for instance, is \$11.47 million. In the prior year, 2014-15, the estimated outcome was \$11.5 million.

THE CHAIR: Thanks for that. Ms Fitzharris, a new question?

MS FITZHARRIS: I will defer to Chris.

DR BOURKE: We are on ageing now, minister. We had the National Seniors Association ACT at last Friday's hearing. I gather from what they told us that they actually stand outside the Council on the Ageing. They seem to want to be independent of government. Is there some sort of divide in the ageing community that

I have not been aware of?

Mr Gentleman: No. There is, I guess, an almost statutory position with the Council on the Ageing. I will ask Mr Manikis to give you the detail in regard to the national seniors group.

Mr Manikis: The Council on the Ageing in the ACT is a local body that serves the ACT. The national seniors are obviously a national body. There is a branch here in the ACT. We do allow separate entities and we do work with both entities in our work.

DR BOURKE: One of the things they told us about was their wanting a one-stop shop for access to health services for seniors. Have you spoken to them about this?

Mr Manikis: We have not spoken to them. We did invite them along to some of our consultations last year. As I recall they did raise that issue. We are meeting up with them next month, in July, to talk further about some of the issues that they have. In the meantime we have progressed a lot of work out of the consultations that we had last year with national seniors, COTA and a lot of the seniors community in putting together our framework. As far as that particular initiative is concerned, whilst we have heard about it last year, we have not progressed it at this stage. But we will be talking with national seniors next month.

DR BOURKE: Could you also tell me about the community flexible bus transport system? How is that progressing?

Mr Manikis: As far as the community flexible transport system is concerned, it is highly successful. You would be aware that in this budget \$495,000 has been dedicated to the continuation of that system. It has carried over 6,500 passengers to date. The funding provides for the community transport of aged people, disability transport, transport for the disadvantaged in Woden, Weston, Belconnen and Tuggeranong. It is progressing quite well. It will continue with some additional resources in this budget.

DR BOURKE: What does the \$495,000 actually deliver?

Mr Manikis: As far as I know it delivers salaries and additional services.

DR BOURKE: Are the buses not actually within the range of community organisations?

Mr Gentleman: Yes. It is not actually in my portfolio but it is within another minister's portfolio. Ms Sheehan has some details.

Ms Sheehan: The buses are actually owned by or are part of the ACTION fleet. They sit with the community organisations but the asset is owned by the ACT government. The funding that goes out to the community organisations, as Mr Manikis was saying, is to have staff that can actually drive the buses. That funding is in the process of being transferred from the Community Services Directorate across to Territory and Municipal Services. That, again, fits in with that really wonderful new one-stop shop for community transport.

It is also heavily linked to the work under the national disability insurance scheme where funding for transport for the under 65s with a disability will be individualised to some extent but then for people that are over 65 it will continue to be funded by both the state and territory governments and the home and community care program, which is administered by the commonwealth.

DR BOURKE: How many buses are there?

Ms Sheehan: Mr Manikis is informing us there are 12. But because of bringing the whole program together, the total is greater than the sum of the parts. We might have had 12 buses dedicated to this community transport program but by bringing all the resources together now and doing that central allocation, that gives a much greater range of access to community-based transport for older people, younger people, people with a disability and so on.

THE CHAIR: Mr Doszpot has a supplementary and then we will go to Ms Fitzharris who also has a supplementary.

MR DOSZPOT: My supplementary question is to whom? Who takes a supplementary on this?

Mr Gentleman: Tell us what the question is and we will answer it for you.

MR DOSZPOT: Can you give us the hours of operation of this bus service that you provide?

Ms Sheehan: With the minister's agreement we could take that on notice and provide you with the information.

MR DOSZPOT: Have you had any feedback from the community regarding their usage of these buses?

Mr Gentleman: I have had some personal feedback from visiting some of the community centres. They feel it is a great resource for the ACT. Indeed, they would like to see, I think, more community buses on the roads across Canberra. Interestingly—this was from a visit to the Gungahlin community centre—there was a particular, I guess, group of people in the territory that felt that they had had the best results from this service. They were people that were less able than others. It is a good resource, I think, and I would certainly like to see more of it. We will have a look at how many people access them.

MR DOSZPOT: Thank you for your comments on that. I have had some feedback as well. Overall they are very complimentary but there is one issue that they have raised and I am wondering whether it has been brought to your attention. That was why I asked about the service times. I think it ends about 3 o'clock. The problem is that some people who have been taken out to the shopping centre cannot get transport back. You may want to take that on board as an issue to consider.

Mr Gentleman: Yes, certainly. The time that I visited at Gungahlin was well past

3 pm and the service was operating. We will check that out.

MR DOSZPOT: Could I ask for clarification on times?

Mr Gentleman: Yes, of course.

THE CHAIR: We are running out of time. A quick supplementary from Ms Fitzharris, then we will go to your question, Ms Lawder, then Mr Doszpot.

MS FITZHARRIS: The national seniors also mentioned that many of their members are also grandparents with caring for grandchildren responsibilities. Are there any specific programs around supporting such grandparents? Some of the issues, I understand, are also about finding playgroups for children who are being cared for by their grandparents, for example. Is that something that you have been looking at as Minister for Ageing?

Mr Gentleman: It has not come directly to me.

Mr Manikis: Could I just say on that point that we do fund playgroups. Taking it from the other way, we do fund playgroups through our community language program. It is a case of probation, I guess. We have not specifically or explicitly set down a program that would assist grandparents. We have not had that issue come up. But if we held some discussions with the grandparents and with the playgroups I do not think it would be too difficult to bring them together.

Mr Gentleman: And I understand that the child and family centres provide that opportunity for playgroups and encourage all ages to become involved.

MS FITZHARRIS: My substantive question is that the health minister yesterday was talking about the separation between what the commonwealth funds in terms of aged care and what the states and territories fund. He said that there was probably an unmet need in the ACT for nursing homes in particular and other aged accommodation because of the way that the commonwealth funding works. Have you had that issue arise and is there anything that the ACT is able to do?

Mr Gentleman: Yes, we do hear that a lot, that there is unmet need, and we have seen funding issues from the commonwealth in regard to aged care. Mr Manikis, could you give some detail?

Mr Manikis: Certainly there is that differentiation between aged care and health care and that certainly came up in some of our consultations with seniors last year. I think the Chief Minister this year held a roundtable for aged care as well to explain to some of the stakeholders precisely where this issue sat. As far as health care is concerned, whilst we had an older persons assembly last year that revolved around three resolutions, that did not include health care. COTA and our ministerial advisory council are very keen to put in place a forum early next year to assist and facilitate discussion around health care and perhaps some of the shortcomings and where things can be improved. That is on the healthcare side.

I can go through this budget that we have just had here in the ACT and the significant

investment in the healthcare side, particularly as it pertains to and assists seniors.

MS FITZHARRIS: We had that discussion yesterday, but thank you.

Mr Manikis: I will not go through that. But certainly on aged care you are seeing different groups that are coming into the territory and are doing battle with the commonwealth—and it is a lengthy battle and it is a complex battle—to actually get aged care and retirement facilities, nursing homes, on the ground. It is very difficult and we have tried to assist some of the locals to do that.

But I think it is something that, whilst we can assist, and we do, with the land part of it, it is the commonwealth part, the allocation of beds, that is the really difficult part. I think they go to a bidding process. There is a limited amount of work that we can do to assist in that process. But I am looking around and, from what I am hearing as well from some of the providers, I am pretty optimistic that we are well served and we will be well served going into the future.

THE CHAIR: Ms Lawder, any questions?

MS LAWDER: In the interests of time I am happy to defer to Mr Doszpot.

MR DOSZPOT: Minister, strategic objective 9 talks about:

Promote an age-friendly city to ensure that those aged 60 years and over are included in, and supported to participate in, the community life of the ACT.

What steps is the directorate taking to promote this age-friendly city concept?

Mr Gentleman: There are quite a number of steps, not just within the directorate but across government as well. In another of my portfolios, in relation to roads for example, we are taking steps in regard to pedestrian access for older persons, particularly crossings throughout the territory, to ensure that they have a safe way of getting across busy roads. We are actually looking at how we can adjust traffic signals, pedestrian lay-bys, if you like, on median strips and the way people will face after they exit from that median strip to ensure that they have a safer crossing of the intersection.

In other portfolios of mine too, in planning for example, we are looking to ease the burden for older persons moving into aged care accommodation and/or more age-appropriate accommodation as they wish to downsize later in life. As to the details in this portfolio, I will hand over to Mr Manikis to give it to you.

Mr Manikis: Certainly. I will go back to the budget again where there is an extra two sites for age-friendly suburbs that have been funded. We had Ainslie and Weston and I think now we have got Kaleen and Tuggeranong as well. There will be some extensive work done in those two suburbs, and there has been an appropriation—it is about \$500,000 over two years—to continue that trial in those specific areas.

MS LAWDER: Sorry to interrupt you. You said Kaleen and Tuggeranong. What do you mean by Tuggeranong?

Mr Manikis: I will find the specific area. It has just slipped my mind at the moment, sorry.

MS LAWDER: Is it all of Tuggeranong, which would be fabulous?

Mr Gentleman: Yes. While Mr Manikis is looking for that detail—

Mr Manikis: Tuggeranong town centre. It is Tuggeranong town centre specifically, which is good news coming off the back of the work that is being done in Ainslie and Weston. That is continuing and will continue into the future. We also continue with projects that the community come up with to make our city age-friendly and we fund those through our seniors grants. That continues as well as we go forward.

Ms Howson: If I can interrupt, I think the question was also about process. In the context of the information that we are gleaning through a range of consultation events and processes that have been operating this year to inform the—just making sure I have got it right—active ageing framework we are engaging with our colleagues across a range of portfolios to ensure that they are aware of that information that is coming through and they are using that to inform their own prioritisation of policy decisions, which has been reflected, as the minister said, in initiatives coming through in a range of other portfolio areas.

MR DOSZPOT: I am glad to hear that. Is the Chief Minister included in sharing information on this concept of including the over 60s in participation in the community alive? He has recently indicated that the pop-up village concept is not for people over 50. I am just wondering whether the Chief Minister is aware of this.

Mr Gentleman: I am sure he is. There are some intriguing comments about the pop-up village, as we have seen over the last couple of weeks. Yes, certainly the Chief Minister is very interested in ensuring that Canberra is an age-friendly city and that we are providing the best possible outcomes for people as they age across the territory.

MR DOSZPOT: So why is not the pop-up village appropriate for people over 50?

Mr Gentleman: I think you would have to ask him. I have been there and I am over 50. I enjoyed the experience very much. Can I just add too, as we do talk about support for ageing across government, that in this budget we have one of the biggest investments in community and social housing that the territory has ever seen, and that includes of course housing for older persons.

MR DOSZPOT: It is not meant to be a flippant comment because it is an issue to older people and it was quite an excluding comment, but I will push on. What actions are being taken to support Canberra's increasing ageing population into the future? Are there any plans specifically for the future?

Mr Gentleman: Yes, indeed. I will go to Mr Manikis for some of the details, but of course the work that we are doing has been well informed by some of the work we have done in engaging older persons across the whole demographic in the ACT over recent years. You have attended the older persons assembly, Mr Doszpot. We have

also had the ACT ministerial mature-aged worker roundtable. That forum brought together representatives from seniors and business groups to determine barriers, also opportunities and solutions, for a mature-aged workforce. That was a great event. Mr Manikis has talked about the seniors grants as well.

But also this week, as you are aware, we had World Elder Abuse Day on the 15th. A number of events were held around that. I went out and supported a local shopping centre stall at Lanyon and the directorate held shopping centre stalls across the territory, alongside people from COTA as well. Yesterday COTA held a specific forum on elder abuse in the territory. We are supporting all of that as well and all of those opportunities help to inform us in the strategies to come. Mr Manikis.

Mr Manikis: Just to answer the question a little further as well, whilst there were about 50 actions that came out of that older persons assembly last year, which is what seniors told us is important to them, they were fed across directorates and directorates are responding. Some of those responses have come in the form of some budget appropriations this time round. That includes \$7 million in additional support for next year's concessions program that we are talking about to meet the growth in demand. If you are talking about the increase in the population, we are making provision for that.

That concessions program is a very important program for seniors. The government is currently considering a variety of reform options to ensure that we are continuing to deliver the concessions to those households that most need them.

Another one is the bulky waste collection service, which is also to continue for another 12 months. That is \$400,000 that has been provided so that pensioners and concession cardholders who have limited capacity and financial ability to remove large, bulky items from their homes will continue to be able to access the collection service.

MR DOSZPOT: Does that include garden waste? A lot of elderly people do not have trailers and they do live in areas where there is still a fair bit of grass mowing to be done.

Mr Manikis: That is something I will need to look into, the exact content of what is allowed. I know that over the border in Queanbeyan it does not include green waste in that special council collection.

MR DOSZPOT: Could you take that on board as a question on notice?

Mr Manikis: I will take it on notice, yes.

MR DOSZPOT: I do get asked about that kind of thing.

Mr Manikis: You heard about the health investment yesterday. As the minister has talked about also, there are infrastructure improvements to help our seniors as well around the 1,288 new public housing dwellings.

MR DOSZPOT: Just on that, what services are provided to allow independent living for the elderly?

Mr Gentleman: There are a number of services provided by the private sector for independent living. We have had an opportunity to visit some of those areas, both on the south side of Canberra and the north side as well. But HACC provides the program for government services to the territory.

MR DOSZPOT: It appears that a lot of people over 65 years have had services cut. It is partly a commonwealth issue but it is also a local issue. Some services are cut for the over 65s but they still need the support they had before they turned 65.

Mr Manikis: I think this is in relation to national disability.

Ms Sheehan: The commonwealth has taken on responsibility progressively over time, apart from specific health services, for really all services for people over 65. It is something that we could get you information on but it is a question about some recent announcements that the commonwealth has made around the funding for programs for over 65s.

Quite apart from the home and community care program, there is some restructuring that they have done of programs on the step between, say, the old home and community care program and their going into a nursing home, to help people remain in their homes. There were the changes that they made there and there was the production of a number of discussion papers where community organisations that provide those services believed about six months ago that the commonwealth would have been announcing an open tender process. In fact, the commonwealth announced that they would continue their funding for another year or so while they have a look at the tendering.

There has been some level of uncertainty among the community providers, which would have been shared, I think, by people that were receiving those benefits. But again, as the minister was saying, they are services that are funded by the commonwealth. But, of course, the organisations that provide those services are providing other services in the ACT that are funded by the ACT government. Disability services would be a good example of that.

MR DOSZPOT: Just another point on that, there are a number of community capacity building projects that are supported in the ACT. It is in budget paper G, page 12. How many of the 15 projects that are supported were ageing related and can you tell us what they were?

Mr Gentleman: We will take that on notice, if we could.

THE CHAIR: A final question. We are due to finish at 12.35.

MR DOSZPOT: In regard to the number of visits to community service organisations in relation to ageing, how many of the 26 visits to community service organisations were in relation to seniors? Have you got any record of that?

Ms Sheehan: Those visits are specifically for the management of contracts and service funding agreements that we have with community organisations. And it is a

figure that comes from the community services program, which is a responsibility of Minister Berry. So it would specifically go to that program. We, certainly with the minister's agreement, would be able to provide you with a list of organisations that are visited under that program.

MR DOSZPOT: I have a number of other questions but Mr Chair is telling me my time is up. Thank you.

THE CHAIR: Your time is up.

Ms Chapman: Could I just say that I would like to assure Mr Doszpot I visit COTA every year. We have a one on one and we talk about the programs they are offering.

MR DOSZPOT: Excellent.

THE CHAIR: It is 12.35 and our allotted time for this morning's session is now at an end. We thank the officers and the minister who attended this morning. We look forward to a prompt response to the questions that were taken on notice. A transcript will be provided when it is available. Members, this afternoon we resume at 2 o'clock with Ms Berry on output class 3, community participation, particularly Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander affairs, multicultural affairs, women's issues, policy recovery reform and Housing ACT.

Sitting suspended from 12.34 to 2 pm.

Appearances:

Berry, Ms Yvette, Minister for Housing, Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, Minister for Community Services, Minister for Multicultural Affairs, Minister for Women and Minister assisting the Chief Minister on Social Inclusion and Equality

Community Services Directorate

Howson, Ms Natalie, Director-General

Chapman, Ms Sue, Deputy Director-General

Sheehan, Ms Maureen, Executive Director, Service Strategy and Community Building

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

Hubbard, Mr Ian, Senior Director, Finance and Budget

Manikis, Mr Nic, Director, Community Participation Group

Gotts, Mr Robert, Director, Community Sector Reform Project

Matthews, Mr David, Executive Director, Housing and Community Services ACT

Murray, Ms Christine, Director, People Management

Duggan, Mr Frank, Senior Director, Housing ACT

THE CHAIR: Welcome to the afternoon session of the fifth day of the public hearings of the Select Committee on Estimates. We will look at output class 3, community participation, particularly Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander affairs, multicultural affairs, women's affairs, policy recovery and reform, as well as Housing ACT.

Please be aware that the proceedings are being recorded and will be transcribed by Hansard for publication. The proceedings are also being broadcast as well as webstreamed. Before we begin, could you please confirm that you have read the privilege statement that is on the table before you and that you understand the implications of privilege?

Ms Berry: Yes.

THE CHAIR: Thank you very much for that. Minister, would you like to make an opening statement?

Ms Berry: Yes I would, thank you, chair, and thank you, members of the committee. One of the cornerstones of this government's social inclusion values is that it is providing opportunities for all Canberrans to live good lives regardless of their background or their circumstances. Nothing is more important as a building block for living a good life than having a stable home.

Our public housing provides homes to around 23,000 Canberrans, the majority of whom are among the most vulnerable members of our community. It is a platform for their social and economic participation. The ACT government is investing in a major, long-term renewal of public housing that will further embed our longstanding approach of salt and peppering and overhaul our ageing stock.

We are also continuing our work to prevent and address homelessness. In March this year the commonwealth government announced a two-year extension of the national partnership agreement on homelessness to 30 June 2017. The funding priority is to be the front-line services focusing on women and children experiencing domestic and family violence and homeless youth under the age of 18. The commonwealth's contribution under the national partnership agreement on homelessness of \$1.52 million per annum for two years will be matched by the ACT. We are also close to officially opening Common Ground, a specialist and holistic approach to supporting people experiencing long-term homelessness.

In my other portfolios the recent signing of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander agreement 2015-18 is an important milestone for the ACT government and more broadly for our community. It provides a strategic partnership committing both the ACT government and the ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elected Body to a whole-of-government approach to achieving equitable outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people living in the ACT. Strong families is a key theme of the agreement, with the focus areas being cultural identity, healthy mind, healthy body, feeling safe, connecting with the community, education, employment and economic independence, and leadership. I look forward to keeping members and the community updated on the progress of this agreement.

One area of work that is rightly receiving community attention is my role as Minister for Women. The recent ACT budget therefore includes additional funding of \$250,000 in 2015-16 for three key domestic and sexual violence services to assist the organisations to meet the increased demand—the Domestic Violence Crisis Service, the Canberra Rape Crisis Centre, and the Canberra Men's Centre to increase funding for their working with the man program. This is in addition to our support for the national campaign to raise awareness about violence against women and children and also announcements by other ministers.

We are under no illusions about the work that needs to take place so that all women and children can feel safe in their communities and we are unflinching in our determination to achieve this. Much of our work is delivered by the community sector and they are important and valued partners. This program continues its supports and initiatives to strengthen the community sector as it navigates a period of major change. Central to this is supporting the sector to develop a sector industry plan. We will continue streamlining red tape and regulation, estimated to save the sector approximately \$2.4 million in the last two years, and introduce an online compliance tool that is expected to save a further \$500,000 each year.

Canberra's diversity and inclusiveness make our city a fantastic place to live and work. Early next year we will once again deliver the amazing National Multicultural Festival, a vibrant display of what it means to be a welcoming, diverse yet harmonious community. Much of what I have raised aligns with the government's agenda for social inclusion and equality. These are not new concepts for this government and we have a long track record that demonstrates our work in this space. However, this new portfolio is familiarising our commitment to doing what we must do to have an inclusive and equitable community that enables all of us Canberrans to live good lives.

Chair, thank you for allowing me to make an opening statement and I and my officials are ready to take your questions.

THE CHAIR: Whilst output class 3 covers a variety of areas, we will start with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander affairs, output class 3.1, community participation. Last Friday at the community day the head of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elected Body said they could not see a whole lot within the budget for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Why isn't there a whole lot in the budget for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people?

Ms Berry: I met with the chair of the elected body and we discussed some of the existing programs and supports that the ACT government provides to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community in the ACT. There are a lot of new initiatives in place or continuing from previous budgets. I will ask one of my officials to expand a bit more on that, if I may.

THE CHAIR: That would be fine; we will go to Ms Howson shortly. But the criticism is not what is there; it is what is missing. What discussions did you have with the elected body so that they might see something in the budget that would have pleased them?

Ms Berry: We have had a number of focus groups with the elected body and members of the community through the elected body about some of the things that they wanted to see through the budget process as well as improvements for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who live in our city.

The main focus of the agreement around stronger families is the a step up for our kids program, but that is really in the youth justice space, so it is probably better to ask the minister responsible for that those sorts of questions. However, from my conversations with the chair of the elected body, we are putting together a one-page document similar to the domestic violence document that was distributed in the budget so that the community can see all of the things that the ACT government has committed to in the past and initiatives under this budget.

THE CHAIR: That still does not answer why there are no new initiatives for Indigenous people.

Ms Berry: It does not answer the question in the way you might like it to be answered, Mr Smyth, but that is the way I am answering it today.

THE CHAIR: Why is there nothing new in the budget for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people?

Ms Berry: I have already answered that. We have been talking about, in the youth justice space, the a step up for our kids program, and the growing healthy families program under the better services work. There is some new aged housing for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Kambah.

THE CHAIR: Ms Fitzharris, a new question.

MS FITZHARRIS: Thank you. I want to ask about the growing healthy families initiative. We had a long discussion this morning with the minister on a step up for our kids. He mentioned on quite a number of occasions the important part of that program for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families, in addition to the child and family centres. Could you expand a little bit on the growing healthy families initiative, which we did not specifically get to this morning?

Ms Berry: Yes, and that is what I was going to ask one of my officials to expand on.

Ms Howson: The growing healthy families program is one of the initiatives in this budget that is very much focused on the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families across Canberra. It is an expansion of some of the excellent demonstration work that we have done in west Belconnen, under a previous federal government agreement, to engage more effectively with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families—creating a place that is safe and trusted by those families to link them into a range of other services.

As you know, in our child and family centres we have programs that are administered by health officials and education, coming into the space with us, and a range of non-government sectors. Through the work that we have been able to do in west Belconnen, demonstrating how to build strong relationships with our community, we have been able to, again, with support from the government, expand that model into Gungahlin and Tuggeranong.

We will see work like stronger women's programs offered across Canberra, Koori playgroups for children and, as I said, good connections and referrals to our maternal and health services that operate through our child and family centres. Our Tuggeranong Child and Family Centre is doing some excellent things with the local schools and connecting children and families through the school environment. This funding will allow us to expand on that.

It is one of the initiatives in this budget that, as I said, is specifically focused on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families. It is very complementary to a range of other investments that the government is making in support of children, young people and families. The nature of those programs, as the minister was suggesting—programs under our youth justice framework and our a step up for our kids framework—and the nature of who they are targeting means they will also significantly benefit the outcomes around stronger families that the elected body have made very clear to us is their key priority.

MS FITZHARRIS: With the Gungahlin Child and Family Centre in particular—I do not know if you can answer this—I understand that at the Ngunnawal school there are specific programs for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander kids in the school; is that right? Is there a connection between the work that will happen in the child and family centre and what might happen at a local school as a specific program?

Ms Howson: I would need to take that question on notice as it is specific, but my understanding, as is yours, is that there are some very good connections between our child and family centres and that school. The education directorate has also invested

some significant effort into specific culturally appropriate programs for that school.

Ms Berry: During Reconciliation Week Gungahlin participated for the first time in the reconciliation walk.

Ms Howson: Tracks for reconciliation.

Ms Berry: Tracks for reconciliation, which I know Dr Bourke and I have attended a number of times in the West Belconnen Child and Family Centre. When I visited Communities@Work last week, they hosted the program and connected up with different community groups and schools in the area, went for a walk around the shopping centre and did some other activities on the day. It has been a really successful program in west Belconnen, and Gungahlin said that they had a wonderful experience this year when they participated in it as well.

THE CHAIR: Dr Bourke?

DR BOURKE: Minister, could you tell us more about how the ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander agreement will bring about practical change to service delivery for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the ACT?

Ms Berry: If I can just give the committee some background as to how the agreement came about, cabinet and the elected body agreed to develop the agreement in 2013 and we set up a completion date for this year by the time the budget was announced, and we met that deadline. There was a lot of consultation and advocacy with the community and with the elected body to achieve this high level of consensus around the actual agreement, which I hope members of the committee have seen or have copies of. I was then able to take the agreement, as minister, to cabinet in January to make sure that it was completed, get it agreed by cabinet and then signed and tabled in the Legislative Assembly.

The artwork on the actual agreement was made by a Ngunnawal woman in the ACT who works in the Community Services Directorate, I think. It is a beautiful piece. If you want to look at it, it is displayed in my office. I have been very lucky to have it there in my office for people to come and have a look at.

The agreement is really building on the relationship we already have with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community and the elected body and the work that they do with the community in communicating with the government about issues and concerns in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community. It is the first agreement of its kind in the ACT. The elected body is the only elected body in Australia at the moment. We want to make sure that the work that we do across government in delivering on the agreement across the ACT government is done in partnership with the elected body to deliver on the agreement's purpose, which is developing stronger families in the ACT.

DR BOURKE: Are there any gaps between the agreement and the programs that are going to deliver the commitments in the agreement?

Ms Berry: We have had some very positive feedback on the agreement from the

elected body and from the community more broadly. Across the directorates there has been some really strong enthusiasm to improve our work. We are still developing with the elected body and across the government directorates a program for how we do that implementation. As soon as we have that agreed to by the elected body and the directorates, we can give some more detail to members.

DR BOURKE: Could you talk to us a bit more about the development of the implementation plan? Who is going to be responsible for delivering the outcomes?

Ms Berry: Yes. I will ask one of my officials to elaborate a bit more on that.

Ms Howson: Thank you, minister. Dr Bourke, as the minister has indicated, we are in the process now of formulating the implementation plan. I think the most compelling thing about formulating an agreement with the elected body like this is the integrity it has in terms of the issues that have been raised by the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community. It focuses attention around a core set of key result areas that really lend themselves to a whole-of-government response.

I am the chair of the subcommittee of the strategic board that is overseeing the implementation of this agreement. The agreement is constructed in such a way that it requires all of us to come together around each of the key result areas in order to deliver outcomes. For example—if I could use one that sits in my area—connecting community and feeling safe are really what a step up for kids is very much about and what underpins what we will be able to do in working across the justice system as well as working with health and education in those areas.

We have a reference group with representation from all across government that has just been established. I will let Ms Forester talk about that. That group met recently. The key thing is that my subcommittee, with directors-generals as members, will be driving the development of this implementation plan and then its actual establishment on the ground.

Ms Forester: Thank you for your question, Dr Bourke. Going back to the relevance of the question around the gaps between the agreement and programs, as Ms Howson has said, we have a reference group that has representation right across government—all government directorates, including the elected body. If we go back to the importance of why we needed the agreement, it was really about bringing relevance to everything that we are doing across government in servicing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in communities. The reference group, I think, is a really good connector in that the areas that have been in this space for a while are able to assist some of the other directorates that have not been as mobilised in the group.

We had a meeting of the reference group last Friday, which was very well attended. A lot of enthusiasm and encouraging outcomes came from that meeting because people are really committed to this agreement and making sure that it is going to work and making sure that we are getting the outcome of the deliveries of exactly what the community has asked for around the strengthening families pitch that we have in there. Through the implementation reference group, it will provide us with an opportunity to identify those gaps and then work more clearly towards how we try and close those gaps.

DR BOURKE: Thank you.

MR WALL: A supplementary on that, chair.

THE CHAIR: Mr Wall.

MR WALL: Thank you, chair. Minister, the current agreement—how is it going to be measured over the coming years to make sure that the key goals outlined in this agreement are met, if not exceeded?

Ms Berry: That is something the implementation planning process will cover. Once we have that process worked out in more detail, we will be able to provide more information. But we are still working through that with the elected body.

Ms Howson: If I might follow up?

Ms Berry: Yes.

Ms Howson: We will be establishing a clear evaluation plan as part of the implementation process. It will be about achieving milestones that are set out under each of the key areas of focus. In addition to that, we are working on a suite of outcomes that we will measure over a longer period, Mr Wall. We are in the process under this subcommittee, the strategic board that I am involved in, of identifying the data sets that can inform that. We are working concurrently on the outcomes that will be described.

As we have discussed this morning, in terms of getting a bit under the bonnet, in terms of the macro picture that data often will present around what is happening for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in this community and some more localised views of that, we are examining what data is available to us, how we can present that and how that will inform our understanding of whether or not we are achieving the outcomes that we set ourselves. The agreement itself has some indicators that are already very clearly identified and we are the building data sets now that will report on that on a regular basis.

MR WALL: One of the concerns I have in reading the agreement is that a lot of what you refer to as quality-of-life outcomes are largely motherhood statements that cannot practically be measured or tracked as to whether or not you are succeeding. The first one is: community members celebrate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture. I understand that that would be set to broaden the wider community's knowledge of Indigenous affairs and Indigenous issues, but how is something like that going to be measured and how, from that measurement, are you going to be able to track whether this is improving the life and the opportunities that exist for Indigenous people in the ACT?

Ms Berry: On the day that the agreement was signed, in my speech I said that the agreement had been signed in partnership with the elected body and that neither of us looked at it merely as ink on paper. We see it as a living document that we move, if we need to, to change if either of us feels that things are not working. This is

something that both the government and the elected body are serious about making sure does work. We will work together to achieve that. We will work out along the way the best ways to measure the success of the agreement and the work we are doing across government.

MR WALL: Minister, how will this agreement be any different to, say, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment strategy that was previously unveiled by Jon Stanhope?

Ms Berry: I suppose the very real difference between this agreement and the agreement that you have referred to is that this agreement has been developed by the community. That is the difference. The words in this agreement are the words that the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community wanted in the agreement. This is their agreement.

MR WALL: You are saying that previously the targets and the goals that were set were not what the community wanted?

Ms Berry: I do not think I said that at all.

MR WALL: I am just trying to get to the bottom of where the differences are and why this one is going to be treated any differently to previous agreements.

Ms Berry: I just explained that to you. This is an agreement that was made by the elected body and the community. The words in this agreement are their words.

MR WALL: Thank you, chair.

THE CHAIR: A new question from Ms Lawder.

MS LAWDER: Minister, I want to ask a question about Gugan Gulwan, an Aboriginal corporation which has been in need of new premises for some time. In fact, there was a motion in the Assembly last year in March. Minister Rattenbury at that time said that he had been aware of a need since January 2014. It is about a year and a half down the track. Could you talk a bit about what action you have taken to assist Gugan Gulwan in finding new premises?

Ms Berry: I have a meeting coming up with Gugan Gulwan next week. I will ask one of my officials to respond to that question.

Ms Sheehan: Thank you, minister. Thank you for that question. You may or may not be aware that the facility that Gugan Gulwan operates out of at the moment is owned by the ACT government. Previously when the Community Services Directorate was responsible for all of the community facilities, we were responsible for that. We did quite an amount of refurbishment to the building, including upgrading of kitchens and meeting areas, and additional space, particularly as Gugan Gulwan has received additional funding from both the commonwealth and the ACT government over the years; they have needed extra space in their building. We have been able to do some additions and refurbishments there.

The question for Gugan Gulwan is, over time, what other services might they be asked to provide or what might they want to provide and what is the appropriate accommodation for them to provide those services. One thing they are very interested in themselves is that they do not want to make Aboriginal people all over the ACT come to their premises in Wanniasa; they are really interested in providing more outreach services. They are looking at how they can do that right across the ACT. For example, they do outreach services through Billabong, which is in Holt. That gives you an idea of the reach that Gugan Gulwan have across the whole of the ACT.

As the minister said, she is meeting with them and she will have a discussion with them about the sorts of things they are interested in. We have done a fair bit of work with them in the past looking at what other facilities might be available in the ACT that are already constructed that could be repurposed. We were not, in the end, able to find another building that they could just move into. Now it is a question of what sorts of services do they want to deliver into the future, what is the best accommodation for that, is it really purpose built on site or is it a combination of the facilities they currently have and then making sure we have sufficient space for them in other facilities to deliver on an outreach basis.

I should have mentioned, of course, West Belconnen Child and Family Centre where they make visits to and deliver outreach services there. I think you would see, in terms of best practice of service delivery everywhere, that organisations are really striving to go out to where their clients are rather than building some fabulous building that is, in fact, not at all convenient for clients from all over the ACT to go to that building.

MS LAWDER: The need was identified, as I said, nearly a year and a half ago. Do you have a time frame of when you feel you may be able to assist Gugan Gulwan to accommodate what they would like to do?

Ms Berry: The accommodation space is in the Chief Minister's portfolio area. Like I said, I am meeting with Gugan Gulwan next week, and I will get a better idea of what their needs are and how we can work together.

MS LAWDER: You are meeting with them specifically on that issue?

Ms Berry: No.

MS LAWDER: Thank you.

THE CHAIR: Mr Wall.

MR WALL: A quick follow-on while we are talking about Gugan Gulwan: who is responsible for the building that they currently occupy at Wanniasa?

Ms Berry: The property group, Chief Minister's.

MR WALL: One issue they have recently raised with me, in the last couple of days, is that they have been trying desperately in this cold weather, for the last couple of weeks, to get the heater fixed. Perhaps some follow-up or at least a call to them as to when that might happen would be appreciated, particularly while this wet and

inclement weather continues.

Minister, I want to ask about a couple of key issues specifically which organisations such as Gugan Gulwan and Winnunga have raised with me that are of significant concern. There are four key areas. The first is the suicide rate amongst young Indigenous people, which continues to be trending in the wrong direction. What, as the Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, are you personally doing to ensure that this is curtailed?

Ms Berry: I had a meeting recently with Julie Tongs from Winnunga. We had a fairly detailed discussion about the issues for young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the ACT, and also in the region, who most recently have committed suicide and the families that were affected by that—and also with the elected body and their concern with the suicide rates of young Aboriginal men, predominantly in the ACT. I will ask Ms Howson to elaborate more on some of the conversations she might have had and what sort of work we are going to be doing with the community about addressing those concerns.

Ms Howson: Thank you, minister. It is very alarming but also quite encouraging that Ms Tongs and Ms Davidson, who represent both the organisations we have spoken about this morning, came to talk to me and Dr Peggy Brown at the time there was very heightened concern about the number of suicides that had happened within this region recently. We immediately discussed what I would describe as the emergency or immediacy of the issues concerning a small number of families that were brought to our attention through Winnunga and Gugan Gulwan. I cannot speak for Health, but I know they put in place a suite of measures to assist those particular families and to support Gugan Gulwan and Winnunga over that very heightened period of concern.

Subsequently we have met on two other occasions with both those leaders of the community. We are working through with them their views and thoughts on how government can wrap further support around their relationships and engagement with the families of concern to assist them on a range of measures. From my directorate's point of view, for example, the government has invested in the strengthening families program as part of the better services suite. We are making the facility of those programs available to families that are, as I said, of primary concern to Gugan Gulwan and Winnunga. We are also working through with Gugan, in particular, on how we can provide some additional support to kin, again responding to the needs of those particular families. Those conversations are still ongoing. We have invited Julie Tongs to come back to us with her views. Her engagement is more directly with Health. I know she is working with officials in that directorate on their current program around suicide prevention.

MR WALL: It is a very disturbing issue. I know it is one that often is a difficult one to talk about, both in this place and also within the broader community. From the directorate's perspective, where are the shortfalls, where are the gaps? Why does this continue to be an issue? Obviously it is a very complex scenario, but my understanding is that in many situations, by the time someone gets to the point of wanting to end their own life, they have had some engagement with government services, health services or whatnot along the way. Why are these people falling through the net?

Ms Howson: Mr Wall, you are right; they are very complex situations. I am no expert on the issue of suicide per se, so I would not want to step outside my area of expertise. My understanding from conversations I am having with both Ms Tongs and Ms Davidson is just about the compounding despair that is a result of families that are in crisis, that have significant disadvantage. There is no doubt that poverty is connected to these concepts of despair. It is the compounding nature of this that I think results in a sense of hopelessness for individuals.

Obviously there is a need for an immediate response. I believe Health has stepped in to support these communities in this context and minimise any other burdens that may just be the straw that breaks the camel's back. We have been very conscious of making sure we are supporting the families that have been affected by these suicides financially and in other ways. We have also been conscious of the long-term scenario. Here is one which brings us back to the concepts in the elected body's agreement with government around stronger families. It touches on all the elements of this agreement, from cultural identity issues through to safe communities, healthy families, housing—the full suite of social determinants of good health.

MR WALL: One of the other key areas that is raised with me often and is a precursor to where some people have ended up, as we were just discussing, is drug use, another one that disproportionately affects the Indigenous community in the ACT. I know there has been a lot of discussion recently about ice and there has been an announcement about some funding to try and tackle that, but what is being done specifically within those programs to help the local Indigenous community?

Ms Berry: That is not really in our portfolio area.

MR WALL: As the minister responsible for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people—

Ms Berry: The government is well aware—

MS FITZHARRIS: I am not sure that the minister is responsible for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, in a sense.

THE CHAIR: It is in her portfolio.

MS FITZHARRIS: The portfolio, yes. Sorry.

Ms Berry: The government is aware of the inequality challenge that lies within the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community and we will do everything we can working with the community across all of the different departments of government to hopefully remove some of the gaps that exist in that part of our community.

Ms Howson: I can add to that. I make this point simply because I think there is a more consistent, joined-up approach being taken here around Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander issues. In relation to the concern around ice usage within our community, again, both Ms Tongs and Ms Davidson have been very forthright in coming to speak to the government about these issues. We have been able to

coordinate our discussions with both those leaders of the community. It is an issue that both JACS and Health have more of a lead on, but I certainly see my directorate's responsibility being to back up whatever they are working with the community on in relation to the community services we provide. In that sense, the agreement and the work of the minister across government are facilitating government not operating necessarily in silos and trying to come together to solve these complex issues.

Ms Forester: If I can add to that, Mr Wall, from the perspective of the Office for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs and the elected body, the whole ice epidemic has been quite close to what both of us have been looking at. One of the priorities is that there will be a community forum within the next few months specifically looking at ice, the drug use, and supporting families. Yesterday Gugan Gulwan ran a forum on the effects of ice and what happens with that. As a result of that, we are looking more broadly at what we can now do to get the community together to start to look at strategies and supports in a culturally appropriate manner.

MR WALL: Thanks.

THE CHAIR: Minister, what discussions have officials had with the elected body or with other groups about an Indigenous business chamber, and what progress has been made to further that?

Ms Berry: I will ask Ms Forester to respond to that.

Ms Forester: There has been a bit of discussion. We have been talking with economic around the work happening out there to support Indigenous business. Although it is something which does not actually sit within our directorate, we have been having conversations and discussions. I know the elected body is very keen for the development of an Indigenous business chamber here, and my understanding is that through the economic development area further conversations are happening in that space.

THE CHAIR: Are you involved in those conversations?

Ms Forester: I have been involved in some of those conversations, but not in recent weeks.

THE CHAIR: Thank you. Ms Fitzharris.

MS FITZHARRIS: Thank you. Minister, I am not sure where to say this, thinking it through and looking at our program for the afternoon about social inclusion in broad terms, but I want to say it was great to see the social inclusion statement included in this year's budget to the extent that it seemed to inform so much of what else was in the budget. In terms of the closing the gap data that the commonwealth released earlier this year, it showed in general terms across the country a bit of stagnation, unfortunately, and in some cases some of the data is heading in the wrong direction. Can you give us a picture of what is happening in the ACT in relation to that data?

Ms Berry: Yes. I noted with concern the lack of progress made at a national level in those areas of life expectancy, literacy and employment. Certainly local data is crucial,

given the relatively small population we have in the ACT. I am looking forward to a local progress report later this year. Ms Forester, if you could provide more details, that would be good.

Ms Forester: We are due to do a 2015 ACT closing the gap report, which will happen later this year. As the minister has said, nationally there have been rates that are not quite where they should be. The ACT performs quite well on a number of the indicators, but, as the minister has also said, there are a couple of indicators that we do not measure against because of our relatively small numbers. We will have an ACT closing the gap report response later this year.

MS FITZHARRIS: Do all states and territories do their own and we do our own process, or is it linked to a national collection?

Ms Forester: It is a process that each of the jurisdictions undertakes.

Ms Berry: I think it has been a bit of a challenge in the ACT, because we have much smaller numbers, to get qualitative data to use and report on. But we will do that and be able to do some work with that progress report when it comes through.

MS FITZHARRIS: How do you go about collecting the data? Do you use existing data through existing processes across government already and then supplement that?

Ms Forester: Yes; we link into the existing data we have. We also look at the Indigenous expenditure report. That report only comes out every two years. We look at a number of measures that are already in place and extract our report through those processes.

MS FITZHARRIS: What is the Indigenous expenditure report? Is that something the ACT government do?

Ms Forester: It is a national report.

MS FITZHARRIS: Part of the report on the ROGS, government services information, is it?

Ms Forester: It is in addition to that.

THE CHAIR: A last question in this area from Dr Bourke.

DR BOURKE: Thank you, chair. Minister, you have probably alluded to this, but what feedback do you give to the Indigenous community, once the budget is announced, on those budget details as well as the details of funding of ongoing programs, of which there are dozens across the different directorates, which directly affect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families in the ACT?

Ms Berry: We have been working with the elected body, as I said previously, to develop a document like the DV one-pager, the domestic violence one-pager, so that we can make sure the community is aware of everything that is happening across government currently but also some of the new initiatives that have been announced

in the ACT budget. Ms Forester can provide some more detail about how we are communicating the budget to the broader community.

Ms Forester: Thank you, minister. What we will be doing is—through the Chief Minister’s department, they have assisted in bringing together all of that information, which will go into a fact sheet that will be available to the community. We will distribute that out to the community through our networks as well as through the elected body networks.

DR BOURKE: I think it is important that, apart from growing healthy families and the smoking cessation program that were funded in this budget, the dozens of other things the government is already doing—Indigenous-specific programs—need to be known about and also, perhaps, aligned with the new headlines under the elected body agreement.

Ms Berry: Yes, you are absolutely right. It is important that we make sure that the community is well aware of everything that is going on and the support the government is providing—and also the work we are doing with the elected body. We are organising to do a community signing of the agreement during NAIDOC Week. That is another way we will be providing information to the community about where the ACT government is going in partnership with the community on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander issues.

DR BOURKE: Is there any way the committee could get a copy of that document, if it is ready for release during NAIDOC Week, so that we can consider it during our report formulation?

Ms Berry: Yes; it will be ready very soon.

DR BOURKE: Excellent. Thank you. I am done.

THE CHAIR: We will finish on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander affairs. Given the minister is the minister also for all of CSD and we have therapy services on the last day of hearings, at some stage we will also have to ask corporate and financial questions. The minister is probably more across those. We will now move on to multicultural and women’s affairs, and Ms Lawder. Feel free to range a little; I suspect we will have Mr Manikis and his crew with us for some time.

MS LAWDER: I will start off with the multicultural affairs portfolio, on behalf of Mrs Jones. Minister, many stallholders at the Multicultural Festival said that it had become quite commercialised, and that the corporate organisations who could afford to pay many thousands of dollars had better located stalls. How is the need to support community groups balanced against corporate vendors?

Ms Berry: Yes, we have had some conversations with participants in the Multicultural Festival, both the community and corporate participants. I might hand over to Mr Manikis, who will be able to provide you with more detail on some of the conversations and the outcomes, and how we can improve and make our Multicultural Festival in 2016 even better.

Mr Manikis: We are very much attuned to the fact that the festival is about the community, for the community, and it is about the celebration of our cultural diversity. At the heart of all of that are the community groups. For many years now community groups have been the driving force. We facilitate; they do the work on the footprint.

There are quite a few dimensions to this event. It is one that continues to grow, for a start, but it is one that showcases our city through the diplomatic missions. It provides an important source of revenue for our multicultural community groups. So it is multidimensional. We are very conscious of the fact that we need to pay for the infrastructure, of course. With 400 stalls or thereabouts and eight stages, we need to balance the way we undergo planning for it, and how we do the financial regime around making that happen.

Commercials pay \$9,000 for three days, which is almost a quasi-sponsorship—\$5,500 or thereabouts for a day. It is important revenue to ensure that we maintain the festival at the level that it is at. Community stallholders pay much less than that—about \$1,000-odd for three days and much less for a day. That is for those that are making money. For those that are just there as information stalls and profiling their own organisations, it is free, as it is for diplomatic missions that are not making money on the footprint.

The balance between community and commercial has been at the top of our minds for many years, and it is around the allocation as well. There are hotspots, apparently, around the footprint that generate a lot of revenue, and other spots, apparently, that do not generate the revenue that people wish. You can see where we are coming from—that if someone has paid \$9,000 you would want to give them a chance of recovering at least that, if not more. From a community point of view, it is their festival.

I must say that I do not see in the spine of the festival—the footprint that goes from Akuna Street all the way up now to Northbourne Avenue as a spine, with eight stages and people shoulder to shoulder—that there are too many dead spots along the way. We have had some feedback around the fact that some community stalls did not make the revenue they thought they would make. We have had some commercials tell us the same.

What we are going to do next year, for 2016, is to look at a new way that puts the community stalls front and centre, in terms of allocation. It is something that we will be proposing to the minister—an allocation system where the community comes first. We will see how it goes from there in terms of the commercials.

The event is clearly very popular; it is growing. It has a footprint that cannot expand because of the physical nature of the place it is in. At the end of the day we need to sit down with our community partners. We have a steering committee of our sponsors and our community showcase coordinators from the community groups—the Indians, the Pacific Islanders, the Greek Glendi, Chinese New Year celebrations and so forth. With respect to all of those components and the people that are in charge of or coordinate those components, we meet maybe on a six-weekly basis from about July onwards and then much more frequently as it gets closer. So we will be having a discussion before we set the new participation policy for 2016.

MS LAWDER: Is the pricing structure that you described what is going to apply next year or will you look at that as part of—

Mr Manikis: We will look at that because there are a couple of cost increases. If we have 50 to 60 commercials at \$9,000 each, we then need to decide: do we have fewer commercials with more money that they contribute or do we just have 20 spots for commercials, and that is that? These are the sorts of considerations that we are mulling over at the moment. We do not want to kill the thing. We do not want to blow the budget by millions, because these sorts of things can take off and get out of hand, in terms of costs.

Ms Howson: We most definitely do not want to blow the budget.

MS LAWDER: I know you are aware that for community groups it is a significant investment for them. There were also some comments. Some stallholders who used continuous electricity supply to keep food cold had some outages and electricians were unavailable on the site. Are you looking at having a different approach to that?

Mr Manikis: We bring commercial generators onto the footprint. With 400 stalls and a lot of them requiring electricity, we try to cater for that. For 2015 we also used existing electricity on the footprint. The major problem we had was that it was one of the permanent electricity boxes that went out and it took some time for TAMS or whoever was responsible to connect up with the electricians on the site. There are electricians—

MS LAWDER: No, I understand that issue, but what about next year? Who is to say it might not happen again?

Mr Manikis: For next year we need to factor in additional generators. We also need to factor in making sure that our electricians know who to contact in TAMS at a moment's notice on a Sunday or Saturday. So there are some practical things that we learn from one event to the next.

MS LAWDER: There is always something new, isn't there?

Mr Manikis: There is something new that comes out of left field.

Ms Howson: Just when you think you have it all under control, something else tests the system.

THE CHAIR: Strategic indicator 5 on page 5 of budget paper G shows 150 multicultural groups and 90 community groups, a list as long as the eye can see. Are we at the limit—the physical limit—on the site? If so, what is the long-term plan? Is it just to exist as is or are we looking at other ways of improving participation?

Mr Manikis: That will be up to the community itself, by and large. We test that. This has been a perennial question, as the thing has increased over the years. What our surveys tell us year in, year out is that we get into 90 per cent satisfaction, or very satisfied, 96 per cent, 95 per cent, and that is largely to do with the atmosphere of the place. The containment itself adds to or creates that atmosphere.

We went into East Row this year and we got the buses operating out of another place, so that was something that was a bit left field, to get ACTION buses out for a few days. I think we will try to go down that track. In the future Lonsdale Street might be something that we consider in three, four or five years time—Bunda Street, Lonsdale Street. I am not sure.

THE CHAIR: How many groups do you turn away? How many groups who apply do not get a stall?

Mr Manikis: We do pride ourselves on the fact that we never turn anyone away. We do not turn anyone away. But if the town population increases, and if we are talking about five, six, or seven years time, who knows?

THE CHAIR: Miraculously, for the last three years, only 240 groups have turned up and you have been able to accommodate them?

Mr Manikis: We have 240 groups there, but it is about 380. We have 380 stalls. Stalls include dressing rooms, sound booths—

Ms Howson: Private booths.

THE CHAIR: And private ones. How many stalls all up, did you say?

Mr Manikis: About 380, we pay for, and we have.

THE CHAIR: How many of those are for functions that could be given over to a community group? Or do you need them all as they currently exist?

Mr Manikis: What do you mean?

THE CHAIR: Do you need all the dressing rooms and bits and pieces that you have got?

Mr Manikis: Yes; it is behind the stage. It is pretty difficult for groups to dress out in the open.

Ms Howson: The flexibility is built into the fact that the festival runs over three days. If a particular group ask for a three-day stint, we might not offer them three days; we might only offer them two, so that we can give another organisation one. So it is that sort of flexibility that is built into the scheduling and the allocation. It ends up being quite complex, and I think Jancye has probably gone grey twice trying to work all of that out.

THE CHAIR: Ms Fitzharris, a new question on multicultural or women's issues, or corporate?

MS FITZHARRIS: Minister, I wanted to ask about the Women's Information and Referral Centre. I know that some time ago the model was changed. Would you be able to give us an update on that, the funding that exists and what activities the service

has been providing and is going to provide over the next 12 months?

Ms Berry: The government changed the service model so that the service would be decentralised. We wanted to target the services at women who need them and within the communities that they live in, the same way as we were just talking about with people going to west Belconnen, Gungahlin or Tuggeranong. It is the same sort of process that we have wanted to use when we have been providing services for women in the Women's Information and Referral Service. I might ask Ms Chapman to expand a bit more on that.

Ms Chapman: Yes, we have changed the model. It has now been working in its new form, properly, for about 12 months. It is getting close to about 15 months old. The main thing that we have done has been to use our community child and family centres as spokes. I do not know if you would call it a hub and spoke. We have a location in the Theo Notaras building here as the city base, which has got information, a library and women's information service providers. We have our phone line hosted in Theo, so people can drop in and see somebody.

We also have women's information officers who now rotate around all of our CFCs. They are there if people walk in off the street. When women come in and the officer is not present that day, staff can tell them when the officer will next be in and put them in touch. They can go online and they can phone. One of the things is to try and make sure we are accessible to women and not just a service in the city. One of the things we discovered was that there are women who live out in, say, the Tuggeranong area who never come into Civic at all. That is the first thing.

The second thing that we are doing is getting our return to work officer to rotate out into the CFCs as well. The return to work program is a very important program for women. It gives them ideas about how they can re-enter the workplace if they have been off with child raising responsibilities, or for other reasons. They might be new to Canberra or they might be migrants to this area. The program encourages them to work out what it is they need to do and then provides them some small grants, around \$1,000, to help them along the way. Having the return to work officer able to go out to a safe environment locally I think is also proving beneficial.

One of the other changes we made was to do with "What's on for Women". We used to publish a hardcopy and it was always out of date by the time we published it, so we have now got it online. It is accessible. If you are not online, you can go into the library or a CFC. We update that very regularly. It is the most up-to-date piece of information for women, whatever they are looking for information on.

The interesting thing for me was to actually find out what people were looking for or asking for. It was just general information about women's issues but more broadly—"What's on in Canberra?" type of thing. I think that is interesting, so we might need to use Access Canberra, Canberra Connect or one of those a bit more.

There were a number of inquiries about financial matters where women were trying, in some cases, to work out their finances to leave their partner and take their children. There were education and training types of inquiries. People came to the information services to look at employment opportunities, which is where the return to work

grants process comes into play.

We also developed new brochures and posters to go up in the CFCs so people—again, women—going in there could actually find out more about it. We have put those up in libraries, at the university campuses, at CIT and so on. We try to get the reach out as well as we can. We will continue to do that. From my observations, people are finding that a very useful thing for them, that it is actually services where they want them.

MS FITZHARRIS: Do you have a sense that there are more interactions with the service through this model?

Ms Chapman: I do not know if I could answer that. I am not sure that we keep that kind of data in that way. One of the things that we do know is that a lot of women drop into CFCs for other reasons. They might go there to get help with parenting ideas or to see a MACH nurse if they have got a new bub. They go in for one thing and then there are these opportunities for it to expand. I think it is more that we are actually answering a range of people's inquiries, even though they start with one question. We are trying to work out how to collect that information, because it is actually important information.

MS FITZHARRIS: You have, I think, talked about that this morning, about how that works across all the services that directorates provide.

Ms Chapman: That is right.

MS FITZHARRIS: What are some of the opportunities you see in future for the service?

Ms Chapman: I do not know. I have not given that a great deal of thought at this stage. I think the main thing is being responsive. If something comes up that becomes a frequent theme—so when the information officers who are moving around the CFCs realise that there is something that we cannot refer women to and that it is a constant kind of question—that will become something where we say, “How do we address that need?”

I will give an example. One of the things that were raised was working with women who have been victims of domestic violence—but in a non-threatening way so it is not like a counselling kind of thing. They wanted a way of being able to talk to women but in a less formal way. So we have funded a women's group, which is actually a walk-in group. It is a group of women who have gone through one of our domestic violence services. It is a way of having it in a non-threatening way, being able to walk in and talk and have a cup of coffee; it is like a re-engagement with society. Whatever the theme is, if we can find a way to meet that then that is what we will do.

MS FITZHARRIS: I suppose with the different locations you may even be able to get a sense of different needs across the city in Tuggeranong, Belconnen and Gungahlin.

Ms Sheehan: I am sure we will come to the One Human Services Gateway in the

better services context. The return to work officer and that information service sit in the One Human Services Gateway. As the committee knows, it is the only gateway in the country that is collocated with the National Disability Insurance Agency. So if you think about bringing all of those things together, particularly a goal about supporting people with a disability who might never have had those sorts of services before and matching that up with return to work grants, I think you can see the real benefits of that changed service model for women. They can then be linked with lots of other services, which would never have been the case had they had to go to one central point in the middle of Civic.

Ms Berry: I think one of the challenges that we will have is tracking the number of women that are accessing the service, because they are accessing multiple services.

MS FITZHARRIS: Yes.

Ms Berry: And tracking it just across a phone line does not give us the full picture. We need to figure out a more flexible way to track how women are accessing the services and what sorts of services and advice they are seeking.

MS FITZHARRIS: Thank you.

THE CHAIR: Dr Bourke, a new question.

DR BOURKE: Thank you, chair. In your opening statement, minister, you talked about the funding support for the Canberra Men's Centre. Could you tell us more about that organisation's role in addressing domestic and sexual violence?

Ms Berry: The funding that is going to the Canberra Men's Centre is around working on perpetrator intervention with their working with the man program. The additional funding that will go to that will hopefully assist them in being able to provide advice and assistance for men who need support. I might ask one of my officials to elaborate a little bit more on that.

Ms Sheehan: The Canberra Men's Centre, as you know, Dr Bourke, provides an extensive range of homelessness services. As part of its membership of the Joint Pathways Network of homelessness services, men's services have generally taken on the responsibility of using the opportunity of men being homeless and coming into their service to raise the issue of domestic violence, because very often men may have been the perpetrators of domestic violence, which has then gone on to cause their homelessness. Giving them that very specific program funding actually built on the work that they were already doing generally with men around domestic violence.

Canberra Men's Centre also run really wonderful programs for men coming out of Alexander Maconochie Centre. Again, it is an opportunity for men who may have been perpetrators of domestic violence, which may have been the reason for their incarceration, to raise with them issues around domestic violence. I think it is a really good example of a small amount of money in a small program that just builds on an existing base of commitment from that organisation to raise those important issues of domestic violence with men.

DR BOURKE: The budget papers also mention a commitment of about \$250,000 to the jointly funded national domestic violence awareness and prevention campaign. Do you have more information that you can share with us about that national campaign—the timetable, the nature, the intensity?

Ms Berry: The national campaign?

DR BOURKE: Yes.

Ms Berry: Not really a lot of detail at the moment, other than the ACT government has agreed to be part of that campaign and will contribute our share, as far as funding that campaign nationally is concerned. It is an awareness campaign more than anything. We are going to talk a bit more about that at future COAG meetings and through the development of the prevention of violence against women and children strategy as well. Is anyone able to elaborate a bit more?

Ms Howson: The minister is correct, in that further discussions with the commonwealth on exactly what that campaign will be designed to do and how it will be executed will be a subject for COAG. I think the next meeting coming up for that will be by the end of this month or in July. I would have to take that on notice, Dr Bourke, because it is in another portfolio.

DR BOURKE: Thank you.

Ms Berry: I am participating in a meeting with other women's ministers to discuss that plan. I think we are doing it over the phone. Yes, it is a phone hook-up.

THE CHAIR: Ms Lawder had a supplementary to that point.

DR BOURKE: Sure, but if I could come back to that.

MS LAWDER: I think mine is quite quick. The funding for the Domestic Violence Crisis Service, the Canberra Rape Crisis Centre and the Canberra Men's Centre—is that sharing \$250,000 or \$250,000 each?

Ms Berry: It is sharing across the three, yes.

MS LAWDER: So how much does each one get?

Ms Berry: It is about 10 per cent of their operating expenditure.

Ms Howson: We could provide the specific amounts to you if Ms Sheehan does not have them, but the \$250,000 has been allocated on the basis that it is 10 per cent of their current operating budget.

MS LAWDER: If you could give the amounts and also if you have any specific outcomes relating to the additional funding?

Ms Howson: Yes.

MS LAWDER: Thank you.

THE CHAIR: Now it is back to Dr Bourke for a final.

Ms Berry: Dr Bourke, I have the 10 per cent amounts. The Domestic Violence Crisis Service will receive \$166,801.83, the Canberra Rape Crisis Centre will receive \$80,000, which is 10 per cent, and the Canberra Men's Centre will receive \$10,927.50, which is a 10 per cent increase for the working with the man program.

DR BOURKE: Thank you. The budget contained a collection of initiatives around countering violence against women and children. I think you mentioned a fact sheet that is available. Is there something online as well?

Ms Sheehan: Yes.

DR BOURKE: It is online?

Ms Sheehan: Yes, it is.

DR BOURKE: Thank you very much.

THE CHAIR: Ms Lawder a new question and then Mr Doszpot.

MS LAWDER: Thank you. The amount that was allocated to support ACT public schools to provide social and emotional learning programs relating to domestic violence—are there any social and emotional learning programs currently provided in schools and, if so, in what areas?

Ms Berry: It is really for Joy Burch to respond to that question.

MS LAWDER: Okay. What age groups are going to be targeted with that training program? Again, that is an education one?

Ms Berry: Yes, that is education.

MS LAWDER: Does the ACT government contribute to or have a membership of Our Watch?

Ms Berry: No, not at the moment.

MS LAWDER: Not at the moment? Are you considering it?

Ms Berry: We have had some conversations with Our Watch.

MS LAWDER: Is the ACT government part of any other national campaigns?

Ms Sheehan: Yes. ANROWS is the national research agency that was established by the ministers for women council and all jurisdictions contribute to the operation of that body.

MS LAWDER: Is there an annual fee for that?

Ms Sheehan: Yes.

MS LAWDER: Are you able to tell us how much the annual fee is?

Ms Sheehan: The ACT contribution is \$24,000. The usual split for these things is the commonwealth contributes 50 per cent of funding and then states and territories contribute the rest based on population share. The ACT always gets really good value from its participation in these sorts of national initiatives.

THE CHAIR: Mr Doszpot.

MR DOSZPOT: Thank you, Mr Chair. There has been a reasonable amount of discussion on the Multicultural Festival. Your strategic objective 5 it states that the directorate promotes participation and community life by those from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds by hosting the annual Multicultural Festival. That is not the only activity that you would pursue. Can you enumerate some of the other ways that you get to assist those from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds to join in community activities?

Ms Berry: Yes, I can. Living in the ACT, we are so lucky to have such a diverse and multicultural community that I do not think a week would go by when there was not an activity somewhere that somebody in our community was holding to celebrate our diversity. But I might ask Nic Manikis to provide some more details on some of the other programs that are available in the ACT for people to participate in.

Mr Manikis: Thank you, minister. When we talk about the Multicultural Festival, we are talking about around 4,000 community volunteers, so that is a large opportunity for many people in the lead-up—not just the three days, but the lead-up. That is why it is almost like a bit of a flagship when we talk about the Multicultural Festival. There are, as the minister has said, myriad other opportunities throughout the year. There are other national days when community members come together and are able to participate—this is seniors and family groups from multicultural community groups—and celebrate and mark national days. We have a multicultural grants program that funds many—up to 120 sometimes—multicultural community groups to undertake projects that enhance our social cohesion. It enhances participation, as well, in our community.

MR DOSZPOT: And there are 120 of those?

Mr Manikis: I can be specific for you if you like.

Ms Berry: While Mr Manikis is looking for that, let me say that this week, being Refugee Week, was another opportunity for the ACT to celebrate its diversity. Today I was very happy to declare the ACT a refugee welcome zone along with a number of community support groups.

MR DOSZPOT: What does that really mean—refugee welcome zone?

Ms Berry: It means that we celebrate what we already know or what is already happening in the ACT. We have over 200 nationalities represented in the ACT. We already provide significant supports to asylum seekers and refugees who settle in the ACT and call Canberra their home. We were the first state or territory government to sign up to the declaration, but we are now one of 100 local and community areas across Australia who have declared themselves refugee welcome zones. But significantly, as I said, the ACT was the first state or territory government to do that.

It highlights and acknowledges the work of our local community groups and individuals that support refugees and asylum seekers and it demonstrates support for refugees and stands up against racism and discrimination in our community. It also pursues a more active role in advocating for refugees and asylum seekers and a more coordinated approach to supporting refugee settlement in the ACT and across our country.

This adds to the work that the ACT government is doing in its social inclusion and equality program. That means that it is implementing policies and practices that respond to the levels of poverty, deprivation and disadvantage as well as cultural and systemic problems such as homophobia, sexism and racism, and violence against women and children. But mostly the declaration of a refugee welcome zone in the ACT is about celebrating our differences. Our differences are wonderful, and that is what makes our city so much stronger.

Are you ready there, Mr Manikis?

MR DOSZPOT: Sorry, minister; just before you go, how many refugees have we accepted over the last three years per annum?

Ms Berry: I do not have the numbers of the last three years; I would have to get the detail to you. This is a figure that changes and moves as people decide where they are going to live in Australia. They might come to Canberra initially to be settled but then they might move out. In the ACT from the beginning of the year I think we had around 600.

Mr Manikis: It was 687, off the top of my head, between 2009 and 2014.

MR DOSZPOT: I am quite happy for you to take that on notice. If we could get some accurate figures over the last three years, that would be good.

Ms Berry: Sorry, the last three years and—

MR DOSZPOT: How many refugees have we accepted per annum? Over the last three years, but per annum how many have we received?

Ms Berry: Each year, yes.

Mr Manikis: This is the humanitarian entry.

Ms Berry: Yes, but you need to remember that they do not all stay here. They often move to other cities.

MR DOSZPOT: No, that is fine. I am asking how many were accepted.

Ms Berry: We hope they stay, because Canberra is great and we welcome them here.

THE CHAIR: Mr Manikis, is that off visas, humanitarian visas? Is that how you track it?

Mr Manikis: When we talk about refugees, we are talking about humanitarian entrants. We are talking about that information. Is it the ones that come formal, the people that come here under the humanitarian entrance—

MR DOSZPOT: I am asking how many we welcomed each year, whether they were all refugees or not, so whichever category they were in.

Mr Manikis: Asylum seekers?

MR DOSZPOT: Yes. It is not a difficult question.

THE CHAIR: Just before you go—you said we signed up to an initiative. Whose initiative was it to become a refugee welcome zone?

Ms Berry: The ACT government. As Minister for Multicultural Affairs—

THE CHAIR: Whose initiative was it that the other hundred groups have signed up to?

Ms Berry: It is the Refugee Council of Australia.

MS FITZHARRIS: Can I just clarify. Does the ACT government accept refugees? We do not accept them in that sense?

Ms Berry: No.

MR DOSZPOT: For settlement purposes I am talking about, once they come to Canberra. I am not saying you are granting them asylum.

MS FITZHARRIS: No, but I am just trying to understand. If there is a refugee who is in Australia, does the ACT government play any role into accepting them into Canberra? They choose to move here? We welcome them here, obviously.

Mr Manikis: The ACT government plays a role in having input into it. When the commonwealth government constructs a humanitarian program, the ACT government gets an opportunity to have a say about how large or small that program would be. After that, a refugee, say, in Africa is processed by the immigration department. They put in a destination, where they would like to go. This is part of the difficulty about secondary migration as well. If it is Sydney and then two days later they come down the highway and they land in Canberra, we do not play any formal role in accepting them. What we do is welcome them, help to settle them through some of our support and our service providers. We embrace them and we hope to have them as a

successful part of our community life.

MR DOSZPOT: That is a question I have asked at the outset. If we could have that on notice, that would be fine.

Ms Sheehan: Mr Doszpot, we could provide you with the details from the commonwealth figures on who has come through the humanitarian program and for other purposes such as coming out of detention centres; we can also provide you with commonwealth figures on asylum seekers.

MR DOSZPOT: Okay, but all we are asking for—it is a very simple question—is how many people Canberra welcomed, helped look after, who are classified as refugees. That is all I am asking.

THE CHAIR: 687.

Ms Howson: We will take that question on notice and we will be very clear about the definition of the data that we are providing.

MR DOSZPOT: On that, you were going to—

Mr Manikis: I was going to say that for the 2014-15 participation multicultural grants, we had 136 applicants, receiving \$259,500 for projects. With the ACT Hazara community, for example, we allocated \$2,500 for them to undertake some community cultural events and also for expenses associated with their radio program, which is another very important part of the multicultural community, to overcome barriers of social isolation with some of those members.

MR DOSZPOT: So these grants—

THE CHAIR: This will be your final, Mr Doszpot; then I think Ms Lawder has got another question before we finish.

MR DOSZPOT: The grants that you are referring to—do they include grants to community cultural groups like community ethnic radio and areas like that?

Mr Manikis: They do.

MR DOSZPOT: What component is that?

Mr Manikis: That is part of the participation multicultural group.

MR DOSZPOT: That is part of the 136.

Mr Manikis: That is part of the 136, part of the 260,000.

Ms Berry: We can probably provide, Mr Doszpot, if that would assist you—the grants that go out range from a couple of hundred dollars to quite a few thousand dollars, for all sorts of different events across the multicultural community in the ACT. We will table that for you.

THE CHAIR: Ms Lawder.

MS LAWDER: Just a couple of questions. The women's safety grants—who administers those, and how?

Ms Berry: That is the Office for Women.

MS LAWDER: What are the criteria for receiving funding?

Ms Berry: We will just check if we have got the criteria with us.

Ms Howson: If we have not, we will be able to table it, but it would also be available on our website. In the grant round, we follow a very traditional process. We announce the grants, we publish the criteria for the grants and then we publish the application for people to fill out. Then there is a panel established, which always has community representation on it, and then the written applications are assessed against the grant criteria.

MS LAWDER: How much in dollar terms is allocated to the women's safety grants?

Ms Sheehan: I will just have to confirm that.

MS LAWDER: Do you want to take that on notice?

Ms Sheehan: I am just clarifying from the head of the Office for Women that the women's safety grants were funded by the Justice and Community Safety Directorate as part of the money that came from the proceeds of crime money that was available. So the grants programs that are administered by the Office for Women are the domestic violence prevention grants, the return to work grants and so on—the other grants we have been speaking about. We will be very happy to provide you with a list of all the grants.

MS LAWDER: In the budget for the Office for Women, how much is allocated to courses? Do you run any courses out of the office?

Ms Sheehan: The grants program—

MS LAWDER: The Office for Women, not necessarily specific to the grants program.

Ms Sheehan: For example, the YWCA, through the leadership grants, runs the course which is "She leads". That would be an example of where, under a grants program, an organisation has the idea that it is a course that they would like to run and then put up that proposal. If it is funded, of course, the courses are run. Another example would be where the Domestic Violence Crisis Service is funded to run some very specific programs for people experiencing domestic violence. There could be some variation from year to year, depending on whether the organisation wants to recurrently run the same type of courses or whether women or an organisation say that there is a different need at different times for different purposes.

MS LAWDER: How much in percentage terms did the budget increase for the Office for Women this year, the coming year, compared to 2014-15?

Ms Berry: We might just get one of our officials to come up to the table and provide you with some information on it.

Ms Howson: Ms Lawder, this is related to a question that came up this morning about the community participation group and the funding that sits with them in the participation group.

Mr Hubbard: Thanks for that question, Ms Lawder. As I alluded to this morning, we do not separate out any of the officers in that group, because they do activities across the group. I am sure that Nic can outline how that improves the productivity of that area. So we do not actually have a percentage of budget increase specifically for the Office of Women.

MS LAWDER: I am happy with that.

THE CHAIR: Thanks. Members, we might call break there. We will return for what we list on the program as policy recovery and reform. In the annual report it lists community relations. Output 3.1 has coordination of the whole of directorate, strategic policy projects, community recovery services and community sector reforms, so it is the corporate overhead type stuff, with lots of questions for Mr Hubbard.

Sitting suspended from 3.29 to 3.44 pm.

THE CHAIR: We will resume the hearing. We are now looking at the area of output class 3.1 that looks after policy, some programs and community engagement and support. We will start with Ms Lawder.

MS LAWDER: Minister, on Friday we heard from a number of community groups. Some of them indicated they were disappointed that the 0.34 per cent levy was included again in this year's budget, and I think for the next two years. Their understanding was that it was a temporary levy and they had not necessarily had any discussions that it would be included again. Could you explain the rationale behind including the levy again?

Ms Berry: Yes. We have had a few conversations with particularly ACTCOSS but also other members of the community sector about the levy and the kinds of savings which I referred to in my opening statement that the ACT government and the community have been able to gain for the community sector over the last couple of years. There is an unprecedented period of change in the sector—a lot to do with the NDIS, but also the rise in service demand and decrease in funding. I will ask Mr Gotts to provide you with some more detail about the levy.

Mr Gotts: Would you like me to give you a general rundown on it or was there something specific?

MS LAWDER: No, thank you. Why has it been included again?

Mr Gotts: It has been included again because the reform program and the things that it is contributing to are continuing. When it was originally agreed it was for three years with the potential for an additional two years. Essentially, this represents the additional two years.

Ms Howson: I might add to that, if you do not mind, Ms Lawder. As the minister said, the sector, along with government, is going through significant change in the way in which our service delivery model and approach are applying. It is certainly being driven by the shifting paradigm of the national disability insurance scheme. The sector was very positively engaged with us at the outset about investing in the capacity building of the sector. Our view would be that the first phase of this particular sector development program has been very positive and returned some significant benefits, both financially and in a capability sense, to the non-government sector and that it will help position them to be responsive providers to the types of quality services this community needs through something like a step up for our kids.

In previous hearings we have described how much of the work that is being done within government will soon be outsourced to the non-government sector. This is, in comparison, a relatively small investment in some capacity building that will assist the sector to get ready. It was certainly the view that another two years of investment along these lines will deliver a very strong and vibrant community sector for the ACT community.

MS LAWDER: How much do you expect to make over the next two years from that levy?

Mr Gotts: It is a little under half a million dollars for each of the two years. I think it is a fraction under half a million dollars for the first year and a little bit less for the year after that. The reduction is due to the changing circumstances for NDIS-funded organisations or organisations that are disability organisations. As they transfer away from block funding, that reduces the amount of levy that would come.

Ms Howson: Can I clarify your question? When you said how much will we make, did you mean—

MS LAWDER: How much will you collect?

Ms Howson: Thank you; that is the right answer, then.

MS LAWDER: In the annual report last year, on page 37 it said the program was launched in March 2014 and comprised five modules, which it then names. It says that 23 governance and financial management packages have been delivered for a total value of \$460,000. Given these modules have already been created and quite a number already delivered, and most of the organisations we saw on Friday were not working in the NDIS space but are still being charged that levy, I am unsure as to how your argument about the NDIS stacks up.

Mr Gotts: The levy, as you suggest, comes from those organisations across the community sector. The packages that you are talking about were available to any organisation across the community sector. The 23 that you referred to included some

organisations that were disability-related organisations, but it also included lots of organisations that were not additional, and separate—

MS LAWDER: I understand that. I am talking about the next tranche that this levy applies to for the next two years.

Ms Howson: The first thing I would say is that it applies only to organisations that have a funding arrangement with us of over \$150,000. So any of the smaller organisations are exempt. The second thing, in terms of how it relates, is that the illustration about the national disability insurance scheme is about the way the service system is shifting to a more person-centred, client-focused approach. The reform that the NDIS is leading out is having a ripple effect right through the community sector. So it is not just relevant to the disability sector. If Ms Sheehan wanted to say something, she would be talking about the fact that we are looking to our community sector to make themselves available to people with a disability as well as their traditional client base. It is really the things we have been talking about around better services, our focus on early intervention and prevention, shifting more work out to the sector, the need to have a sector that is—

MS LAWDER: You are shifting more work out to the sector and you are charging them a 0.34 per cent levy to do that?

Ms Howson: In the next phase—we have discussed this with Susan Helyar, the head of ACTCOSS—it is about having an increasing lead-out from the sector itself. ACTCOSS have committed their membership to the development of an industry development plan, and that will be the framework for determining what the next phase of this investment will look like. We do not want to pre-empt that in any way, shape or form. I think the very first step is the investment in this industry development plan.

MS LAWDER: I thought I saw from ACTCOSS's response to the committee that they, too, were surprised and disappointed by the inclusion of the levy. Several organisations said they would be discussing it with ACTCOSS, I think.

MS FITZHARRIS: The Youth Coalition and YWCA.

MS LAWDER: Kippax UnitingCare as well. From our discussions on Friday with those groups, I would challenge you to suggest that Kippax UnitingCare, for example, did not have a client-centred approach already.

Ms Howson: My point is that in a strategic sense the environment is changing for all of us. There is more demand from the community around accountability, getting better outcomes for clients, delivering more joined-up services, making sure there is demonstrated value for money. They are not only issues for government; they are issues for the non-government sector as well as the private sector. In response to that, we all need to invest in our capability, whether that is in an information infrastructure sense, in a workforce sense or in a business process sense. All of these things actually build stronger service delivery organisations. That is what we are about in this regard. We are talking about a third of one per cent of the entire funding base that goes out to the sector. It is a very small component of the contribution to something that, through the first phase of this program, has actually demonstrated some good outcomes.

MS LAWDER: Nevertheless those organisations that we spoke to, and many others that I am aware of, put forward very convincing arguments about what else they might be able to do with that funding if they had it. It may appear small in a whole-of-government sense, but to a cash-strapped and working pretty much down to the bone community sector, it does make a difference.

Ms Howson: I understand that. As the head of an organisation, we all understand that our best interest is in investing in our front-line service delivery. But if we do that with complete disregard for some investment in the capability of our organisation and our workforce, we may not be as relevant in the future as we should be.

Ms Berry: I will add to some of the information that Ms Howson has provided on this. I have had conversations since the budget with some community service providers, including UnitingCare and Susan Helyar from ACTCOSS, and, prior to the budget announcement, with the Australian Services Union, about some of the smaller organisations that provide specialised services who do not contribute to the levy but who are able to access the packages that will be available, ensuring that they are able to continue to provide those specialised services that are so important to smaller numbers of people but no less important people in our community.

The decision was made to continue the levy over the next couple of years because of the success of the previous work that we had been doing in partnership with the community sector. We will continue to do that. We will continue to have conversations with ACTCOSS, who are the representative body for the community services sector. I am sure they will have conversations with their member organisations about how we can best work with the sector to make sure they continue to be viable and continue to be able to provide the services that the government procures them to provide.

THE CHAIR: Ms Fitzharris has a supplementary, as do I.

MS FITZHARRIS: In addition to the modules that are being rolled out, is there value in having it all together and learning the outcomes of those modules? Is there a value-add that you are giving to the program in addition to the modules that are rolling out? Front-line services are often under stress. They often do not have a chance to take a step back and do the strategic work that informs what the next five or 10 years look like. Has there been value in having a program that can value-add on that strategic side as well? Do you do that in the directorate as part of this program?

Mr Gotts: There certainly is value in it. As you suggest, by pooling things organisations get opportunities that would not otherwise occur, and that is always valuable. There is additional value in a material sense. For example, we are using a portion of the levy to purchase an electronic tool that a lot of organisations would not be able to purchase themselves, but by pooling the resources we are able to get a very good deal from the provider and make it available across the sector. There is a benefit that comes from pooling something in that sense. We expect, depending on the size of the organisation, that it will deliver a benefit of between \$2,000 and \$5,000 per organisation. In most cases that benefit alone is significantly greater than the cost of the levy.

MS LAWDER: A supplementary?

THE CHAIR: You can have a supplementary to my supplementary to your question, if you want, but I have got the next one. To follow on from what Ms Lawder said, the “Y” called for a respectful relationship, minister. They did not think they were being heard, despite what is being said. The Youth Coalition used words like, “We’re on a cliff’s edge. There’s a need for trust and a mechanism to prove that.” They made the comment that as a sector—I think it was more aimed at the government—“we’re not sure they’re thinking strategically”. The Youth Coalition went on to say that people who were coming through and looking at what they do were amazed at how intensive the work was. It is easy enough to say it is only a third of one per cent but it is a community services tax. Why tax the sector that is least able to afford that sort of tax?

Ms Berry: Because we want to make sure they are able to continue to provide the services that we procure them to provide.

THE CHAIR: Why not just—

Ms Berry: We have shown, in the last three years of the program, that the sector has been saved \$2.4 million already. We see, by working with the sector in the sort of programs that are needed over the next couple of years, how the sector can better provide services to people and also be able to actually survive. We want to make sure that these smaller, specialised services can continue to provide those services. That is what this levy offers the community services sector.

THE CHAIR: For instance, given the enormous amounts of recurrent let alone capital—there is \$55 million in capital for capital metro this year—are you saying the government, having regard to the \$400,000 that it raised, could not find that money to support the community sector?

Ms Berry: The funding cuts are actually coming from the federal government. There are no funding cuts from the ACT government.

THE CHAIR: No; this is your tax. This is your community services tax.

Ms Berry: It is not a tax.

THE CHAIR: All right; call it a levy. A levy, a tax, an impost. We can argue over the words. You are forcing the community sector to spend this money when they have other needs.

Ms Berry: No, we are working with the community sector to ensure their survival, because that is what we all want.

THE CHAIR: You have just said you are not forcing them; can they opt out?

Ms Berry: Well—

THE CHAIR: It is a simple question: can they opt out of paying the tax?

Ms Berry: Contributing to the levy is applicable only to the organisations who are on \$150,000.

MS LAWDER: Which is barely enough to employ 1½ people.

DR BOURKE: Let the minister answer.

Ms Berry: We have already shown the success of the program. Some of the organisations might be unhappy to continue paying the 0.34 per cent levy to make sure that the sector remains viable and continues to provide the excellent services that it does over the coming years. With unprecedented change in the sector, we cannot say that the sector has not benefited from the work that has already been done with the sector.

THE CHAIR: That may be the case but you did not answer my question: can they opt out?

Ms Berry: No. We are still developing a plan, along with having conversations with ACTCOSS, who are the peak member organisation for all of those community services. I have regular conversations personally, and I know the directorate does as well, with all of those organisations that you mentioned just now—the YWCA, UnitingCare. With Youth Co, I was just out there yesterday talking to some young people from Shepparton. There is absolutely no doubt about the importance of the work that the community sector does in this town. We want to make sure that they can continue to do that and we will work with them on an industry plan so that they can continue to deliver the excellent services that they do.

THE CHAIR: Does any other jurisdiction levy such a fee?

Mr Gotts: My understanding is that—and I am not aware of a fee or a levy that is directly levied like that in other jurisdictions—they tend to have different indexation arrangements. It is more: change the indexation arrangement so that it does not match, say, a wage-price indexation and so on, and do it in that way.

THE CHAIR: Back to Ms Lawder to finish and then Dr Bourke with a new question.

MS LAWDER: Based on what you just said, is the ACT wage-price indexation similar to that in other states and territories?

Mr Gotts: My understanding is that the indexation that is paid by the ACT government has over quite some considerable period been higher than that in other jurisdictions. There was a brief period where I am aware that it was higher in Western Australia at the height of the mining boom but other than that my understanding is that the ACT has traditionally had the highest rate of indexation payments, significantly above other jurisdictions.

MS LAWDER: What does “significantly” mean?

Mr Gotts: In some cases, say, in New South Wales it has traditionally been around

2.5 per cent regardless of what the actual WPI is doing. In the ACT the WPI component at the moment is 2.75. Going back a few years it has been as high as 3½, four per cent.

MS LAWDER: I said that my understanding was that ACTCOSS did not support it. May I read out to you a brief excerpt from ACTCOSS's analysis of the budget which is on the ACTCOSS website:

Whilst ACTCOSS supported the sector development and red tape reduction work continuing, we opposed its funding through a continuation of the tax on the sector. The continued imposition of a 0.34% levy on the community sector was unexpected given ACTCOSS had advised both Officials and Ministers that we did not support an ongoing levy because of a lack of empirical evidence of the return on investment in red tape reduction and the unsustainability of one of the key measures—individual consulting services to organisations.

The levy will effectively reduce indexation from 2.70% to 2.36%. The announcement of the levy in June after most organisations have sought board agreement to the 2015-16 operating budget is disrespectful and disruptive.

Slightly further down they did say that they thought the funds remaining from the 2012-15 levy should be used for completing agreed learning and development projects and scoping an industry development plan. It appears from this that ACTCOSS believe that from the levy that has already been collected there are remaining funds and they were certainly against and unknowing of the new imposition of the levy. As I already said, and as the community organisations said on Friday, the indexation which you said is above New South Wales, for example, is now effectively well below New South Wales. There is a bit of disconnect here between what the minister says ACTCOSS are supporting and what ACTCOSS themselves are saying on their own website.

Ms Howson: If I might come in there, first of all we do understand that the sector has not received this measure favourably. We have been very open and honest about that communication. I think I would certainly challenge the lack of empirical evidence of the benefits of the first program because that was a key element in informing—

MS LAWDER: I am sure you can have that discussion with ACTCOSS.

Ms Howson: Which we have. I just wanted to make it clear and on the record that we do have empirical evidence to demonstrate the quantification of the benefit to the non-government sector as a result of the application of the first levy.

In terms of benefits to the sector, in addition to what has been traditionally a more generous than any other jurisdiction application of indexation to the non-government sector, the ACT government has been very responsive to the changes to the equal remuneration arrangements for the non-government sector and has invested significant millions of dollars in supporting the sector through that—

MS LAWDER: Which is in a different line item, and has been for some time.

Ms Howson: Certainly, but the holistic view, I think, is the important one here. We do

accept that a number of the peak organisations in the sector were surprised by the announcement and have not received it favourably but we are willing to work with them in a very constructive fashion. I think the suggestion about commencing the next wave with an industry development plan is excellent and the outstanding elements of the first phase of the program will be delivered.

THE CHAIR: Just before we go to Dr Bourke, you have a supplementary, it would appear?

MS FITZHARRIS: In terms of empirical evidence, is there anything that you are able to table or take on notice to provide to the committee around it?

Ms Howson: I ask Ms Chapman to answer.

Ms Chapman: Yes, there is. The oversight group of the first 0.34 levy program of work was provided with a reconciliation of the levy and the things it was spent on. Robert has frequently talked about the way that the benefits have been calculated. That is clear. I think there is a one-pager that we could table.

What I would like to say about the issue is: first of all, we understand that the sector was not happy that such a thing would continue. One of the things, however, is that it is not that we give them money and then we take back the money. We determine the levy and we allocate the money out after the levy has been retained. Until the end of this year, part of that levy was to fund, in fact, Robert's salary to ensure that we could drive the savings.

We have undertaken to the sector that there would be no funds spent on public servants' salaries for the next two years and that all of the funds that we collect will go to the sector, as I am saying in shorthand, to implement the sector industry plan. That is a pool of money that quite rightly provides benefits to a range of people and a range of organisations who individually could never achieve some of those outcomes.

In terms of the funds that Ms Lawder talked about that ACTCOSS believe are still remaining, yes there are some funds that are unexpended. One will be the implementation of the electronic tool that Robert talked about, which is to actually reduce compliance costs for people. We will implement that. The licences have been purchased and that is ready to roll out.

The scoping for the industry plan will come out of those funds that are still available. There are two final learning and development modules. The first is the collaboration module which is actually being built into the tender that the NDIS is letting so that we can provide that collaboration module for all sector agencies, not just those with disability. That tender just closed and that will be rolled out very shortly. The second one, which is to do with government procurement rules and what to tender for, some kind of ideas for the boards' CEOs and the board chairman of agencies, is going to be rolled out in July. So we will finalise that. Then we will have the industry plan scoped and then on the basis of that industry plan there will be a determination of what are the things we need to focus on now to actually deliver what the industry plan is saying.

Although the sector may believe that it is unfair, the reality is that—

MS LAWDER: They are wrong?

Ms Chapman: The reality is that there is a lot of benefit that individual organisations by themselves would not achieve because they simply could not afford it. Small organisations would find it very difficult to hire a financial adviser worth \$23,000 to look at their structure, their governance, their accounting rules. Those packages actually help those organisations do that, exactly as the minister said, to ensure that they are sustainable into the future with all of the changes that are occurring.

Ms Berry: In fact that was the very conversation that I had with the Youth Coalition yesterday about one of the packages that they had accessed, about how they could turn around some of their operation and use some of their premises to actually bring some funds into their organisation, outside the ACT government's funding and grants. The Youth Coalition are a small, super organisation who do amazing stuff but they would not have been able, on the advice which they have received and which they are using, to change the way that they run the Youth Coalition to provide better outcomes for the people that they service.

THE CHAIR: Firstly you said that the one-pager—did you take that on notice?

Ms Chapman: I can take on notice the way that you made the assessment, Robert, yes?

Mr Gotts: Yes. I have got a detailed—

Ms Chapman: It is probably more than one page.

Ms Howson: We will provide the empirical evidence that I mentioned on notice.

THE CHAIR: And how much were the funds remaining?

Ms Chapman: Sorry, I do not have that in front of me but it is enough to cover what I have just described as what we are finalising. The scoping could be, I do not know, 60 grand or something.

THE CHAIR: Could we have a reconciliation of what was collected and then what was delivered for it as well?

Ms Chapman: We can take that on notice.

THE CHAIR: Dr Bourke, a quick question in this area before we move on to housing.

DR BOURKE: Minister, when we were talking with the Head of Service on Tuesday about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment in the ACT public service she said that she had set targets for particular directorates. I would like to know what the target for CSD is, please.

Ms Chapman: I think I am going with this. I am just looking at my notes in terms of what our target is. I think it is 3.2 but I am just looking.

Ms Howson: It is in the vicinity of three to five people each year over the next three years but we will get that for you before the end of this hearing.

Ms Chapman: I have got it in here somewhere.

DR BOURKE: So your current headcount is about 900 or something, is it?

Ms Chapman: The headcount FTE—if we take FTE as at 30 May for CSD which does include housing and community services—is 1,155.

DR BOURKE: And you would be able to tell me by the end of the day how many Indigenous employees you have, what your target is and what your growth rate is.

Ms Chapman: Yes, I will be able to tell you that if I can actually find it in my notes.

Ms Murray: Thank you for the question. In relation to our current headcount, we have 46 people who have identified as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander. Obviously, as you would be aware, that is a voluntary declaration and we are currently working at a percentage of around 3.6 or 3.7, which is over the current target of two per cent. Obviously we think that is great but there is still work to improve outcomes in terms of our support that we provide to staff whom we already have in place in the directorate. We are working to support the individuals that we have in terms of their career development, career planning, supporting them through mentoring programs and also working on how we can actually introduce additional Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and be seen as a more inclusive environment for a large group of people including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander potential employees. I hope that answers the question.

DR BOURKE: It does, thank you.

THE CHAIR: A quick final question from Ms Fitzharris and then we will move on to housing.

MS FITZHARRIS: Minister, I want to ask about the strengthening families program. Has the program seen any benefits yet in terms of the wraparound services that it provides? Have you any evidence coming through that program of how effective it has been?

Ms Berry: I will ask one of the officials to give some detail on that, if we have any yet.

Ms Howson: Ms Fitzharris, we have actually taken some time to engage our next suite of families in that program but already we are starting to see some very positive benefits as a result of that service model. I am just buying a little time for Mr Matthews to come to the table because I know he can tell you more specifically the impact that it has had.

Mr Matthews: Thank you, Ms Fitzharris, for your question. The budget recently continued the strengthening families initiative. That is built on two previous pilot

phases that we have worked through. The first was to design a different response for working with families based around a lead worker. The second was to take that to a smaller group and test it in terms of people's experience.

That piece of work was independently evaluated by the University of Canberra. What they found in that evaluation was a range of positive impacts for individual families, not the least of which was increased self-esteem and trust in the service delivery system. Much of the experience around very vulnerable families is negative in terms of their life stories and their ability to get their needs met from a whole raft of different service delivery. That just characterises the complexity and nature of their individual needs.

Since the budget initiative was continued in last year's budget, we have moved that further to engaging 27 families. There are currently another 17 families that are being engaged with to be brought into the program. Interestingly, those families are larger than the ones that we have been dealing with in the earlier stages. Thirty per cent of the families have between six and nine household members. Often they are actually single income headed households—single parents with larger families battling a range of different complexities.

What they are saying to us already is that the engagement around the lead worker model is a very positive way for them to break down and address the issues in their lives. They have been able to work with those lead workers to identify their short, medium and long-term priorities. The short-term problems are often very practical issues around getting their child into the right school, dealing with debt, their income support or their family access arrangements. They are the positive impacts that families are reporting to us in the early stages of this work.

What we are finding then more broadly is that as the families go through that engagement they are much more optimistic around being able to make longer term goals. They are starting to set goals around what they would like to do with their children, return to work, even goals like saving up to buy a family car. It really is at the very practical day-to-day level, as well as more of that, "What do I want to be and where do I want to go with my life?"

We have also trained 101 community workers in the lead worker approach. So what that is also doing is actually broadening out the capacity of the system more generally to work in this way. Strengthening families was never just designed as a boutique initiative for a small number of families, but really very much as a catalyst about how we could start to work with families with complexities in a different way, and we are finding that it is having that effect.

We will continue to monitor the outcomes for individuals. That will be included as part of the evaluation of the human services blueprint. What we are expecting to see is those ranges of different outcomes in terms of a material impact on people's lives but also just people's sense of control over their own circumstances and their trust in the service delivery system.

MS FITZHARRIS: Are the 101 community workers that have been trained in community sector organisations?

Mr Matthews: Government and community; that is one of the flexibilities of the model. Families often do not get to choose who they work with. Lead workers are about saying, “Who do I most trust? Who is best placed to work with me and address the issues in my life?” That could be a government worker or it could be a community worker. We are finding a good mix across the current families that are engaged. But the training is about making sure that people have that awareness and capability so that if they are working with families that would benefit from the program, they can easily bring those people into the program and also be supported in a professional development context, to be able to increase their practice.

MS FITZHARRIS: Is the lead worker role in addition to working specifically with the family about their specific needs? Is it to make everything behind the scenes invisible—finding all the right people in the various services to help the family?

Mr Matthews: A lead worker would be really adequately described as a guide, somebody to help people navigate the service delivery system and to walk alongside them, not to take control over their lives and tell them what to do, but to help them guide through the system. Those lead workers might also be providing support to those individual families. They could be somebody that is doing counselling with that family. There have been housing managers that have taken on lead worker roles and social workers in the hospitals. It is really people from a whole variety of different organisational contexts.

The lead worker role is about the system saying, “You are the person who is authorised to help this family navigate the system.” One of the most important elements of the model is that lead workers have an escalation process. If they get stuck anywhere in the service delivery system there are appointed executive contact members of the ACT public service, in Health, justice, education—all the portfolios. Those people are there to assist and to help break through any system barriers that those lead workers find.

THE CHAIR: We will finish output class 3.1 there, which has been fascinating. It has covered most of the day and it covers a multitude of areas. We will now move on to housing, because I know Mr Duggan in particular is keen to get to the table to give us some advice, aren't you, Mr Duggan? With that, given her interest, I will defer my question to Ms Lawder to start off on housing.

MS LAWDER: Minister, I can see that as at 1 June this year the number of people on the housing register waiting list was 2,318, including 104 on the priority housing waiting list. With respect to people moving out of Owen flats, for example, are people from Owen flats being moved into available properties before people on the waiting list? Or are the people trying to leave, or who are being moved on from Owen flats—just as one example—being added to the waiting list?

Ms Berry: Thanks for the question. Mr David Matthews will give you some detail on the waiting list and the question you have asked about the tenants and Owen flats in particular.

Mr Matthews: Thank you, Ms Lawder, for your question. Technically, we actually

have two waiting lists. We have a housing register and a transfer register. Essentially, people in current housing that will be relocated under the public housing renewal program will be on the transfer register. In terms of the actual priorities around allocation, our commitment is first and foremost to our current tenants, to relocate them under the public housing renewal commitment. The minister and the government have made that commitment very strongly and very publicly.

We will be negotiating with each of those individual tenants to find a suitable housing solution. That could be—in a lot of cases it will be the stock that is produced to replace our old multi-unit complexes. But it also could be our existing portfolio. It is about getting the right outcome for people and negotiating that with our individual tenants.

MS LAWDER: Just so I am clear, those people from Owen flats, as one example, would they appear on the priority transfer list, which is currently 335 average waiting time? I am just trying to understand exactly what you—

Mr Matthews: Ms Lawder, the answer to that question in short is no. They have a different status. They are a management-initiated transfer or an out-of-turn transfer. So they do not appear on that priority count.

MS LAWDER: For a person who has been on the waiting list for priority housing or on a priority transfer for a year, pretty much, if an available house comes up that is suitable for someone from Owen flats, for example, is it going to go to the person from Owen flats rather than someone on this waiting list? Is that correct?

Mr Matthews: That could happen, Ms Lawder. The way it works in practice is that as a property becomes available for allocation, the whole intent of the priority allocation system is to get the right match between the individual applicant and the individual property. When we look at an individual property we will certainly make an assessment about whether it is suitable for somebody relocating from Owen flats, in your example, or somebody on the waiting list. Essentially, we will make the offer on that basis, on suitability, and on the basis of what is the right outcome for each of those individuals. But in saying that, clearly we do have a commitment and a time frame in which we want to relocate our tenants. We will have to make sure that we do our best to meet that from the total available stock that we have.

MS LAWDER: I am glad you mentioned the time frame that you have in mind because that gives me an opportunity to ask you a supplementary question. People at Owen flats—we have talked about this in the Assembly—have been a little uncertain about the time in which they will be moved. I know some people have already been moved from Owen flats and a number of them are very happy with their new accommodation. I am not implying any criticism of their new accommodation. But we have had some conflicting signals. There is a letter that the Chief Minister wrote to one tenant on 17 March that says, “Late 2015 or the first half of 2016.” On 26 March in the Assembly Ms Berry was asked the question:

... what have you told the residents of Owen flats will be their relocation date into other Housing ACT dwellings?

At that time Ms Berry said:

There have been no dates because there are some issues with ...

Et cetera. I think there are a couple of other examples. However, when I attended a barbeque at Owen flats, I think on 13 March, I got a copy of a little newsletter. It is called "March 2015 newsletter". That newsletter says, "We are supporting tenants of Owen flats to move into their next homes between now and late 2015." Minister, can you understand how tenants are feeling quite disconcerted, disempowered and uncertain about the dates when they are supposed to be moving? We have had Mr Barr, we have had a newsletter, we have had you saying there is no date.

Ms Berry: Yes, as members of the committee would understand, building new residences does take some time. It is unfortunate that information has not been able to be clearer for the tenants at Owen flats. But we also want to make sure that we get the correct information out—

MS LAWDER: But which one of these is correct?

Ms Berry: so that people can be assured when new housing that is more suitable for their needs is built, that it is housing that meets their needs and that we can move them into those new housing developments as soon as they are built. It is unlikely that the new housing, which is part of the program for renewal of our public housing stock, will be completed until early 2016 at the earliest, I would say.

But the building industry is a fickle beast and depends on a lot of things. We do want to try and make sure that we get the correct information out to residents for them to make plans if they need to and so that we can assist them with their plans. I will ask Mr Matthews to give you some more details on time frames as well.

Mr Matthews: Thank you, minister. The published information is that the residents of Owen flats are due to be relocated in the 2015-16 financial year. That is on the public housing renewal website. As you mentioned earlier, Ms Lawder, people are being relocated on an as-needs basis. We have people already who are put on a transfer application or who have said to us that their preference is to move earlier; they might be thinking about enrolment of kids in terms of their caring responsibilities or their family responsibilities. So it does come down to individual circumstances. Throughout the whole discussion around the public housing renewal program, we are recognising that our tenants have very different needs and circumstances, and the program needs to be as flexible as possible to adjust to those. That certainly does bring with it some challenges around one-line communication points that you can make, for example, in media updates. So we have got a—

MS LAWDER: Are you the ones making the media updates?

Mr Matthews: What I am suggesting, Ms Lawder, is that—we are, of course, communicating through a variety of formats, including the media, but what I am also saying is that there is clarity about the timetable, which is the 2015-16 year, and we will continue to work with individuals. If some people need to go this current financial year, which they have, we will do that. As we go through the program, we

are going to find lots of different circumstances that we need to be flexible around.

MS LAWDER: I have one final question going back to my original question about the waiting list. Say there was a family who had a child with disability who had been waiting for two years on the waiting list for a house in their preferred area with disability access to become available and there was someone at Owen flats for whom disability access was also appropriate who might have said they were happy to go anywhere. If a house with disability access in Tuggeranong became available, who would get that house—the person who had been on the waiting list for years or the person from Owen flats?

Mr Matthews: Ms Lawder, the first thing I would say is that most of the people that are living in Owen flats are singles or couples, so they are a fairly small household. In terms of whether they would be eligible for a freestanding property or a flat, most of them are likely to be eligible for a smaller form of accommodation, which mostly will be a flat. In terms of what we are constructing under the public housing renewal program—

MS LAWDER: I am not talking about constructing; I am talking about if a house became available now.

Mr Matthews: What I was trying to get to, Ms Lawder, is suggesting that within the time frame that the minister has outlined—so the first three construction sites at Monash, Nicholls and Chisholm—that will all be accessible accommodation. In the time frame between now and the end of this current financial year, there will be almost 60 new accessible houses available.

MS LAWDER: But what if a house became available tomorrow?

Mr Matthews: I would just refer to my previous answer that we need to get the best match between the individual tenant and the available property. If there is a pressing reason why somebody would need to be allocated before the intended time frame, then of course we would have to be responsive to that. We do recognise that there is a lot of competing demand through the waiting list process. The process that you are describing is pretty much the whole process and responsibility we have around the management of a waiting list, which is to look at the needs of different applicants and to make the best possible allocation from whatever available properties we have got.

MS LAWDER: Thank you.

THE CHAIR: I have a supplementary; then Ms Fitzharris. With Monash, Nicholls and Chisholm, how many new units or places of accommodation are in each of those?

Mr Matthews: Mr Smyth, what is currently proposed is 14 at Nicholls, 20 at Chisholm and 25 at Monash.

THE CHAIR: And the addresses?

Mr Matthews: I do not have those to memory; we can provide those.

THE CHAIR: That is all right. And the—

Mr Matthews: Sorry, Mr Smyth; they have obviously been all subject to current development applications, so they are certainly in the public domain.

THE CHAIR: There was some concern that some of the units being constructed at the back of Chisholm might be included in that total. Is the Chisholm site new?

Mr Matthews: The Chisholm site is 20 two-bedroom units. That is what is proposed to be constructed on the Chisholm site.

THE CHAIR: To be constructed. It is not the site at the back of the Chisholm shops that is under construction?

Mr Matthews: No. Just to be clear, Mr Smyth, no; this is a new proposal.

THE CHAIR: Ms Fitzharris, a new question.

MS FITZHARRIS: Thank you. With the significant investment in the public housing renewal program, are you able to explain how the split between ministerial responsibilities with your portfolio and Housing and the Chief Minister's urban renewal portfolio works?

Ms Berry: Yes. It can be a bit confusing, and sometimes it is difficult for members of the Assembly to understand the different roles that the different directorates play during this urban renewal process. To make it clearer, if I can describe it, the Minister for Urban Renewal, Minister Barr, has responsibility for the delivery of public housing renewal program through EDD, Treasury, LDA and the Public Housing Renewal Taskforce. That includes the land development and planning approvals for new housing as part of the renewal program; the demolition and sale of properties that have been identified for the renewal; the construction of new dwellings based on the requirements identified by the Minister for Housing—these are the kinds of dwellings that Mr Matthews was describing earlier; tenant communication regarding the renewal program; budget bids for construction of replacement housing stock; and ensuring that the government meets the requirements of the ARI agreement and the affordable housing policy as well as land supply from assets other than Housing ACT properties.

Going to the Minister for Housing, which is me, I have the responsibility, through that delivery of public housing renewal, in areas including social housing policy; the identification of existing housing properties that could be suitable for inclusion in the renewal program; requirements identification for replacement properties; tenant management and communication regarding relocation to new homes; supporting the Public Housing Renewal Taskforce to engage with tenants in relation to the public housing renewal program; responsibilities as prescribed under the Housing Assistance Act; and overall management of the public housing portfolio, including repairs, maintenance and management of the ongoing spot replacement program, which are the housing properties that are not included in the broader renewal program.

Put simply, I am responsible for the tenants and the Minister for Urban Renewal is responsible for the build.

MS FITZHARRIS: Thank you. With the movement of tenants within the portfolio, obviously this is a very intensive period, but it has always gone on, I believe—that they have moved. What did you know about where tenants wanted to live and what sorts of properties they wanted to live in before this renewal program got underway, and what have you learnt since this intensive period started?

Ms Berry: There was a lot of work done when the Dickson flats were vacated and tenants were re-homed out of that. We learnt a lot about how we communicate with tenants and how we best meet their housing needs. We are using what we have learnt through that process and also through movement of tenants across the ACT, which happens as a matter of course. I might ask Mr Matthews if he can provide some more information on that.

Mr Matthews: Thank you, minister. My colleague Frank Duggan has been doing a lot of the on-ground work with tenants in these sites. Our experience with Dickson flats was that only a very small number of people wished to remain in close proximity to Dickson flats. I think it was three in total who wished to remain along Northbourne Avenue or in close proximity.

MS FITZHARRIS: Out of how many?

Mr Matthews: Out of 21. What we found in that example was that others were wanting to move into all different parts of the ACT. It was pretty much based on their family and friendship networks. People often wished to be closer to their friends or, if they were older, their family.

Our general feedback that we are getting at the moment is that there will be a real mix along Northbourne Avenue around where people want to go. Of course, there will be some people that want to remain living in the city and really value the amenity of the location of being in those inner suburbs. Others have suggested that the form of accommodation is much more important to them—getting newer accommodation, getting accommodation that is more flexible and adaptable, getting a two-bedroom dwelling so that they can have carers or family and friends come to visit. Those are the features that are more important to them. It is very much an individual decision. Location is one very critical element of that. We are expecting that there will be a variety of preferences and choices.

With our normal transfer waiting list, it is not uncommon, of course, for people to seek transfer to another part of the ACT. In fact, it is quite common, and it reflects all of our housing situations: at various points of our lives it makes sense to live in different locations. I think we would say that our public housing population is not much different today.

Mr Duggan: On a very individual basis, we are doing individual assessments of every tenant. We are looking at age, gender, ethnicity, issues around disability and connectedness with family, work services, transport, health services et cetera. We are trying to build up a comprehensive picture of what the individual needs are and then work on them individually. Each one of our tenants will have an individual coordinator of that service. We have got operational staff both from ourselves and

from a non-government agency. For example, today we interviewed 11 of our Owen flats residents about what their primary needs are, where their location is, what issues they would like us to consider. That is talking to a range of tenants who may also want to be co-located in the same geographical area because of built friendships. That is the process we are following.

MS FITZHARRIS: I know you have spoken a lot about how much you want tenants to be involved in this process. There was a task force set up, I think.

Ms Berry: The LINCT group.

MS FITZHARRIS: Is the LINCT group still operating?

Ms Berry: Yes. The LINCT group was set up in 2014. It was made up of government and community service organisations whose job is to provide advice to government and also to tenants they are supporting about the renewal program. Does anyone have a list of the people that are on that?

Mr Duggan: I do, minister. We have ACT Shelter; the Tenants Union; the Canberra Men's Centre; the Y; the Northside Community Service; ACTCOSS; the Youth Coalition; First Point; and Sunflower Health Services, which is a schizophrenic fellowship group. We meet regularly, on a four to six-weekly basis. We look at the policy and program directions; we look at communication terms; and we look at the whole of tenants' issues. Below that group is an operational group; they are doing the hands-on work with every individual tenant.

MS FITZHARRIS: So a lot of those organisations work with the tenants?

Mr Duggan: Yes. They usually have linkages with the tenants, and where an agency has got that linkage, they take the lead. Based on the model that David talked about earlier, with families, people do not want to tell their stories twice. They have got the relationship in that space. So a non-government agency could take the lead and we will co-work with them as a housing manager, because we have got our responsibilities in that space. That is how we are allocating the work.

MS FITZHARRIS: Okay.

THE CHAIR: The name of that group was the—

Mr Duggan: Linking into new communities task force.

MS FITZHARRIS: LINCT.

Mr Duggan: It is totally deliberate about what we are trying to achieve to ensure people move in the new opportunities and they are sustained in their new homes.

MS FITZHARRIS: Thank you. With the Dickson flats, when did the former residents of Dickson flats move?

Mr Matthews: It was at the end of last year. I think most tenants were re-located by

about September-October last year.

MS FITZHARRIS: Have you had a chance to follow up with them about how the process went and what they are finding in their new houses?

Mr Duggan: In the initial phase, we have a new service system through our normal tenancy services so that when you actually take up a new property through a transfer allocation, you get three individual visits. The feedback we have had from the housing managers is that they are very happy with their new accommodation and really settling into that very successfully.

MS FITZHARRIS: Thank you.

THE CHAIR: Dr Bourke, a new question.

Mr Matthews: Sorry, I have got block and section numbers for those dwellings if you would like them.

THE CHAIR: Knock yourself out.

Mr Matthews: Sorry, Dr Bourke. The Chisholm location is block 8 section 567, Hambidge Crescent and Goldstein Crescent. Nicholls is block 17 section 63, Kelleway Avenue. Monash is block 7 section 57, 196 Clive Steele Avenue.

THE CHAIR: Thank you. Dr Bourke.

DR BOURKE: What are the potential obstacles to continuing to implement the salt and pepper approach in public housing in the ACT?

Ms Berry: I guess one of the potential obstacles is the availability of land to build them on first of all. That would be one of the obstacles. But one of the other obstacles might be some push back from members of the community about whether or not they want public housing tenants to be part of their neighbourhood. We need to be mindful of and have regard for existing community members as well as our public housing tenants and make sure that we get the communication right with everybody to make sure that everybody can be involved as much as we can allow them to be and get them to be so that everybody can be part of this renewal program. It is a once in a lifetime renewal program and the salt and pepper approach has been successful.

DR BOURKE: Returning to that theme, with the implementation of that salt and pepper approach—you are talking about community resistance—what is the directorate doing to counter that resistance or manage it?

Ms Berry: As I was saying earlier, we do need to have regard for existing community members as we go through this renewal program and it is important that we get the communication right. We really do want all of our community to be able to welcome the disadvantaged people and vulnerable people in our community into their neighbourhoods with open arms. The communication that happens is really the responsibility of the urban renewal task force. However we, being responsible for public housing tenants, will want to make sure that they are involved in the

conversation as well.

The ACT has a proud history of salt and pepper. We have got public housing spread out all across our city and we know that when we have it spread out we have a lower level of high numbers of disadvantaged in one place. That is the sort of thing that makes our community stronger. That is the whole idea behind this salt and pepper program that the ACT government is continuing to progress with.

DR BOURKE: And what is your view of the role of registered community housing providers working with a social housing mix?

Ms Berry: I might get one of my officials to provide a bit more detail on the connection between the community housing providers and ACT government housing. They are a very important part of the whole fabric of our social housing approach here in the ACT and, in fact, they are playing an even more important role as we are moving through to the national disability insurance scheme and allowing people with a disability, for example, to select where their tenancy management should come from. Many of them that are making those decisions now are actually choosing our community housing providers. We see them as an important component of our overall fabric that Mr Matthews can talk specifically about.

Mr Matthews: The not-for-profit sector is very important both in terms of providing tenants with choice but also in increasing the overall availability of housing supply. What we recognise from a policy perspective is that we need to have a range of different housing options for different individuals based on their needs and income. The way that the government has supported that is by making available 610 ACT government properties as well the provision of community housing. We already use a significant number of our dwellings for the provision of community housing.

In addition, there are a range of different initiatives, whether it be support for CHT affordable housing under the affordable housing action plan which is supporting them to produce 500 more affordable units or whether it be support that we have provided under the nation-building and jobs plan where, for example, we have supported the Salvation Army to develop 24 developments, we have supported St Margaret's Uniting Church in Hackett to do six dwellings and we have provided 53 dwellings for Argyle Community Housing. There are a range of different measures that are in place to support a variety of provisions.

Just to confirm that number that I mentioned, the report on government services shows that there are 610 community housing dwellings in the ACT as of 30 June 2014. What we are seeing, though, as the role of our registrar of community housing providers continues to mature, is that there is, in fact, an increasing supply. And that is reported in our output statements.

DR BOURKE: Are there any plans to pursue further partnerships with private sector or philanthropic sources to develop additional social or supported housing such as the Common Ground project?

Ms Berry: I think Common Ground will open very soon and be fully tenanted, both the social housing side of Common Ground and the community housing side. I think

that project alone is an exciting project for the ACT. It is the first Common Ground in the ACT. Of course, there have been Common Grounds across the country but this is the first one for the ACT. And I tell you what: it has been amazing to see how it has been embraced by the community of Gungahlin, and the support that they are providing for tenants when they arrive is quite remarkable. We would like to see how that housing program progresses once it is fully tenanted.

Absolute accolades and acknowledgement need to go to Liz Dawson for her work in steadfastly and at every opportunity and in every moment lobbying anyone who had any possible influence to be able to bring that program to the ACT. We thank her for it. The housing is 40 purpose-built units—20 units for chronically homeless people and 20 for affordable renters. When I went out and visited during the open day—I think Ms Fitzharris was out there as well—hundreds of people went through and were just so excited, I think, about what the program was going to be able to deliver.

We have also entered into a partnership with Project Independence which has been set up by Glen Keys, basically based on his experience with his own son and with his own family being able to maintain the tenancy on his home—a young man who has a mild disability but who would probably not be able to maintain a tenancy on his own unless proper housing was developed for him. There are two of those projects, one in Latham and one in Harrison. The number of tenants in those buildings is about eight?

Ms Howson: Six to eight.

Ms Berry: There are six to eight tenants in each of those developments. I have been keeping an eye on the one at Latham when I go to my son's soccer matches. But that will be a really wonderful and different housing project that again has been embraced by the local community and provides opportunities for people who would not ordinarily be able to have a chance at having a house or a tenancy or a unit of their own. Yes, if there are any businesses or philanthropic organisations that wanted to fund housing or different types of housing like Project Independence, absolutely we would support that.

DR BOURKE: So there is nothing else in the pipeline at the moment?

Ms Berry: Anything in the pipeline? Anything?

Ms Howson: If I might add, there are a couple that are already being worked through with non-profit organisations. I have not got their permission to talk about who they are but most certainly with regard to anyone that is coming to talk to us with a good idea, particularly if they also have some funding that they can bring to the project, we are very open-minded. We are looking for innovation and we are looking for different ways of being able to meet the housing needs of ACT residents.

Ms Berry: I just want to let members know that the official launch of Common Ground is scheduled for 3 July and it is anticipated that there will be quite a number of people who will attend, including the federal Minister for Social Services who has been invited to co-launch the event. And you will all, of course, be invited to attend.

DR BOURKE: This social and supported housing tends to be more of a niche or

segmented proportion of your social housing market. I am glad to hear that you are getting further interest happening there. That means that there is actually a proactive approach on your part seeking new partners.

Ms Howson: That is correct, and we also are particularly putting that effort through the housing needs for people with a disability. That is where our key focus is at the moment in the context of the national disability insurance scheme.

THE CHAIR: A new question, Ms Lawder.

MS LAWDER: I just want to talk a little about homelessness, which may surprise you—maybe not. The First Point data for March—there may have been some more recent ones but I have not seen them—show there were 705 people waiting for homelessness accommodation. During March only six per cent of people waiting for accommodation were placed in homelessness accommodation. Given what we have just heard in a previous answer about the waiting list and people in properties up and down the Northbourne Avenue corridor needing to be relocated even though new housing has not yet been built, do you have any projection—I have not seen anything in your targets really—that homelessness demand for services, especially accommodation, is going to increase?

Ms Berry: I have said this a number of times in the Assembly: nobody who is part of the housing renewal program will be made homeless. However, homelessness continues to be a very important issue for the ACT government to address as well as for governments across the country. It is a very complicated and complex issue. There are a number of causes that result in people becoming homeless. In the ACT we are very fortunate to have the most amazing support services that provide excellent support to people who are experiencing homelessness or are seeking accommodation for themselves and/or their family if that is the case.

MS LAWDER: It was not quite my question. Mr Matthews and I have had this discussion a few times before. Given that only six per cent of people got accommodation, for example, during March—I take your point that no-one from that corridor will be made homeless—what I am concerned about is—

Ms Berry: It is not just the corridor. It is the whole program.

MS LAWDER: the people who are already on the list who are already waiting.

Ms Berry: Let me be clear: it is not just the corridor; it is the whole program—not just the people in the corridor but other housing dwellings that are part of the renewal program. Those people are part of the—

MS LAWDER: But there are 705 people as at March waiting.

MS BERRY: I will ask Mr Matthews to provide some more detail for the committee.

Mr Matthews: Indeed, when it comes to homelessness data, Ms Lawder and I both take a strong interest in it. With the First Point data that you mentioned, First Point has a system where they categorise need into A, B, C and D levels of priority need.

The number you raise is for all of those groups. Not all of those people require accommodation; some of those people require support or referral to other service providers.

MS LAWDER: Even if you take priority A, only 58 per cent of those, according to this data, got accommodation during March. The number was 25, which was 58 per cent of priority A. That means 42 per cent of people in priority A did not get accommodation.

Mr Matthews: You are right, Ms Lawder, in terms of that reporting period. The reason why those people remain on that list is so that First Point follows up with them until they are housed or until they no longer require accommodation. People's experiences with homelessness are very diverse, as you know. Some people's experience of homelessness is a one-off crisis. So that need can emerge and it can dissipate, and that person's circumstances can change quite rapidly, even on a day-to-day or a week-to-week basis, let alone over time. The whole purpose of the First Point categorisation is to make sure that at any one point in time we have an understanding of what people's needs are.

The ACT is very bold in this respect. No other jurisdiction does it in this kind of way and is as transparent about the range of different needs that are presenting at our service delivery system. Not only do we collect the data but it is very openly used by the sector and the government to understand need and to plan service delivery responses. So I think we have a very good and contemporary understanding of those changing circumstances and needs.

Over the period of time that First Point has operated, 777 people have been placed into accommodation. Many more people have been placed into other non-accommodation support. Many more people still will receive one-off brokerage to stay in hotels or to deal with bills that might, for example, prevent their eviction from taking place. So there are a whole lot of different responses to people's presenting needs. Often, if there is not an available bed, that is when the system is very flexible about kicking in another response that can address the problem from a different angle.

MS LAWDER: Thank you, Mr Matthews. I absolutely appreciate your knowledge of the subject. I will return to my point that the numbers appear to be growing. An article in the *Canberra Times* of 28 January stated that the Productivity Commission's report on government services found:

The number of potential tenants waiting for public housing in Canberra has increased by about 900 in the past four years ...

My concern is that that number is going to continue to increase because, as public housing properties become vacant, those from the corridor may be placed into those. People already on the list and others around Canberra who may be struggling will increasingly miss out. That is my concern. My original question was: do you think that that upwards trend, which I find very alarming, will continue?

Mr Matthews: Ms Lawder, I will answer that in part firstly by talking about the fact that the government's commitment under public housing renewal is for no net loss of

accommodation. So 1,288 units will be removed during the renewal program and 1,288 will be replaced. That, over time, will be neutral to the waiting list. What it will do is improve the form of that housing and its accessibility and adaptability to a range of different people.

During the course of the program there will be some temporary fluctuations in the waiting list as people are relocated and as we move people into their new accommodation. That, for some people, might mean a quicker allocation. For example, if you are on a waiting list in Chisholm—the example that was used before—and that is the most suitable location for you and you require accessible, adaptable accommodation, those people may indeed get accommodation sooner than they would have otherwise if the public housing renewal program did not exist. You are right; that also might cause some delays to some individuals as well, as we work through that process for individuals.

This is not an exact science—building 1,288 properties and moving those people into those properties. That would be an incorrect way of running this program and would result in adverse outcomes for individuals. We will have to balance all of those requirements. But the positive commitment from the government is that they will replace all of those units and also, importantly, that they will be built in advance of the need to relocate tenants. The order of the program is that funding is provided to build or acquire new stock before people are relocated. That will certainly minimise the impact on the waiting list.

MS LAWDER: With respect to the First Point data—the bit that I read from, the six per cent, which was 27 vulnerable families or individuals—that is less than the 12-month average of 36 placements per month. You possibly have more recent data than I do for April—May, perhaps. What has been the number of placements in those months? Has it been about the same, less or more than the 12-month average?

Mr Matthews: The number of people, adults and children, placed into homelessness accommodation was 43 in March, 57 in April and 44 in May. You can see there is some variation there but it is within a similar bandwidth.

MS LAWDER: In percentage terms has that been more, less or about the same as the 12-month average?

Mr Matthews: In terms of priority A category individuals and families, it was 56 per cent in March, 45 per cent in April and 60 per cent in May.

MS LAWDER: Thank you very much.

THE CHAIR: It is my turn for a new question, so I will cede to the shadow minister for housing, then we will go to Ms Fitzharris.

MS LAWDER: Can I ask a few questions about Spotless?

Ms Berry: Yes.

MS LAWDER: Can you tell me some of the key performance indicators that are used

to assess Spotless's performance?

Mr Duggan: There are a number of key performance indicators for Spotless. Some would be the vacant property returns, their call centre management, the management of complaints and budget management. They would be four of the particular KPIs that we operate with Spotless. We also have KPIs for repairs. There are urgent repairs, priority repairs and normal repairs. We monitor those as well.

MS LAWDER: Does Spotless hold a master key for each Housing ACT property?

Mr Matthews: No.

MS LAWDER: Who has a master key for the properties?

Mr Matthews: There is not something that you would characterise as a master key for all public housing properties. We have a way of managing our vacant properties through a key lock system. To describe the way that that would have to work, once a property becomes vacant, it no longer is tenanted, it comes under the control of Housing ACT, and we then refer it on to Spotless to undertake any works that need to be done during the vacant cycle. They return the property back to us for allocation when that is completed. During that period of time the property is in the control of Spotless and they manage that through changing the locks.

MS LAWDER: Would Spotless or Housing ACT maintain a key register, copies of keys? Are you able to take it to your local key cutter and get a copy made?

Mr Matthews: It is a unique locking system—the one that you are referring to, Ms Lawder, in terms of the vacant management process—and that system is unable to be copied through a local locksmith, for example.

MS LAWDER: Do Spotless, as the maintenance provider, have a tool that removes the barrel and then they replace the lock? Is that how it works?

Mr Matthews: The system that you are referring to, Ms Lawder, is an old system. That is how it in fact functions. When I described it as a locking system rather than a key, it is a way of changing access to the lock.

MS LAWDER: That is no longer used; is that correct?

Mr Matthews: That is correct.

MS LAWDER: Is there still a central access point staffed by a Spotless customer service operator?

Mr Duggan: Yes.

MS LAWDER: Is that at Nature Conservation House in Belconnen?

Mr Duggan: Yes, that is correct.

MS LAWDER: Do client satisfaction surveys happen every year—satisfaction with Spotless?

Mr Matthews: There is an annual client satisfaction survey which is done for Housing ACT as a whole. That includes people's thoughts on the condition of their property as well as the maintenance services they have received. In addition to that, as part of Spotless's operations, they seek feedback through the call centre and after works have been completed. So there are multiple points at which feedback is sought on tenant satisfaction with pieces of work, with Spotless as a provider or, indeed, more broadly with the condition of their property.

THE CHAIR: I understand Dr Bourke has a supplementary to this.

DR BOURKE: Thank you, chair.

THE CHAIR: Then Ms Lawder can finish and we will go to Ms Fitzharris.

DR BOURKE: In the contract with Spotless, is there something in there about employment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, and could you elaborate on that for me, please?

Ms Berry: Yes. I will ask Mr Duggan to provide some details about the supported workers as part of the Spotless contract—Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment.

Mr Duggan: There is a component which contains a cohort and a KPI around employment options for people from vulnerable groups. Spotless employ 13 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. They have 28 tenants that they employ. They have 33 people with a disability, almost 100 young people and about 44 apprentices. I think their total is 218. We set them a target of 105, so they have absolutely exceeded their target in that space.

DR BOURKE: Thank you.

THE CHAIR: Have you finished, Ms Lawder, on that question?

MS LAWDER: Yes, thank you.

THE CHAIR: Ms Fitzharris, a new question.

MS FITZHARRIS: I want to ask about the national partnership agreement on homelessness. I believe the commonwealth have agreed to fund it for just one more year, the 2015-16 year?

Mr Matthews: Two years, Ms Fitzharris.

MS FITZHARRIS: Are there any changes to the nature of the partnership?

Ms Berry: I understand it is a new agreement, so it is not an extension of the existing agreement. The ACT will receive about \$1.5 million for two years from the

commonwealth, which is matched by the ACT government, and that is in this budget. This is in addition to the \$17.5 million provided by the ACT government each year for homelessness services. We are still in the process of working on the actual agreement, but the focus of the agreement is on women and children experiencing domestic violence and young people under the age of 18.

Mr Matthews: If the committee is interested, I can quickly update that. As the minister has identified, the commonwealth are presenting it as a new funding agreement, even though, in a sense, it is a continuation of previous funding offers. That means we have the opportunity to have a new form of agreement. That has been the subject of negotiations between the commonwealth and states and territories over the past couple of weeks. We have certainly participated in that. Those changes are about reflecting those priorities of the new minister, Minister Morrison, and his desire to have 25 per cent of funding under that agreement identified in those two priority areas. That is certainly not inconsistent at all with the ACT government's priorities. Young people and people experiencing family and domestic violence are critical priorities in the homelessness area, so we will certainly have no problem meeting that requirement from the commonwealth. It is a matter of simply finalising the details with them.

I should also point out for the committee that it will allow us to continue funding for current NPAH-funded services. That is one of the pieces of negotiation we have taken into those discussions with the commonwealth. We are very satisfied with the suite of services that are operating under the NPAH. They represent some really great innovation. We were pleased that the commonwealth government agreed to a two-year extension after a couple of one-year extensions. This gives us some funding certainty. We would expect that agreement to be finalised by officials in the next few days, leading, of course, to 30 June, and then the funding offer will be issued by the Prime Minister to other first ministers.

MS FITZHARRIS: So you have no idea at this stage what it looks like beyond the two years?

Mr Matthews: Not at this stage. Obviously the commonwealth has referred publicly to the work on the federation reform, in particular housing and homelessness as a part of that, and the taxation review. The future of funding in those areas is linked to those broader macro policy developments.

MS FITZHARRIS: The commonwealth had earlier done a paper on the specific housing side of that. Are you able to give us an update on where that is at—or is that stalling and allowing the federation and tax reform to go first?

Mr Matthews: The commonwealth have issued a paper on housing issues. That was a welcome contribution to the policy discussion around housing issues. A number of local stakeholders participated in consultations around that. The ACT government, of course, had the opportunity to contribute to that as well. There is work at an officials level leading to the leaders retreat that is due to take place in July where there is expected to be a focus on a range of issues around federation reform; tax reform issues and housing are in that basket of issues.

THE CHAIR: Dr Bourke.

DR BOURKE: Thank you, chair. Indicator j on page 33, if I understand it correctly, is saying that tenants who have problems with an amount outstanding equal to or more than \$500 and are four or more weeks in arrears have a payment agreement made, and the target for 2014 was 90 per cent but the estimated outcome is only 80 per cent, which is less than what you desired. You attribute that to a softening in the ACT economy. Taking into account these current economic conditions, do you think this is problematic or abnormal—or is it to be expected and something we can see across the country?

Ms Howson: I will just answer initially. These issues are very intricately linked to the national economic position as well as the local economic position. One of the key indicators that comes from economic health, I suspect, is the experience of housing stress. That flows through, of course, into the capacity of tenants in the social housing system to meet their obligations in order to pay the rent they owe. It is not unusual that we see these sorts of fluctuations in concert with the economic conditions that are applying both locally and nationally at any point in time.

I would like Mr Matthews to talk about how we respond to those circumstances to support the most vulnerable members of this community and how we support them to stay in housing through that process.

Mr Matthews: Thank you, Ms Howson. I make reference to the indicator below, k, which is the percentage of rent received. That shows that we collect 99 per cent of available rent, so our performance in that regard is very strong.

Notwithstanding that, of course, there are people who face some significant financial difficulties. The purpose of indicator j is putting the onus on us as an organisation to engage with our tenants. The indicator is very much designed to say that once people have reached a threshold, having engaged with them and reached an agreement with them about repaying it, it is not to anybody's benefit for them to be in debt. It is not to housing's benefit and it is not to the benefit of individuals to have that debt weighing over the top of them. We get in as early as possible and work with people to reduce that debt by getting a reasonable repayment agreement—that could be \$10 or \$20 a fortnight in addition to the rent—to start to chip away at that debt, which can be a significant form of stress for people.

This is a good indicator for us. It is a stretch indicator. The indicator is not completely within our control. Obviously our tenants have to enter into an agreement. The only agreements that are counted in this indicator are when a tenant agrees. Engagement can be difficult in some cases, and some tenants can put their heads in the sand because they get overwhelmed by their financial circumstances. But still this indicator puts the onus back on us to continue to engage and to continue to get as many people into those agreements as possible.

DR BOURKE: Is this change an indicator of increasing numbers of people in this category or the increasing difficulty of their circumstances?

Mr Matthews: I think on the whole my opinion on that, Dr Bourke, having been in

housing over a decade, on and off, is that the debt issues are cyclical. They are linked to the economy, but they are very long term issues around poverty and disadvantage for individuals in the community. Often people do not pay their public housing rent and meet other debts they have, and that is the way they manage their finances. The situation changes from time to time, but essentially the underlying drivers are still there. We are housing the poorest people in the ACT. They often are single-headed households or on fixed statutory incomes and they have a lot of financial pressures. That is the picture. As we continue to target those highest in need, that issue becomes more challenging and more acute for us. Again, that means we have to work with our tenants. If they are able to pay their rent, it gives them the stability of accommodation and the ability to have that base to live their lives and to not have that further issue hanging over their heads. That is our message simply for tenants: “Pay your rent, as much as you can; come and talk to us early if you are get in difficulties; if you are in debt, do what you can to start to chip away at that and make sure your tenancy is sustainable.”

DR BOURKE: The indicator is not really so much an indicator of people in debt but an indicator of people who are in debt who have not actually organised an agreement with you. Is there something more you would be able to do to increase the number of people who do not have agreements to have agreements?

Ms Howson: We have moved to a new tenancy model. We are calling it modernising tenancies. This model allows us to, if I might use the term, assess the complexity and need of the full range of our tenant population and allocate more support resources to the people who are struggling the most. Mr Duggan is the architect of that tenancy model; I am sure he will be happy to spell that out a little more thoroughly.

Mr Duggan: Specifically in the area of debt, from the research we undertook we realised the most succinct thing to do was engage people at the commencement of their tenancy. For the first six months of tenancy allocation between July and December last year, we had 98 per cent of our new tenants signed on to centre pay. This is a significant change because it allowed them to do a direct debit right through. We also have the modernising tenancy services where now we engage people on three visits in a 90-day period. Our previous model was once every 90 days and then in the year. During that 90-day period with the three visits, we really work with people to make sure any services they need are linked in. As we identify issues as we have assessed people for housing, we wrap around as many as services that are needed through a coordinated approach. That, hopefully, will sustain the tenancy more strongly.

When people in this area get into debt, we also have a team of intensive workers. So if they are in debt, they work with them fairly consistently and do additional visits in that space. Our debt in this space, the confinement of the debt, is about 1,000 people and less than \$1,000 worth of debt, so it is a low number, in that sense, of debt. But that is a massive issue, as David and others have said, against your income. So we started up repayment plans, working with people. We have Care financial services and a range of other services that we get people engaged with so they can do some budget planning. We try to work alongside them to maintain their tenancies.

MS BERRY: That is one of the things that Housing ACT has been doing really well.

It is being more than just a landlord; it is making sure that when our tenants are experiencing some difficulties, we can put them in touch with some of the different support services they might need, particularly when they have some debt issues in their lives, but also with agencies like mental health, Care Financial Counselling Service, the Public Trustee, the welfare rights and legal centre, the sustaining tenancies team and any other community support agencies that might be out there that can provide support or assistance to public housing tenants who are at a bit of a time when they need some more support than they would normally need.

Mr Matthews: Just for the committee's benefit, 86 per cent of tenants are not in debt. It is 14 per cent who are in some form of debt. That represents about 1,400 accounts in total. Again, notwithstanding the fact that they are low income households, still the vast majority of people are not in debt.

DR BOURKE: Those wraparound services you are providing in public housing to maintain people in a home—is that a bit different from what happens in community housing organisations?

Mr Matthews: No. Community housing do similar service delivery to public housing these days. I think the distinction between public housing and community housing in terms of service delivery is not as great as it once was. Certainly public housing service delivery, as the minister said, has evolved very significantly—about looking at people, understanding the circumstances in their lives and not just being a landlord. We certainly do not regard ourselves as just being our tenants' landlords; we are there to support them and to refer them to support. Similar things do happen in the community housing sector. In fact, we work very closely with the community housing sector and the homelessness sector in the way we do our services, to make sure that where they can support us they will, and where we can support their service delivery we will. For example, Dr Bourke, we can make available our training to people in the community housing sector and the homelessness sector where that is appropriate. Wherever possible, we share skills and we share resources.

DR BOURKE: Do you charge for that?

Mr Matthews: We would not be charging for that, no.

Mr Duggan: Additionally, Dr Bourke, we sponsored four of our non-government colleagues to undertake the certificate IV in social housing this year. We have a joint training program in that area; that was well received by the sector.

THE CHAIR: Ms Fitzharris has a supplementary.

MS FITZHARRIS: Thank you. With your tenancy managers, do they visit each public housing tenant the same number of times every year or is there a tiered or targeted approach?

Mr Duggan: There is. We differentiate our approach in this area. We used to visit once a year. Now we have changed our whole tenancy service to target those most in need. In a particular area, when people came into public housing, we realised that was a period of instability. They have got the house, but they may have needed more

support. So we maximised three visits in that area. Where they are self-sustaining their tenancy, we visit them once a year. We are looking at actually extending that to longer periods, because people self-manage exceptionally well. The majority of our tenants do. Where we have had tenants who are more vulnerable or have issues that we need to deal with, we have got an intensive team and we maximise our visits in that area. That is dealing with issues like mental health issues, or squalor or debt; we can maximise our input and really develop them and specialise with them to help them to meet their needs.

Mr Matthews: We undertake over 11,000 visits a year, so that is a lot of work. It is a lot of visits and a lot of contact with our tenants.

THE CHAIR: Ms Lawder has about 37 seconds for a question.

MS LAWDER: The question is quick; I do not know about the answer. Mr Rattenbury, when he was minister, spoke about an audit to be undertaken by Spotless of disability features of homes. I think he said it was a five-year program. Can you give a quick update on that audit process and also how much the contract is worth and the payment structure for that contract?

Mr Matthews: Briefly, Ms Lawder, that is an ongoing audit program now. The way it works is that essentially, as part of the key performance indicator framework you mentioned earlier, Spotless have a set target about the number of condition audits they need to take every month. That is how we guarantee or have a program to be able to get all of our properties audited. We will continue to audit our properties on an ongoing basis so we can do our asset management role. Essentially, it is built into the core service delivery that Spotless provide. Minister Rattenbury's previous comments were correct; we are expected to get through that first cycle of property audits within five years.

MS LAWDER: So every time a Spotless contractor goes to a house, they check what is there?

Mr Duggan: They do a condition audit on each calendar month and they report on that.

THE CHAIR: We will leave it there. Thank you to Minister Berry, Minister Gentleman and staff for appearing today. We will return tomorrow at 9.30 with the Chief Minister in his role as Minister for Economic Development.

As is my wont, I will give an award of the day. The award today goes to Mr Doszpot and Mr Gentleman for their Statler and Waldorf impersonation: in a discussion on the pop-up, Mr Gentleman goes, "I'm over 50." Mr Doszpot had set him off by saying the Chief Minister scared him off from going there because he was over 50. You can work out which one is Statler and which one is Waldorf.

The committee adjourned at 5.31 pm.