



**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY**

**SELECT COMMITTEE ON ESTIMATES 2016-2017**

(Reference: [Appropriation Bill 2016-2017 and Appropriation \(Office of the Legislative Assembly\) Bill 2016-2017](#))

**Members:**

**MR B SMYTH (Chair)**  
**MR J HINDER (Deputy Chair)**  
**MS J BURCH**  
**MR S DOSZPOT**

**TRANSCRIPT OF EVIDENCE**

**CANBERRA**

**FRIDAY, 24 JUNE 2016**

**Secretary to the committee:**  
**Ms K Harkins (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.....599, 664**

## **Privilege statement**

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*Amended 20 May 2013*

## **The committee met at 9.30 am.**

### Appearances:

Bourke, Dr Chris, Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, Minister for Children and Young People, Minister for Disability, Minister for Small Business and the Arts and Minister for Veterans and Seniors

### Community Services Directorate

Howson, Ms Natalie, Director-General

Matthews, Mr David, Deputy Director-General

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

Hubbard, Mr Ian, Chief Financial Officer, Finance and Budget

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

Baumgart, Mr Richard, Executive Director, Disability ACT

Gehrig, Ms Therese, Director, NDIS Taskforce

Jordaan, Ms Elise, Senior Manager, Child Development Service

Moore, Mrs Nicole, Director, Community Participation Group

Gilding, Ms Louise, Executive Director, Housing and Community Services

Hyland, Mr Bob, Financial Controller, Housing and Community Services

Gibson, Ms Sally, Senior Manager, Human Services Registrar

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

**THE CHAIR:** Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. Welcome to this the sixth day of the public hearings of the Select Committee on Estimates 2016-2017. We are all looking forward to lunchtime, because that signifies halfway.

Let us start by acknowledging that we meet on the lands of the Ngunnawal; we respect their connection to the land and their continuing traditions that we honour by acknowledging them.

The proceedings today will examine the expenditure proposals and revenue estimate for the Community Services Directorate and ACT Housing in budget statement G. Proceedings today are being recorded and transcribed by Hansard and will be published by the committee. Proceedings are being broadcast as well as being webstreamed. To assist the secretariat, if you take a question on notice it would be useful if you would use words like, "I will take that question on notice." That allows us to track it in the transcript.

Before you on the table, and for those who come to the table, is the pink privilege statement. Could you please confirm for the committee that you have read the statement and that you understand the implications of privilege.

**Dr Bourke:** Yes.

**Ms Howson:** Yes.

**THE CHAIR:** So acknowledged. Thank you very much. Minister, would you like to make an opening statement?

**Dr Bourke:** Yes, I will start with an opening statement, if I may, for this particular portfolio area of children and young people. I thank the committee for the opportunity to make some opening remarks.

For children and young people, the government is strategically focused on early intervention and prevention services to divert escalation to statutory services. The directorate is continuing to deliver on reform work underway, including the transition to services under a step up for our kids, consolidation of the integrated management system and the development of a new client management system for Children and Youth Protection Services.

The government will continue to provide support for children in out of home care by increasing resources to provide appropriate child-centred options for children in care through an additional \$800,000 in this budget. The directorate will also commence development and implementation on a number of new projects and services as part of the investment in the safer families agenda. This includes \$2.578 million over four years for the establishment of a Child and Youth Protection Services case analysis team to provide real-time feedback on the quality of service and decisions to improve and to strengthen decision-making and accountability. We are also providing \$425,000 for a quality assurance and improvement committee which will be established by the director-general to provide arms-length quality assurance and compliance of statutory services. I am ready to take questions, chair.

**THE CHAIR:** Thank you, minister, and welcome. I have some general questions across the entire directorate. From page 3 of budget statement G, could you give us a rundown of the declining staff numbers, being well aware of transition arrangements to NDIS?

**Dr Bourke:** As you have already alluded to in your question, it is indeed the transition to the NDIS which requires us to move people who were formerly provided with care through Therapy ACT and Disability ACT onto the NDIS approved plans, and that requires a change and transition in staff number. There has been a faster than anticipated shift, particularly in group homes, but I shall get directorate officials to provide you with some more details.

**THE CHAIR:** Before you start, appreciating that the bulk of this is in disability and therapy services, are there any changes in the number in output class 2 and output class 3, if that could be included?

**Ms Howson:** Not materially. It is primarily around the transition arrangements that are impacting on Disability ACT and Therapy ACT.

**THE CHAIR:** Have there been any forced redundancies?

**Ms Howson:** No.

**THE CHAIR:** Where are the bulk of the staff going who leave the service?

**Ms Howson:** Again, this particular answer is more relevant to the Disability and Therapy ACT output class, but we have quite a number of staff who have transitioned into the non-government sector. A number, because of their age profile, have taken the opportunity to retire. And another group are being redeployed into other parts of the ACT government.

**Dr Bourke:** A particularly interesting element of the transition to the NDIS is the growth of small business in this area as people who were formerly employed by Disability ACT or Therapy ACT take this opportunity to establish their own businesses and provide services to a variety of clients either in single-person businesses or in conglomerates or large organisations.

**THE CHAIR:** So there are no changes in the staffing for output class 3?

**Ms Howson:** No. In fact, I think there is an increase, as a result of some of the additional work that we will be doing around the family violence response.

**THE CHAIR:** Let us go to that then. On page 10, the output class, why is there a reduction in controlled recurrent payments, particularly if there is an increase in staff because of the family violence initiative?

**Dr Bourke:** I think that is due to an issue around depreciation. I will get Mr Hubbard to provide us with some more detail.

**Mr Hubbard:** Just because of the movement, if you are happy, I will—

**Dr Bourke:** Okay; let us table that chart if we could.

**Ms Howson:** If we may, chair. We have anticipated this question, and it is quite complex in terms of movements around the output classes, so we thought we would try to illustrate that more clearly.

**THE CHAIR:** Thank you.

**Mr Hubbard:** What we have tried to do here is show you how we have actually moved the outputs around. We are going through a three-year transition into the NDIS, and there are significant changes that have been wrought by that transition. We are heading into the third year of that transition, and I am sure that when we get to that output the people who basically are in charge of that will give us some pretty good details.

On the whole, what we have done is this. If you look at the pink area in 2015-16, how the table is working is as follows. That is output 4 from last year, basically the care and protection output. As you can see there, what we have tried to do is also give you a snapshot of the FTE that is there and the amount of controlled recurrent that is there. Then, to show you that for this year's budget papers, we have moved output 4 into output 3. How we have done that is that we have also set up an output 2; I think when we get to that Maureen Sheehan will be able to give you the details of what we have tried to construct there. We have brought together the community participation output,

which is output 3, and moved that into output 2.

To help with the explanation, I have tried to colour-code the movement. As you can see, that community participation group has gone from output 3 into output 2. The early intervention output, which was output 2 last year, remains in output 2. And there is a little green line, which is the Child Development Service, which we have moved out of output 1, because that is heavily related to Therapy ACT. As Therapy ACT exits service, the Child Development Service moves into there.

I have also tried to put the FTE across the top just to show you what the FTE is in each output and then give you a total of the FTE on the right. The total FTE in those outputs has dropped from 757 down to 587, but when you include the corporate services that delivered, if you look at it, we had 90.5 FTE in 2015-16. With the transition out of service, we are also dropping certain corporate services to better fit the entity that we are going to move to—not completely in 2016-17, but more likely in 2017-18. We are really trying hard to make sure we have got the appropriate mix, both corporate services to deliver to the front line and also the right front-line services.

You will see throughout all of the financials that there are some really big movements, depending on whether we are talking about money going to the commonwealth as our payment to the NDIS program—and also some pretty big movements in funding related to providing voluntary redundancy payments to staff as they choose to exit during that procedure.

I think that when we get to the disability output itself, we have a lot of detail and a lot of planning that went into how we have managed that transition.

**THE CHAIR:** Sure.

**Mr Hubbard:** I hope this makes it easier for you.

**THE CHAIR:** That is all right.

**Mr Hubbard:** But it is really quite complex.

**THE CHAIR:** In table 9, output class 3.1, the gap in the 2015-16 year is \$3 million but the gap between controlled recurrent payment and total costs this year is closer to \$5 million. Why the decline in controlled recurrent payments?

**Mr Hubbard:** Which output? Sorry, this is—

**THE CHAIR:** Output 3.1.

**Dr Bourke:** I think that was the depreciation I was talking about before.

**Mr Hubbard:** I will find out exactly what that is. You are talking about the difference between the 90,179 and the 89,626?

**THE CHAIR:** Yes.

**Mr Hubbard:** That 600,000?

**THE CHAIR:** Yes, the total cost. The gap for the current year is about three million. The gap in the coming year is closer to five. Where is the difference coming from?

**Mr Hubbard:** Where are you seeing the gap of five million?

**THE CHAIR:** Between total cost and controlled payments. In 2015-16 it was 90,179 and the total cost was 93 and a half.

**Mr Hubbard:** That is on page 25, is it?

**THE CHAIR:** No, on page 10.

**Mr Matthews:** Some more details are provided on page 25, Mr Smyth, which gives the operating statement for Child and Youth Protection Services, which breaks down the revenue by controlled recurrent payments and other sources.

**Mr Hubbard:** Sorry, you have lost me a bit. Where are we here?

**THE CHAIR:** On—

**Mr Hubbard:** So you are looking at the difference between 93 million and 89?

**THE CHAIR:** No, the difference—in the 2015-16 year, the total government contribution was 90 million.

**Mr Hubbard:** Yes.

**THE CHAIR:** And the total cost for the output was 93.

**Mr Hubbard:** Yes.

**THE CHAIR:** In the 2016-17 year—

**Mr Hubbard:** Okay.

**THE CHAIR:** It is 89 million, and the total cost will be 94. So the gap is slightly larger. Where is that additional revenue coming from?

**Mr Hubbard:** You have gone from 90 to 94?

**THE CHAIR:** Yes.

**Mr Hubbard:** Is that what you are trying to do? Yes. Obviously, as Mr Matthews has alluded to, you are looking across two years. If you look at the movement between the controlled recurrent, there is about a 600,000 difference there. As you go down the difference between the total expenses, the biggest difference, if you look at that, is probably 1.5 approximately in supplies and services and a bit more in grants and purchase services.



**THE CHAIR:** What is the additional in supplies and services?

**Mr Hubbard:** I do not know. I will have to check and pull that out.

**THE CHAIR:** Thank you.

**Mr Hubbard:** If you want that?

**THE CHAIR:** Yes, if we could.

**Mr Hubbard:** I will take that on notice.

**MR HINDER:** This current budget provides an additional \$800,000 for out of home care services. Is that new money? Is that in relation to the step up for our kids program? What is that funding going towards?

**Dr Bourke:** In brief, Mr Hinder, yes and yes, but I shall give you some more detail. The 2015-16 budget provided \$38.9 million over four years to fund the out of home care service, including an investment of \$16 million in new services and reforms through a step up for our kids. The investment is designed to stem the rate of entry to care through new placement provision and reunification services in—

**MR HINDER:** Sorry, I am on page 93 of BP3.

**Dr Bourke:** Yes, I am talking about the \$800,000; I am providing some background for you to start with. As I said, last year there was \$38.9 million over four years to fund out of home care, including investment of \$16 million in new services through a step up for our kids. The modelling used to determine the initial demand and projected investment of the new services was based on data that was available in 2014. As we moved closer to the start date demand became clearer. Therefore, in 2015 the directorate commissioned a new service to deliver new systems of care.

Uniting is providing services through Children and Families ACT to keep families together and prevent children from coming into care. This is what the money is going towards. The ACT Together consortium is being led by Barnardos, and they are working with children and young people in care to provide stability in those children's lives and address their therapeutic needs. The benefits of those services will start to be realised over the 12 to 18 months.

This additional one-off adjustment to the base funding for that out of home care represents the gap between the overall out of home care apportionment and the impact of increased numbers of children and young people coming into care. So in effect this is an add-on to take up additional demand which has emerged over the last two years and that we have now realised is required. That is what the \$800,000 is for.

You will note there was a Treasurer's advance in this output class. It included a component of increased demand for the 2015-16 year. The \$800,000 represented the projected demand in 2017-18, and no further adjustment to the base is going to be required after that year.

**MR DOSZPOT:** Good morning, everyone. Minister, has the Auditor-General released any reports over the past 12 months that dealt with any matters related to your agency or to any associated entities or agencies?

**Dr Bourke:** As you will recall, Mr Doszpot, I came into this portfolio in January. During my time as minister I am not aware of particular Auditor-General reports, but I will ask the director-general to talk a little bit more about that for you.

**Ms Howson:** Mr Doszpot, you are talking about any Auditor-General reports that relate to this particular output class?

**MR DOSZPOT:** Correct.

**Ms Howson:** No.

**MR DOSZPOT:** We will go to another matter; I have a few questions. In BSG, what will be involved in procuring and building a new client management system for Child and Youth Protection Services?

**Ms Howson:** Thank you for asking that question. This is part of an ongoing program of reform that is related to a step up for our kids and also relates to findings from the Auditor-General's examination of child protection back in 2012. The government's response to that report was to invest in the complete renewal of our case management system for child protection essentially. The funding in this year's budget and was also in last year's budget in terms of developing the feasibility and design components related to that transition. I will ask Dr Collis to talk about the details of that particular project.

**Dr Collis:** We are currently involved in a process to procure a new client management system. As the director-general pointed out, this stemmed from observations made in Auditor-General's and Public Advocate's reports some time ago that the criticality of having information at the fingertips of our caseworkers at a particular time is essential to making good decisions. The system that is supporting case management currently is decades old, out of date and not fit for purpose anymore. The overarching principle around commissioning this new system is that we would hate to think that any decision made was improper, inaccurate or wrong because the person making the decision did not have access to the appropriate information.

It might be worth noting that nearly every jurisdiction—in fact I think all jurisdictions in Australia—is currently undertaking this very same process. New South Wales have made some recent public comment about how they are moving with that. This procurement process is currently in the valuation stage, and we are expecting that by 2017 there will be a system in build at that particular time.

**Dr Bourke:** Of course, as you would expect, Mr Doszpot, secure mobile access to the system will be a particularly important part of that development to enable caseworkers when they are in the field to access that kind of information.

**MR DOSZPOT:** Sure. But relating that back to the actual procuring and building for

a moment, you are buying an off-the-shelf system but one that will need to be modified specially for you?

**Dr Collis:** I will need to be very careful about my comments here because we are in the middle of the procurement. But the request for proposal was for a commercial off-the-shelf system, that is correct. You might recall that there was a budget allocation in 2013-14 to scope the feasibility of a client management system. Technology has moved significantly in the past decade; in the early part of the 2000s the only option was a boutique, built-specifically-for-purpose solution. That, of course, is extremely expensive, requires a long relationship around management and maintenance over a period of time and has unknown capacity to interact with other systems. That feasibility led us to develop the request for proposal, which was a commercial off-the-shelf system.

I add that the other element of this is the capability we will see in the request for proposal for us to interact with our clients and our stakeholders more seamlessly in this process. The intention is, for example, that children and young people in care will be able to interact with the system and have a space on the system, as will carers, and as will the organisations that are supporting us in that. That is in the request for proposal.

**MR DOSZPOT:** You mentioned that other jurisdictions are going through the same process at the moment. Is there commonality across most of the jurisdictions with the sort of solution you are looking for?

**Dr Collis:** Mr Doszpot, I probably cannot talk for some of the other jurisdictions because they are in the position we are. Some of the jurisdictions, for example—

**MR DOSZPOT:** No, I am not asking for specific—

**Dr Collis:** Yes, that is right. Some of the jurisdictions are at a place we were probably two years ago; they are looking at feasibility, and there are forums we are participating in to share the knowledge of where we are at. What I can say is that we have been very fortunate, through the openness and transparency of New South Wales in particular, to provide an enormous amount of information and intelligence from their assessment of their needs and what is available. So we are talking to all of those jurisdictions.

Mr Doszpot, you are absolutely right, this represents probably a once-in-a-generation ability to have systems that operate on platforms that can talk to each other, which is, of course, one of the criticisms about information-sharing across jurisdictions. My observation around this is that there are forums which are engaging so that people are aware that the platforms are compatible; and there is a coalescence in all the jurisdictions to make that happen.

**MR DOSZPOT:** From a technical point of view, is this procurement being handled by your own IT services or is it through Shared Services? How is it being handled?

**Dr Collis:** This procurement is like all other procurements—there is an evaluation panel within Community Services Directorate. Shared Services Procurement are on

there, as is the probity advice from the Government Solicitor's office. We also have expert advisers we have called in from across government to provide input into that evaluation process.

**Dr Bourke:** Of course, at the ministerial meeting that is happening in this area today in Melbourne—regrettably I was unable to attend because I needed to see this committee—information-sharing between jurisdictions and information collation is one of the topics being discussed. We have representation there, and I will look forward to hearing the reports when they come back.

**THE CHAIR:** Mr Hinder has a supp and Ms Burch has a supp.

**MR HINDER:** I am looking at page 93 of BP3. You have got \$2.471 million allocated there for the enhanced child protection case management. Is this what we are talking about? That is over the four years.

**Dr Bourke:** Yes, I am happy to talk about that. That is primarily about oversight, Mr Hinder. That is clearly within the purview of information management and it is an important part of that. But this is a little bit beyond just information management; this is about enhancing the quality assurance of child protection services through an independent operations case analysis team to support improved decision-making within care and protection.

**MR HINDER:** Yes, the question I was coming to was: what other services? You have software we are talking about here. The table below that talks about integrated case management and it talks about family violence. Are we creating two separate systems or is a case management system going to do all of these things?

**Dr Bourke:** I will talk about the case management and protection element of the \$2.47 million first and then we will move to the integrated case management which you have also raised. The case analysis team that I just talked about is to provide a more rigorous analysis of cumulative harm across care and protection case teams. It is going to address one of the vulnerabilities that has been recognised in the recent reviews into family violence.

In addition, that funding will establish a child and youth protection quality assurance and improvement committee, which will comprise: the Family Safety Coordinator-General, the director-general of CSD; the deputy director-general, quality governance and risk, ACT Health; an independent senior practitioner with high-level experience in child protection; a second independent representative with child protection expertise from another jurisdiction; and the Executive Director of Child and Youth Protection Services.

The committee's work will be supported by two independent quality and compliance officers situated within the government's new human services regulator function, which is independent from Child and Youth Protection Services but still based in the directorate. That will ensure the provision of arms-length quality assurance and compliance, which is the purpose of this particular budget allocation, to address those needs within the children and young people protection service and also to respond to those vulnerabilities recognised in those recent reviews. Ms Howson will talk to the

other element of your question.

**Ms Howson:** In terms of the integrated case management allocation, that relates particularly to an appropriation that Minister Berry will be responsible for. The difference between these two measures is that the integrated case management investment is to be attached to the proposed family violence hub, which was one of the recommendations in the Glanfield inquiry. Our expectation is that that funding will go directly to supporting families requiring intensive support to engage with a range of early intervention and other services in order to address the issues around their experience of family violence.

**MR HINDER:** I am assuming there is some connection—at least in operation—between child protection and family violence, and I am hoping the software packages are capable of at least talking to each other in some way to be able to coordinate all those things.

**Ms Howson:** These are very good questions. The observation has been made by others that child protection essentially is a core element of the response to family violence, particularly if you are placing children at the centre of that response. It has also been made very clear in recent reviews that improved collaboration and information-sharing is essential if we are going to overcome these constant impediments to effective responses to families which come about from a siloed approach across our service system. So, Mr Hinder, you are absolutely correct.

There is some additional funding in the family safety package to support some information technology presentations with the family violence hub, but that is yet to be designed. Essentially it will be about supporting and enabling systems to connect so that the caseworkers involved with the family violence hub will be able to draw in information collectively at the consent of the family and also share the family's information, based on their consent, with other providers.

**THE CHAIR:** A supplementary, Ms Burch.

**MS BURCH:** Going back to something that Dr Collis said around the build of the database—access by the children within the system, carers and stakeholders—what will that look like? It will build up because you often hear that when a child gets to 18 years of age their life history in many ways is just full of blanks, for instance, where is the school report? This is particularly so for those who have had multiple placements. Will this system almost be an end to that piecemeal approach to following the life journey of some of these kids?

**Dr Collis:** Thank you for the question, Ms Burch. That is the intention. I acknowledge your leadership and a lot of the work that is coming to fruition today under a step up for our kids. I would just emphasise your point that for children and young people who move through the out of home care system, one of the most significant frustrations that they talk of is the ability to understand their history and to have access to that. This system will allow that access to be real-time. We are asking for not only read kind of information but also input information as well.

The intention is that children and young people have the capacity to access their

records and their life history. But they will be more able to control the input of information about their life history and they will be able to add things that are important to them, for example. That is the intention. And they will be able to comment on their experiences within that. As I said, that is the intention of where we are going. Whilst the technology is necessary for that to happen, we all know that there needs to be behaviour and cultural change around how we interact in the system—

**MS BURCH:** Getting the system to work that way.

**Dr Collis:** so that it will work that way. That will be our challenge.

**MS BURCH:** And a shared platform?

**Dr Bourke:** I will just add a little bit to that if I can, Ms Burch.

**MS BURCH:** Yes.

**Dr Bourke:** The legislative basis to enable children to get access to that information was part of that last tranche of changes to the Children and Young People Act which was passed in the Assembly in our last sitting with the support of everybody here.

**MS BURCH:** The other partners or key players in shared real-time information are the carers and the organisations, particularly in relation to my substantive question, and I will go to out of home care generally. This platform will be able to be accessed by Barnardos, carers and so on. So there is a common base?

**Dr Collis:** That is what we are commissioning. The work that we used to do a feasibility study indicates that we expect that those requirements are possible in the new system.

**Dr Bourke:** Chair, I understand Mr Hubbard has an answer in relation to an earlier question.

**THE CHAIR:** We will finish this first and then we will go to that. I think Ms Lawder would like a supplementary on the same question and I have one too. Then we will go to Ms Burch for a new question.

**MS LAWDER:** You mentioned the Glanfield inquiry. Was there anything that was new or surprising in the Glanfield inquiry compared to previous reports in this area?

**Dr Bourke:** Certainly the Glanfield inquiry gave us a range of responses to some important issues in care and protection, and I will just turn to those. The key issues were collaboration, compliance, capability and capacity. I think those are particularly important qualities to grapple with in care, Child and Youth Protection Services. Of course, family violence is a national issue that affects Australians across our nation. All governments, as we know—federal, state and territory—are working very hard to combat family violence. The Glanfield review did actually note the significant reform work which is already underway through a step up for our kids, the integrated management system—which we have already talked about—and the system designs for the new Child and Youth Protection Services.

Just focusing on those improvements in collaboration, compliance, capability and capacity, that was the subject of a budget allocation of \$2.47 billion specifically within child protection case management and coordination to address those four elements of compliance, capability, capacity and collaboration. I will get Ms Howson to elaborate on that further.

**Ms Howson:** Thank you. Just to add to the minister's response, I think the key difference in the way in which this review has approached the issues facing victims of family violence is a system response. You asked the question: did it discover anything new? I think what it has illuminated is that, if we are going to tackle an issue like this, we need a very coherent system-based response. I think for the ACT this is the first time we have had a systems-based review of these issues. While there are elements that relate specifically to the output classes I am responsible for, I think the fact that it has taken a strategic view of the whole system has put the ACT in a much stronger position and allowed us to lead the country out in a response to family safety that is comprehensive, Ms Lawder.

**MS LAWDER:** The integrated management system is a tool to achieve what you would like to achieve. Was there anything new or surprising in the recommendations of the Glanfield inquiry; any new recommendations that we have not seen in previous reports in this area?

**Ms Howson:** I think the themes are very similar. I would have to check this, but I am fairly confident that Laurie Glanfield also commented that the issues that he discovered are similar in many jurisdictions across Australia. But there is emphasis here in the ACT which has given me some clarity about areas of focus. I would point to, again, the comments the minister has made, particularly around information sharing but a subset of that being collaboration. In the ACT we are in and should be in a better position to build strong relationships and not be burdened by our understanding of a legislative framework that prevents us sharing information in the interests of children and victims of family violence. That is, I think, a key area and a key finding.

Our focus on building a culture of information sharing is a different illumination of that issue. We have had a very technical response in the past to information sharing. Mr Glanfield emphasised that we actually need to build a culture across our government services and our non-government services of being prepared to discover ways to share information, not to be legalistic in our response, notwithstanding the requirements around complying with legislation to do with privacy and our own Children and Young People Act.

**THE CHAIR:** Referring to table 16 on page 15 of budget statement G—budget technical adjustments—the \$1.18 million was initially in this year. Why was this project not completed in the current financial year and why is it being rolled over?

**Mr Hubbard:** That was some funding that we did have and we have rolled that over. It is just when the actual bills come in for that project. It has been scoped and kicked off and that is why we have rolled it over into 2016-17. This is the IT project?

**THE CHAIR:** But it is only under procurement now. Why has it taken so long?

**Ms Howson:** I will ask Dr Collis to answer that question.

**Dr Collis:** Thank you for the question. It is good to answer one about numbers in the table for a change. This is a rollover. Commissioning a system such as this which is going to have a lifespan of maybe 10 or 20 years has a lot of decision points in it and the financial year cut-off sometimes comes close to milestones. In particular, the implementation of this program was changed—not delayed in terms of the final outcome date—when there was a decision to invest more time in market research and knowing what markets were out there before entering into the procurement phase. So that, in a sense, moved that. We felt that the time spent in actually engaging in the market would pay dividends at the other end of the process by ensuring that we got the best people to the procurement table. That is fundamentally the answer around that.

**THE CHAIR:** When will the tender close?

**Dr Collis:** The tender is closed and is in the evaluation phase at this moment.

**THE CHAIR:** So when do you expect to make an announcement?

**Dr Collis:** The announcement will be before the end of this year.

**THE CHAIR:** Financial or calendar?

**Dr Collis:** Calendar year.

**THE CHAIR:** When do you expect it to be operational?

**Dr Collis:** In our project planning there is a build next year with a go-live date in 2017, the end of 2017.

**THE CHAIR:** The end of 2017?

**Dr Collis:** Yes.

**THE CHAIR:** Thanks for that. A new question, Ms Burch.

**MS BURCH:** I have a question on out of home care and the step up for our kids strategy. There are probably a few questions. You had an extra \$800,000 because more kids are in care. First, how is the strategy going? How is the relationship with the partners going? What are our numbers like? Also, looking at the re-substantiation rates, is that what we want to see or do we want to see them in the outyears change because of the out of home care strategy that has now started?

**Dr Bourke:** As I said before, Ms Burch, the extra \$800,000 is to cope with the increased projected demand arising from the situation that we are now in as opposed to the projections that were previously used, which were relying on 2014 figures.

**MS BURCH:** How many children are in care at the minute?



**Dr Bourke:** I think it is over 600.

**Ms Howson:** As of the last report, 694.

**Dr Bourke:** As to the progress of the ACT Together partnership consortium, it is going well. Obviously, it is still early days. This is nearly 12 months into its life. Of course, in those periods of transition there are always questions and things that need to be answered. I will get Ms Howson to talk a little more about the progress of step up for our kids at this stage. The underlying philosophy is a fabulous one. The idea that we are going to provide care for kids that is trauma informed is a significant change from the philosophies that have been embedded within care and protection in the past.

The idea is that we are actually going to take account of why kids are going into care. It is those terrible home circumstances for many children where there may be mental illness, drug and alcohol abuse or, indeed, the family violence that we have already talked about, or some combination of all three. They are the primary reasons why children enter our care and protection systems.

As I understand the latest information—I will get Dr Collis to talk a little about that in a minute—during children’s very early years, the developing child’s brain is extremely vulnerable to that sort of chaotic and extremely psychologically damaging abuse. It can produce people who continue to be harmed and damaged later in life. This is what is really emerging. That trauma-informed approach is the key policy shift within step up for our kids. All credit to you when were minister for recognising that and implementing that.

I think we should pause to reflect for a minute upon the long-term outcomes of that trauma to those young people, especially those little boys. I reflect on my previous role in corrections. I became very aware that detainees at the AMC had such a poor educational standard. They were functionally illiterate and innumerate. Pretty clearly it spoke to me as saying that for people who had had a devastating experience at that early stage—when they were little boys; at two to four years-of-age when their brains are developing, when their psyche is developing—that it has carried through for the rest of their lives.

I think this is the fundamental reason why we argue that the state needs to intervene for the protection of children in this area. So that is why this area of investment is so important. I will ask Ms Howson to talk some more.

**Ms Howson:** Thank you, minister. In terms of the questions that you asked about numbers, was the answer in terms of the number of children in care what you were looking for? It was just that we have got a base now of, say, 690. Part of the strategy is prevention. It is that getting in early, some tough decisions around permanent placement earlier, but also it is the early work so that they do not ever come into the system. Often times if we had an extra six months or some better intervention and support for the families we might get them over that that hump.

I think the fact that we are still experiencing growth in the numbers of children coming into care—it is at levels that we have experienced in previous years—does go

to our discussion about where we were at in the implementation of step up for our kids. I will ask Dr Collis to speak to that.

**MS BURCH:** Because it is just 12 months. It is not even 12 months yet.

**Ms Howson:** Yes, I think it is an important story in terms of when we expect to see the interventions impacting. We are already seeing some very excellent signs of early intervention for families that are brushing up against the statutory system, if I can put it in those terms. I would like Dr Collis to talk to that but I think it is important that it is understood that there are other drivers, external drivers, that impact on what happens with child protection services.

We have been experiencing since really 2015 an evident trend upward in child concern reports, which is also translating into increases in appraisals. As you could imagine, it cascades through to children coming into care. It coincided with our community's experience of four adults being murdered as a result of family violence. Our postulation on this—is that a word?—our hypothesis around this is that the community again has—

**MS BURCH:** Become aware.

**Ms Howson:** responded to that. The child protection service has become, if you like, the community's entry point into raising those concerns around children and families that they believe need support. That again hit a peak earlier this year and we are still experiencing this trend of increased concern reports within our service. That is a good thing, in that the community clearly is aware, engaged and concerned. What we need to do as a whole system though is respond to ensure that families get support as early as possible in the context of the needs that they have rather than reaching a crisis point and moving into the child protection system.

Going back to Ms Lawder's question earlier, I think one of the other things that was revealed in Laurie Glanfield's examination of family violence is that the way in which the mandatory reporting system is essentially the default for concerns for families experiencing family violence also usually means that there are co-morbidities around drug and alcohol use and mental health issues that are clogging up the statutory system. What we need to see is some further diversion earlier in terms of early intervention, which is where a step up for our kids comes into the frame. Dr Collis, would you like to talk to where we are at and about implementation?

**Dr Collis:** The step up has only been implemented for six months. We are six months into the implementation phase. I would like to focus on the relationship between the two domains. Uniting ACT-New South Wales have set up their child and family program within the ACT. It is the most comprehensive tertiary intervention program bar none across Australia, but probably even much wider than that.

In terms of the relationship, I would like to go on record as saying that Uniting ACT-New South Wales have been exceptional in what they have brought to the table in regards to their intellectual property. They are an organisation based upon data evaluation, publication of their research and understandings. They have cultural proficiency in terms of the Jannamili and their Aboriginal development institute.

Indeed, our experience has been that they have been really responsive in respect of numerous families. They have been with us in the first 24 hours talking to families. As at the last count, which is 9 June, they were engaged with 85 families. I have not got the data around children in those families, but the number of children would be significantly greater.

In regard to that, it is interesting to see that 11 of those families are around pre-natal involvement which, of course, as you would be aware, is a voluntary arrangement with us. That is really excellent. Twenty-five families are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families. Uniting have delivered on all of the outcomes we wanted—their workforce, their engagement in policy. They are maturing very well.

The benefits of that will really kick in 12 months after it starts. We have put our money where our mouth is in regards to this. We have got an outcomes framework. We will monitor that. We have a governance system which will change and adapt.

In regard to the continuum of care, ACT Together, led by Barnardos, have been fully engaged in all of the governance meetings. I need to point out that shared governance is a really new thing in this space. Government and non-government are working together, sharing information, adapting as we move along. We are transitioning into the full continuum of care by July. That is on track.

**MS BURCH:** What do you mean by continuum of care?

**Dr Collis:** The continuum of care being—if we think of strengthening the high-risk families domain—the domain of early intervention and tertiary prevention. But the decision to move children into alternative families is the continuum of care. Those alternative families may be foster care, kinship care, some form of other response, such as residential care. So it is that full continuum of care option that is really in place.

**MS BURCH:** There was a divide of case management by foster in the community sector and case management of kin care traditionally in-house with CSD. Will that be maintained or we will move it all out so that there is a single approach to case management?

**Dr Collis:** As of 9 June, 84 more kinship—sorry, I will go back. As of 9 June, 157 kinship carers have been transitioned into case management through the consortium.

**MS BURCH:** But one of the things I recall when Mr Gentleman brought it in was the narrative that a lot of families just say, “There are too many people.” You know, the third wheel. “Just let’s get on; let’s have the support agency; let’s just as a family get on.” So that is—

**Ms Howson:** We are well into that transition and we are reshaping and clarifying our roles. There is a role for government and there is a role for the non-government sector.

**MS BURCH:** That is good.

**THE CHAIR:** Mr Wall has a supplementary. Just a reminder, members, by 10 past 11 we have got to have covered output classes 3.1, 2.1 and 2.3. Feel free to range. Mr Wall, a supplementary, and then Ms Lawder has a question.

**MR WALL:** One of the concerning stats under the accountability indicators for this year was the number of additional out of home care days—

**MS BURCH:** What page?

**MR WALL:** Sorry, page 13 of budget paper G. Point j is the number of out of home care days used by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, and there is a substantial increase of some 11,000 new days that were not budgeted for in the 2015-16 financial year. What is that major jump attributed to?

**Dr Bourke:** The proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out of home care is a national issue and is an ACT issue. It is also an issue in many other colonial societies across the world.

The history of this country is what has dictated the high proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in care. I think it was debated last week federally about the invasion of this country producing a tremendous dislocation of Aboriginal people and Aboriginal families—dispossession, discrimination and particularly terrible circumstances which have had long-term intergenerational impacts—and that is—

**MR WALL:** I appreciate the historical—

**Dr Bourke:** I am providing the frame for you, and then when we will get there. If you just let me answer the question we will get to the particular issue. I need to provide the background for the issue because so many people are often unaware—

**MS LAWDER:** I suspect most people in this room are aware.

**MS BURCH:** I think the minister—

**THE CHAIR:** Let the minister finish. I am sure he is coming to the point.

**Dr Bourke:** Coming back to the issue of why we have high levels of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in care and the effects of those intergenerational traumas and higher levels of family violence, we see recent statistics from the Institute of Health and Welfare indicating the admission of Aboriginal women to hospital for serious assault is 20 times that of non-Aboriginal women. We have already heard from our local Aboriginal medical service about the higher issues, the problems with drug and alcohol use within portions of the Aboriginal community. We know the higher levels of mental health issues, which are the precursors of why Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children enter care. Those are the precursors of why children are going into care.

Then you might ask, “What are we doing about it?” This is the fundamental activity under a step up for our kids and the \$18 million which has been allocated to provide a

better outcome for all kids but in particular Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander kids. That is why UnitingCare was part of that consortium with their specialist Indigenous unit, Jaanimili, which has had such significant success in New South Wales.

That is the overall policy framework which informs the answer to your question. As to the particular figures, I will ask Dr Collis to provide a bit more information for us.

**Dr Collis:** Thank you, Mr Wall, for the question. I think the numbers are in fact a description of what has happened over the year. There has been an increase in all use, as you pointed out, in terms of all days in out of home care. In regard to what is the specific driver of the greater increase amongst Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families, I think that is a question that we will only be able to address as we move forward and understand what particular drivers occur for particular families.

I think that the drivers that Minister Bourke has just talked about—family violence, mental illness and drug and alcohol—occur differentially in our community and not unsurprisingly. I think that when there is stress in a community you would expect the impact of those drivers would act out differentially as well. That is the worry.

**MR WALL:** I guess the underlying reasons that you are highlighting are no different this year to what they have been in certainly the year previously and the year before that; yet we have seen an 11,000-day increase in the number of out of home care days.

**THE CHAIR:** Yes, 20 per cent.

**MR WALL:** It is a 20 per cent increase. Really, that is a massive increase for such a small cohort of the community. Then in the budget papers you have got no increase in the target for 2016-17. What, if anything, has been done then to stop that or are we going to see a similar increase again year on year as we get to the next estimates hearing?

**Dr Bourke:** As I just described, the step up for our kids program with UnitingCare and its Jaanimili Indigenous specialist unit is going to drive into this area, but of course one of the key tertiary prevention aspects will be the strengthening of high-risk families work which has already been allocated within previous budgets, as you will probably be aware. That involves us placing a caseworker to provide in-home support to keep one of these vulnerable at-risk Indigenous families specifically together so that the children do not need to be taken into care. That could be up to 30 or 40 hours a week.

You might ask, “What sort of work is a caseworker doing there?” They are doing all the things to provide a normal home environment: getting kids up, getting them to school, helping with meals, helping with work around the house, providing the kind of support that all of us take for granted in our home lives and our homes but are absent within these particularly vulnerable families. I think that goes some way to address your question. Obviously this has only been implemented recently and we are not going to see the fruit of that effort for some time.

Also, further down the spectrum we have got the work which is being done at our child and family centres, in particular at west Belconnen in my electorate, where the

staff are particularly engaging with vulnerable Indigenous families in particular to provide the kind of intensive support for people to overcome those particular traumas that I talked about before, which are of course the precursors for children going into care.

If we accept the premise that the state has a role to intervene when children are at risk of psychological harm, then we have to be involved in this area, we have to intervene and we have to remove children who are at significant risk of harm and long-term harm which, as I have already described previously, has significant long-term consequences.

In fact, we can go back and look at the historical data which arises from the youth justice and eventual justice outcomes for children who have been in out of home care and they are not particularly good. This is because there has not been that trauma-informed therapeutic response in past out of home care experiences. And that is what we have changed here. We have actually looked into what can be done better and we have implemented it, and in the future I anticipate—I hope—that we will start to see some better progress.

**MR WALL:** How many caseworkers are currently undertaking those intensive family intervention roles?

**Ms Howson:** Minister, should I—

**Dr Bourke:** Yes, if you could please. We will seek some clarification if we could.

**Ms Howson:** Thank you. When you say the intensive support roles that—

**MR WALL:** As the minister said, these caseworkers are in the home and working quite closely and intensively with the families to provide, I guess, what we would term a normal home life. How many caseworkers are in this role?

**Ms Howson:** If we can talk specifically about the UnitingCare program—and I will ask Dr Collis if he has that information; we might need to take that on notice—further to that, as the minister has suggested, the work that we do within the context of child and family centres in our child, youth and family support program is also relevant here. But I will ask Dr Collis to make a comment here.

**Dr Collis:** I will take on notice the question about staffing in the UnitingCare ACT and New South Wales child and family program. I do not have that current information and I do not want to mislead the committee. What I can say, however, is that as of 9 June there were 25 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families who were being supported by this intensive case management work who would have otherwise been in care but were being supported in the home to remain out of care.

We are hoping that those 25 families, and as that builds over the course of the time, is where we will get the benefit within 12 months of those children not coming into care. Out of those 25 families, we are looking at a much larger number of children. That is a significant proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children who come into care. If there were a success rate of merely 50 per cent in that cohort, that would

change our profile to reduce our growth as well.

That is the answer in regard to how many families are being supported currently but I will take on notice the question about staffing.

**Dr Bourke:** Do you have the numbers for how many children are in that program at the moment?

**Dr Collis:** Not to hand.

**Ms Howson:** Can I also add that while it is a different type of service the government has invested in a therapeutic specialised service for families that are involved with the out of home care system, and the majority of those families supported, I believe, are also Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families. That is our Melaleuca Place intensive service model.

**THE CHAIR:** Ms Lawder had a supplementary and then a new question from Mr Wall.

**MS LAWDER:** In the same table that Mr Wall was referring to on page 13, we have seen the total number of out of home care days used annually go up, including for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people; yet the total investment for out of home care day is decreasing. Can you just briefly, perhaps, explain how you are driving down the cost of investment per out of home care day?

**Dr Bourke:** Dr Collis will take that question.

**Dr Collis:** Do we have it here?

**THE CHAIR:** Dr Collis is looking at Mr Hubbard.

**Dr Bourke:** He is referring to Mr Hubbard.

**Ms Howson:** I am happy to come in there because the average investment per out of home care day is, I understand—and please correct me, Mr Hubbard, if I am wrong—calculated on the basis of our unit cost in our contracts in relation to the provision of out of home care services and based also on our projections around numbers. In the context of 2015-16 the 138 represents the fact that there were more children coming into care than expected against the allocated funding.

**MS LAWDER:** It is a crude measure, it is a bucket of money and how many children.

**Ms Howson:** It is a crude measure, exactly, yes.

**Mr Matthews:** And if I can just add very briefly, it is also covers a range of different service response right through from high-intensive residential care to kinship and foster care. The unit cost of the different types of service delivery support do vary as well, and as we try to shift children and young people into lower support arrangements where that is appropriate, in community-based settings, then that cost structure changes as well.

**Ms Howson:** The reality is in fact that we are now in a position where we have not been before, where we have a very good appreciation of our unit-based costs but we are also providing, against a therapeutic plan for each child, supplementary funding that is based on the needs of that child. It is again a very child-centred model of funding and children are receiving the supports that they need at the time that they need them. That is the way the funding flows through in terms of our new contractual arrangements with our providers, ACT Together.

**THE CHAIR:** A substantive question from Mr Wall.

**MR WALL:** I want to quickly turn to the Bimberi Youth Justice Centre. What has the average occupancy at the centre been, Dr Collis, over the past 12 months?

**Dr Bourke:** This is one of the great success stories in this directorate, and particularly in this area, as you would appreciate, Mr Wall. Probably the stand-out statistic is the 30 per cent—was it 30 or 35?—reduction over the past three years in the number of young people who have been incarcerated in Bimberi, in particular an excellent 47 per cent reduction in the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth incarcerated in Bimberi. This goes to one of the elements of the budget where we have allocated some resources to seek a new model about how we can operate. We are getting these extraordinarily low numbers in an organisation that is built to hold many more. There might be only eight or nine young people out there at any particular period of time in a facility which is built to house 30 or 40.

You have to say that in some ways it is a bit of a victim of its own success. I think that something that we should be very proud of as a community is that we have been able to work right across the community to reduce that involvement in youth justice, even with the police reducing the apprehension of young people by something of the order of 20 per cent. But of course—

**MR WALL:** Just on the reduction in young people being housed in Bimberi, accountability indicator a, still on table 14, is that there is no change in the number of custody days used annually. It has been trending at 7,500 for a number of years now and there has been a substantial reduction. On my rough numbers, 7,500 days per year equates to, on average, 30 people per day. The figures that we have had in Bimberi are nowhere near 30 per day, so why has there been no change in that?

**Dr Bourke:** I will get Dr Collis go to the specifics for you.

**Dr Collis:** Thank you for the question, Mr Wall. You are quite correct, I believe. I will need to get you the precise average figures per day. I can say that towards the end of this reporting year we are heading for another reduction in the average occupancy for young people in Bimberi. The expectation in terms of the targets that we have put around how many days occur was adjusted in previous years. We are predicting that there is a point at which we are going to hit a floor, if you like, in the number of young people. We have been predicting that for a couple of years, and we have not found the floor as yet. That goes to why in previous years we have adjusted the number of days down and where we will adjust again on the basis of the data that we have.



**MR WALL:** For the 7,500 days that are estimated, are they fully budgeted?

**Mr Matthews:** Yes.

**MR WALL:** We are talking such small numbers. Are you able to give the committee some idea of the types of offences that are seeing young people end up in Bimberi now, given that there are so many diversionary options and opportunities in place before a custodial sentence is handed down?

**Dr Collis:** Very serious ones.

**Ms Howson:** The numbers are very low at the moment. I think, today, we have—

**Dr Bourke:** Nine.

**Ms Howson:** Nine young people in the detention centre. It varies from four to nine across the course of months.

**MR WALL:** Yes.

**Ms Howson:** I am just conscious of being too specific.

**MR WALL:** In the broad sense, are they drug offences, assault offences, sexual offences?

**Ms Howson:** Can I answer it by saying that—

**Dr Bourke:** I think at this point we have to say that given the small number of young people who are there, we cannot possibly provide more information about the nature of the offences because of the risk of identification given that you have got such small numbers in place. Mr Wall, I am sure you will appreciate that.

**THE CHAIR:** I am sure we are not after the particular offences, but is it property-based crime, drug-based crime, assault, sexual assault? That surely does not identify anybody.

**Dr Collis:** In terms of the offences of young people in custody, the categories of offences have not changed. They have all tended to drop, with the exception of one category. The categories that used to drive detention in Bimberi were offences against warrants, and young people breaking bail conditions and so forth. That used to be the largest reason why people would find their way into Bimberi, usually for a night or two until the next court appearances. The other offence types that are in there are crimes against property, assaults and robbery. The proportionality of those categories has not changed. Severity is another matter. We do not measure the severity of offences, as you can appreciate. There is some concern about robbery, for example, that can mean different things, and you can see that as being more severe. What I can say is that the offences that occur against things like good behaviour orders and so forth have reduced as a consequence of our early intervention processes out of Bimberi. Essentially those are the categories which are still existing—property

crimes; assaults and property crimes.

**Ms Howson:** Robberies.

**Dr Bourke:** The reason for this reduction has been the effort resulting from the youth justice blueprint with its three elements of the restorative justice program which has been so effective, and I am delighted that we have been able to extend that to adults; the after-hours bail support, which is now the after-hours crisis support service, which Dr Collis alluded to before; and the through-care program through the Bendora unit within Bimberi.

**MR WALL:** What are the government's long-term plans for this facility? You have \$100,000 in the budget to look at operational aspects; improving operational capacity is how it is listed in the budget. What does that money hope to seek to achieve? And what are the government's long-term views on a facility that was built to house so many more than it ultimately is.

**Dr Bourke:** Obviously, a facility which is built to house a lot of people requires a significant staffing cost to maintain and staff it. We have such small numbers; and, progressively, probably, into the future, we will have small numbers as well. The bid, the initiative, is going to fund a review into the options, considering how, with a further subdivision of units, we can better utilise the facility and reduce those running costs per client, which is obviously a key issue. Given that you have very small numbers in a large facility, the cost per detainee becomes quite high, as you would expect. As I said before, it is a victim of the success of the youth justice system. It is a great problem to have, isn't it?

**THE CHAIR:** A new question from Ms Lawder.

**MS LAWDER:** Thank you. I want to ask about the adoption process. Is there work underway in the government to speed up the length of time or remove some of the blockages that can make some adoptions take a very long time?

**Dr Bourke:** Adoption is a very complex matter. It actually means that you obliterate the identity of a child, so there are a whole bunch of steps which need to be in place to ensure that that is done in a fair and just manner. The birth family needs to be involved if they are going to consent to it. If they do not consent to it, there is a much greater level of work that needs to be done. Of course, dispensation of parental consent can be done, but that requires additional legal work, and there are also the processes of the Supreme Court involved. The government addressed this in a small way in the reforms that were included in the fourth tranche of reforms to the Children and Young People Act. Step up for our kids is really focused on children and providing long-term permanent care for children. Whether it is adoption or ongoing permanent care, it is a great objective to have to provide that kind of stability and importance.

**MS LAWDER:** Maybe I could clarify my question a little. For those children for whom it has been decided that adoption is the way to go, how are we going to remove some of the roadblocks? I understand there are other options and it is very complex, but from when there is an adoption process initiated to when it is finalised what are

we doing to improve that process?

**Dr Bourke:** Which roadblocks did you have in mind?

**MS LAWDER:** I have had some questions on notice about this; I have had some responses and there appear to be some time losses here. There is the time when an application for local adoption is finalised by the directorate and the time when an application for a local adoption is lodged with the court system. The length of time between the finalisation and when it is lodged is apparently not collated. The total length of time from the time of an application for a local adoption through to the completion of an adoption is also not collated, according to the response that I have received. And there is a whole lot of other information I am not going to bore you with because you probably wrote the response. But I hear from families that there are roadblocks and lost periods of time when nothing is occurring with their adoption application. We have already spoken, minister. You have spoken very eloquently about the effect on the child. This is, of course, a concern of those adoptive parents—about ensuring that certainty for the child.

**Dr Bourke:** I appreciate the issue of certainty for parents. I am assuming that those children are already with the people who wish to adopt them, so they are already in safe, loving environments providing that continuity of support which they would enjoy. I will get Dr Collis to elaborate further on this issue.

**Dr Collis:** Thank you for the question. I imagine the answer to this is one that is not going to take away frustration for people who are experiencing adoption, because once they have made the decision and they have made an application, clearly their family accept their course and they have been through a really large process of determining how they wish to build their family. What I can say—and I will refer, Ms Lawder, to the period of time you talked about, about the decision and the application—is really that the blocks will usually fit within the category of the dispensation of consent. If there is consent from the birth family, systems can move quite quickly. One would need to realise, however, that the very nature of the way young people come into out of home care and experience their life is sometimes quite chaotic, as are their broader family relationships.

I will not go to specifics, because it may identify particular areas, but I will give an example of some of the things that can complicate a dispensation. One of these complications would be at this phase when, from Child and Youth Protection Services, we brief the Government Solicitor to move that along. In that phase, if a parent, for example, denies paternity of a child, that requires a process to determine who is the father of the child, potentially with people who are not necessarily conducive to the process of adoption. The process of dispensing with the consent of parents where we do not know of their whereabouts can cause this process to happen. Of course, birth families also might change their minds at any time through this process, and they might provide information. We bear in mind that the Supreme Court, which makes the final determination, has the really onerous role of ensuring that all of these matters have been considered.

In just about every case that I have looked at, such complications as the ones that I have talked about and numerous others are in fact related to that process of dispensing

with consent. The unfortunate part of that block is that the interaction and work around that may not be visible to the family. It may feel as though nothing is happening, but searching for the birth family, and getting their consent and so forth, is part of the process.

**MS LAWDER:** If that is perhaps invisible to the family, why are the families not being more informed about what is going on?

**Dr Collis:** The information around paternity, for example, and disputed paternity, is particularly sensitive information for the family. I take on board that if people are feeling frustrations because they feel that we are not keeping them apprised of where we are in the process, we can do better with that. Again, there will be a level of information which will go to specifics around the birth family which will, by its very nature, need to be not known to anyone but the Government Solicitor, I would imagine.

**MS LAWDER:** I take your point, but some families have said to me that they call up to ask about progress and they are sort of told, “Look, I do not know.”

**Ms Howson:** Ms Lawder, if that is the feedback you are getting, that is certainly something we should take on board. We will look at that.

**MS LAWDER:** I think have spoken in the Assembly about that in the past, about the adoption process. Why does the directorate not collate all of that information about the total time it takes from an application for a local adoption right through to when the adoption order is finally made?

**Dr Bourke:** There are going to be a lot of variables, as we have heard, involved with a—

**MS LAWDER:** Absolutely, but you cannot manage what you do not measure. It is an old saying. How do you know when there may be issues if you have not measured or kept some record?

**Dr Bourke:** How many cases of adoption do we have? It is about 20, 10?

**MS LAWDER:** So it would not be that hard, would it?

**Dr Collis:** Seven.

**Dr Bourke:** There are seven cases. Given that level of numbers, statistics are not going to be that meaningful, are they?

**MS LAWDER:** I was told this information is not collected. That was the answer to a couple of questions that I have received.

**Ms Howson:** And that is going to the minister’s point. In a way, setting a benchmark around this is pointless, because there are so many variables that are not within our control in the context of an open adoption process.

**MS LAWDER:** I am not looking for a benchmark; I was just looking for information.

**Ms Howson:** That sort of information we can provide, given that the number of cases is so low.

**MS LAWDER:** Thanks.

**THE CHAIR:** We have 10 minutes left, members. I will defer to Ms Lawder with my question, and then a new question from Mr Hinder.

**MS LAWDER:** Thank you. I refer to page 9 of the Community Services Directorate budget paper. Output 2.1, early intervention services, has table 5.1. I can see that the estimated outcome for 2015-16 was 26.162 and the amount for this budget is 24.870.

**Dr Bourke:** That goes to the discussion on the table that Mr Hubbard produced earlier. It is about the transfer of Melaleuca Place into another output class. I will get him to talk a little bit more about that.

**MS LAWDER:** I have not asked my question, but go for your life.

**Dr Bourke:** Sorry; I thought that was a question.

**MS LAWDER:** We did not get your earlier answer.

**Mr Hubbard:** That difference between the total cost of 26 million approximately in 2015-16 going to 24.8 million in the following year is that, as the minister says, we are establishing output 2 to be more the early intervention elements and output 3 to be all the statutory elements. We have moved Melaleuca Place out of output 2 and into output 3. That is significant.

**MS LAWDER:** I can see that in the note.

**Mr Hubbard:** Yes, that is significant.

**MS LAWDER:** So that was not actually my question.

**THE CHAIR:** Perhaps we can have your question.

**MS LAWDER:** Thank you; that would be lovely. In the explanation it talks about services being delivered by community organisations or in partnership with other agencies, local community organisations and service providers. What indexation was applied to the agreements that you might have with community organisations in the 2016-17 budget?

**Ms Howson:** We are applying the same formula to indexation that we have always applied.

**Mr Hubbard:** Yes, community sector indexation. How it is derived is in budget paper 3.

**Ms Howson:** It is the combination of the current CPI and our wage indexation.

**Mr Hubbard:** Yes. If you look at page 180 in BP3, the actual indexation for 2016-17 is 1.8 per cent. As Ms Howson was outlining, that community sector indexation is made up of two elements, one of which is the wages cost index, and also CPI. They are done on the basis of wages representing 80 per cent of the cost of an NGO and 20 per cent representing the increase in costs related to supplies, cars, insurance et cetera. Both of those numbers come from the ABS. When you do the maths on that that shows that for next year we will be indexing at 1.8. That goes to all the NGOs that are funded by the Community Services Directorate and Housing.

**MS LAWDER:** So in real terms is that a cut for community sector organisations when compared to CPI?

**Mr Matthews:** I am happy to answer that, Ms Lawder. It is absolutely not a cut. As Mr Hubbard said, it is based on published economic data. The formula, in fact, favours the community sector generally because it recognises that a higher portion of their overall funding is spent on wages. The breakdown on page 180 that Mr Hubbard referred to shows that the wage price indexation component was two per cent and the CPI component was one per cent, which made for the combined total of 1.8 per cent. The formula is very much based on the cost structure of what community organisations spend.

**Mr Hubbard:** Just to tidy that up, Ms Lawder, I think your question is: does that represent a cut?

**MS LAWDER:** In real terms.

**Mr Hubbard:** In real terms. That index is put on the base of their 2015-16 amounts, so whatever their actual base is for that year it then gets increased by the 1.8. So it is actually an increase. With the non-government agencies we have tried to maintain the value of their grant or their purchase in line with the real cost increases which we represent with the WPI and the CPI—and I think that is one of the most generous across the country. We are trying to maintain that parity with real costs.

**MS LAWDER:** The organisations referred to in this output—are they subject to the community sector reform levy?

**Ms Howson:** I think many of them would be. Ms Sheehan might be able to answer that question in more detail.

**Ms Sheehan:** Thank you for that question. Organisations with income from the ACT government of under \$150,000 per year do not pay the levy. In addition to that, if payments to an organisation are going directly for care of a client then those payments are exempt as well. For example, many of the funding arrangements which we are phasing out under the national disability insurance scheme had never been subject to the 0.34 per cent, even though the payments were in the millions of dollars—because they went directly to client care. The intention was never to take 0.34 per cent away from client care.

**Dr Bourke:** Chair, we have a couple of bits of information that have arisen from questions. If you want to take up the next minute or two dealing with that as opposed to going to another question—if that satisfies the committee?

**THE CHAIR:** Why do you not give us the information and then if there is any time left Mr Hinder can ask a question.

**Dr Bourke:** Excellent. Dr Collis?

**Dr Collis:** Thank you, chair. In relation to the numbers of staffing in Uniting ACT-New South Wales for the child abuse families program, 26 staff are working with 85 families. There are currently 23 of those positions on the ground and working and three have been selected and are being recruited as we speak. That is the number: 26 families working with 85 families.

**Ms Howson:** Twenty six caseworkers.

**Dr Collis:** Twenty six staff, sorry, working with 85 families. In relation to the average number of young people in Bimberi per day—and it goes to that question—in 2014-15 there were nine young people per day on average. In 2015-16, as we are heading towards the end of the fourth quarter, it is remaining the same—that is, nine young people. Again, that goes to the substance of the question about whether we are getting to the lower—

**Mr Hubbard:** To bridge the gap between the controlled recurrent 89 million and the total ordinary expenses of 94, as you can appreciate, there are a lot of ins and outs, but the most significant ones are that we have been provided with some additional supplementation for our workers compensation premium of around \$2 million. We have also got some funding, as has been discussed so far, for the Bimberi study at 100,000, plus the 800 for covering the costs of additional demand coming into out of home care. We have also some supplementation. We have done quite a bit of work around the total cost of the system due to some of the things that we are doing, and we have realised that we are slightly underfunded in some areas around the operating costs, including IT and supplies, and that is worth around 1.9. So all up it comes to about 4.8 of additional money for the big movements rather than all the little things that happened in the background.

**THE CHAIR:** Thanks for that. Mr Hinder has a quick question.

**MR HINDER:** My question is about the step up for our kids program and its stated aim of increased advocacy services for people. Can you give me a rundown on what those additional advocacy initiatives might be and, in particular, whether or not foster carers have now been given more voice in the processes and procedures of the directorate?

**Dr Bourke:** It is very important to be able to provide a voice for everybody involved in this area, not just the birth parents but also foster carers, children and families. As you are probably aware, the birth family advocacy service was commenced in December 2015, and that has been operated by Australian Red Cross. That provides advocacy for parents whose children have been or are at risk of entering out of home

care. It helps them to understand and make sense of what the system is and what their rights and responsibilities may be through those processes. I understand they have already had 54 referrals to Red Cross, and 14 of those were for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families. Of course, I would like to thank Red Cross for their work in that sector.

The directorate has also been in contract negotiations with Carers ACT to provide a kinship and foster care advocacy support service. That service is going to operate independently, at arm's length, from government and non-government and foster care providers. Kinship, of course, is particularly important in the ACT, where we see that more than half of our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are in kinship care, which I think is a great statistic. In fact, two-thirds of those in kinship care are with Aboriginal components of their family rather than the non-Aboriginal components. I think that is a real piece of work that care and protection has been able to establish over the years. Often that sort of traditional form of care is particularly valuable when we are working with Aboriginal families. Carers ACT is going to provide that support and advocacy for kinship and foster carers.

**MR HINDER:** Thank you.

**THE CHAIR:** We might break there. Members, we will return at 11.25 to look at disability and therapy, output class 1.1, and then veterans and seniors in output class 2.2.

### **Sitting suspended from 11.12 to 11.27 am.**

**THE CHAIR:** Members and officials, welcome back to the next session of the 2016-17 estimates. Minister, to follow on from the discussion we had earlier this morning, have there been any teething problems in the transition to the NDIS and the handover to—

**Dr Bourke:** I was going to take the opportunity to make a brief statement, if I may, chair?

**THE CHAIR:** I apologise. Would you like to make a brief opening statement?

**Dr Bourke:** I would appreciate the opportunity to make a brief overview statement, and I thank the committee for that opportunity. The ACT government is committed to improving the outcomes of people with disabilities. In partnership with the National Disability Insurance Agency and its community partners, we are delivering a broad range of services and programs to support people with a disability to live the life they want.

As no doubt members are aware, Canberra's disability commitment, Involve, provides a framework to promote and to achieve positive social and economic outcomes for people with disability, and the 2015-16 priorities were housing, NDIS implementation, jobs and skills development.

The ACT NDIS trial, which began in July 2014, is progressing well, and it is expected that all eligible ACT participants will be in the NDIS by the first quarter of



2016-17 and the territory's contributions provided to the commonwealth as part of the commitment to the bilateral agreement for the NDIS launch. There are now 4,247 people who have been assessed as eligible for the NDIS, of which 3,429 now have individualised funding plans. In addition, 212 disability providers are registered with the NDIS in the ACT.

The 2016 budget reflects the transition out of services, and that is evident in the staffing reductions of [2,704 FTEs](#) ceasing employment in the ACT public service and the reduction of \$25 million in employee expenses. The impacts since 2014-15 have seen 146 staff take voluntary redundancies with corresponding payments of \$15.480 million. In 2016-17 it is estimated an additional 128 FTE will choose to exit the ACT public service via redundancy provisions at a cost of \$9.182 million.

Another important update for members is that the many people with disabilities who have previously received services from Disability ACT and Therapy ACT have exercised their choice and control—the fundamental elements of the NDIS—and chosen alternative providers. As a result, government-operated services have reduced considerably, growing the market and providing more choices than ever before.

I also remind members about my recent announcement regarding Canberra-based broadcaster Radio 1RPH, which will now deliver information about the rollout of the national disability insurance scheme in the ACT from July under a new funding agreement. I was also pleased to announce that Radio 1RPH was successful in receiving a commonwealth business investment package grant of \$50,000.

An important part of the process of preparing for the NDIS has been the introduction of the Child Development Service. The new Child Development Service was launched on 12 April 2016, and the ACT Community Services, Health and Education directorates have collaborated to provide this more integrated service to streamline assessment service for ACT families concerned about their child's health and development. The introduction of the Child Development Service is being accompanied by the stepping down of services provided by Therapy ACT.

**THE CHAIR:** Thank you, minister. I will defer my question to Mr Wall.

**MR WALL:** Minister, there has obviously been a lot of work going into the preparedness of the workforce, particularly as the ACT government transitions out of providing services and looking for the private and not-for-profit sectors to pick up that work. What monitoring is being done as to the capacity of the market locally to meet those demands? Are you monitoring things like waiting times for families to get into things like occupational therapy or speech pathology?

**Dr Bourke:** Given that there are 212 providers eligible to register with the NDIS in the ACT you would have to say a broad range of providers is available to provide services in different areas, including speech pathology, as you have already mentioned, occupational therapy, physiotherapy, home care and a range of other services for the varying needs that people with disabilities may wish to utilise. I will go to the directorate to provide some more information specifically about that market testing that has been going on.

**Ms Howson:** Thank you, Minister. Mr Wall, I am going to defer this question to my colleagues who will be able to answer it in detail. We are certainly monitoring our service and as far as waiting lists are concerned I can tell you that Therapy ACT has no waiting list. That is a characteristic of the stepping down and moving of clients, the flow-through of clients, into the non-government sector.

The other area we are paying particular attention to is supporting our local not-for-profit organisations or charitable organisations where we have had previous funding agreements with them to ensure that their cash flow is supported by the phasing into the NDIS. We can talk specifically about that, but we are not directly collecting information about other providers. That will be an issue for the National Disability Insurance Agency and their concerns around the performance of the market, if you like, and the system overall.

Of course, our regulator is in play to monitor the capabilities of the disability organisations and providers against the disability standards so we can report on our work in that area. I will pass over to Richard.

**Mr Baumgart:** The market question is absolutely one for the National Disability Insurance Agency. However, having said that, some of the areas you spoke of in the allied health professionals area are ones where we had heard some months ago anecdotal evidence that there were considerable waiting lists in particular ones—primarily, it was speech pathology. However, as part of that, our NDIS task force, which Therese Gehrig heads up in one of her jobs, undertook a phone survey of all of the registered providers—that is, registered with the NDIA, not registered professions, because only some of the allied health professions are registered professions—and spoke with the vast majority of them. Some of them were sitting on the border, if I could say. A small number were registered with the ACT but waiting for there to be enough of a market for them to just cross over. We are talking even as close as Queanbeyan. They felt they still needed to see a bit more demand for them to cross the border.

Several of the other providers said they were full in terms of their capacity, and that is because, whilst we say there were 41 allied health providers, several of those were single-person trading, the equivalent of even two days a week even—0.4 of an FTE equivalent—right up to some of the larger organisations that have the full suite of allied health professionals. They were able to say that, “Look, we can prioritise and if you have anything, we would be more than happy”. Of course, we were not about to advertise on their behalf and we said, “Well, this is now a market model. You’ll need to make sure that you do that”.

Having said that, we were relatively satisfied that across the full spectrum of allied health professions there was a sufficient market to meet any of the urgent or critical responses that needed to be met. There has been—and it is acknowledged, particularly within speech pathology, that there can be—a longer time for lower priority or for less urgent supports.

We provided that information to the NDIA. In April, if I recall, they ran in combination with the national disability services—I think they actually led it—an evening for allied health professionals who were either currently in the market or

interested in the market to come along. They used that information we had undertaken at the end of March by doing all of those phone calls et cetera and were able to provide back to the market more broadly where they felt that there was higher demand and where there was lower demand.

As we proceed and this matures a bit further the NDIA will be in a better position to indicate the total demand from everyone's plan, if we put it that way, so they can say, "We can see this service, this support requirement is in their plans but it is not being activated." That is the term they are using, and that will send the appropriate market signals back out to the market.

**MR WALL:** What role or responsibility does Disability ACT have to ensure there is adequate capacity in the local market, or is that now wholly the responsibility of the NDIA?

**Mr Baumgart:** I would argue that it is not solely the NDIA yet but that it will be getting that way. We still have an appropriately sized team at Therapy ACT. We still have one more quarter for people to phase into the scheme. In fact, there are still some adults in their 20s and 30s who cannot enter the scheme yet, so we still have active cases and we are using that. That is a way also for us to be checking the market. We have had only, I think, nine referrals in the past three months for people to Therapy ACT. That was primarily in speech pathology, again. We still have a speech pathologist, an occupational therapist et cetera at Therapy ACT for at least the next three months for monitoring.

**Dr Bourke:** Of course the Child Development Service, which we established this year, is available for parents who may be concerned or want to have some short-term one or two goes at getting some initial problems sorted out or seeing whether a child really does need to engage with the NDIS.

**MR WALL:** But that service is no longer available once a child, for instance, has an official diagnosis and has been transitioned across to the NDIA system?

**Ms Howson:** That service is not a specialist and ongoing service; it is an early intervention service. We can talk more about that. In fact, we have some of our Child Development Service staff here if you would like to hear more about that service.

**MR WALL:** We have spoken about it at length, but by saying there is capacity over here does not necessarily mean that families going through the transition through to the NDIS are going to be able access it, so—

**Ms Howson:** If I could come back to your original question and the answer that Mr Baumgart gave, it is our responsibility through transition to continue to monitor the transition. But, ultimately, the responsibility for the market's response to the needs of our clients will be the NDIA's. The relationship we continue to have with the NDIA is quite an important one. What was described is a very appropriate role for us. We have shown throughout the course of the two-year transition that where we can see an issue emerging we will investigate it as thoroughly as we can and we will work with the NDIA to find a resolution around that. We will continue to that until we have achieved full implementation.

**MR WALL:** For the families experiencing a wait to get into services—we will continue to use speech pathology as that example—whilst the government continues to provide these services through Therapy ACT until the transition is complete, is there any scope for Therapy to pick up some of the unmet need or demand that exists in the marketplace at the moment until its closure next year?

**Ms Howson:** We are not convinced there is unmet need responding from the market. I think what Mr Baumgart was saying is a number of providers are at the point of stepping up to respond to the demand that is occurring. But we have been operating throughout the past few months and we have been accepting clients. We are at a point now where we are looking towards the closure of Therapy ACT and what is in the interests of clients in terms of their ongoing relationship with Therapy ACT. We are at a crossroads in that respect. But certainly until now, despite the fact that we have been hearing anecdotally about these issues around availability of service as Mr Baumgart said, we have only had nine referrals to Therapy ACT and no waiting list.

**MR WALL:** But if you are not accepting new clients largely then—

**Ms Howson:** Well, we have been while these issues have been evident. But I think it is appropriate for us to encourage the community to source their supports from providers that will be staying in the field for some time. It is in their interest to do that.

**Dr Bourke:** And to support those local businesses.

**MR HINDER:** Minister, it appears from your opening statement that the NDIS has been spectacularly, successfully implemented in the ACT. But I notice that at page 95 of budget paper 3 there is still funding for the task force. What is the focus of the task force for which funding is provided in the 2016-17 year?

**Dr Bourke:** We have talked a little bit around that. As you have heard, over 4,000 people have been found eligible for the NDIS and there are still a few people to enter the scheme in the first quarter of the next financial year. So we need to be able to provide support to clients and organisations during that transition over the following 12 months.

The NDIS Taskforce is going to support the sector through a range of initiatives including the your voice, your choice good life planning programs, which will provide support for people with disabilities, especially those who have not traditionally engaged with disability services, to prepare for the NDIS. Those programs will be delivered in partnership with Mental Illness Fellowship Victoria and local providers including Imagine More and Community Connections.

These programs are peer-led and include one-to-one support for people considering what a good life can look like for them or their family members, and assistance to develop a plan around that. The program has worked with over 338 people through community conversations, workshops and individually with people who may be socially isolated and with whom formal services have difficulty engaging. Engagements include the member of the your voice, your choice partnership regularly attending the Early Morning Centre on Northbourne Avenue, which you may be

familiar with, to make themselves available to clients of that service as well.

Another element will be supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders to benefit from the NDIS. Two outreach workers have been working with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island community based at Gugan Gulwan to navigate the NDIS in particularly practical ways. I think we have already got 102 Aboriginal members signed up for the NDIS. If you consider the proportion of Aboriginal people within the ACT population, that seems to be a reasonable level of engagement at this stage but it is always an area that I am particularly interested in, as you could imagine, to make sure that people and their families are supported to be able to access the NDIS.

The ready 4 program is supporting organisations to adapt to the new business environments that we have been talking about. Of course, the NDIS is taking the disability sector from effectively state-controlled, stage-managed—one end of the political ideological spectrum as you might experience it—out to the level of free-market capitalism where individual choice and individual empowerment are really the goal of the NDIS. It is to give people who have had no choice a choice, to give people who have had no voice, a voice, and to enable them to move from the periphery of our society into the centre.

That is the goal of the NDIS. It requires, effectively, an ideological shift for organisations and businesses to move from one end of that political ideological spectrum up to the other. That is why we are helping with the ready 4 program, so that they can fully understand the costs of service deliveries at unit prices, which some NGOs have been unfamiliar with in the past. They can then work to use those to claim against individual support plans and make themselves viable organisations. As we have talked about in the previous discussion, we want to have a viable disability sector in the ACT to provide the services within the model that we want to the people who need them.

**THE CHAIR:** Ms Burch, a supplementary and then you, Mr Doszpot?

**MS BURCH:** Is the task force working down from the directorate into sector support or is it working back up into the NDIA and the commonwealth on the final negotiations? What is the spectrum of that?

**Ms Howson:** We are still engaged in both ends of that spectrum. I might ask Therese to talk to the program for the next 12 months and Maureen can speak about what is happening in terms of bilateral discussion with the federal government.

**Ms Gehrig:** The task force has been working, as the Director-General said, on both ends of the spectrum but particularly in supporting the sector. We have been fortunate to have received funding from the commonwealth through the sector development fund where we have worked with individual organisations to be business ready. Through that, the 72 organisations have been supported through a business investment package to actually change their service model as we move forward. That has been a really positive program.

The minister has just reflected on a range of activities that we are still delivering through until December. That is the your voice, your choice, the read for, the opening

doors project. Our priority for the next year moving forward will be looking at developing the workforce. We know that through the NDIS the funding from the beginning of trial to full scheme in 2019-2020 nationally almost doubles. There will be a need for additional workforce. From the commonwealth sector development fund we will be seeking to actually look at how we can prioritise growing the disability workforce within the ACT.

We know that the majority of our workforce are older, they are women, they are part-time. So how do we actually make working in the disability sector something that is attractive and somewhere where we can perhaps attract those who are looking to return to the workforce? How do we get Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to support their own clients? And how do we get refugees in? It is just that flexibility as we move forward.

We do know that we need to retain our existing workforce. It has been really positive that as government is exiting service delivery, a large number of former Disability ACT staff are now actually employed by the non-government providers supporting clients in the community. That will be the main focus as we move forward over the next 12 months.

**MS BURCH:** Are community sector and cross-government agencies on that task force or is it just internal? Is it an across-government agent group?

**Ms Howson:** Ms Burch, it is the same configuration that we have had over the past two years. It is a number of officials from different parts of government working with the non-government sector.

**Dr Bourke:** Going back to that area of workforce development, I can say that yesterday we received notice that an extra \$1.3 million will be provided by the commonwealth for further workforce development in the ACT. I might get Ms Sheehan to say a little more about what that program encompasses.

**Ms Sheehan:** The ongoing negotiations with the commonwealth are important because there are actually three players in the environment still. The commonwealth have established the National Disability Insurance Agency but funding is still coming from states and territories at the rate of 60 per cent of total contributions. So the states and territories, and Minister Bourke as the disability minister, are still very much involved in the way the scheme will be rolled out, not just in the ACT but across all of Australia.

That means that we do still have regular bilateral discussions and negotiations with commonwealth officials from the department of social security. In fact, we had a bilateral meeting last week which was where Therese Gehrig and I concluded those negotiations for the extra funding for workforce development.

The other important things that we have been negotiating through those bilateral forums were still around what would be the cash and in-kind contributions for the final year of our trial. There were some quite complicated negotiations—possibly unnecessarily complicated negotiations—that we had to go through around cross-billing for people over 65, people under 65 and so on.

What is really important in continuing that dialogue with the commonwealth at this stage is New South Wales beginning their full rollout on 1 July. It is important that any ongoing concerns that we had in the ACT are not lost because New South Wales, which is so much larger than us, is taking the attention of the National Disability Insurance Agency. Our link to the officials at the department of social security is a great one to make sure that our interests are not lost.

In addition to that, we still have maintained the project board of directors-general of the Health, Education and Community Services Directorates. This has been overseeing the transition. On a quarterly basis, the National Disability Insurance Agency participates in that forum as well just to make sure that we have got that proper buy-in that we need for successful implementation.

**THE CHAIR:** A supplementary from Mr Doszpot and then a new question, Mr Doszpot.

**MR DOSZPOT:** I will take the supplementary, Mr Chairman, and I will pass my substantive to Mr Wall. The supplementary is in regards to the interaction of disability-related issues across various government agencies. There are students with complex needs and challenging behaviours and there are children with a disability, including autism, who are in mainstream schools. What involvement do Community Services, Disability and Therapy have with Education in addressing the issues that children with disability have in these mainstream schools?

**Ms Howson:** Mr Doszpot, we are in transition in relation to our relationship with the Education Directorate and supporting them. This budget reflects some of that transition. So I will ask Mr Baumgart to speak specifically about the transition of funding from an appropriation that was in the past associated with Therapy ACT and is moving to the education and training directorate. In addition to that, the newly formed Child Development Service will continue to have quite a strong relationship with the education department. Ms Sheehan can talk to that.

**MR DOSZPOT:** My question basically is: where does the expertise lie in addressing these issues? Is it the department of education that is expected to have, if you like, the overall strategy for addressing issues that these children face—and the teachers and the associated people involved?

**Ms Howson:** Yes.

**MR DOSZPOT:** Does that strategy or direction come from within Education or is it part of Disability and Therapy?

**Ms Howson:** My sense around this is that it will be recalibrated. There will be a shift in that partnership. But because we have established this Child Development Service for children up to 12 years of age, particularly children with autism, we will both have a partnership around supporting outcomes for families—both the Community Services Directorate and the education and training directorate.

Furthermore, the needs of families in my view cannot only be characterised by an

identified disability in a child. Certainly, with the opportunity of my moving to the education and training directorate shortly I will be putting a strong emphasis on the partnership between the Community Services Directorate and the education and training directorate to support families in their communities.

We are not stepping away from supporting families that have children with disabilities but there have been some shifts in appropriation. Consequently, our roles and responsibilities are changing. Would you like to hear a little bit more about the Child Development Service and its relationship with education?

**MR DOSZPOT:** Time permitting, but obviously you have answered my question regarding the role. I understand that it is a changing environment from that point of view. Thank you.

**Ms Howson:** Thank you.

**MR DOSZPOT:** Perhaps you could talk to it for just a minute or two.

**Mr Baumgart:** Absolutely, I will keep it brief. I will expand slightly on what Ms Howson just said. The Education Directorate has reprioritised or reordered some of the way in which we would have undertaken previously some of the mainstream adjustments for therapy assessments within schools. With that transfer of funding to the Education Directorate, it is under the director of student engagement who used actually to be a senior manager of Therapy ACT, I would add. So, absolutely, there are some significant skills in that area, being an allied health professional herself. Several other Therapy ACT staff have also obtained employment in that part of the Education Directorate. That is something that they will absolutely be taking on and reordering in the way in which they carry out things in light of an NDIS environment.

With the Child Development Service assessments up to six years of age, seven and eight-year-olds were previously undiagnosed. That is probably the critical area because zero to six-year-old it is before they start school. When they start in kindy if they did not go to preschool or if they come across as kinders and year 1s and they have not had a previous diagnosis, then that is where absolutely the Education Directorate and the Child Development Service will be working very closely together on autism assessments up to 12 and including 12 years of age.

It will be absolutely through those and, in fact, Education has provided some funding back to CSD for the Child Development Service through some teachers, early childhood teachers, to work in early intervention through the child and family centres and the Child Development Service. So there will definitely be links through all of those and some of the Education staff are going to actually be operating at least for the next six months from the Holder centre—the allied health that they have—so that we can make sure that those links are there.

**MR DOSZPOT:** Thank you.

**THE CHAIR:** Mr Doszpot's substantive question rests with Mr Wall and then a new question from Ms Burch.



**MR WALL:** Thank you, chair. I might get Mr Hubbard up because it is a question relating to numbers. We will pre-empt it and give him a chance to come up. For everyone's benefit, it refers to page 14 of budget statement G. Under "budget technical adjustments" there is a line item there: "revised ACT government contribution to NDIS". There is 10.695 million in the 2016-17 year, but it seems that there is money then coming back to the territory in the 2017-18 year. Could you perhaps walk us through how those numbers are worked and what is happening there?

**Mr Hubbard:** Thank you for the question, Mr Wall. We have been working pretty closely with Treasury, and of course Maureen and Therese have been working very closely with that team as a working group at the national level to talk about, basically, the amount of money that we are actually going to put into the NDIS. The money is made up from a whole range of services in different directorates. Initially, when the negotiations happened in, I think, 2013-14, there was a modelling of who would put in what amount of money and when. What we have been trying to do over the past three years, based on the modelling, was to say, "Once all the directorates have put into the arrangement, either in cash or in-kind to meet the total amount for the agreement, what is the gap?" There was always going to be a gap, or potentially there was always going to be a gap, depending on what cash and in-kind went in and also the total number of clients going into the scheme.

Just to cut to the chase: this number here is an amount of money which is the difference between what directorates can put into the agreement, cash and in-kind, and the total that is required. It is recognised that this year there will be a shortfall of about 10.6. Because CSD managed that payment to the commonwealth on behalf of the whole government, it has appeared here. Mainly Education and Health provide us with money. We invoice them quarterly and then we put the payment together and send it off to the commonwealth. The following year, as you see there, the money goes the other way.

**MR WALL:** Yes.

**Mr Hubbard:** Therese, of course, has got these numbers—she lives these numbers—so she can tell you a bit more about that. It is really the amount that comes in through the Medicare levy that actually supplements the gap in between. Therese, I do not know if you want to go to the actual numbers each year? Would that help?

**MR WALL:** Yes, I would appreciate that. I am just trying to get a handle on it. We have got the 10.6 going out this year. We get 10.6 back next year, but then in 2018-19 it is estimated at 22.2 million going out. It is just about where it all comes from, which bucket and how.

**Ms Gehrig:** All Australians are paying the additional 0.5 per cent of the Medicare levy, and then that funding will flow into the NDIS. The way that it flows is based on the number of eligible participants in the scheme in each of the given years. So in the first year it would be 10 per cent. You have to reach a 50 per cent threshold against your target before you can access more than half the money. Then when you get the 100 per cent in, you get the full amount.

Just to give you an idea of the flow of the access to the disability care Australia fund,

in the previous federal budget papers it was 1.4 million in the first year, 12.4 million and then 43 million. The reality is that is about 15 million a year, so 14 million in the first year, and it keeps growing. You actually get an overpayment, as shown here in 2017-18, which is the offset. As well as the very different flows against the Medicare levy, on page 15, if you look at the repayment of the national disability special purpose payment, you will see in 2017-18 that it is a negative 25 million.

**MR WALL:** Yes.

**Ms Gehrig:** At the moment the commonwealth provides the states with a payment for disability services. As participants enter the scheme, we would then repay those funds back to the commonwealth. So we have only got a small amount for 2016-17, but when we have all of our eligible participants in the scheme, rather than the commonwealth giving the state the special purpose payment the commonwealth will make that payment directly to the NDIS.

**MR WALL:** What is then expected as far as the contributions from the territory go for the 2019-20 financial year? There is nothing in that line for the budget?

**Ms Gehrig:** The Productivity Commission will be undertaking a review of the NDIS in 2017, and that was always forecast, so based on the evidence of trial and the number of participants in the scheme. Through our heads of agreement, which we have signed, we anticipate that the combined contribution will be 342 million in 2019-20, but we will need to await the Productivity Commission's review as we move to national population share.

**MR WALL:** Where in the budget then is provision for that payment being made at this point?

**Ms Gehrig:** It has not, pending the Productivity Commission review.

**Mr Baumgart:** I am now venturing into Mr Hubbard's area, but the states and territories, with the Grants Commission, will then look at the wonderful horizontal fiscal equalisation arrangements. They will need to look at incorporating the GST revenue and other payments. That will then be one for ACT Treasury to work with us on, but we do need that review before we can get into it.

**Ms Howson:** I think essentially the accounting treatment is that we will not reflect anything that is not in the commonwealth budget papers. It is not in the commonwealth budget papers; therefore it is not in ours.

**THE CHAIR:** Ms Burch, a new question. Just remember, members, we have also got veterans and seniors to be done by 12.30.

**MS BURCH:** Just a quick question for either Ms Sheehan or Mr Hubbard regarding commonwealth funding negotiations. Then I want to go to the Child Development Service and talk about that. With those ongoing commitments financially, we are secure in our obligations? The commonwealth is not trying to re-think or re-guess our obligations? It is probably a hypothetical, but are we anxious about a greater draw on our resources to any change?

**Ms Sheehan:** No, I do not believe that we are. There has been nothing in the regular bilateral discussions that has indicated that the commonwealth are trying to shy away from their obligations.

**MS BURCH:** It is just that every now and again you see in the media a level of anxiety, I think, as different states start to transition.

**Ms Sheehan:** Minister Bourke can talk about the way in which the state and territory ministers have been working with the commonwealth minister at the ministerial councils and the commonwealth's ongoing commitment to the NDIS.

**MS BURCH:** I am happy to be assured.

**Dr Bourke:** I think it was very clear at the minco in Adelaide earlier this year when all disability ministers from states and territories across the country—

**MS BURCH:** Were very clear?

**Dr Bourke:** were very clear with the commonwealth that we did not want to see total control to the commonwealth of either eligibility or the level of the package that might be provided for particular people, given that we are stumping up such a significant proportion of the funds that support the NDIS. But also, Ms Burch, if those people are not eligible for a package or are excluded under spurious reasons from the NDIS then they are pushed back into the rest of our support systems within our state and territory jurisdictions. Everybody—conservative and Labor states and territories—was as one on this strong position with the commonwealth that we want no overarching commonwealth control over the levers that adjust the outcomes of the NDIS.

**MS BURCH:** Thank you. You have made mention of the Child Development Service. As we transition and get to the end of the year, Therapy ACT changes, with the transition fully in, but we will continue to need early intervention services and those referrals and assessments. How is that going to work?

**Dr Bourke:** The Child Development Service is already up and running over in Holder, as you may be aware. That provides a range of allied health professionals, speech pathologists, occupational therapists and physiotherapists, but also child health specialist doctors, paediatricians, people from the education and training directorate, people from Health and people from CSD, working together to deliver an outcome for families and their children. The usual eligibility is nought to six, but for kids with autism spectrum I think it is up to 12 that they can go along and have an assessment. There are also going to be drop-in sessions available at our child and family centres in your electorate, of course, down there in Brindabella.

**MS BURCH:** Ms Jordaan is waiting to say something.

**Mr Hubbard:** The minister is doing very well!

**Dr Bourke:** You might have been down in Tuggeranong, of course, at the child and

family centre.

**MS BURCH:** That was going to be one of my other questions. Whilst it is located in Holder—

**Dr Bourke:** There are drop-in sessions available—

**MS BURCH:** To increase that accessibility—

**Dr Bourke:** in the child and family centres, to spread it out. Of course, this is going to be an on-demand service. There will be no fees; it is free. In fact, that was one of the very interesting things when I was being interviewed by the media. They were astonished that we were providing it for free.

**MS BURCH:** Child and family centre services and Therapy ACT?

**Dr Bourke:** Yes.

**MS BURCH:** ACT government generally is pretty goddamned good. Ms Jordaan, did you want to add something?

**Dr Bourke:** Ms Jordaan will be able to tell us a lot more.

**Ms Jordaan:** To follow on from what the minister has said, we are providing services in the community and linking very closely with the child and family centres to provide an integrated service, because it is really important that families are linked in within the service system. It is not only an early intervention model to identify the child's developmental need; it is also to link and support the family to be able to access the broader services, universal and mainstream services, that we offer through our child and family centres.

**MS BURCH:** Is it well understood? It is a new service. It has been going since January, so six months.

**Ms Jordaan:** That is right.

**MS BURCH:** Is the service sector understanding it, and are the families understanding its availability, do you think?

**Ms Jordaan:** I think so. It was really important to get our website up. We do have all that information on the website. As the senior manager, I have visited over 26 stakeholders in the first six months to meet with areas of the sector. I have met with Education and, importantly, the health sector as well, and provided the relevant information, for example, on the Healthnet, which over 1,000 GPs access. So they are able to understand what the service offers. That has been a really important part of the role.

**Mr Baumgart:** It will continue to develop. Obviously some parts of the model have developed further than others and are now at true integration; whereas others are still simply at collocation. We will continue to progress that. With the educational

psychologists, the child health medical officers and community paediatricians who are also located at Holder, the word is obviously continuing to get out and expand.

**MS BURCH:** That really is an integrated service and not just sharing the copy room?

**Mr Baumgart:** It depends. This particular part might be simply collocation and it is going to take some time for us to develop that further.

**MS BURCH:** Yes.

**Mr Baumgart:** Whereas this particular service—whatever that is—is now a much more integrated service, whether that is trans-disciplinary assessment for the intake which has progressed considerably so that it now involves health officers and people who are from the CSD in together. Whereas some of the other programs are just CSD operated. Obviously we will continue to expand that.

**MS BURCH:** Do you share your data across them: disability data, therapy data, school data maybe? That is a work in progress?

**Mr Baumgart:** That is a work in progress. I should not be jumping in, Elise, but I know that you have got officers on the front counter, for example, who are now in both systems.

**Ms Jordaan:** That is right.

**Mr Baumgart:** So we use one system.

**Ms Jordaan:** That is right. We were not able to integrate the data systems.

**MS BURCH:** There are probably privacy restrictions in some.

**Ms Jordaan:** We are looking at some information-sharing protocols, but we have trained staff to be able to use ACTPAS, which is the health care system analysis system. They actually have both screens available so that when somebody enters the service—the client walks in—it is an integrated service. The phone lines are triaged. From the user point of view, it is an integrated service.

**MS BURCH:** It is a single entry point for once somebody comes in.

**Ms Jordaan:** That is right.

**Mr Baumgart:** A single entry point.

**Ms Sheehan:** As you can see from the budget papers, we have created a new area, which is strategy participation and early intervention. In an organisational sense we have brought together in one place the Child Development Service, child and family centres and all of our community participation activities, the idea being that we are trying to build a strong, resilient community. Families with children that need services need more than a particular clinical service. They need support for their family from child and family centres, from mainstream services, and then they need all the

community development activities that make the community strong. It is not that you need a service; you just need to be able to participate in the community in the way other people do.

**MS BURCH:** I imagine a referral or an assessment for a young child with a development delay is to get them on track, but there are parenting skills about strengthening families and a whole range of other activities in there as well.

**Ms Sheehan:** That is right. The family needs support as well as the child needing a service. That is why bringing those services together is the best way that we can support those services and that community participation.

**MS BURCH:** It sounds great.

**THE CHAIR:** A supplementary, Mr Doszpot?

**MR DOSZPOT:** No.

**THE CHAIR:** Moving on—

**Dr Bourke:** Just before we move on, I have got a small addendum to make, if I may?

**THE CHAIR:** Yes.

**Dr Bourke:** I just want to clarify the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participants in the NDIS as at 31 March 2016. There were 149.

**THE CHAIR:** Members, by 12:40 we have also got to cover veterans and seniors. With that, I will defer my question to Mr Hanson.

**MR HANSON:** Minister, in your role as veterans affairs minister or minister assisting veterans, whatever the title is, could you tell me what you have done?

**Dr Bourke:** What I was looking forward to doing shortly after I became minister was to attend the ministerial council on veterans affairs which was scheduled for February this year, and that would have been a good opportunity for me to hear about what is happening in veterans affairs around the country at both the commonwealth and the state and territory levels. Regrettably, Minister Robert, the commonwealth minister, resigned on the Friday and that minico was cancelled. It has not been rescheduled unfortunately, so that opportunity to gain an oversight—

**MR HANSON:** Other than you were going to a meeting?

**Dr Bourke:** If I might just finish my answer.

**MS BURCH:** Mr Hanson, could the minister—

**Dr Bourke:** If I might just finish my answer.

**MR HANSON:** That was just a political.

**MS BURCH:** No, that was the minister responding to your question.

**MR HANSON:** He did not go to a meeting.

**Dr Bourke:** Chair!

**THE CHAIR:** Ms Burch, please.

**Dr Bourke:** Thank you. Anyway I will just finish answering the question.

**MS BURCH:** We have done this.

**Dr Bourke:** If I had been able to go to—

**THE CHAIR:** Order please, Ms Burch. Would you be quiet. Mr Hanson, would you finish your question.

**MS BURCH:** Under standing order 234 I might put a challenge to the visitor if you continue to stop me when Mr Hanson interrupts a minister mid-response.

**THE CHAIR:** It is my job to run the meeting. You are entitled to run the standing orders any time you want, but you also need to be orderly. Minister, would you like to continue. Mr Hanson, if you would let him finish.

**Dr Bourke:** Thank you.

**MS BURCH:** One more interjection and you are—

**THE CHAIR:** Ms Burch, would you come to order please. You do not run this meeting.

**MS BURCH:** Neither do you at times.

**THE CHAIR:** Ms Burch, I do not think anybody has ever been named or warned in a committee meeting but I am happy to do it if you continue in this manner. Minister, would you like to finish your answer?

**Dr Bourke:** Thank you. As I was saying to Mr Hanson, that would have been an opportunity very early in my handling of this portfolio to gain some insight into the initiatives which are undertaken in other states and territories by my ministerial colleagues and their directorates. Unfortunately, that did not happen.

In the interim I, of course, have been briefed by my directorate officials. I have met with the ministerial Veterans Advisory Council and I have been to a number of veterans events as well as met with representatives from veterans organisations, including the 90th meeting of the ACT RSL which we both attended and spoke at.

**MR HANSON:** Beyond a meeting that you did not go to, a briefing that you got and a meeting that you did go to, what has actually been rolled out for veterans? What

programs exist? What funding have you got? What actions are being taken? Yes you got a briefing and there is a meeting you failed to attend and there is a meeting you went to. What has actually happened? What is happening?

**Dr Bourke:** I must reject your characterisation of a meeting that I failed to attend. I did not fail to attend. The commonwealth minister, for reasons that I will not go into, lost his portfolio and his directorate cancelled the meeting.

**MR HANSON:** So there was a meeting—

**Dr Bourke:** So I will not accept the characterisation from you, Mr Hanson.

**MR HANSON:** Sure. I—

**Dr Bourke:** Mr Hanson, I will not accept the characterisation from you that I failed to attend a meeting. That is absolutely outrageous and I would ask that you withdraw it.

**MR HANSON:** Sure, I am happy to say the meeting was cancelled.

**Dr Bourke:** No, I would ask you that you withdraw it.

**THE CHAIR:** Minister Bourke, you ask me to do that. If you are offended by it, you go to the chair.

**MR HANSON:** The meeting did not occur. I am very happy to say that the meeting did not occur. I accept that. Other than a meeting that did not occur, a briefing that you got, another meeting that you did go to, to be entirely accurate, can you tell me what has happened? What have you done?

**Dr Bourke:** Thank you, and I shall ask our directorate officials to inform you of all the activities that we have undertaken in veterans affairs.

**MR HANSON:** Okay then, just do that.

**Dr Bourke:** Ms Sheehan.

**Ms Sheehan:** One of the main roles of state and territory ministers with respect to veterans is to communicate on behalf of veterans with the commonwealth which controls the funding for veterans outside other mainstream services for older people that veterans might use. What was very important was that—although the minister was unable to directly tell the commonwealth minister the concerns of ACT veterans—he had already consulted with ACT veterans about what their main areas of concern are with respect to commonwealth-funded services.

The areas that the minister has been strongly advocating on behalf of ACT veterans are, first of all, the Department of Veterans' Affairs health cards. ACT veterans are finding that they are waiting for excessive periods of time before they can get access to medical specialists. Of course, because of the conditions that require them to see medical specialists they are very concerned about that and they often have to travel outside the ACT to visit specialists in Wagga, Albury or Sydney. The view of



ACT veterans is that having a veterans affairs card should give them priority access to specialist treatments rather than simply being a payment system. It is very important that the commonwealth understands this and responds.

Another very important issue for veterans that the minister has been strongly advocating is access to aged-care facilities, and what veterans have found is that they are currently having to navigate quite a tricky system, sometimes involving in excess of 100 pages of documentation that they have to go through before they are able to be assessed as being eligible and then receive services in aged-care facilities. The council that advises the minister—and the minister then advocating on behalf of their interests—is advocating that the Department of Veterans' Affairs and other commonwealth agencies actually work to reduce that type of administrative burden on veterans and their families.

The other thing that veterans are particularly concerned about—and it relates back to their access to health services—is that they are looking to have veterans liaison officers in all of the major health facilities. The commonwealth has not been providing that in all of the hospitals and veterans, through the minister, have been lobbying very strongly for that as well.

As I said, the important thing for state and territory veterans ministers to do is to listen to what veterans are saying locally. State and territory veterans ministers do not control the funding levers that the commonwealth control, and they do work very hard on access to mainstream services and, because the minister is the minister for seniors as well, all of the work that has been happening on behalf of seniors in the ACT goes to the benefit of veterans. But with respect to that control of those payment systems that the commonwealth controls, the most important thing to do is listen to veterans and then feed back to the commonwealth all of the concerns that our local veterans have with receipt of services.

**MR HANSON:** A very good answer. Thank you very much. Very informative.

**Dr Bourke:** Mr Matthews.

**Mr Matthews:** Another area of joint activity has been the issue of homeless veterans. In a meeting of housing ministers back in March in Brisbane there was an issue raised by the New South Wales minister for housing, Mr Hazzard, about better understanding the dimension of homelessness amongst veterans, including younger veterans that have been returning from more recent conflict. At that meeting there was a very wideranging discussion about the particular needs of veterans, including coordinated support and the effects of trauma and a joint commitment formed by those housing ministers to do some further work cooperatively with the commonwealth in that area.

As a result of that meeting, housing ministers have written to the Hon Dan Tehan, the Minister for Veterans' Affairs, seeking agreement between the commonwealth and the states and territories to undertake a joint research study to better understand the full extent of the issue and how homelessness is experienced particularly by veterans and to look at how more targeted responses can be delivered. That will be further discussed at future housing ministers meeting and there has been cross-office

coordination between the minister for housing and the minister for veterans affairs in this area.

**MR HANSON:** Thank you very much for your answer. It is very much appreciated.

**THE CHAIR:** Mr Hinder has a supplementary and I have a small supplementary as well.

**MR HINDER:** I have a supplementary for the minister. From conversation with you, I understand you have been exceptionally busy organising for the Vietnam Veterans Day in August, in particular preparation for the 50th anniversary of Long Tan. Can you give us some advice about what you and your directorate have prepared or are doing to help celebrate that milestone?

**Dr Bourke:** Apart from the breakfast that we are organising to support the day, we are liaising with both the Vietnam veterans federation and the association to undertake commemorative flower planting in Northbourne Avenue. This is a commonwealth and national issue of importance as well; we are working with the commonwealth and the War Memorial to deliver an appropriate and wonderful commemoration.

**THE CHAIR:** What statistics does the department collect on veterans? Or is that the purview of the feds?

**Dr Bourke:** Statistical collection is primarily a role for the departments of veterans affairs, but I will check with the directorate to see whether there is anything specifically we collect.

**Ms Sheehan:** I am not aware that we are specifically collecting statistics on veterans, but if we provide a service we keep information about services that we provide. And with the consultative committee that advises the minister on veterans issues, we obviously record the issues that they raise so that the minister can represent those issues on behalf of veterans to the commonwealth. There is certainly a record of concerns raised—rather than a statistical collection.

**Ms Howson:** I might just add, though, if you do not mind, Mr Smyth, that we are aware, through other data services, that there are approximately 20,000 veterans living here in the ACT.

**THE CHAIR:** In the accountability indicators for this output class, there does not seem to be a mention of veterans. How many occasions of service have been provided to veterans in those—

**Ms Howson:** We are not collecting that information at this point.

**THE CHAIR:** If you are trying to advise the commonwealth but you are not collecting actual data, how do you give the advice? Is it based on anecdotal evidence?

**Dr Bourke:** Based on the advice that is provided by veterans organisations, in particular the ministerial council, and representations that I receive from individual veterans. Of course, DVA is a significant commonwealth bureaucracy which has more

than adequate information and data-gathering capabilities to be able to provide the kind of information that we might require at a state level to implement policy or consider various issues.

**THE CHAIR:** Is it possible to work out how many occasions of service we have provided to veterans?

**Dr Bourke:** I am not sure that that would actually be possible, but I will seek advice.

**Ms Howson:** We could certainly take that question on notice in the context of the health system, for example.

**THE CHAIR:** Thank you. Mr Hinder, a new question?

**MR HINDER:** Minister, the ACT's first seniors health roundtable was held in May. Can you give the committee a rundown on how that came about?

**Dr Bourke:** The seniors health roundtable was an opportunity for seniors from various organisations to provide advice and talk about issues that were particularly relevant to seniors here in the ACT. I shall get Mrs Moore to provide some elaboration on the findings and fruit of that particular roundtable.

**Mrs Moore:** The actual roundtable was an action that was identified in the active ageing framework that was launched in November last year. It really came from feedback from the last older people's assembly that health really requires some dedicated focus and opportunity for seniors in the community to really discuss that issue in depth. So we had the forum. It pulled together around 90 people from across the spectrum of service providers and also seniors in the community. A professional report is being developed. We had scribes on the day. We are just waiting for that report to be finalised; we expect it to be out next week, by the end of June.

Some of the key things that came out were around more opportunities for seniors to participate and have more choice over the health decisions that affect them. There were some really great, innovative ideas around how we use things like fit bits as diagnostic tools to support seniors, and also some great ideas around things like intergenerational playgroup-type activities where older people can get active and benefit from the same kinds of programs that we apply with younger people. It is really looking at how we can get older people active in the community.

**MR HINDER:** What sort of people attended the roundtable?

**Mrs Moore:** The Ministerial Advisory Council on Ageing had a role in leading the development of the planning for the forum. They brought together a working group to develop the forum. Some of the key agencies that were represented were the Council on the Ageing and the LGBTIQ Advisory Council. I think ADACAS was represented. It was really trying to get a cross-section of organisations that work closely with seniors and have a good idea of what the key areas of concerns were for those older people in our community.

**MR HINDER:** Was there any feedback? Was it successful? Were follow-up issues

identified?

**Mrs Moore:** There will be. In the report we are expecting to bring together a range of recommendations for government to consider. In terms of feedback on the actual event, the feedback was that it was very positive. It was very well attended, and people really appreciated the opportunity to delve into specific areas of interest. But until we have the report back, we are not in a position to be able to identify what those recommendations might be.

**Dr Bourke:** I also had a meeting with the former ACT senior of the year, Professor Greg Tegart, who gave me a briefing about his work in looking at how we can better utilise technology to support people as they age—seniors. I think he is in his 80s, and he was very keen that we should be looking at the capabilities within the ACT to develop a local industry but not building widgets. That was what he was very keen to tell me. It is not about building the widgets; it is about coming up with the ideas of what older seniors want and what can help them to make their lives better and then using that as a specification to get better things to happen. It was a great discussion. It crossed over a couple of the different portfolios and it was a pleasure to have.

**MR HINDER:** Thanks, minister.

**THE CHAIR:** Mr Doszpot, a new question?

**MR DOSZPOT:** I have a supplementary and then my question. The supplementary is this. One of the seniors roundtables I attended raised the ongoing issues in relation to the Canberra Seniors Centre at Turner. That has been going on, I think, for about three to four years under Mr Rattenbury and Mr Gentleman. I am seeking your advice as to what is the latest development on the proposed exchange. I believe the department or the LDA would like to acquire their current location, and a new location has been sought for them. Can I get an update on that?

**Dr Bourke:** Yes; let us organise an update. Are you able to provide that?

**Ms Sheehan:** Thank you, Mr Doszpot, for that question. The centre itself is owned by the organisation rather than the ACT government, but over the years the ACT government has put considerable funds into looking at redevelopment opportunities and identifying a site. We can consult with our colleagues in the economic development directorate to find out where the redevelopment is up to but, as I say, the site belongs to the organisation itself.

**MR DOSZPOT:** I am well aware of that. I am also well aware that there have been offers made to them but still nothing has eventuated. This has been going on, to the best of my recollection, for nearly four years. They are very frustrated by the lack of advancement. They have a lot of members. They cannot really operate at an optimum level because they are restricted by the amount of space they have compared to how many members they have. That is my supplementary. I would appreciate—

**THE CHAIR:** And commentary.

**Ms Sheehan:** With the minister's agreement, we can certainly get that information

from economic development directorate.

**Dr Bourke:** Of course.

**MR DOSZPOT:** I appreciate it; thank you. The other issues that concern the seniors that I am talking to relate to the seniors card. Did the directorate consider creating a means test to put in place restrictions on the seniors card instead of just a blanket ban on those aged between 60 and 65?

**Dr Bourke:** It is not quite a blanket ban, as you appreciate, Mr Doszpot; it is a progressive scheme which advances year by year. This was a recommendation from COTA to the ACT government to better target the seniors card and concessions in general. I know that some people have suggested a means test for the seniors card, but we probably need to pause for a moment and consider the operational costs in implementing a seniors card that would be means-tested as opposed to the scheme which we have introduced, which is probably in line with many other jurisdictions in the country, of moving concessions up to age 65 from 60.

I realise that some people are not supportive of the idea. Of course, it is a responsibility for the Chief Minister as Treasurer, because he has responsibility for the concessions review, and its outcome and its implementation in the budget. I will get Ms Sheehan to talk a bit more about the issue.

**Ms Sheehan:** Thank you. There are two things to keep in mind, which are slightly separate: one is the availability of concessions to seniors; the second thing is the seniors card. The seniors card itself is actually a card that enables concessions with private traders. That is the great benefit of it, of course. In that sense, it is not a question of whether the ACT government wants to put a means test on who can have access to those concessions—

**MR DOSZPOT:** Doesn't it relate to concessions regarding government utilities and government transport?

**Ms Sheehan:** That is the issue of concessions in general. The ACT government determines a policy on the availability of concessions, as the minister was describing. The purpose of the seniors card is not to grant a government concession; it is to enable seniors to receive discounts on services in the private community. It is actually a great benefit to seniors to have access to cheaper goods and services but, in addition, it potentially generates greater economic activity: if the seniors were unable to afford the higher cost item, they would not spend their money at all, whereas if they can have the item at a concession they do use those traders. The card itself is really a way of helping seniors get private sector goods and services at a lower rate.

**MR DOSZPOT:** I can understand that, but if we move beyond that to concession changes that are mooted for utilities and transport concessions that seniors used to get, that is part of the issue that I am talking about.

**Ms Sheehan:** The minister has already addressed the question that the government already did a review of concessions. The government made a decision on that, and the budget announced an additional \$35 million a year, I think, over four years for

concessions availability in the ACT.

**Dr Bourke:** The intersection point—

**MR DOSZPOT:** An additional \$35 million, did you say?

**Ms Howson:** Can I just interrupt here? This is not our policy responsibility, Mr Doszpot. It would probably be better if this advice came from the economic development directorate.

**MR DOSZPOT:** I partly agree with you—

**Ms Howson:** Sorry, Treasury.

**MR DOSZPOT:** I agree with you that the responsibility for it is with Treasury, but also we have a minister who is representing the senior community. As such, I would like to see a bit more action out of the minister in listening to the community and the concerns they have with aspects of the—

**Dr Bourke:** Well—

**MR DOSZPOT:** Let me finish—of the concession cuts that are occurring. You say, “Well, it is not my problem; it is the Chief Minister’s.” The community is hurting. There are members of the community who have taken retirement at 60 and who have based those decisions on certain concessions that are available. Things are tough. For them to be cut—I think it takes a bit more of an assessment of their situation than has been given.

**Dr Bourke:** We started out talking about the seniors card. Is that what we are still talking about or have you morphed on to a few other things here? I am just a bit confused here.

**MR DOSZPOT:** We are talking seniors. We are talking about seniors in general. You do not want to talk about seniors in general?

**THE CHAIR:** The minister is just asking for clarity.

**Dr Bourke:** I am just trying to understand the scope of the question.

**MR DOSZPOT:** We have moved on from the card.

**Dr Bourke:** We have moved on from the card?

**MR DOSZPOT:** Yes.

**Dr Bourke:** I was just going to return to the card for a moment, if I may?

**THE CHAIR:** Can we just work it out. Are you saying that you would prefer Mr Doszpot to ask Treasury about the concessions or is that something where we could get a coordinated response?

**Dr Bourke:** I am not going to be supported in my answers from my directorate for specific answers around the application of the changes to the concession, because it is not the responsibility of this directorate; it is the responsibility of another directorate. If we want to talk in general, we are perfectly happy to talk about things in general, but we are not going to be able to provide specific advice, and I understood that was the purpose of an estimates committee.

**MR DOSZPOT:** I will leave it with the request that you, as the minister, take on the concerns that the community has, including COTA, regarding the cutting of concessions. I will leave it at that and hope that you will take up the challenge as well as raising it with Treasury.

**Dr Bourke:** As a policy aspect, I would reject the characterisation of the concessions changes as a cut. I would put it back to you and say that these concessions have now been better targeted than they were before. I do not believe that any concessions have actually been—

**MR DOSZPOT:** Tell that to the ones who lost them: that they were not cut.

**Dr Bourke:** If I could finish my answer—I do not believe that concessions can be correctly characterised as being cut. They are being better targeted to those most in need—

**MR DOSZPOT:** So the definition—

**THE CHAIR:** No. It is not a discussion.

**Dr Bourke:** which is the advice I have received from COTA. If you want me to listen to organisations and heed their advice—they said, “Better target them”. That is what the government has done. Now you seem to be telling me that I should not have listened to that advice. I am a bit confused here.

**MR DOSZPOT:** You know exactly what I am telling you.

**MR HINDER:** A senior moment.

**MR DOSZPOT:** Excuse me—

**THE CHAIR:** We are about to run out of time. Perhaps Mr Doszpot can put his question on notice for Treasury. If you want to get some more information on the seniors, you have about a minute.

**MR DOSZPOT:** Excuse me, Mr Chair; I have just had the most inappropriate comment made when we are talking about seniors. Mr Hinder, would you like to repeat it?

**MR HINDER:** The minister—

**MR DOSZPOT:** You said I had a senior moment. I find that—

**MR HINDER:** No, no.

**MR DOSZPOT:** I find that disgusting, actually.

**MR HINDER:** I was not suggesting you had had one.

**MR DOSZPOT:** That is what you said.

**MR HINDER:** The minister was pointing out that perhaps he was confused, and I said maybe it was a senior moment. I jest, Mr Doszpot.

**THE CHAIR:** If it is a reflection on the minister, you should withdraw that.

**MR HINDER:** I am happy to withdraw it, whoever it was offending.

**MR DOSZPOT:** Well, most—

**THE CHAIR:** No; it is withdrawn. Minister, could you finish with your comments on the seniors card that you were going to come back to.

**Dr Bourke:** I was going to say that the intersection between the seniors card and transport concessions does have an interaction with the ACT government, and I wanted to remind members that concessions for seniors with regard to full and part-time pension holders will continue. They will continue.

**THE CHAIR:** We will finish there. The committee will resume at 1.55 pm, when the Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs will appear, followed by the Minister for Multicultural and Youth Affairs and the Minister for Women.

### **Sitting suspended from 12.40 to 1.56 pm.**

**THE CHAIR:** Good afternoon all and welcome back to the afternoon session of the Select Committee on Estimates 2016-17. This afternoon we will look at Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs then Multicultural and Youth Affairs, women's issues, then housing, social services, social inclusion and social housing. Please be aware that proceedings are being recorded and transcribed and that they will be published by the committee.

The proceedings are being broadcast as well as being webstreamed. In front of you on the table on the pink card is the privilege statement from the Assembly. Could you please confirm to the committee that you have read and understand the implications of privilege?

**Ms Forester:** Yes.

**Ms Howson:** Yes.

**Mr Hubbard:** Yes.



**Dr Bourke:** Thank you, yes.

**THE CHAIR:** So acknowledged; thank you very much. Minister, would you like to make an opening statement?

**Dr Bourke:** Thank you, chair. Once again I thank the committee for the opportunity to provide a few brief opening remarks. This government remains committed to delivering better outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in the ACT. In addition to the whole-of-government support, this government provides an additional \$2.3 million over the next four years to support specific initiatives for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Canberra.

This support is framed around the ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander agreement 2015-2018, which is now in its second year of operation. It commits 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. Implementation of that agreement aligns the ACT government initiatives to the agreement's key theme of building and sustaining stronger families. I will take questions.

**THE CHAIR:** Thank you for that, minister. You mentioned some additional funding. What will it primarily deliver? What is the intention?

**Dr Bourke:** There is \$2.3 million allocated, as I said, over the four years within this budget. That aligns very closely with the needs identified within the ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander agreement, which was signed last year. In respect of those specific initiatives, I will just talk about one of them to start with. It is the \$694,000 over four years for legal reforms to address the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the justice system.

Specifically within that initiative, there is one particular initiative that I want to talk about. That is the Indigenous restorative justice guidance partner for adults. You will have heard earlier today about the success that the ACT has had in reducing the incarceration of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people in the ACT. I think I said that we have reduced it by 47 per cent over three years. A key theme within that youth justice blueprint is restorative justice.

The initiative announced in, I think, the 2012 budget—the Indigenous restorative justice guidance partner for young people—changed the engagement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people with the restorative justice system from about 40 per cent up to better than 80 per cent, which is, I think you would agree, chair, an absolutely fabulous result. That is why within this \$694,000 for legal reforms this is a particularly potent initiative.

This is combined with the other initiatives which, of course, the Attorney-General will speak to because that is actually his area of business. But I think it goes some way to addressing that over-representation. If you are going to have a restorative justice program I think the evidence that we saw in 2012 was that you need to have an Indigenous restorative justice guidance partner. Now we are going to have one as a result of this initiative for adults and not just for youth. You need more than one

person to work in different areas because of the workload involved with the youth Indigenous justice guidance partner.

**THE CHAIR:** How much of the funding in output class 2.2 goes to addressing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander issues?

**Dr Bourke:** All of it. I will ask Mr Hubbard to speak to this.

**THE CHAIR:** So everything in 2.2 is spent on Indigenous issues?

**Dr Bourke:** Sorry, in the \$2.3 million?

**THE CHAIR:** No, in the output class 2.2 how much of it is spent on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people?

**Mr Hubbard:** As you are probably aware, chair, we have not split up the output into the various offices for a couple of years now. I appreciate the *deja vu* nature of the question. Quite a few of the groups—the policy side of things, the event side of things—are shared. OATSIA is a bit different. Have you got the actual staff and numbers from OATSIA, Robyn?

**Ms Howson:** We could take that on notice but we can actually provide the allocation to the Office for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs.

**THE CHAIR:** If you have not got the breakdown, can you guarantee to the committee that funding for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander programs has gone up?

**Ms Howson:** Yes, there are budget initiatives where we have received additional funding which provides an opportunity for further investment in this area.

**THE CHAIR:** How can I know that—

**Ms Howson:** If you look at this—

**THE CHAIR:** if you cannot tell me what the budget was?

**Ms Howson:** Sorry, chair. We can talk to you about the specific budget initiatives this year and that is an increase on the previous year's allocation.

**THE CHAIR:** But if the total allocation is hidden inside output class 2.2, you can say, "There is an additional \$700,000 this year." But that does not mean that there has not been a cut because it is all hidden by not disaggregating it. It is impossible to know for Indigenous, for women's, for youth, for multicultural whether their funding genuinely goes up or down.

**Ms Howson:** The funding that goes into the community participation branch covers, as we said, a number of the government's objectives—

**THE CHAIR:** Yes, it does.

**Ms Howson:** particularly in the area of participation and social inclusion. We can provide more details around what that budget is made up of. But I think the point we have been making over a couple of years is that the deployment of those resources to various objectives is integrated in the way in which we respond. Rather than being functionally disaggregated, we ask our staff to work on a range of initiatives that deliver outcomes for seniors, for women, for the multicultural community and, into the future, for people with a disability.

**THE CHAIR:** And it is not an unreasonable approach that the areas of the output class would work together. One would hope that would happen but—

**Ms Howson:** Yes. I guess, in other words, it does not make a lot of sense to disaggregate that because all those staff, in fact, are deployed across that range of objectives. But the Office for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs is separate, quite separate, from that particular branch. It is a branch in its own right. We can provide a breakdown of the funding that goes into the Office for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs.

**THE CHAIR:** I am happy if there is an amount that is corporate—I understand that—but out of the \$28 million, could we have a breakdown of what the FTE is that that supports? What are the breakdowns for Office for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, women's, multicultural and youth issues?

**Ms Howson:** Yes, I am happy to take that on notice and provide that.

**THE CHAIR:** I ask this question every year and you are happy to take it on notice and we get it later, but getting it later does not help us explore what the funding is doing in these issues. Again, I would say that not to have a breakdown in the budget papers I think is very disappointing.

**Ms Howson:** I can tell you that we have not reduced funding to the Office for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs from last year to this year. We are increasing the funding as a result of being successful on a couple of budget initiatives.

**THE CHAIR:** So what percentage of funding has it gone up?

**Ms Howson:** Percentage-wise I would probably have to just—we might be able to provide that before the end of the hearing. But, in actual terms, it relates to the measures that sit in the budget papers.

**THE CHAIR:** Sure, but do you see the dilemma in this discussion?

**Ms Howson:** I can see your point, yes.

**THE CHAIR:** Thank you. Mr Hinder.

**MR HINDER:** There are a number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander initiatives in the budget. Some of them will be funded out of or delivered from existing resources. What outcomes are you expecting from these initiatives?

**Dr Bourke:** There are actually 11 budget initiatives aimed at Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people within this particular budget. I will talk about a couple of them. Firstly, there is \$1.3 million to expand outreach health services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. That is basically about putting specialist medical services into Winnunga.

There is the \$649,000 for the legal reforms, which I talked about before. I think for me the keynote there is the adult restorative justice guidance partner. There is \$149,000 to build better connections with the community in Canberra. There is \$107,000 for the ACT government to deliver mentoring and training for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander public servants in the ACT public service. That is at the middle level.

Members may recall the previous committee report from the health, community and social services committee, which I chaired previously. It looked at Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment in the ACT public service. One of the things we talked about was better support for career development.

It is interesting, Mr Hinder, to notice that we have actually been reasonably successful, comparatively, within the ACT public service in recruiting and retaining Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. There is a significant increase of over 55-60 per cent since the policy was established in 2011 by former Chief Minister Jon Stanhope. You might say that that is in stark contrast to the federal government where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander public servant numbers have actually seemed to decline.

I think you might go to the root cause of why we employ Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander public servants. That is to improve the capability of our public service, not just to deliver programs for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people but for all people in our community. That capability argument is, I think a very powerful one. I think that senators Cash and Scullion, when they announced their policy late last year, sadly neglected to undertake an assessment of capability within their public service and the reason why they need Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to deliver that capability.

It tended to be more one of those efforts of saying, "We are going to do Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people a favour by giving them a job." For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, that is not a particularly attractive recruitment offer. In contrast, Jon Stanhope, as I said, when he launched our policy in 2011 said, "This is to build our particular capability." I am very pleased with that \$107,000 initiative.

There is another \$100,000 for grants to programs that celebrate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture. The \$100,000 there is going to cultural groups. It provides funding, in the last financial year, for the Tuggeranong community arts centre to document the life of Ngunnawal Aunty Agnes Shea, which I think is going to be a fabulous—

**THE CHAIR:** See you Saturday week.

**Dr Bourke:** Yes, we will be looking forward to that.

**MS BURCH:** Yes, it is not too far away, is it?

**Dr Bourke:** I expect to see Brindabella MLAs down there enjoying the publication—

**MS BURCH:** Looking forward to it.

**Dr Bourke:** at the Tuggeranong Arts Centre. That will be good. Yes, those are the kinds of initiatives and some of the outcomes that are within this budget, Mr Hinder.

**MR HINDER:** Thanks, chair.

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

**MR DOSZPOT:** I defer my question to Mr Wall.

**MR WALL:** I will use my substantive question to follow on from some of those grants you were talking about, minister. What of those grants is the Office of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs responsible for implementing or overseeing?

**Dr Bourke:** The grants programs are administered by OATSIA and the CSD grants unit. I will get the directorate to tell you a little more about that in a moment. There are basically three types of grants: community grants, scholarship grants and leadership and cultural grants. The scholarship grants offer up to \$100,000 in funding, and applicants can apply for up to \$5,000 to assist with the costs of study, including but not limited to HECS fees, computer equipment, books and stationery.

The purpose is to encourage ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to undertake study and training. This has previously funded individuals to do things like their cert IV in project management practice, master classes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander writers, and conservation and land management certificates III and IV.

The leadership grants offer up to \$60,000 in funding to encourage and support ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to develop the knowledge and skills to lead and engage on behalf of their communities and organisations. Individuals can apply for up to \$3,000; organisations can apply for up to \$10,000. The ACT leadership grants have previously funded programs and events such as the youth leadership cultural camps, Indigenous facilitator training and core circle.

The cultural grants up to \$45,000 encourage and support ACT-based community organisations to apply for a one-off grant to assist in a program or an event that will promote wider understanding of the cultures of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people living in the ACT. The cultural grants have previously funded programs and events such as the NAIDOC Indigenous showcase at the National Multicultural Festival and the ACT Torres Strait Islander Corporation to record stories of Torres Strait Islander people and their contribution to Canberra.

I will get somebody from the directorate to talk a little more about the interaction

between OATSIA and the CSD grants unit about the delivery of those grants.

**Ms Forester:** With regard to building on what Dr Bourke has said, the Office for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs has the oversight and administrative responsibilities for the whole-of-government agreement, and it reports directly to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander subcommittee of the strategic board. A number of the budget initiatives there, including the grants program, are administered directly by OATSIA. We publicise those; we manage that process; we continue to engage with the community on the things they are doing.

With some of the new budget initiatives that have been announced in the recent budget OATSIA will have an additional FTE—one staff member at the SOGC level—who will have responsibility for coordination and management of a number of the new budget initiatives, particularly those around the employment space and also assisting other parts of government. The purpose of the whole-of-government agreement is about bringing ACT government together to work in partnership to deliver services and programs to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

The additional FTE person will assist with the coordination and promotion of a number of the other budget initiatives, including the grants program that has been provided to support Indigenous business in the ACT. There is additional funding for that. There is also some additional funding to artsACT to work in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander arts space supporting artists and arts practice in the ACT.

We will also be working very closely with justice around some of those initiatives that Dr Bourke has already mentioned. The career mentoring program that he also alluded to, which is the responsibility of CMTEDD, will also have a coordination oversight role with that. Part of what OATSIA will be doing through this process is making sure we are all on the same page and are all working towards the same goals.

**Dr Bourke:** Of course, given that this is a whole-of-government approach, other directorates also have specific Indigenous scholarship grants. I point to the Education Directorate's aspirations program, which has scholarship grants for young people in years 11 and 12 who are interested in education and health careers. I was delighted only the other month to be at the Australian Catholic University where I was able to hand out scholarships to young people studying education and, particularly important to our discussions this morning, social work.

**Mr Wall:** What role does the office have in making sure that government meets its objectives under the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment strategy?

**Ms Howson:** Mr Wall, the direct responsibility for that sits with the Chief Minister's directorate. It is a responsibility of the Public Service Commissioner to oversee governance targets and performance in relation to that. In fact, the Head of Service herself takes a very direct interest in following through with all the directors-general across government around their performance in achieving those particular objectives. They are also working with all of us around strategies to improve our recruitment and retention of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in our workforce.

**MR WALL:** With the other areas of government where you have—I think the words

you used were—a guidance and oversight role, how does that role work? Can you identify a project the office has been involved in and what input the office had had to steer that.

**Ms Howson:** I will start in the context of the oversight arrangements that are in place through the strategic board which is the strategic board of directors-general. There is a subcommittee of that board made up of directors-general. The Director-General of Community Services Directorate chairs that committee, but a number of directors-general sit on that committee. We also have the Chair of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elected Body on that committee.

The committee has overseen the development of the government's response to the agreement that was struck with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community, and we are supporting the development of the implementation plan around that.

We have also worked together on the first—what we are calling—omnibus budget submission, which has led to the outcomes in this budget for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander initiatives which relate directly to the priorities in the implementation plan. At that high level there is direct engagement, and we support the work of Robyn and her branch in working across government on the delivery of those initiatives.

**Ms Forester:** We also have an inter-directorate reference group made up of a lot of the policy and project officers across government who are responsible for the delivery of these initiatives. OATSIA manages the coordination of that and the secretariat support for both the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander affairs subcommittee as well as that inter-directorate reference group.

**MS BURCH:** You mentioned a number of initiatives. I am looking at page 94 of budget paper 3. It is internally funded but, nevertheless, it looks like an interesting project, supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples by establishing a central portal. Can you tell us what that is, what it will access and how it will connect to that whole-of-government approach?

**Dr Bourke:** This is an issue identified through the elected body and the community of the capacity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to access ACT government services and specific Indigenous information within those websites.

**MS BURCH:** On Indigenous programs or just in general?

**Dr Bourke:** Indigenous programs and issues that are relevant to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, which could include heritage matters, of course. Those consultations indicated a desire for an Indigenous director to add a culturally appropriate portal which could enable better interaction by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Canberrans. I will get Ms Forester to talk a little bit more about that.

**Ms Forester:** Yes. Basically the portal will be the first landing point for anybody looking for information relevant to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the ACT. They can get to the initial portal and that portal will link to other parts of government so they can find additional information. It is very much modelled on the commonwealth government's indigenous.gov portal. We all know that the internet is a

fantastic resource, but sometimes it is very hard to navigate.

**MS BURCH:** You just get lost going down various rabbit holes.

**Ms Forester:** Yes. So one of the things that this portal will do is allow people to go to their first point of contact and from there drill down to the appropriate information they require. It will highlight the work the ACT government is doing in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander space. It will also provide additional contact information for people when they are looking to access mainstream services as well—knowing the appropriate way into housing or health or the justice system.

**MS BURCH:** It talks about language and format. Are you working with the elders or the Indigenous elected body? Who are you working with, or is it all internal? Are you going out and testing it?

**Ms Forester:** Yes, it will be a consultation with the community, because it is all about language and understanding and what makes the best product to be the best user-friendly product. There will be consultation with the elected body. There will be consultation with the community. There will also be consultation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff who are working within the ACT government because they are our best resource. As employees we are our best resource.

**MS BURCH:** Absolutely. How does that link to the next line on the top of the next page, which is supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples by improving Indigenous representation? There are two separate bits of work but there is an overlap because if you increase engagement you increase interest, therefore, that may lead to increased buy-in. There is reference to the elected body there.

**Dr Bourke:** I think we are all aware that there is a range of tensions within communities in the ACT. Developing a community-led, government-facilitated process to assist in dispute resolution and looking to achieve durable agreements between the traditional custodians can be of benefit not only to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander traditional owners but all Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders—indeed, the entire ACT community.

A great piece of work can be done here to facilitate better outcomes for all of us in this space. I look forward to the work of this project to improve those outcomes. And it is not just that; it is also looking at best-practice models for Indigenous representation and to benefit the families through connection to country. Of course, they are the authorities on matters of culture and heritage.

**MS BURCH:** What is the existing method or platform for having community input into government? Where do they come in and say, “This is what we want to see. This is how we want business done.” Will this facilitate any enhancements or improvements to that?

**Dr Bourke:** The obvious way to start that answer is to talk about the elected body. The ACT is leading the nation in developing democratically elected indigenous representation instead of a hand-picked group.



**MS BURCH:** Are we still one of the only jurisdictions with a—

**Dr Bourke:** We are the only one.

**Ms Forester:** We are the only jurisdiction that has such a body.

**Dr Bourke:** We are the only jurisdiction with a group inputting to government that is elected by the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community in which they live. As opposed to the old models of the hand-picked group or the coterie of friends which have been used in other jurisdictions at other times in the past, this is a genuine democratic initiative. It is going from strength to strength, and I am strongly supportive of it as a model to deliver an Indigenous voice here in the ACT.

Of course we also have the United Ngunnawal Elders Council to provide advice around traditional custodian matters, and I will let Ms Forester talk a little more there.

**Ms Forester:** Part of the elected body's mandate is to run community forums. That is one of the best opportunities for the community to have discussions with the elected body, who then feed that back to government. It was through things like the community forums that the whole-of-government agreement grew. That was the opportunity for the community to let the elected body know what they wanted to see happening in government, and then the elected body negotiated the development of that agreement. That is one of the initial stages where people can input into that.

Through the office we always encourage feedback from the community. We have from time to time run our own forums depending on what the subject matter might be or we have run survey opportunities for people as well.

**MS BURCH:** You mentioned the whole-of-government agreement. I note on page 12 of budget statement G indicator e is to develop a whole-of-government implementation plan, and that has now ceased. Indicator f is to implement projects included in the whole-of-government plan, and there is a target of five projects in there. How do you concentrate on those? It is a sensible change rather than having one plan, and what do you do with it; I am getting a sense of that. What are those priority projects?

**Ms Forester:** To support the implementation of the whole-of-government agreement we have developed a plan which sets out how we are going to achieve what we have said in the agreement. We are also in the process of finalising an outcomes framework to support the reporting requirements for the whole-of-government agreement. It is one agreement and it is just the additional measures that we have in place to be able to deliver and report on what we are doing.

**MS BURCH:** I think it is a sensible way forward. Are there any early indications about the priority of those five projects? What you would like to see kick off first?

**Ms Forester:** Given the major initiatives that have come out of the budget, they are the major projects we are stepping out of that. The agreement, as you might be aware, is couched around a number of initiatives, including things like employment and around cultural identity. A number of the initiatives that have gone out of current

budget are some of those major projects.

**MS BURCH:** Because it is a whole-of-government agreement, the reporting of it comes through this, so we will not have EDD or Health or JACS reporting. Is the carriage of the whole-of-government reporting mechanism through you?

**Ms Forester:** Yes, we will be developing the report on the whole-of-government agreement from this point forward.

**THE CHAIR:** I think we have time for one question before we do the changeover of ministers. Perhaps Mr Wall, a quick question.

**MR WALL:** The office might be able to give us some update of the work they might be doing with Gugan Gulwan Youth Corporation at Erindale in identifying new premises.

**Dr Bourke:** I have visited Gugan on a number of occasions, and I know there have been ongoing discussions with officials over a number of years about Gugan's requirements and alternative places for it. I think you would probably say that Gugan is ideally placed in its current position. That is why they like being there. It is so close to Erindale centre. It is extraordinarily convenient.

**MR WALL:** There is no argument about the location but obviously the condition of the existing facility and the space in which they have to operate the services—

**Dr Bourke:** And that is why I have asked officials to work to get us a better solution than what we have got available there, which is, of course, something that is suitable for Gugan. I will get Mr Matthews to talk a bit more about that.

**Mr Matthews:** We are very interested in making sure that Gugan have appropriate accommodation. They are a vital service provider and they provide a whole range of differing services from their current location. They have very much grown to the extent of their current facilities and they certainly make the best of it but we have been, as you have pointed out, Mr Wall, in discussions with them about alternatives for a little while now.

Property Group, who are responsible for managing whole-of-government accommodation, most recently met with them on 17 June and again are continuing to be in regular conversations with Gugan around what their particular requirements are, what their preferences are about where they would like to be located. There have been some offers of accommodation that is available in the ACT government property portfolio but they are not suitable for Gugan's needs as determined by them. For example, they are in the wrong part of town. So there is very much still an active search for existing accommodation that could potentially meet Gugan's requirements. As the minister said, they are very keen to continue to operate in that northern Tuggeranong area because of their strong links with the community there and the accessibility of that location to their client group.

There are limitations with that particular site. There is no other immediate site that is going to meet their needs. There are ongoing conversations between Gugan Gulwan,

the Property Group and us. We do not have a solution to that issue at the moment but I want to reassure the committee that it is something that we continue to work with them on and look for options around.

**Dr Bourke:** And certainly let me inform the members from Brindabella that it is something that I will be actively pursuing.

**MR WALL:** The observation I would make is: for over two years now members of this committee and the Assembly have been told, “Have faith, have patience, something is happening in this space.” Every day that goes by we seem to be no closer to a solution to this dilemma.

**MS BURCH:** It is around suitability and what works for them as well, I think.

**MR WALL:** Certainly it is but there are a number of options that I think would meet those needs. Why is it taking years to come up with a solution to what seemingly is a simple problem?

**Dr Bourke:** Which options are you suggesting?

**THE CHAIR:** Sorry, I did not hear that.

**Dr Bourke:** I just asked Mr Wall which option he was suggesting.

**MR WALL:** I am sure if you speak to the management and the committee at Gugan they will be as forthright with you as they have been with me about what they think the options are.

**Mr Matthews:** The only extra comment I would like to make is that it certainly has not been as a result of lack of activity in terms of trying to find suitable solutions. There have been a number of sites over that same time period that you mentioned that have either been explored or discussed with Gugan Gulwan or in fact offered. We just have not found the right solution yet. We are very aware that they have got very particular accommodation requirements as well. There are certainly types of government accommodation or ex-community facilities, for example, that are not going to be suitable for their needs. We need to work with them to find a solution that works for them. Currently there is nothing available that has been able to meet that solution but we will continue to work with them to find that.

**MR WALL:** Have they identified any options that they consider would work for them?

**Mr Matthews:** Not to me. I could check in with Property Group if you want me to and get back to you on that issue.

**THE CHAIR:** That would be kind if you would, yes.

**Mr Matthews:** I will take that on notice if the minister is happy with that and go back to Property Group.

**THE CHAIR:** Unless someone has a quick question our time is up. Any finals? No. Minister, thank you for your attendance today. I think we will see you with other hats on next week. If any questions have been taken on notice by your part of the department, if we could have answers within five business days commencing tomorrow the committee would be most appreciative. A transcript will be provided when it is available for your perusal, and any suggestions or corrections or additional information you wish to provide, the committee would be most appreciative. At that point we will suspend while we change ministers but, I suspect, keep the staff.

**Dr Bourke:** Thank you chair, thank you committee.

Appearances:

Berry, Ms Yvette, Minister for Housing, Community Services and Social Inclusion, Minister for Multicultural and Youth Affairs, Minister for Sport and Recreation and Minister for Women

Community Services Directorate

Howson, Ms Natalie, Director-General

Matthews, Mr David, Deputy Director-General

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

Moore, Ms Nicole, Director, Community Participation Group

Hubbard, Mr Ian, Chief Financial Officer, Finance and Budget

Drejer-White, Ms Maggie, Director, People Management, Service Strategy and Community Building

Saballa, Ms Melanie, Director, Service Strategy

Gibson, Ms Sally, Senior Manager, Human Services Registrar

Gilding, Ms Louise, Executive Director, Housing and Community Services

Duggan, Mr Frank, Senior Director, Housing and Community Services

Power, Ms Leanne, Director, Business and Capital, Housing and Community Services

Hyland, Mr Bob, Financial Controller, Housing and Community Services

Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate

Rynehart, Mr Josh, Director, Licensing & Registration, Access Canberra

**THE CHAIR:** Welcome Minister Berry. We will now move on with the public hearings of the Select Committee on Estimates 2016-17, particularly in relation to budget statement G, the Community Services Directorate. This afternoon we have Ms Berry, the Minister for Multicultural and Youth Affairs, Minister for Women and Minister for Housing, Community Services and Social Inclusion.

Please be aware that proceedings today are being recorded, will be transcribed and then published. As well, the proceedings are being broadcast and webstreamed. If a question is taken on notice it would be useful if our witnesses could indicate that they have taken that question on notice. Before you on the table is the pink card, the privilege statement. Could all those at the table please indicate that they have read the statement and understand the implications of privilege?

**Ms Berry:** Yes.

**THE CHAIR:** So noted, thank you very much. Minister, would you like to make an opening statement?

**Ms Berry:** Yes please. Thank you chair and thank you to all committee members today for the opportunity to make an opening statement. Obviously, I am very proud of the investments of the 2016 budget and the investments that it makes across the broad-reaching areas of my portfolio. There is a deep commitment to the social inclusion agenda through the government's new investments and importantly in the

initiatives that they will deliver on the ground. Equally, the budget shows an ongoing commitment to services and organisations that we value very highly for their work in our community.

Just a few examples of this are the indexed funding for community service programs, which has risen above \$10 million. It is \$10.29 million now. Grants provided through housing and community services will total around \$624,000. There is our ongoing commitment to pay equity for social and community services workers, a payment of more than \$3 million in 2016-17, and a continued commitment to reform in our services systems by bringing the better services principles of information sharing and shaping services around individual needs to other parts of the system. Much of this work has been made possible by the government's broader economic management and I want to thank the community sector for their positive response to the way that the government has put this budget together.

Of course, one of the most prominent parts of the budget for me, as Minister for Women and minister for community services, is our family and domestic violence response. The budget commits \$21.4 million to the response to family and domestic violence, the largest new funding initiative in the ACT's history in this area. It is not just about significant investment, it is about learning from extensive research to develop systems that work across government and with the community to provide support where it is needed, when it is needed and for as long as that support is required. The capacity of front-line services is boosted with an additional \$416,000 over four years to be allocated to the Canberra Rape Crisis Centre and an additional \$830,000 over four years to the Domestic Violence Crisis Service.

Separately, \$964,000 over three years will fund a residential behaviour program called room for change, for men at risk of committing domestic or family violence. The program, driven by a collaboration between the Domestic Violence Crisis Service and Connections ACT, removes the potential offender from their home environment. This provides safety for the family and an opportunity for targeted support for the potential perpetrator, all with the hope of sparing both the family and the community the cost and the trauma of having violence escalate. There is also \$5.6 million to improve our service system, specifically through the new family safety team, and an integrated case management approach as we develop the first family safety hub.

Finally, I would note the \$770,000 for training of front line-service workers in different occupations around our community. The long reach of this issue will touch many people and organisations and this investment seeks to put all of us in a better position to respond.

In housing—which will come up later this afternoon—the 2016 budget continues the government's strong commitment to public housing and the housing needs of some of the most disadvantaged members of our community. \$184 million is being invested in housing and homelessness support. This is on top of the \$169 million being invested in 2016-17 for public housing renewal. Aside from public housing renewal, Housing ACT is also replacing and refurbishing properties under its annual capital works program. This will see about 70 dwellings replaced each year with properties better suited to meet the housing needs of public housing tenants. At 30 June 2016 the government's social housing stock is estimated to be around 11,659. In the coming

three years property numbers will increase by a further 148 to 11,807 properties.

This budget also continues our support for Common Ground with funding of \$308,000 for onsite services there. July 2016 sees the first anniversary of the official opening of Common Ground and we should acknowledge some of the significant achievements there. For example, nine tenants who were previously experiencing long-term homelessness have secured either full-time, part-time or casual employment. Four tenants have begun studying, with two attending university.

The budget paper also lays out the government's ongoing commitments to multiculturalism in Canberra, refugee and asylum seeker support and ongoing engagement with our young people, particularly through Youth Week, the Youth Advisory Council and our youth grants. The government's aim is always to support our community to be its best and to support individuals to be included and to be valued. I am happy to take questions and for officials to answer questions as well.

**THE CHAIR:** Thank you minister. We might reverse the order. At the far end of the table, Mr Wall, then followed by Ms Burch.

**MR WALL:** Minister, under this output class what grants or programs is output class 2.2 responsible for in relation to youth?

**Ms Berry:** Can you ask me again? Sorry.

**MR WALL:** With respect to youth services, output class 2.2, which is what we are discussing, what programs, grants or initiatives is Community Services responsible for?

**Ms Berry:** The ACT government has been providing a number of different programs and grants for young people in our community. We also have the interact strategy which is the youth engagement and participation strategy which provides a platform and encourages young people from a range of backgrounds and experiences to have their say about issues that affect them in Canberra. We also have the Youth Advisory Council, which was set up by Minister Burch when she was minister in this area. The Youth Advisory Council provides strategic advice to the government on issues affecting young people. The youth interact grants provide funding for young people to organise projects, events, activities and programs that benefit other young people in the community.

We also have the youth interact scholarships. The youth interact scholarships provide funding of up to \$500 for young people to attend learning, sporting, personal and career development opportunities. Coming up soon, over the next couple of months, young people in Canberra will have the chance to share with me their thoughts on the issues affecting them in the community when I go to visit young people in the community to seek their views on what is happening for them and how we can make things better. Of course, as you know, we also have the Young Canberra Citizen of the Year awards which recognise the work that young people have been doing and the contribution that they make through their personal endeavours and who have been actively involved in the ACT community.

I go back to the youth interact grants and the youth interact scholarships and I might ask if one of my officials has some detail on some of the recipients of those grants and what those grants actually went to in making a difference to those young people's lives.

**Mrs Moore:** The youth interact grants this year provided grants to 12 different groups and they all have a focus on young people supporting young people. One of the really great examples of that was a youth bereavement network that was set up by a local young person to support young people who have been through grief. The peer support model is something that we know works really well for young people, in particular. That was one example.

We have also got a student life skills seminar program that has been funded through the south-western high school network to provide life skills training support to young people as well. There is a whole range of different initiatives. They are just two examples from the youth grants.

In terms of the youth interact scholarships, we have provided 23 scholarships this financial year, and they go to young people who are representing the ACT or participating in particular activities, whether it is a sporting event or other opportunities to get involved such as debating programs, that kind of thing. One of the really great examples this year was an 18-year-old who went to play ice hockey overseas and was really successful in that. We have also this year had the first opportunity to provide a youth scholarship to a group, which is a debating group, to help them compete on behalf of the ACT.

**MR WALL:** What proportion of the funding in output class 2.2 goes towards those youth grant programs and scholarship programs?

**Ms Howson:** We will have to take that on notice. We have not brought the breakdown of that with us. But if I can reiterate my earlier response to a similar question, in terms of the community participation group all staff in that branch are focused on a range of objectives that sit across the government's objective for a multicultural community, seniors and youth.

**MR WALL:** I understand that the staffing capability is shared across all the portfolio areas—women and multicultural—but I would imagine that then there are separate funding streams for the youth programs, the multicultural programs and women's programs within that.

**Ms Howson:** There certainly is in relation to particular programs, but again the majority of the funding relates to staff effort, and that staff effort is not segregated across each of those separate areas. We have integrated our response and we are getting much better outcomes as a result of that. Rather than having a very small team, for example, looking after the interests of seniors in the ACT, we can now dedicate good policy support, good administrative support, event management support and consultation support across the whole branch to the interests of those subcommunities.

**MR WALL:** A follow-on question, just because there is an absolute lack of detail in the budget paper on youth programs like the youth scholarships program, youth



interact and the Youth Advisory Council, is: in the funding that is provided in this year's budget, are all those programs funded not just in the 2016-17 financial year but also in all of the outyears?

**Ms Howson:** Those programs will continue.

**THE CHAIR:** Is it possible to get a breakdown of the funding over the budget period for those programs?

**Ms Howson:** For particular programs?

**THE CHAIR:** Yes.

**Ms Howson:** For example the grants programs and so on? Yes, we can take that on notice.

**THE CHAIR:** Thank you. Ms Burch, a new question?

**MS BURCH:** Thank you. I was going to ask about the youth grants, but I hear that they have gone to wonderful young folk, so that is good. We celebrate an active youth week here in the ACT. Besides it being awareness raising and almost allowing the youth of the city to take ownership of it for that week, how do we strategically build on that with information and programs that may come through various opportunities, whether it is government or partnerships with the community?

**Ms Berry:** One of the things that happen during youth week is the Young Citizen of the Year awards. This year there were, as usual, some fantastic winners of the awards. Over 44 applications were received, and that number just seems to be increasing all the time, which means that there is much more engagement for young people in our community than perhaps there ever has been. I expect that to continue.

We have been trying to work on how we can better engage and learn off the conversations that happen during Youth Week and give these young people a chance to use what they have learned during Youth Week. I have invited different people who have been young citizens of the year to come and see our citizenship ceremonies. For example, so far we have had Young Citizen of the Year Jordan Kerr come and at very short notice be the MC for our citizenship ceremony. We also had Young Woman of the Year Rachael Stevens MC a citizenship ceremony. I have been mindful of making sure that when we recognise those young people for the achievement and the contributions that they have made to our community, it should not just end on that day and on that occasion; we should find ways that they can use that award and build on their resume and their experiences by having them get the chance to participate in other activities that the ACT government is privileged to host.

That is one example. Does anyone else want to say anything about some of the other things that we are doing for Youth Week?

**Mrs Moore:** Following on from that same theme, the award recipients for the youth awards are invited to participate in things like grants assessments for the Youth InterACT programs and the scholarship programs. It is definitely an active role that

they have then in taking the agenda forward. We have also had them involved in the recent interviewing process for the Youth Advisory Council. They are very much not just about recognising the young people but also giving them opportunity to take a leadership role in youth affairs in the ACT.

**Ms Sheehan:** Can I add that they have been very involved in the one Canberra program, taking a community development, community support approach to address the possibility of antisocial behaviour.

**MS BURCH:** A lot of these grants go to high-achieving young people. They should be recognised and encouraged; they are the leaders of the next generation. Where do we go in working with disengaged youth? How do we make sure? There are plenty of leaders out there who, for a whole range of reasons, are disconnected or just do not reach that right door at the right time to take an opportunity that is provided.

**Ms Berry:** With some of the other grants that are provided with Community Services, we have tried to make sure that they are better targeted to young people who might not have the same chances as those who are the sorts of ordinary participants or ordinary recipients of some of these grants. Do you want to—

**Ms Sheehan:** Across the whole range of our grants—not just specifically youth grants, but all of the grants that are available to us, whether they are multicultural, the one Canberra grants, women’s grants, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leadership grants, cultural grants and so on, at every level—we would try to look across to make sure that young people are getting a look in, not just the usual suspects, if I can refer to it in that way, and then looking to call for interest in those grants in a way so that young people who are disadvantaged would be interested in them.

Sometimes I think about it in this way. If you think about the GST, you get a recipient-generated invoice. If you just do a grants round and you say, “All comers, can you just apply for a grant,” sometimes that does not get the sort of young people that you are looking at. What you can do is go out into the community and then go to groups who will provide services for those young people, and then ask them to support young people to actually apply for grants.

If you think about tenant-initiated grants in the housing area, that is an area historically where we did have difficulties getting young people, particularly young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, to get grants. On occasions, we actually sponsored football competitions for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander kids. We funded an organisation to do that; they reported back to us about all of the young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who lived in public housing that were able to participate.

So we are trying to take a broad approach to involving young people generally in all of our programs, and disadvantaged young people, rather than just saying, “This is for young people; this is for women; this is for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.”

**MS BURCH:** It makes me think of a great local organisation, Kulture Break. That does great work. I am not quite sure where the funding is for it, and I think their

Dance Nation is coming up. Probably everyone has an invite to that. They are an organisation that targets those disconnected kids that sit on the outskirts, for a whole range of reasons—anti-bullying, social inclusion. Is there ongoing support for groups such as Kulture Break?

**Ms Berry:** Kulture Break's funding comes through the arts.

**MS BURCH:** Arts?

**Ms Berry:** But another example I can talk to you about is some work that has come together out of better services in West Belconnen, that partnership between Belconnen Community Service, the Riverview Group and Education. They have put in a young person's sort of training access hub—I am not sure what the actual title of it is—where young people can go to get work experience, write up resumes, find out how to look for jobs and all of that sort of thing. It has been a really great partnership within the community that has not necessarily been a government driven partnership. Better services is really going towards bringing all of those different opportunities together and those different groups out in west Belconnen, being able to support youth. One of the issues that were raised as a concern out in west Belconnen was youth employment. Also, more broadly across the ACT, but particularly in west Belconnen, groups like Riverview, Belconnen Community Service and the Department of Education could come together and bring in this program that would be targeted at those kinds of people who might not normally have access to that kind of support.

**MS BURCH:** I would like to ask about one Canberra, but I will defer to my colleagues.

**THE CHAIR:** Mr Doszpot, you have been deferred to.

**MR DOSZPOT:** Thank you; I appreciate being deferred to.

**MS BURCH:** It only happens once.

**MR DOSZPOT:** Good afternoon, minister. Can I just ask where Mr Manikis is. He is always here to answer questions for us.

**Ms Howson:** He is on some well-earned leave.

**Ms Berry:** He has gone somewhere warm.

**Ms Howson:** He is in Greece, actually.

**MR WALL:** Well-timed leave.

**MR DOSZPOT:** He has been mentioned anyway. Minister, can you tell me what activities, programs or services multicultural affairs offers to help seniors in communities from other cultural and racial backgrounds?

**Ms Berry:** Sorry, what programs?

**MR DOSZPOT:** For seniors.

**Ms Berry:** There are a number of programs that senior citizens from multicultural communities across the ACT would have the chance to be able to participate in through the work that Mrs Moore and Nic Manikis have been doing in supporting that community.

One of the programs that is run out of MARSS is a sewing group where lots of different women come together, usually older women who come together to learn how to sew. They all come together and all speak different languages, but the one thing that they have in common is a willingness to learn a new skill, and that is sewing—being able to sew. That is one example of where older Canberrans from multicultural communities have been able to participate in a program that might not necessarily be available to them in any other circumstances. I will ask Mrs Moore to give some more detail on some of the other programs that are available.

**Mrs Moore:** One of the benefits of CPG working in the way it does with the interaction between the different portfolio areas is that we have the Ministerial Advisory Council on Ageing, which has multicultural representatives. They are able to provide advice to that group around seniors issues that are specific to the multicultural community. We also have the situation across all of our grants programs where we are looking at how we target particular groups, for example, looking at how we can make sure seniors are considered in our multicultural grants, how we can make sure our multicultural communities are considered in our seniors grants. There are a number of examples from that. There have been the seniors grants, the digital grants. We have funded programs that have supported computer programs for seniors, for example, and some of those have been specifically targeted around multicultural community groups.

**MR DOSZPOT:** As a general statement, that is good, and I accept that, but what I am asking for is the names of the various groups in the seniors category. Which are the groups that you are giving grants to?

**Mrs Moore:** In the multicultural space, we fund the multicultural services. They are not senior specific. It is through the grants programs and seniors organisations that are targeting multicultural groups for funding. We would have to bring up those grants, but I do not have that with me.

**MR DOSZPOT:** There is one that I am aware of who do a very good job, Chin Wong's Chinese group. That is a seniors group. I should imagine there would be other multicultural seniors groups like that. I am asking how many of these are being funded.

**Ms Howson:** We should take that on notice, Mr Doszpot. We can bring that—

**MR DOSZPOT:** Okay. Could you add to that also taking on notice the amount of money that they are given.

**Ms Howson:** Certainly.

**MR DOSZPOT:** And also what are the seniors groups specifically, first off. That is my first question. The second question is: can you provide a list of all of the multicultural groups that are given funding each year and the amounts that they are given.

**Ms Howson:** Yes. All this information should be in our annual report, but we are happy to provide it.

**MR DOSZPOT:** We have asked for this information, I believe, a number of times of the minister and we have not had a response. The relevant shadow has not had a response on that. So I ask for that information to be given to the committee.

**Ms Howson:** Certainly. We are happy to provide it to the committee.

**MR DOSZPOT:** The group names and also the amount of grants that they are in receipt of.

**Ms Berry:** Just to be clear, I do not recall getting a request specifically from you, Mr Doszpot. I have from other members.

**MR DOSZPOT:** I indicated to you that it was not from me; it was from the—

**Ms Berry:** Okay. I have provided that information.

**MR DOSZPOT:** That is not the information she gave us. I have asked the question. Thank you.

**THE CHAIR:** I have a supplementary: if you are a multicultural group, you go through the grants process and they are all listed in the annual report?

**Ms Howson:** Correct.

**Ms Sheehan:** Yes.

**THE CHAIR:** Okay, all recipients. What is the range that you give out for a multicultural grant through that competitive process?

**Ms Berry:** There are a couple of different ones, aren't there?

**Ms Sheehan:** Yes, there are the multicultural grants which largely go to organisations to help them participate in the Multicultural Festival.

**Ms Berry:** Festival, yes.

**THE CHAIR:** Yes.

**Ms Sheehan:** Then the range of grants there depends upon what it is that the organisation applies for. Very often in some grants programs, organisations get large amounts—like \$10,000. In the multicultural grants area to participate in the Multicultural Festival, the quantum of the grant is much more likely to be somewhere

between \$1,000 and \$2,000. I will just check, Mr Smyth, but there is about \$260,000 that we allocate through that program. That plays a very large role in supporting organisations not just to participate in the Multicultural Festival, which would be good enough in itself; but organisations actually use that to generate income for their activities for the whole of the year; so it has that double benefit.

**MR DOSZPOT:** Just one other question on that: what is the process? Is it an annual opportunity for them to apply for grants?

**Ms Sheehan:** Yes, we do an annual grants round. It is widely advertised and organisations put in their applications. They are assessed by a community-based panel.

**MR DOSZPOT:** In the information you are giving me, could you also include the time of year when this happens? People keep asking us. So we will pass that information on.

**Ms Sheehan:** Most definitely, and it is certainly in time for organisations to know that they have the funding to participate in the Multicultural Festival.

**THE CHAIR:** There is a grants round for the Multicultural Festival, which you might call smaller amounts—\$1,000 to—

**Ms Sheehan:** The quantum for the whole grants program is large—over \$200,000—but the size of the grants awarded is quite small compared to, say, when we were talking about organisational business development grants under the NDIS, which are very large. The money goes a long way because the grants are quite small.

**THE CHAIR:** Yes, but there is a process and there is an assessment?

**Ms Sheehan:** Absolutely.

**THE CHAIR:** And there is a list of those every year?

**Ms Sheehan:** There is a list and, as you said Mr Smyth, it is published in the annual report. We can certainly provide that.

**THE CHAIR:** So those small grants are published in your report?

**Ms Sheehan:** They are.

**THE CHAIR:** What about funding for the key multicultural groups? For example, does MARSS get a grant?

**Ms Berry:** Yes, the majority of the MARSS funding is federal. It is from the commonwealth government but we do provide some funding.

**Ms Sheehan:** We do provide some small amount of funding to MARSS. I think it under \$100,000 but we can confirm that.

**THE CHAIR:** So what bucket does that come out of?

**Ms Sheehan:** That comes out of—it is not through a grants program but through general funding that is available in the community participation group. MARSS has specific outputs that they deliver for us. But as the minister said, MARSS is largely funded through the commonwealth.

**THE CHAIR:** I understand that. Does MARSS have three-year funding, five-year funding from the ACT government?

**Ms Sheehan:** MARSS has, at the moment, three-year funding. As part of our reforms in reducing red tape for community organisations about two years ago, where organisations were in receipt of quite small amounts of funding, we were able to convert most of those from service funding agreements into recurrent grants. MARSS has a recurrent grant. But with the minister's agreement we can provide you further details of that grant. Of course, those grants are all published in the annual report.

**THE CHAIR:** We have got approximately \$260,000 for the multicultural festival. There is a series of recurrent grants—

**Ms Berry:** No.

**Ms Sheehan:** No, sorry, for the grants—the multicultural grants program?

**THE CHAIR:** Multicultural grants program.

**Ms Sheehan:** But what we are aware of is that many of the grants go to organisations to assist their participation in the festival.

**THE CHAIR:** That is okay; so that is about \$260,000. The recurrent grants for organisations like MARSS, what bucket of money do they come out of and how much money is in that bucket?

**Ms Sheehan:** Are you talking now of recurrent multicultural grants or recurrent grants in the community services directorate?

**THE CHAIR:** No, just multicultural.

**Ms Sheehan:** The grants programs that are available in the multicultural area are the multicultural grants, as we said. We also have language grants which are through the multicultural area.

**THE CHAIR:** How much is in the language grants?

**Ms Sheehan:** Sorry, I am just going to my list of grants.

**Mr Matthews:** While Ms Sheehan is finding that answer, Mr Smyth, all of this information is available on our website. I have got it open at the moment. It includes the fact that the current multicultural grants round is open at the moment. It has got the guidelines for 2016-17 there. It has also got a list of all of the recipients for

2015-16 and 2014-15 available—

**THE CHAIR:** I know that. I am just trying to get a base on what are all the different grants if you are a multicultural organisation. You have got the multicultural grants, you have got recurrent grants—you are going to find out how much that is—you have got language grants. What other grants could a multicultural—

**Ms Berry:** Language school grants—

**THE CHAIR:** Sorry, schools?

**Ms Berry:** for language schools.

**THE CHAIR:** Schools, yes. Is that in the language grants or is that different?

**Ms Berry:** That is the language—

**Ms Sheehan:** Yes, it is, Mr Smyth.

**Ms Berry:** Yes, the language school grants, yes.

**THE CHAIR:** That is a different category?

**Ms Sheehan:** Yes, and, sorry, Mr Smyth, if I can correct the record, it is not \$260,000. It is \$241,700 that was available and last year 114 organisations received grants under that.

**THE CHAIR:** So there are four categories in which a multicultural group could apply for strictly a multicultural grant?

**Ms Sheehan:** We have said the multicultural grants and the language grants.

**THE CHAIR:** Yes, and group funding for the recurrents and you are going to—

**Ms Howson:** That is not on application.

**Ms Sheehan:** No.

**THE CHAIR:** That is not on application?

**Ms Howson:** No.

**Ms Sheehan:** Mr Smyth, some of—

**THE CHAIR:** So how is that dispensed?

**Ms Howson:** They are decisions of government to fund particular organisations. The form in which they are funded, as Ms Sheehan was explaining earlier, in the past has been through service level agreements. We have shifted them to—



**THE CHAIR:** Yes, but you seek a service and go to a provider.

**Ms Howson:** That is correct, yes.

**THE CHAIR:** Does that not go to a tender process for the delivery of that service?

**Ms Howson:** It may from time to time, yes.

**THE CHAIR:** But are they in the annual report? Are they on the website?

**Ms Howson:** That is right.

**Ms Sheehan:** They are.

**THE CHAIR:** Apart from those four—if my multicultural group wanted to hire a school hall for 500 bucks for some social on a Saturday night, can I get \$500 or \$300?

**Ms Howson:** You might be successful in one of the grant rounds for that, yes, under the multicultural participation grants program.

**THE CHAIR:** You have to go through a grant round.

**Ms Howson:** Is that correct?

**Ms Sheehan:** Yes. But, Mr Smyth, one of the reasons that we give grants to organisations to participate in activities is actually to help them generate revenue. That is the double benefit. They can participate in something like the multicultural festival but they generate for themselves revenue, which assists them to participate in other ways.

**THE CHAIR:** So all of those groups who wanted to run a small function or do something for a couple of hundred dollars or a thousand dollars, they go to the multicultural grants program?

**Ms Sheehan:** They can apply for a multicultural grant, that is right.

**THE CHAIR:** Is there a delegation or a discretion that Mrs Moore or Mr Manikis can exercise when they are approached by a group? Could they give them some discretionary money—\$200, \$500, \$1,000?

**Ms Sheehan:** The funding for those activities is within the grants program. The grants program is assessed by using criteria which are published on our website by a number of community representatives. The grants are approved by the minister.

**THE CHAIR:** So there is no discretion to Mr Manikis, Mrs Moore or somebody else in the area to give out money without a grant process?

**Ms Sheehan:** Well—

**Ms Howson:** I think from time to time the government might identify an event or an

initiative that they wanted to sponsor—“sponsor” I am using the in the broader sense of the word. We would, to the capacity within our budget, support the minister to accommodate that.

**THE CHAIR:** But they are reported somewhere?

**Ms Howson:** Only inasmuch as we report on our overall expenditure.

**THE CHAIR:** So could we have a list for the past 12 months of any of those sponsorships that have been made to—

**Ms Howson:** Sure. Some examples of that in the past have been things like events we have initiated for the Sudanese community—

**THE CHAIR:** Yes.

**Ms Sheehan:** I was thinking of another one, which was a terrific opportunity, actually. There was an ethnic disabilities group that had no funding at all. Because we had access to the sector development funding under the NDIS, we were actually able to give them core funding to then work with people with a multicultural background who would not have otherwise had a service at all to go into the national disability insurance scheme.

**THE CHAIR:** There were a couple of questions there that were taken on notice that are recurrent, so that is good. Mr Doszpot had a supplementary, and then Mr Hinder with a new question.

**MR DOSZPOT:** With regard to grants and how people can get them, I have actually sent a request to you, minister, regarding Street Soccer, which is a volunteer group. There is a man by the name of Ronnie MacLeod who does a great job pulling people together from the homeless community. It has got multicultural ethnic elements in there as well as people who are trying to recover from drug abuse and so forth. It is a totally volunteer organisation, yet it has to pay reasonably high amounts of money to hire an oval. I sought some information from you on this and you said you cannot do anything about it. You would think that a group like this that has not got the money really to look after itself—and the volunteers are doing it out of the goodness of their hearts—could apply for some sort of grant that could alleviate its situation?

**Ms Berry:** I think what you were talking about came through my other portfolio area of sport and recreation.

**MR DOSZPOT:** It came from me to you.

**Ms Berry:** Yes, from you to me through sport and recreation. Obviously they could apply for grants through that process as well. Can I put that on hold and come back to you on Monday when I am doing sport and rec?

**MR DOSZPOT:** If you could take that on board and give us some advice. I think they are a really useful part of our community and I would like to see what we can do.

**Ms Berry:** I can recall it, but I do not think it was through community services.

**MR DOSZPOT:** No, I do not expect you to remember every one of these. I appreciate your taking it on board. Thank you.

**THE CHAIR:** Mr Hinder with a new question.

**MR HINDER:** Thank you, chair. Speaking of the Multicultural Festival, minister, you tabled a survey in the Assembly earlier this year. Can you give us the key findings of the survey and maybe explain how the survey was conducted?

**Ms Berry:** Yes. The National Multicultural Festival this year was another outstanding success. In 2016 it has proven to be Canberra's most loved, fun and free culturally diverse family event. This year marked its 20th birthday. Going for 20 years now, the festival is just growing on each success every year. This year we had over 460 stalls. We had 280,000 attend the festival from four o'clock Friday through to 6 pm Sunday. I think I saw a number of members of the Assembly at the festival. At this year's festival the headline event was the Black Sorrows, of course. Baby et Lulu and Paulini and Kulture Break were all part of the headline event this year. ACT Policing have confirmed that the crowds were all very well behaved, which is another good reason why it is such a successful and well sought after event.

The key results of the satisfaction survey were: 95 per cent were satisfied or very satisfied with the festival; 97 per cent expressed that they were most likely to attend again in 2017; 99 per cent expressed that they would recommend the festival to a friend; and 97 per cent felt safe or very safe during the festival. Over the weekend there were approximately 350 performance groups, with over 2,500 performers over eight stages. The volunteering component of the 2016 festival worked out very well across those three days, with over 4,500 community volunteers as well as 100 volunteers who were directly providing assistance to festival staff.

The survey itself is conducted by volunteers who spend the whole time over the weekend talking with festival participants and getting their feedback. Obviously people provide feedback on social media as well. We take all of that feedback into account. But certainly 20 years of the National Multicultural Festival has been an enormous success. We conducted over 1,000 phone surveys to get those responses as well. So, again, it has been a really successful festival.

**MR HINDER:** Is there any economic impact from the festival for the territory at all?

**Ms Berry:** Yes, there was a huge, positive economic impact from the festival. In fact, this year it is estimated that over \$12 million was put back into the ACT economy from participants who attended the festival. I should say that when I was going through the festival I ran into a group of people who have been coming to the festival every year for as long as they can remember. They came from Melbourne, Western Australia and Sydney. They had special T-shirts made up to say that they were regular festival goers. They were so excited to be there. It was their big day out, if you like, every year coming to Canberra to go to the Multicultural Festival. That was pretty awesome.

**MR HINDER:** That is interstate travellers. Were there international travellers here?

**Ms Berry:** I think we estimated about 43,000 interstate and international visitors as well, so that is pretty good.

**MR HINDER:** Great.

**THE CHAIR:** Does the Multicultural Festival run at a profit? How much does it cost to put on and how much do you get back?

**Ms Sheehan:** We have a list of the grants that you were asking for, Mr Smyth, in our papers. With the minister's agreement, we could table those for your information immediately.

**THE CHAIR:** Fabulous.

**Ms Berry:** The festival is more of an opportunity for the community to come together and celebrate the ACT's amazing cultural diversity. It runs to a budget and provides that really great cultural experience.

**THE CHAIR:** And the budget is how much?

**Ms Berry:** The profits, or the outcomes, for the Multicultural Festival—

**THE CHAIR:** Profits are good.

**Ms Berry:** There is, of course, the social benefit for our community and visitors who come to the ACT and the economic benefit that we have just talked about of over \$12 million back into the ACT economy. One of my officials might be able to put their finger on the figure.

**Ms Howson:** We can provide the actual cost of staging the festival. In addition to that I might just add—and I will make Ms Sheehan's point again—that the overall strategy is to allow the multicultural community and organisations that make up that community to generate income. So if there is anything of a profit it goes into the non-government sector and the private sector that hosts stalls.

**THE CHAIR:** You obviously have an expenditure. That is fine; you have a budget. But we obviously charge people for stalls or access and things.

**Ms Howson:** Yes, and that is essentially to go some way towards the covering costs.

**THE CHAIR:** That would ameliorate some of the cost.

**Ms Howson:** That is correct. And our budget is?

**Mrs Moore:** We have a budget of 0.475 million for the festival. That is our internal budget. The rest of the costs of the festival are raised through either sponsorships or stallholders.

**THE CHAIR:** How much is raised?

**Mrs Moore:** This year 0.105 million was raised through the stallholders, through the multicultural groups. We will take that on notice just to make sure that we get these exactly right.

**Ms Sheehan:** What we want to clarify are the sources of revenue for the festival. We have an overall budget which includes what government funds as well as the revenue that we raise from stallholders, sponsorships and so on. That varies from year to year. We can provide you with the revenue raised and the expenditures for the last Multicultural Festival when that is available.

**THE CHAIR:** That is kind; thanks very much. We will move on to the Minister for Women. Minister Berry, the government's initiative to address domestic violence, who is the lead minister on that?

**Ms Berry:** There are two ministers who would be responsible for that—the minister for justice and community safety and the Minister for Women, which is me, at the moment. We have appointed an acting coordinator-general, which is Mr Matthews, who is here with us today. He will be responsible for setting up the family safety hub, given his expert experience in setting up all of the integrated service work through the human services blueprint and the better services pilot in west Belconnen and getting those integrated service systems together. Mr Matthews has been the architect of those programs. He will be responsible for ensuring that through co-design with the community services sector and the women's sector the family safety hub provides that chance for the government to provide an even better integrated service system.

**THE CHAIR:** So the bulk of the funding rests where: with Community Services or JACS?

**Mr Matthews:** In terms of the appropriation in the budget, the initiatives are spread across a number of directorates. It is mostly JACS and Community Services Directorate. The appropriation will be made to those different agencies. Of course, those agencies will become responsible and accountable for delivering those. There will be whole-of-government leadership and whole-of-government reporting on the safer families package. That will be brought together under the role of the coordinator-general.

**THE CHAIR:** Two questions in terms of the expenditure: one, what information informed the expenditure? Is it all evidence based that these are the things that will deliver the outcomes? Two, what are the outcomes you seek to achieve? Have we set ourselves milestones and targets against the delivery of the funds?

**Ms Berry:** The family safety response, which the government decided after long and careful thinking to fund through a levy, has been discussed with experts in the sector over the past 18 months—certainly since I have been Minister for Women—to determine the best way to respond to domestic and family violence and sexual assaults in the community. Of course, the three reports the ACT government commissioned—the death review, the Glanfield inquiry and the gap analysis—have all informed the work going ahead in putting together this response.

It is very important for the government to listen to the expert advice from the sector as well as experiences from across the country and across the world to put together a response that deals with this terrible issue we are facing here in the ACT and across the country that deals with it in a balanced way, makes sure that people are being provided the support services they need, prevents the violence from happening in the first place and provides a justice response if that is required as well.

At the end of the day we do not want to see the result of this violence continue to be played out in our court systems, our emergency departments and our neighbourhoods. Ultimately we all want the violence to end, and that is what this family safety funding goes towards achieving.

Mr Matthews will go more to the detail of the funding and where it is directed to assist the committee.

**Mr Matthews:** A couple of comments in addition to those of the minister: clearly the ACT government is already committed to addressing violence against women and children as part of its prevention strategy from 2011 to 2017. There has already been an existing longstanding commitment around addressing family violence, domestic violence and promoting family safety. The ACT government has also been very actively involved in national work in this area.

A very strong information base and evidence base has been built over many years. The minister has mentioned the three most recent reports: the Glanfield inquiry; the death review, which looked at very tragic family violence deaths and tried to understand the circumstances and the issues that led to those deaths; and the gap analysis, which looked at existing service delivery and where extra investment was needed. All of that has been very comprehensively undertaken to inform this whole-of-government approach.

The package that was announced in the budget obviously turbo charges existing efforts, and that is a very important point to make. Experts and front-line workers and women's organisations have been working to address these issues for decades. There is lots of fantastic work already on the ground in our community and lots of positive differences are being made to the lives of individuals. But there are some areas that need extra investment, and they have been the focus of the safer family packages.

Obviously we need to make sure there is a whole-of-government effort. We need to make sure that people have somewhere to go when they feel unsafe. We need to coordinate on-the-ground service delivery, and we need to make sure information sharing is more comprehensively implemented so we can take the right steps to make sure people remain safe.

The death review that was undertaken showed there is still a strong awareness requirement that exists in our community. For example, it showed people did not always view coercive and controlling behaviours as part of the family violence spectrum. In fact, the tragedy of many deaths is that that was the behaviour in place prior to the murder or death of the individual concerned, and that escalated incredibly quickly.

That death review also looked at not only what is described as inter-partner violence but also violence in the family from children to parents. A variety of responses and nuances are required to address the whole issue. They have all been brought together in the context of this package, and there is a strong commitment to improve our current responses.

**THE CHAIR:** I do not think anybody would disagree with any of that, and well done to those in the sector. I am not sure I could do the work, so good on them. But for the additional input what are we getting? The strategic indicators do not seem to specifically mention family violence. Strategic objective 8 refers to an anti-violence culture in the ACT to ensure that women feel safe, but the indicator is the proportion of women who feel safe by themselves in public places.

**Mr Matthews:** Yes.

**THE CHAIR:** What we are talking about in terms of domestic violence is violence in the home, so what is the strategic indicator for violence in the home that will tell us the situation is improving?

**Mr Matthews:** Mr Smyth, as part of this whole-of-government approach there will be a performance scorecard or an outcomes framework developed to show and track progress at a whole-of-government level. Clearly that is not limited to just the Community Services Directorate and what might appear in our output classes. This package is a new package; we are very much at the beginning of this next phase of work. If there is a need to further adapt or amend government accountability mechanisms, that can be considered going forward. What is most important is that we can be accountable back to the community about what is being rolled out and the difference it is making.

**Ms Berry:** There is no doubt that awareness is rising about all of these issues—family violence, domestic violence and sexual assaults—through the work that has been happening here, our community’s own experience of violence over the past couple of years and also with Victoria’s royal commission into violence. That work has put additional pressure on all of our support systems. That has been very easy to record from the additional phone calls these organisations have been getting and the funding they have had to provide for crisis accommodation for women and children who have been leaving violent circumstances in homes and having to spend time in hotels or in other kinds of accommodation. The funding the Domestic Violence Crisis Service is spending is three or four times what it would ordinarily spend. That is the same sort of information we are getting back from the Canberra Rape Crisis Centre.

It is easy enough to understand that the need is rising because of the awareness around these issues. Now we need to respond to that and find somewhere to go for those people who have been affected by violence. That is the funding initiative that has been missing from the federal government in addressing this very important issue—they funded the awareness but have not funded somewhere for people to go when they are placed in this situation. That is where our program, room for change, comes into effect. It removes the violence from the family home. It provides intensive support for the family to stay at home and then provides intensive support for the person who

might have—

**THE CHAIR:** Yes, I am aware of what it intends to do, but how are you going to measure it?

**Ms Berry:** The work the coordinator-general will be doing to set up the family safety hub will be co-designed with the sector to ensure that there is a proper system in place that we can evaluate where—

**THE CHAIR:** I understand all that. You have managed to get the funding into the budget papers; you have the levy in the budget papers. But we are not aware of the outcomes we are expecting for this. Is this just a lump of money you thought you could afford to levy, or is it the adequate quantum of funds required to make a significant change to this problem? The only way you can tell me there is a significant change is if you measure it. So what are you measuring, and when will we see whether there is a change in the outcomes?

As you say, sometimes when you alert people to a problem, demand goes through the roof. But when are we going to see that come down? I am now told there is a scorecard. Again I point to accountability indicators in table 12 on page 12. They do not mention women; they do not mention domestic violence or programs for women at all. How will we know the outcome of this extra money? Is it just a number that has been thought of—“Okay, that’s what we can afford to put on the rates”—or is this the number that we need to effect change, and what change will we effect with the funds?

**Ms Howson:** If I may follow on from what the minister was saying, at the moment our capacity to provide data rests within the tertiary end of the system, be that information that flows through to Justice and Community Safety or information that we receive through our funding arrangements with crisis support providers.

One of the first roles, as Mr Matthews was outlining, for the coordinator-general will be to articulate what the service design around early intervention will look like and attach to that metrics that will give the community confidence that the response is having an impact on reducing violence or preventing violence before it reaches the tertiary system. Again, I am postulating, but you would expect to see a reduction over time, maybe not initially because of the issues around raising awareness, but—

**THE CHAIR:** It worries me that you use the word “postulating”. Have the programs been designed to have a definite effect and lead to a reduction in domestic violence?

**Ms Berry:** Yes.

**Ms Howson:** I am saying that the programs that have been funded have an evidence base, and the programs that will be designed from this funding will also have an evidence base and they will attach metrics. What I was postulating about was that we would expect to see over time a reduction in the impact of demand in the tertiary system if early intervention is having the positive impact we expect it to have.

**Ms Sheehan:** Mr Smyth, there is a very extensive evidence base for best practice in domestic violence, and that was the gap analysis report the minister was referring to.



There were three aspects to the gap analysis report: the first was a literature review which was heavily supported by ANROWS, the Australian National Research Organisation for Women's Safety, which was looking into domestic violence supported by all state and territory governments. That was the literature review on all of the evidence on best practice in services and what was missing in services.

There is a large consultation report where all of the areas working with victims of domestic violence were consulted about the issues in the system. The gap analysis then identified, on the basis of consultation and research, the gaps in service delivery. As the minister said, that is part of the strong evidence base for the funding of services going forward. We have not just picked it out of the air; there is a very, very strong evidence base.

**THE CHAIR:** You have got an evidence base that says these are the shortfalls. You have done the gap analysis and you have funded the programs. But unless Mr Matthews can talk us through what the scorecard will do, there are no strategic or accountability indicators that relate to this that I can see—correct me if I am wrong. We now have a separate scorecard.

**Mr Matthews:** You have asked a couple of questions, Mr Smyth, and I would like to take the chance to answer each one of them. You have asked one question about what will appear in the accountability statements or in the outputs in the CSD budget statements. You have made the reference to what is already in there, and my earlier answer to that was, if there is a need to further amend the performance indicators in that budget paper, that will be considered and done in future. That is one part of it.

You also asked a question around the evidence base for why particular initiatives were identified as part of the safer family package. Ms Sheehan has answered that. We are confident that all of the things that have been identified are evidence based and also add to our existing service delivery system.

**THE CHAIR:** I absolutely accept that.

**Mr Matthews:** I made another point, which is that we have multiple data sources which give us an indication of the prevalence of family violence, how people are feeling in terms of their personal safety, including the Australian Bureau of Statistics personal and safety survey. There is also police data and there is statutory service system data, as Natalie Howson has mentioned. There is also demand data that the minister has mentioned. All of those relevant data sources will be mapped and monitored for us to be able to show progress against that demand and then tie that to an evidence base around individual initiatives that have been implemented.

It has been good we have had the opportunity to talk about the different dimensions in which we will be able to understand what success looks like in this area and then to be able to report back on that. That will have to be a whole-of-government exercise because of the nature of family safety and family violence. It will not appear in totality in any one directorate's budget papers, but there will be a publicly available document accountable to those areas.

**THE CHAIR:** When will that occur?

**Ms Berry:** Mr Matthews is acting in the coordinator-general role. That full-time position will be filled and work will be done in co-designing the family safety hub to make sure we achieve the outcomes and results we want; obviously everyone wants the violence to end. That is the primary result we are all attempting to achieve through this. When that is done that will be the time when within the next couple of months that we will be able to start working together with the sector on putting together a system that will have that proper sharing and integration of services across the government so we can properly find out what is going on.

The room for change is a relatively easy one: if we stop a family from falling apart because of violence and a potential perpetrator does not end up in the court system and a woman does not end up in our emergency department, that will be a pretty easy outcome to measure as a success through this program.

**THE CHAIR:** Is that easy to measure?

**Ms Berry:** The family safety hub will be working on the best way to measure that to be able to report on it. The organisations providing support services and one-on-one support to a family and the perpetrator of the violence will be able to see very clearly that that family's relationship has been repaired or the perpetrator has been able to reassess the relationship and be able to live in a non-violent way. That is the outcome we want to see.

**THE CHAIR:** Just a quick follow-on, then supplementaries from Mr Hinder and Mr Doszpot and I am sure Ms Burch has one. What percentage of women suffers domestic violence in the ACT?

**Ms Howson:** In terms of the figures around population impact, we refer most often to the national figures. I might ask one of my officials to deal with this with me, but what we see is that one in three women over the age of 15 have experienced violence at some point in their life. They are shocking figures. I think one in five have experienced sexual assault.

**THE CHAIR:** We do not have ACT-specific figures?

**Mr Matthews:** I have them in front of me. If I can update these figures I will. For example we know that ACT Policing attended 2,848 incidents in 2014 with a total of 1,984 criminal offences identified, that the DPP commenced criminal proceedings against 425 defendants in 2013-14, that the Domestic Violence Crisis Service made and supported over 30,000 contacts through their phone line and attended 1,400 crisis interventions in 2013-14, that the Victim Support Service supported 136 new clients in 2013-14, that Legal Aid assisted in the delivery of 1,116 legal support services in 2013-14, that 15 per cent of the clients that were engaged in the strengthening families initiative have identified domestic violence as a current issue and that 529 people presented to ACT homelessness services with domestic or family violence as their primary presenting issue in the same year.

**Ms Howson:** And if I might add to that, the majority of child concern reports relate to notional abuse, which is generally characterised as exposure to domestic violence.

**Mr Matthews:** There is a range of data sources available that show presentations and current service impact.

**THE CHAIR:** A row of supplementaries.

**MR HINDER:** Just a comment on that one, notwithstanding all of the anecdotal data that a lot of women do not report, the statistics are skewed definitely in favour of it being much higher than is reported?

**Mr Matthews:** Under-reporting, that is right.

**MR HINDER:** If I look at the seven line items in BSG on page 14 under the heading “Safer Families”, some of those, like additional funding for the Rape Crisis Centre or the Domestic Violence Crisis Service, do not really need quantification, or we know what is going to happen to those funds, do we not? I am not trying to answer Mr Smyth’s question here with your assistance. In regard to some of the other ones like training in domestic violence for front-line workers, it would be useful to have, “We hope to have X number of people trained in that field,” I suppose.

But of the seven there, if you read through the categories “early assistance for families at risk of violence” and “enhanced child protection case management coordination”, then there would be a plan to put that in place, I would assume, and each of those would have some sort of indicators attached to them? Those seven items there over the four outyears seem to be accounting for a large amount of the spend anyway. Would that be correct, I suppose is my question?

**Ms Howson:** Yes. If I can reflect—

**THE CHAIR:** “That is my own hypothesis.”

**MR HINDER:** That is right. Tell me how close to right I am.

**Ms Howson:** What we will be able to do is demonstrate that the money has gone, as an input, to either the intended program intervention or initiative, and we will be able to report back on that initiative or program having been established and operating. What we would also like to move towards though is a statement of clear outcomes and what would be the proxy indicators or metrics that we could measure to give us confidence that the logic in applying the funds to these initiatives is actually resulting in the outcome we are looking for.

**MR HINDER:** And the same result was clearly Mr Smyth’s intention in putting that question.

**Ms Howson:** That is right.

**MR DOSZPOT:** My supplementary is a fairly simple one. Excluding any increases from the safer families program, has there been a decrease in the overall funding for the Office for Women?

**Ms Sheehan:** Thank you for the question. There has been no decrease whatsoever in the overall funding for the Office for Women, and—

**MR DOSZPOT:** That is my question.

**Ms Sheehan:** What I would like to add to that is: the Community Services Directorate is operating to break down barriers as a whole. For example, when we were doing the gap analysis, I was able to send an extra policy officer from the policy team to work in the Office of Women for probably about four or five months, and we will be seeing that sort of thing more and more. Certainly there is no reduction and as we need to really put some extra policy or service grunt into a project—if I can refer to it in that way—we are moving resources from right across CSD to really support the effort.

**MR DOSZPOT:** As I said, it is a simple question but please consider it in terms of “overall”. I think you have answered it, but if there is any variation in it I would like to know.

**Ms Sheehan:** Absolutely, of course.

**Ms Berry:** I will know, probably, if that happens.

**THE CHAIR:** Ms Burch, a supplementary.

**MS BURCH:** I think it follows on from that. We have got a safer families statement here. Once you have gone through and got your measures and started to track those changes across the existing datasets and then possibly created other measures, how will you report that? I go back to what you said about it being between you and the attorney. Will it be held in a six-monthly safer families report, annual reports? Do we wait until budget papers next year? What is the early thinking for the coordinator-general’s office in relation to that?

**Ms Berry:** I will ask my officials to provide some detail as well, but I think setting up this whole response has not been something that the ACT has done on its own or that we are on an island amongst this and we are the only place that is having to respond to this really terrible issue. Across the country, states and territories are responding to this in different kinds of ways. Our response and Victoria’s response are very similar.

They will be setting up five safety hubs in regions across Victoria and they have started talking with their support services about how that set-up is going to happen. We will be working very closely with the Victorian family safety minister and the Premier as we go through this program to respond to this issue of setting up the family safety hubs. That will be the area where we will be developing the system to evaluate, provide feedback and set up the reporting systems in the best way that we can to make sure that they provide the information that we need to see that this response is actually making a difference in our community.

**MS BURCH:** I think the simple question is: will you be sharing it back to the community?

**Ms Berry:** We have to somehow, do we not?

**MS BURCH:** Yes.

**Ms Howson:** My response to that would be that we still need to reach—

**MS BURCH:** I am just putting up a pacemaker that this time next year we will be saying, “Where”—

**Ms Howson:** Certainly one of the best models we have experienced in CSD is the regular reporting through the Assembly that we did with the national disability insurance scheme. I imagine that is a model that the government would be interested in looking at.

**MS BURCH:** And then you expect, once you start reporting on this, that whole awareness, you will get increased reporting as people recognise it is a safer environment in which to report as well?

**Ms Berry:** I hope so and I hope that, through the work that we have been doing here in the ACT, and others across the country, especially Victoria, then the federal government, whoever that is, will be able to provide a really national response to this whole issue instead of just small amounts of money that are creating issues for all the states and territories to then have to manage. It really does need a national response. But certainly Victoria and the ACT are doing something that I think all the other states and territory women’s safety ministers, premiers and chief ministers are looking at very carefully to see how it plays out in our community.

**MS BURCH:** Well done.

**THE CHAIR:** We might break there. Thank you for that. The committee will resume with the minister for housing and social inclusion.

**Sitting suspended from 3.49 to 4.07 pm.**

**THE CHAIR:** Good afternoon, minister; welcome back. Good afternoon, ladies and gentleman, and welcome to the last session of the sixth day of the Select Committee on Estimates 2016-2017 inquiry into the 2016-17 budget. Members, between now and 5.30 this afternoon we will look at social inclusion and social housing, so feel free to range across both issues to your heart’s content.

We have new players here, so please be aware that today’s proceedings are being recorded as well as transcribed and will be published by the committee. The proceedings are also being broadcast and webstreamed. If you take a question on notice if you could say words like, “I will take that question on notice,” that will help with the tracking of the questions that are taken on notice. And when you come to the table if you could please familiarise yourself with the privilege statement? If those at the table now could indicate that they have read and understand the implications of privilege for the committee? So acknowledged; thank you very much. Minister, would you like to make an opening statement on social inclusion and social housing?

**Ms Berry:** No, thank you, chair. I made the statement at the start of the hearing.

**THE CHAIR:** All right. We will go straight to questions.

**Ms Berry:** Before you do, chair, we have something to add.

**Mr Hubbard:** We are just going to describe the Multicultural Festival finances, just to give you a quick shot on that. As you would appreciate, the festival has been running for about 20 years so we have had a bit of budget experience in setting the festival up. Over the past couple of years it has been worth between about a million and \$1.1 million in operating costs. The revenue for that has come from stallholders, sponsorship and the government contribution. For 2016 the stallholder revenue was \$300,000, sponsorship was \$160,000 and the government contribution was just over half a million, which meant that we made a loss of about \$100,000 on the festival for this year. That is how we manage it each year. We set a certain budget and then deal round it. I think the biggest cost that we have found going forward is the hire charges. As the festival grows each year we have to pay particular attention to the property expenses and the hire charges because they are our cost drivers for the festival.

**THE CHAIR:** Thanks for that. I will defer my question to Ms Lawder.

**MS LAWDER:** I would like to start by talking about the recent Auditor-General's report into the maintenance of public housing. There were some recommendations in there about timeliness, effectiveness and maintenance of public housing property. I would like to use a couple of specific examples for my question. I have been contacted by one tenant who said that she has moved into a new property and there is no phone line connected from the pole to her house. There are a couple of other properties in the same development. Would it be normal that a tenant has to pay for it themselves? I guess my point is: if she moved into an existing property, that phone line would already be connected from the pole to her house.

**Ms Berry:** I am not aware of that particular issue. It has not been raised with my office. I am not sure whether Housing ACT has been informed about that issue. It might be best if you can put that person in touch with my office or with Housing ACT so that we can deal with that particular issue.

**MS LAWDER:** Sure. I have used that example as an illustration. My question was: would a tenant generally have to pay for the connection from the pole to the home?

**Mr Matthews:** The short answer is no. We would pay the service connection fee, if you like, and the tenant would obviously be responsible for their own connection fees.

**MS LAWDER:** Is that the kind of issue that would go through the contract holder—I guess Spotless—or would there be a different avenue that would normally be taken for that?

**Mr Matthews:** I am just trying to work out the best way to answer your question. We do our new constructions through our panel of builders and we commission the construction of new dwellings from the private sector. Generally that would include, in terms of completing that construction, arranging for the connections of all servicing arrangements so that when a new tenant moves in they can connect their personal

accounts.

**MS LAWDER:** I think we heard a couple of other examples in the Assembly last sitting. There was a woman who complained about fire safety in her property. There was another example, which I cannot recall off the top of my head. Is it the kind of issue that, as the Auditor-General has pointed out, is about a lack of oversight from Housing ACT or CSD in those new developments?

**Mr Matthews:** I think that they are different issues to the ones that were canvassed in the Auditor-General's report.

**MS LAWDER:** These are in addition to the ones that the Auditor-General canvassed?

**Mr Matthews:** What I was going to explain is that the Auditor-General really covered the provision of the total facilities management contract, which of course also includes the role that Spotless plays for Housing ACT once we have received newly constructed properties. Spotless can help with the handover arrangements and the inspections of those properties and help us manage the defects liability period. Any new constructions have a defects liability period and Spotless help us perform that function. The Auditor-General's report looked at the whole of the total facilities management contract. I think it is fair to say that the majority of that contract relates to the planned and responsive works that take place to the existing portfolio on a year-on-year basis.

**MS LAWDER:** I will leave that one there, except, did I see, Mr Matthews, you are moving on to a different position?

**Mr Matthews:** Yes, I will be taking on a new role as the interim coordinator-general for family safety from 11 July. Until that time I am acting deputy director-general, CSD.

**MS LAWDER:** Congratulations on your new role. I will miss you.

**Mr Matthews:** Thank you.

**THE CHAIR:** A supplementary from Mr Doszpot, and then a new question.

**MR DOSZPOT:** Minister, how much did Housing ACT collect in maintenance costs, damage reparation and interest on rental arrears?

**Mr Matthews:** Mr Doszpot, there are a few different questions there. Just to answer one part of it, around interest on rent arrears, we do not charge tenants interest on rent arrears. What we want, of course, is for tenants to pay their rent. Their rent is determined by their income and paying no more than 25 per cent of their income in rent. If they get into arrears—as some of our tenants do; obviously they are struggling at times with various different financial challenges in their life—what we want them to do is to start repaying that arrears to us within their means and in a way which is not going to put them into further financial hardship. Generally we would not ask a tenant to pay more than 30 per cent of their total income in rent costs, including arrears, to Housing.

Our objective is to get people paying regularly, because that is the best way for them to maintain their housing and to avoid being in debt with us, having that pressure. Our output indicators show that we collect 99 per cent of collectable rent every year. That is a very strong performance from our point of view, particularly given the nature of our client group, which includes the lowest income earners in the ACT.

**MR DOSZPOT:** How much was written off in unpaid rental debts?

**Mr Matthews:** We can try to answer that question later on in this session. It is obviously an accounting issue around the write-off of debts. Without going into all of the accounting treatments, the general principle, of course, is that we keep a debt on our books for as long as we believe that we have a reasonable chance of collecting it, and we will pursue that debt, whether it is a rental debt or property debt, with all of our existing tenants. That will remain a live debt. If a tenant were to leave Housing, for example, we would pursue that debt, even though they were no longer a tenant with us. But there comes a point from an accounting perspective, from a book perspective, where that debt is not realisable. Then we would write that debt off. Our financial controller, Bob Hyland, might be able to give that figure, but again I want to emphasise the point that we would still try to collect debt for as long as we possibly can.

**MR DOSZPOT:** I am quite happy to take these on notice. What was the cost of normal or requested maintenance on Housing ACT's properties before any tenant contribution?

**Mr Matthews:** I am just trying to understand that question.

**MR DOSZPOT:** What was the cost of normal or requested maintenance on its properties, on your properties?

**Mr Matthews:** What we would have to do to answer that question, Mr Doszpot, is to extract the tenant-responsible maintenance from our overall maintenance expenditure.

**MR DOSZPOT:** Sure.

**Mr Matthews:** Yes, we will do that.

**MR DOSZPOT:** And what was the cost—

**Mr Matthews:** Mr Hyland—

**MR DOSZPOT:** Can I get a few of these out, and then perhaps you can answer them.

**Mr Matthews:** Yes.

**MR DOSZPOT:** What was the cost of repairing damage caused by tenants or their associates?

**Mr Matthews:** In what period, Mr Doszpot?



**MR DOSZPOT:** In the past 12 months?

**Mr Matthews:** Last financial year?

**MR DOSZPOT:** Yes.

**Ms Howson:** Mr Doszpot, do you mind if we answer them as we go, just so that we do not lose the thread of the question?

**MR DOSZPOT:** Certainly. I was just trying to be helpful.

**Ms Howson:** It has just taken a little while for our financial controller to come to the table. I think he can help you now.

**MR DOSZPOT:** Thank you.

**Mr Hyland:** In answer to your first question about write-offs, we write off about a million dollars a year for rent. That is provisioning for doubtful debts or impairment of debts and the write-off provisions, so writing off bad debts. That is about a million dollars a year. In terms of repairs and maintenance each year, we spend about \$37 million in total on repairs and maintenance. That includes about \$3 million for tenant-responsible maintenance. So excluding tenant-responsible maintenance, it is about \$34 million on repairs and maintenance. Was there any other question?

**Ms Howson:** And the next question?

**MR DOSZPOT:** The last one I was just going to put in was: how much does Housing ACT pay in ACT government rates, charges and taxes?

**Mr Hyland:** In terms of rates, it will be about \$17 million in 2016-17. We pay a range of other statutory charges such as stamp duty and other charges like that. They are probably significant. We also pay water rates and sewerage to ACTEW, now Icon Water. We would have to probably aggregate them up if you want a full list of what we spend.

**MR DOSZPOT:** Sure.

**Mr Hyland:** But the majority of it would be general rates.

**MR DOSZPOT:** With that, what were the staffing, consultancy, contractor and other administrative costs that were incurred as part of this provision for public housing?

**Ms Berry:** What is it you are after? Is it with Housing ACT or how many people work in housing?

**MR DOSZPOT:** With Housing ACT. What is Housing ACT's staffing, including consultancy, contractors that you may employ and other administrative costs incurred as part of the provision of public housing?

**Mr Matthews:** Mr Doszpot, you basically go through our profit and loss statement there.

**THE CHAIR:** That could be reasonable.

**Mr Matthews:** In the budget papers there is an expected outcome which has been listed; obviously in our annual report we will report on the final outcome. There is a budget against all of those loan items. We can go through them in more detail with you if you want to go through our profit and loss statement.

**THE CHAIR:** Perhaps you want to take that on notice, because I know Mr Hyland could speak all afternoon about the profit and loss statement.

**Ms Howson:** In terms of staffing, in 2015-16 the estimated outcome was 245, and budgeted for next year is 256. What we will have to take on notice is the disaggregation of the expenses associated with consultancies.

**Mr Hyland:** We spend about \$1 million or \$1.5 million each year on consultancies depending on what works we want to undertake. We normally use consultancies for specialist work like doing work around our public housing asset management strategies. We bring a consultant in to assess and help us work through those sorts of strategic issues. We also hire contractors—basically from body shop—to have labour come in and sit with us when we have a shortage of staff. We will have between 10 and 20 of them come through, on average, to backfill housing managers and front-line staff who are on maternity leave or something who we have contracted staff for. They are built into our salary costs but they are in addition to the FTEs. We normally have between five and 10 of them on, depending on the background.

**MR DOSZPOT:** Could you address these issues. If there are things that you feel that you can give us now, I am very happy to take that, but I do not want to tie up the complete process here this afternoon on this. I am happy for you to take these questions on notice. It is up to you.

**Mr Matthews:** Mr Doszpot, the operating statement is on page 35 of budget statement G. It is broken down by a number of those items that you have mentioned: employees, super, supplies and services, which would include maintenance, depreciation, borrowing costs, grants and purchase services, which would include funding going to homelessness services. So it is aggregated at that level in the operating statement on page 35. Just going to the nature of your questions, it seems you would like us to break up that supplies and services line in a bit more detail to cover off things like the rates and other water and sewerage charges that we pay. We can take that on notice.

**MR DOSZPOT:** Thank you. My final question to the minister on this is this: I understand the difficulties and so forth with the salt and pepper approach where you try to be fair to everyone. If a particular street had around 57 per cent social housing in the street, how would you consider that?

**Ms Berry:** I would consider it probably pretty close to my street, but the salt and pepper policy is not really based on a principle of statistics or numbers on particular

streets; it is more about breaking down big numbers of disadvantaged people living together and distributing them all across our city. There is no actual formula used in the salt and pepper principle to make sure that we give everybody a chance to live all across our community regardless of their income, regardless of the postcode.

**MR DOSZPOT:** I understand. Simply, the question was—I think you have answered it. You are saying that is standard, is it?

**Ms Berry:** The whole of the ACT has always had public housing all across the city. That is what we aim to achieve to make sure that people who are disadvantaged do not have to live in high numbers of disadvantage where that is not proven to be of success for them to be able to get good outcomes in their life, be able to have the same kinds of chances that the rest of us have. When we broke that down, we found that anywhere in the country would be able to say that the best way for people to have a really good crack at happiness is to have that disadvantage broken down so that we get to live with each other regardless of incomes or our postcode, where we come from. That is the best way for people to be included and have a really good chance at getting on with their lives.

**MR DOSZPOT:** I have some other questions, but I will keep it at that.

**THE CHAIR:** Just a final to Ms Lawder's question; then we will go to Mr Hinder. What percentage of tenants is on direct debit? Aren't all tenants meant to be on direct debit now?

**Mr Matthews:** We should have that number.

**Mr Hyland:** Yes, we do. About two-thirds of our tenants are on some form of electronic payment—direct debit, centrepay or something. That has been pretty consistent for the past 15-odd years.

**THE CHAIR:** Great initiative.

**Mr Matthews:** Mr Smyth, most tenants certainly sign up on direct debit arrangements as well.

**THE CHAIR:** Mr Hinder has a new question.

**MR HINDER:** Minister, I have a question about the better services pilots. Can you give us an update on the progress made in those three better service projects: strengthening families, human services gateway and the local services network?

**Ms Berry:** Thank you for that question. This pilot was announced a couple of years ago by the former minister, Ms Burch, and the Chief Minister, in west Belconnen. It is made up against those three initiatives: strengthening families, the human services gateway and the local services network. What I am finding now in west Belconnen is that people are starting to really know about better services under the program. It is not just the support services or the government services but people within the community: businesses and people that I meet such as parents at my schools. They are really starting to know about what the local services network and that better services

integrated system are all about and wanting to be part of it.

In respect of strengthening families, I know that there has been a bit of a conversation about that today with Minister Bourke as well. Already we have had 69 families with over 304 family members who have been able to be part of strengthening families. We have had some really great outcomes with some of those families being able to get the kinds of services they need when they need them for as long as they need them. That is the great thing about that whole program and better services more generally. It is that it is not about a government system or a support service telling a family what they think they need. It is, rather, listening to the family and finding out the kinds of support services that they need.

Recently in the budget, Winnunga and Gugan Gulwan received funding out of the confiscated assets fund which will also give those organisations the chance to provide a program similar to strengthening families for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in our community.

The human services gateway was recently re-tendered and a new contract has been finalised between the Woden Community Service in partnership with Belconnen Community Service. They will be able to build on the great work that ConnectionsACT did. They were the architect of the first gateway known as FirstPoint over the past three years. I am really looking forward to working with both those organisations, which have very long experience working in our community but also looking at how we can make that system even better and, out of that, the future work with the family safety hub working out of the human services gateway as well.

In respect of the local services network that I touched on before, we recently celebrated with a kids carnival down at UnitingCare Kippax. We had hundreds and hundreds of families that came through and connected with different organisations that were down there at UnitingCare but also just networking people into different opportunities for them and their families. I know when I was a mum bringing up my children in west Belconnen, I never really knew what was around for them. That is what this better services program does. It really does give people a chance to see what is happening in their community, get the support services that they need for young children but also connect up with each other.

I think I gave an example last year of where Capital Chemist were supporting one of their clients. They were able to connect their client through the network to employment opportunities because they were part of the local services network. It is not a new thing. It is about a neighbourhood actually being a really good, supporting and inclusive neighbourhood. Better services is kind of giving them the support to build on that as a community.

I think one of the other things that I wanted to touch on with the better services work is the way that that will feed into the setting up of the family safety hub but also the government's response to the Glanfield inquiry in making sure that we have those integrated service systems and that we make sure that we have the proper supports there for families and share information across government directorates as well.

**MR HINDER:** The Capital Chemist network is a very good corporate citizen here in

the territory. Are these pilot programs informing social policy more broadly and working towards social inclusion?

**Ms Berry:** Yes.

**MR HINDER:** How are they doing that?

**Ms Berry:** That is the work that I guess will go towards the response to the Glanfield inquiry and making sure that we have those well-integrated service systems and support networks across government but also across the community, into our community support sector and in our neighbourhoods as well. That will be the work that goes into setting up the family safety hub that the coordinator-general will be responsible for. I talked before about the architect of better services and the human services blueprint with Ms Howson and Mr Matthews. Ms Howson, did you want to say anything on this?

**Ms Howson:** Just to add to the minister's response, I think one of the things that we are delighted to see happening now is that the human service blueprint, which was a precursor to our better services agenda, as a set of designed principles, is now informing so many initiatives across government. For example, the design elements have been picked up in the justice reinvestment strategy. They have been picked up in the schools for all response that education and training directorate are rolling out. That is a demonstration of the connection across the ACT government and that willingness for all of those human service directorates to work well together.

**Ms Berry:** The whole idea of all of these things is, I guess, to sort of un-silo the way our government has been working and have all the government services working together much better. I guess that is through the work that has been done through the development of the human services gateway. People can go in there seeking support for housing but then they can be directed to a whole bunch of other different services that they might need through that one point in time.

They get the chance to tell their story once and they do not have to tell that story again and again a whole bunch of times through all the different government departments or support services. That has been the information that has come back to us through the gap analysis as well. Having to tell a traumatic experience over and over again does not lead to a very good outcome for the family. Through the work that we have been doing through the human services blueprint across government, that will give families in our community the chance to really get on with their lives, get the supports that they need.

**THE CHAIR:** A supplementary from Ms Lawder and then a new question from Mr Doszpot.

**MS LAWDER:** Thank you. You mentioned the gateway. With respect to what was previously handled by FirstPoint, are any employees from what was FirstPoint moving over to work in the new gateway?

**Ms Gilding:** Yes, the Woden Community Service ran a recruitment process. The existing FirstPoint staff were certainly invited to apply for those positions. I

understand that two have been successful in terms of transitioning. So, yes, there have been opportunities for the staff to continue on.

**MS LAWDER:** How many positions were to be filled?

**Ms Gilding:** I do not have that. That is for Woden Community Service in terms of their business model but certainly we could ask Woden Community Service that.

**MS LAWDER:** Thanks.

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

**MR DOSZPOT:** Thank you. Minister, coming back to your comments on the importance of trying to help disadvantaged people in our community, one of our most disadvantaged suburbs in the ACT is Oaks Estate, according to the Bureau of Statistics. Given that Oaks Estate has no ACTION bus services to speak of, given that the only retail business in Oaks Estate is an enormous discount liquor outlet in a location where parolees and people with substance abuse issues or mental health issues must walk past every time they enter or leave Oaks Estate, why do you think Oaks Estate is an appropriate location to keep a concentration of disadvantaged people in?

**Ms Berry:** I will begin by pointing to some of the work that has been happening out at Oaks Estate with St Vincent de Paul. They have been supporting workers out there who have been chronically homeless for periods in their lives. They have been able to work individually with each of those tenants out there to give them a chance to have some difference in their lives. That has been happening since 2008. Since those programs have been in place, there have been very good indications that there have improvements in the physical environment and feelings of personal community safety at Oaks Estate.

Since then—July last year—the ACT government has been actively engaged with representatives from Oaks Estate. In fact, representatives from the Oaks Estate community met with three ministers of the government as well as the Chief Minister. So they have had very good access to the government, probably more access than many people would expect to have, when they have been talking about specific issues that have been raised.

I will say that Housing ACT has been progressing some of the specific issues put forward by the Oaks Estate representatives, particularly in relation to improving lighting and fencing in the area. We have also talked about the lighting issue with Territory and Municipal Services and ActewAGL. That issue is being progressed. Mr Matthews, did you want to add to that?

**Mr Matthews:** I will add to that, minister. There are 78 dwellings in Oaks Estate that are owned by Housing ACT. Whilst that is a reasonable number in a fairly small suburb, in terms of overall concentrations it is in the medium range.

**THE CHAIR:** Sorry, 78 out of how many?

**Mr Matthews:** Seventy-eight, which represents about 35 per cent of the total housing of Oaks Estate but only about 10 per cent of the actual land mass of Oaks Estate. They are four medium density units in Oaks Estate. They comprise bedsitters—one and two bedroom properties. They were constructed in 1974; so they have been part of the Oaks Estate community now for 40 years. The involvement of St Vincent de Paul, or they do refer themselves as Vinnies, as the minister described is around providing the right level of support to the people that are living there. So in terms of the actual—

**MR DOSZPOT:** Sorry, I have to stop you there. Look, I understand the work that St Vincent De Paul carries out. What I cannot understand is the work that the ACT government is not carrying out. Why put people into a disadvantaged area when you know the circumstances that they are living in? Better still, if I can turn that question around, why don't you give them ACTION buses? Why don't you give them some shops rather than just a liquor outlet? And why don't you, minister, talk to the people out there? They have been wanting to meet with you because they feel you are the one that really understands the issues that exist there. Yet you will not meet with them. These are serious issues I am just bringing up with you. You have told me that the safety and lighting issues have been addressed. I have it here that certainly there were to be meetings with executives of ACT Housing but still nothing has been done regarding lighting. It has not been installed. Tree pruning has not undertaken. As a consequence, crime occurs in the street including drug dealing in the open. Why does ACT Housing not take the appropriate action?

**Ms Berry:** Just before you start, I will say that Housing ACT has been very active in working with our public housing tenants who live out in Oaks Estate as well as supporting the work of Vinnies in supporting those people who live out in Oaks Estate. From my own conversations with residents—public housing tenants who have been supported by Vinnies—one of the things that has been successful for them is providing the chance for that community to come together and support each other. So with respect to talking about shopping centres and ACTION bus services—

**MR DOSZPOT:** Not shopping centres; just a shop.

**Ms Berry:** That is an issue that you would have to take up with another minister in the government but what I can say is that the public housing tenants and the volunteers—

**MR DOSZPOT:** Don't you want your public housing tenants to have a decent shop? Why would I have to take it up with somebody else?

**THE CHAIR:** Mr Doszpot, let the minister finish, please.

**Ms Berry:** that work with Vinnies have been able to put together a really great program where they support each other and transport each other at different times during the day so that they can get into the city, if that is what they need to do to go to different appointments. What that has been doing is building some resilience amongst that community of tenants who would normally be isolated by themselves. It brings them out together, they have conversations with each and support each other. Some of them have lived under some of the most challenging of circumstances. But they have managed to build, with the support of Vinnies, a really strong community in

supporting each other out at Oaks Estate in those—

**MR DOSZPOT:** What about the other 300-odd people who are needing some of these issues as well who are not supported by St Vincent de Paul but as ratepayers they have every expectation to be supported by the ACT government?

**Ms Berry:** I am sure that if they needed support from St Vincent de Paul they could contact them if they had a particular need to be provided with a service that could be provided by somebody like St Vincent de Paul. But as I said, the Oaks Estate community did meet with three ministers and the Chief Minister last year. We took on board the issues that they have raised. All of the other issues that you are raising with me are not issues that I can respond to as minister for housing. I can certainly take them on and get them to the other ministers if that is what you would like. I am happy to do that.

**THE CHAIR:** We have limited time. We may need to push on. Ms Lawder has a supplementary—

**MR DOSZPOT:** I am going to put some more questions on notice to you and I strongly suggest that it is in your area. We are talking about needy people. You are in charge of housing. A lot of the concerns of those people that—

**Ms Berry:** I have responded to that question but I am happy, obviously, to take any other questions that you have on that issue.

**THE CHAIR:** Ms Lawder, a supplementary, and then, Ms Burch, a new question.

**MS LAWDER:** Mr Matthews, I think you said, was it 78 or 75 dwellings owned by—

**Mr Matthews:** Seventy-eight, I said.

**MS LAWDER:** Are there any others that are leased or auspiced or head-leased or something in addition to those?

**Mr Matthews:** No. That is 78 in total, of which 27 are managed by Housing ACT.

**MS LAWDER:** Not owned?

**Mr Matthews:** No, and 46 by St Vincent de Paul, three by Havelock Housing Association and there are some in the vacant process.

**MS LAWDER:** And was that dwellings rather than properties?

**Mr Matthews:** That is properties.

**MS LAWDER:** How many people?

**Mr Matthews:** How many people?



**MS LAWDER:** It might be A ballpark and a guess rather than—

**Mr Matthews:** I do not have that in front of me but given that they are largely bedsitters, one and two bedrooms largely, they will be single people and perhaps some couples. I would not expect there to be many more than 100 to 150 people living at Oaks Estate.

**THE CHAIR:** Ms Burch, a new question.

**MS BURCH:** I have a couple of things. On page 33 under accountability indicators, the percentage of public housing tenants receiving a rebate is at 95 per cent. Does that move very much? Is it up, down, consistent?

**Mr Matthews:** It is gradually going up. It is pretty much at its peak now in terms of 95 per cent. Over the years of course Housing ACT was one of the most targeted social housing systems in the country. As people move on, for whatever reason, we are generally replacing those people with very high-needs tenants or people that have priority needs. They are generally low income earners also, with our eligibility.

Of course there is still an effect where people come into housing and get work and improve their circumstances, which is fantastic. Some of those remain in housing and some of them transition to other options. The 95 per cent would be amongst the highest level of rebaters that we have had, if not the highest, and it does represent, on the whole, a very targeted system.

**MS BURCH:** Of those that come in—and that is a good news story—get stable, safe accommodation and then get jobs and training, what is the movement then through it? The waiting list is still there. You have to move them up to the top of the cuff so that the bottom comes in. It is a late Friday afternoon analogy.

**Mr Matthews:** Just as a general response to that, obviously we have got an ageing tenant population. That is what we have generally seen. If we take a longer term trend, those older people are staying longer in public housing and those people are not expected to leave public housing until they transition to a higher form of care if that is what is required. Each of the tenant cohorts is different but yes, of course, we do rely on an element of people moving through the system and moving on to different circumstances in order to reduce the waiting list but that—

**MS BURCH:** Sorry, those in the five per cent are paying full market rent?

**Mr Matthews:** They are.

**MS BURCH:** That is done elsewhere. What is the income level when they pay full market rent?

**Mr Matthews:** The full market—

**MS BURCH:** Given the eligibility is about \$45,000 or thereabouts.

**Mr Matthews:** In terms of getting into the system, new applicants' eligibility is

actually at just over \$30,000 for a couple. It is very low. In terms of full market rent, the way the system works is that you pay no more than 25 per cent of your assessable income in rent. People's incomes can be higher than that and they will only pay the market rent. Of course the market rent can vary in different places across the ACT as well. There is no set formula—

**MS BURCH:** Gordon would be different to Garran which would be different to—

**Mr Matthews:** That is right. There is no set income level at which people start to pay the full market rent. It depends on their income and the location of their home but the general rule is that people are paying not more than 25 per cent of their income in rent.

**MS BURCH:** And is there an income point where they are encouraged to move on or do they just keep locked in at that five per cent so that there is no movement?

**Mr Matthews:** Yes. The figure is about \$95,000 of household income when we reassess people's circumstances. Again, it is not an automatic issue that those people move on from the system but we have been for a few years now collecting the income details of all tenants, including people paying market rent. If people are above that level for more than two years in succession, then that triggers a review process where we look at people's individual circumstances.

I would point out that the things that we take into account of course are their overall income, the stability of that income. Some people, of course, are approaching the end of their working career, for example, and their income level is expected to go down. We also look at any other special circumstances that people might have which would make either securing private rental or home ownership difficult for them. But we have asked, I believe, around 78 public housing tenants to leave the system as a result of those assessments since we commenced this program.

**MS BURCH:** You have got more than 78 on the waiting list. It is a ripple, not a big splash. On page 29 it talks about social and economic participation and there is a line that is going in the right direction, close to 100 per cent participation. How do you measure that and what is in that? It talks about access to safe, affordable housing that contributes to economic participation and it talks about working in partnership with providers to increase their foundation skills, capacity and resilience. What is that?

**Mr Matthews:** That graph that you are talking about getting close to 100 per cent is actually relating to strategic indicator No 1 which starts on page 28 and which reflects those being allocated into highest needs. That reflects the targeted nature of the system.

**MS BURCH:** Is it linked then to the one underneath it?

**Mr Matthew:** The one underneath, that is right. The way that we measure the sorts of opportunities for social and economic participation is one of the questions that are part of our annual independent housing survey. We are asking tenants how they believe public housing assists them to be a part of the community and to engage in social and economic participation, and that is how we get that measure.

**MS BURCH:** I think you might have touched on it with the building better families. Tenants are connected into that broader suite of community services. If you have a tenant that comes in after 10 years, is trained, skilled, got a job, actually wants to own their own home, can they buy the house they are in? Do they have other mechanisms for getting that leg-up into home ownership?

**Ms Berry:** Yes. There are a couple of things that happen that the ACT government does to support people in those circumstances. There is an opportunity to be able to purchase the public housing home that they are living in. The ACT government also provides bonds that give people a chance to maybe get into private rentals of their own and leave the public housing system as well.

**MS BURCH:** Are there many? Do you get a sense of numbers that would—

**Mr Matthews:** Sorry, just to clarify the question, existing tenants that get a bond or sales to tenants?

**MS BURCH:** No, existing tenants that may take advantage of the scheme you have about buying. If you have been in social housing for 10 years, kids are going to the local school, you have that network around you. You may prefer to stay where you are.

**Mr Matthews:** We do have that information. In terms of sale to tenant generally, 11 tenants purchased their home under the sale to tenant scheme in the 2015-16 financial year. A further seven did in the previous year. Then of course the other—

**MS BURCH:** That is good, that is security, that is the ultimate security for people that have come in in such need.

**Mr Matthews:** And just for completeness for the committee, the other scheme, I will just quickly mention, is the shared equity scheme, which is an extension of the sale to tenant program, where tenants can purchase 70 per cent of the property as a step up in home ownership, with Housing ACT owning the residual 30 per cent. Then the tenant has the opportunity to buy Housing out once they have become established. Generally it is part of a refinancing arrangement around their mortgage.

**MS BURCH:** And many numbers in that?

**Mr Matthews:** Eight so far in 2015-16.

**MS BURCH:** And do you work with a financing partner that is easy to do business with in this area?

**Mr Matthews:** The IMB are the finance provider, and they do apply normal credit checks and assessments and assess a capacity to pay. It has got to be done in a way which is financially sustainable for the person taking the loan. Again, we regard that as a very important element of our overall service delivery as well.

This is the turn - Estimates-24Jun16-25.docx

**THE CHAIR:** Ms Lawder, a new question?

**MS LAWDER:** On page 33, in table 28, one of the accountability indicators was about satisfaction with the provision of community housing. This was perhaps touched on in the Auditor-General's report. Was it the one about the low number of returns to the survey? Is that the same?

**Mr Matthews:** It is a different measure, Ms Lawder.

**MS LAWDER:** Where is that referred to in your accountability indicators?

**Mr Matthews:** To clarify, under the accountability outputs, what that refers to is a general measurement of public housing satisfaction, which is done through the independent survey on an annual basis. We regard that as a very robust process. Firstly, it is a tool that is used across the nation every two years. We do it in the in-between years so that it provides us with an arms-length surveying process. It is done through random sampling, and therefore it touches on the whole tenant population, not just components of the tenant population. That leads to the overall scoring of public housing satisfaction and indeed community housing satisfaction.

What you have referred to is this. As part of the feedback process on the delivery of our maintenance services, tenants were also given the opportunity at the completion of that job to provide feedback on satisfaction as to how they have experienced that work. That is very much—

**MS LAWDER:** So you do not have that as an accountability indicator?

**Mr Matthews:** No. That is not listed in here, but it does form part of the key performance indicator framework for the total facilities management contract.

**MS LAWDER:** So you do not have a goal for what you would like that participation and satisfaction with the maintenance to be?

**Mr Matthews:** We do under the framework for the contract.

**MS LAWDER:** You do not appear to report on that publicly.

**Mr Matthews:** Housing is a very diverse and complex business. We cannot report on all elements of it under this accountability framework, but what we do have as part of the performance framework for the delivery of maintenance services is an element where we want to capture tenant satisfaction. It is very important that we get their feedback on whether they are happy with work or not. That is why it has been included as part of that framework.

**MS LAWDER:** Is that type of information included in the annual report?

**Ms Howson:** There is a range of indicators that we use to manage our business which we do not report on through the annual report.

**MS LAWDER:** Perhaps my underlying point is that it might be a useful indicator.

The Auditor-General has indicated that there are some challenges there to be met, and I would imagine that the general public, let alone members of the Assembly, would be interested in that kind of information.

**Ms Berry:** That is noted; thank you.

**THE CHAIR:** Let me go to strategic indicators 2 and 3 on page 29s and 30. Strategic indicator 2 would indicate that 20 per cent of people do not believe that Housing assists them to participate in their community. What are the actual raw numbers on this survey, and what are we doing to ensure that all tenants feel they are being helped by being a Housing tenant?

**Mr Matthews:** I am not sure if one of my colleagues has got the breakdown of the actual survey. I will give him time to do that. But the actual—

**THE CHAIR:** Mr Duggan will have them. He has got them at his fingertips, I am sure.

**Mr Matthews:** The actual survey itself—I made that point earlier—is very much regarded to be statistically valid because the population that it is surveying across, the whole of the public housing tenant base, is very valid. In terms of the actual survey result, over 2,000 surveys were mailed to tenants as part of that survey, and 500 survey responses were completed, which is a response rate of almost 25 per cent, which is considered to be a pretty good response rate for a voluntary survey. We ask a range of general questions about how people view their circumstances. They are very much deliberately designed like that, because we want to hear what the tenant thinks about how they are feeling, whether they feel they have got better health, whether they are able to cope with life events, whether they want to continue living in the area that they are in, and—this element that we are talking about in strategic indicator 2—whether they feel part of the local community. In terms of the result, there is, as you say, a portion of people who are saying that they do not, but there are also some people who have not answered that question or not responded. The data that are recorded would be those that regard that as being a positive response.

**THE CHAIR:** Okay. Going to strategic indicator 3, how many people have we helped? I think it is about 65 per cent, but 65 per cent of what? Is this the survey again?

**Mr Matthews:** Yes. Bob Hyland can answer.

**Mr Hyland:** That comes from the AIHW annual report information on homelessness services. They ask people when they enter the service who are going to seek employment and who are employed at the time, so what their employment status is. At the end of the period, they ask again. They quantify that number. I think that with the last number we have got—we are still waiting for the current one—it was an increase of 77 over 31, which is an increase of about 35 or 40 people over the increase in number who were assisted into employment while they were in that homelessness service.

**THE CHAIR:** So this is 77 people?

**Mr Hyland:** That is right.

**THE CHAIR:** And the number of homeless people in the ACT at the same period?

**Mr Hyland:** I do not know that off the top of my head. I only prepared the supplementary table to get the numbers, but I just remembered that number; it just stuck in my mind.

**THE CHAIR:** I think we are all happy that we have helped 77, but there are a lot more than 77 people homeless and unemployed in the ACT. Sixty-five per cent sounds like a great outcome, but it is not big numbers.

**Ms Berry:** Housing ACT does support people who are experiencing homelessness even when they are not in public housing anyway. In fact, we spend the highest on providing support to people who are experiencing homelessness while we are finding different ways to support them; getting them into housing of their own if that is an option, or crisis accommodation; and in lots of other different ways—putting them in touch with other different kinds of services that are funded by the ACT government. It is not a case of us just leaving people to fend for themselves.

Another thing about the ACT is that because of the work of FirstPoint and the human services gateway, and because of the size of the ACT, we have a really good idea about who are the people in our community that need that support, so we are able to provide that support in a very targeted way to different people to meet their different needs.

**THE CHAIR:** I think I just heard you say we spend the most on homelessness. In comparison to what or whom?

**Ms Berry:** In comparison to the rest of the country, per person. I am just going to put my finger on the actual percentages, but behind all those statistics and figures is the work through FirstPoint and the human services gateway, as I said. Because of our numbers and because of the geographical area of the ACT, we are able to really understand what individuals' actual needs are and provide the right kind of support services for them while they are experiencing homelessness, making sure they are being supported.

**Mr Matthews:** Mr Smyth, that data is reported in the report on government services every year; it is part of that reporting process. Generally it is reported on a per capita basis, so population basis, how much each jurisdiction is spending—on homelessness services in this case. The ACT is consistently first and second in that reporting.

**THE CHAIR:** But what percentage of the population are homeless?

**Mr Matthews:** That is a different question.

**THE CHAIR:** It impacts directly on your answer. If you are saying that we spend the most per capita as a per capita measure, if we have a very low number of homeless people, of course the measure is going to be good.

**Mr Matthews:** Mr Smyth, you would be aware—certainly Ms Lawder is—that the nationally comparable data on homeless rates is recorded as part of the census.

**THE CHAIR:** Yes.

**Mr Matthews:** The ACT is pretty much on the band average in terms of its rate of homelessness compared to other jurisdictions. But we do have a significant portion of our homeless population actually receiving a service. That is why that funding contribution that is made by the ACT government is reflected in the number of homeless people that we are actually servicing.

Let me explain this measure a bit more. As was explained by Mr Hyland, the beauty of the homelessness data is that it records people's circumstances when they go into the homelessness system and then when they leave the homelessness system. That is across a range of different measures, including whether people have got case management or other needs. For those who were in homelessness services who were seeking employment, where that was a goal that they could achieve at that point in their lives, which is not the situation for everybody receiving homelessness services, that is how this measure is formed. It measures when people are coming into service, whether they are looking for employment, and then whether that has been achieved when they leave. That is, of course, a subset of the overall homeless population at any one particular point in time.

**THE CHAIR:** Does this chart mean that 77 people got a job?

**Mr Matthews:** Yes, that is right.

**THE CHAIR:** Thank you.

**Mr Matthews:** And the minister referred to Common Ground as a one-off case study about how good, intensive service delivery can actually help people get over that line.

**MR HINDER:** That segues reasonably nicely into my question. Doesn't that table actually indicate that 65 per cent of 77 had their employment outcomes improved? Is it the whole 77 or is it 65 per cent of them? That is the way I read it.

**Mr Matthews:** It is that 65 per cent of people that were seeking employment were assisted into employment.

**MR HINDER:** That is a different number again, it seems.

**THE CHAIR:** It is 118.

**MR HINDER:** Okay. I want to talk about homelessness services also. What is the projected investment in housing and homelessness services for 2016-17? And how many organisations have we funded through that? They are not all within social housing, are they?

**Ms Berry:** It is about 18 million under services and organisations that will be funded

through that. I do not know—40?

**Ms Gilding:** Sorry, the number of organisations?

**Ms Berry:** Forty organisations that will have contracts through the homelessness fund. I think it is about 40. I might ask Ms Gilding to provide you with a bit more detail on that.

**Ms Gilding:** In terms of the total figure, we are talking \$18,675,319.43. There are, I think, 28 providers, providing 47 different services. I think that is the answer to your question.

**Mr Hyland:** Can I just add that that number would be indexed. We now know the indexation rate for 2016-17; those numbers will go up by the indexation and they will get supplementation through the ERO payments for the SACS award. These are their contract rates, so it will be slightly more than that, probably about \$1 million on top of that.

**MR HINDER:** I understand the national partnership agreement on homelessness ends in 2017. What if the commonwealth does not continue to fund that?

**Ms Berry:** That has been a particular frustration for the ACT, but also across the country for housing ministers. Here in the ACT, if that funding does not continue and there is not more certainty provided as part of that national partnership agreement, there are programs like street to home, which has meant that the ACT has the lowest number of rough sleepers in the country. That particular program is run by Vinnie's but funded under the national partnership agreement. Our place, which is youth support housing, is funded under that partnership agreement, and there is no certainty that that funding will continue; and half the organisations that Ms Gilding just referred to that are funded under this national partnership agreement will also miss out on funding if there is no certainty provided or if that funding is not improved.

When housing ministers met earlier this year, one of the outcomes of that meeting was to call on the federal government to continue the funding, provide more certainty and increase the funding for the national partnership agreement.

**Mr Matthews:** The amount is \$1.52 million that comes directly from the commonwealth under the national partnership agreement, which is matched by the ACT government. I would have to say that that amount has not been indexed by the commonwealth for the past couple of years, so that has also been a pressure, that there has been no indexation despite local service providers having those indexed costs.

**MR HINDER:** If we have the lowest number of rough sleepers in the nation, do you have any idea what the actual number is?

**Ms Berry:** I think it has been fairly—

**Mr Matthews:** It is 29.

**Ms Berry:** Yes, 29 in the last—



**Mr Matthews:** In the last ABS survey, census. There will be another census result coming out soon.

**MR HINDER:** On nights like tonight 29 is too many.

**Mr Matthews:** It is too many. We are very conscious about the climate impacts of people rough sleeping. St Vincent de Paul, whom we mentioned earlier, are really experts at this. Even for people who are rough sleeping, they are in contact with them and offering them support and assistance. It is a very difficult issue. They had their CEO sleep-out last night. I know that some members of the Assembly participated, and the Governor-General and a bunch of corporate leaders across the country too. I think that issue is very much a shared concern across the whole community.

**Ms Gilding:** Certainly that is based on the last census data. In terms of our conversations with street to home, they certainly like to keep an eye on our rough sleepers, and they have not reported an increase in people in that situation. But we have the next census coming up, and the ABS are working with all the jurisdictions to put field officers out on the streets and to work with providers so that we can get a real sense of whether or not there has been an increase or what that situation actually is.

**THE CHAIR:** Ms Burch has a supplementary then Mr Doszpot with a new question.

**MS BURCH:** A point of clarification on the NAHA and the funding into the ACT: we heard from a community group—I think it was the women’s domestic violence service—that was traditionally funded where we were a post office, so to speak, for the commonwealth and that there had been a change to those funds. It was unclear whether it was ACT funding or commonwealth funding. Can you clarify that for us?

**Ms Berry:** I will be corrected if I am wrong, but that funding was under the NAHA. The ACT government tried to lessen the impact to local organisations when that funding was cut. I think that is what happened.

**MS BURCH:** How much funding was lost from that particular slice?

**Mr Matthews:** Over \$4 million per annum was taken out of the base of the NAHA. The NAHA funds public housing, community housing and homelessness services. Essentially we have some choices about where we allocate those resources as long as we are able to meet the requirements of the commonwealth. As the minister said, there were several years where we withheld any cuts from homelessness services, but then we were in a situation where we could no longer afford to do that.

**MS BURCH:** Because you did not get the money in to pay out?

**Mr Matthews:** Because the money was not coming from the commonwealth. That reduction became built up over a very short period of time. We worked with the sector to identify the fairest possible funding model. Then we phased in any reductions individual services had over a two-year period, which has just finished.

We recognise the challenges that presents for local providers. The ACT government already, as the minister pointed out, makes funding commitments in addition to what is required under any national agreements and in addition to what other states and territories are doing. There is already a very strong commitment to those services, but we have to always make sure that our contracts meet whatever funding envelope we have.

**MS BURCH:** That is why there is a united call for no more changes to NAHA.

**Ms Berry:** Yes, and the NPAH as well. And an increase would be nice.

**THE CHAIR:** Ms Lawder has a supplementary and then Mr Doszpot on a substantive question.

**MS LAWDER:** I want to follow up on a couple of points made in response to Mr Hinder's question. Firstly, Mr Matthews—you may have been working in the area at the time—when the national partnership agreement on homelessness was announced was it not part of the road home, the white paper on reducing homelessness?

**Mr Matthews:** Yes.

**MS LAWDER:** Now we are planning to turn off the tap, break the cycle and improve and expand services. Was that not posited in the first instance as a one-off circuit breaker, a big injection of funds to try to achieve some of those goals?

**Mr Matthews:** As you have referred to, it was part of a national movement, if I could call it that. The Prime Minister at the time was Kevin Rudd, and there was a very broad scale community concern about the issue. That resulted in an additional funding injection into the sector. I think what every state and territory would say—hopefully the commonwealth would agree with it—is that that new money provided a lot of innovation in terms of the different types of services on offer; not just maintaining a very strong network of crisis beds and refuges but also doing more preventative work, more sustaining tenancy work and dealing with particular cohorts like rough sleepers in a much more direct way.

It is fair to say that, despite that funding increase, we still see presenting need. That is a phenomenon across the country. You would be aware that the last two ABS censuses showed some increases in homelessness. We continue to better identify people in need and better understand their needs. It would be difficult to argue that that funding effort would no longer be required given the fact we still have people experiencing homelessness. We would be very much hoping to see a positive impact from the upcoming census, but we are also getting better at identifying people.

The recent review we have done of our sector shows it is operating efficiently and effectively. But homelessness is such a complex issue, as you are very familiar with. It is difficult to prevent in all cases and also has a very long tail in the sense that you see the intergenerational flow on and experience which takes some time to work through.

**MS LAWDER:** Sure. The Auditor-General's report on the implementation of the national partnership agreement identified some issues, but I will move on because I want to cover a couple of things that were discussed.

There was also federal funding, I think as an NPAH thing, towards Common Ground. Is that the case? Yes?

**Ms Berry:** The ACT government provided \$17 million towards the Common Ground project. I cannot remember the figure for the commonwealth.

**Mr Hyland:** The commonwealth put in \$4 million under the capital program associated with its national partnership on homelessness.

**MS LAWDER:** It was in addition to the general allocation? A one off?

**Mr Hyland:** And the ACT put in, yes.

**MS LAWDER:** A capital sort of—

**Mr Matthews:** It was. To be fair, the commonwealth provided access to the NRAS program for Common Ground as well. That certainly was a joint initiative and jointly funded by the two levels of government.

**MS LAWDER:** Minister, you mentioned the great work of street to home and Vinnies. They do a fantastic job with rough sleepers, but my recollection of the ACT figures is that we have one of the lowest rates of rough sleepers in the country compared to the national average. I believe that was probably the case before the NPAH.

**Mr Matthews:** Ms Lawder, we certainly saw a reduction of rough sleepers in between the last two ABS censuses, which we attribute to the efforts of Vinnies and the community more generally.

**MS LAWDER:** The last two censuses, so that was 2011 and the one before that, 2006?

**Mr Matthews:** The 2006 census was the baseline data for a lot of those national partnership agreements.

**MS LAWDER:** Where did the ACT sit in that compared with other jurisdictions?

**Ms Sheehan:** Ms Lawder, from recollection in 2006 we had something like between 80 and 100 rough sleepers. That came down as low as under 30, and we attributed the considerable investment in—

**MS LAWDER:** Sure, but my question was: how do we compare to other—

**Ms Sheehan:** I beg your pardon; I cannot hear you, Ms Lawder.

**Ms Howson:** How do we compare to other jurisdictions?

**Ms Sheehan:** In terms of percentage of rough sleeping in 2006?

**MS LAWDER:** Were we one of the lowest—

**Ms Howson:** We probably should take that on notice.

**THE CHAIR:** Mr Doszpot, a new question and then Ms Burch.

**MR DOSZPOT:** Minister, I have a number of constituents living in public housing, some of them in the inner south area. One property in particular is a beautiful house—very nicely looked after and maintained. The person has been living in it for over 50 years. When you step inside the house it is like a time warp; it is like you are stepping back into the '50s. She is not complaining, so this is not a complaint. The person does not want to make a big issue out of this because he or she wants to stay in the place. I should imagine you upgrade some of these houses.

**Ms Berry:** Yes.

**MR DOSZPOT:** Is there a possibility of, with some care, reassuring the person that the house can be renovated and the person can come back into the same place?

**Ms Berry:** If you can have that person get in touch with my office or Housing ACT we can have a look at the concerns she has. Of course, Housing ACT managers, whom I have met on a number of occasions, are more than just landlords these days; they understand their work goes over and above just making sure people pay the rent each week. It is making sure that tenants are supported and put in touch with support services if that is what they need. It is to be understanding of the situation you are identifying. I encourage you, if you can, to let that person know that we will take on their individual circumstance and respond to them. I can understand how that person might be feeling because of things that have happened in their lives. Get them to get in touch with us and we will respond. I think that is the best way to do it.

**MR DOSZPOT:** Thank you.

**THE CHAIR:** Ms Burch, a new question.

**MS BURCH:** Just on social housing: one of the indicators on page 33 reports a growth in the number of tenants managed by registered community housing organisations. The footnote shows it has gone from 1,500 to 1,700. The footnote recognises that is probably the NDIS transition, whether public housing has moved to the community provider. It was mentioned, I think, through the Chief Minister under affordable housing strategies, community housing, social housing and affordable housing; there were a number of categories in there. Public housing, in and of itself—it is publicly funded—will never be able to grow to meet the demand. It is an enormous task. So how do you work with groups such as Canberra community housing and other community housing providers to grow? What sorts of levers do we need to put in place to grow that market?

**Ms Berry:** There are a couple of things that the ACT government is doing. Of course, there is the tax reform—don't get excited, chair; I will just mention it once—on the phasing out of stamp duty. That will have an effect over time on people being able to afford homes of their own. Land supply is one part of it as well. It is not the only part, but it does play a part in giving people a chance to get into housing that they can own. The ACT government provided a loan to Community Housing Canberra of \$70 or \$80 million.

**Mr Matthews:** \$70 million.

**Ms Berry:** \$70 million. That is not due to be paid back until 2018. I have been out at a number of handovers of keys to new residents.

**MS BURCH:** How many properties do they have on line now?

**Mr Matthews:** Off the top of my head it is probably about 340 to 350. The issue about affordable housing strategies that you are referring to, Ms Burch, is that they do sit in other portfolios, primarily in Economic Development. Treasury mentions the loan facility that the minister spoke about. What we have here, though, in these indicators is a sign of growth in that sector. That growth is not just coming as a consequence of transfer of disability houses, for example, to the community. It has come as a result of the investment in CHC and also some other partnerships that individual community housing providers are making.

There have also been some very important developments at the national level around a government-to-government process in looking at how we can increase overall affordable housing supply. The policy issues, which you are all very familiar with, operate at a very macro level but also at a very micro level in different housing markets across the ACT.

As part of the overall affordable housing effort, in our economic development area we have some set targets around the production of affordable housing in the land release program. So there are a range of different levers that are being pulled. Having a viable community housing not-for-profit sector is very important. It is why we have been leaders, in fact, nationally under the regulatory system.

**MS BURCH:** I was going to lead to that because I think the regulator is sitting quietly at the back there.

**Mr Matthews:** Yes, she is. I was also, Ms Burch, taking the opportunity to acknowledge her achievements. Ms Sally Gibson is very much a leader in that national conversation about the emerging regulation of the not-for-profit housing sector.

**MS BURCH:** Part of the national and consistent approach to regulation was to simplify some of the processes: hold them accountable but have a level playing field to encourage that growth. Yes? You have sat there all afternoon, Ms Gibson.

**Ms Gibson:** The aim of the national regulatory system for community housing is certainly to try to create a level playing field to provide assurance for investors, to

protect assets from governments and investors and to ensure that tenants get well-managed, well-run services.

**MS BURCH:** With that safety you could have an investor come in—an investor with a good social conscience that thinks that, instead of building an apartment block, they could build some social housing—and the regulation that is now in place gives them assurance that it is stable, the income is safe and all of that?

**Mr Matthews:** If I can, Ms Burch—and Ms Gibson can add to it—as part of that national conversation about affordable housing a number of models have been proposed. Of course some jurisdictions are looking at variations on stock transfers, but in the commonwealth space it is about looking at whether there can be some aggregated bond arrangements which allow the investment community to support affordable housing. It is about looking at housing trust structures and other forms of social impact investments. That is the current conversation that is taking place and a strong regulatory system will have to underpin that.

**Ms Gibson:** Indeed, I think the New South Wales government have a bond-type scheme that they are promoting currently. There are a number of organisations operating across the country now—regulated community housing providers—who are attracting a lot of attention from financial institutions as well as government. They are being seen as a very viable vehicle for the increase in affordable and social housing. In some other jurisdictions there has been a lot of underpinning of that with large stock transfers, but they are in very different contexts to the ACT. Those providers are able to attract that level of input because of the regulatory system and the assurances.

**MS BURCH:** Do we have many providers?

**Ms Gibson:** We do. Currently we have 14 registered providers in the ACT. No, 15: we just registered a new one. Of those, three are registered to operate in both New South Wales and the ACT. The remainder operate solely in the ACT. They vary in size. I think it is fair to say that CHC, Community Housing Canberra, would be the largest of them. So they go down from that to the Tamil Senior Citizens Association, which is entirely volunteer run and has 14 houses. It is a proportionate risk-based system that caters for a range of organisations in different tiers of risk. CHC are in the highest level of risk because of their development activities, but that supports that growth in housing and they have certainly increased the rental housing stock.

**MS BURCH:** And they can access the commonwealth rental subsidy?

**Ms Gibson:** They can, yes. Just to pick up on the loan from the ACT government, they have two loans. One is \$50 million and the other is \$70 million. They are due to commence repayment of the \$50 million in 2018, but that is spread over a number of years. So they do not have to pay it all back at that point.

**Ms Berry:** It is not paid straightaway.

**Mr Matthews:** It is \$50, plus \$20, equalling \$70, for the purposes of clarity.

**Ms Gibson:** That is right. It is \$50, plus \$20.

**Mr Matthews:** It is 5.30 on a Friday.

**THE CHAIR:** No, it is only 5.29. So, Ms Lawder, if you have a question that could be answered in the next 37 seconds, you are in.

**MS LAWDER:** I was really keen to hear a little bit more about Homes for Homes.

**Ms Berry:** That is seed funding that the ACT government has provided to Homes for Homes. It is a fairly new initiative. It will not be felt a lot, I guess, but it is another chance for us to work with another partner—taking on the question by Ms Burch—and different organisations to try to address some of the housing problems in the ACT. It is a new partnership with the *Big Issue*. Are we one of the first or the first?

**Mr Matthews:** There are a couple of other states, minister, that are involved.

**Ms Berry:** Okay. I was trying to claim the first. Never mind.

**Mr Matthews:** We are fast followers in this instance.

**Ms Berry:** Yes. I think it is \$100,000?

**Mr Matthews:** Over two years.

**Ms Berry:** Over two years, just to get them started with some housing. Did you want to add some more detail on that?

**Mr Matthews:** Yes, just very quickly. It is an interesting scheme because it basically allows property owners to contribute to the homelessness problem by allowing a caveat to be lodged on their property title which would make a donation of 0.01 per cent of the property value to the Homes for Homes organisation when it is sold. Then the Homes for Homes organisation reinvests that money that they have gathered in the jurisdiction that it has been gathered in the supply of new housing. It is expected that as that fund accumulates it will produce real houses in the ACT that would then be managed by community organisations. Of course, the focus of the program is homeless people or formerly homeless people.

**MS LAWDER:** When you say “donation”, it will be tax deductible?

**Mr Matthews:** Yes.

**MS LAWDER:** It sounds like a good thing.

**MS BURCH:** That is point—?

**Mr Matthews:** It is 0.01 per cent.

**MS BURCH:** You do not notice that when you sell your house, and it makes a difference.

**Mr Matthews:** No. On a \$480,000 house it would be \$480 on the sale.

**MS LAWDER:** But it is the cumulative process that is important.

**MS BURCH:** Yes, it adds up.

**Mr Matthews:** The ACT government is assisting by waiving fees for the lodgement and removal of caveats on titles. It is trying to provide an enabling framework and encourage good-minded citizens to make that small donation as part of their home sale.

**MS LAWDER:** The interest accumulated—does that remain in that fund or does the *Big Issue* get to use that for something else? Do you know?

**Mr Hyland:** My understanding is that there is an organisation set up called Homes for Homes, which is a tax deductible gift society. They will keep the money and then attribute it to community housing associations to manage. I would imagine they would manage the fund and work out how to distribute it. I think there are still things to work out on that front.

**MS LAWDER:** Thank you.

**THE CHAIR:** Members, that brings our time together this week to an end. To the ministers and all witnesses who have appeared today, thank you very much. If any questions taken on notice could be answered within five working days of the hearing, so that is by Friday next week? The secretary will provide a transcript of today's hearing when it is available for corrections, inclusions or additional information you feel compelled to give to the committee. That will be gratefully received. We return on Monday. I think it is Territory and Municipal Services—given I got it wrong yesterday.

I know everybody waits for this, but the chair's award does not go to Mr Duggan, because he refused to come to the table when called. Ms Saballa was in with a chance because she sat there patiently all day without saying a word. She got to the table and gracefully left without saying a word, so well done—the consummate public servant. I think in terms of endeavour to avoid the committee, the award must go to Mr Manikis who managed to have his annual leave when the estimates committee was on. Who would have thought? I am not sure whether that is a brickbat or a bouquet for us, members. With that we will end the hearings.

**Mr Berry:** Just before you do, Mr Smyth, can I just put on the record that this is Ms Howson's last estimates with the Community Services Directorate. As you may know, she is going to be director-general for Education. I am sure she will be desperate to come back next year after she experiences estimates with Education. I wanted to thank her and acknowledge her for all the work she has done leading up to estimates this year.

**Ms Howson:** Thank you very much.

**Ms Berry:** And for the whole time that I have worked with you. I am sure others will



have the same great big thank yous for you. Thank you very much.

**THE CHAIR:** On behalf of the committee, we would also extend our thanks to Ms Howson for all her appearances over the years. If she really wants to we can have a recall day on 4 July and she can come and tell us about her first week in Education.

**Ms Howson:** No, that is fine.

**THE CHAIR:** Perhaps there we should end things.

**The committee adjourned at 5.33 pm.**