



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

**STANDING COMMITTEE ON JUSTICE
AND COMMUNITY SAFETY**

(Reference: [Annual and financial reports 2013-2014](#))

Members:

**MR S DOSZPOT (Chair)
DR C BOURKE (Deputy Chair)
MRS G JONES
MS M PORTER**

TRANSCRIPT OF EVIDENCE

CANBERRA

MONDAY, 3 NOVEMBER 2014

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

By authority of the Legislative Assembly for the Australian Capital Territory

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

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Amended 20 May 2013

The committee met at 12.30 pm.

Appearances:

Corbell, Mr Simon, Attorney-General, Minister for Police and Emergency Services,
Minister for the Environment and Minister for Capital Metro

Justice and Community Safety Directorate

Playford, Ms Alison, Director-General

Alderson, Dr Karl, Deputy Director-General (Justice)

Beattie, Ms Liz, Acting Executive Director, People and Workplace Strategy

Lutz, Ms Amanda, Manager, Restorative Justice Unit

Phillips, Mr Brett, Executive Director, Office of Regulatory Services

McCabe, Mr Mark, Work Safety Commissioner, WorkSafe ACT, Office of
Regulatory Services

Garrison, Mr Peter, Solicitor-General for the Australian Capital Territory

Lane, Mr Dominic, Commissioner, ACT Emergency Services Agency

Foot, Mr David, Chief Officer, ACT Ambulance Service, ACT Emergency
Services Agency

Barr, Mr Conrad, Deputy Chief Officer, ACT Fire & Rescue, ACT Emergency
Services Agency

ACT Policing

Lammers, Mr Rudi APM, Chief Police Officer

Hayward, Mr Chris, Director, Corporate Services

THE CHAIR: Good afternoon everyone, and welcome to this second and final public hearing of the Standing Committee on Justice and Community Safety for its inquiry into annual and financial reports 2013-2014. Today the committee will hear from the Attorney-General and his officers, including those from the Office of Regulatory Services, the law courts and tribunals, the Solicitor-General for the ACT, the Emergency Services Agency and ACT Policing. Following these witnesses, the committee will hear from the Minister for Workplace Safety and Industrial Relations and his officers, including those from the ACT Long Service Leave Authority.

I would like to note that today's hearing is being recorded and it will be transcribed and published as a record of today's proceedings. We will begin with the Attorney-General. Good afternoon, Mr Corbell.

Mr Corbell: Good afternoon, Mr Doszpot.

THE CHAIR: I presume that after all this time you are pretty familiar with the privilege statement. But just in case, do you want to revisit it?

Mr Corbell: I am aware of the statement.

THE CHAIR: Would you like to make an opening statement?

Mr Corbell: No, thank you, Mr Chairman. Thank you for the opportunity to be here this afternoon. Of course my officers and I are happy to try and answer your questions.

THE CHAIR: Thank you. In that case I will ask the first question. Attorney-General, page 20 of the JACS annual report 2013-14 notes the overrepresentation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the justice system. Can you tell the committee what the ACT government is doing to address this?

Mr Corbell: Yes, thank you, Mr Chairman. The overrepresentation of Indigenous people in the criminal justice system continues to be a challenge for this jurisdiction, as it does for every other jurisdiction around the country. We have worked closely with the Indigenous community over the past four years in particular and have put in place an Aboriginal justice agreement which is focused on areas for common cooperation and effort to reduce overrepresentation in the criminal justice system.

The government has put in place new programs to assist with the diversion of Indigenous young people in particular away from the more formal elements of the criminal justice system and also as an attempt to try and divert them away from time in jail and the potential for recidivism that particularly comes with that. For example, we have provided funding through an Indigenous friends program to assist with young people being diverted into restorative justice where that is appropriate. That has proven to be very successful in increasing the number of Indigenous young people who are taking part in restorative justice and therefore are being diverted away from other parts of the criminal justice system.

The government is currently finalising a new Aboriginal justice agreement between the representatives of the Indigenous community here in the ACT and the government. Discussions with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elected Body, in particular the previous and current chairperson of the elected body, have indicated that we should await the election of the new elected body before proceeding to finalise the new Aboriginal justice agreement. The government took the advice of the outgoing chair and put that project on hold pending the outcome of the elected body election. The elected body has now been elected for its new term and my directorate has recommenced discussions to finalise the new Aboriginal justice agreement.

THE CHAIR: A supplementary from Ms Porter first and then Dr Bourke.

MS PORTER: Good afternoon, minister; good afternoon, everybody. Attorney, regarding Indigenous people, and particularly young Indigenous people, who have been subject to courts or being arrested by the police, could you discuss with us a little more the role of the guidance partners? That is talked about on page 22 of volume 1. What do they actually do and has there been any improvement in the uptake of young people in regard to RJ since the guidance partners were introduced?

Mr Corbell: I will ask Ms Lutz, who is involved with the RJ program, to answer that question.

Ms Lutz: In terms of the Indigenous guidance partner for the restorative justice side of things, this is a position that works very closely with young people and their families. They are often on the front line. They make contact first. They build rapport with families and the young person. They explain what restorative justice processes are all about and they work really hard to build that relationship, build a bit of a

bridge between the family, the young person and the restorative justice convenor. That convenor then assesses the young person for suitability and the Indigenous guidance partner guides and supports that young person and their family all through that process, to conference and beyond, and then monitoring the restorative justice agreements.

MS PORTER: Do you think that has created an environment where more young people are willing or prepared to take that option?

Ms Lutz: I think it does. We had an issue where participation was not of a standard that we would have liked to have seen. We have engaged an Indigenous guidance partner who had helped to establish the Koori preschool here in Canberra before she left for Queensland. She knows many of the young people in the community. She has a lot of ties with the community. So when young people see her, many of them recognise her. They think very highly of her. She has a motherly presence and also a “take no nonsense” attitude. I think that her presence and her ability to engage young people will have a big impact on their future participation.

MS PORTER: Thank you very much.

THE CHAIR: Dr Bourke.

DR BOURKE: Thank you, chair. Coming back to Indigenous settlements in justice, I note on page 21 the increase in adult referrals to the Galambany court and a drop in juvenile referrals to that court over the last year. Why is that happening?

Ms Lutz: As I said, the Galambany Circle Sentencing Court since 2009 has been accepting referrals for young people. At that time the magistrate was also the young people’s magistrate, or the Children’s Court magistrate. Alongside that JACS is developing a framework for children going through the Galambany process. That is a focus at the moment, to strengthen that framework for young people. Our Galambany coordinator is working closely with youth justice and with court personnel to ensure that that framework is sound and that the experience of all young Indigenous people going through the Galambany court will be a strong one. In essence, a complete understanding of why referrals have dropped probably relies on these questions being asked of the court.

DR BOURKE: Perhaps you could tell us what makes a defendant suitable or unsuitable for the Galambany court.

Ms Lutz: A defendant must have pleaded guilty. There are other eligibility requirements. They must have a connection and a willingness to engage with the Indigenous community here in the ACT. Some offences, such as sexual offences, are not eligible.

DR BOURKE: Thank you.

THE CHAIR: Dr Bourke, a first substantive question?

DR BOURKE: Thank you, chair. Turning to page 21, talking about legal assistance,

minister, could you outline the main initiatives you took during the year to boost legal assistance?

Mr Corbell: Yes, thank you very much, Dr Bourke. The government has been very focused on legal assistance matters over the past 12 months in an environment where we have seen cuts to legal assistance grants from the commonwealth government, which has had a direct impact both on community legal centres and on the Legal Aid Commission itself.

The most notable achievement in terms of the ACT government's own funding during the year was the opening of the new community legal centre hub. We provided funding for the community legal centre hub of \$1.05 million over four years, for the development of this new facility, which brings together four community legal centres in the ACT into a common shared accommodation space. That has been very well received by those CLCs and it is forming the basis, I believe, for some greater synergies and reduction in duplication, particularly in terms of administrative and logistical support for each of those CLCs.

That ambition is yet to be fully realised, but having the four CLCs in that single location provides us with the potential to achieve some greater efficiencies. It has certainly provided the CLCs with more space for their operations and, in particular, to be able to accommodate pro bono assistance, whether that is from private law firms or whether it is from legal students from the ANU, both of whom provide assistance to CLCs at different times. The government is also providing funding of over \$900,000 to continue the street law program, which was funded for a new three-year period from the 2012-13 budget. So that has been very important.

I am reminded that in the most recent budget the government also provided \$100,000 per annum over the budget cycle for the provision of an additional duty lawyer for the Aboriginal Legal Service. This is the first time that the ACT government has provided funding to the Aboriginal Legal Service, but we have chosen to do that as a result of our commitments. That funding will provide an additional duty lawyer service in the Magistrates Court for Indigenous people who are appearing before the court.

Finally, the government has also provided additional funding of \$200,000 to the Legal Aid Commission to assist it with expensive legal cases. There are a number of legal matters that are complex and expensive, and funding has been provided to assist the Legal Aid Commission with those matters. That is not funding that has gone towards the high profile Eastman matter; that has been funded separately. This is for other expensive legal matters that the Legal Aid Commission is representing people on.

DR BOURKE: Minister, are you able to quantify the losses to legal aid assistance for Canberrans coming about from those federal government changes to funding that you mentioned?

Mr Corbell: Nationwide the federal government cut legal aid spending by \$15 million, which is quite significant. The impact for Legal Aid in the ACT for the 2014-15 financial year is \$400,000. That is the equivalent of 2½ full-time equivalent staff for Legal Aid ACT. That funding was particularly going towards providing support and legal assistance for Indigenous people in our community—in particular,

Indigenous women, people who were subject to domestic violence, women who were subject to Family Court matters. That funding has been withdrawn arbitrarily, without even waiting until the conclusion of the contract period; it was simply cancelled before the contract was completed. That is having a direct impact on Indigenous people in our community, and in particular Indigenous women.

DR BOURKE: And what sort of feedback have you had from the community about that, minister?

Mr Corbell: Obviously it is not very welcome. This is an area of legal assistance that targets particularly vulnerable people in our community—women facing violence, domestic violence in the home, women who are caught up in drug and alcohol-related matters or Family Court related disputes. Often these issues are intertwined, they are complex and they are difficult. This funding was specifically targeted to assist with those more complex legal matters. The withdrawal has a big impact. We know that early intervention and early assistance can stop a matter becoming more complex, more difficult and more expensive. This withdrawal certainly will not help in relation to that issue.

THE CHAIR: Ms Porter, your first substantive question.

MS PORTER: Chair, may I ask a supplementary of the attorney first?

THE CHAIR: Sure.

MS PORTER: Having listened to your answer to Dr Bourke just now about the withdrawal of funding, what are you doing to try and meet that shortfall? This is obviously a very serious situation that you have just described. Do you have any capacity to be able to respond?

Mr Corbell: Regrettably, no we do not, Ms Porter. This is a matter that I have raised with the federal attorney at meetings of state, territory and federal attorneys. A number of other jurisdictions have voiced their concerns as well. In particular my New South Wales counterpart has been very vocal in raising these matters with the federal Attorney-General. Unfortunately, the federal attorney has indicated that he is not revisiting this matter. I have met with community legal centres and the Legal Aid Commission about these matters. I have certainly indicated to them that if the ACT can assist, we will, but that is very difficult given the range of cuts that are occurring. There have been other cuts to other community legal centres. The Women's Legal Centre funding was cut by \$100,000. Funding for the Environmental Defender's Office has been effectively cancelled by the federal government. The Environmental Defender's Office now is facing the prospect that it will have to close as a result of that funding cut.

I am certainly exploring what assistance can be provided by the ACT but that is very difficult and very limited in an environment where funding for our own services delivered by these agencies is under pressure as well.

MS PORTER: Will there be an upcoming meeting of attorneys-general around the country that will be able to address this matter and make a concerted effort to raise

this yet again federally?

Mr Corbell: There have been two meetings of attorneys-general this year. The issue has been raised at each of those meetings. I have to say that the most recent meeting, which was in September, if I recall correctly, was stronger in putting these concerns on the table to the federal government. But there is no indication that the federal government is prepared to revisit its view on those matters.

MS PORTER: Attorney, I will ask my substantive question. Going back to the topic of restorative justice, on page 24 of volume 1 it talks about surveys that were administered to each young offender post conferences. The results are published on the same page. Could you highlight to the committee how these results were achieved and what were the main factors of the program that helped to achieve such pleasing results?

Mr Corbell: I might ask Ms Lutz to talk about that. In general terms what we are seeing with RJ is a high level of engagement from both offenders and victims who are offered participation in RJ. I think that is primarily down to the very strong proactive work of the people who work in the RJ unit. This is a very intensive and time consuming process. It involves a lot of discussions directly with both offenders and victims before they are brought together in conference to explain to them both how RJ works and what the options are for them as part of that process.

We are finding that once people have been through the RJ process they are signalling and reporting a very high level of satisfaction with the process. The level of satisfaction from people that participated in the process is over 90 per cent, so that is a very good outcome for RJ. Both offenders and victims are indicating their satisfaction with having been through that process.

Certainly, for victims in particular, it is achieving a level of closure and resolution of the offending and the consequences of the offending on them in a way that we know the more traditional court process is not delivering to anywhere near the same extent. I might ask Ms Lutz to comment further on that.

Ms Lutz: I would add that participation in their own justice process gives victims especially a sense of ownership in their own justice interests. We find that a lot of victims are really keen to take up that opportunity. It is completely voluntary, so there is no coercion. We find that young people and their families are also very keen to participate.

Having said that, participation in a safe and guided way is what we are aiming to do. The process that we have respects all participants in the process, meets with them and prepares them for the conference. Sometimes they are indirect but mostly they are face to face. I think that the satisfaction rates, which are consistently in the mid-90 per cent range, reflect respect for the process and the ability of people to get together and work out their own outcomes and have a say in their justice process.

MS PORTER: Thank you.

THE CHAIR: Mr Hanson.

MR HANSON: The Victims of Crime Commissioner this year when he appeared before this committee talked about the use of double jeopardy. He said he provided a submission to the government back in 2011 in relation to this issue and he said other jurisdictions are all moving or have moved on double jeopardy law reform. Can you update the committee on where the government is with considering this area of law reform? Is there a body of work in progress or is the government going to be moving in this area?

Mr Corbell: Thank you, Mr Hanson, for the question. I am not in a position to announce the government's policy position on these matters at this time, but I can say that it is the case that I have received representations from both the Victims of Crime Commissioner and the Director of Public Prosecutions on the matter of double jeopardy reform, and there are a range of issues as part of that under that general heading. The government released as a discussion paper a paper that had been prepared by the DPP a couple of years ago and sought stakeholders' views on the matters posed by the DPP. I asked the DPP if he would be willing for me to use his paper to me as a discussion paper on these matters and he indicated he was. I released that paper and asked for people's views on it. Obviously a broad range of legal stakeholders expressed their views, including the Bar Association, the Law Society, the Legal Aid Commission, the Human Rights Commission and a range of other stakeholders.

The government has been considering the issues arising from that paper. It is fair to say that this is an area that is controversial at least in part and the issues that arise are absolutely fundamental to the way our criminal justice system operates. I have been giving close consideration to the issues that have arisen as a result of that feedback, and I have recently agreed on a series of policy proposals for the cabinet to consider in due course. That submission is in train and will be considered by the government in due course.

MR HANSON: As a supplementary, can you give me any idea on time frame? Are you looking at some time next year if it gets through cabinet?

Mr Corbell: In terms of the cabinet time frame, I could not tell you exactly what that is. But a submission has been prepared and is now in train through the cabinet process. In terms of when the government would envisage announcing its policy position and the possible introduction of legislation, I would envisage that that would be in the autumn session next year, unless my officers correct me.

MR HANSON: Are the discussion paper and the submissions to that discussion paper freely available?

Mr Corbell: Yes. Those submissions are on the public record, if I recall correctly, as is the discussion paper.

MR HANSON: Whereabouts is it? Is it on the JACS website?

Mr Corbell: The JACS website.

Dr Alderson: We can provide the committee secretariat with further advice on that.

MR HANSON: With the link?

Dr Alderson: Yes.

THE CHAIR: Attorney-General, just going to the statistical profiles, witnesses have made representations to the committee that the severity of custodial sentences is increasing while the prevalence of offences is going down. As I understand it, the ACT still has the highest level of recidivism. Are you able to provide the committee with further information on trends with sentencing in the ACT?

Mr Corbell: In what respect, Mr Doszpot?

THE CHAIR: In the three respects I pointed out.

Mr Corbell: It is a fairly broad-ranging question.

THE CHAIR: I am asking you to give us some indication of commentary on the custodial sentences increasing while the prevalence of offences is going down yet the recidivism still remains very high.

Mr Corbell: It is the case in general terms that the Assembly has agreed through legislation to increase maximum penalties for a number of offences. For offences such as culpable driving offences and dangerous driving offences and so on, decisions have been taken to increase maximum penalties, and that will flow through in terms of the average penalty the courts hand down for those types of offences. Equally, there have been increases in the maximum penalties for a range of sexual offences. Again, that is expected to flow through in terms of the average length of sentences that offences attract over time. That is the case for some matters. For other matters there has been no change to the level of penalty available for certain offences.

In terms of sentencing trends more generally, as you would be aware, the government has invested significantly in the development and establishment of a sentencing database. That is starting to provide some real and meaningful data on a range of offences. I saw an interesting report the other day—some of the first academic research on sentencing trends in the ACT as a result of that access to that database—in relation to some particular offences and that is very helpful in starting to build a better evidence base for sentencing in the ACT.

THE CHAIR: Can the committee have access to the database you referred to?

Mr Corbell: As I have indicated previously when I gave evidence at the sentencing inquiry the committee is holding, we can facilitate that, and that offer remains open.

THE CHAIR: Can we put formally on notice that whatever information can be given should be passed through to the committee?

Mr Corbell: Certainly.

THE CHAIR: That wraps up the first session. We now go to the Office of Regulatory Services. Minister, would you like to start with an opening statement?

Mr Corbell: No, thank you, Mr Chair.

THE CHAIR: Page 52 of the annual report references replacement of speed and red light cameras. The Auditor-General's report No 1 of 2014 on speed cameras in the ACT was critical of the state of planning for speed cameras in the ACT. Can you tell the committee what the government has done about this since the report was published and what effect will the report have on the ACT's management of speed cameras in the future?

Mr Corbell: The government has undertaken a range of responses to the Auditor-General's report. The government agreed with a large number of the recommendations made by the Auditor-General in her report. The government has announced a review of the road safety camera program in the ACT, and that review and its results are currently before government for its consideration. Once the government has considered those matters, it will make that documentation available. The government has also allocated \$1.55 million for the replacement of red light and mobile cameras in the 2013-14 budget. These replacement cameras are now operational. So the government has undertaken a range of steps in response to that audit report.

THE CHAIR: Can you tell us what effect the report will have on the ACT's management of speed cameras in the future?

Mr Corbell: There were a number of useful recommendations from the Auditor-General in terms of asset management for the road safety camera network and the assets within the network and also as an effective guide for the development of a more coherent and effective strategy for the administration of the road safety camera network.

THE CHAIR: Dr Bourke, a substantive question.

DR BOURKE: Page 64, working with vulnerable people background checks, you seem to have processed an enormous number of people since the scheme came in. Are you aware through refusal of registration or anecdotally of being able to deter undesirable people from working with vulnerable people?

Mr Corbell: I will ask Mr Phillips to help you with that one.

Mr Phillips: Thank you for the question, Dr Bourke. As you quite rightly point out, there have been a significant number of applications over the last two years. In the vicinity of 400 checks have resulted in people getting other than a general registration. Anecdotally a number of people have made inquiries, made applications and have then withdrawn or chosen not apply after they have received information about the process. We do not keep the stats of how many phone calls we get that might lead to people not taking action, but anecdotally a number of people have moved away from applying after they have received information about the process.

DR BOURKE: What sort of assistance have you provided for people who may have had criminal offences in the past which are not relevant to working with vulnerable people?

Mr Phillips: The legislation requires us to undertake a risk assessment in relation to all applicants. Following a CrimTrac search, for those applicants that reveal a previous criminal history that fits into the risk assessment guidelines that might not be relevant, we work with those people to either provide them with a general registration, which is what happens on most occasions, or, on occasions, we provide them with a conditional registration, which means they can work in the field subject to some conditions on their registration. Alternatively we provide them with a role-based registration, which means they can work in the particular area for which they have applied for.

MS PORTER: Paid parking using credit cards has been rolled out. Could you inform the committee how that has been received by the community and whether the additional parking inspectors that were funded through the budget have had any marked effect in apprehending people who use disabled parking bays illegally?

Mr Corbell: As members would be aware, new paid parking arrangements were rolled out in March this year across all ACT government car parks. By 30 June 300 new machines had been installed across the major centres in the ACT. As you note, Ms Porter, this includes the capacity to use credit cards and also pay-by-phone applications, as well as cash.

I am pleased to say there has been a very good take-up in relation to credit card usage; a large number of motorists are now using credit cards rather than cash to pay for their parking. That is certainly streamlining the administration of day-to-day maintenance and collection from the machines.

In addition, pay-by-phone applications have been put in place through the Parkmobile app. There have been some teething issues with the use of this mobile phone technology. However, changes to the law have been made to remove the requirement to buy a ticket when the Parkmobile app is being used. In addition, we have worked closely with Parkmobile to resolve some of the technical interface issues at their end in relation to the operation of the app. That now seems to be operating in a very stable manner. Where intermittent errors are being identified, parking operations continue to be in communication with the provider of our parking machines, Duncan Solutions, to resolve any issues.

MS PORTER: My second question is around—

THE CHAIR: Ms Porter, I have a supplementary question, if you do not mind. Minister, can you give us an indication as to how many dollars in total terms are outstanding on unpaid fines?

Mr Corbell: I think we will have to take that on notice, Mr Doszpot.

THE CHAIR: Would you also take on board—

Mr Corbell: Unpaid parking fines?

THE CHAIR: Unpaid parking fines and also the amount collected in parking fines. Thirdly, is the number of unpaid fines decreasing or increasing with the new technology?

Mr Corbell: I am happy to take those questions on notice.

THE CHAIR: Thank you. Ms Porter, back to your substantive question.

Mr Corbell: I will just mention, however, Mr Doszpot—Mr Phillips reminds me—that the government has put in place new infringement notice management plans. You can see these outlined on page 52 of the annual report. This allows for applicants to enter into a payment plan in relation to any infringement notice they receive. This applies to traffic infringement notices, speeding fines and so on, as well as parking fines.

Under those arrangements people can enter into a regular payment schedule. They can also seek to have the fine discharged through other means, where appropriate, such as through community work or social development plans that allow people—perhaps not so much with a parking fine, but certainly with a traffic fine or a drink driving matter, for example, in terms of any fines that they attract—to discharge their obligations through community work or social development orders, such as attendance at courses or volunteer work in the community. That is proving to be very welcome.

An infringement notice management plan is automatically granted to anyone who receives a concession payment from the government, such as a pension and so on. They are able to repay the debt directly from their Centrepay payment on a fortnightly basis, starting at \$5 per week. These new arrangements are certainly assisting people who are vulnerable, who are on low incomes, to meet their obligations to discharge a fine but without having to potentially face time in jail, which previously was the only option open to them.

THE CHAIR: One more supplementary question regarding that. Talking about vulnerable people, what is the situation with the parking fines for people parking in disabled spots? Has any thought been given to increasing the severity of the fines for people who park in disabled spots?

Mr Corbell: If you are booked parking in a disabled spot you already attract a higher level of penalty than for just a regular spot—

THE CHAIR: Apparently it is not high enough. There are still quite a few people parking—

Mr Corbell: Whether or not a higher fine would serve to deter people, I guess, is something that would have to be tested, given that you are already paying more than you would be in other circumstances.

MS PORTER: Attorney, that goes to the second part of my question, which was around apprehending people who actually do that, and whether or not we are having

any more success in doing that. Only this morning I had a conversation with a constituent over the phone about her noticing this happening in a particular shopping centre—it does not matter particularly which shopping centre—and her frustration about witnessing this behaviour by people who obviously do not have a sticker in their car. She has also noticed that not only are some people parking in the allocated place for people with disabilities but also they manage to squeeze their cars into the little yellow hatched area. I am not quite sure how they manage to do that, but anyway. This was reported to me this morning. It is a continual frustration for people. Have you noticed that?

Mr Corbell: Clearly people who park in disabled zones do not have much of a conscience, and it is pretty unacceptable behaviour. The government does target people who park illegally in disabled zones. We have put in place additional parking inspectors to help meet demand in terms of the number of complaints we receive about illegal parking, whether it is illegal parking in the context you mention, such as disabled zones, or whether it is in other circumstances such as residential street parking or parking on verges, all of which are increasing in the volume of complaint.

The government has provided funding in the most recent budget for eight additional parking inspectors. I am advised by Mr Phillips that as of today five of those positions have been filled and the balance are in the process of recruitment. We have also seen a significant increase in the number of infringements being issued for the last calendar month—I think a 30 per cent increase in the last calendar month due to the additional inspectors coming on board. I would say, Ms Porter, that if there are particular areas, as always, please bring them to my office's attention or parking operations' attention so they can include that in their areas that they pay particular attention to.

MS PORTER: I certainly will; thank you very much.

THE CHAIR: Mr Hanson, a substantive question.

MR HANSON: Mine is to do with the Work Safety Commissioner, to the minister and Mr McCabe. My understanding is that you had the initial carriage of the Mr Fluffy issue; is that correct?

Mr Corbell: I had responsibility for the Mr Fluffy issue in my role as minister for industrial relations. I am no longer the minister for industrial relations. You should ask the relevant minister questions about that.

MR HANSON: Initially you had carriage for it when this arose as an issue. When did that change?

Mr Corbell: No, I was responsible as minister for industrial relations.

MR HANSON: So any question with regard to Mr Fluffy you are not taking here. It is under industrial relations later on this afternoon; is that right?

Mr Corbell: Responsibility for the Mr Fluffy asbestos issue is now the responsibility of the Chief Minister, so I would refer you to her.

MR HANSON: Sure. But the Work Safety Commissioner, Mr McCabe, is responsible for aspects of asbestos and Mr Fluffy, I am assuming, in that role?

Mr Corbell: There is a whole-of-government response to asbestos-related matters. Obviously Mr McCabe is engaged with the broader whole-of-government response, which is led by the Chief Minister and Treasury Directorate and the asbestos task force, which is the responsibility of the Chief Minister.

MR HANSON: Sure. But I imagine that when the Chief Minister appears Mr McCabe may not be here. Mr McCabe, when did you first become aware of the Mr Fluffy issue in terms of the risk that was presented within homes that had been cleared and had been issued a certificate but then it became apparent that there was a residual risk? When did that first emerge?

Mr Corbell: Mr Hanson, if you are going to ask questions about Mr Fluffy I think you need to do it in the context of your questions with the responsible minister at the table, which is the Chief Minister. I am sure that Mr McCabe can either make himself available for that hearing or alternatively he can answer questions that are placed on notice. I am not comfortable with you asking questions of Mr McCabe in relation to the portfolio responsibilities of another minister. That is not why we are here today. I would ask, through the chair, that those questions go to the Chief Minister, as the responsible minister.

MR HANSON: That being case then could I ask that Mr McCabe appear when the Chief Minister appears so that those questions can be followed up?

Mr Corbell: That will be a matter for the Chief Minister, but I am sure that appropriate arrangements can be put in place.

THE CHAIR: Mr Hanson, you still have a substantive question and you have not had an answer, so keep going.

MR SMYTH: Could I just follow up that question? On page 57 of the JACS annual report the third paragraph in the first column says:

Throughout 2013-14, WorkSafe ACT managed issues arising from possible exposure to asbestos fibres—

Mr McCabe, could you outline, throughout 2013-14, what you did as the Work Safety Commissioner which falls in output class 1.7, regulatory and transport services?

Mr Corbell: I have no difficulty with that, Mr Smyth. My comments were in relation to the specific issue of response to Mr Fluffy asbestos matters. Obviously there are more general asbestos matters that—

MR HANSON: I am sorry, minister, but it says—

Mr Corbell: If I can just finish my answer, Mr Chairman. Clearly Mr McCabe has regulatory responsibilities in that area and I have no difficulty with him answering those questions.

MR HANSON: Specifically it does mention—just to go further, it says:

[known as ‘Mr Fluffy’ houses].

Why did we just go through that little song and dance where you refused to—

Mr Corbell: You are asking questions that are more broadly about knowledge within government around Mr Fluffy matters.

MR HANSON: No, when Mr McCabe became aware.

Mr Corbell: No, the question is quite clearly more broadly about asbestos matters and knowledge within government. I think it is entirely appropriate that the portfolio minister be present to deal with those matters. However, you have asked Mr McCabe about matters mentioned in the annual report and I have no difficulty with Mr McCabe answering those questions.

MR HANSON: All right. Well, back to where we were. If I can re-ask my question perhaps, given that it is in the annual report. When did you first become aware—

Mr Corbell: No.

MR HANSON: It says here in the annual report:

Throughout 2013-14, WorkSafe ACT—

DR BOURKE: Chair, I do not think we are making any progress here.

MR HANSON: It continues:

managed issues arising from possible exposure to asbestos fibres in a number of houses which had been part of the asbestos loose fibre insulation program [known as ‘Mr Fluffy’ houses].

Under what circumstances am I not allowed to ask a question about when the Work Safety Commissioner, who is mentioned in the annual report, became aware of that?

Mr Corbell: No, you are not asking about the specific matters mentioned in the report. You are asking—

MR HANSON: That is exactly what I just asked.

Mr Corbell: a more general question.

MR HANSON: No, I am not.

Mr Corbell: You are, Mr Hanson; you are.

MR HANSON: I know what I am asking.

Mr Corbell: You are asking a more general question about when did a particular officer within the ACT government become aware of the Mr Fluffy loose-fill asbestos issue.

MR HANSON: That is right.

Mr Corbell: Quite frankly—

MR HANSON: That is not a general question. That is a very specific question about the Work Safety Commissioner—

Mr Corbell: Quite frankly, it is not about the day-to-day compliance activity and regulatory activity that Mr McCabe has responsibility for and which I am very happy for him to answer questions from you on. It is a more general question about state of knowledge of these matters. I am sorry, but I think the minister responsible for the Mr Fluffy response is entitled to be here at the table when that question is asked, and that is why I have given you the answer that I have given.

MR HANSON: Mr Chair, I would ask that you rule on this because this is the JACS annual report. This is under the responsibilities of WorkSafe ACT. This is referring to the fact that WorkSafe ACT managed issues arising from exposure to asbestos, including providing information and advice to assist home owners and, where appropriate, taking regulatory action to safeguard home owners and others.

It is extraordinary that it is in the annual report and it specifically refers to WorkSafe ACT as having managed this program. Now I am asking the Work Safety Commissioner to outline when he became aware of this, and basically expand on what is contained in the annual report. For the minister to say he is not going to allow the Work Safety Commissioner to answer these questions is extraordinary. I would ask you to rule on that.

THE CHAIR: Mr Hanson, I can say that the minister has indicated that questions on compliance-related issues can be asked. If you could put it in those terms, I am sure that the question will be allowed.

MR HANSON: Commissioner, in relation to your responsibilities, as outlined on page 57 of the annual report, could you please outline what activities you have undertaken specifically in relation to Mr Fluffy, as outlined in the annual report?

Mr McCabe: The paragraph you are referring to in the annual report refers to activity undertaken by WorkSafe in connection with the asbestos task force which was set up in March this year. WorkSafe was one of the parts of government that worked with the task force. We took some regulatory action in relation to individual cases that came to light as a result of that program, and that is what that refers to—a number of specific cases which came up as part of that program.

MR HANSON: So you had no responsibility or jurisdiction, and took no action, prior to the task force being established?

Mr McCabe: WorkSafe has always had responsibility for compliance with the ACT

law. There was very little activity in relation to Mr Fluffy houses prior to February this year, apart from one house which came to light last year, which was a house that had been missed by the program, the so-called Downer house.

MR HANSON: What about the house in Yarralumla where the home owner reported. Did that go to you?

Mr McCabe: It did. I cannot recollect exactly when that came to light. I would have to take detail of that case on notice.

MR HANSON: Could you, if that was in your responsibilities, get back to the committee to identify when that came to light? You just said that you were aware of it. When that came to light—that was before the asbestos task force was established, so you were aware of Mr Fluffy issues—it was reported to you that there was a concern with asbestos in a home that had previously been issued with a certificate. What action did you take?

Mr McCabe: That could well be the case. I honestly cannot recall when that case came to our attention, but I am happy to take that on notice.

MR HANSON: But you do recall receiving notification about it?

Mr McCabe: Yes. Well, I believe I know the house you are referring to.

MR HANSON: But you cannot recall if you took any action?

Mr McCabe: I cannot recall exactly when that came to light.

MR HANSON: I appreciate that, but can you recall if you took any action and, if so, what action that was?

Mr McCabe: I would have to take that on notice; I do not have the details before me. My recollection of it would be sketchy. We have dealt with a lot of houses in the last six months or so, or more, and I honestly do not recollect the exact details of that house. I am aware of the house. Probably the reason I am aware of it is that the owner has been quite vocal about the matter for quite some time, so that is why it has stuck in my memory, but I do not recollect the details.

MR HANSON: You do not recollect that that was about a year before the letter went out?

DR BOURKE: Chair, this is getting repetitive.

Mr McCabe: I honestly cannot tell you exactly when, but I am happy to take it on notice.

THE CHAIR: Mr Hanson, I think Mr McCabe has indicated that he will take it on notice. We will do that. We are running out of time, so we will have to move on. Mr Smyth, your substantive question.

MR SMYTH: I just have a couple of questions in the same area. The Downer house, as you referred to it—when did that first come to your attention?

Mr McCabe: I do not have those details before me, but I believe it was about July last year. As I said, that was a house that was missed by the program.

MR SMYTH: As a consequence of the Downer house, who took the decision that it be demolished? Did you order that it be demolished or did the residents take that decision?

Mr Corbell: The government took the decision. The government took the decision that it be demolished.

MR SMYTH: Was that on advice from the commissioner?

Mr Corbell: I really cannot answer those questions. I am familiar with the detail, because I previously had portfolio responsibility, but it is not—

MR SMYTH: And that portfolio responsibility covers the period that is in this annual report.

Mr Corbell: No. The decision on demolition was taken on the basis of a recommendation by the minister for industrial relations.

MR SMYTH: And you were the minister at the time.

Mr Corbell: Yes, and I am not appearing here in—

MR SMYTH: And that period is covered by this report.

Mr Corbell: No. This report does not cover the responsibilities of the minister for industrial relations; you should direct your question to the relevant portfolio minister, who is now the Chief Minister.

MR SMYTH: All right. Mr McCabe, as a result of your intervention or activities at the Downer house, what recommendations did you make to the government?

Mr McCabe: WorkSafe did not intervene in relation to that case. We were made aware that the case had come to light, and we oversighted the action that the government had decided to take in relation to it, to ensure it was done safely.

MR SMYTH: So you did not make a recommendation to the government?

Mr McCabe: I do not believe we did.

MR SMYTH: Could you check whether there was any correspondence with the government in that regard?

Mr McCabe: Certainly I can check that.

MR SMYTH: You have had some dealings with a property in Woolley Street, Dickson. Can you update the committee as to where that is at? In particular, two businesses were closed, two automotive businesses. Will those businesses be compensated for the material and tools that had to go to the tip because they were not recoverable? If so, by whom?

Mr McCabe: I do not have the exact dates for that case before me. There are two aspects to WorkSafe's involvement in that case. One was to make sure that the workplace was made safe; the other is ongoing investigation to determine whether there should be any stronger regulatory action taken against any of the parties. WorkSafe directed the owners of the building to make the building safe, which eventually involved replacing the roof to the building, which they did. The workplaces within the building were then declared fit for re-use, and that was the end of the matter as far as WorkSafe was concerned, from that aspect. The WorkSafe investigation into whether someone should be held responsible for that situation arising is ongoing. I believe it is nearing completion.

Mr Corbell: Generally speaking, the legal position is that if a business is disrupted and suffers economic losses as a result of disruption associated with need for regulatory compliance, that is a matter for the business and its insurers in terms of business interruption and coverage for losses. That is the general legal position in relation to those matters.

MR SMYTH: When was WorkSafe first made aware that there was loose asbestos or asbestos falling from the roof of that building, and what action did it take?

Mr McCabe: I would have to take on notice the exact details, but my recollection is that it was February this year—late February this year.

MR SMYTH: You will take that on notice?

Mr McCabe: Yes.

MR SMYTH: Thank you.

THE CHAIR: Time has expired for this segment of the hearing. Thank you very much to all attendees.

We will now call on the law courts and tribunals. Good afternoon, Ms Purvis. I presume that you are familiar with the privilege statement in front of you. Would either the minister or Ms Purvis like to make an opening statement?

Mr Corbell: No, thank you; I do not intend to make opening statements for any section of my hearing today.

THE CHAIR: Is Ms Purvis in a position to make an opening statement?

Mr Corbell: No. It is not Ms Purvis's role to make an opening statement.

THE CHAIR: Thank you. Attorney-General, the Director of Public Prosecutions'

annual report for 2014 raised questions about the effectiveness of listing practices and case management currently employed in the ACT Magistrates Court, together with the proposals that have been put forward to address this issue. Can you tell the committee your views on this and what the ACT government will do to ensure that the Magistrates Court operates as effectively as possible?

Mr Corbell: I certainly welcome feedback and comments from justice stakeholders on ways in which our courts can operate more efficiently and use their time as effectively as possible—as, I know, do the heads of jurisdiction of each of the courts. As to whether or not these matters are to be adopted, it is a matter for the courts. The courts are independent and separate from the executive arm of government. To the extent that they are able to determine these matters within their existing legislative frameworks, these are matters for the courts to decide.

THE CHAIR: Supplementary, Ms Porter.

MS PORTER: Attorney, I am not sure whether you will give the same answer to this, but on page 88 of volume 1 it mentions two key projects, the criminal listing pilot and the mediation pilot. Are we able to get some more information about the results of those pilots? It is under graph No 9. It just mentions them there.

Mr Corbell: These are matters that have been at the initiative of the Chief Justice. They are matters which the government welcomes as useful and effective measures to better manage the time with the courts and provide for more matters to be heard by the courts.

The most recent statistics in relation to the pilot criminal listing project which concluded on 11 April this year showed that 87 matters were listed, 67 of which were listed for trial at the start of the project and 20 of which had not yet been listed. Six of the 20 matters not yet listed were resolved by a change of plea. Forty-eight of the 67 listed matters included in the project were finalised. Twenty-six of those 48 matters were resolved prior to the conclusion of the trial, and 25 of those by change of plea.

What this really highlights is that you can get a very large number of these matters resolved without the need to either commence trial hearings or, alternatively, have the matters resolved early on in the trial hearings. And notable in those statistics is the number of matters that resolve by defendants subsequently changing their plea.

MS PORTER: Pleasing results.

Mr Corbell: It highlights that the sooner you can get a listing date and a matter coming on before a judge or magistrate the more likely you are to see the parties focus on the matters at hand and determine what is the most realistic course of action for them to take. Often, particularly where a trial date is far away or it is indeterminate as to when it is going to come on, people avoid making that difficult decision. But once they are faced with the prospect of having to make that decision, it can lead to a more timely decision, and in many instances a more timely resolution of the matter.

THE CHAIR: Dr Bourke, a substantive question.

DR BOURKE: Minister, can you tell us about the new court facilities? What benefits will we see from those new buildings and where is the project up to?

Mr Corbell: The government is proceeding with a significant redevelopment of the existing law courts precinct which will involve a substantial redevelopment of the existing Supreme Court building and its physical connection with the existing magistrates building to make a single law court building for the territory.

The government has determined that that project will proceed by way of a public-private partnership. The government has already been through an expression of interest process for consortia willing to compete in the PPP process. We are at the point of having short-listed two bid teams for the redevelopment and construction of the new law courts precinct. The first consortium is Laing O'Rourke Australia along with Programmed Facility Management and Macquarie Capital group. The second is Amber Infrastructure with Richard Crookes Constructions and Brookfield Johnson Controls. Those two short-listed consortia will be asked to proceed to the request for proposal stage, which commences this month. We expect a selected consortium to be chosen around the period of quarter 3 or quarter 4 of the next calendar year.

The benefits of this redevelopment are substantial. Obviously, the existing Supreme Court building is antiquated and not fit for purpose—not designed for modern courtroom operations, judicial operations.

The new building, which will be an integrated building, integrated into the existing Magistrates Court building, will involve a single registry and single entry and security point for both the Supreme Court and Magistrates Court operations. It will obviously involve improved facilities for our judges in terms of their chambers and for their support staff, but most importantly it will provide modern courtrooms, and additional courtrooms to those that we have available—I think, if I recall, in total up to four. There will be eight courtrooms provided for in the new design, including five jury courts, which is a substantial increase on the two jury courts we have at the moment.

In addition, the building is designed to accommodate the capacity for expansion to a further four courtrooms within the built design. That will allow growth over the years, recognising that this is a building that will be in operation for 50 or 60 years or more. And, most importantly, it will have effective circulation spaces and work spaces for the range of stakeholders who use the courtrooms every day—so effective, secure, separate, safe circulation spaces for judicial officers; effective separation between witnesses and victims, and their families and supporters; purpose-built private conference rooms for lawyers to consult with their clients; modern jury assembly areas and jury deliberation rooms—something which is very limited in the existing Supreme Court building—and a range of other improvements.

We believe this new facility is going to be a great addition to the justice system and a great addition to the civic infrastructure of our city. We have had a strong level of stakeholder engagement in the development of the project to date. The Chief Justice represents, overall, the interests of judicial officers in the development of the project. Over 45 separate information sessions and workshops have been held with key court stakeholders and users between May and October this year.

THE CHAIR: A substantive question, Ms Porter.

MS PORTER: Attorney, in answer to a question before, you talked about the ACT sentencing database that was launched last year. I think there was some conversation about that. How is this progressing and what do you believe are any lessons that are being learnt from the introduction of the database?

Mr Corbell: The sentencing database is now up and operational and some very informative sentencing snapshots are now being finalised. The government has engaged with legal academics at UC in utilising that data and presenting some analysis associated with that data. The government expects to be releasing some of that data in due course, which will assist stakeholders in getting an understanding of what the sentencing database can provide and how it can be analysed.

The first research project that is being undertaken with the information contained in the database includes nine Magistrates and Children's Court offences which will help inform our judges, magistrates, lawyers, policy makers about sentencing outcomes for a range of offences. We hope to be able to build on that in future years so that we get an informed evidence base when it comes to sentencing trends in the territory.

THE CHAIR: Mr Hanson, a substantive question.

MR HANSON: Minister, where are we at with the issue of Supreme Court judges and the call from various people for a fifth judge to be appointed? Have you received representations recently? Has the government formed any new view or are you still locked into four?

Mr Corbell: The government's position remains as it has been for some time, which is that we keep this matter under review, but we are not yet convinced of the need for an additional fifth resident judge for the Supreme Court.

MR HANSON: How are you stop-gapping? You have got temporary arrangements in place. How is that working?

Mr Corbell: The government responds with additional or acting judge appointments as and when required. We already have 15 additional judges who serve from time to time in the Supreme Court and who are judges of the Federal Court of Australia. We also have from time to time appointed acting judges. The government appointed earlier this year a number of acting judges—Acting Judges Walmsley, Ashford, Cowdrey and Robertson—to assist the Supreme Court in a range of civil matters, particularly trials that followed on from the Chief Justice's civil mediation block that occurred between March and April this year. We have provided \$225,000 to fund these appointments, which run for 12 months from 1 July this year.

MR HANSON: How does that compare, in an actual cost comparison, with putting on a bunch of temporary judges or acting judges, as opposed to putting someone on permanently?

Mr Corbell: The cost of a permanent or resident Supreme Court judge is approximately \$1 million per annum, not including pension costs.

MR HANSON: Does that include the staff associated—

Mr Corbell: Yes, it does.

MR HANSON: And what do you do about staff for acting judges?

Mr Corbell: It is within that cost.

MR HANSON: That is within that cost?

Mr Corbell: Yes, \$225,000.

MR HANSON: And when you say you keep the matter under review, what is the trigger for a fifth Supreme Court judge?

Mr Corbell: These are matters for judgement. The government and I, as the attorney, meet regularly with the Chief Justice to discuss a range of matters that involve the interface between the executive and judicial arms of government on the terms of the administration of justice. The Chief Justice and I have recently agreed on the development of a resourcing model which will be used to help inform our decisions about when and what sort of additional judicial resources are required for the court.

THE CHAIR: I am deferring my substantive to Mr Hanson.

MR HANSON: On the issue that we were talking about before, the new building, have you had any feedback from any local consortia who seem to have missed out? Have they come back to you or have you gone back to them and has there been any dialogue? I know that there was some surprise, I suppose, amongst the local industry that none were included.

Mr Corbell: There was one locally led consortium that expressed interest through the EOI stage. They were not shortlisted to proceed to request for a proposal stage. I have not received any representations from that consortium, but it is a normal part of the EOI process that those consortia that are unsuccessful will receive a debrief in relation to their unsuccessful EOI.

MR HANSON: Who is making the decisions? Is this being dealt with by procurements centrally or is it within JACS or who is actually managing this process?

Mr Corbell: There is a project team and governance body that oversees the development of the PPP. That includes the Under Treasurer. I will ask Ms Playford to outline to you the membership of that body.

Ms Playford: The project overall is governed through its steering committee. At this stage of the process, prior to financial close on a PPP the Treasury Directorate are taking the lead. The Under Treasurer, David Nicol, is the chair of that committee at the moment. I am also on that committee, as is David Dawes, who is responsible for procurement within government. The Chief Justice is also on the steering committee. Then a number of officers, including the project director and officers from within

Treasury, Shared Services Procurement and courts registry, provide information to that steering committee. There is a project committee that sits underneath, with officers from all areas of government, that reports up to the steering committee.

MR HANSON: Was it the steering committee that made a recommendation to—was it to the Attorney-General or the Treasurer or who?

Mr Corbell: To me and the Treasurer.

MR HANSON: So it was a joint decision, was it?

Mr Corbell: Yes. We accepted the recommendations of the committee.

THE CHAIR: Dr Bourke, your substantive question.

DR BOURKE: Just coming to the ICT case management system, minister, I note that you are progressing the agreement with the Western Australian Department of the Attorney-General. Could you tell us more about that agreement and whether it has actually come to fruition yet?

Mr Corbell: The government has provided \$8.17 million in capital funding and \$1.33 million in recurrent funding to develop a new court and tribunal management system. This is a case management system for cases that come before the law courts and tribunals. So it is ultimately intended to be rolled out across the Supreme Court, the Magistrates Court and the ACAT.

The development of the case management system involves an agreement with the Western Australian Department of the Attorney-General for the provision of their courts' management system under an agreement signed between the two jurisdictions. The ACT signed the agreement in May this year and we are awaiting finalisations from Western Australia to execute the agreement in the near future. I had a discussion with the Western Australian Attorney-General last time I saw him, at a meeting of attorneys-general, in September and he confirmed with me that Western Australia are on track to execute the agreement at their end. We are working closely with the technical areas in the Western Australian department, and the first stage for the ACT is to roll out the new case management system in the ACAT in 2015.

DR BOURKE: Why was the Western Australian system chosen?

Mr Corbell: The Western Australian system was chosen because it was considered to be the most suitable system to meet the ACT's needs. It is highly regarded as an integrated case management system for courts and it allowed us to implement a case management system effectively in an off-the-shelf model rather than trying to develop a bespoke system ourselves.

DR BOURKE: What would be the disadvantages of developing a bespoke system?

Mr Corbell: Cost and time.

DR BOURKE: And you mentioned that the ACT had signed the agreement in May.

WA is yet to sign. When are you anticipating that will be the case?

Mr Corbell: The Western Australian attorney assures me that he expects that to be resolved as soon possible. Certainly the latest advice is later this month.

DR BOURKE: And what consideration is in it for the Western Australian government?

Mr Corbell: I am advised by the Western Australian attorney that he requires whole-of-government signoff on the actual entering into the licence arrangement with the ACT. So there have been some delays in proceeding through the whole of the Western Australian cabinet to receive that agreement. However, he advises me that is on track.

DR BOURKE: I meant: what will we pay Western Australia for this?

Mr Corbell: I beg your pardon? What will we pay them?

DR BOURKE: Are we paying them?

Mr Corbell: Yes, we will be paying them. We are not getting it for free. Do we have the exact licence agreement? I do not have the exact figure in terms of a licence payment but I am happy to take that on notice.

THE CHAIR: Ms Porter, your substantive question.

MS PORTER: We were talking about fines in another segment of the hearing and on page 87 of volume 1, attorney, it mentions enhanced fine enforcement and continuing to roll out the full debt recovery system for this scheme which was introduced in 2010. Obviously this is an ongoing issue. Is this continuing to be able to, I guess, retrieve fines that are outstanding? We were talking more or less about traffic fines before. Does this system also provide the same facilities to people, who may be vulnerable, to be able to pay their fines, attorney?

Mr Corbell: The short answer is yes. People who have not yet paid their court-imposed fines can enter into an agreement to have their fines discharged to a payment plan or alternatively through a voluntary community work or social development program, and that is proving to be very effective. The enhanced fine enforcement regime is designed to make sure we have timely follow-up with people who have been ordered to pay a court-imposed fine, just making sure that people are followed up where they do not respond to their reminder notice.

The number of licence sanctions, for example, that have been issued has more than doubled since the introduction of the new fine enforcement unit, with 1,104 licence sanctions being issued over the 2013-14 financial year compared with 435 in the 2012-13 financial year. These are instances where people have had their licence suspended or cancelled as a result of failing to pay a fine. Obviously that is meant to serve as a trigger to get people to pay attention to the fact that they have an outstanding fine and they need to do something about it.

Of course, what they can do now under the new payment plan regime is agree to enter

into a payment plan. As soon as they do that, their licence is reinstated and they are then able, obviously, to continue to drive and have a regular payment regime or take advantage of the other options available, if suitable, such as voluntary work or social development.

MS PORTER: There would be other fines, though, that would be imposed by the courts, would there not, in relation to matters other than traffic matters? Does the same principle apply, attorney, to those as well?

Mr Corbell: Yes.

MS PORTER: I cannot think of a particular instance but I imagine that fines are imposed for other reasons.

Mr Corbell: Yes. Fines can be imposed for a range of reasons for a whole range of offences.

MS PORTER: And the same system applies?

Mr Corbell: Yes.

THE CHAIR: Before we go to Mr Hanson, a supplementary, Dr Bourke.

DR BOURKE: Are we having many people incarcerated for non-payment of fines?

Mr Corbell: I am advised no. I am happy to give you something more quantitative than that but I would have to take that on notice.

DR BOURKE: I recall the recent tragic case of a death in custody in Western Australia where a 22-year-old woman who had \$1,000 worth of outstanding parking fines was taken into custody and I just want to be assured that something like that would not happen.

Mr Corbell: I would be very concerned if we saw an instance like that here in the ACT because there is now no longer any reason for it. The fact that we have got an infringement notice plan in place means that people have options to be able to discharge their obligations without needing to be arrested for outstanding fines. Obviously in some jurisdictions, if you have outstanding fines, you have not paid them, you can be arrested and you can face terms of imprisonment as a way of discharging your obligation. The whole point of the infringement management plan regime is to avoid the need for people to serve time in jail to discharge their fine.

THE CHAIR: Any other questions from the committee?

Mr Corbell: If I may, just a couple of follow-ups from earlier questions.

THE CHAIR: Sure.

Mr Corbell: Just a clarification in relation to the double jeopardy reforms that Mr Hanson was asking about earlier, I am advised it is more likely that the

government will introduce legislation in the spring 2015 legislation program as there will be a need for further consultation and possibly an exposure draft of legislation, given the significance of the matters that we will canvass. I am also advised that not all of the submissions made on the double jeopardy matter are on the website but I will address in full these matters in my written answer to the question taken on notice. Those are the two matters I draw to your attention.

MR HANSON: Could I just clarify, you will be then providing all of the submissions, will you, in camera?

Mr Corbell: Yes, subject to any requests for submissions to be kept confidential by this committee.

THE CHAIR: Thank you, minister and witnesses, for appearing in this segment. I will now suspend hearings for a short break and the committee will resume at 10 minutes past 2 with the Solicitor-General for the ACT.

Sitting suspended from 1.59 to 2.12 pm.

THE CHAIR: Good afternoon, all, and welcome back to this second and final public hearing of the Standing Committee on Justice and Community Safety for its inquiry into the annual and financial reports 2013-2014. We will now hear from the Solicitor-General for the ACT, Mr Peter Garrisson. Can you indicate to us that you are familiar with the privilege statement?

Mr Garrisson: I am quite familiar with it, thank you.

THE CHAIR: The minister has indicated that he does not wish to make any opening statements, so we will go straight to questions. I will ask the first question through the minister to Mr Garrisson: the JACS annual report at page 37 states that your office has been conducting the long-term legal work for the capital metro and Supreme Court projects. What can you tell the committee about the nature of this work? What area of law does this work fall into, and are there any areas that are particularly challenging?

Mr Garrisson: In relation to both projects our office has had a key role in the formative stages of the processes which have now led to the conduct of a range of procurement processes. My office continues to provide contractual, procurement and associated advice to the relevant groups that are conducting those projects. More particularly, as part of our model for outsourcing of government legal services, we have conducted one of several processes that we have over the last 12 months to identify a panel of commercial law firms that are able in the long term to provide the nature and scale of advice required for the territory's infrastructure projects.

I could, of course, say to the government, "Keep giving me more lawyers and I will do all the work that one could do," but, of course, projects of the nature of capital metro and the Supreme Court are finite. The resources and skills that one requires in order to undertake those services are clearly defined, and I readily admit that some of those skills are not within my office, particularly in relation to the finance area, although we do do some finance work for Treasury.

We conducted a tender process and established a panel of four law firms from whom expressions of interest can be sought for particular projects. We conducted processes in relation to both the Supreme Court and capital metro, and in relation to both of those projects the law firm of Clayton Utz was successful in being the core legal service provider for the projects as they emerge. Those services are managed by my office. One of my special counsel is outposted to capital metro on a full-time basis as their director of legal services. We continue, of course, to provide a significant body of work both in relation to the Supreme Court and in relation to capital metro on areas, for example, around planning law and the like where clearly my office has a longstanding and significant body of knowledge in relation to ACT planning law. We work collaboratively with the law firms undertaking that work and manage and liaise with them in relation to those functions.

THE CHAIR: Were there any areas you felt you had to bring additional expertise into?

Mr Garrison: That was the point of conducting the tender, of getting the panel of law firms from which we could select a firm which will have the resources and ability to conduct the project. It is, in part, a knowledge issue in some limited areas, but it is also about being able to have the commercial transactions conducted in an environment where we are not diverting dedicated resources from within my office from other core government work we undertake. This is, we believe, a very efficient way of dealing with it. Also, the firm selected has had experience in similar projects which, of course, was one of the criteria of selection to go onto, first the panel and then to be selected for these particular projects.

A significant body of other outsourcing of legal services is overseen by my office, not just the relatively small amount of outsourcing that you see disclosed in our external sources in part 2 of the report. Last year the total outsourcing of legal services was about \$1.75 million. The nature of the outsourcing of work is increasing, not just in relation to the Supreme Court and capital metro but in relation to probative work and conveyancing work for a couple of agencies, particular projects we have had addressed which the agencies disclose in their respective annual reports for their outsourced legal services. We see that there will be an increase in the outyears for external legal services.

My own view is I think that is particularly healthy. Although my office has the first call, if you will, on the legal work of the government pursuant to the legal service directions that were made a couple of years ago, it has been the government's policy for approximately nine years that the Solicitor-General would be the principal source of legal advice. That has led to a significant growth over time in my office, which is a natural function of the increasing complexity of the business of government.

A whole range of projects are being undertaken—the health infrastructure project, for example. You will see in our statistics where we talk about the value of contracts. Last year we did something around the \$80-million mark in contracts; the year before it was well over \$1 billion. It depends from time to time on what is happening. The health infrastructure project was half of the major contracts that we did last year, so it varies from year to year. But the importance of the outsourcing and having access to those skills means that the legal services can be managed effectively without the

peaks and troughs that would be required in my office were we to respond in relation to some projects which are going to have a large but relatively short-term demand for resources.

MR HANSON: A supplementary question. Mr Garrisson, you mentioned capital metro, the light rail project. Could you tell me how much has been spent either within your office or through outsourcing on that project to date?

Mr Garrisson: I do not have those figures, Mr Hanson.

MR HANSON: Can you take it on notice?

Mr Garrisson: I certainly can. We will make inquiries.

MR HANSON: Who is meeting that bill? Is that billed back to the Capital Metro Agency?

Mr Garrisson: Yes.

Mr Corbell: I should indicate, Mr Hanson, that that is within the existing budget appropriation for the Capital Metro Agency.

THE CHAIR: Dr Bourke, a substantive question.

DR BOURKE: Minister, page 42 shows the performance indicators chart. Congratulations on the 20 per cent increase in compliments received, but you also have large increases in agreements drawn or settled but drops in claims finalised. How do you manage these workflows and the workforce to cope with these fluctuations?

Mr Garrisson: With some difficulty sometimes, Dr Bourke. The nature of the legal services for the territory is a dynamic undertaking. As I have perhaps said on other occasions in this place, I am particularly proud of my office and my staff. You will see from the account of the major projects, which runs for several pages, that the legal services provided by my office cover the full gamut. There is just about nothing we do not do.

Unique amongst all the crown law offices in this country, we combine local and state government functions in the functions we discharge. We also undertake the legal services that in most other jurisdictions are undertaken by lawyers acting for the insurers of that jurisdiction. The significant advantage that presents for the territory—this is my view admittedly, and I am a little biased in it—is that it enables a single source of legal advice and a collective body of knowledge about government, its operations, who you go to, who you need to speak to and who has responsibility for particular activities, which is very important. For example, when you are dealing with claims, claims against the territory cover an astonishing array of circumstances and causes of action. It is particularly important, for example, with a range of commercial litigation that we are undertaking at the moment, that you know where to get your information. That is the single greatest barrier to delivering effective legal services, and other jurisdictions encounter this on a regular basis.

I will not quite be so bold as to suggest that my office is the corporate memory of government, but it is pretty close to it. I have lawyers who have been there for over 20 years and a wide range and a significant number of very bright young lawyers who are learning from them. Managing the diversity of that work is the job of my deputies and my managers, and I think they do not too bad a job.

DR BOURKE: What has been the beneficial impact of your recent restructure on addressing that diversity of work?

Mr Garrison: There have been a number of initiatives in the last 12 months. At the more prosaic level, we have restructured the way our legal support services are provided by our legal assistants and the like. It was very much an old school legal system working from two or three lawyers or more—generally more—and it was not a particularly efficient way of doing it. I took some advice, we did an analysis and we consulted with all of the staff who were involved about how the internal services were being provided, whether expectations were being met and what the demands are of providing legal services now compared to 20 years ago when very much the same system was still in operation.

We have moved to a team-based model. There are three teams of legal assistants within the office and each team is responsible for one of the sections. It means, in effect, work does not fall between the cracks. It means there is continuity and there is oversight of all of the work that is coming in to be done internally for the office. It has had a few road bumps along the way, because lawyers hate having things change in the way they do their work, but it has been quite successful and I am very pleased with the way it has occurred.

The other very significant change in our office has been the introduction of our new enterprise agreement for our lawyers. I have touched on that in the statement in the annual report. Enterprise agreements sound like pretty boring stuff, but for our office it is probably the most significant change in 20 years. We operated on the old legal 1, legal 2 framework. That had a whole range of points in the legal 1 range and then two points in the legal 2 band. That meant that, in the modern legal practice when you are trying to both retain good people and attract good people from outside, we had immense difficulty doing that.

We have introduced a new four-level structure with a significantly increased remuneration at the top end, with the approval of the government. It has come into place and I think the first pay is this week. It means that we are on a far more competitive footing in attracting and retaining staff. We are actually going through some recruitment processes at the moment. I suppose there is not a lot known about what crown law offices do or, indeed, what my office does, except what is set out in the report. But for all intents and purposes, it is a law firm and operates like a law firm. It has all of those pressures and the need to treat people well and remunerate people appropriately. Although the remuneration we are now able to offer is not at the top of the scale—far from it in fact—it is reasonable. That is then combined with the nature of the work we undertake, and that is one of the big attractions. One of the big attractions is the work we do and the environment within which we work in the office. I could say more about it, but I will not because there probably will not be any time left.

THE CHAIR: Thank you. Ms Porter, a substantive question.

MS PORTER: I have a supplementary on what you were just saying. How many staff work within the practice?

Mr Garrisson: It has dropped just a bit because I have had several leave on maternity leave and we are in the process of making up for their absences. It is around 85. It can be a bit over 90 at times. That is generally around 65 lawyers.

MS PORTER: Is there a good gender mix in the staff?

Mr Garrisson: Yes, approximately two-thirds of our lawyers are female. One of my two deputies is female. It works really well. We have a very good mix. We have a number of staff who work part time. We ensure that the nature of the work they do and the work practices accommodate that. It is difficult, for example, to have job sharing in a strict sense in a legal environment, by virtue of the nature of the work that is undertaken. It is a bit hard to do. But we have a very collaborative model in our office so that the work that any lawyer undertakes is overseen by another more senior lawyer—if not in detail, certainly in general. Because of the systems that we have in place, very rarely will something occur that someone is not able to pick up and run with.

MS PORTER: On page 43 of the report, Mr Garrisson, it mentions the Law Officers Act 2011. Did that cause the role to be any different? Was it a substantial change? How does that take effect?

Mr Corbell: It was a pretty fundamental change, Ms Porter. The Law Officers Act consolidated existing legislation that provided for the change in law and also the office of Chief Solicitor. Is that correct?

Mr Garrisson: And the government solicitor.

Mr Corbell: And the government solicitor's office. And it established the role of Solicitor-General. So we combined acts in this new act and, most importantly, established the office of Solicitor-General of which Mr Garrisson is the first incumbent.

Mr Garrisson: And with the efficiency of the ACT government, I perform both roles. Pursuant to a direction given to me by the attorney, I also perform the functions of the Chief Solicitor. The role of Solicitor-General has a conventional understanding in Australia, which is as the principal legal adviser and counsel for government. It does not have an administrative role at all. I also, however, fulfil the functions of the Chief Solicitor, the crown solicitor, so that I maintain my responsibility for the management of the government solicitor's office.

More importantly—and in my view, I think, of great advantage to the government—I maintain this overview of all the legal services that are provided to government. It provides me with a knowledge of what is happening. I and my other senior lawyers are able to look at trends and look at things that are happening and say, “Hang on a

minute, something is happening here.” It enables a more proactive intervention on my part whereas the traditional role of Solicitor-General is to sit there and wait to get the brief to provide advice or appear in court—which I do as well. In a jurisdiction as small as the ACT, I think it works very well.

MS PORTER: So one role advises the other role in some ways. It complements the other role; is that what you are saying?

Mr Garrison: Yes.

MS PORTER: They do not conflict with one another?

Mr Garrison: No, not at all.

MS PORTER: With those efficiencies that you were talking about before, obviously having those two roles complements one another and brings more efficiencies, would you say?

Mr Garrison: Very much so.

THE CHAIR: Mr Hanson, your first substantive question.

MR HANSON: Mr Garrison, in September last year the Chief Minister said that she had very strong advice that the ACT same-sex marriage laws could act concurrently with the federal marriage law.

Mr Garrison: Yes.

MR HANSON: The High Court begged to differ.

Mr Garrison: As they do from time to time, Mr Hanson.

MR HANSON: As they do from time to time. With your advice now—in retrospect would you have offered different advice? What went wrong there?

Mr Garrison: There were some unknown unknowns, perhaps, in relation to it. Mr Hanson, I tend not to speculate on what my advice might have been in certain circumstances. Certainly, as you would be aware, I do not canvass the advice I am proposing to government in this place. By all means, you should feel free to ask the Chief Minister. I believe, presented with the government’s initiative and the advice that I provided with other senior counsel to government, that we would do very little differently.

The issues, whilst dealt with in short compass by the High Court, addressed some pretty fundamental issues that to that point had not been resolved. The nature and scope, for example, of the marriage power, the nature and scope of the core Marriage Act, had not been canvassed in this environment. The role of providing advice is to say, “Our best advice is this.” I might say that lawyers in government service are often very pleased to have a win because government is invariably on the receiving end of challenges across all jurisdictions. The commonwealth, as you will recall, has had a

number of setbacks on a number of issues. Lawyers give the best advice they can. There are always risks to litigation. My own view is that I do not think I would have changed any of the advice we gave. No matter is entirely risk free, and we now have a greater body of knowledge about the operation of the commonwealth Marriage Act.

MR HANSON: Indeed. In terms of the costs, we were ordered—as in the ACT were ordered—to pay costs.

Mr Garrison: Yes.

MR HANSON: Have they been paid?

Mr Garrison: Yes.

MR HANSON: How much was that?

Mr Garrison: \$500,000.

MR HANSON: \$500,000?

Mr Garrison: Yes.

MR HANSON: So in addition to the costs of your own office and all the expenses of the staff in the minister's office and across JACS, we had to pay \$500,000 for the court costs.

Mr Garrison: For the commonwealth's legal costs, yes.

MR HANSON: With the commonwealth's legal costs, I assume that they actually look at the entirety of their costs. What were the entirety of our costs, when you look at the hours spent in your office and money paid, outsourcing?

Mr Garrison: There were two external counsel engaged to assist with it. Those costs were, as I recall, around \$117,000.

Mr Corbell: \$112,000 on external counsel.

MR HANSON: How many hours would you suggest that your office spent working on this, amongst all the various people, including yourself, obviously?

Mr Garrison: Including myself, some very long hours. I would have to come back to you in relation to that precise figure.

MR HANSON: Can you give an estimate?

Mr Garrison: Possibly in the vicinity of \$200,000 but it might be more.

MR HANSON: \$200,000 in—

Mr Garrison: Just in time.

MR HANSON: But it might be more?

Mr Garrison: Yes.

Mr Corbell: I would indicate to you, Mr Hanson, that the costs associated with the territory's legal representation in relation to this matter, including the engagement of external counsel, were met within the existing appropriations available to the ACT Government Solicitor. To put the costs in some context, in relation to external counsel, the territory expends approximately \$2½ million every year, on average, for a variety of legal cases, ranging from the Civil and Administrative Tribunal to the Magistrates Court, the Supreme Court, the Court of Appeal, the Federal Court and the High Court from time to time. So that is in the context of a spend of \$2½ million for external counsel, each and every year.

MR HANSON: I am trying specifically to understand the full cost around this body of work.

Mr Corbell: Sure.

MR HANSON: Minister, you might be able to tell me: the Solicitor-General said that it was at least \$200,000 worth of work in his office. Have you worked out how much time was spent in your office and across JACS more broadly on this, or is that not going to be included in the costs?

Mr Corbell: Those are the ordinary costs of the administration and running of my office. We do not bill or segregate the costs associated with my staff between one matter and another. There is an overall cost for the operations of my office that encompasses everything that I do as a minister. They are not separated out; in the same way that they are not separated out in your office.

Mr Garrison: Mr Hanson, just on that point, as the attorney has indicated, the funding of that case was not the subject of any exceptional appropriation or resourcing. We routinely provide legal services across a range of matters where there is a notional value attributed to those services. That simply makes up the body of work that our office does.

MR HANSON: Absolutely, but I assume that while you are all busy working on one thing, it probably means that you are required to outsource on others, doesn't it?

Mr Garrison: No, not generally. The work that I do, I would say, expands to exceed the available time, as it does for many of my lawyers. The work in relation to the marriage equality case was in a very short space of time. There was a condensed time frame set by the High Court. There was a great deal of work done in that short space of time. Other work continued to be done; other functions continued to be performed. To the extent that one had to, work was spread amongst others in the office. So although there is, if you will, a notional cost in the conduct of the matter, it has not derogated from the nature of the work that is done. It simply means that in that 12-month period our office did a lot more work within our existing resources.

THE CHAIR: Mr Garrisson, we have run out of time in this particular segment. If you have any other questions to ask, Mr Hanson, I suggest you put them on notice. I will be putting some questions on notice as well. Mr Garrisson, thank you for joining us this afternoon.

Mr Garrisson: Thank you, chair.

THE CHAIR: We will now go to the next area, the Emergency Services Agency. Welcome to the hearing, Commissioner Lane. Are you familiar with the privilege statement that is before you? I presume you have been in hearings quite a few times.

Mr Lane: I have, thank you, chair.

THE CHAIR: The minister has indicated that he does not wish to make an opening statement, so I will ask the first substantive question, through the minister, to you, Commissioner Lane. The Auditor-General's 2013 report on bushfire preparedness identified some problems with the management plans, among other things. Can you update the committee on ESA's response to the Auditor-General's findings and recommendations?

Mr Lane: The Auditor-General made a number of recommendations on areas that had room for improvement in relation to ESA's overall approach to bushfire management planning. It identified that further work is required in relation to how the ESA and its agencies, such as TAMS, the broader JACS Directorate and EPD, work together to ensure the appropriate implementation of the strategic bushfire management plan and recommended a revitalisation of the implementation working group. That was certainly one recommendation we agreed with and have done a lot of work on—to ensure that with the new strategic bushfire management plan, version 3, and its 12 objectives and its 71 key actions we wish to implement over the coming five years, the implementation working group, as it is now revitalised, works on that.

Further, there have been a number of other improvements requested by the Auditor-General or worth consideration. One was the change to our approach to bushfire planning for rural leaseholders within the ACT. We took that on notice and considered what that meant in relation to not only how we can work better with our rural leaseholders—and we do have a very good relationship with them—but how we could strengthen the legislative arrangements around that. That led to some amendments to the Emergencies Act as late as last week.

The key one of those that the Auditor-General raised was how we can target those rural leaseholders to ensure that they understand what issues they have in relation to their land management and how we can clarify those responsibilities. Through that, we have made it clear that the amended legislation clarifies any confusion in relation to land management agreements and the importance of having a bushfire operational plan within what is called the bushfire abatement zone. That work will now continue. It has been implemented very successfully to date through the Rural Fire Service FireWise planning, and we will continue to do that. The other thing we have done in relation to assisting farmers is make it clear in relation to the length of time between bushfire operational planning reviews. The legislation now makes it clear that that is once every five years, which aligns to the length of time of the strategic bushfire

management plan.

We have also taken on board the Auditor-General's recommendations in relation to how we work better with our national land managers—whether it be defence, science, education or federal government land, of which there is quite a deal within the ACT—to implement very similar arrangements to what we would expect of our territory land managers in relation to bushfire plans of operation for those areas. We continue to work in partnership with our federal agencies on that.

Lastly, the other key area for improvement we identified was that, whilst we have very good relationships and a very good bushfire operations plan under the TAMS Directorate, there were some limitations in relation to those other minor landholders within the ACT who we worked very hard with to ensure that we can improve those across education, our utilities and community services to ensure that we have bushfire plans of operations for those as well.

THE CHAIR: Dr Bourke, a substantive question.

DR BOURKE: Minister, the Aranda fire and ambulance station, what benefit is it going to provide over the existing set-up, and what is the time line?

Mr Corbell: The government has made commitments to undertake a significant re-basing of emergency services stations to meet growing demand and improve or maintain response times across the city as the city continues to grow. We have met the first of these commitments, and indeed all of our election commitments, with the funding of facilities for the west Belconnen and Tuggeranong fire and ambulance stations. The south Tuggeranong fire station is now under development. West Belconnen is complete. Aranda was funded in the most recent ACT budget. That is \$18.864 million of capital funding, and that project is intended to commence later this year. The tender for construction closed on 16 October, and I am advised that the tender process will be completed by early this month. Once we have a successful tenderer, we can proceed to see works commence in due course.

The advantages of the co-location of the fire and ambulance station at Aranda will be to shift the existing operations that are currently located on Rae Street in the Belconnen town centre to the Bindubi Street location in Aranda. This means quicker and easier access for our fire and ambulance crews, to get onto major arterial roads that service that part of Canberra.

One of the challenges with the existing Rae Street location for both fire and ambulance is that it is now in the heart of the Belconnen town centre, which is increasingly a low-speed road environment—as it should be, due to both congestion and the fact that there are just a lot of people moving around that location. That is reducing the capacity of our fire and ambulance crews to respond in a timely manner, because of the time it takes to get onto some of the higher speed arterial roads that they need to access in order to provide a timely response. The relocation of fire and ambulance from Rae Street to Aranda, which will occur with the construction of the Aranda fire and ambulance facility, is going to help us maintain, if not strengthen, our response times for that part of Belconnen.

DR BOURKE: Some residents raised concerns about both noise and traffic flow on Bindubi Street as a result of the siting of the Aranda fire and ambulance station, in particular the fact that it is opposite Canberra High School. How are those concerns being addressed?

Mr Corbell: These are not unusual questions and comments to receive in relation to fire and ambulance facilities. The ESA has looked very closely at these issues. In relation to noise, the ESA services, both ambulance and fire and rescue, have established protocols that limit the need to use sirens when exiting the station. There are clear protocols in place in relation to that. That is particularly important at night time and in the early hours of the morning. The ESA have been able to explain to residents that those protocols are strongly adhered to by crews, and that limits the amount of noise associated with vehicles leaving the facility, as is the case for west Belconnen, where this issue also arose. In relation to traffic, detailed traffic assessments have been undertaken as part of the development assessment for the proposal. Obviously, those issues have been addressed with the successful granting of a development approval for that project.

DR BOURKE: What about vehicle speeds when they leave stations? That is another concern residents have raised.

Mr Corbell: Again, there are well-established protocols in place in relation to safety when it comes to urgent duty driving for both fire and ambulance. Those ensure that safety, both for the crews and for other vehicular traffic, is able to be maintained.

THE CHAIR: Ms Porter, your substantive question.

MS PORTER: My question is in relation to the community resilience section that is mentioned on page 97 of volume 1, where it talks about one-stop shop community education bookings and other work that the community resilience section undertakes. I note that on Saturday the CFUs—community fire units—that I am attached to will be involved in that day of making the public more aware of the bushfire season that we are now in and the various work of the agency. Could you explain to us if that is part of that resilience section and the other work that that section does?

Mr Lane: Yes, most certainly. And just to make the point up-front, our work in relation to community education and resilience never stops. That is one of the most important things we do as an emergency services agency. Our ACT Fire & Rescue community resilience section is very much at the forefront of that.

Through the creation of the one-stop shop, during the 2013-14 period the community resilience section has been able to establish much better ways of ensuring that we can use our firefighters on an almost daily basis as they go to community fetes, preschools, schools and other community-type events where the presence of firefighters is very much appreciated and the opportunity for us to spread our community education message is there for all to see. It is one of the most important things we do.

The other key component which you touched on is the community fire unit Saturday, which we are running again this Saturday, 8 November. It is another very important day in the calendar to represent our more than 1,100 community fire unit volunteers

across the territory and the wonderful work that they do. As part of community education and community resilience, the CFU volunteers, partnered with our officers from ACT Fire & Rescue, will once again be spreading that message across the localities within the territory.

That again is one of the key elements of what we do. That will also tie very much to our Canberra bushfire ready program, which the minister announced and released only this morning—a key program that we will be running from now all the way through until Christmas, with the recent reminder, of course, of the devastating fires in Katoomba over the weekend and the tragic fires in South Australia on Friday as well. We will continue to do that work. It is very much key work that is continued—not only by ACT Fire & Rescue and their community resilience section but also by the State Emergency Service in terms of StormSafe and the Rural Fire Service in terms of the wonderful work they do in educating the community.

MS PORTER: I have noticed that the advertisements have been rolling out about flood readiness as well, which is fantastic. With regard to volunteers, you mentioned the CFU volunteers, the larger number of those. Overall, the numbers that are mentioned on page 90 are quite substantial. Are there plans to increase the number of volunteer staff across the different areas? What particular roles do the volunteers mentioned on that page play?

Mr Lane: One of our key targets is to continue to increase the overall number of volunteers we have within the ACT. We do a very good job of that. Our numbers overall continue to grow. Across various services, those numbers, as you can see, do vary from year to year.

MS PORTER: Yes.

Mr Lane: We saw another increase again in our community fire unit volunteers over the last 12 months. Whilst there have been adjustments to some of our MAPS volunteers in the RFS and the SES, overall our target of increasing our total volunteers by about 1.5 per cent per annum is still our target and what we continue to strive to achieve.

We know the value volunteers bring to our community and the wonderful contribution they are able to make, not only in terms of being able to respond to fires, storms or other such events but because of that work they do in the community in the education space and also some of the work that is done behind the scenes, which is what our tremendous MAPS volunteers do, being there to be able to map fires, floods or other such devastation. And there is the work they have done with Red Cross in terms of ensuring that there is an understanding of where damage has impacted in other jurisdictions, such as the Queensland floods, Cyclone Yasi and those sorts of things.

That work all continues. At the recent RFS open day, our MAPS volunteers played a wonderful role in assisting the community in understanding bushfire-prone areas by being there so that people could actually see on the big map whether their property was in a bushfire-prone area and whether they needed to get bushfire ready. We continue to strive towards improving our volunteer numbers and making ESA a wonderful place to be in as a volunteer.

THE CHAIR: Mr Smyth, your substantive question.

MR SMYTH: Commissioner, I was wondering how many outstanding claims there are within the ESA in regard to bullying and harassment.

Mr Lane: I might ask our PWS executive director to answer that question.

Ms Beattie: I am just checking my numbers, sorry. There are actually no allegations of bullying and harassment outstanding at the ESA presently. They have all been investigated, and the investigations are completed.

MR SMYTH: And in the past 12 months, how many reports were there that warranted investigation?

Ms Beattie: For Emergency Services?

MR SMYTH: And what was the nature—

Ms Beattie: No, sorry, the question you are asking is for Emergency Services?

MR SMYTH: Yes, for ESA.

Ms Beattie: In the last 12 months, we have received one.

MR SMYTH: Commissioner, all the chiefs of the individual services are on contract. When do those contracts expire?

Mr Lane: They expire at various times.

Mr Corbell: I am happy to take on notice the exact details.

Mr Lane: I am not sure of the exact dates, but the—

MR SMYTH: So all are currently employed under a contract?

Mr Lane: Yes, they are.

MR SMYTH: And you will take on notice when they were renewed and for what length?

Mr Corbell: Yes.

MR SMYTH: Commissioner, in regard to the Sydney Building fire, there are some allegations that you were on the fire ground offering directions to the Fire & Rescue officers. What was your role on the day of the Sydney Building fire?

Mr Lane: My role on that day, as it is every day, is to take the overall strategic direction, leadership and management of the Emergency Services Agency as I am required to do. On that particular day I took the opportunity, following a phone call I

received from another jurisdiction, to ask a question of our incident controller in relation to the Bronto, which of course has already been made very public, and obviously considered what further actions might be necessary in terms of the containment and the extinguishment of the fire and the recovery from that operation afterwards.

MR SMYTH: Did you make operational directions to the Fire & Rescue service officers that day?

Mr Lane: Sorry, what was the question?

MR SMYTH: Did you give operational command or orders to the Fire & Rescue service officers on site that day?

Mr Lane: I give operational command and orders to my staff every day. On that particular day in relation to the Sydney Building fire, I gave a number of commands and directions to staff of ESA in relation to my expectations in relation to the management of public information to ensure that the media was kept informed, to make sure advice in relation to things like road closures and bus closures could be disseminated. I made sure that we had information available to the government in relation to what the impact of a major fire in the CBD of Canberra would mean. I took the opportunity to ask questions in relation to the overall operation as well.

MR SMYTH: Did you give directions to the Fire & Rescue officers on the ground that day on how to actually fight the fire?

Mr Lane: Did I give direction on how to fight the fire?

MR SMYTH: Yes.

Mr Lane: What, the specifics of how to fight the fire?

MR SMYTH: Correct, assignment of the units, or approach or tactics or technique?

Mr Lane: No, I did not.

THE CHAIR: I defer my substantive question to Mr Smyth.

MR SMYTH: Can you give the committee an update on some of the issues that have surrounded the culture inside various arms, for instance, the toxic culture in ambulance management, the bullying and harassment in the fire service and what has occurred and where is the government at with its program to increase the number of females in the emergency services?

Mr Corbell: Just before the commissioner goes to the detail, there are some general observations from me. In relation to the matters you raise, for ambulance, as you would be aware, the government has commissioned a cultural review of the Ambulance Service and that report is being finalised by the consultant. I am advised that their final review is expected to be completed by the end of this calendar year.

In relation to Fire & Rescue, as you know, there have been a small number of matters reported over the past 12 to 18 months, all of which have been appropriately responded to. The government has announced the development and the implementation of a women in emergency services strategy. The purpose of this strategy is to increase the representation of women in both paid and volunteer workforces of the ESA. This is consistent with the government's broader commitments to encourage the engagement of women in the ACT public sector.

That strategy is being developed and is taking account of feedback received from staff during an internal consultation process which occurred in May this year. I am looking forward to seeing the recommendations of that work, and how we will work with our existing volunteers and paid personnel to encourage more women to become engaged in our emergency services. You may have more to add to that.

Mr Lane: Yes, I certainly do. We have certainly hit the ground running in relation to our women in emergency services strategy. ESA was a key sponsor of the women in firefighting forum that was held here in Canberra earlier this year which brought firefighters, emergency managers and members of Defence personnel to Canberra to discuss the matters that relate specifically to organisations like emergency services which are underrepresented in relation to women within a workforce. That is recognised, quite clearly, nationally as an area of focus that all emergency services and fire agencies need to consider in relation to promoting the opportunities that are available for women in emergency services.

As well as that particular forum, we have also provided opportunities for staff and volunteers of ESA to attend other such forums here in Canberra to promote the importance of women in organisations like Defence and emergency services and we have recently engaged a project officer, with a support officer, to assist in engaging the program.

As I see it, it has three key elements. One is how we can target and recruit women into the ESA, whether that be into our permanent ranks or even indeed into our volunteer ranks. And whilst our volunteer services have healthy numbers in relation to women we know there is still room for improvement. Secondly, it is about how we promote women within the agency—again, whether they are volunteers or staff—to take on higher ranked positions or positions of seniority within the ESA and then hopefully also see continued elevation and improvement of women across the ACT government. Thirdly, it is about understanding, for the rest of ESA, that is, the men, the importance of growing our capability by being a more diverse workforce in terms of gender and for other areas of diversity as well. That is the third key area we will be promoting through that process.

Over the coming 10 or so months, we will be bringing a lot of those things to fruition to assist and promote the importance of the agency to women as a whole, and it is one of those things that I think will be a very successful program.

MR SMYTH: And just to finish, how many officers of ESA are currently stood down pending disciplinary inquiries and how many officers are off on stress leave at the moment?

Mr Lane: I might have to get our executive director—

Mr Corbell: I think you would have to take that on notice.

Mr Lane: I will take that question on notice.

MR SMYTH: The information is coming.

Ms Beattie: I have actually got the answer.

Mr Corbell: Do you have the answer there?

Ms Beattie: I do have the answer. As far as I am aware, there is one ESA person currently suspended.

MR SMYTH: And how long has that person been suspended?

Ms Beattie: I would have to take that on notice, but it has been 12 months.

MR SMYTH: Approximately 16 months?

Ms Beattie: Yes.

MR SMYTH: How is it that somebody can be suspended for 16 months, pending a disciplinary inquiry?

Ms Beattie: The outcome has been notified to that individual. We are currently negotiating a replacement for him.

MR SMYTH: It seems an extraordinarily long time. The Attorney-General would be aware that justice delayed is justice denied. Why has this, or any case, taken 16 months in which to reach resolution?

Mr Corbell: All I would say is that these matters can be complex and therefore protracted. Each party has rights in relation to the way these matters have to be addressed and these grievances resolved. As to the specifics, I would have to seek further advice on the specific issues at play.

MR SMYTH: The other half of the question was: how many officers are off on stress leave or compensation?

Ms Beattie: That one we would have to take on notice.

THE CHAIR: Dr Bourke, a substantive question.

DR BOURKE: Minister, can you outline the upgrades to the ICT systems that have been outlined in the report on page 91?

Mr Corbell: There are a range of ICT upgrades underway. Would you care to elaborate?

DR BOURKE: I was asking you to elaborate.

Mr Corbell: I am just asking which ones in particular.

DR BOURKE: Let us walk through them and you can point out which ones you think have been the most valuable at this stage, and what the key points are.

Mr Corbell: There are a range of projects that are underway. The projects completed during the last financial year include improvements to the Kronos payroll and rostering system, in terms of improving the process and governance for the operation of that system; the strengthening of the ESA 000 capability, ensuring high-availability telephony and a refresh of the comm cen, the communication centre business continuity site, that is, the backup site for our 000 operations; the replacement of obsolete radio communication consoles in the comm cen with a new solution which is used to dispatch, communicate with and coordinate ESA first responders across all of our emergency services.

There has been completion of enhancements to the mobile data system, upgrades to the ESA web-based spatial system to provide real-time location-based mapping information within the ESA and also for dissemination through the ESA website. There has been implementation of a major upgrade to the asset management system for ESA assets; finalisation of implementation of the ACT Ambulance Service clinical simulation environment, which is an ICT-based simulation environment for clinical training. And finally, there has been the replacement of urban search and rescue and chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear or CBRN technologies.

DR BOURKE: What does “technologies” mean when we are talking about the chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear facilities?

Mr Corbell: I will ask the Acting Chief Officer, Fire & Rescue, to assist you with that.

Mr Barr: I understand your question related to more detail in relation to—

DR BOURKE: You have had some technologies replaced. What does that mean?

Mr Barr: Basically that was replacement of detection equipment for chemical, biological, radiological detection matters. Quite a bit of the equipment we had had reached the end of its useful life. We went through a process to replace some of that equipment so that we were able to get modern, state-of-the-art-type equipment, which generally has greater capability or greater ease of use, and some other associated equipment in that area.

DR BOURKE: So it is new equipment which actually does the job better?

Mr Barr: Yes.

THE CHAIR: Ms Porter, your substantive question.

MS PORTER: Minister, on page 97 it talks about recruit college 36 and the financial commitment by the ACT government to this college, to conduct the recruit college. Could we have a little more information about how this college operates and the benefits to ESA, and will there be a similar program in the future?

Mr Corbell: The government, through ESA, undertakes recruit college training for fire fighters as and when required. Its purpose is obviously to train up fire fighters to replace fire fighters who are retiring or to address churn in the overall level of membership of Fire & Rescue.

The particular recruit college that you are referring to which is in the annual report, recruit college 36, was specifically commissioned to increase ACT Fire & Rescue's overall fire fighter numbers by six. This is the implementation of the government's election commitment in relation to the recruitment and employment of an additional six ACT Fire & Rescue personnel to provide for full-time manning of the platform on demand capability of ACT Fire & Rescue.

The value of the election commitment is just over \$4 million over the four-year period. It allows the full-time staffing, 24/7 staffing, of the platform on demand capability. Platform on demand capability is a series of transporter trucks with the capacity to carry shipping container PODs, as they are known—platforms on demand—which carry a range of specialist support material and equipment for a range of ACT Fire & Rescue functions, such as the CBRN function that Acting Chief Officer Barr was referring to earlier, or indeed USAR search and rescue, urban search and rescue, specialist equipment, trench rescue equipment, and a range of other specialist fitted-out PODs or shipping containers. For example, there is a mobile field kitchen-type capability for supporting fire fighters in the field if they are at an incident for a long period.

All of these shipping containers are able to be quickly hoisted up onto a transporter vehicle and then driven to the site of the incident. Previously, this capability was staffed on an overtime, as required basis. The government took the decision at the last election to make a commitment to fund it on a full-time basis and recruit college 36 allowed us to recruit the personnel needed to be able to deliver that capability.

MS PORTER: When it is necessary therefore this kind of activity, the recruiting, will happen. This is not a regular thing that happens once every 12 months, for instance, but on an "as needs" basis?

Mr Corbell: Yes, the government, through ESA, runs recruit colleges as and when they need to.

THE CHAIR: Mr Smyth, your substantive question.

MR SMYTH: I want to go to some of the Ambulance Service issues that have been canvassed over the last year. Minister, has the procurement of the new uniforms now been completed and have they been issued?

Mr Corbell: I will ask the Chief Officer, Ambulance if he can bring you up to date on that, Mr Smyth.

Mr Foot: Mr Smyth, recently we have been liaising with and taking some advice from the ACT Government Solicitor to be able to recommence negotiations with the preferred supplier of the new uniform. We served correspondence on the preferred supplier last Monday. That correspondence, as I said, was prepared in negotiations with the Government Solicitor. We have asked the supplier to rectify the two issues that we had previously with the new uniform, that we had identified before it was actually issued to our front-line staff. We will be providing the preferred supplier with a four-month time frame to issue and provide ESA with stocks of the new uniform.

MR SMYTH: What were the two issues?

Mr Foot: The main issue predominantly related to a level of formaldehyde that had been detected in the collar of the shirt, and the pH level of the material as well. Both of those levels were advised by CSIRO independent testing in the laboratories in Melbourne. Based on that advice, we went back to the supplier through the ACT Government Solicitor. We advised them of those problems that we had experienced and we asked them to rectify those two issues.

MR SMYTH: When do you expect to have the new uniforms issued?

Mr Foot: The request we have made of the preferred supplier is to have all issues resolved and the new uniform stocks delivered to the ESA resource centre within four months.

MR SMYTH: The upgrade to VACIS: have those issues been resolved?

Mr Foot: The IT system that is being used for the VACIS software is the newest software available in Australia at this point in time. The issue you are referring to was a download issue with the software. That, to the best of my knowledge through InTACT, our provider, has been resolved. At this point in time we have not received any further complaints about VACIS software.

MR SMYTH: With the defibrillators, have all the issues been resolved?

Mr Foot: Mr Smyth, we are continuing to monitor the rollout of the MRx cardiac monitor defibrillator. We had one complaint in September which related to an alleged issue with a battery on a monitor. The two batteries on the monitor were both sent away to the Australian supplier and independently bench tested. We were advised by the supplier that they were unable to fault the battery system. Independent testing that we have undertaken also was unable to identify any charging fault with that particular unit. That was in September.

MR SMYTH: In total, since the defibrillators were rolled out, how many complaints have been made by staff?

Mr Foot: Mr Smyth, which area you talking about? Are you talking about the battery system or—

MR SMYTH: In regard to all areas of operation—batteries and connectivity.

Mr Foot: I will have to take that on notice.

MR SMYTH: Okay, thank you.

THE CHAIR: We have reached the end of the segment allocated to Emergency Services. I would like to thank all officers from Emergency Services who have come here this afternoon. There may be other questions that are put to you on notice.

The committee will now hear from the minister's next area of responsibility, ACT Policing. Good afternoon, everyone. We will now resume the next segment of our annual report hearing. We welcome ACT Policing. Good afternoon, Chief Police Officer Lammers.

Mr Lammers: Good afternoon.

THE CHAIR: Welcome to you and your officers. I want to check that you are familiar with the privilege statement that is on the table in front of you. I think you have been to enough of these.

Mr Lammers: Thank you.

THE CHAIR: The minister has indicated he does not wish to make an opening statement, so I will go to the first substantive question. Mr Lammers, the committee has expressed an interest in the use of prohibition orders by police, including whether more use might be made of them. Can you tell the committee how prohibition orders are sought and applied by police? Are there any features of administration for prohibition orders which discourage their use by police?

Mr Lammers: Prohibition orders are not widely used in the ACT. They are considered for use in the broader Australian Federal Police, depending on the circumstances. There is a mechanism that is used to apply for prohibition orders. As I said, it is not widely used by us; certainly not in the ACT.

THE CHAIR: Dr Bourke, a substantive question.

DR BOURKE: Minister, the report cover and page 6 both report significant drops in crime. It is highlighted in the report cover that there have been some dramatic drops in property crime, robbery, alcohol-related crime and offences against persons. What do you attribute this to and do you worry that these drops will not continue?

Mr Corbell: Yes, we have seen significant reductions in crime types across the ACT. We continually see significant reductions in motor vehicle theft, in offences against a person such as assault, and also burglary and break and enter offences, as well as other offences such as property damage. These are pleasing trends.

ACT Policing has met all four measures relating to levels of crime in the performance agreement it has with the ACT government. This decline continues a five-year downward trend in reported crimes and offences in the ACT. To give an example, in the past full financial year compared to the previous financial year reporting period,

the overall number of offences against people is down by 10.9 per cent; sexual offences are down 15.3 per cent; alcohol-related crime is down 14 per cent. ACT Policing has exceeded its clear-up target rate for offences against a person by 2.5 per cent.

These are very pleasing. If you look at the outcomes across different parts of the community, there are some very significant outcomes that I am sure all residents will welcome. For example, Dr Bourke, for reductions in reported crime based on districts within the ACT, Belconnen has seen a 25.8 per cent reduction in reported crime to police over that period; the city area has seen a 23.2 per cent reduction in the level of reported crime; Gungahlin has seen a 12.3 per cent reduction in the level of reported crime; Tuggeranong has seen a 15.5 per cent reduction in the level of reported crime; and in Woden, including Weston Creek, there has been a 30 per cent reduction in the level of crime reported to police between 2012-13 and 2013-14.

These are excellent results. I am very thankful for the work of ACT Policing and their dedicated teams, as well as their general duties teams, for the work they have done to achieve these outcomes. This has been led through an intelligence-led model—initiatives such as the regional targeting team, the property crime targeting team and crime reduction units, partnerships with organisations like Crime Stoppers and Neighbourhood Watch, and also diversion programs, particularly in the drug and alcohol area.

It is worth highlighting too the way ACT Policing have integrated their work with the whole-of-government property crime reduction strategy. As minister, both as attorney and as minister for police, I focus very strongly on reducing property crime in our community through the ACT property crime reduction strategy. We now know that offences against property continue to decline. We have the lowest number of property offences for more than 10 years. These are very significant outcomes that have been led through the intelligence-led work of ACT Policing and the other elements of the property crime strategy which have been implemented across a range of government agencies.

DR BOURKE: You talked about reported crime, minister, but do you have any indication of what unreported crime levels there may be in the community?

Mr Corbell: Yes, we do have some indications of the level of unreported crime in the community. That comes about through the statistical surveys that ACT Policing participates in. I am not sure whether the Chief Police Officer can provide some more detail on that.

Mr Lammers: I could, thank you, minister. Two of the areas that we have been concerned with not only in Canberra but in the rest of Australia for quite some time are levels of sexual assaults and levels of domestic violence. We have programs in place in Canberra that target both of those. They are probably two of the most unreported crimes across the country and across most parts of the Western world.

Through our intervention programs we are creating awareness, particularly in areas of domestic violence, violence against women and children. ACT Policing is a supporter of the white ribbon campaign—I am an ambassador, a white ribbon ambassador—and

we work constantly in the community to raise the awareness that violence against women and children is not accepted and it is not tolerated by us. So we are targeting that. We also provide some heavy consequences for those perpetrators of family violence. As you might know, we have a presumption against bail for offenders. We have in place a number of services that help the victims of crime, both female and male, and their children.

Sexual assault also falls into the category of “underreported”. That could be sexual assaults that range from indecent assaults right up to the heavier categories of sexual assault. Once again, through our awareness programs, more women—particularly women—are feeling more comfortable with reporting instances of sexual violence to police. What we have seen over the last couple of years is an increase in the reporting of sexual assaults, which, to me, is a gratifying response to community awareness about the harms that it is causing. But those two categories are still two of the most underreported crimes.

DR BOURKE: Minister, you talked about intelligence-led policing. Could you tell me more about the changes implemented following the review of the crime prevention and intelligence portfolios in 2013 and what effect that review had?

Mr Corbell: I think that is probably a question for the CPO, so I will ask the CPO to assist you with that one.

Mr Lammers: A lot of what we have done over the last couple of years, and even stretching well beyond that, has been to take a different approach to the way in which we look at crime in the community. Over the last 14 months specifically I have focused on more public engagement, more community engagement, making sure that the work we do is multipronged. It is about detection, it is about disruption and it is about prevention, and that is where a lot of my officers’ effort lies right now.

We couple that with an intelligence-led model that permeates all the way through ACT Policing, from our patrols to our regional targeting teams to our crime branches. All of those areas have an element of intelligence-led investigations and response to them. With that, we have seen significant falls in crime right across Canberra—as the minister mentioned earlier, eight per cent right across the board last year. We attribute that to two things: a much heavier community engagement and an intelligence-led way in which we respond.

DR BOURKE: Thank you.

THE CHAIR: Thank you. Ms Porter, a substantive question.

MS PORTER: Thank you, chair. Good afternoon, Chief Police Officer.

Mr Lammers: Good afternoon.

MS PORTER: Minister, I think it was you that mentioned the crime reduction unit in answer to a question from Dr Bourke. I notice on page 85 some of the work that is conducted by the crime reduction unit—namely, the Big Bang Ballers, which you have to say very slowly in case you get it wrong. It talks about targeting young people

at risk, particularly between the ages of 14 and 25, but also mentions that some participants come from countries where there is a genuine fear of the police. Minister, I was wondering whether you or the CPO could talk about this program, the success of it since its inception, and whether or not similar programs are envisaged to target certain groups in the community.

Mr Lammers: I am happy to respond to that, minister. I thank you for the question because it is a program, among a lot of other programs, that we are particularly proud of. We have been looking very carefully at intergenerational crime, at young kids who commit crime with their parents having committed it. We are finding a disturbing number of kids, children under the age of 18, that are committing crimes. We find that a parent, generally the father, either has been incarcerated or has committed crime in the past so the children are more likely to do crime in the future.

Through a number of programs, and this is just one of them, we are trying to connect really closely with the children and give them alternatives, to keep their hands busy, to keep their bodies busy and to make sure that they know that they can work in a team environment—in this case a basketball-type team environment, but we do lots of these types of things—so they really feel they have got a sense of belonging to the community.

We find that this on its own—and this is, as I said, just one of the programs—attacks the crime right at its source, right at the time when a child is on the cusp of deciding whether he or she is going to commit some sort of petty crime which leads to larger and more consistent crime in the future. It is one of the turnaround-type programs that we have. We run this in very close concert with things like restorative justice and diversion conferencing, getting them very early, making sure that they do not get a taste of incarceration and working with police in a very positive way. We support police role models but we also support role models within the team themselves so they can learn from peers, which we find has the greatest influence.

MS PORTER: Does it also have the benefit of having young people understand that the police are not to be feared but rather are people who want to work with them to help them change direction in their life?

Mr Lammers: That is exactly right, through all of our programs. I mentioned earlier my increased focus on community engagement. From the time that we visit some of the junior primary schools—and we have our Kenny Koala, for instance, come and talk to them—it is about self-protection, it is about crime prevention and it is about being good citizens. That is a message that we make sure permeates through all of our programs. It is about making sure that children particularly feel comfortable in the presence of police, that they actually feel proud to be with police. We encourage them to take photographs of us. In many cases they take those photographs home and they put them up as modelling themselves with police as good citizens. We find that the more of that that we do, the greater the influence it has on the community. The results speak for themselves: crime is going down.

MS PORTER: That is terrific. You talked about this program and you mentioned Kenny Koala, which is obviously very appealing to small children in particular. Are there other programs of this nature that are being run out of the crime reduction unit?

Mr Lammers: There are so many programs.

MS PORTER: Too many to mention?

Mr Lammers: Too many to mention, but we have ones that target families—so families as a unit where either the parent or the child has been exposed to the criminal justice system. We have programs with the Indigenous. I am the patron of the solid young fellas program—so dealing with very young kids at a very early age, making sure that they are exposed to police in a very positive way and also making sure that they learn and understand more about their own culture and that their culture is not a bad thing.

We have programs around crime reduction and education. We have a schools program. We have programs that encourage no bullying in the school environment and in the home environment. The programs we have transcend not just where they at school but where they go socially or anywhere they are in the community.

We have senior liaison members who are highly skilled in making sure they get the right messages across. We also have other programs that model good behaviour in the community, and we send our police uniformed officers out to make sure they do that. Every time we run a campaign anywhere in the ACT we make sure that the police model the type of behaviour that we expect the children to follow.

MS PORTER: The volunteers in policing program—are they involved in this program too? Do they go out with the police to the schools et cetera, to these various venues? Is that one of the roles that they play?

Mr Lammers: Again, thank you for the question, because we are very proud of our volunteers in policing. We use them across a broad range of activities. Firstly, we use them as a resource capacity in our police stations, so they are the first contact with the public when people come in, and they work with our constables in the police stations. We use them also for a lot of fundraising initiatives, working with charities that, by their very nature, attract children and young adults—and adults as well.

We stage a number of events where they work with our new recruits as members of the public to show them what it is really like when they come across angry people or even people that are violent. We do not have any child volunteers, but we certainly have children and grandchildren of some of the volunteers that come along to some of our special occasions just to show that it is a family unit involved, not just a volunteer. Some of the volunteers tend to be older members of the community, some of whom have worked with policing and some of whom have not. They feel like they want to give back to the community. The volunteers work across a whole range of activities throughout Canberra.

MS PORTER: That sounds pretty busy. You recently had 11 new volunteers successfully complete their induction training. I think it takes your number to 51, if that has not changed of late. Is this number sufficient to do all the work that you have just outlined? Could you accommodate an increase in this number?

Mr Lammers: We find that the numbers right now are sufficient for the activities that we have planned. If we were to plan more activities, then of course we could use more numbers. We find that some of the volunteers are with us for a long period of time and others come for a short period of time. For a number of reasons, family or health, they leave. But we try and keep the numbers up around 50 to 60 because we find that that is a very manageable group for the activities in ACT Policing. I also do not want to create an environment where it looks like we are unfairly using the volunteers past their capacity, so we watch that very carefully.

MS PORTER: Thank you very much.

THE CHAIR: Mr Hanson, your substantive question.

MR HANSON: Can you give the committee an update on the situation with regard to ice—methamphetamines—the role the outlaw motorcycle gangs are playing, the extent of the problem and what you are going to do to manage it?

Mr Lammers: Mr Hanson, quite some months ago we set up a task force called task force Nemesis that was specifically targeted at outlaw motorcycle gangs within the ACT, their use of illicit drugs, their use of firearms and the way in which outlaw motorcycle gangs connect with other gangs throughout Australia and to some extent throughout the world. We are finding that the use of cannabis and ice—methamphetamine—in the ACT is increasing. You might also know that recently we executed warrants at Hume where we closed down a clan lab of quite some significance. That was responsible for taking many hundreds of millions of drugs off our streets, some of which would have been destined for Canberra, but I am sure others would have been destined for interstate.

We are targeting very closely the activities of outlaw motorcycle gangs throughout all types of organised crimes, not just drugs, and we are having good success in Canberra in doing that. The reach of outlaw motorcycle gangs in Canberra is still minimal. The reason we have things like task force Nemesis set up is to keep it that way. We will continue to keep our foot on the throat of organised crime in Canberra so that it does not spread.

MR HANSON: Have we seen other gangs try to move in on the Rebels' turf, or is it the Rebels that are the singular gang?

Mr Lammers: The Rebels have been domiciled in Canberra for a long, long time. In recent times, within the last 12 months, we have seen the Comancheros try to gain a foothold in Canberra. We have seen what we call patching over—some of the Rebels wanting to become members of the Comancheros. The cultures, if I can use that word, of the Rebels and the Comancheros are completely different. They are different types of outlaw motorcycle gangs. Whereas the Rebels like to remain relatively under the radar, the Comancheros have no such desire. Our work through task force Nemesis has been specifically targeting the Comancheros to make sure they do not get a foothold in Canberra. Over the last six months we have executed a lot of warrants on both the Rebels and the Comancheros. We have seized firearms, we have seized ammunition and we have seized weapons. And we will keep the pressure on them.

MR HANSON: You will never get rid of the problem, but you have a lid on the problem? You are keeping it contained? You certainly see stories where ice is becoming virtually out of control, particularly in some New South Wales towns. You are comfortable that you are on top of it?

Mr Lammers: Over quite some years we have seen that people that are drug affected are also alcohol affected, particularly those that are arrested and come through our watch house. We have stepped up training for our members to identify people who actually use ice. Although the usage is increasing, we have a very good handle over the use here in Canberra. We have very good intel that is joined up not only with the AFP but other law enforcement agencies and the Australian Crime Commission to make sure that if there is an increase in its use in Canberra we know about it and we can target it.

THE CHAIR: I defer my question to Mr Hanson.

MR HANSON: You are probably expecting one on tasers, so I note that the use of force with tasers is down from 49 to 37 incidents. We have seen the AFPA call for a wider issuing of tasers, a number of front-line officers in their incident reports have said the same—that is, they support a wider disbursement of tasers. We have seen incidents in the ACT where firearms have been used with pretty tragic consequences where they may not have been if front-line officers had been issued with tasers. Where are you at in your thinking with regard to issuing tasers beyond front-line sergeants or substantive sergeants as it is now?

Mr Lammers: Thank you, Mr Hanson. I have given quite some consideration in recent times to whether or not tasers ought to be rolled out past front-line sergeants. The use of tasers in the ACT is relatively minimal. The use of firearms in the ACT is even less than the use of tasers. I have seen no compelling argument for me to roll out tasers past front-line sergeants to constables. If the situation changes where I need to re-examine that, I will certainly do so. But right here and now, I see no compelling argument for front-line officers to have tasers in Canberra.

MR HANSON: Specifically, it is only substantive sergeants who are issued with tasers. There are situations, as I am aware, where acting sergeants are filling a role and, therefore, the substantive sergeant is just not available. Have you given thought to potentially giving it to the acting sergeant or the person doing the job as opposed to the rank to meet that need?

Mr Lammers: No, Mr Hanson. The approach I have taken is to ensure that the sergeants' positions are filled by substantive sergeants. We have gone through a process recently where all the vacancies within ACT Policing will be filled by substantive sergeants. There will be times, of course, when sergeants go on leave or they are unfit for duty, maybe during a sickness, where an acting sergeant is put in place, but the coverage of the ACT by substantive sergeants during that time is still adequate.

MR HANSON: There have been incidents though where people have been shot where perhaps they would not have been if there were tasers. That does not give you cause for alarm that situations like that will occur again—a constable on the front line

will be forced to draw a firearm or otherwise they would use a taser?

Mr Corbell: I will restate the stats on that: since 2000—so in the last 14 years—there have been four occasions where a police officer has had to discharge their firearm, four occasions in 14 years. That is a very, very small number. In the majority of those occasions the discharge of the firearm occurred after the rollout of tasers to front-line sergeants. There is clearly no link between the absence of tasers and the use of firearms, and we are talking about very, very small numbers. Those are matters I keep in mind from a policy perspective when I look at whether or not there is an argument for an expansion in taser use. Having restated those facts, which I outlined in the recent Assembly debate, I will ask the CPO to elaborate.

Mr Lammers: Thank you, minister. Certainly those statistics are accurate. In those four shootings within the ACT, as the minister says, the majority of those—three—occurred after the rollout of the tasers.

MR HANSON: Were substantive sergeants present during those shootings?

Mr Lammers: I could not answer that right now.

MR HANSON: That is the point I was making—the people that used their firearms potentially did not have access to tasers, regardless of whether they had been rolled out in the ACT. I am making the point they should be rolled out further, so that is very relevant to this point. They may have been rolled out, but were they rolled out to the officers who were on the scene and drew their firearms?

Mr Lammers: I could not answer that right now.

MR HANSON: I think it is pretty relevant. My understanding is: in some cases, not.

Mr Hayward: I can state that on at least one occasion of those three a sergeant was present and was the person who used the weapon. I am not a hundred per cent able to say whether or not it was on more than one occasion. I know that on one occasion a constable drew the weapon and was forced to use it. Across all four of the incidents, at least two of them and possibly three were when a sergeant was using a weapon.

MR HANSON: But they may not have had a taser. We are not sure?

Mr Hayward: At least one of them was prior to tasers being introduced and one was since tasers were introduced.

Mr Corbell: The other point to be made—and this is the advice I receive from police—is that just because a taser is available does not mean it will be deployed ahead of a firearm being deployed. It is a dynamic use of force, a continuum that the police use. They use force consistent with the threat they face. Just because a taser is present does not mean that it will be used as a matter of course before a firearm is drawn. It depends on the circumstances police face. Obviously they are trained to use the force options available commensurate with the threat and the circumstances they face.

MR HANSON: I notice that complaints against police are down. Congratulations. I note some other statistics are looking good, so well done. I know it is a very difficult job you have out there. I think you would appreciate that my call for tasers is not one of criticism but to try to assist police in doing a very difficult job.

THE CHAIR: Mr Hanson, were you asking for a question to be taken on notice?

MR HANSON: Yes, whether a taser was present at those incidents, or could have been.

Mr Lammers: I will take that on notice.

THE CHAIR: Dr Bourke, a substantive question.

DR BOURKE: Page 15 of the report refers to perceptions of crime. Can you tell us more about the ACT community's perception of crime compared with other Australian communities and how that perception compares with the actual level of crime in the ACT?

Mr Lammers: Certainly. The perception of crime in the ACT often does not reflect the reality of crime in the ACT. As the minister and I have said a couple of times earlier, crime is down in the ACT, eight per cent. When speaking to people around those perceptions we might ask whether they are frightened that their home will be broken into and they might say yes. When we ask, "Has your house ever been broken into," they say no. So the perception often does not reflect the reality.

It is very similar throughout all of Australia, the perception of crime, which is why we are now treating it as an indicator of effectiveness and not as a KPI. They are difficult to quantify. I would rather rely on the evidence we have in supporting our key performance indicators, and they all tell us that what we are doing in the ACT is being very effective in reducing crime quite considerably over the last couple of years. Certainly, as we said earlier, crime in some categories is now the lowest it has been in 10 years.

Perception does not often reflect reality, but we understand that perception is very important. That is why, as I said earlier, I have such a heavy focus on community engagement, on making sure that the public is aware of the way in which they can make sure their premises are guarded against intrusion, that their cars are secured, and that children are very aware of strangers. We do that throughout the whole category of age groups and we are having good success there. That is reflected in the actual figures on the reduction of crime.

THE CHAIR: Ms Porter, a substantive question.

MS PORTER: Minister, I wanted to ask about the three things referred to on page 82. As to the graduate program, what kinds of roles are the graduates involved in? I note there were 12 rotations in the mix of corporate and occupational functions in this reporting period. Also during the same reporting period ACT Policing has hosted the placement of six trainees from the AFP Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander traineeship program. I am interested to know more about that, and also the way the

workforce reflects the diversity of the community. I think that is particularly important at the moment to emphasise that work that is being done to ensure the diversity of the workforce.

Mr Lammers: Once again these programs, particularly those around graduates, are the ones we are very proud of. I have been involved in bringing graduates into the AFP for more than 10 years. We find that when the graduates come in they assimilate very well into our organisation. They come well skilled and also with a great deal of enthusiasm, which is why I like to take graduates in. ACT, like most of the AFP, takes quite a few graduates into various areas within ACT Policing. We have noticed that the people that come through have a preference to stay with us for quite some time because of the work they are exposed to.

We are particularly proud of our work with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community and encouraging them to come into ACT Policing. Unfortunately, the attraction rates are lower than I would like, and my executive team and I talked not so long ago about how we can encourage diverse groups, not just Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, to find a home in ACT Policing and to feel welcome in ACT Policing. Quite often the numbers just are not there.

We would very much like to increase the gender balance; we would like more women in ACT Policing, but we find that the pool of applicants is just not there. Our challenge is to have more people of diverse background, including more women, actually apply to join the organisation, so our marketing strategies will be around that.

MS PORTER: You obviously have a marketing strategy. Are you placing greater emphasis on that at the moment?

Mr Lammers: We are. We have not recruited into the organisation the numbers we are likely to recruit over the next 12 months with the increase in the national threat environment. For us, this is a great opportunity to get not only skilled people into our organisation but to further diversify it. We will be specifically targeting diverse groups into the organisation as well as women.

THE CHAIR: Supplementary, Dr Bourke.

DR BOURKE: What sort of strategies are you using? You have mentioned them, but could you tell us more about them in detail?

Mr Lammers: A lot of it, once again, is about community engagement and awareness. It is going into schools and talking up the benefits of being part of policing. It is also making sure that people realise that to be a whole part of the organisation is not just about sworn police officers; it is about people with all sorts of different skills. Half of our organisation and about 35 per cent of ACT Policing is unsworn. We have a large component of sworn policing, and that might tell the community we have a heavier focus on sworn police than we do on unsworn. We are trying to send messages that the skills of unsworn police are valued as greatly as those of sworn officers. Once again it is about going out into the community through the campaigns we run. We are having an open day at Belconnen police station next Saturday where we will be talking about diversity and making sure that people are aware that we want all sorts of

different people in our organisation.

Some criticism has been levelled in recent times about positive discrimination. I am of the view that that is not such a bad thing and that we should actually be targeting the diverse groups, the ethnic groups. We reach out to the Muslim community all the time, particularly in these days of heightened threat alert. We encourage them to be part of our organisation. Our arms are open to diverse groups to join us.

THE CHAIR: We have reached the end of our allotted time. On behalf of the committee I thank you, minister, ACT Policing and all the witnesses who have appeared at today's hearings. The contributions will greatly assist the committee in its inquiry into the annual reports for 2013-14.

Appearances:

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

Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate
Young, Mr Michael, Executive Director, Continuous Improvement and Workers Compensation, Workforce Capability and Governance Division
Nicol, Mr David, Under Treasurer

Justice and Community Safety Directorate
McCabe, Mr Mark, Work Safety Commissioner, WorkSafe ACT, Office of Regulatory Services

ACT Long Service Leave Authority
Shih, Ms Catherine, Chief Financial Officer
Barnes, Mr Robert, CEO and Registrar

THE CHAIR: Welcome to this second and final public hearing of the Standing Committee on Justice and Community Safety for its inquiry into annual and financial reports for 2013-14. Today the committee has heard from the Attorney-General and his officers; we now look forward to hearing from the Minister for Workplace Safety and Industrial Relations and his officers, including those from the ACT Long Service Leave Authority.

First I would like to confirm, minister, that you are well aware of the privilege statement that is before you. I think you have attended a few of these, and your officers are in the same position. You have read and understand the privilege statement before you?

Mr Gentleman: Yes.

THE CHAIR: Minister, would you like to start with an opening statement?

Mr Gentleman: Yes, Mr Chairman, and of course we are aware of the privilege implications in committee hearings. I would like to welcome my directorate officials here today to assist in this inquiry.

Thank you, Mr Chairman and committee members, for the opportunity to discuss the 2013-14 annual report. This report provides detail of the significant work undertaken in relation to workplace safety and industrial relations during 2013-14, and I firmly believe the directorate has delivered on an extensive program.

As you are aware, I became the sixth minister in the ACT cabinet in July this year, taking on the role of Minister for Workplace Safety and Industrial Relations. I want to acknowledge that during the period to which the annual report relates I was not the minister responsible for this portfolio.

Workplace Safety and Industrial Relations is a portfolio that I am very passionate

about. I have been involved in it for a number of years. The portfolio, as you are aware, encompasses a broad range of issues, including health and safety, dangerous substances, public and private sector workers compensation, workplace injury and management, and industrial relations, including long service leave entitlements, public holidays and daylight saving.

Ensuring the wellbeing of employees, mentally and physically, is very important to having a productive and healthy community. This is also the case with ensuring adequate public holidays and conditions. Good conditions and safety of the workforce in the ACT are contributing factors to Canberra being the most livable city in Australia.

This broad range of issues in workplace safety and industrial relations is covered by two output classes in this report, 1.2 and 1.3. Services were delivered by a number of entities during the reporting period, including the Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate; the ACT default insurance fund; the office of industrial relations; and the Long Service Leave Authority.

The year recorded was a significant year in the Workplace Safety and Industrial Relations portfolio, both locally and nationally. I want to take the opportunity, if I may, to highlight some of the key achievements and initiatives the directorate has been involved in during this reporting period.

The ACT government remains committed to national harmonisation of workplace health and safety, as well as workers compensation laws. In the reporting period the territory contributed \$161,128 in harmonisation funding to Safe Work Australia, and throughout the year CMTED continued to provide support for the ACT's contribution to national harmonisation initiatives, including facilitating the memorandum of understanding between jurisdictions for agreement on adopting national cross-border guidelines, and also work towards the introduction of the Workers Compensation (Cross-border Workers) Amendment Bill. That is the one that we debated just recently. The bill, which was passed by the Assembly in October, assists employers to determine which workers compensation jurisdiction must insure workers who work in more than one state.

The ACT also participated in the national-level discussions with respect to the development of uniform legislation across Australia to regulate the handling and storage of explosives. And during the reporting period the government was represented on Safe Work Australia subcommittees such as the Strategic Issues Group on Work Health and Safety, the Strategic Issues Group on Workers Compensation and various temporary advisory groups. Through these committees, the government actively participates in addressing national workplace safety issues and is playing a lead role in the development of the national guide for the assessment of permanent impairment which is to be used in workers compensation schemes around the country.

With respect to the ACT's private sector workers compensation performance, I am pleased to report that the ACT's average premium rate for 2013-14 remained relatively stable, at 2.42 per cent of wages. We also made progress towards the self-sufficiency of the ACT private workers compensation scheme, with the implementation of a new regulatory funding model. From 2013-14, the costs

associated with regulating the scheme were transferred to workers compensation insurers through a regulatory levy. In 2013-14, \$1.86 million was collected. The levy will be further expanded in 2014-15 to also partly fund the territory's work health and safety regulatory operations. That includes policy and enforcement. We want to make sure that we can keep a lower cost, in line with other jurisdictions.

In 2013-14 we also saw the introduction of the new workers compensation management scheme, which went live in February this year. The new system offers enhanced security and data quality, and provides much greater capacity to monitor and report on work injury management in the territory.

With respect to the public sector workers compensation scheme safety performance, it was pleasing to see that there was a reduction in the number of compensation claims accepted for injuries relating to bullying and harassment in the period compared with the previous year. Through 2013-14, work continued to reduce work health and safety risks and improve health and return to work outcomes for ACT public servants injured, with the implementation of the ACT public service workers compensation and work safety improvement plan progressing. The successful implementation of the plan should assist in containing future workers compensation costs.

A little bit further along, key components of that improvement plan have included the introduction of improved case management models based on commercial insurance best practice; the upskilling of line managers and supervisors in people management; training and capability building for case managers; and early intervention strategies.

Also in the reporting year, training was delivered to almost 500 supervisors and managers. The courses covered a range of management skills, from generic core capabilities to specific skills in managing workers who sustain a compensable injury.

Another positive development in the year was the implementation of the RiskMan electronic accident and incident reporting system. This system will facilitate timely responses to incidents and early intervention by the ACT public service injury management team to assist those injured workers.

In the year, CMTED, together with an independent actuary, worked to develop an alternative ACT public service premium devolution method. This new method was rolled out for the devolution of these 2014-15 premiums.

During the year, a number of initiatives have been undertaken to improve the health and safety of the community and those who work within it. One such initiative was the introduction of the Dangerous Substances (Asbestos Safety Reform) Legislation Amendment Bill. As you are aware, that is currently before the Assembly. The bill will make the necessary amendments to legislation to adopt the national model of asbestos regulation and strengthen asbestos safety management in the territory.

Workplace health and safety in the territory was further strengthened with a number of other initiatives, including the development and implementation of regulations mandating asbestos awareness training, as you would probably be aware. The government also continued to provide funding to UnionsACT to assist in employing an occupational health and safety liaison officer. This initiative aims to improve safety

by promoting safety awareness and providing education and training, particularly to private sector entities.

Following the *Getting home safely* report on construction industry safety in 2012, the ACT government has taken up the challenge to lead improvements in the construction industry by introducing best practice purchasing arrangements for construction projects that it commissions. This work was continued in 2013-14 with the introduction of the active certification for the review and measurement of a construction contractor's health and safety performance. The whole-of-government construction project management guidelines were also introduced in the period.

I am very pleased with the work that has been undertaken within the reporting year in the Workplace Safety and Industrial Relations portfolio. I am happy to take questions from the committee and also provide my directorate officials.

THE CHAIR: Thank you, minister, and I think you win the prize for the longest introduction session today.

Minister, my first question to you is this: the JACS annual report, on page 56, states that in the reporting year the government created 12 new positions in WorkSafe ACT in response to the *Getting home safely* report. Can you tell the committee the current number of staff employed by WorkSafe ACT? What specifically will these 12 new staff members be doing? And how does their work relate to the concerns raised in the report?

Mr Gentleman: Thank you very much for the question, Mr Chairman. It is important that we have responded to the need for workplace health and safety inspectors and the increased numbers there. I will just go to my colleagues for a moment.

Mr Young: That matter pertains, in some detail, to WorkSafe ACT, so Mr McCabe might join us.

Mr McCabe: I did not quite hear the question. I thought I heard you say four staff, but it was 12. All 12 positions have now been filled. Prior to that, WorkSafe had 18 field inspectors in work safety; it has now got 30. They all went in as additional inspectors. It has enabled WorkSafe to create three subunits of inspectors. They are of equal size, 10 each. There is a proactive inspectors team, a reactive inspectors team and a major investigations team. The additional inspectors enabled us to progress a number of outstanding investigations which had been on our books for quite some time, going back to the *Getting home safely* report. But more importantly, it has enabled us to move quite solidly into the proactive space; prior to that, we were very heavily reactive. Reactive inspections are ones where we go out because some incident has occurred, or someone has told us something, rather than us going out and trying to check whether things are being done right. We are checking, but we are checking after the event.

THE CHAIR: The second part of my question was: these 12 staff will be looking at concerns that were raised in the report? Is that right?

Mr McCabe: Yes, that is right. In the last year, even though those inspectors only

came on during that year, we had an increased number of field inspections compared to the previous year. From memory, the figures are something like 2,800 field inspections in 2013-14 as opposed to about 2,100 the year before. We have issued an increased number of notices, in construction in particular, as a result of those additional inspectors. So it has enabled us to have a stronger presence, on construction sites, in particular, which we have focused on because of the *Getting home safely* report issues.

THE CHAIR: Thank you.

Mr Gentleman: Perhaps, while we have got Mr McCabe here, he could tell us about the new infringement notices that have been introduced.

THE CHAIR: Thank you for the question, minister.

Mr McCabe: Yes. One of the other recommendations from the *Getting home safely* report was that there would be additional infringement notices added into the legislation. Ten additional offences were added. They came in from July 2013. WorkSafe issued a fair number of infringement notices in the first month or so after they were brought in, but the number has dropped off significantly since then. Basically, having those new infringement notices got attention, particularly by the residential construction sector, which is where they have been largely applicable. I would say that I have been to more meetings of the MBA's residential construction group in the past year than I had in the previous four years or so. It has definitely got their focus, which is what you want fines and strong enforcement action to do.

THE CHAIR: Thank you. That was Dr Bourke's question.

MR SMYTH: Can I have a supplementary?

THE CHAIR: A supplementary, Mr Smyth, and then we will go to Dr Bourke.

MR SMYTH: Mr McCabe, could you provide a list of all the investigations that you have now got underway and the list of any outstanding?

Mr Gentleman: I think where it is possible we should be able to provide, certainly, numbers, but there could be some privacy issues. I will certainly work with Mr McCabe to see what we can provide for the committee.

Mr McCabe: Yes. That was the only thing that was going through my head, because we definitely track it all. I see a spreadsheet and I get a fortnightly report on where all those cases are at. But with regard to the ones that we have not finalised, I guess I am reluctant to name whom they might be. I could certainly give you numbers and I could give you names of the cases that we have put before the courts. There were a number of cases that we have referred to the DPP which have not yet appeared before the courts. There has been substantial activity in that area in the past 12 months.

THE CHAIR: Dr Bourke, your substantive question.

DR BOURKE: Minister, could you expand on your role in response to loose-fill

asbestos and the transition of responsibilities to the task force?

Mr Gentleman: Yes, certainly. My role in regard to that in this area of workplace safety has been to ensure, of course, that we have asbestos awareness training rolling out across the territory. You are probably aware that we moved the training regime over to WorkSafe ACT. My understanding is that there were about 13,000 inspectors that have now been trained across the territory that can operate for asbestos awareness. That is the principal role that I hold in this portfolio.

MR SMYTH: As a supplementary, you said 13,000 inspectors. Do you mean 13,000 qualified individuals?

Mr Gentleman: Yes, that is correct, assessed.

MR SMYTH: And who provided the training for the 13,000 individuals?

Mr Gentleman: There have been several RTOs that have been providing the training. All of that training has been drawn up in the asbestos awareness task force's regime and those are assessed people that would have, in some way, probably contact with loose-fill asbestos in those properties. They involve people that might be plumbers, for example, electricians, builders.

MR SMYTH: I am aware of that, but who provided the training?

Mr Gentleman: The RTOs presently able to offer the course are the Housing Industry Association, the Master Builders Association, Creative Safety Initiatives, Capital Training Institute and Robson Environmental.

MR SMYTH: Can we have a breakdown on how many each of those five organisations trained, please?

Mr McCabe: If I could answer that question, we do not get given that information. The RTOs keep that information themselves.

MR SMYTH: How do you know 13,000 have been trained if you have not got that information?

Mr McCabe: Because the ACT Training Fund Authority provide a reimbursement to RTOs and employers for people that have gone through the training course. They have informed us that the bulk figure that they have provided reimbursements for is in excess of 13,000. They may have the breakdown of which individual RTOs have done it and we could try to get that, but it is not information that we hold ourselves or need to hold ourselves. We only seek that information when we go out to individual sites and we ask an employer to provide evidence that they actually have had their people trained.

MR SMYTH: If you can get it, that would be handy.

THE CHAIR: Ms Porter, your substantive question.

MS PORTER: Minister, you mentioned harmonisation of work health and safety legislation before. Recently you had a ministerial meeting with other ministers from across Australia. Is that correct? Was this matter raised at that meeting?

Mr Gentleman: Yes, we did. Thank you for the question. I attended a ministerial council meeting just the other week with ministers from across Australia and, of course, the federal minister, Minister Abetz, in relation to harmonisation across all of the territories and states and the federal government on workplace relations and health and safety legislation.

We had several topics to discuss during the meeting. Most of it was about harmonisation, though. There was a proposal brought to the meeting regarding the powers of union officials and there was a recommendation that the relevant WHS laws be amended to require a minimum of 24 hours and a maximum of 14 days notice to be provided for entry into a workplace to inquire into a suspected work health and safety issue.

I was joined by my colleagues from South Australia in opposing that recommendation, although I still think it will proceed because the other states felt that it was appropriate that that go ahead. My view at the time was that this would lessen the application of safety in the workplace. I was quite concerned about a move away from those safer workplaces and the negative impact it might have on the rights and safe working conditions of workers.

We also had a look at a proposal that section 93 of the act be amended to replace references to “directions” in provisional improvement notices with “recommendations”. I opposed that as well. I felt that that was a lessening of the power that that regulation would have and that would mean that, in my view, the safety of workers would not be as strong in the workplace should that go ahead. The evidence we found in that particular area did not show that those measures would increase any safety on the work site at all. The delegates from South Australia voted against that as well.

MS PORTER: With regard to the first matter that you said you did not agree with, people being able to get on a site, could you explain the reason why you and the minister from South Australia opposed this? If the matter, whatever it is, continues, the people that are on site are still exposed to whatever that matter is, whilst the delay?

Mr Gentleman: Yes, indeed. Evidence provided to me has shown that a union representative wishing to go on site to notify a safety issue has been told to hold back and that action on the safety issue has not gone forward. My concern is that if we do not have the ability to take immediate action, if a notice has to go through for an official to wait 24 hours to attend a work site for an issue, then, indeed, those workers could be in jeopardy for a longer period.

MS PORTER: So there is no emergency provision within that suggested change in the legislation which would allow people to go on site should there be a very urgent reason for them to do so?

Mr Gentleman: There did not appear to be any discussion or evidence provided that would support that, and that was my concern. Certainly there are other inspectors, of course, that operate during the period but it may well be that employees are concerned about their future employment and might not want to raise those sorts of issues with those particular inspectors.

MS PORTER: And I did not quite understand the other amendment that you were discussing and the implications of that. Could you explain that to us again?

Mr Gentleman: Sure. It is in relation to provisional improvement notices. A provisional improvement notice can be put in a workplace to encourage a manager at the time to ensure that they bring their work level of safety up to a standard. The intended change is to reduce the direction in the provisional improvement notice simply to a recommendation. If you see a fault in a workplace and a PIN is issued, it may be then that if this were to go through they would only recommend that you fix that fault.

MS PORTER: So there is no actual enforcement of that?

Mr Gentleman: That is correct. That is what we were concerned about.

THE CHAIR: Mr Smyth, your substantive question.

MR SMYTH: If we could just have an organisational matter first. On page 8 there is a chart that details the directorate's organisational structure which, of course, changed on 1 July. Mr Nicol is here. What have you picked up, in addition to your many burdens, in the last couple of months?

Mr Nicol: I have picked up responsibility for workers compensation in the private sector, industrial relations et cetera, reporting to Mr Gentleman.

MR SMYTH: Is it possible to get an org chart of the entire Chief Minister's directorate now that shows all the—

Mr Nicol: Yes, I think we can provide that.

MR SMYTH: Minister, I want to thank you. We had Minister Corbell here earlier who refused to answer any questions on Mr Fluffy. It is pleasing to see that you are willing to do that.

DR BOURKE: That is not right.

MS PORTER: I do not think you should mislead.

MR SMYTH: Name the questions that Mr Corbell answered.

THE CHAIR: Order, please!

MR SMYTH: The first dot point on page 21 says that the highlights were to coordinate the whole-of-government response to dealing with loose-fill asbestos.

What is the ongoing role now, or has all that gone across to the task force?

Mr Gentleman: Thank you, Mr Smyth, but I understand that the Chief Minister is the minister responsible for the task force. It is more appropriate that you direct those questions to her.

MR SMYTH: Is that all there is? You have got no ongoing role now?

Mr Gentleman: In the taskforce, no. Mr Nicol.

Mr Nicol: I have an ongoing role as Under Treasurer reporting to the Treasurer obviously, but in this portfolio the task force took over all of the responsibilities to deal with loose-fill asbestos. We have residual responsibilities associated with asbestos more generally and we interact on an information level. Mr Young, would you—

Mr Gentleman: Before we go to Mr Young, I still retain the regulatory authority for asbestos in the ACT.

MR SMYTH: What is the connection between your regulatory role and what the task force does now? Is there any connection?

Mr Gentleman: I guess in a regulatory role, yes, I need to make sure that the laws involved are up to par with the investigations and the work that the task force does.

MR SMYTH: And how will that be done?

Mr Nicol: Obviously the task force is still undertaking its work and significant work still needs to occur with respect to questions of demolition and purchasing of the properties et cetera. And once we get to the stage of those questions, they will have to conform with all regulatory requirements of the territory. To the extent that that involves Mr Gentleman's powers, those powers will be exercised like on any other questions.

MR SMYTH: Who is responsible for the safe storage and disposal of the demolished houses? Does that fall under your responsibility or is that—

Mr Nicol: That probably is a question best put to the task force, I think.

MR SMYTH: Do you have adequate resources to ensure safety on all of the sites when the demolition commences as well as the transportation through the city and the dumping to wherever the material is dumped?

Mr Nicol: Again, I think that is a question for the task force but those questions are being considered and adequate resourcing will be provided.

MR SMYTH: But you will be responsible for making sure that is all carried out in accordance with the law, or is the law being abrogated to someone else and you are not responsible for asbestos?

Mr Nicol: No, there are no proposals at this stage to change the law, not that I am aware of. That is a question, again, for the task force.

MR SMYTH: But the task force will not be responsible for enforcement of the law in regard to the safe demolition, transportation and disposal. Surely, that remains under your portfolio.

Mr Gentleman: Mr Smyth, I will ask Mr McCabe to respond to that.

Mr McCabe: My understanding is that the government will be responsible for compliance with the law, insofar as it is undertaken as a government program, and WorkSafe will be responsible for making sure the government complies with the law.

MR SMYTH: Thank you very much. I would have thought that was 100 per cent the right answer. Do you have adequate resources, given you are about to pick up 1,000-odd demolition sites, to adequately ensure that the demolition is carried out safely, that the transportation of the material from there to the disposal site is carried out safely, and that the final resting place of the demolished homes is secure?

Mr McCabe: I believe we do.

MR SMYTH: So you do not see this as an additional impost on your services?

Mr McCabe: I would not say it is an additional impost. I would say that it is our job. The nature of our job or where we focus over the coming years may shift more heavily towards that sphere of activity, but I do not see it as being outside our capacity to do that, at this stage at least.

MR SMYTH: Call it 200 tonnes a year for five years; there are 200 additional sites. Do you think you have adequate resources to carry that out without it impacting on your other existing—

Mr McCabe: Yes. The additional safeguard that I see from where I sit—and this program is yet to be fully devised and rolled out, so I can only comment in a very general sense about how I perceive it might be—is that if, as seems to be the way it is going to be, the government buys back the homes and then undertakes the demolition of those homes itself, all of that will be able to be done through a procurement process, presumably, which would have, one would hope, strong controls in it. So a lot of the compliance work will be done through that process.

WorkSafe's role will still be to make sure that that does put in place appropriate safeguards, but it is a different scenario to what would be the case if 1,000 householders were doing this individually, each using potentially different contractors of varying quality et cetera. I am not suggesting that that guarantees it will be fine, but it is a much higher level of control than if it was open slather.

MR SMYTH: But you will have a role in making sure that it is carried out safely?

Mr McCabe: Absolutely. Ultimately, it will be our job to make sure that whatever processes are put in place are safe and are carried out safely.

MR SMYTH: You do not see that as distracting you from your other important work?

Mr McCabe: I would rather it was not there, but I think we are resourced adequately to do it.

MR SMYTH: At the COAG level have we had approaches from New South Wales in regard to assistance with what we have done previously, and our expertise to assist them in assessing their problems?

Mr McCabe: That is not a question I could really answer. I am not involved in that process.

Mr Gentleman: Mr Smyth, there has certainly been some interest from other jurisdictions on the training that we have been providing. I think they are looking to how they could provide similar training for their asbestos awareness assessors.

Mr Nicol: I also think that contact—none has been made to me—would have been through the task force. So they would be able to help you there, Mr Smyth.

THE CHAIR: I have a supplementary. This is in regard to Mr Smyth's first question. Minister, page 57 of the annual report states that WorkSafe ACT managed issues arising from possible exposure to asbestos fibres in a number of houses which had been part of the asbestos loose-fibre insulation program. Can you detail the ongoing role for WorkSafe ACT in the proposed Mr Fluffy demolition program?

Mr Gentleman: In this annual report it does not actually refer to those programs at all.

THE CHAIR: Page 57, according to my notes, says that WorkSafe ACT managed issues arising from possible exposure to asbestos fibres in a number of houses.

Mr Gentleman: What are we looking at, Mr Chairman?

THE CHAIR: The annual report.

Mr Gentleman: Is it in the JACS one, Mr Chairman?

MR SMYTH: Yes; it is on page 57 of the JACS report.

Mr Gentleman: That would be Mr Corbell's—

THE CHAIR: Okay.

MR SMYTH: On page 21 there is reference to the national framework for explosives—"participate in developing uniform legislation across Australia to regulate explosives". Can you update the committee on that? How many licences to hold explosives are there in the ACT and what work has been done to ensure that they are held safely and all the explosives are accounted for?

Mr Gentleman: Yes, certainly. We are looking at the possible harmonisation of explosives laws. Safe Work Australia has established a working group to look at national reform to explosives laws. While several legislative models are available, it is likely that it will involve a model act and a regulation as well. It would cover protection of public safety and property, as well as workplaces, and provide for a whole-of-life approach—so from the manufacturer, the import, the supply, transport, storage, and use and disposal of the explosives. I will have to come back to you with the actual detail of the number of licensed explosives operators in the territory.

MR SMYTH: What compliance activity has there been in the past 12 months to ensure that all explosives are held safely and handled safely in the ACT?

Mr Gentleman: There is quite a range of compliance activity.

Mr McCabe: Any use of explosives has to be approved by the ACT. If I heard your question right, it was more about the storage of explosives.

MR SMYTH: Storage and usage—storage, preservation and usage.

Mr McCabe: The usage is regulated under the dangerous substances legislation by WorkSafe ACT. We get applications for approval to carry out those activities which we scrutinise and approve. I would have to come back to you with numbers to indicate what our level of activity has been in the past 12 months but we should be able to provide that.

Mr Gentleman: Mr Smyth, you are probably aware that there is quite a bit of interjurisdictional work in regard to this. There could be some operators that are based in the ACT but would operate into New South Wales as well.

THE CHAIR: Thank you, Mr Smyth, for your questions. I now proffer my substantive question to Mr Smyth.

MR SMYTH: With the workers comp management system which, according to the report, has enhanced data security and data quality, how is that going? When did it actually go live and have there been any teething problems?

Mr Gentleman: In February this year it went live. With the new system to date, all self-insurers and five of the seven approved insurers are using the production system, with the remaining insurers expected to commence in the near future. The system receives and stores information submitted by insurers about private sector workers compensation schemes, policies and claims. It is also being complemented by a new data warehouse and data analysis reporting software. So it is integral to the government's monitoring and regulation of both the territory's work safety performance and the workers compensation scheme.

DR BOURKE: Why was this implemented, minister?

Mr Gentleman: It was implemented so that we could have better outcomes for work health and safety across the territory and we could integrate all of that data to ensure that we are doing the best for workplace safety.

DR BOURKE: So you are looking for patterns in data?

Mr Gentleman: Indeed, yes.

MR SMYTH: Were there any issues identified since it went live?

Mr Young: On the subject of issues arising, we took the opportunity, in implementing what was a capital works program, to work with the Tasmanian workers compensation regulator. It was part of a harmonisation initiative whereby we introduced a new reporting standard by which insurers reported claims and policy data to the regulator, a new system to manage that interface, a new data warehouse and new reporting solutions.

This was a piece of work that was done in a very similar way in Tasmania 12 months ahead, which involved, essentially, the same vendor and the same insurers in most cases. We were fortunate in that our insurers had already been through a similar process in Tasmania, and that was very useful in preventing those types of issues. Generally speaking, compliance has been very good. We are working with two insurers in the test phase at the moment and we expect that they will come online and commence reporting against the new standard and into the new system within the next month.

MR SMYTH: So they are new insurers?

Mr Young: No. Two of the existing approved insurers, of which there are seven, are still in test and have yet to commence reporting into the new system.

MR SMYTH: You say in the annual report that it provides a more flexible interface for insurers. What does it do?

Mr Young: It does. It essentially allows potentially three means by which insurers can send information through to the regulator. One is a monthly data upload. Another is essentially a live interface, where they are able to log into our system via a secure portal and make line-by-line and payment-by-payment additions to the database if they see fit. There is also potentially a web-based real-time interface which is available, but no insurer has yet picked that up, so we are using one of the former two means of receiving information. Previously, the historical database relied on only one means of interaction, which was, essentially, an electronic transfer.

MR SMYTH: How much was the system, and who delivered it?

Mr Gentleman: There were funds, Mr Smyth, of \$670,000 rolled out over the 2013 financial year.

Mr Young: That was the amount that was rolled over. The annual report reflects a rollover of \$670,000 into the 2013-14 financial year, which was actually as a result of delays in the procurement process. But the total amount, from memory, was \$3 million. I will confirm that in a moment when I find the exact reference.

THE CHAIR: Mr Smyth, we will have to move on. Dr Bourke is a fan of questions.

DR BOURKE: Thank you, chair. Minister, what progress has been made in implementing the getting them home safely report, and are there any outstanding matters?

Mr Gentleman: Thank you, Dr Bourke. It is really pleasing to note that there have been no fatalities in the ACT construction industry since the getting home safely inquiry was commissioned. Given that there were 17 deaths in construction Australia-wide in 2013 and to date there have been 14 construction deaths Australia-wide in 2014, I feel the ACT is doing very well. I think we need to keep it that way as well. It is good to see that those construction workers across the territory are now getting home safely.

Work is continuing with government and industry on implementing all of the recommendations. There have been several recent developments, one of which includes the laying of charges against two companies, including a company director and a New South Wales maintenance engineering company, following the deaths of two workers. One of these workers was Ben Catanzariti. Mr Catanzariti died after being struck by a concrete pouring boom at a site in Kingston in July 2012. He was just 21 years old. Because of tragedies such as this the implementation of the recommendations is very important, amongst other legislative reforms and safety regulations as well that we find important to ensure safety across the territory.

In response to the report—as you have heard already from Mr McCabe—12 additional work safety inspectors have been hired through additional funding to WorkSafe ACT. This takes the total number of inspectors to 31, with four team leaders who are also inspectors. In addition to hiring the inspectors, we talked about the infringement notices now introduced to ensure that you can operate in a real-time sense to ensure safety in the workplace. Those infringement notices can include regulations around personal protection, equipment, trench collapses, white card training, verification and other improved safety measures for employees.

DR BOURKE: What sort of training are those inspectors provided with before they start work?

Mr Gentleman: Going to the detail of the training, Mr McCabe.

Mr McCabe: There are a couple of formal courses that we put all inspectors through. One is cert IV in government (investigations). Another is a cert IV in government (inspections). There is a distinction between the two. Where inspectors have completed that, we then look to upgrade their training up to diploma level in both of those items.

THE CHAIR: Minister, in the interests of time, could I ask you to bring Mr Robert Barnes onto your panel in case members want to ask questions in that area as well? I apologise.

DR BOURKE: How very astute, chair, because I was just about to ask: given, minister, that you also have some long service leave inspectors as part of your

portfolio coverage, do you anticipate broadening their role into WorkSafe inspections as well?

Mr Gentleman: For the long service leave inspectors?

DR BOURKE: Yes. Is there some possibility that that could be done as well?

Mr Gentleman: I guess there is a possibility. I have not looked at that yet. The portable long service leave scheme operates in a different sense.

DR BOURKE: Of course, but they are still on work sites and they are aware of what is going on, presumably.

Mr Gentleman: I guess the answer is no; we have not looked at that as yet.

THE CHAIR: Ms Porter, a substantive question.

MS PORTER: Thank you. On page 22 of the report, minister, in the third para it mentions the long service leave portability scheme and also refers to the Holidays Act. I wanted to ask you about the reforms to the Holidays Act—how the August amendments benefit the Canberra community and what consultation was done prior to that? I also had another question in relation to long service leave portability. Are there other groups that have been brought into that scheme of late—namely, aged-care workers and waste workers?

Mr Gentleman: There are two streams there, but if we go to the Holidays Act first: as you are aware, the Holidays Amendment Bill 2014 amended the Holidays Act earlier this year. That provided that when Christmas Day, Boxing Day or New Year's Day falls on a weekend the following Monday or Tuesday will also be a public holiday. Those amendments allow people more time, of course, to spend with family at either cultural or religiously significant times of the year.

Evidence showed that the grievance experienced by those who are forced to work on Christmas Day means that it is quite right, I think, for employees to be compensated for working on those particular days to provide services for others who work regular hours. I think we go to the detail here of whether or not penalty rates should apply on those particular days. I am of the strong view that they should. It is a recompense for those people that have to work on those particular days. We did have quite a bit of consultation from employer and employee groups. On the original one, I think there was only one comment from an employer group in regard to those changes to public holidays.

MS PORTER: And the portability?

Mr Gentleman: The portable long service leave scheme allowed us to look at a three-year rate for levy investigation. Based on some of the outcomes, we have done investigations. The actuary recommendations looked at the levy payable by employers. We did have, of course, an election commitment to extend the community sector portable long service leave scheme to include aged-care workers and to extend to the contract cleaning scheme and include waste workers as well.

We have been at the forefront of those reforms to protect entitlements to long service leave. We have done so in a number of the industries now, where workers move frequently between employers, by legislating for those portable schemes. What we saw was that you might have an industry—for example, I think the waste workers industry was quite interesting—where somebody might be employed for a number of years with a particular company, a new company takes up the contract and they lose their long service leave entitlements. Now the portable scheme actually covers that.

MS PORTER: Thank you.

THE CHAIR: Mr Smyth, your substantive question.

MR SMYTH: I have a question for the Long Service Leave Authority. On page 7 of the report it says that you have signed a new lease for unit 5 at the National Associations Centre for a further three years, but you own unit 5 as an investment property. Does that mean you are renting it off yourself? How is this going to work?

Mr Barnes: We own the section of building which we occupy under a strata title, that being 71 Constitution Avenue. We have just a little more space than we currently need and, therefore, we have rented out the additional space to the ACT training fund authority. That has been ongoing for some little while. They had the lease with us and we have renewed it for a further three years.

MR SMYTH: That is the note on the page 101, but if you read page 7 it is kind of ambiguous.

Mr Barnes: Sorry about that.

MR SMYTH: It could almost be read that you signed a new lease for your own unit.

Mr Barnes: No.

Mr Gentleman: Mr Smyth, we will ensure that that gets reported correctly in the next one.

MR SMYTH: I am sure it is reported correctly; I just think you might be able to interpret it in one of a number of ways. Referring to the paragraph above that on page 7, you have leased the leave track IT system to the New South Wales Long Service Leave Corporation. How does that work? Is that on a cost recovery basis? Do they pay a licence fee?

Mr Barnes: Yes, pretty much. We developed an IT system specifically for our needs. When New South Wales began a scheme to cover the cleaning industry similar to our own, they saw fit to approach us for access to that scheme. We have leased that to them to enable them to run their scheme. It runs on a different basis to their construction industry, which is project based, as distinct from wages based.

DR BOURKE: What do you make out of it?

Mr Barnes: \$50,000 a year.

DR BOURKE: Well done.

MR SMYTH: In terms of contracts, the annual reports are meant to show the contracts and value of the contracts. Where would I find that in this report?

Mr Barnes: I will seek advice from my CFO. Ms Catherine Shih is CFO of the authority.

Ms Shih: Just to repeat Mr Smyth's question: you want to know where the value of our contracts is stated in our annual report?

MR SMYTH: Yes.

Ms Shih: It is the section under government contracting at page 102 of the annual report.

MR SMYTH: If I understand it right, the annual report directions say you have to name the provider, the description of the contract, the period of the contract and the cost of the contract—but there are no costs attached on any of these pages—and whether or not it was an open contract or a select tender.

Ms Shih: Different contracts were negotiated and signed on a different basis. For example, with the Manning Clark offices sale, we worked with the Government Solicitor's office to select the most suitable solicitor for us. Because the overall value was under \$25,000—

MR SMYTH: These are all under \$25,000?

Mr Gentleman: Mr Smyth, we might take that on notice, investigate for you and come back to the committee.

MR SMYTH: Because they are not—

Ms Shih: Most of them are under \$25,000. Some of them were over. It is more like a deed, an open contract; so it is more like a cost recovered basis.

MR SMYTH: It might be useful to detail that. I think normally we have it either as an open contract or ongoing contract, select tender et cetera. Otherwise there is no accountability there.

Mr Gentleman: Certainly. We will come back to you with that.

THE CHAIR: We have a number of questions that we would put on notice. We have run out of time now, but there will be a number of questions coming to you.

Mr Gentleman: Mr Chairman, just before we finish up, Mr Young can complete the answer on the IT question you had earlier.

Mr Young: There were two questions. One was to confirm the total cost of the accident information management system and also to advise the vendors that were involved. The total allocated amount for that capital works project was \$3 million, and that appears on page 86 of volume 1. The principal vendor that was involved was Sinotech. It provided the IT system. However, two consultancy firms also provided staff with technical skills, and they were Altis and Tescom.

THE CHAIR: Thank you very much. Minister, on behalf of the committee, I would like to thank you and your officers for coming here this afternoon. Your contributions will assist the committee greatly in its inquiry into annual reports once again.

Mr Gentleman: Thank you, Mr Chairman.

THE CHAIR: There will be a number of questions submitted on notice.

Mr Gentleman: Of course.

The committee adjourned at 5 pm.