



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

**STANDING COMMITTEE ON PLANNING, ENVIRONMENT
AND TERRITORY AND MUNICIPAL SERVICES**

(Reference: [Annual and financial reports 2011-2012](#))

Members:

MR M GENTLEMAN (Chair)
MR A COE (Deputy Chair)
MR A WALL
DR C BOURKE

TRANSCRIPT OF EVIDENCE

CANBERRA

FRIDAY, 8 MARCH 2013

Secretary to the committee:
Ms V Strkalj (Ph: 620 50435)

By authority of the Legislative Assembly for the Australian Capital Territory

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

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Amended 9 August 2011

The committee met at 1.31 pm.

Appearances:

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

Territory and Municipal Services Directorate

Byles, Mr Gary, Director-General

Smith, Mr Kim, Executive Director, Directorate Services

Pitt, Mrs Leesha, Acting Director, Canberra Connect

Bailey, Mr Daniel, Director, ACT Property Group

Perram, Mr Phillip, Executive Director, Business Enterprise Division

Ware, Mr Chris, Director, ACT NOWaste

Trushell, Mr Michael, General Manager, Capital Linen Service

Doherty, Mr David, Acting General Manager, Yarralumla Nursery

Horne, Mr Hamish, Chief Executive Officer, Canberra Cemeteries

Little, Ms Vanessa, Director, Libraries ACT

Steward, Ms Fay, Executive Director, Parks and City Services Division

Flanery, Ms Fleur, Director, City Services, Parks and City Services Division

Iglesias, Mr Daniel, Director, Parks and Conservation

THE CHAIR: Good afternoon everybody. Welcome to the public hearing of the Standing Committee on Planning, Environment and Territory and Municipal Services inquiry into annual and financial reports 2011-12. The committee will this afternoon resume its consideration of the Territory and Municipal Services Directorate's annual report in accordance with today's program, noting that ACTION and Roads ACT were covered at the committee's hearing on 21 February.

Could witnesses please read the privilege card that is on the table before you, and can I get an acknowledgement that you understand the privilege statement?

Mr Rattenbury: Yes, that is fine, thank you.

THE CHAIR: Minister, before we begin, would you like to make an opening statement?

Mr Rattenbury: No, I am happy to go straight to questions. There is one addition from Mr Byles.

Mr Byles: Good afternoon, members of the committee. I would like to make a correction to the annual report, volume 1. Can I draw your attention to page 46 of volume 1. The top line talks about "environmental—resource efficiency and waste". Currently across the top line it reads "912", "38" and "N/A". "38" is incorrect. Could you note that that should read "238". That was an error when we were compiling and proofreading. I apologise to the committee for that.

THE CHAIR: Would that amend the total paper used underneath as well?

Mr Byles: I will have to check that and get back to you. My understanding was that the original figure went over, but at publishing it was erroneously entered. Of course it was not picked up in the proofreading. That is what happened. So I dare say it may not; however, I will confirm that.

THE CHAIR: Thank you.

Mr Rattenbury: Apart from that, we are happy to proceed straight to questions.

THE CHAIR: I might kick off then. On page 41 of volume 1, under directorate services, it talks about human resources. I have given you a false lead, because then I want to go to volume 2, page 3, which talks about workforce capability and capacity. This is under “risk”, of course. One of the dot points there says “ensure adequate staffing levels are maintained”. Could you explain what the levels are in growth and then we will go to the next dot point after that. How have staffing levels grown over this last period?

Mr Byles: At this stage I cannot give you a percentage growth rate of staffing levels. However, I have my human resources team here and they may be able to elaborate on that point. The directorate runs at approximately 1,860 full-time equivalents. We are staffed to do the job, and it is a very broad range of jobs that we need to do. I am very proud to say that all the team in TAMS work very hard to achieve a very good outcome and value-for-money services across the ACT. In terms of growth, it would be comparative to some other years. I would have to take that on notice and get back to you, Mr Gentleman.

THE CHAIR: Sure.

Mr Byles: However, if you allow me to call one of the team, they might be able to add to that. Mr Smith is the executive director.

Mr Smith: I might give a little background about the dot point you drew us to originally. TAMS has a fairly robust risk management framework in place at the moment. The risk management framework operates by analysing risk in all of the business units and then escalating and gathering that risk up to a directorate level. So what you are seeing in the annual report is that distillation, that summary up.

What that dot point is telling us is that our business units have identified that a potential risk exists, that workforce capability and capacity may not be sufficient to meet the growing demands that are placed on TAMS. The risk is identified as a potential and realisable risk. It does not mean it has actually come home, although it has evolved in certain ways.

Within that context, I might just refer the committee to some statistics that exist in volume 1, page 95, which contains our staffing profile. The staffing profile carries a number of different statistics which may help the discussion, but the staffing profile is also affected by changes in the make-up of TAMS’ businesses, people coming and going, joining and leaving. So it is a little hard to compare directly staffing levels one year to another.

But as a general statement, TAMS has kept a fairly stable number. So while the demands on the business have grown incrementally, the staffing levels at an FTE level have not particularly grown. This is the risk that the risk register is identifying for us that we need to mitigate. That is where we have got to.

THE CHAIR: The next dot point there relates to an effective workforce plan being in place. That is the possible risk. So can you describe to us that workforce plan?

Mr Smith: Yes. Again, it is the same process, of course. These are risks escalated up to the directorate level. The workforce plan really talks about how we are going to deal with things such as an ageing workforce within TAMS and skills bases which are sometimes hard to source, certainly for things such as engineer-type roles. Some of the professional roles become very difficult to source given that we are in competition with other government employers within Canberra.

This risk is identifying that that is something we need to have a mitigation strategy around. We do have mitigation strategies which deal with looking at that ageing profile, looking at things such as succession planning, skilling up within TAMS, remedies such as bringing in people as trainees to bring them up in their skill level through the business. So that particular risk looks at that level of skill growth and control over ability and capacity.

Mr Byles: With your permission, minister, there is one thing I might add to that. I guess it is also a function of the ageing of the workforce, and I think this was said in a previous annual report hearing. From memory, about 70 per cent of our people are over 39 to 40. So we do have an ageing workforce and we are very proud of that because it brings with it a particular set of corporate skills that is hard to put a value on.

But I might also say that balanced against that is the fact that we have a pretty steady attrition rate. We run at about 8.9 per cent for TAMS and about 8.4 per cent for ACTION, if my memory serves me correctly, which is about standard for the ACT public service. So it is a fairly steady workforce.

THE CHAIR: When is your next EBA due for bargaining? Is that a whole-of-government EBA?

Mr Byles: We are in the process of starting those discussions and the administration behind that as we speak.

THE CHAIR: Thank you. Questions, members?

DR BOURKE: With Canberra Connect, what is the average number of calls received per day?

Mr Byles: The acting general manager from Canberra Connect, Leesha Pitt, might be able to respond to that in terms of details about Canberra Connect calls. It is separate, but I am happy. If the minister is happy, we can deal with that question now.

Mr Rattenbury: Yes.

Mrs Pitt: Can you repeat the question for me, please?

DR BOURKE: I was inquiring about the average number of calls per day that Canberra Connect receives.

Mrs Pitt: I would have to take that question on notice. I could tell you that, on average, we take approximately 800,000 calls a year. Obviously, the volume varies depending on a range of factors such as whether there are any emergency events or particular activities throughout the year that increase core volume. For example, this year, we have taken extra calls for the election; so we took calls for Elections ACT.

DR BOURKE: So 857,000 would indicate about an average of 2,000 calls a day. On page 41, the annual report talks about 8,000 calls during the Mitchell chemical fire in 2011. Was that in addition to the usual load or was that the total load for those four days?

Mrs Pitt: During the Mitchell fire we took approximately 8,000 calls over the four days of the event. That was a much higher volume than normal over four days. So, for example, for the peak period between 5.30 am on Friday and midday there were approximately 4,300 calls. That is about more than four times the volume that we normally get at that time of day.

DR BOURKE: What strategies do you have in place to mitigate the extra load that that places on your call centre?

Mrs Pitt: We are seated for 64 staff. When emergencies occur we roster on all available staff.

Mr Byles: You may be aware, Dr Bourke, that the government funded additional FTEs for Canberra Connect based on the call capacity. I think we went from 51 to 64 or thereabouts—certainly in that vicinity—in terms of increasing our call capacity. That has allowed us to be able to address some pressures we had on our call answering times, and they have improved, I am told, significantly over the last few months.

By way of example of calls, I just happen to have a list here of what could be considered to be the top five within each of the business units. You will not be surprised to know that things like trees, grass and buses feature, I will not say significantly highly, but they are prominent throughout the call volumes.

THE CHAIR: Would members like to continue with Canberra Connect and then we might be able to finish that.

MR COE: I have questions on directorate services in general. I am curious about what the role of the department is during caretaker. What sort of information should the department be providing to the ministers?

Mr Rattenbury: I think it is best if you take this, Mr Byles, having not been in the job through a caretaker period yet.

Mr Byles: Thank you, minister. The caretaker conventions are very clear in that the advice provided to ministers is that required to conduct normal operations.

MR COE: So should providing information for election forms be part of that responsibility, that charter?

Mr Byles: I would have to reflect on the context of that, Mr Coe.

MR COE: The context is a series of emails between the minister's office and the department, including yourself, Mr Byles, whereby people from the minister's office were quite explicit that it was election information. So, for instance, someone from the minister's office said, "Hi Gary, in readiness for the Pedal Power forum," et cetera, "once you have had an opportunity to get some advice, perhaps I can meet with the relevant roads and budget people to get across this area, which is shaping up as a big one for the election."

That was an initial email from the minister's office. Then from there the emails went seemingly all over the place with people providing information. Several times the election was mentioned. One time it says here—someone in the department said, "Can you advise the current status of the Bowen Place crossing? We've taken information from the website but you may have some additional insight into this. The context for the request is a meet-the-politician forum on 19 September."

It goes on. Then someone actually from the federal government says, "Yep, it might be best if the Chief Minister discloses that I provide that information—eg, I have pressed the organisation for an update and I have been advised."

Is this sort of culture rampant in the department so that there is a genuine willingness to help ministers or help candidates or help politicians in election forums?

Mr Byles: I do not know if your statement, Mr Coe, is actually reflecting the facts about "rampant culture". The culture of the directorate is actually to provide the best value for money and deliver good services for Canberrans. Again, without seeing the context of those—I realise that you have something in front of you there, and I would have to look at that in the full context of how they were produced. I am happy to do that. But can I say that when we were approached by political parties to provide information, I made sure—because I was involved particularly around the election signage issue—that all three major parties got the very same information, or similar information, and I went to great length to do that.

MR COE: That is all very well for election signage, but the ministers have exclusive access to the departments. This all came in an FOI. This FOI was the one that was eight weeks late, which does cause some suspicion when you have an FOI which is due in early January and it does not come in until very late February.

It does make me think about what was actually behind the delay in the FOI but, more worryingly, what is the culture within the department with regard to providing information to ministers. How many other instances will there be in TAMS whereby the department has provided information to the minister's office about election

policies or election forum issues?

Mr Byles: Firstly, can I apologise for the lateness of the FOI. That is unacceptable and that has been reflected in some of our figures that I am not proud of, and we need to get better in that space. I reiterate the fact that the caretaker convention is quite specific.

When you say, “How many other instances,” I understand that that was part of the FOI, and the FOI was produced in accordance with the requirements. I would add, finally, that we do have an operational business to run. Business has to get on and do things that we are expected to do. It is that fine line and we try to adhere to those conventions. If you are suggesting they have been breached and been breached deliberately, then I am happy to relook at what you might be suggesting.

MR COE: If a question has been put around the department and it explicitly says, “The context for the request is a meet-the-politician forum,” why did not the communication stream stop there?

Mr Byles: I would have to look at that document you have got, Mr Coe, and provide a formal response.

MR COE: Sure, all that information is in the FOI. Also in the FOI was a request by the Chief Minister’s office, by the Minister for Territory and Municipal Services, to the DLO. In actual fact, the DLO has included you and others in the email. It says, “Can we get some factual information on the following: what is the current level of funding under the agreement with the RSPCA? Where are we up to with the planning for the move of the RSPCA?” et cetera.

It just so happens that all those questions were exactly the same questions that were put to the three political parties with regard to their policy for RSPCA and animal welfare. What came back during caretaker was this brief. Again, this is available in the FOI. This brief, funnily enough, turns into a Labor Party election policy, with the highlighted bits in pink being straight from the government brief.

It does get me a little concerned that there is a culture within the department of supporting the government of the day and supporting the ministers of the day at all cost even if it goes against caretaker convention. Have any concerns like this been raised with you before?

Mr Byles: No, they have not. You are half-right there, Mr Coe. There is a culture about supporting the government of the day. But during caretaker conventions, they are quite explicit about what you must and must not do.

DR BOURKE: Mr Byles, you mentioned before lateness in completing FOI requests. Can you give us some other examples of FOI requests that your directorate has not fulfilled within the time lines?

Mr Byles: In our accountability indicators, from memory, there is about a 47 per cent completion rate for the timings. I am not proud of that, as I have said, Dr Bourke. I have not got the exact list, but we can provide that if necessary. Normally what we try

to do is that we go to lengths to contact the applicant and try and get an extension. I personally in this case apologised to Mr Coe, he may recall, both verbally and in writing, and I will do so again in this forum. We have got to get better in that space.

DR BOURKE: So about half the time the FOI requests are late from your directorate?

Mr Byles: Some of them are very complex and I had a team working on those FOIs. We considered that in our monthly stewardship report and we try and track it, as we do everything else. We just dropped the ball on a few. I take the hit on that. It is as simple as that.

THE CHAIR: What is the volume of requests for freedom of information?

Mr Byles: Again, Mr Gentleman, I will have to get back to you, but it is volume and complexity—they are the two parts of the equation. You can get a simple FOI that you can do quite quickly; you can get others that actually have a large scope and require a large amount of consultation, sometimes with other parties. Again, if you want us to provide specifics on that, I am happy to do that.

MR COE: Minister, what do you intend to do, having heard what I have had to say and the emails and documents I have quoted? Is that of concern to you?

Mr Rattenbury: I have not read the FOI previously. As you know, the FOIs go through the department, so I have not been involved in the preparation of those documents. So today is the first that I have become aware of them. I will certainly have a look at them myself now. You have raised some interesting issues, and I will have a further conversation with Mr Byles, if necessary, once I have read those documents.

There is an interesting line there where all members of the Assembly are able to seek briefings from government agencies, and that is done on a regular basis. Certainly from my own experience last term we often met with government agencies and asked for a range of information along the lines of the sort of information that was requested here. I think the context is an important one.

MR COE: Yes, but that would have to be of concern when, in effect, you get a government brief in the same order that is presented here that gets copied and pasted—

Mr Rattenbury: I will have a look at the specifics of that. I suspect, though, there are occasions where, for example, my own party, the Greens, have sought a brief from a government agency which has then informed our own policy, because that is the sort of research one would be doing. We rely on the public service generally across the ACT to give us experienced advice. I cannot think of a specific example, but I am sure there were occasions when my own party went to the public service, asked for information and then probably prepared a policy document off the back of that.

MR COE: Yes. There is an important distinction there, though. One is where the party seeks the information and it is straight-bat information and the government

provides it to a straight-bat question.

Mr Rattenbury: Yes.

MR COE: However, if the government is informed, “This is election related, this is political. Can we have information,” you start getting into some murky territory.

Mr Rattenbury: Potentially. I think the caretaker convention is very important. You could also make the case—and this is where I will want to have a look at the context—that it is appropriate for them to say, “I’m doing this in the election context,” so that the public service provides the information in that context. If a minister says, “I’m seeking this information,” the agency may think about the way it provides the information given the context. I think there is a positive side to being explicit about it being the election process.

MR COE: It seems here that when you mention the election context it becomes a higher priority.

Mr Rattenbury: I will have a look at the documents.

MR COE: Yes, I suggest you do. Minister, your own party raised concerns during the election campaign—

Mr Rattenbury: I think I might have done it myself, Mr Coe.

Mr COE: I beg your pardon?

Mr Rattenbury: I think I may have made comments myself to that effect.

MR COE: What a coincidence. And that was reported fairly widely in an article entitled “Accusations caretaker rules broken”. The ACT Greens accused Labor of abusing the electoral caretaker conventions et cetera. Given your own experience and further evidence, which I will happily pass on to your office, what things do you think are on the table for reform or for ensuring that this sort of thing does not happen again?

Mr Rattenbury: I have not looked closely at the caretaker conventions in recent times, so, again, that is something I would have to reflect on, particularly in light of the issues you have raised. I think that is something the whole Assembly might wish to take up through the course of this term through the admin and procedures committee, for example, or some other mechanism. If there are concerns about the caretaker conventions—and there is a written caretaker convention that is circulated by the Chief Minister’s directorate—that is probably something the whole Assembly should consider collectively in light of the fact that, come next election, your party, my party, we will be all seeking to ensure there is an even playing field there.

MR COE: That is right. Mr Byles, you pretty much said earlier that if I am making a formal complaint or if you get a formal complaint you will look into it. What does that mean? What are the potential consequences if it turns out that the department or the ministers breached caretaker conventions?

Mr Byles: That is something that I would probably have to take on notice. At first blush I would have to obviously speak with the minister about that, because I am not sure of the consequences of caretaker convention. I have never breached caretaker convention before, Mr Coe, so this is a new path for me, if it is what you are suggesting.

THE CHAIR: I might just bring the committee back to the annual report. I will go to page 41 underneath the previous discussion on human resources—

Mr Rattenbury: Volume 1, Mr Gentleman?

THE CHAIR: Sorry, page 41 of volume 1, still under directorate services. The third paragraph talks about the support areas, and the fleet is what I want to ask questions about. Can you tell me how many vehicles you are actually looking after as the fleet?

Mr Byles: 595, I think, give or take. It is pretty close. That consists of leased and owned vehicles and a range of vehicle types. I might get Mr Smith to either confirm or drive a hole through my figure there, but it is in that vicinity.

Mr Smith: Thank you, director-general. Yes, the number is correct. The number moves around a little bit. The fleet we administer includes operational vehicles used by parks and other parts of TAMS. It is not a passenger vehicle fleet necessarily; our passenger vehicle fleet is quite small. I do not know the number off the top of my head. I apologise. But the majority of those vehicles are operational vehicles.

THE CHAIR: And there is a move across government to move to electric vehicles, so is there one for the directorate this time?

Mr Smith: Yes.

THE CHAIR: And do you plan on increasing that number, minister?

Mr Rattenbury: It is not a discussion I have had with Mr Byles at this stage. Because of the operational requirements, the bulk of the vehicles in TAMS are those kinds of heavy, four-wheel-drive-type vehicles. Of course, the ACT government has that general policy of four-cylinder vehicles where appropriate, but there is an exemption for operational requirements. I think TAMS is a place where a lot of those exemptions apply because of the heavy nature of the work that a lot of the vehicles undertake. There is a limited scope for electric vehicles in TAMS at this point in time.

THE CHAIR: In managing the fleet, do you do all of the operations for the fleet, or have you looked at having fleet operators manage those vehicles for you?

Mr Smith: Mr Chair, we have looked at a couple of options for fleet management. One is centralising fleet management back to Shared Services, who are working with us on that. It is not a great option for TAMS given that we are a little bit remote from the other fleets. So the original thinking was that we would combine the fleets and generate some savings in terms of sharing of vehicles. A lot of our fleet traffic is to depots and to worksites that are very TAMS-specific in terms of our passenger fleet.

We do not do a whole lot of travel into Civic, although we do do some of that.

We have not looked specifically at outsourcing control of the passenger fleet because the passenger fleet, as I said, is quite small and we would not have a lot of takers in the market for that. But when I say we manage the fleet, we operate it under the sgfleet common procurement arrangement. So we do not do all the legwork ourselves; we work it through a leased arrangement. So the impact on TAMS is fairly light given that we only have a small passenger fleet.

MR COE: Of those cars, how many would be privately plated?

Mr Smith: I would have to check, Mr Coe, I am sorry; I do not know off the top of my head. I know it would be a very small number. It could even be zero; I am just not 100 per cent sure.

Mr Byles: Perhaps we will take that on notice. I am just thinking in terms of our executives, if you start looking at the logic there, are you talking about those—

MR COE: No, I was mainly referring to the 500-odd—

Mr Byles: The fleet, yes.

MR COE: So none of those cars should be privately garaged; is that right?

Mr Smith: Mr Coe, there are some arrangements currently under the policy where we do home garage specifically with authorisation of the director-general for good operational reasons. As a general default position we do not encourage or allow home garaging, and I am speaking now excluding the executive packaged ones, so we will put them aside for a moment. Again, I would have to give you the exact number, but it is quite low.

Mr Byles: 56, I think. About 56 out of 595. Mind you, the 595 is all fleet types, and, again, I am relying on memory here. And a lot of that is in our facilities maintenance—our plumbers, our tradies, who have early starts.

MR COE: So if there are 56 vehicles that are privately garaged or on occasion are garaged, what does that mean for FBT?

Mr Smith: The number quoted by the D-G is for authorised people to garage. It does not necessarily mean that every day that person who is authorised home garages that car. They may only do it quite infrequently, depending on the nature of the business. In terms of FBT it is a very light liability. Again, I do not know the exact numbers. We would have to look at that, and that would be fairly complex, I would suggest. But generally, that home garaging would fall underneath the low-value exemption under the FBT.

Mr Byles: With the 56, I cannot recall whether that is the approvals or people to home garage. It does not mean 56. So on a rotational basis, we may share a vehicle based on our shift and be able to take that up. I will just have to confirm that.

MR COE: How do you keep a record? Obviously there are logs and things in terms of vehicle movements. How do you keep a record for FBT purposes as to where the vehicles are actually spending the night?

Mr Smith: Mr Coe, there is a logbook for each vehicle, and the logbooks are surrendered at the time we are compiling our FBT records, for people to prepare the returns. Drivers are required—and where they do not do so are followed up—to record where the journeys are. So a journey from a worksite to home is recorded in that logbook.

MR COE: Could you please give me a breakdown of the FBT that has been paid just for operational vehicles, not the executive?

Mr Rattenbury: We will take that on notice.

THE CHAIR: Do members want to move on to Property Group? I might kick off on the Property Group questions. In regard to the old Downer primary school, there are some changes happening there. I understand that is going to be at some point changed into mixed-use services. I understand there are still some tenants at Downer. Can you begin by letting us know where you are up to with the Downer area?

Mr Rattenbury: In terms of making sure you get the latest information, I will ask Mr Bailey to give you that.

Mr Bailey: The Downer business park is proposed to be redeveloped. That is with the Economic Development Directorate, which actually are going to use it as a mix of housing, and they have invited Community Housing Canberra to actually do the work. This was planned to be undertaken towards the end of this year. The majority of the tenancies actually will expire by June, and we are working with them to find alternative accommodation for the community tenants. But the view is that the building itself will be demolished towards the end of this year and developed.

THE CHAIR: Have the tenants responded favourably to assistance for those changes?

Mr Bailey: We have been in consultation with them for some time, and they have been given plenty of warning. We have identified those that we can probably house within our portfolio, and we have worked with other directorates as well within the ACT government to see if we can house some of them there. The main priority has been the community tenants. We have worked with the commercial tenants as well to see if there are some tenancies that they could maybe look at with Canberra CBD. They are mostly small tenancies with very small footprints, and the rent there is very low. So we have to work with them to find something suitable for them.

Mr Rattenbury: In the context of Property Group looking at all the requests that come in, those tenants who are being evicted at Downer are obviously at the top of the list for seeking to find available space. That is the prioritisation they have been given, given that they are losing their current location.

DR BOURKE: Minister, in volume 1, page 40, the Property Group in 2011-12 is

“working closely with the Environment Protection Authority to continue the project for the analysis and testing of fuel storage tanks and removal or abandonment of in situ tanks”. What tanks are you referring to—just ones on government land? And what success have you had in cleaning up properties for redevelopment?

Mr Bailey: That is an ongoing program that we have. The ACT Property Group have a number of depot sites in the portfolio, and the underground storage tanks, the USTs, are fairly prominent. One of the big projects that we are working on this year is the Phillip bus depot site, which we will endeavour to remediate as well. That is part of a development for ACTION, but a condition there with the EPA was that the underground storage tanks be addressed before that development was approved. We are some way down that track. Work will commence with the construction contractor this financial year, and it will go on for some time. There are up to 16 underground storage tanks within this depot that we have to remediate, and remediation projects are quite complex and take a bit of time. We have engaged a superintendent for that, and we are just engaging the construction contractor now, with works to commence. But we do have underground storage tanks across the portfolio and, over time, we will be continually working on removing those.

DR BOURKE: What success have you had in cleaning up properties completely—or completing the clean-up operations, I should say?

Mr Bailey: I am not too sure of any recent examples that I can give you. But we have regular programs that look at underground storage tanks or maybe asbestos removal projects and things like that in property. It is ongoing. Keep in mind that the portfolio that we have is 45 years of age—the average age of the properties. So there will always be contamination issues and the remediation projects are difficult and ongoing. We have had a continual program annually of remediating sites, but I can get you some specific examples.

Mr Perram: I guess the success is determined by the clearance that we get from the EPA and the superintendent at the end of the site works. As Daniel was saying, it is a continuous project, some large and some small, in respect of contamination. We ensure that the site is capable of being used at the end of that, irrespective of whether it is a minor level of, say, asbestos contamination, or these tanks, which are problematic until the tank is out and you look under the tank to find out if there has been any pollutant or plume running off that. It is a real problem until the tank is taken out.

DR BOURKE: Indeed, managing that is also a problem.

Mr Perram: Exactly.

DR BOURKE: Either time consuming or expensive, or both.

Mr Perram: Yes, it can be.

DR BOURKE: Could you take on notice any recent examples of your success in that area?

Mr Bailey: Certainly we will.

MR COE: I am curious as to when and in what projects the Property Group gets involved. For instance, how is it determined what would be an ACT Property Group asset as opposed to, say, an education directorate or a Housing ACT asset? I know it is a very broad question. When does the Property Group kick in in managing assets?

Mr Rattenbury: I understand where you are coming from. It is an interesting question because a range of agencies have a range of properties—CSD, EDD, Property Group. Your question is: how does the decision get taken as to which one gets which asset?

MR COE: That is right.

Mr Bailey: At the moment the Economic Development Directorate have been responsible for that, with their strategy team. So if there is a property that is declared surplus, it must go through Economic Development Directorate, who actually go out to all directorates asking if anyone has a requirement for that property. After expressions have been received, they then evaluate what is the best use for that. Quite often, by default, they do come to ACT Property Group to hold, or, if they are actually going to be divested, like Downer, or other properties that will be sold, ACT Property Group will manage those until the divestment date and look after them. Or if they have gone out for consultation, as I said before, it can then be decided that ACT Property Group can manage them.

If they are old schools, for example, we have a community waiting list. At the moment there are about 76 people sitting on the list waiting to get hold of a tenancy through the government. So we can actually get people in there. We have the real estate arm within the ACT Property Group that manages that and can hopefully get a return on these properties and keep them in use. Having an empty property is not a good thing.

Mr Perram: By way of example, accommodation with multiple tenants traditionally comes to the ACT Property Group. The new Gungahlin office block would come to the ACT Property Group as the management facility for the different tenants within it. But sometimes with specialists—for example, hospitals—it stays with them because of the unique and unusual circumstances related to the management of that. But traditionally the multiple ones stay with ACT Property Group.

MR COE: Are there any sites that you can think of where there is a mixture of ownership in the same site? Are there any schools or facilities whereby Property Group and another agency are involved?

Mr Bailey: There are certainly some school sites where, for instance, there may be a preschool or child care next to it. There are only a couple of those. For the most part, I am not aware of too many where we are interacting. There are some where CSD have a portfolio with similar properties to what we have, in terms of community hubs. We have community hubs as well. But I am not too familiar with those that we would be sharing.

MR COE: In terms of asset management, maintenance and security and other issues, across the ACT government is there a policy for that and a single contract, or could it be that in those instances where you might have a preschool next to a school, you could have one requiring a security contract and next door you have a totally different contract?

Mr Bailey: ACT Property Group have a facility management section—the property projects and services area. We maintain a number of whole-of-government panels for the ACT government—fire services, fire monitoring, emergency lighting and things like that, where all directorates can use that and use the buying power of the ACT government. That also has a facility management arm, with trades people—plumbers, carpenters and things—that do a lot of work for education, health, TAMS and the like. There is no obligation that they must use us, and there are other directorates that do have, I understand, facility management contracts with different people.

MR COE: Are there better ways of doing that? I know it is complex. Is there scope for a single government contract for that kind of work?

Mr Rattenbury: This is certainly an issue that has crossed my mind, Mr Coe. It is something that has struck me, in talking with Property Group, that there do seem to be a range of property owners across the government. The policy question is to sort out whether there is better value in having one single, large operation or whether there is a level of expertise and capability that is added by different agencies holding different sets of properties. It is not a question that I have formed a firm view on yet.

MR COE: It would be tricky. For the Property Group, managing properties is core business. But for the vast majority of other agencies, or other areas within agencies, it is not core business. It is ancillary to what they are actually trying to do. They are trying to build health services. They are health professionals; they are not necessarily building professionals.

Mr Rattenbury: Certainly, but if you look at an agency like the Community Services Directorate, with my housing hat on, they do have very significant property management skills. You are right; perhaps for a smaller agency it is not as effective, but that is where the weighing up comes in, as to what is the right balance.

Mr Perram: I will give an example. With Yarralumla Nursery, clearly their skill base is horticultural. What they do is hire the ACT Property Group to do any of the asset management out there or lease negotiations. That is not unusual across the whole of the portfolio of the ACT government.

THE CHAIR: I have a couple of specifics, if I could. Urambi primary school is an empty school at the moment. I think that has been passed over to Property Group now?

Mr Bailey: No, not yet. It is still with education and through EDD, I understand, to direct where it is. But it is not currently a Property Group asset.

THE CHAIR: Okay, I cannot ask about that one. The other one I wanted to ask about was the small facility on White Crescent in Campbell, which is tenanted by the retired

transport employees group, which is a fantastic heritage thing for Canberra. Do you know how often they have to renew? Are they ongoing tenants or do they have to renew the lease frequently?

Mr Bailey: I am not familiar with the specifics of White Crescent in Campbell, but most community tenancies have MOUs or licences in place with them. When they expire they go into holdover provisions until we negotiate another one. We rarely have instances, except for Downer where things like that are being developed, where we have to relocate tenants. But they automatically go into holdover until the new MOU or licence is put in place.

Mr Rattenbury: Is part of your question, Mr Gentleman, about the usual length of those periods? Is that what you were—

THE CHAIR: Yes. I do not have any idea of how long they go for.

Mr Bailey: I think, for the most part, we usually do the three to five years for community tenancies. But we do work with the tenants. Some may not want to commit for that long, so we work with them on that.

THE CHAIR: I remember the Downer one was quite short because there was an intention to—

Mr Bailey: Yes, when we know something is happening, we give short licences, or if we inherit a school we know will eventually be sold or demolished in two years, we will just put in a two-year licence or something like that.

MR COE: I have a question which may segue into ACT NOWaste. It is with regard to contracts at Mugga Lane. I believe, minister, you might have had a meeting with some people yesterday—

Mr Rattenbury: My office did, yes.

MR COE: I understand there are some changes to the way the tenancies are being managed at Mugga. Is that being done within the Property Group, or is that being done within NOWaste?

Mr Rattenbury: It is done within NOWaste. This is the business enterprises part of TAMS, yes. The short version, Mr Coe—this may short-circuit a few of the questions—is that a discussion is taking place with ACT Recycling at the moment. That is a matter of commercial negotiation at the moment, and that is ongoing. So there is a limited amount we will be able to say on that specific matter because of the commercial-in-confidence nature of it. But I am happy to discuss the policy generally.

MR COE: I am new to this issue, so I am trying to get my head around it as well. So what is the policy change which has come into effect or which is coming into effect and which is bringing about a change where in the past there was not?

Mr Perram: We were working with the Auditor-General in respect of a standard application of tenancies across the ACT government, particularly related to Parkwood

and the subdivision at Mugga Lane. That could be where some of this is going from. In respect of the particular matter you are talking about related to the tenancy, Chris could give you an overview of that, if you would like, without touching on any of the commercial-in-confidence.

Mr Ware: The site under discussion that you are talking about is presently tied to a contract in place for the management of the transfer station and, therefore, no rent is being charged on that site. Obviously, if we charge the business rent, they would just basically charge us back in contract fees, so no rent is being charged. However, from 1 July we are seeking to enter into a strictly commercial licence agreement for the operation of the construction and demolition recycling facility and then have a separate contract in place for the transfer station. Hence, we will commence charging commercial rent from that period—the intention is from 1 July.

MR COE: So whereabouts would the transfer operations move to?

Mr Ware: The transfer station operations presently happen in a discrete structure within Mugga Lane. That is where general members of the public can drop off their waste. The construction and demolition processing facility is up at the northern end of the site, well away from the transfer station. So they really are two separate entities that under the present contract arrangements happen to be tied together.

MR COE: How dependent is the work of ACT Recycling on the specific location they are in at the moment?

Mr Rattenbury: The advice is that that is probably one that is a bit tricky in the context of the negotiations. Sorry about that, but I think that is just sliding into that zone of—

MR COE: Okay. Is the government aware that changes to this space could result in the viability of some of these businesses being questionable and perhaps closing down?

Mr Rattenbury: Certainly that is a consideration that is being taken into account. That is a case that has been put forward to us, and that is where the negotiation process really becomes very commercial in nature. As government, we have a responsibility to ensure that we get a maximum return for the territory and a fair return—that is probably a better word, not a “maximum”, but a “fair” return for the land. We have been given advice to that effect and feedback from the Auditor-General. At the same time there is obviously an interest in ensuring the continuity of some of these services. That is the way up.

MR COE: Yes. Do you know how much you expect to raise through charging for this land that was previously not rented out?

Mr Rattenbury: Not at this point.

MR COE: Do you have a target or an amount of money you are hoping to raise such that it can be, in effect, turned into other aspects of waste management?

Mr Ware: That is a subject of the negotiations.

THE CHAIR: Just on Mr Coe's question, you would have contracts in place for other square metreage areas in the recycling parts of Mugga, so down the bottom where the MRF is and the new estate area. Is there a charge per square metre that you make, or are they particular contracts with each provider?

Mr Perram: In relation to this one, because it is a change from the past practice to the current, we are seeking expressions from the community as to who would be available to do that—commercial operators and ACT Recycling. It is not the normal hire-of-site-style operations of the other one. So that aspect is different. I think Mr Coe pointed to that before in respect of the nature of the business in its own right.

Mr Rattenbury: The other thing we would add is that in seeking to apply a rent charge to some of these firms—and the same process is applied at the Belconnen site—we have sought an independent valuation of what that would be worth. So through property companies—it is their business to provide these kinds of valuations—we have sought independent valuations of what the government should be considering charging for these sites.

MR COE: Is this change of policy a stand-alone decision or is it part of a broader suite of changes to how Parkwood and Hume are going to be managed?

Mr Perram: It is part of a broader suite. We are looking at particularly Parkwood estate and a full estate management plan for that which will translate down to the estate at Mugga. But this one also relates to the method in which that operational centre within the construction and demolition side of things works within that site itself. So it is also a separation, if you like, of the transfer station from one of the components to make it into two discrete operational facilities, for want of a better description.

DR BOURKE: So what changes are you planning to make to the management at Parkwood?

Mr Perram: I would have to get Daniel to give the full area. Basically, as a quick overview, we are looking at risk management in respect of fire and we have been working with fire brigades on that. We then went to the next level of looking at the operational aspects of Parkwood. We have had valuations in respect of the operations. We have had a town planner look at the viability of operations on that site, particularly in respect of lot sizes and the capability of businesses to successfully operate on the block sizes that are there. We are currently in discussions more than negotiations, if that makes sense, with the tenants on that site to be able to go forward from there.

When we actually get to the next stage of the town planning and development of the site and the viability of those parcels, that is when we will get serious with the discussions with the tenants out there so they can make a decision on their future direction.

MR COE: Why would changes to Mugga Lane be made in isolation from the broader

policy? The Auditor-General in her report said there needed to be greater definition about the roles of Parkwood and Mugga. Are you jumping the gun by making changes to the sorts of tenants you want at Mugga before you have actually worked out the broader picture with regard to waste management?

Mr Perram: The key component and the difference—I will get Chris to expand further on it—is the transfer station, which is fundamental to the operations of the landfill.

Mr Ware: As Mr Perram was saying, the operation of the transfer station is at present tied to the operation of the construction and demolition processing facility. Obviously if we continue with those two tied together, it limits the field that would bid for a future tender for the operation of the transfer station. So we are seeking to separate the two.

In relation to the tenancy, if you like, of the construction and demolition processing facility, we are looking to replace like with like. Obviously there is a discrete field of operators who would be looking to bid for that work. There is also a separate potentially wider group of businesses that would tender for the operation of the transfer station. Now, with that in mind, we decided to make the decision to split the two and offer them separately rather than combine them and, therefore, have a greater field of applicants.

MR COE: Have the concerns the Auditor-General raised been addressed and this is now all part of a new regime within waste management, or is this just a piece of the puzzle with the rest still to be determined?

Mr Perram: The separation of the transfer station is the fundamental change that lets us bring in that standard overall policy, once we have got that separation, if that makes sense.

MR COE: So that policy is documented?

Mr Perram: No, what we are saying is that enables the Parkwood scenario, once it is fully developed, to be able to come forward. Until we have a separation of the two functions, if you like, at Mugga, we cannot take those forward.

MR COE: But the plan to separate the functions, is that documented? Is that part of a strategic plan or is that a stand-alone decision?

Mr Perram: Can you think of another way to explain it?

Mr Ware: It is part of a strategic decision of how the sites will be let or contracted within the Mugga Lane precinct.

MR COE: Yes, I understand that decision. However, the Auditor-General, in effect, said there has to be a strategic direction for the overall site and for waste management in general in the ACT, including Parkwood. So is this all part of that broader strategic direction which has been worked out since the publishing of the Auditor-General's report, or are we still working in the very environment which the Auditor-General was

critical of?

Mr Perram: The Auditor-General's report particularly referred to Parkwood and the subdivision associated with the MRF at the front of the major operations at Mugga. They are the two prime sites that the Auditor-General referred to. What we are endeavouring to do is to have the learnings from that Auditor-General's report translated back into the site itself. But we cannot do that while the transfer station is part of this dual process. So the Auditor-General did not particularly address, if you like, the internal operations of the site.

THE CHAIR: My question comes back to the report. On page 36 there is a discussion about the capturing of almost 30,000 megawatt hours of methane at the active landfill at Mugga. Also there is some at west Belconnen in that note. But the third dot point there says—and we heard this the other day—that there is going to be an expansion of stage 5 of Mugga. I understand that is a new area. Will you be continuing on with the capture of methane there?

Mr Rattenbury: The question is: will there be methane capture at stage 5?

THE CHAIR: Yes, at the new stage.

Mr Ware: Certainly, Mr Gentleman.

THE CHAIR: It will be in a different area. Is it going to be processed by the same technology that is already in place?

Mr Ware: That is the present intention, but should better technologies come along, we would look at retrofitting the existing facilities.

THE CHAIR: Have you looked at other, more modern technologies? It is quite old now.

Mr Ware: No. At this stage my understanding is that there is no more appropriate technology. But as I said, in the foreseeable life of Mugga stage 5, there may be something that comes along.

Mr Rattenbury: Mugga stage 5 has a 25-year minimum lifespan on it. So you can imagine there might well be advances in that time.

THE CHAIR: Is Mugga stage 5 within the land area that the ACT government owns already? There is no new purchase?

Mr Perram: We purchased in this financial year the land required for that extension.

DR BOURKE: In volume 1, page 221, the west Belconnen resource management centre has the rehabilitation of landfill cells scheduled for completion by June 2015. Can you outline what this work will be?

Mr Ware: The work at west Belconnen to rehabilitate the landfill cells follows on from some studies that we undertook into the thickness of the capping layer. The EPA

require that in the capping of the landfill there should be at least 500 millimetres of clay. Some of the areas were found to be much thinner than that. So this rehabilitation work will see the increase of the capping layer to the required 500 millimetres and then revegetation of the landfill surface.

DR BOURKE: Do you have any other plans for the facility apart from this capping—apart from what we have just talked about with an overall management strategy?

Mr Ware: On the site at the moment, Dr Bourke, we have in the past sublet areas for very short-term usage to rehabilitate former service station sites. That was the contaminated soil that Mr Bailey was talking about. That is a practice known as land farming, where the hydrocarbons are effectively composted and the hydrocarbons will break down the microbes into shorter chains. So we have discrete areas set aside for that and we will continue to reserve those areas in the west Belconnen site for those uses. Another use that we are investigating at the moment is for discrete areas within the site to be used as a solar farm. Negotiations with a proponent are underway at the moment.

THE CHAIR: How long do those contaminated soils from former petrol station sites take to break down once they have been removed to west Belconnen?

Mr Ware: It very much depends on the type of contamination. I am informed that petrol takes up to three months—sometimes much shorter. It does depend on the levels of contamination. Diesel, heating oils take much longer, and it does very much depend on the type of hydrocarbon chain that you are talking about. So benzene, toluene, which are up around the very long chain, can take much longer. We have been doing some work to remediate some sillage pits in the area. That is stretching out to almost three years now because that was grease trap type material, which is quite long-chain.

THE CHAIR: Colleagues, we might move on to Capital Linen Service. I want to go to page 37 of the report, which talks about Capital Linen. Three paragraphs down, it talks about a training and competency framework for a safe and harmonious workplace. My recollection from previously was that there was quite a lot of early training for new arrivals to Australia that came and worked at Capital Linen Service. Does that still continue?

Mr Trushell: We have built on a lot of the work that was done in the past. In the past we had a framework based around a full external competency-based program. Some of the lessons learnt about that involved trying to enable us to better deal with some of the literacy issues as we were taking on people who worked for us who did not have strong English language or educational backgrounds. Recent experience is that we have often had people who have spent a decade or more in, for example, areas like south Sudan. They have spent a lot of time in war zones. An example is a current employee who spent 10 years in a refugee camp in Kenya. Often, with coming into our workplace, there are cultural challenges not just in terms of social cultural changes but in terms of workplace cultural changes in working in a factory-type environment.

The focus around this program now is, first of all, on being able to put somebody

from day one on to a machine and ensuring on that day that they are safe. So we designed a framework based around a three-level competency. The first competency which we required them to get to very quickly was the ability to hop on to a machine and not hurt themselves or anyone else while they were learning on the job. Then there was a standard competency, which we applied to everyone, which is level 2, which is the expectation that a person will achieve that competency within a reasonable period of time, to effectively do the job safely, ensuring they are producing a quality product at an appropriate productivity level. Then we have a third level of competency—your A grades, your experts, who could do additional stuff on machinery. An example would be restringing an iron or some of those more routine maintenance-type functions or control functions which were less than you would have your maintenance team do and that are done on a daily basis.

The additional bit that we developed was a formal, structured assessment process. Somebody would be trained around a series of competencies out of a manual that any of our supervisors could pick up, including some of our supervisors who themselves did not have strong English literacy backgrounds, and then essentially have anyone come in and assess them. So it is also, in a sense, developing the capability of our first-line leaders, because they have had to learn all of this and they have had to learn to teach one curriculum rather than them teaching the way that they learnt it and the way they were taught. It has improved safety and quality through the standardisation of the on-the-job training.

THE CHAIR: Do those competencies then bring them up to a certificate level? Do you issue that or is that issued—

Mr Trushell: That will be the next stage, as we finalise all the areas. As you can imagine, working across all the functions within the factory, there is a lot of work to be done. There were a lot of lessons to be learnt. We are essentially building in-house an educational capability whereas in the past we brought in somebody else from outside. The strength of that is that it is very specific to our laundry. Capital Linen is a best-practice laundry in Australia. Many people who develop this capability here will go and work somewhere else and they would be an employee in another laundry of a very high standard as a result of the work. The idea was that as we complete it across all the functions, we would seek certification to have this formally recognised.

THE CHAIR: What has been the retention of those people that have come in and attained that certificate level?

Mr Trushell: We have people there now who have been there for five or six years and are now starting to move on into leading hand roles and other more specialised roles. Not everyone who comes and works in a laundry enjoys that experience. It is pretty relentless, coming in for eight hours a day, day in, day out, to produce the product. Customers, including the health system, use our product 365 days a year. So it is a pretty relentless environment, and that does not suit everyone. But for those who come in and find that they are comfortable with that sort of physical, relentless work, we are getting a high retention rate. One has to accept that, in Canberra, there are opportunities in other parts of the public sector and the private sector. So not everyone stays, but I think that, considering the demands of the work, we have a very high retention rate.

DR BOURKE: The report mentions employment opportunities for people with disabilities. How successful have you been there?

Mr Trushell: Once again, it is an area that Capital Linen has been committed to for a long time. We have people who have been there for a long time, including somebody who came under my predecessor, who came in via a schools program, so it was essentially a work experience program, and they stayed. There was another example of a furniture business in Queanbeyan, a private sector business, which was sold and taken over by a national company who then, as part of their rationalisation, got rid of all their people with disabilities. We picked up a couple of gentlemen through that who have settled in really well and have enjoyed the experience of working at Capital Linen. We have a number of long-term people there. Once again, the work environment is ideal for them, because it is very structured. There are some jobs you can give somebody and give them an area to work in, and that is their area. They are very good in terms of start times, finish times. The routine nature of the work, the systematic nature of the work and the level of supervision suits certain sorts of intellectual disabilities. So it has been very successful.

DR BOURKE: With the theatre packs that you prepare for local hospitals, are you preparing them for sterile? Do you sterilise them on site or do you send them to hospitals and they do it?

Mr Trushell: We share building 4 at 9 Sandford Street, Mitchell, with the ACT Health sterilising unit. We share that building and we use their sterilisers and their trolley wash facilities. The linen is washed in the laundry next door. It is then transported to the sterile environment over there. We have a standing team over there who then produce a wide range of theatre packs. We are allowed to use a couple of the sterilisers. So it is pretty much the same facility as ACT Health sterilising are using to produce their instruments. And it is subject, similarly, to Australian standards.

MR COE: Minister, have you had an opportunity to consider what the future of the linen service is and whether it is something that should remain within government?

Mr Rattenbury: At this point Capital Linen Service have actually been going very successfully in terms of their financial performance. Eleven new customers were signed to contracts in 2011-12, and most of those have commenced in this current financial year. So they have certainly recovered from their 2011-12 downturn, and tonnage delivered in the first six months is up by eight per cent. So from that point of view Capital Linen Service is quite a successful part of the business enterprise section of TAMS. As Mr Trushell has spoken about, the social enterprise employment outcomes are very positive as well. From that perspective, I think it is quite an important and positive part of the TAMS business portfolio at this point in time. But the question you are asking is one that government must ask itself from time to time.

MR COE: I apologise if this question has already been asked: how many people with disability would be employed at the linen service?

Mr Rattenbury: We discussed this but we did not actually give a number.

Mr Trushell: It is very difficult. I have a view that people are not required to identify themselves as having disabilities. Of course, there is a spectrum. How do you define disability? You are looking at a range of people with what are formally recognised as disabilities, and we work with support organisations who come on site and provide ongoing support. We have a number of people who clearly have disabilities who choose not to have that support. But, objectively, you can tell. Of course, there is a spectrum. All I would say is that we employ a number of people who suffer disadvantage in various aspects, but we try not to dwell on that too much. It is a place that provides employment opportunities because of the nature of the business and the nature of the jobs that we do, which adds a degree of diversity to the employment base within the ACT.

MR COE: For people that are defined as having a disability that in the private sector might mean being able to attract some financial assistance for the business, whether that is territory or federally supported, can the same be said for an ACT government agency? Is the ACT government able to seek financial support for people who might have a disability?

Mr Trushell: I believe those programs are available. The difference is that these people do a real job. They are doing the same job as, for want of a better word, a normal employee. And they attract a normal wage.

DR BOURKE: So they are not on a disability award?

Mr Trushell: No. The only additional assistance they get which we do not fund is the support people who come in to the workplace and assist those people. That is a major help for us, because often we are dealing with a range of issues that arise that probably are outside our capability to manage.

MR COE: Has the linen service ever explored whether you would be able to get financial assistance from the federal government for employing people with a disability?

Mr Trushell: No, not during the time that I have been general manager. But I am not sure about before. I am happy to take that on board.

MR COE: If that could, therefore, enable more people to be employed by getting that sort of commonwealth support, that would be a good outcome.

Mr Perram: I can give an example of another one of my businesses. We have a contract for the employment of five people with disabilities. The government funds their supervisor on site. So we do look into that arena.

Mr Rattenbury: Just going back to your earlier question, Mr Coe, about the ACT government remaining in this business, I think one of the dangers is that if Capital Linen Service were to be sold or the business ended, potentially the material would be provided from outside the ACT through a supplier in, say, Wollongong. I think Wollongong is the other place.

Mr Perram: Wollongong and Albury.

Mr Rattenbury: Wollongong and Albury. Potentially, they are the competitors we face. Those jobs would move outside the territory. That is an issue that sort of weighs on my mind as well.

MR COE: Sure. Does that mean that all ACT government laundry which could be done by Capital Linen Service is being done from the ACT? I believe that there are ACT government contracts that have not been awarded to Capital Linen Service. That is correct, is it not?

Mr Trushell: No, the only one which we did previously was Calvary, which is a private entity doing public beds. We lost that through a tender process a couple of years ago.

Mr Rattenbury: I might say that I find it very disappointing that Calvary does not support the local linen service, given the amount of—

MR COE: The government does not support ACTEW.

Mr Rattenbury: Indeed, but given the excellent track record of Capital Linen Service, I think it is a real shame that Calvary have decided to send their business interstate.

MR COE: The same could be said about other aspects of the government.

THE CHAIR: There are two types of employment, from my memory, at Capital Linen Service. There is the laundry operation and then there is the delivery operation. They were on two different types of employment agreement, from memory. Is that still the case? Are they still on different EBAs?

Mr Trushell: It is partially correct. We have got essentially four employment streams, if you like. It is under the same classifications. There are just different qualifications. You have got a driver stream, a maintenance stream and essentially your production worker stream. That includes the team that are based in the Canberra Hospital and deal with the linen there. Then you have got a management, admin stream.

THE CHAIR: When would that EBA be due to be bargained?

Mr Trushell: That is part of the team's enterprise agreement; so it is an attachment to that. It is negotiated in the normal course of the TAMS enterprise agreement.

MR COE: I apologise if I have missed it, but a past recommendation of either this committee, the predecessor committee or the estimates committee was for each of the government enterprises—so the linen service and the nursery—to have their own stand-alone financial statements. I believe that was in the annual report. Has that been considered?

Mr Rattenbury: I will just get some advice on that, Mr Coe, because I do not recall

that.

Mr Byles: I cannot recall the precise question, Mr Coe.

MR COE: To be honest, nor can I. It was something along those lines.

Mr Byles: So if the minister is happy, we could just take that on notice?

MR COE: Yes, sure.

Mr Byles: Thank you.

THE CHAIR: Are there any more questions on Capital Linen Service? We might move to Yarralumla Nursery. I will kick off at page 38 of the report relating to the Yarralumla Nursery. There is a discussion there about an apprenticeship program at the nursery and then there is the Koomarri employment contract and the Black Mountain School vocational training. Can you give us some detail, firstly, on the apprenticeship program and then go on to those relationships with Koomarri and also the vocational training?

Mr Perram: I might start the answer on this one, because David has been in the role now for only five weeks. Yarralumla Nursery has had an extensive program of apprenticeship training, as you would be aware. We anticipate recommencing that in 2014. There are no apprentices on site at this time and the budgets that we have put forward suggest the recommencement of that on a continuous basis, one apprentice a year, from 2014 onwards.

The program that I mentioned to Mr Coe before was, in fact, the Koomarri program. That is in the five disabilities programs. We have the contract with them. To me, it is an excellent addition to the nursery. It works extremely well for both parties. Longevity of the staff members from Koomarri that have been there has been extensive. They fit into the place very well. David, do you want to touch on the Black Mountain School vocational training?

Mr Doherty: Obviously, Black Mountain School is a special school for young people with disabilities. They participate in work experience at the Yarralumla Nursery. The advantage for that group of people is that it will expose them to a work environment which is a very careful and benign work environment for young people. That group of people will possibly end up under the care of Koomarri anyway and possibly that will be an ongoing source of Koomarri placements.

DR BOURKE: On page 39 reference is made to formalising arrangements with the arboretum through an MOU. Could you tell me more about the relationship and the MOU with the arboretum?

Mr Perram: In relation to the formalisation of it, it is in draft form at this time. The arboretum and Yarralumla Nursery have had an extensive relationship for many years. In fact, over 50,000 of the trees in the arboretum have been provided through the nursery. Also, we looked after their bonsai collection prior to it being placed at the new site.

We are working towards having the development of the MOU. At this stage, the new manager for the arboretum has only just been appointed and has been slightly distracted with the opening of the arboretum. So we thought we might leave it for a while until he settled in. That is the position with the MOU for the arboretum.

With Floriade, as recently as yesterday we had discussions with Floriade in respect of the operations. We provide the site for the bulbs to be located when they come in, the heating of the bulbs and the sorting of the bulbs into the gardens. We also provide through the nursery the large pots and hanging baskets that are right through the site. That is on a contracted basis with the Floriade group.

MR COE: I have some questions regarding insurance. I believe this might have been discussed in the media last year. Is the plant stock insured?

Mr Perram: I will have to take that on notice. The business is insured, but I will need to take on notice the level of insurance for the total plant stock. Like a normal business operation, we have that, but I will take that on notice.

MR COE: Yes, please. You might have to take this on notice as well: the work that is undertaken by Koomarri, does that fall under Koomarri's insurance or is that under government insurance in terms of workers compensation and the like?

Mr Perram: There is a clear separation between the two. It is a contract between Koomarri and us. So the workers compensation is borne by Koomarri. But obviously the public risk and so on on the site is ours. But workers compensation is theirs.

MR COE: Minister, similar to the last question about the linen service, do you have a view about the future of the nursery?

Mr Rattenbury: It is something that I, again, am considering, as governments should from time to time. Obviously, Yarralumla Nursery is due to celebrate its centenary next year. There is a very strong connection across the Canberra community to the nursery. Of course, with the plant issue scheme, so much of our landscape has been provided through the nursery to Canberrans. I think that the question that needs to be resolved is what is the appropriate role for government to play in this sector, mindful of a range of factors, including the return to government, the cost to government and whether the private sector can provide an equal or better service.

But I think if you look at something like the arboretum, clearly, Yarralumla Nursery has played a very special role that it would be difficult to replicate, and similarly with the plant issue scheme. These are issues that would need to be weighed up in that question.

DR BOURKE: Perhaps you could tell us about the record digitisation project.

Mr Rattenbury: At Yarralumla Nursery?

DR BOURKE: Yes.

Mr Perram: That was a very successful project between the gardening society and Yarralumla Nursery, as well as the historical society. There is a card system which is now digitised and available to the general public as well as a ledger system that can go back to the original plantings within Canberra. It is very much worth having a look at.

The original journals literally say where the trees were sourced and it says where they were planted. There are a couple of trees—I think there are three trees within Canberra that have been excluded from that site because of their unique and unusual nature and the potential for them to be sourced by other people. But apart from that, basically every tree that has gone through the nursery over that whole period since 1915 has been recorded through those documents. It is a great artefact that Canberra has, a great legacy.

DR BOURKE: Fantastic.

THE CHAIR: My next question relates to the condition of the building. I have not visited it for quite a while, but there was some deterioration, I recall, at the back of the building at the nursery. I just wondered what condition it is in now. Has it been repaired?

Mr Perram: In recent times we have had a condition audit done of the whole site, because, as you know, it has been heritage listed. There are concerns in respect of some of the buildings on site. This year the government allocated \$835,000 towards in-part upgrading of the buildings. Some of those funds will particularly address the asbestos in the amenities building as well as sorting out the lunch room—that is probably the easiest way to describe it—the sick bay area and the toilets there.

The dispatch office, which is also one of the oldest buildings on site, will be restored from the outside and painted. We have made application in a budget bid for the buildings to the south of the administration building, which are the main old buildings on site. In addition to that, we have the condition audit now in respect of the glasshouses on site. So we will be able to start working forward, potentially going to the Heritage Council and asking for funds particularly for those, because two of those glasshouses are particularly special.

THE CHAIR: We might take a break for afternoon tea and come back after the break.

Mr Rattenbury: Mr Chair, is that it for Yarralumla Nursery?

THE CHAIR: Yes, I think so. I just ask colleagues whether there are any questions in respect of the Animal Welfare Advisory Committee and the cemeteries authority.

MR COE: I have nothing for AWAC. I have what I think would be a brief question for the cemeteries authority. I am happy to knock that over now if you would like to do it. It will take just two or three minutes.

THE CHAIR: We might do that.

Mr Rattenbury: That is fine with me. In respect of the other portfolios that we have gone through, are we free to release the staff for those? Has everyone finished with those? Thank you.

MR COE: I have a question in relation to page 237 of volume 2, the going concern and the state of the trust. The state of the trust has improved this financial year. What is the trajectory for the trust for the next five to 10 years?

Mr Horne: The liability of the trust you are referring to is the Gungahlin component. There are actually four trust funds that make up the whole of the perpetual care fund regime. Gungahlin is just one of those. The trust is, if you like, broken into two components—one is an inherited component of the liability and the other is a future component. The problem that exists is that the inherited liability—that is, the liability that had accrued when the trust regime came into force—in essence, is going to be very difficult for us to make good, if you will. But the future liability will be taken care of over time in the normal course of business.

Mr Perram: The authority has sent in a brief to the minister in respect of the perpetual care trust—I am not sure if it has reached the minister yet—talking about those major issues related to perpetual care and pre-authority perpetual care.

MR COE: So if we have the same policy settings and expected patronage or usage, will significant policy changes need to occur?

Mr Perram: Potentially, but that would be a decision for government.

MR COE: Yes, sure. But, in effect, what you are saying is that if we keep going on this current path, it is not going to be sustainable?

Mr Horne: It is a very long-term issue. Other than saying that, one could get an actuarial study done that could say one way or the other, in fact. But it is a long-term issue, and we are obviously working through it on a continual basis.

Mr Perram: Perhaps if I could give an example, if Hamish can correct me, the example I would give would be Woden Cemetery, which arguably will be near completion for general burials in about five or six years. Once those general burials are done, the level of income stream will reduce quite markedly, and the maintenance of that site would then cost more than the revenue stream coming in. That is when it would become critical in respect of the government having to determine the way forward. So, as Hamish said, it is a longer term solution that is required as opposed to tomorrow.

MR COE: Yes. The total gains for the authority were higher than expected by a quarter of a million dollars or thereabouts, and we are referred to note 9 at page 229 whereby an extra \$100,000 or so was the result of the reversal of the impairment loss from receivables. So the reversal of the impairment loss from receivables is about \$100,000 more than 2011, and footnote b says:

The reversal made on the allowances for impairment loss relating to the Gungahlin Perpetual Care Trust is due to an improvement in the Trust's financial

position as a result of higher than ministerially determined Perpetual Care Trust contributions ...

For a layperson like me, what does that mean?

Mr Horne: That means we are making contributions above the requirement. So we made extra contributions because we had the funds to reduce the liability.

MR COE: So why was it, in effect, ahead \$100,000 then?

Mr Horne: Because we made an extra \$100,000 of additional contributions into the fund.

MR COE: I understand, but where did that extra \$100,000 come from?

Mr Horne: From our operational funds.

MR COE: And that was not anticipated?

Mr Horne: Actually, that was budgeted for, yes.

DR BOURKE: My office has been approached by constituents about the Norwood Park Crematorium saying the facilities are old and too small for large gatherings. Is there any incentive to upgrade Norwood when it has a monopoly, and what progress has been made on providing choice?

Mr Perram: Norwood is not part of the authority's portfolio, and our only control of the Norwood facility, if you like, is in relation to the legislation itself. We cannot deem for it to upgrade unless it is in breach of that act. I know the authority has done some significant work in respect of the southern cemetery and is looking at it being capable of providing the services for a greater population base within Canberra as the city grows. That is probably the area where the biggest influence can be made on Norwood being more appropriate, if that is the right word.

DR BOURKE: What other alternatives to cremation and traditional burial have been explored?

Mr Rattenbury: Certainly when it comes to the new southern cemetery there is the option of natural burials, which was actually a matter of public importance in the last Assembly. I think it might have been before you came, Dr Bourke; it was in 2009. But that is certainly one option that is being explored. There is an increasing acceptance of and, in fact, desire for that form of burial both here in Australia and internationally.

DR BOURKE: Perhaps you could explain exactly what "natural burial" means?

Mr Rattenbury: Yes. It looks quite different from a traditional cemetery in the sense that it ends up looking like a forest. There are two approaches, and they are applied in different places. One is where people are buried in an existing standing forest. They are buried without a coffin and are simply placed in the ground, perhaps with a shroud over them, and just decompose naturally, to put it politely. The other approach is one

where people have a tree planted over them, and there are different models around. It is quite a different approach. Some people prefer it to cremation because there are not the emissions that go with that. For some, it is simply a matter of feeling more connected with the earth, having less of a footprint with the burial process.

What will be important for the future is that we provide a range of options, and, at the moment, natural burial is not available in the ACT. So I think it is quite important that it becomes available. Certainly in the UK, for example, the first one was established only in 1993, if I recall correctly, and at last count there were more than 200 natural burial sites in the UK. So you can see the popularity has grown very quickly.

THE CHAIR: Thank you, members. We will take a break now and come back at 3.25 with Canberra Connect.

Meeting adjourned from 3.08 to 3.26 pm.

THE CHAIR: Welcome back to the standing committee on planning and environment hearing into annual reports.

DR BOURKE: I have some questions on libraries. Minister, can you tell me about the tutor service that the libraries offer for schoolchildren and its usage, please?

Mr Rattenbury: I will ask Ms Little, who is the director of ACT libraries, to join us at the table. I am sure she would love to give you some detail on that.

Ms Little: The tutor service we have is a program called yourtutor. It is a subscription service that is run by professional teachers and tutors. Anybody from years 3 to 10 can get on to the computer and email in a question—a problem they are having with their homework or a question that they have about the work they are doing at school—and a tutor comes back and helps them with that.

DR BOURKE: How many encounters do you have in a year?

Ms Little: I would have to take that on notice, but quite a lot. There is always room for more. We would really like to be promoting it more heavily, but it is quite a used service.

DR BOURKE: Whilst we are still on libraries, could you tell me more about the Kippax library and its volume of borrowers and other users compared to, say, the Belconnen library?

Ms Little: The Kippax library is a smaller library, and it has fewer borrowers and fewer loans than Belconnen or other of our branches. Again, I would have to take on notice exactly how many loans there are. With respect to our loans for the financial year that we are talking about, we got over three million, which was a great celebration for library staff, and our visits were almost two million. That is the total that we have. I would have to take on notice the exact Kippax ones, but they are certainly smaller than Belconnen, Woden or Gungahlin.

THE CHAIR: There is a discussion in the annual report about the radio frequency

identification project. Can you expand on how that project works and how that is rolling out?

Ms Little: I can certainly do that for you. The radio frequency identification system enables us to put little radio frequency chips in each of our library items, and then there are chip readers in each of the branches and in some of our book chutes. So when somebody comes to borrow material from the library, they simply take their card on to one of these machines, pop their card down so that the machine knows that it is them and then they can put all of their books on just in one big pile and it issues all of those books out to the person. They get a receipt to say, “These are the books that you’ve borrowed and this is when they’re due back.” That is always very important because we have different loan periods for books and DVDs.

If somebody tries to steal something out of the library and they have not gone through that process of issuing the material out, an alarm rings as people leave the library and library staff very politely suggest to people that perhaps their loan did not go through properly and we will go back and try again.

Mr Rattenbury: It works very well. I have used it—not the bit about stealing the book but the bit about actually borrowing the book yourself. I think that is one of those efficiencies in the library that is very useful.

THE CHAIR: Are you able to use your card to go online and look at the status of the term of the borrowing?

Ms Little: Yes. We issue you with a unique borrower number. You can ask us for a PIN number associated with your borrower number and you can go on to our website 24 hours a day. You can do a whole range of things. You can use the tutor system. You can access a range of databases that we pay subscriptions for—a lot of journal articles and those kinds of things that are very important and useful, particularly for upper high school, college and university students. You can request material. Out of the three million loans last year, 500,000 of them were from requests. So people in Canberra who are time-poor sit at home at some disgusting time of the evening and request the items that they want, and have them delivered to the branch so that they can come in and pick them up and borrow them. There are quite a number of different activities you can do on our website using your card and your PIN number.

DR BOURKE: Could you tell us about the Freegal music downloads?

Ms Little: Sure. I do have numbers on Freegal. I need to look them up for you, though. The Freegal system is the Sony playlist. I think the music industry was keen to try and work out a relationship with libraries. So we pay a subscription every year to that Sony playlist and anyone with a borrowers card from ACT libraries can go on to the Freegal system through our website and download three free music pieces per week. After that, if there is a fourth piece of music that you want, you can either put that on a list for next week and it will come through automatically to your device when it becomes available or, alternatively, you can go out and buy it through a Sony opportunity. I do have numbers here somewhere of how many of them have been downloaded. Freegal—nearly 26,000 downloads.

DR BOURKE: What does the licence cost each year?

Ms Little: \$35,000.

DR BOURKE: With those three free downloads a week, that is presumably a track, so if it goes for two minutes or 50 minutes, it really depends on what you are after?

Ms Little: That is right. It could be a very long piece of classical music or it could be a very short Beach Boys song.

THE CHAIR: Was there a short Beach Boys song?

Ms Little: Well, they are known to be short, aren't they? They were in that era when the radio stations were telling them how long their songs could be.

Mr Rattenbury: The three-minute pop song, I believe.

THE CHAIR: I had a visit to the new library at Gungahlin and I was very impressed with the library there. Can you tell us what the take-up has been from Gungahlin?

Ms Little: The visitation in the first 12 months went up by 400-odd per cent. It was an unbelievable uptake. We can get anywhere upwards of 100 or 150 children at our story time, or our giggle and wiggle, which is for the preschoolers, for the tiny kids, zero to two. Yes, it is a very busy place. You might know that we have just announced that we are a digital hub up there for the NBN project. So that is bringing a really great high-speed connection to that library and we are doing a lot of work around educating the community on how to use technology.

THE CHAIR: Is that connected now?

Ms Little: It is.

Mr Rattenbury: Launched in the last few weeks, if I recall correctly.

Ms Little: Yes, it was launched on 5 February.

DR BOURKE: Could you tell us about your engagement with social media?

Ms Little: We have extensive Facebook, Twitter—not so much YouTube but we do use YouTube. Our Facebook account is very popular, and people use it as a way of getting access to and information about our programs and our activities. We use Twitter a lot to alert people to what is happening in the library. Last year, 2012, was the national year of reading, and we tweeted a book to read every day. The poor person who ran that program was forever berating us about what book we would put on that for today. But we did a recommendation every day via Twitter.

THE CHAIR: I think that is it for the library service. We might go back to parks and conservation. I was going to ask a question previously of the Property Group about public liability insurance and permits for use in open places. The reason I was going to ask it there was because I understand that with the Albert Hall you previously had

to have your own public liability insurance program to be able to lease it, and now there has been a change so that the department allows an overarching PLI policy to cover those people that are leasing either public property or places. Is that now rolling out for permits in public open places as well?

Mr Rattenbury: I do not think we have the staff here who are familiar with that particular policy. I certainly think there are real opportunities in a policy like that for the government to be able to essentially assist community organisations through our leverage to not have exorbitant—

THE CHAIR: Yes.

Ms Steward: Generally speaking, for someone to use a public place for an event they need to have their own insurance to do so. The premium they pay reflects the type of activity that they are going to do and the risks associated with it. So it is influenced by anticipated numbers, the location, traffic management and the like.

Mr Rattenbury: I think your question essentially was: can we take the approach from the Albert Hall and apply it to some open-space events?

THE CHAIR: That is correct.

Mr Rattenbury: That is a question that we will take on board—not necessarily on notice but we will take that on board, explore it further in TAMS and see if that is possible.

THE CHAIR: Okay.

MR COE: Again, I think there might have been a recommendation of the committee last time to look into whether it is possible to have an insurance portal so that, in effect, when you book your event you, if possible, tag on to some government insurance.

Mr Rattenbury: They are all connected bits of TAMS, so Property Group, parks and cons and—

Ms Steward: I cannot answer that one specifically but we will look into that.

MR COE: On a similar issue, with regard to the Public Unleased Land Act, which went through a few weeks ago, how are things going with regard to the policy formulation?

Ms Steward: Fleur Flanery, the director, will be able to talk specifically about that. We are in the process at the present time of finalising the information and the fact sheets that will go to all of the interested stakeholders relating to the implementation of the new act. So Fleur will be able to give you a little bit more detail about that.

Ms Flanery: The implementation of the Public Unleased Land Act is going very well. We expect to have the legislation fully operational by 1 July. In terms of the policy, in addressing your question, we have met with the policy council and we have met with

specific directorates. There are ongoing meetings and there is a draft of the policy that is being discussed across the directorates. There are guidelines; some have already been formed and some are developing. I would say we are very much on target.

MR COE: And will that policy be put out for consultation prior to implementation on 1 July?

Ms Flanery: Yes. The policy will be an across-government policy, so it will be agreed, and it is at a higher level. I think what you might be referring to is some of those guidelines and whether they will be put out for consultation?

MR COE: Yes.

Ms Flanery: There are certainly plans to roll it out across the community and inform them. Some of those guidelines already exist, and we are trying to stage the work so where there are guidelines around events, have those much more explicit and available and articulate when things can and cannot be done. Certainly there are no major changes other than a streamlining of processes, which should be ready by 1 July.

MR COE: I think you mentioned a website is in development or in the final stages of development. Can you talk the committee through the capability of that website?

Ms Flanery: The website concept exists in a whole range of areas at the moment. So what the directorates are trying to agree on is the one-stop portal. For example, sport and recreational services have a booking system, libraries have a booking system, as does the arboretum. So we are trying to amalgamate all those websites so that people can go in through a portal—it is not yet agreed where that portal will be, but I assume there will be a range of access points—so that people can apply and it will then be fed out to the various directorates. Really, it is a streamlining process of something that already exists.

By 1 July we do not imagine the whole database connectivity will be fully wired and functional, but, certainly, the agreement is there amongst the different directorates to have that one-stop approach.

MR COE: For instance, if somebody who wants to do an event at Dickson ovals, they will be able to go to that website as opposed to what? How would they book that at the moment?

Ms Flanery: If it is a sporting field, they would go to Sport and Recreation and book it through that area. I guess you are touching on one of the points at the moment—that is, in some cases, people are not sure of when they do and do not need a booking, permit et cetera.

MR COE: And is that likely to be online for 1 July in some form or another?

Ms Flanery: Yes. We are trying to work out how we connect the bookings and permit systems.

DR BOURKE: Minister, in response to the Commissioner for Sustainability and the

Environment's report on Canberra nature park, the annual report says on page 125:

In 2012-13, TAMS will focus on ... the implementation of ... recommendations including:

... improving the connectivity and extent of woodland habitat across five nature reserves stretching from Aranda Bushland, via in Belconnen Hills at Kama Nature Reserve to the Molonglo River ...

What progress has been made there?

Mr Iglesias: We have made really good progress on that one. The government has committed over \$1 million to improve woodland connectivity across some of those northern nature reserves. In working very closely with our ESDD colleagues, we have a plan. We have an operational plan about what the priorities for improvement are and where they happen to be. That aligns very closely with issues around maximising connectivity for a whole series of flora and fauna and is also aligned very closely with engaging the community.

We have been able to come up with a program that ticks the boxes. We have had some good progress this last year, especially on Mount Painter, where we have been able to use some of the timber that has come from some of the urban development areas in the north of Canberra and bring it into Mount Painter and improve the habitat value of some of those areas.

I do not know whether you know, Dr Bourke, but Mount Painter is very highly degraded, and it has benefited from some of these habitat improvements that we have been able to do. We have not been able to do that without the community groups. The Friends of Mount Painter have been critical in helping us to do that.

DR BOURKE: With regard to your targeted vertebrate pest management, particularly in the Pinnacle at Hawker with the rabbit management, how has that been going?

Mr Iglesias: Again, very successful. Rabbit control has to happen year after year after year for it to be effective. What we have been able to do, again, working with the local community in mapping some rabbit burrows and where activities are, is focus our control activities in relation to the control of rabbits. That has meant using contractors to be able to get in there and identify and deal with the burrows.

It is something we will have to keep coming back to. In certain years we have higher infestations than in other years. That is just dependent on climatic conditions. But we have made good progress with rabbits on Mount Painter, as we have in other areas, such as at Mount Majura and Mount Ainslie.

DR BOURKE: What sort of management strategies are you focusing on with rabbits?

Mr Iglesias: You mean for their control?

DR BOURKE: Yes.

Mr Iglesias: Best practice around Australia depends on the terrain, and the terrain we

have in Canberra means we can use a combination of ripping—using heavy equipment to destroy the burrows—and also gas—certified chemicals that are specifically produced for the purpose—and also baiting. Using those three methods in tandem gives you the tools to get the best result. Again; it is about being persistent; it is about recording your results and it is about coming back and repeating them. Rabbits are very difficult to eradicate in some areas—in fact, probably in most areas. We can aim at control. There are very few places in Australia that can say they have eradicated rabbits. Our management objective is to control.

DR BOURKE: What about the role of biological management, such as calicivirus and myxomatosis?

Mr Iglesias: Yes, we use calicivirus. We apply it to carrot bait. You cut up carrot, put it in a target-specific hutch, if you can envisage that, and then you spray the calicivirus over it. Again, it can only be applied in tandem; it is not the silver bullet. You have to use it together with other measures. And it can be effective. In some populations the rabbits can build a natural immunity, so you cannot depend on the calicivirus. And in others it can work really well. In fact, the effectiveness of calicivirus is not really well understood in some rabbit populations as to why sometimes it kills them off really well and at other times it does not.

DR BOURKE: Is that due to different subspecies?

Mr Iglesias: It may just be the way that calicivirus is acting in the environment and whether the dispersal mechanisms active in the particular place where you are using it are working as effectively as they could. In some of the arid areas, for example, they have had really good results and in some of the wetter, temperate areas, not so good.

THE CHAIR: Can you give us an update on the status of feral animals in Namadgi national park? From a previous visit many years ago I remember there was a lot of concern about feral deer as well as the normal feral animals, such as pigs and goats.

Mr Rattenbury: The Parks and Conservation Service have a very effective program on vertebrate pest management at the moment. When it comes to horses, there is only one wild horse remaining in ACT national parks. The rest have been managed carefully over the last few years.

MR COE: Did you say one?

Mr Rattenbury: One. He is a wily one, though.

MR COE: Obviously.

Mr Rattenbury: He has developed a good understanding of the trap. But it compares very favourably; if you go just across the border in New South Wales, you will see a significant number of horses literally just across the border and doing significant damage to the lowland swamps.

MR COE: How do we know he has not gone across the border?

Mr Rattenbury: Well, it may be that he is going down and coming back. But there is only one recognised in the ACT at the moment. Pigs remain an issue. I guess there is speculation about where the pigs are being introduced into the park, and there is certainly some concern there, but there is an ongoing control program. And deer—Daniel might correct me here—I think deer sightings are still relatively few, but it is certainly an issue of concern to the rangers.

Mr Iglesias: And dogs is the other one.

Mr Rattenbury: Of course, dogs, yes.

Mr Iglesias: With deer, it is an emerging issue in our part of the Australian Alps. They are recognised throughout the Australian Alps, but we have been spared impact here, relatively speaking. We have set aside some money to understand exactly what the problem is with deer, so that will involve monitoring programs to try and understand how many we have out there. Just in the last six to 12 months there has been a bit of a spike in sightings. Our first step in having integrated pest management is to understand the problem we have. That is where we will focus our energy in the first, say, six months of the process.

THE CHAIR: You mentioned dogs. There were a lot of concerns from rural operators in the south of Canberra about dogs coming from the park onto their rural lands and killing the stock. Are you monitoring those?

Mr Iglesias: Yes, absolutely. We employ a dedicated dog trapper who is on staff. From time to time we supplement the services of that person. Our philosophy is along the margins of the national park. The management aim is to control dogs. We do that very effectively. We have got management tracks which are regularly travelled by this person and actively baited for dogs. The focus is to reduce the number of dogs along that common border. Now, as far as I know, this year we have not had a report of one stock loss.

Ms Steward: I add that he works really closely with the rural landowners as well. In terms of any sightings and reportings, there is a dialogue between them. Particularly if he believes that there is a sighting, he can go out and actually set some traps based on that kind of intelligence. It is a little bit like rabbits. We very much rely on the community telling us. They are the ears and the eyes of what is out there. We use a lot of our response based on that kind of information. Wild dogs are just another example.

THE CHAIR: There being no further questions, we will move on to city services.

MR COE: I was wondering whether there has been any progress regarding the rolling out of recycling across the town centres. There was quite an extensive trial that we have discussed here before. I am just wondering whether there has been any progress.

Ms Flanery: We have 40 recycling bins in the city centre currently. We ran a trial for about six months. There has not been a rollout of that program across the regional centres or across the city other than the city. What we are doing is trying to evaluate the best waste management strategy in conjunction with NOWaste. We are looking at a range of options to see what the most cost-effective option is for the ACT.

MR COE: Minister, is it a priority of yours to get this in place?

Mr Rattenbury: I think it is valuable to have recycling at those very public spaces. It is a community expectation that they should be able to dispose of waste in the same way they do at home. I think there is a sense of frustration at times when they think, “I am in a public place and I have to throw the recycling away.” I think there is a question there to assess what is the most effective system to put in place. Is it there or do we focus our resources somewhere else? So the results of the trial will be something that will inform my views on this as well.

MR COE: The results of the trial are in, though, are they not?

Ms Flanery: The results—yes, they are in in that we know it is an effective way of capturing recyclable material. What we are trying to ascertain is whether there is a better way of doing it; so a one-collection approach rather than multiple bins. That is something that we are looking at in conjunction with ACT NOWaste.

DR BOURKE: What does it cost per kilo?

Ms Flanery: I would have to take that on notice.

MR COE: The total project is \$250,000; is that right? It is a quarter of \$400,000 or something in that ballpark; is that correct?

Ms Flanery: It is \$165,000 for 2011-12.

Mr Rattenbury: Yes, that was the capital funding for the trial in the city centre.

MR COE: That was the capital funding?

Mr Rattenbury: Yes, and recurrent funding of \$80,000 was provided for the servicing of the bins.

MR COE: So \$250,000-ish, all up.

Mr Rattenbury: That was until June 2012.

MR COE: Yes, right.

Mr Rattenbury: Then a further \$50,000 a year was provided for the 2012-13 through to 2014-15 financial years.

MR COE: I have another question that I think I asked last time. What scope is there to roll it into the broader waste collection contract?

Mr Rattenbury: It is an interesting question, actually.

Mr Byles: I am not sure of the total relevance, but I remember we did explore this. There was something about the inability for the trucks to pick up. It was different size

and configuration. I think it was problematic, as I recall. We have looked at it, but we would probably have to take that on notice in terms of—

MR COE: So what about the waste collection that is done in the city at the moment—not the recycling but the waste collection? Is that on a separate contract to the rest of waste collection in the territory?

Ms Flanery: Yes, it is, because of the trucks and the nature of driving on pavement and things, yes.

MR COE: I think I have seen those smaller vehicles collecting the waste. We might be going beyond the depth of all our knowledge here, but are those trucks able to be used for recycling as well? Perhaps not at the same time, but are they able to do a recycling run and then do a rubbish run?

Ms Flanery: We are trying to look at the most efficient use of those trucks. That is something that we are looking at—the multiple uses of the trucks and things. I am not quite sure if they can be used—how dual purpose they are. I guess what we did was to look at a trial. We have some information about the trial which seems very positive in terms of the amount of rubbish that was collected. I think the appropriate place to look at it is what else is going on in the waste area and whether technology has moved forward or is it the best approach. I am not sure at the moment.

DR BOURKE: Minister, on page 19, it says that in 2012-13 TAMS will upgrade furniture and bins in parks and shopping centres, particularly in Hawker and Jamison. Could you tell us what the nature of those upgrades will be and when they will be completed?

Mr Rattenbury: Furniture and bins specifically, just bear with me. We, of course, have our ongoing shopping centre upgrades, which tend to take on a specific shopping centre at a specific time. I am just trying to think about the furniture program, Dr Bourke. My colleagues might assist me. You have stumped us here late on Friday afternoon.

Ms Steward: This is a suite of public domain improvements that are captured in a range of initiatives that we have underway in terms of our program. So the minister is correct in saying that the shopping centre upgrade program has provided some occasions to be able to upgrade the furniture in those locations.

In terms of things associated with the district parks and playground upgrades, again, we would look at the opportunities to replace ageing assets and the like, including looking at bin location and looking at whether or not there are more appropriate ways of dealing with waste in public places, because sometimes, as we know, a bin can attract waste in the wrong way in a public park. So we have to look at ways in which we can get a more responsible approach, I suppose, by people who use those spaces. So there is no specific program that I can point to, but it is across—

DR BOURKE: I was referring to page 19, paragraph 5, upgrade of furniture and bins, Hawker and Jamison.

Mr Rattenbury: What that points to also—it refers further there to log bollards and barriers being installed. I think what is pointed to there is that TAMS has a budget for various pieces of work that need to take place around the city. I think this paragraph is referring to those smaller ongoing works.

Ms Steward: Yes.

Mr Rattenbury: Often people approach us and say that something is particularly run down or that vehicles are getting onto an open space; can we please install some bollards? They are the sort of requests that come through. Some of it is a bit reactive where people actually ask.

DR BOURKE: Of course.

Mr Rattenbury: TAMS has that flexibility.

Ms Steward: Yes.

Mr Rattenbury: Some of it is where the agency has identified things in its own right and just goes out and fixes them. So it is that combination.

DR BOURKE: Perhaps you could investigate what exactly is specifically planned for Hawker and Jamison and take it on notice.

Mr Rattenbury: Yes, we will take that on notice. I know we have just got in the works at the moment at Jamison—and Ms Porter has been asking me about this—some work being done on disabled parking spaces there. Some constituents have raised specific concerns with us about spots there. They will be fixed up by the end of April, if I recall correctly. People identified a particular issue with some markings there; so that is currently being sorted at Jamison.

THE CHAIR: Minister, I go to page 17, urban treescapes. There is quite a bit of discussion there on the commissioner's recommendations. Can you give us an update as to where we are at with that tree replacement program?

Ms Flanery: The government responded to the commissioner's report in April 2012. Since that time we have been working through a series of implementation strategies to get her recommendations underway. The most significant is the integration of the tree removal and planting programs and watering programs. It may seem very logical, but there are things to work out—risk, plant supply and how we notify the community. Certainly, we have made significant progress in that respect.

For the last two years we have planted approximately 2,000 new trees to replace trees that have been removed in streets and parks. We have watered close to 23,000 young trees over one of the hottest summers. We have all of our young trees now on a GPS system. So we know where they are, how much they are being watered, when their stakes need untying. It is an ongoing program. It is no small task when you are managing 700,000 trees.

THE CHAIR: Questions, members?

MR COE: No.

DR BOURKE: No.

THE CHAIR: Thank you, minister and staff of the directorate, for your attendance today. If there are any questions on notice, we will get those to you as soon as we can.

Mr Rattenbury: There are about half a dozen, I think.

THE CHAIR: That concludes the examination of the TAMS annual report. Those questions on notice are due by 18 March.

The committee adjourned at 4.02 pm.