



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

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

(Reference: [Annual and financial reports 2012-2013](#))

Members:

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

TRANSCRIPT OF EVIDENCE

CANBERRA

FRIDAY, 18 OCTOBER 2013

Secretary to the committee:

Ms M Morrison (Ph: 620 50136)

By authority of the Legislative Assembly for the Australian Capital Territory

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

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Amended 20 May 2013

The committee met at 9.01 am.

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

Horne, Mr Hamish, Chief Executive Officer, Canberra Cemeteries

Bailey, Mr Daniel, Director, ACT Property Group, Business Enterprise Division

Perram, Mr Phillip, Executive Director, Business Enterprise Division

Trushell, Mr Michael, General Manager, Capital Linen Service

Roberts, Mr David, Director, ACT NOWaste, Business Enterprise Division

Iglesias, Mr Daniel, Director, Parks and Conservation, Parks and City Services

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

Little, Ms Vanessa, Director, Libraries ACT, Parks and City Services

Colussi, Mr David, Director, Canberra Connect

THE CHAIR: Good morning everybody, and welcome to this public hearing of the Standing Committee on Planning, Environment and Territory and Municipal Services inquiry into annual and financial reports for 2012-13. Today the committee will be examining the Territory and Municipal Services Directorate annual report, including the annexed reports of the ACT Public Cemeteries Authority and the Animal Welfare Authority.

Could I remind all witnesses that the proceedings are being recorded by Hansard for transcription purposes and webstreamed and broadcast live.

Today we will be hearing from the Minister for Territory and Municipal Services. On the program for this morning we have the minister and, first up, the ACT Public Cemeteries Authority. We will then go to TAMS directorate services and enterprise services. I advise those listening that ACTION and roads will be dealt with at a different time, later in the month.

Could you please confirm that you have read and understand the implications of the privilege statement that is in front of you?

Mr Rattenbury: Yes.

THE CHAIR: Thank you very much. Before we proceed to questions, minister, would you like to make an opening statement?

Mr Rattenbury: Thank you, Mr Chairman; no, I will not. I am happy to go straight to the topics that the committee would like to cover.

THE CHAIR: Members, questions?

MR WALL: I am happy to kick off. Page 7 makes mention of the Gungahlin

shopfront. I was curious, minister, as to where the plan was up to for that?

Mr Rattenbury: The Gungahlin shopfront is being progressed as part of the development of the new government office building in Gungahlin.

MR WALL: I have jumped the gun a bit there. Canberra Connect is scheduled for a little bit further down.

Mr Rattenbury: That is all right. I will answer the question now, and if we need to, we can answer further questions. As I was saying, the implementation of the Gungahlin shopfront is being progressed as part of the development of the new Gungahlin office building. From recollection, that is due to be completed by late next year. TAMS, or Canberra Connect, as part of that process is currently doing the research and preparations for opening a shopfront on that site.

THE CHAIR: Let us go to questions on cemeteries.

DR BOURKE: Minister, page 131 notes:

In 2012-13, 296 burial sites were reserved compared to the five year average of 222. This result was a significant increase over previous years, particularly after a large drop in 2010-11.

Minister, why is there such a fluctuation in the reservation of burial sites and what is the cost associated with reserving a plot?

Mr Rattenbury: I will hand over to Hamish Horne from the cemeteries authority for that detail.

Mr Horne: We actually do not know why numbers fluctuate. Having said that, this year we saw a large additional number of sites sold for the interment of ashes. We put that down to opening a new ashes garden at Woden cemetery.

DR BOURKE: Perhaps you could tell us a bit more about the cost of vandalism in cemeteries. I notice there have been some particular incidents at Hall, which is in my electorate of Ginninderra. And what measures are you taking to limit that vandalism?

Mr Horne: In general, the cost of vandalism is very low. Hall cemetery is a one-off event, certainly in the last decade. There was a significant cost associated with that, which was covered by insurance. But, in general, we have a range of security measures in place, including random patrols during the evening. The gates are obviously opened and closed at specific times. We have security fencing, and lighting in appropriate places, although not a lot. It is very difficult to maintain 24-hour surveillance at a place like a cemetery, which is essentially a large park, and particularly at Hall cemetery, which is a remote site.

DR BOURKE: What was the quantum of the cost of the vandalism?

Mr Horne: I think the total cost of replacement of plaques was around \$20,000.

THE CHAIR: On page 131, under “Performance”, the second paragraph talks about the master plan for the southern memorial park that was completed back in 2012. There has been continued work through the last year. Can you give us an update of where we are up to with that plan and the park?

Mr Horne: As you know, the plan has been completed. At the moment we are investigating various funding and operational models. We are conducting a market sounding, which is in progress at the moment, to test the appetite, capability and capacity of the market to potentially fund and/or operate the park. That will bring forward a number of options which will be further investigated by way of a business case, which we hope to bring forward to the government as part of the normal budget cycle.

MR WALL: Has the master plan for the new cemetery been released publicly?

Mr Horne: No, it has not.

MR WALL: When will that happen?

Mr Rattenbury: That is a matter that we are still considering. There are a number of questions that it has raised, which was flagged in the *Canberra Times* the week before last. As part of the work that Mr Horne was just describing, I think it is relevant to undertake some of that further research before we go out for further community discussion. If we do open the prospect of a private partner or a private operation, I think it is important that community discussion covers those matters as well to get that feedback and see where people are at with that.

MR WALL: Is there a preferred model at this stage as to whether it is government owned and operated or put out to tender?

Mr Rattenbury: No, there is not. The sounding that Mr Horne was describing is exactly that—it is to get a sense. It is a bit unclear. I understand in other jurisdictions there are some models where there is private involvement. So on that basis and that understanding, we have gone out to have a look. But at this stage it is very preliminary. There is not heaps to report on it.

MR WALL: What consultation are you embarking on with the community as to which option is the preferred method?

Mr Rattenbury: None at this stage. Once we have done some of the research and there is actually something to consult on, that is when the next stage of consultation will take place. There is still time. Woden cemetery has capacity until around 2017, 2018, depending on how many plots get taken up. So we are still well within the time frame of having sufficient time to open a new facility as required.

MR WALL: How much time do you anticipate that establishing a new facility will take?

Mr Horne: Approximately two to three years.

MR WALL: So the time window is not really that big?

Mr Rattenbury: No, we have a couple of years left to make some firm decisions.

DR BOURKE: This proposed facility includes a crematorium as part of the planning, I believe. Do you think more families would opt for cremation if there was a choice of crematoria in Canberra?

Mr Horne: No, I do not think so. It will essentially provide choice. We are not anticipating that more people will move to cremation over burial just because there are two crematoriums available.

Mr Rattenbury: My understanding, Dr Bourke, is that people are increasingly choosing cremation, but that is more of a social trend rather than an issue of provision of facilities.

DR BOURKE: Do you know why?

Mr Horne: In simple terms it is an international trend right across the world. There has been a steady trend towards cremation over a long period of time.

Mr Rattenbury: The other option that will be part of the new southern cemetery is provision for natural burials, which is certainly an emerging trend. Particularly in jurisdictions such as the UK, we have seen that increasing in popularity. Going to your earlier questions, Mr Wall, that reminds me: it is not that work is not being done. For example, planning has already taken place on the site for the southern cemetery. Some of those preliminary works that are necessary down the line have been put in place already.

THE CHAIR: Going back to page 131, under “Performance”, four or five paragraphs down, the authority reserves positions for future sites. Can you go through with us how members of the public would be able to reserve a site?

Mr Horne: It is a very simple process. They simply turn up and we provide somebody to escort them out and show them what is available. Once they have done that, they make a full payment and from that point on that site is reserved for them or their family in the future.

THE CHAIR: Is there any ability for low income families—are there payment options?

Mr Horne: We do not offer discounts from that point of view. However, if a family in need cannot afford to have a burial, one of the other departments—I am sorry, I forget which one—offers a method by which they can apply for assistance.

DR BOURKE: What does a plot cost?

Mr Horne: It depends. A base space is about \$5,500, or less for a cremated ashes remains space.

MR WALL: With respect to the triple bottom line report on page 140, total water use has gone up from just under 12½ thousand kilolitres to over 41,000 in the last 12 months. I was wondering what that is attributed to.

Mr Horne: That is the result of two factors. We had a very good year the year before, if you like, in terms of water use, so we have seen a large jump. Also, we had a large water leak, which was an underground water leak which took a while to detect. So we lost quite a lot of water literally into the subsoil.

MR WALL: How was the water leak identified?

Mr Horne: By normal checking of meters.

MR WALL: From when you noticed an anomaly in the amount of water consumption, how long did it take before that was addressed?

Mr Horne: The water was turned off immediately and repairs were made. But that was literally a leak for, we think, only two or three days.

MR WALL: How much lost water would you attribute to the leak?

Mr Horne: I do not know the actual number of litres. I know what the cost was but not the amount of water.

MR WALL: Do you mind elaborating on the cost?

Mr Horne: The cost was around \$40,000.

MR WALL: In an average year what would normal water use be?

Mr Horne: In an average year, it is around 50 megalitres. About \$100,000 worth of expenditure.

MR WALL: So the 41,000 would still be slightly under the average.

THE CHAIR: There being no further questions for cemeteries, we will move on to TAMS and directorate services. Minister, on page 11 in the outlook category there is a line that talks about TAMS continuing to reflect the ACT government's key priorities, linking these to TAMS's priorities. Can you go through with us which of these particular priorities and in what order you are linking those to the ACT government's priorities?

Mr Rattenbury: Certainly. The government has four stated priorities which were set out in the budget. TAMS works across all of those. I am just having a mental blank with regard to reciting them to you at this moment, Mr Gentleman, but there are issues such as having a more liveable city. Obviously, in the work that TAMS does, that very much plays out in the provision of parks, open spaces and the like.

The issues that you see here, particularly the provision of capital works projects, are very important for the infrastructure of the city. You will notice on that page a photo

of the Majura parkway, which has been identified as a major piece of infrastructure. Construction is progressing well at the moment. It is meeting all of its milestones. They are the sort of works that have been progressed.

It is that full spectrum that is identified there on the page. It is that day-to-day work of TAMS. For example, at the moment, a new network, network 14, for ACTION bus services is out there. That is very much targeted at providing better mobility across the city for people. We will come back to that with the discussion on ACTION, but in terms of your general question, the page here talks about the maintenance and improvement of assets, the parks, the skate parks. This year's budget contains funding for new barbecues. So it is about some of those very low level, day-to-day issues, right through to the big infrastructure items, such as the Majura parkway.

MR WALL: With respect to enterprise services, I am after a bit more detail on page 10, which talks about a new policy to increase the usage of Albert Hall and the Yarralumla woolshed, which has been completed. I was wondering what changes have been made and if there is any reporting on improvements in those figures.

Mr Bailey: With both the Albert Hall and the Yarralumla woolshed, we implemented a trial last financial year where we took out the bulk public liability insurance and then we hired that out—basically, per hire—so that people could pay a fee to obtain the public liability insurance for it. Prior to that, hirers would have to hire the venue and also obtain their own public liability insurance. Sometimes the cost, depending on the event, could be up to \$2,000 per event for the public liability insurance.

We took over the broad coverage of it and basically implemented a system where we could just recover our costs. We hired it out at \$150 per event plus GST. We fell short by about two or three hires. So this year we have adjusted the fee slightly. Obviously, it has gone up just a little bit. But it has been a successful trial and it has meant that we will keep going on with it. It is able to be used by most hirers. We still have to undertake a risk assessment for the venues but it has enabled broader use and it is working well.

MR WALL: So the hire fee has gone up from \$150. What is the—

Mr Bailey: The fee this year is \$250. That is noting that there were increases in the actual insurance costs as well, and noting that we fell short by the hire fees. We expect it will take two to three years for it to even out, for us to know roughly that we get a certain number of hirers that will use it. For setting the fee initially we just based it on the previous year's hires, thinking we would get a certain percentage of those that would want to use it again. We came pretty close, and it has worked really well. It covers broad events, from 18th birthday parties right up to weddings and everything like that. So it has covered all of those. That previously would have cost—

MR WALL: How many hires per year are you relying on to break even?

Mr Bailey: That is a good question—the exact number. I would have to get back to you on the number there. It is not great. It may be around 20 to 30 hires. I would imagine that would cover the cost of it.

DR BOURKE: So it is \$250 to hire the Albert Hall?

Mr Bailey: No, sorry. The Albert Hall has a number of different fees associated with it as to if you actually hire it midweek or on the weekend. The public liability insurance component is \$250. And that is for both the Albert Hall and the woolshed, but they are both different fees.

THE CHAIR: So what sort of saving would that mean to members of the public that are using that program rather than trying to get their own public liability insurance?

Mr Bailey: For the average event—let us say it is a 40th birthday party, we were finding that the average cost of public liability insurance was around \$600 to \$800. By offering this now at a fixed fee—\$250 for the event—that is a considerable saving. It works out well. For an 18th birthday party, people were getting quotes of over \$2,000 for insurance.

MR WALL: Has there been an increase in the number of uses of either of the two facilities since the change in insurance?

Mr Bailey: We have not noticed any material change in the number of hirers in relation to that yet. But we are hoping that this year will, again, cover the costs and then next year, hopefully, we can keep the fee the same if the number rises or potentially even reduce it.

MR WALL: Is this a sort of initiative that is looking to being expanded to other hired sites in the territory?

Mr Bailey: I understand that is the case. A number of different directorates have contacted us to find out the process of what we did and looking to roll that out for other venues.

THE CHAIR: Minister, do you think you would consider this for public places in the ACT where you, at the moment, have to apply for a permit?

Mr Rattenbury: Potentially. It has certainly been my view and my party's view for some time that this is a good way to proceed. The government can use its size and capability to create exactly the scheme that Mr Bailey has provided. As he has outlined, the savings opportunities for the community are terrific. So where we can use the economies of scale from government, there is no reason why we should not. It is not an additional cost to government—quite the contrary; it essentially breaks even. There is a little bit of adjustment work to be done there, but that is inevitable in that process. It is a great way of removing barriers to the community holding events. If you reflect on the centenary year, one of the most popular events and surprising events has been the parties at the shops. Those sorts of community events spring up, and sometimes barriers like insurance are, unfortunately, the things that get in the way, particularly when volunteers are organising something.

DR BOURKE: What sort of risk assessment would you envisage would need to be done before you offered that kind of blanket insurance for people booking public spaces?

Mr Rattenbury: Perhaps we need some experience based on what TAMS has done already.

Mr Bailey: We basically have a check list that determines what the venue is and how many people will be there. But it goes down to other levels of detail for the Albert Hall and the woolshed. It goes down to traffic management plans and security and things like that. So for a birthday party that may be having 150 people there, we look into traffic management, where they will be parking and just seeing how sophisticated they are in the planning of the event. Once we are comfortable they have met that, we then are able to offer them the insurance. We have certain conditions under the insurance as well. We cannot just say it is a blanket coverage, no matter what the event is. We have to ensure it has ticked the boxes and we are comfortable that the event will be properly managed, even down to things such as alcohol being present. It is not something that you are not allowed to have in terms of it does not void the insurance, but if there is alcohol present, we have to make sure there is a security presence as well to ensure there are not any issues with that.

Mr Perram: I think that is going to be one of the great challenges, particularly with open spaces. What we have found is it has worked very well with Albert Hall and with the Yarralumla woolshed, but the greater the crowd and run by volunteers, that risk assessment is probably going to address more issues in the risk management.

DR BOURKE: Some organisations may already have their own public liability insurance. Are you envisaging that you would need an opt-out—

Mr Bailey: This policy is optional.

MR WALL: In establishing the cost of it, is cost recovery what you are aiming for, or is there an admin and service fee associated with it as well?

Mr Bailey: No, the trial was purely for cost recovery, and we fell just short of it. But we have set the fee this year again purely to recover the costs. We see this as a good addition to the hiring of the hall, so we see it as something that hopefully will attract hirers to it. We are not looking to make anything out of it; purely just cover it.

THE CHAIR: Minister, if we can go to directorate services. Page 19, about halfway down the page, it refers to Canberra Connect, the website, and, of course, the fix my street service. How has the response from the community been and how have you been able to follow up on the requests on fix my street?

Mr Colussi: The fix my street program has been in place for a number of years now; we rolled out that program in 2010. It has been very successful in its uptake, and we are improving that service on an ongoing basis. Just recently we made that site more user friendly for mobile devices. Since then something like 25 per cent of the fix my street responses are coming in through that service. So that is a very positive improvement to the service. It is certainly giving the customer base the opportunity to give feedback to government on the go. The types of things we are getting through that are usually municipal service-type requests, like potholes and trees and bike paths and those sorts of things.

In terms of resolving those, the responsibility for resolving those rests with the line area. So for municipal services requests, obviously the roads and parks services have a large role to play in that. The resolution rate depends on delivery in those particular areas, but, for an example, for street lights, something like 90 per cent are resolved within two days. So it is a pretty good turnaround on that service delivery.

DR BOURKE: Page 10 of the annual report talks about digitisation of Yarralumla Nursery's old records. Perhaps you could tell me some more about that and the involvement of those records in the Canberra centenary?

Mr Rattenbury: Yes, certainly. It is, of course, Yarralumla Nursery's centenary next year in 2014. Preparations are underway to ensure that that occasion is suitably marked. I think it will be one of the nice flow-ons from the centenary events this year. But in terms of the digitisation project, I will refer to Mr Perram.

Mr Perram: The program was funded through the heritage area to an external body, which was the heritage gardens unit in the Southern Tablelands. What they captured were the cards that related to all plantings within the ACT from the nursery as well as the ledgers, and they are available on the website now. The actual documents themselves are quite unique and have been placed into storage in the government information storage area so they are in the proper conditions now.

DR BOURKE: Did the digitisation involve entering the data or scanning the actual records?

Mr Perram: It was primarily related to scanning of the records but also providing an indexing interface so you could look up your street or your trees or whatever. That style of access to those documents.

DR BOURKE: So you can search by street or tree?

Mr Perram: That is my understanding. You can search by street or tree or even arcade or something like that, as far as an arboretum-type search is concerned.

DR BOURKE: Perhaps you could also tell me about the plans the minister has alluded to for the nursery's centenary next year?

Mr Perram: I would love to. We are looking at a monthly program during the year. It is very early stages. We hope to have a draft program for the minister by the end of this month. The proposal at this stage is, for example, for a soft launch of heritage signs at the nursery in January. The keynote event will be tied in as being the feature for Heritage Week, which is in April. Hopefully the weather will be good then. Over and above that we will have something on each month during the year.

THE CHAIR: Minister, whilst we are on the nursery, on page 15 there is a line about the plant issue scheme. Can you advise the committee how that scheme or if the scheme has changed over time. I imagine it would have, as many new blocks, especially in the new suburbs, are much smaller and do not have room for large trees.

Mr Rattenbury: The scheme, in essence, actually has not changed that much, Mr Gentleman, to my understanding of it. People who take a new block are entitled to \$220 worth of plants. So in terms of your question of the changing of block sizes, it is not specified what you have to take. It is an amount of money, and so you can get small shrubs, ground covers, those sorts of things, depending on what is available and in season at the nursery. Essentially people come, as they always have been able to do, and just get that allocation.

There will be some changes coming up with the government's intended sale of the retail arm of Yarralumla Nursery that has been publicly announced. The intention is that the wholesale nursery will continue to operate. I see that as a very important government operation, particularly in terms of the specialist provision of cool climate plants for the Canberra and surrounding region. I think that is a place where there is a niche role for the government nursery to play that perhaps the private sector is not playing.

With the sale of the retail nursery, the intent is to sell it as a going concern. Our thought is that it is quite likely someone will continue on the site with the business. With that changeover, the plant issue scheme will then operate out of the wholesale nursery. So there will be some adjustment to the program just in terms of access times and the like, but, essentially, the scheme will continue and people will be able to keep accessing it.

THE CHAIR: With the proposed sale, what would occur with the current buildings? Would they be leased to an operator?

Mr Rattenbury: Where the retail nursery is?

THE CHAIR: Yes.

Mr Rattenbury: Yes, the intent would be to simply lease the site out. There will, therefore, be a rental return to government as the owner of the site, and then people will be able to operate a business there as they see fit. In discussions I have had informally with people, there is a sense that Yarralumla Nursery is seen as a bit of a specialist in native plants. Some see that as a marketing opportunity. It will go to an open tender process and people will come in and make the entrepreneurial decisions they see as the best opportunities for that site. I think it has got a great reputation with the Heritage Nursery next door that continues to be a very strong commercial business. I expect it to remain a sort of a thriving area. With a cafe and the like, it is very popular. When people go down there, they will see the number of cars, particularly on a weekend.

DR BOURKE: How will you assess the value of the rent? What process will you use?

Mr Perram: We have appointed a commercial agent who is giving us advice on that. We currently have sites there. Clearly, Hobday's cottage is leased out as a café and it gives us an indication of rent comparison. That is on a business rental basis. We have got Heritage Nursery on site, again, giving us another number in respect of the figures required. So we will have an independent to look at what that site should be assessed

at. But, in addition, in year three of the first five-year lease, we will have a review to the market rate. Then if someone comes in with a very strong proposal, say, for a contribution of X to move in as well as an annual rent, that way it gets back to the market rent at the time.

One of the great things about the sale of this site is that we have been working with the contradiction between the wholesale nursery selling to the retail nurseries throughout the ACT region in direct competition to our own retail outlet. That has been a juxtaposition that will be addressed by this.

MR WALL: Minister, you mentioned it was planned for the nursery to be sold on once it was running as a going concern. Are there any plans as to what the time frame is for that to occur?

Mr Rattenbury: That is happening now.

MR WALL: It is happening now?

Mr Rattenbury: We are hoping to have it in place by the end of this year?

Mr Perram: Yes. We will be to market early next month.

MR WALL: What strategy has been undertaken for market?

Mr Perram: We have appointed a commercial agent who has given us a marketing strategy. We have endorsed that marketing strategy, and we will be working through that.

MR WALL: As someone who still has a family business, I know it is a tough time for people to invest in the territory. What contingencies are in place should a sale not be achieved?

Mr Perram: Certainly the Yarralumla Nursery could continue to operate until the market improves. The operations at the moment, if you like, are not a direct cost to the wholesale nursery. It is just that juxtaposition about creating the greater wholesale opportunities in the market. We can continue to operate for some time. It is just that we would prefer to address that conflict of retail versus wholesale.

DR BOURKE: How did you go about choosing the commercial agent?

Mr Perram: We called for expressions of interest from agents, and we have selected the one that was, in our mind, the best mix of promotional opportunity, mix within their partnership and staff as well as experience within the sale of small businesses.

MR WALL: Are you able to inform the committee of which agent has been chosen?

Mr Perram: Given that it will be in the paper in about two weeks, Knight Frank have been appointed.

THE CHAIR: We will move on to Capital Linen Service. Page 15 of the report

shows a number of changes have been implemented through the continuous improvement program. The first one is upgrades to boilers resulting in a reduction in gas consumption of five per cent. There would have been a cost involved with that, I imagine, so how long will it take to recover that cost with the reduction in consumption?

Mr Trushell: The majority of those costs were associated with the work that needed to be done as part of the new workplace health and safety regulation compliance requirements. So, in effect, the only additional cost was the programming changes to the boiler management system which were around about the same as the savings in the first year.

THE CHAIR: So those savings will continue on?

Mr Trushell: Correct, yes.

DR BOURKE: Congratulations on your Capital Linen Service staff winning customer service award in the director-general's awards for TAMS staff and teams. With such an enormous business and customer base, how do you maintain the enthusiasm and pursuit of excellence in customer service?

Mr Trushell: Capital linen and its predecessor has been operating in the private sector since about 1991. Essentially, half its business is coming from around about 80 to 90 private sector businesses. The need to win our business through contracts every three years is essentially what keeps us on our toes. We maintain a very close connection with our customers. We have a range of feedback arrangements which we keep very much front and centre with our staff. So it is essentially a case of maintaining a consistent message around what we are there to do, encouraging customers to provide feedback and ensuring that the customers understand that we maintain responsiveness to that feedback. Essentially, I think it is a cultural thing that is well ingrained through the business by now, and it has been there for a number of years. It is something which is at a fairly advanced state, which makes it easier to continue to build on.

I think some of the recent government reforms around the ACT public service performance framework have been a particular impetus this year as we have used that framework as a way to introduce in a new way themes we have been working on for a number of years but which now clearly align with the philosophy of the ACT government in a much more direct way.

DR BOURKE: Is that work that you are doing with your workforce formalised through training programs or is it more like incremental support?

Mr Trushell: A combination of both. We have used a performance management framework which we have evolved ourselves over the last three years. Where that has got to now, essentially, aligns quite well with the ACT public service performance framework. There is some additional stuff that we need to do, but it is more of an incremental change rather than any kind of significant change. We do have a formalised training framework, which is essentially called a competency and training framework. The focus of that is on building competency through on-the-job training

and development.

As part of our quality management systems, we have a series of modules which we are building for each of the areas. That way we can bring off the street and into the business people who have not worked in a laundry environment before, make sure that they can work safely within a very quick period and then progressively build their competency to different levels on particular machines or production lines and then be able to move them around the plant to create, I guess, a multi-skilled workforce.

DR BOURKE: And does that articulate with the national vocational and education training framework?

Mr Trushell: It does not. It is something we would like to do in the future. We actually have used that framework, but we felt it did not translate well into outcomes on the job. One of the challenges with that was that it was very expensive to do in terms of the opportunity cost of taking production staff off the floor and having them working, effectively in a classroom environment. We then had to sort of assess the cost of that because if you take staff off the floor, you have still got to produce your 100 tonnes a week. You are starting to have to have those staff attend classes, which you pay for, and then you move into working overtime and additional hours in order to get production out or you have to employ more staff, which would have been fine if we could see that translating to improvements in the business but we did not.

We felt that the level of expertise and capability that we had to develop an on-the-job training program would work more effectively, and it has proven to do so, in the sense that you can bring in somebody straight off the street and just progressively develop them. And that way, if they do not stay for very long because they do not like it, you have not invested massive amounts in training but you have developed enough. It also blends in well with the business, in the sense that it gives us flexibility to train them to be safe initially, then train them to work in different areas, as we require, to maintain flexibility. As we build that up, I think it is something that, with some assistance, we could develop into some sort of recognisable qualification.

THE CHAIR: Capital Linen have a great history of hiring and training those with low English skills or English as a second language. Is that continuing?

Mr Trushell: It is. Everyone here would be aware, I guess, of the sorts of people who are migrating to Australia and coming to Canberra. And we tend to be often a point of first or early employment for all of those people. The demographic has changed over time. But we continue to be able to offer employment to people from those sorts of backgrounds.

A lot of our training is geared around being able to bring in people from very diverse backgrounds, whether it is people with disabilities, people with, say, low educational standards—literacy, in particular, is a big issue, for whatever the reason—make them safe and be able to make them productive workers. And the organisation—and I do not take credit for this—as a whole is responsible for this, particularly the staff in the production areas. Many of them have come from similar backgrounds; so they have a lot of understanding and sympathy for people who have come in in more recent times. They have learnt ways of dealing with, managing, training and mentoring people who

have got a range of backgrounds. I think it is something that is well accepted now. People see it as a strength. And all the staff have just got better and more creative in ways of developing their teams to make them work safe and to make them work effectively and feel like they belong to the organisation.

It was the really simple things that we focused on, making sure that we were to pronounce and spell people's names correctly, that they got a uniform early so that they looked the same as everyone else. There were a lot of really simple, basic things that gave a sense of belonging and a sense of respect. And I think that seemed to resonate with the workforce.

THE CHAIR: And what sort of relationship do you have with migrant and resource services?

Mr Trushell: None at all, really. We have had some contact with them, but we generally directed them to the sources from which we get our employment. And that seemed to have worked well. I think that because of the fact that we have made it very clear that we are very open minded in terms of the range of people that we employ, it then becomes a matter of word of mouth. For example, we employ a number of Sudanese people. By word of mouth, relatives, they pass on the fact that it is a good place to work and we then do not tend to need to go looking for people, because, as a result of the reputation of being a good employer, we tend not to then have difficulty finding people. They often tend to come to us.

MR WALL: Just on Capital Linen Service—and you have already spoken about Yarralumla Nursery and plans to sell it off—are there any plans with regard to the future ownership of Capital Linen Service?

Mr Rattenbury: Not at this point.

MR WALL: So government retention?

Mr Rattenbury: In my view, it is a government business enterprise that is operating very effectively. And there is clearly a space there for us to keep operating.

MR WALL: Obviously it is a fairly competitive market, the linen industry. Is there a shortfall in the operating costs of the Capital Linen Service?

Mr Perram: Just in relation to that, Capital Linen Service is the only commercial laundry within the ACT and it plays a major part in the ACT government's strategy as far as emergency response for accommodation as well as health services are concerned. But I will hand over to Michael in respect of the actual services that are provided.

Mr Trushell: The Canberra market is interesting, in the sense that it is a small, regional market. If you look Australia wide, yes, there is a lot of competition in places like Sydney and Melbourne. It is not the case in Canberra. And one of the reasons that we have the large number of private sector customers that we do have is, essentially, a degree of market failure. Our private sector competitors are coming in from Victoria and from Sydney. And they are essentially not servicing the market very well. We are

not there because we are pushing out private businesses; we have essentially been there and have continued to grow because the customers are essentially choosing to come to us.

DR BOURKE: With that growth in contracts that you are experiencing, is there a limit as to how much you can handle at your current premises?

Mr Trushell: Provided the growth is progressive. It is not so much around the productive capacity of the plant. As a linen hire business, we need to buy the linen upfront if we take on a new customer.

The other challenge, in particular, is maintaining the workforce and having to then start to work out standardised hours to work six days a week, work into the evenings and that sort of thing. Yes, there is plenty more capacity to grow, but it has to be done in a measured way, and it needs to be the right sort of business at the right sort of pricing to make sure it is worth while.

Mr Perram: To give an example of the flexibility, the week before last—I would stand corrected—125 tonnes went through because of the impact of Floriade in Canberra. So there is that capacity to ramp up and down, as Michael was saying, with the staff and the additional hours.

DR BOURKE: What is your normal tonnage per week?

Mr Trushell: It actually varies a great deal. There are peak periods, and it can fluctuate day to day. On average, we are doing 100 tonnes a week, which, by Australian standards, is a good-sized laundry, about 100 tonnes a week. But that can drop at Christmas time to 80 to 90 tonnes, and it can ramp up to 125 tonnes. One of the challenges is that the customers order as they need. Hotels these days, because of things like Wotif, do not know who is going to be walking in their doors and needing a hotel room. So the big challenge of running a laundry is that you need to be able to respond very quickly to that demand.

Similarly, the hospitals tend to be a lot busier now than they used to be. They do not tend to have the sorts of quiet times that they used to. In the past, things might have got very quiet in January. Last year we got caught out a little, in the sense that the hospitals seemed to be very busy in January and we were working overtime in January because we allowed a lot of our staff to go on holiday on the basis that it is normally a quiet time and it is a good time to allow staff to take leave. So it tends to be a day-to-day challenge, and your ability to respond and have a flexible workforce—and essentially, we have good tactical planning on a day-to-day basis—is very important.

MR WALL: Just back to my prior question, is the laundry currently operating as a going concern or is there a deficit in its operating expenditure?

Mr Perram: It is commercially viable, if that is what you are saying. We run at a surplus.

MR WALL: And it is returning a dividend to the government?

Mr Perram: No, it is not.

MR WALL: Is there a reason why?

Mr Perram: The model that we are using is that we endeavour to minimise the costs of the linen service and laundry services to the public hospitals so that that way, rather than paying a dividend back, we are trying to be as efficient as possible and as cheap as possible for our key clients, which is the public hospital system.

MR WALL: And is the contract for the hospital system won through a tender process or is it a direct select tender? How is that worked out?

Mr Trushell: Capital Linen Service and its predecessor, Totalcare Linen, have serviced the hospital really since it was first created. That was what it was set up for under the commonwealth. It was set up as part of a range of service providers within the commonwealth health system. So essentially, it has always had the contract. That is a decision of people other than me. But we do have to go into essentially a negotiation. There are performance measures within the contract as well. That was a decision by Health to go through that process in that way. But it was done as a single select.

MR WALL: Just to clarify, you retain any profits of the linen service to subsidise the cost of the hospitals' linen processing, yet you negotiate quite a deal with them and there is no guarantee of their business?

Mr Trushell: There is no guarantee of the business beyond the five years of the SLA. Within that, we went in and negotiated prices. They made it very clear that they were subject to government budget savings, like everyone else, and that, essentially, we had to be able to continue to demonstrate value for money. But we also have to be mindful that this is not just around unit pricing as well. There are other things they are looking for. They are looking for guarantee of service, continuity of service, ability to grow and adapt. You would be aware of the amount of change that has gone on at the campus there at TCH.

Part of the service requirement was that we were able to adapt as wards were closing or opening—changes were going on—innovation in product delivery, ability to work with, for example, the sterilising instrument service as well, who are on the same side as we are. So the value-for-money proposition is not just around pricing but is based around a number of short-term and longer term, I guess, imperatives.

An example of the innovation is around providing products. One of our business lines is sterilised theatre products. There are a lot of laundries in Australia but relatively few of them are able to provide that particular service. And what we have been able to do is provide a service which complemented what the operating theatres wanted in terms of reusable products plus disposable theatre products, which they buy from the likes of Kimberly Clark and those sorts of companies.

What is happening at the moment is that there is a gradual phasing out of polyester cotton-based products because of concerns around the risk of infection from lint. We

are working with them at the moment to do an evaluation around the introduction of non-lint-based products. As part of that evaluation, we are not looking at it from the point of view of how much money can we make out of this. We are looking at it from a whole-of-government point of view of what is best in terms of the best cost outcome for the government budget and what is best in terms of achieving government outcomes, for example, around reduction of waste and things like that.

We tend to take a broader, more holistic, long-term view of our business rather than, I guess, when you are in sort of a contract situation where you tend to try to maximise your profits within the period of the contract because you are not guaranteed anything beyond that. So it raises issues, then, around: if you go to outsourcing, will the outsource company invest in future capability, invest in equipment, invest in enough linen to make sure that they can service the hospitals? So our focus tends to be around building capability, both in the short term but also in the long term, to ensure that there is a guaranteed linen supply that meets the needs of the ACT public health system.

THE CHAIR: Minister, I might just bring you back to page 15 and, again, in the continuous improvement program there is a note about a delivery vehicle tracking system. Can you go through, for the committee, how consultations with staff went and how that has improved the delivery system?

Mr Trushell: Until the introduction of that system, we had no effective data around the efficiency or effectiveness of our vehicle collection and delivery services. Obviously a key part of the service delivery cycle is that in order to have the linen available to reprocess and deliver out, you have got to be able to collect it. And the idea of that system was that it tracks each of the individual trucks. It allows us to then have data which tells us how long it takes us to get from point to point, how long we are at a particular site. And that then starts to provide the information to allow us to work out how to optimise our delivery and collection of linen, particularly as things change.

What we did was that we essentially sat down with our drivers and explained what we wanted to do and we sat down also with the TWU, the CFMEU and our joint consultative committee, because while it did not directly impact on the other staff, it was important to, I guess, ensure they understood what we were doing. The TWU were not thrilled initially, but as we worked through why we were doing it, I guess, the safeguards that were there as part of the system made it clear that it was not about trying to catch drivers out. I never had any particular reason to believe that the drivers were not doing the right thing in the first place. So it was really focused on improving the service delivery.

Particularly as you grow, there will be a tendency for people to ask for additional trucks, more drivers. I felt that we still had a little bit of fat to squeeze out of that if we had better data. And that tends to reflect in most of what we do. If you have got good-quality information, you are in a position to make more optimal resource allocation decisions. Essentially, that was what it was about.

The system is in. The drivers are happy. They can see that we are not using it as a big brother-type system. And it is open for them to come and see it. It is great for the front

office staff because often they will get a phone call from a hotel saying, “When’s my delivery coming?” They can look on the system, see the truck is five minutes down the road and ring back. In the past, they had to ring up drivers in their cabs. They cannot answer on their mobile phone while they are driving. Often the communication was a little difficult. You did not know where a driver was. For example, if you needed a driver to divert to somewhere else, you did not know which driver was closest to that facility. For a relatively cheap system—it cost about \$20,000—it offers a massive amount of future benefit for us.

THE CHAIR: Real time. Are there any more questions on capital linen, members? We might move, then, to ACT Property Group. I might just kick off by asking about the changes to Downer or how the new development in Downer is going and the tenants’ movements from there.

Mr Bailey: We have been able to find alternative accommodation for just about all the tenants in Downer now. There are still two that we are working with. We are reasonably confident that we will be able to find accommodation for them. We have got some options for those people to go to. But yes, we are on track with that. And it looks to be fairly successful.

THE CHAIR: Has construction started at all, or demolition?

Mr Bailey: No, not to my understanding. It may well have gone into early next year now because we got the extension to get the tenants out by this year. I think the demolition works will commence early in the next calendar year.

MR WALL: I am not quite sure about this. Is the multi-purpose sports facility that is being built down at Tuggeranong for archery and other community groups an asset that falls under the ACT Property Group?

Mr Rattenbury: No, I think that would be through EDD, through the sport—

MR WALL: So sport and rec have retained ownership of that.

Mr Rattenbury: I am pretty sure they would have that. It is certainly not ours.

MR WALL: Okay; I am right at the moment.

DR BOURKE: Minister, page 17 makes reference to the plans for the Parkwood Road recycling estate.

Mr Rattenbury: Yes.

DR BOURKE: What are the management issues there, please, and what are the plans?

Mr Bailey: There are a number of different things happening out at Parkwood at the moment. There was the Auditor-General’s report last year that identified a couple of issues with the site. We are currently working on licence agreements with the tenants. A large percentage—around 35 or something—of the licences have expired. They are

in holdover mode at the moment. We are working with them on new licence agreements to get them up to a market rent, a market-based rent, which is in some cases a considerable jump from the current rent. So we are working with them. Over a period of time we are hopeful that we can get everybody up to market within a period of three years.

There are other issues with the site that we are trying to deal with in terms of establishing better services. We are looking at doing some studies to see what sorts of things we have to do there to improve the infrastructure on the site. We have recently had a town planner engaged to look at future planning of the site, whether the block sizes fit, what in the future that estate should be called and what it should do to service the community.

Mr Perram: On a slightly different theme from where Property Group works, in the recycling area there are rebates given to the businesses on the site—or some of the businesses on the site—with their operations. What has happened over time is that they appear to have transitioned into slightly different businesses. One of the challenges there is for both NoWaste and ACT Property Group to work out exactly what the new businesses are and whether that rebate applies to the ongoing operation of those businesses? So that is part of that rental debate that is going on at the moment.

DR BOURKE: So what sort of quantum of rental change are you anticipating following that review?

Mr Bailey: Over the last 12 months we have had two different market assessments done. The Auditor-General's report picked up on one of the valuations saying that \$30 was the market rate per square metre. We have subsequently obtained another valuation earlier this year which put it more around the \$15 mark as being the market rate. But we are being quite reasonable in all negotiations. We are not sort of saying, "This is the set amount." As all commercial arrangements should be, we are encouraging the tenants to obtain their own valuations so that they are comfortable that it is a market rent and we are working with them on that.

In some cases we have actually entered into two recent licence agreements where we are transitioning so that over three years they will get to a market-based rent. Given that the current rent that they are on is quite low, it will progressively work up over the next two years. Then we will do a market review—I obviously cannot state what that will be—in three years' time and go from there. Each different licence holder may want a longer term or a shorter term; so we really are tailoring each licence to their own business.

DR BOURKE: How are you working with the tenants to manage their sites, that their issues of public safety are properly addressed?

Mr Bailey: We try to work fairly closely with the tenants. We have held a number of open days where we have called the groups in on a couple of sessions to talk about concerns and where we are going with things. But we do try also to work individually with them to listen to their concerns. In terms of the public safety, we ensure that there is compliance with the licence agreements that they are on. When required, we have to take firmer actions or we can, under licence, enforce some provisions there to

ensure they are doing the right things.

DR BOURKE: Do you undertake regular inspections or do you rely upon compliance?

Mr Bailey: We do undertake regular inspections. We also will sometimes accompany the EPA when they are undertaking inspection of some of the sites as well. So there are a couple of sites where we know that there are some bigger issues on, and we work with the EPA on those. I have even been to some of the inspections with them.

DR BOURKE: What is the frequency of those inspections?

Mr Bailey: With the EPA it is monthly. But in terms of ACT Property Group inspections, it is not uncommon for us to be out there more than that.

THE CHAIR: Minister, page 17 shows that Property Group spent \$6.5 million on upgrade programs involving 183 projects on 85 different properties. That is quite extensive. Can you give us an overview of what the programs involve?

Mr Bailey: Yes, certainly I can. Each year that is around the amount that we like to put in the upgrade program. The portfolio that we have, as we are saying, is 148 properties. The average age of the building stock is around 45 years. So a lot of these sorts of works are base building works like plant and equipment. There is a lot of make-safe work as well. We undertake condition assessments and hazardous materials reports for our entire portfolio.

That actually forms the basis of a lot of our works. A lot of that might include asbestos removal. But a lot of it is upgrading plant and equipment—carpets, paint, things like that. They are the real core base building sort of projects; removing fuel tanks right down to upgrade works in the portfolio.

THE CHAIR: Do you recoup those costs through the rental process?

Mr Bailey: That is correct, yes. The portfolio is split 50 per cent community tenants and 50 per cent commercial tenants. A lot of our commercial tenants are other ACT government directorates and they do pay rental. The community rent is set to effectively recover costs. That is what generates the income to put back into this upgrade program.

THE CHAIR: On the community rentals, is there a different cost for not for profits? For example, where Downer was being rented out, there were some for-profit groups and some not for profit.

Mr Bailey: Yes. So the not-for-profit groups would pay the community rate rent. But the commercial ones would pay a different commercial rent that would be based on the property.

Mr Perram: One of the areas that property and business enterprises have been involved with is a review through the Community Services Directorate in relation to exactly that—the consistency of community rent application across the ACT

government. That is part of the considerations that will come forward probably in the next 12 months.

MR WALL: I have an electorate-based question. The former TAMS depot in Hyland Place in Wanniasa is an issue I have written to you on before, minister.

Mr Rattenbury: Of course.

MR WALL: You said that the tenancy had expired there and that the Property Group was in negotiations to review the agreement. I was wondering if there was a renewal reached and if any work is planned to upkeep or maintain the building, given last time I went past there a number of windows were boarded up and there was a substantial amount of graffiti on the property.

Mr Bailey: I am not 100 per cent familiar with that particular property, but I know we have actually got money in this year's program for depot upgrades. So that is actually a focus that we are trying to go through with all our depots to upgrade some of the base building aspects there.

MR WALL: Do you have any disused depots?

Mr Bailey: I do not know of many that are vacant. So I am not sure—

Mr Rattenbury: I have not had an update since I last wrote to you on that one, Mr Wall, but I will check on that and will get back to you on notice.

MR WALL: Could you take that on notice for an update?

Mr Rattenbury: Yes. I know that last time I wrote to you I said, yes, those discussions were going on.

MR WALL: Yes.

Mr Rattenbury: Is there a particular concern you have? Is it just to make sure that the building is not left idle?

MR WALL: It is ultimately the case that it is in a fairly secluded spot. It does tend to be the victim of vandalism and other untoward activity.

Mr Rattenbury: Sure, yes.

MR WALL: It is a broken window syndrome. If it is left to lay idle, it is only going to increase the instance of that sort of activity in the area.

Mr Rattenbury: No, we will get an update on that specific location and provide you with an answer on notice.

DR BOURKE: Minister, you have four business parks for small businesses.

Mr Rattenbury: Yes.

DR BOURKE: Could you tell us a little bit more about them and how you manage them financially? Are these incubators or solutions to a market need?

Mr Bailey: Yes, my understanding is that initially the business parks were set up as incubators. They offered discounted rents in the event that the businesses would be able to get established and potentially move on or move to a more market-based rent. My understanding now of the business parks is that they have a mix of commercial and community tenants in them. That is a model that we find works well. The community rent is basically cost recovery but does not sometimes cover some of the upgrade works that we would like to do; so having a mix of those is quite a successful way to manage the projects there.

But, yes, I suppose that within the actual portfolio management, we are comfortable that we are investing appropriately in the infrastructure there to allow for a reasonable standard of accommodation. They are very popular. One issue is that we literally do not have enough community accommodation around. We have a waiting list; so we are confident that, I suppose, the stock that we have is good, it is wanted and it works well.

Mr Perram: I understand that the incubator programs were with Chief Minister and Treasury and they are currently run by EDD. We provide, if you like, the infrastructure as opposed to the programs or initiatives.

DR BOURKE: So what sort of rents are we talking about?

Mr Bailey: What sort of rates?

DR BOURKE: Yes.

Mr Bailey: The community rate is around \$120 per square metre. That is for community or not-for-profit groups. But the commercial rates can vary. There is no really set amount. It is negotiated.

THE CHAIR: Does it depend on location as well?

Mr Bailey: Some part of it does—well, not entirely. We are not quite there just yet. It is just depending on whether it is a gross floor area that they are renting. It is also set based on the amount of space. It might be a very small area that is worth a lot less or something like that. It really is tailored to the individual one for the commercial. But for the community one, whilst there are variances to that as well—I am saying \$120 is the set amount—there are different deals that have been done in the past. Some are a lot less—

THE CHAIR: So different rates for storage, for example?

Mr Bailey: Absolutely, yes. Storage, or if it is just garage space or if it is just hard stand office. So that \$120 I am giving you is probably a standard office or a community building like that. But, yes, there are places that just have garages, workshops, depots and things like that attract a very different rate.

THE CHAIR: Minister, again on page 17 towards the bottom, the second dot point there, under “Activities undertaken” I am interested in the LEAD—live, experience, access, develop—agreement there.

Mr Rattenbury: Yes.

THE CHAIR: Can you give us some information on how that is operating?

Mr Rattenbury: Yes, specifically was that around the merry-go-round—

THE CHAIR: No, firstly, how is the partnership operating and then we will ask about the merry-go-round?

Mr Rattenbury: Yes, certainly.

Mr Bailey: The merry-go-round was handed back to ACT Property Group in July last year after it had been in private ownership for about 19 years—private management, sorry. So we actually were not too sure what it is. ACT Property Group ran it for a couple of months, but we really wanted to trial something different; so we thought that under a social procurement we would run a trial with a community group to see if we could form some sort of partnership.

LEAD were actually one of a couple that we approached and we put them on as a trial just to see if it would work. It was cost sharing or revenue sharing. ACT Property Group was fully responsible for maintenance and the upgrade of the merry-go-round. It is under a conservation management plan. There are a lot of historical aspects that we have to manage. But we wanted to see if it would work.

LEAD has been doing it since September until now. We are just about to go out to market to run a more formal process to formalise that for a longer term. We have found that the trial has been very successful. The employment that LEAD have been able to provide is a really rewarding aspect of it; 15 to 18 people have been able to be employed through the merry-go-round. We have also found that the ACT government gets enough revenue that it can actually keep the management, the repair and the maintenance of the merry-go-round going. So it is a successful trial and we are just going to formalise that now through a formal procurement process.

THE CHAIR: Turning now to the merry-go-round, there has been some discussion about the merry-go-round moving.

Mr Rattenbury: Yes, I was surprised by the media coverage of that. I thought in the way it was presented it suggested that LEAD were being booted out. That was certainly very contrary to the discussions I have had with Property Group. We spoke about this very carefully, because I think, as Mr Bailey has outlined, it has been a successful program, and we are moving to formalise it.

It is quite possible—I do not want to sort of pre-judge it in any way; but there is no reason why LEAD would not win the contract on an ongoing basis. But in that spirit of government being open about these things, it will now go to a formal tender

process. I was a bit surprised about the way that that was presented. It came across in quite a negative way when, in fact, my view is that it has been very successful. It is quite possible that that will continue. If, for some reason, LEAD were to not win the contract, it would be simply because another operator running a similar social procurement model somehow presented a better approach. But that is what these processes are about.

MR COE: Regarding the Mt Rogers community hub, I understand that there is some concern about the ongoing management of the facility in terms of maintenance—maintenance requests and the former tenants having swipe passes—that are still current et cetera. Will you please give an overview as to how those assets are managed? What is the onus of tenants with regard to maintenance and what is the responsibility of the government?

Mr Rattenbury: Sure.

Mr Bailey: Mt Rogers I actually inspected rather recently. Over the last three years ACT Property Group has spent approximately \$940,000 in upgrade works aside from any urgent repairs and maintenance on Mt Rogers. That has included some roof, fire, traffic calming, new road, parking upgrades and just the general base building there. It is actually in very good condition. The building itself, I think, is one of our better community buildings. It does have a mix of tenants in there.

I have met with some of the tenants and heard some of their recent concerns. We are certainly working with them on those aspects there. In terms of the repair and maintenance, the base building is ACT Property Group's responsibility. We are very responsive, looking at the list of what we have done recently. But for a tenant, basically all they are responsible for is their fit-out and things like that. But especially at a multi-tenanted site like that, we are responsible for the cleaning of the common areas. They are responsible for cleaning in their tenancies.

MR COE: Is there scope to put in additional toilet facilities or to change the configuration of the entrance hallways such that toilets are either publicly available or such that they are blocked off so they are a particular tenant's responsibility, in effect? At the moment I think there is some confusion about who has access to certain facilities. For instance, there is one instance whereby the male toilet is a publicly accessible toilet but the female toilet is not publicly accessible at certain times. I guess that the broader question is: what scope is there to better configure the facility?

Mr Bailey: It is difficult. I suppose the problem that we have is that this was an old school. If you actually look on the plan, there are so many toilet blocks out there. But, like you said, they might not fit in with the fact that we now have got it multi-tenanted. I know that area where the female toilet is. It is where you walk in the doors. It is still in the common area, but the male toilet is in the playground area, sort of thing.

MR COE: The common area if the door is unlocked.

Mr Bailey: Yes, it is at times. Yes, it is difficult. If you look at the number of toilets out there, there are quite a lot. But the difficulty is—I mean, it has worked. The tenants have been out there together now for five or 10 years. There are some recent

issues that have sort of brought some concerns to a point. We are always trying to work with our tenants to get the best out of the properties that we can. We would certainly allow any plans to upgrade or any installation of private toilets and things like that.

We just have a balancing game where we have got, I suppose, a limited amount of money and a portfolio of stock that is approximately 45 years in average age. So we just have to work out where we sort of allocate our money each year. Mt Rogers is a really good quality property out there at the moment. I am fairly confident, based on the recent discussions I had as early as this week with the tenants, that we will be able to address some of their concerns with parking and toilets that they have got. But, again, a lot of this comes down to just different behaviours of the tenants which are causing some of the issues, and that is a challenge.

MR COE: Yes. In terms of your assessment of the site, is it functioning at capacity now? Is there scope for increased use?

Mr Bailey: I think it is at reasonable capacity. There is very limited vacant space there. I think there are only one or two rooms that are vacant. It is an old school. It would be great if the whole place was open and everyone could access everywhere—if there were more than adequate bathrooms and more than adequate parking and things like that. But people target different areas of the site, which is on a big block of land. Whilst there might not be enough parking in here, it might be right around the other end. That is a bit of an inconvenience, we will admit. But we are working with them. We may be able to free up some of the extra green space into some overflow parking that might help with some of the peak capacity times.

A lot of these are different community groups, and I think there are a couple of churches and things like that out there. When they have their services is when there is the peak volume of people coming in. If that conflicts with another group, it does provide some challenges with parking. We are aware of those; we are hoping we can come up with a solution.

MR COE: Finally, how have things progressed with regard to the school at the site? And what other sites were considered—sites that are comparable or similar?

Mr Bailey: The decision on putting the school there is not a decision of ACT Property Group. ACT Property Group was approached to see if one could possibly go to this site. It is an option, and one that at this stage has the interim acceptance of the education department that if it could go there, it would be preferable. But it is only interim. It is only to go there, our understanding is, for 12 months. That is what the licence that we would be looking at doing would be for. That licence is conditional on them submitting a DA, a development application, which to date has not been submitted. That was to put a couple of demountables on the site of their current tenancy. The group already is a tenant of the site. That is one of the options. I am not sure what other sites education considered. I do know that they had to look at areas in Gungahlin and Belconnen. They were the two areas that—

MR COE: North side, yes.

Mr Bailey: Yes, that is right. But in terms of other sites, we considered everything that ACT Property Group had and basically put them on the table. Given the very short nature of time that was required—as I say, this is put down as the preferred site pending a development application and even pending the fact that they need to find a more permanent site, preferably, I think, in Gungahlin.

MR COE: On the back of that answer—there was regard to facilities or infrastructure required for a school, which is probably somewhat different from the requirements for other tenancies in terms of the safety standards and everything else—what remediation or additions to the site are going to be required in order to comply with school standards, separate from demountables?

Mr Bailey: Okay.

MR COE: Separate from parking space, I mean.

Mr Bailey: I understand that education would be the ultimate governing body of that. From the Property Group's perspective, we would want to ensure that parking was addressed, that toilets were addressed and that the services, in terms of all the plumbing, electrical and everything like that, were suitable. There is security and fencing. But in terms of the standards for the amount of bathrooms, the amount of parking and things like that, I think education would have some guidelines there. I know there have been some concerns that they may be using the shared bathrooms. I do not think it would be possible under education's guidelines that schoolchildren would be able to use a publicly accessible bathroom. They would have to probably install some other bathrooms and toilets in their facility as well.

I am not across the actual details of what is required for a school. Technically, feasibly, from an ACT Property Group perspective, can it be done? Yes, it can be done out there, following a development application and meeting all the building codes and requirements and things like that. Our greatest concern for the tenants out there would be ensuring adequate parking. We would be making sure that the development application, with traffic coming in and out and dropping off for schools, adequately addresses that and does not impact on the other tenants.

MR COE: Thank you.

THE CHAIR: Any other questions on the Property Group?

DR BOURKE: Yes. On page 18 you mention completing stage 1 roof repairs at the National Convention Centre. What further work is required and what is the long-term future of the building in line with the city plan and the city to the lake concepts?

Mr Bailey: With the roof, it is getting to the stage where there were some upgrades. There have been some minor leaks in the past, and water leaks are always a challenge. And it is a big roof space. We have done some work on stage 1, but through that we have identified other areas that we are looking at. We are doing that as we speak. There are roofing repairs happening there; it is, I suppose, ongoing—those base building aspects of our portfolio and the challenges we have with age. That one is built with a big roof space, and tracking down water leaks is always a real challenge.

Mr Rattenbury: That is the answer on the roofing. In term of the longer term plans, as you know, the Economic Development Directorate is taking the lead on the city to the lake project. In terms of the long-term future of the convention centre, that is an issue that is under consideration. Members are all aware of the push by various business organisations in Canberra to construct a new convention centre in the medium term. By that, I mean perhaps a 10-year time frame. That is what they envisage is needed. Certainly that is being looked at by government at the moment. It is part of the parliamentary agreement to get the business case ready for a new convention centre so that we can look at public-private partnerships and various funding models. Obviously the future of the current convention centre would need to be part of that equation of how the land might be released to help fund perhaps a new convention centre. Those are the sorts of issues that need to be weighed up as part of that bigger picture planning of the city precinct.

DR BOURKE: Thank you. Whilst we are on building refurbishment, I refer to page 190, where it talks about the refurbishment of heritage properties, including the Yarralumla woolshed and the former sewer attendant's cottage at Weston Creek. What is planned for the future use of particularly the cottage?

Mr Bailey: We have not actually identified any future use. There are probably about four cottages that we have that are in a similar state. They have been refurbished to effectively a cold shell base building sort of style. With that one there, when the rest of the area opens up, we will be looking at expressions of interest or what we could possibly do to upgrade it, with the view that maybe it will become suitable for a community tenancy or maybe it will become suitable for some other use. At this stage, we have not identified a tenant for that particular property.

DR BOURKE: Could you tell me—

Mr Perram: One of the approaches we have had has been in respect of a museum for the bushfire that may fit. We are just not sure of the configuration of the cottages; it may not work at all.

DR BOURKE: Could you tell me a little bit more about the heritage value of the cottage?

Mr Bailey: I am not too familiar with all of the details of the heritage, but I could certainly get back to you on that, yes.

Mr Rattenbury: I think this goes to your question, Dr Bourke, to some extent: the cottage—correct me if I am wrong here—has not been accessible because of the works that have been going on in the area to get the pond ready as part of that whole development. That is why there is no tenant at the moment. That cottage has not been available to lease in that sense.

DR BOURKE: Nor would it be practicable, given the works going on around it.

THE CHAIR: We might move on.

DR BOURKE: I have still got some questions, if I might.

THE CHAIR: Sorry, Dr Bourke.

DR BOURKE: Going back to page 18, regarding the testing of fuel storage tanks and the removal or abandonment of in situ tanks across the ACT, in what cases would you consider or have you considered abandonment?

Mr Bailey: Leaving them in situ?

DR BOURKE: Yes.

Mr Bailey: We have had discussions with the EPA on this. We have some tanks that are adjoining—abutting—building footings, things like that. The aim is always to remove them when the tank has stopped being used, and that is what the EPA requires as well. If it is actually structurally unsafe to do so, in that it would compromise the integrity of the building, there are other ways that we can then discuss with the EPA of abandoning it there. Obviously it will always be part of the management plan for the site, so any further development would have to take it into consideration. If that building was demolished or redeveloped, it would be noted that there is a tank there that needs to be removed as part of that. With any abandonment we would also make sure that we test all around it in terms of environmental testing to ensure there is no leachate or contamination in the ground. If that was the case, we would have to manage that. That would be the only case where we would look at abandoning.

DR BOURKE: How many of these would there be?

Mr Bailey: There are not too many.

DR BOURKE: Dozens? Hundreds?

Mr Bailey: No.

DR BOURKE: Tens?

Mr Bailey: In terms of potential ones—all up, tens in the ground, you mean?

DR BOURKE: Yes.

Mr Bailey: No. In the Woden site I think there are about 14 tanks or something like that. At another of our sites, there might be two to three tanks on a property, but there are not too many. It would be under 20 all up, I would imagine.

Mr Perram: I think there are five sites that the ACT Property Group has tidied up in the last three years. We are progressively working through the sites that have tanks on.

DR BOURKE: Thank you.

THE CHAIR: We will move to ACT NOWaste. Minister, while the officials are coming up, I might kick off with Mugga landfill and ask how the expansion of Mugga

landfill is going.

Mr Roberts: The expansion is really in two stages. One is two interim expansions, which have now been completed. The first of those has been approved for filling. Design work has been completed on the longer term extension, and that will be put out to tender shortly.

THE CHAIR: The methane generator that you have currently operating at Mugga—will that work continue in the expansion? If so, will you be piping from the new landfill site or will you create another generator?

Mr Roberts: It will continue with the current generator. Yes, it will work with the current arrangement. We are not moving to what they call a bioreactor, which is designed principally to create more methane. We are looking at continuing the current process with landfill.

THE CHAIR: Thank you.

DR BOURKE: I have more on methane. You are also producing methane at west Belconnen landfill. What is the projection for how long west Belconnen will continue to produce methane now that it has been closed?

Mr Roberts: The profile of methane production is economically around 18 years, so parts of west Belconnen are reaching the end of their useful life. Other parts have about five years to run. The infrastructure under the current contract reverts to the territory, I think in about two or three years. At that point we will have to make a decision on whether we are going to put in new infrastructure to continue to use the methane generated or whether we are going to flare it.

DR BOURKE: Is there any variability in those projections around methane production, given the level of moisture and water?

Mr Roberts: Yes, there is a lot. The bioreactor is specifically designed to keep the waste moist, to increase the rate at which things rot and degenerate and the methane is produced. But also the nature of the waste has a big impact. A lot of the old waste at west Belconnen is construction and demolition waste, which tends to be fairly inert—brick and rubble. That does not rot down and produce methane. So it depends on quite a few factors.

DR BOURKE: Thank you.

THE CHAIR: Questions for NOWaste?

MR COE: Yesterday there was a bit of activity just across the road there. I was wondering what communication or what role you have had, minister, with regard to the ongoing dispute with waste collection service workers?

Mr Rattenbury: Yes, I am aware, and I have been briefed on the situation. Just to paint the full story—as I am sure you know, we are implementing new contracts. We are moving from Cleanaway to SITA effective from 28 October. That was through a

process of government going to market and testing for the new contract.

As part of the contract with SITA, SITA committed to the government that it would offer wages at rates and conditions of employment not less favourable than the current agreement. That is the phrase—“not less favourable.” The situation we now find ourselves in is that SITA has made an offer to employees. SITA believes it would see them paid at least the same, if not more, based on working the same number of hours.

Where the point of dispute lies is in the interpretation of the term “not less favourable”. In SITA’s view—and I think this is right—that does not necessarily mean exactly the same working arrangements as previously. The dispute between the Transport Workers Union and the staff they represent and SITA is about whether that offer that has been put forward is not less favourable. That is a dispute between those two parties. Given the importance of the service and ensuring that we do have continuity of garbage collection in the ACT, I have directed TAMS—Gary Byles as the director-general has taken this on; we are taking it very seriously. We are seeking to work with the two parties to help them find agreement.

Yesterday’s action was unexpected. It was surprising in the sense that TAMS has facilitated further meetings next week between the two parties, and we are actively engaging with the two parties to try and get this resolved.

DR BOURKE: What about the long service leave entitlement for the workers?

Mr Perram: Under the provision of the existing Cleanaway contract, all existing staff of Cleanaway will be paid out a redundancy payment, including the ones that are re-employed by SITA.

DR BOURKE: Is that going to cover their long service leave entitlements or are they transferred?

Mr Perram: No, it will not transfer, because it is a different employment arrangement. But they will be paid out the full entitlements.

DR BOURKE: So they do not get continuity of service?

Mr Perram: No; that is correct.

MR COE: How many suburbs or households have been affected so far by industrial action of sorts?

Mr Rattenbury: We have only had the one instance of industrial action. That was back in August. The number of households was about 22,000. Arrangements were put in place for catch-up collections, which most people did receive—not all. But also at the time the government made an offer to people who were affected by that that they could take their waste to Mugga Lane for free. We had around 450 or so residents who took up that offer and actually brought their own rubbish, or probably brought theirs and maybe their neighbours—

MR COE: Was that based on showing your licence with the address?

Mr Perram: Basically, it was bringing your own rubbish in in small quantities. It was not an address area because we thought most people would not take up the movement of the organic waste if they did not have to. As far as we can see, given the numbers involved—450 out of 22,000—there may have been some people from other areas use it, but it would only have been a very small proportion.

Mr Rattenbury: Just going to your issue of industrial action—just to finish that off—there are now undertakings through Fair Work Australia that were put in place after that last disputation at the end of August which require that there be no further industrial action up until 28 October—so the current Cleanaway contract. As to yesterday's event, the view has been put that that was not industrial action because it was undertaken during the tea break. Certainly, based on the duration of it, which was in the order of 45 minutes to an hour—if I am correct—it has not triggered that clause under the Fair Work undertakings.

MR COE: So we will all have 15 minutes at 10.45 to frantically do a convoy of some sort!

Mr Rattenbury: I thought you would like that one, yes.

MR COE: That is right. Does the contract that the territory has with Cleanaway and also with SITA have a penalty for days lost due to industrial action?

Mr Perram: The contract is worded in the opposite direction. Basically, they must ensure the collection of the waste. So rather than having a penalty for non-collection, “you must make good” is probably the best way to describe it.

MR COE: Does the KPI include a time frame?

Mr Perram: There are significant issues in relation to the capability to pick up on that. If you like, the penalty would apply because of the overtime requirements necessary to do the collection. Cleanaway, and into the future SITA, would wear an additional cost in respect of the collection of that same waste. The time frame itself is very difficult unless you have a significant number of unused trucks or a significant number of unused drivers on any given day. Then you have the particular issues also with the familiarity of the runs being collected.

MR COE: In the event that there is a dispute that goes for a week, say, and therefore every household in Canberra does not have their rubbish collected and half the houses do not get their recycling collected, in that scenario what happens with regard to the contract? Is it simply that the operator has to catch up on 220,000-odd collections?

Mr Perram: There are two areas with this. Basically, the first one is the Fair Work Commission would make a determination in respect of the operations of the action. What they did for the one-day action was direct that the drivers return. I would expect that any action would be limited to one day and a direction be given and fines applied should it not apply only for one day. The likelihood of a full week would be most unusual.

On the second side of things, we also have the issues related to public health. The ACT government public health officer would be able to make directions, in conjunction with the commission, to have matters addressed at that stage.

In respect of particular time frames, it is very difficult. What we would do internally is extend the landfill hours. We would enable collections after the normal closure of the landfill so that we could expedite the capability of the collections to occur during that period in the immediate future of any industrial action.

MR COE: That public health requirement, is that a factor or an argument against switching the fortnightly collection to rubbish and the weekly collection to recycling? I know that either the minister or his previous colleagues touted that as something for discussion in the last Assembly. Would there be public health implications by not having rubbish collected on a weekly basis?

Mr Rattenbury: That is something that we need to do some more research on at the moment. I have certainly been approached by constituents who have suggested it be switched over—that the recycling bin be taken on a weekly basis and the other one be taken on a fortnightly basis—just because of the way people’s habits have changed. As they recycle more and more, that is where the pressure is on the collection. That is something I have asked the agency to give me advice on, the viability of that. I know other people would say, “That wouldn’t work for us.” It is an idea that is around but it is far from a definitive position on what the best approach is.

MR COE: Would the public health issue come into that discussion as well?

Mr Rattenbury: It would have to be measured, yes. It would certainly be part of any decision. Obviously, in the winter it is probably not so much of an issue. In the summer people would be more concerned about it. There is also a perception issue around something might smell even if it is not dangerous from a public health point of view. These would be factors we would need to weigh up as well.

MR COE: Finally, from my point of view, on waste, is there any development or any change of position regarding a third bin or a third bin equivalent service for households?

Mr Rattenbury: Not at this point in time. The advice I continue to receive is that around 90 per cent of all green waste is making it to the green waste recycling facility. That remains a very effective rate of recovery, a very successful rate of recovery. In addition to that there are the various trash pack services around town. Those small businesses, I think, again are fulfilling the niche for those that do not like to go to the tip or do not have the capability to go to the tip.

The key issue, in my mind, is trying to improve the rate of putrescible waste being captured and used. It is a very valuable resource. I am seeing trends in the community of increasing level of composting at a household level. People are seeing that value. Probably the other area we need to be mindful of is those in the community who cannot get to the tip and for whom the cost of a trash pack might be a point of pressure. They are probably the areas that I am most concerned about.

DR BOURKE: What is the level of methane production from household composting?

Mr Rattenbury: As a pop quiz, Dr Bourke, I do not know. I am happy to try and get some advice on that for you and let you know.

DR BOURKE: Yes, the greenhouse gas production that is being produced at home, whereas if it is all in the same place it is a different kettle of fish.

Mr Rattenbury: I do not know if there is a difference. That is something I can take on notice. If we have got some information on that, we will share it with the committee.

Mr Perram: I guess one thing is that if you are composting and you have a carbon dioxide off-take, if you like, from your home composting bins, that is far better than a buried putrescible waste that has a methane off-take, which is about 25 to 27 times worse. In that regard, home composting is probably efficient and more effective.

Mr Roberts: One other comment: it depends very much on how you compost. If you do it properly, aerobically, it does not generate the methane. You are creating the nutrients without the methane. One of the challenges with composting is enabling people to do it well.

DR BOURKE: That is a good answer.

Mr Rattenbury: Does that answer it, or do you want—

DR BOURKE: I am pretty happy with that.

Mr Rattenbury: We will not take that on notice then, just to be clear.

THE CHAIR: We might take this opportunity to have a break. We will come back at 11 with the Animal Welfare Authority.

Meeting suspended from 10.45 to 11.06 am.

THE CHAIR: Welcome back to the planning, environment and territory and municipal services committee inquiry into annual and financial reports. We will now deal with the Animal Welfare Authority. Minister, do you want to make a statement on the authority?

Mr Rattenbury: No. Again, we will go straight to questions.

THE CHAIR: Members, questions for the authority?

Mr Rattenbury: Just before we do, Mr Gentleman, we do have a staff member who is absent today who is actually the lead staff member for this, but Ms Flanery will assist, and if there is something we cannot cover, we will have to take it on notice. My apologies to the committee, but our staff member is necessarily away.

THE CHAIR: Questions, members?

MR COE: Minister, when were you briefed about the rabbit warren concreting issue at the RSPCA?

Mr Rattenbury: I cannot recall the exact date, Mr Coe. I think the issue arose just before I came back from leave, as soon as I got back from leave, which was 11 or 12 September.

MR COE: What was the date of the concreting?

Mr Rattenbury: I would have to take that on notice. It was actually while I was on leave. In terms of being specific, I will get back to you on that.

MR COE: What was the nature of your briefing? What was the genesis of it?

Mr Rattenbury: The issue had been raised and there were animal welfare concerns that had been raised about whether this was an appropriate way to proceed. TAMS, as the responsible agency in the ACT government for monitoring animal welfare, investigated the site and looked at whether there were breaches of animal welfare standards.

MR COE: You have no concerns about what was undertaken at the RSPCA?

Mr Rattenbury: The advice to me from TAMS was that there had not been breaches of animal welfare. They certainly had a discussion with the RSPCA about more appropriate means of dealing with rabbits. As you will recall from the media discussion, there was some discussion about whether it had been done from a staff safety perspective or to deal with the rabbits. The conclusion drawn was that no rabbits were harmed in this process, that there were other escape routes for them out of the burrow. So that was the animal welfare side. As I say, we then had a discussion with the RSPCA to say that, if there are concerns about rabbits, to talk to TAMS about the best way to deal with them. From a staff safety perspective, which was the other angle, again, there were better ways to proceed and TAMS would be willing to advise on the best way to proceed.

MR COE: Has Mr Linke unduly suffered as a result of the whole issue, do you think?

Mr Rattenbury: I am not sure what is the best way to answer that, Mr Coe, simply in the sense that I am sure there has been a level of discomfort about the fact that this was played out in the media over a number of days. As you would know from the jobs that we have, that can be an uncomfortable personal experience. I have not spoken to Mr Linke about it specifically, so I am not sure what his feelings are about the way that that was reported.

MR COE: Has the ACT government ever used concrete to seal off rabbit warrens?

Mr Rattenbury: Not that we are aware of. It is not a recognised way of doing it. Mr Iglesias might help us, but there are a range of procedures for dealing with rabbits which we can go into in detail, if you like, but I am not aware of any use by the ACT government of concrete.

Mr Iglesias: There are nationally recognised means of dealing with rabbits. I think it is well understood that the best way to deal with rabbits is to deploy a range of tactics. We can employ ripping, which is basically destroying their burrows, and also the use of chemicals to poison the rabbits. When the rabbit numbers have been reduced to a lower level, we can then use things like direct shooting as well or trapping. So it is really a holistic approach that we adopt, typically, that uses a whole bunch of different methods at different stages.

MR COE: I can understand that for a large area, but if it is specifically trying to keep them out of an enclosure, isn't sealing off some of the entries, so long as there are enough exits, actually reasonable?

Mr Rattenbury: I am not sure why you would want to close off some of the points and not others.

MR COE: All the ones in the enclosure.

Mr Iglesias: In the situation that RSPCA found itself in with its rabbits, the advice that we provided was that you need to look at the whole area. So you need to consider all the various types of options that you can deploy on that site that would give you an ongoing solution. And there are a number of them. We can use fencing, rabbit-proof fencing, so that we do not have re-invasion, and that isolates the population that they have. You can use poison. Typically, in that situation, we would have used poison to kill the rabbits and get them down to a very low number. We can then look at trapping to get the last remaining number. That would have been the safest and most, if you like, proven method of dealing with the rabbits. Concreting some of the burrows and leaving others open is not going to deal with the rabbit problem.

MR COE: Is poisoning actually an option at an animal welfare facility?

Mr Iglesias: Poisoning is considered to be, from an animal welfare point of view, an appropriate way.

MR COE: No, at a facility—

Mr Rattenbury: Because there are other animals around.

MR COE: Because you have got hundreds, if not thousands, of other animals, domestic and native.

Mr Iglesias: The way the poisoning works is that it is deployed into the burrow space. What happens is that a number of the entries are blocked up. So the poison is deployed, it does its job and then that is it. The chance of the poison, if you like, impacting on other animals incidentally is minimal.

DR BOURKE: So you are talking about a gas rather than baits?

Mr Iglesias: Yes. It can be a combination of the two. It really does depend on the circumstances. Had we been invited to go on site, it would have required us to have a

look at it and decide, “Okay, can we use poison gas here, can we use poison baits here?” It would have been a mix of methods and we would have worked over a number of months to deliver effective control.

DR BOURKE: So you were not involved? You were not invited to offer an opinion?

Mr Iglesias: No, we were asked to provide—

DR BOURKE: You were asked?

Mr Iglesias: Yes, which we did.

DR BOURKE: Before the RSPCA concreted the burrows, you were asked what could be done?

Mr Iglesias: That is true.

Mr Rattenbury: Mr Coe, with respect to where you were going, I think it is a physical question that you are asking. My understanding is that the rabbit burrows were outside of where animals are enclosed at the RSPCA. Certainly, my recollection from being on the site is that the burrows are out the front of the building and all the RSPCA animals are inside the building.

MR COE: There is an enclosure out the back which has donkeys and all sorts of other—

Mr Rattenbury: Yes, depending on what is around. I am not sure that is where the rabbit infestation was. Anyway, that clarifies where I think you were going with that question.

THE CHAIR: Minister, if we look at page 123, there are three codes of practice that we are advised are under consideration by you. There are three dot points there—three codes of practice which are under consideration by you. Where are you up to with those codes?

Mr Rattenbury: I am awaiting advice on all of those at the moment.

DR BOURKE: With regard to the welfare of dogs code, I note that under the Domestic Animals Act a person needs a multiple dog licence to keep four or more dogs on a property. As a result of that, licensing of the property is expected and neighbours are considered. However, is there anything to stop a family perhaps having a dozen dogs if different members of the family each only, say, own three dogs?

Ms Flanery: Dr Bourke, you are quite correct; people can have numerous dogs. So we are looking at ways to limit the overall number of dogs on any premise. We are currently reviewing the Domestic Animals Act to try and address that issue.

DR BOURKE: What ways would that be?

Ms Flanery: We could look at total number of dogs rather than dogs per person.

DR BOURKE: But, clearly, that is going to vary according to the premises. People living on a 300-square-metre block as opposed to a 1,200-square-metre block are going to have a different footprint. Are you going to be looking at size of block or people living in apartments, for instance, whether they have got multiple dogs, or in the suburbs? Is that going to form part of the review?

Ms Flanery: Certainly, you have articulated a lot of the problems, and I will jot all of those down. They will be part of the things we will consider.

DR BOURKE: What sort of community consultation are you going to do to get there?

Ms Flanery: Just to clarify, you started asking about the dog code, as it is referred to. That is separate from the Domestic Animals Act. So it is early days in the review of the Domestic Animals Act, but the dog code has been referred to government for comment.

DR BOURKE: Let us go back to the review of the Domestic Animals Act, because that is what I am particularly interested in. When will consultation open for that and how do people share their views with you?

Ms Flanery: No dates have been determined for that yet. We need to make sure it is on a regulatory program and we have thought about the exact issues that you have articulated—how we might go about this if we want to achieve a certain outcome.

DR BOURKE: I presume there are no limits on cats?

Ms Flanery: Cats are another area that we are looking at. We have a paper that is being prepared about better cat management, including cat containment, and more consultation around it. But I do not think we have actually looked at limiting the number of cats per house. Sorry, we do that; people with more than four cats—I am pretty sure but I can take that on notice and clarify the exact number—do need to register their cats.

DR BOURKE: What about multiples of other domestic animals that you might encounter in Canberra, such as chooks?

Ms Flanery: We have not limited numbers of other animals. People have pocket pets, rabbits and other pets. I am not quite sure what you are actually asking: are we looking at limiting animals in all households?

DR BOURKE: Yes, I was interested in number limitation, because we have moved on from dogs and cats now to chooks and whatever else you might be considering within the review of the Domestic Animals Act.

Ms Flanery: We are looking predominantly at dogs at the moment in terms of managing numbers. Certainly, we are looking at a whole raft of measures in terms of better animal management across the ACT.

DR BOURKE: I suppose dogs would be where you get the most complaints anyway.

Ms Flanery: Dogs and roosters.

THE CHAIR: Minister, in regard to severely injured animals on the road or places like that, what is the authorisation required for an officer to put an animal down?

Mr Rattenbury: Mr Iglesias can go straight to the detail on that.

Mr Iglesias: If it is a native animal, before the animal can be put down, we put our staff through extensive training. The appropriate mode of destruction is by firearm, so we ensure that we are certified under the Firearms Act and also the Nature Conservation Act. For a member of the public that might come across an injured animal, there is an allowance in the act that says that anybody can take the effort if they so wish to put the animal out of its misery. That action would be exempt from any licensing requirement, given that it is done in good faith and for the benefit of the animal. But our mode of management is to use firearms, and we also have something called a captive bolt pistol, which is effectively exactly what it describes—it fires a bolt into the animal and kills it humanely without the requirement to actually shoot a bullet. It is safer.

THE CHAIR: In the report it says that there are six officers from TAMS and/or sworn AFP officers who are authorised as inspectors.

Mr Iglesias: Yes.

THE CHAIR: They are rangers, I imagine?

Mr Iglesias: Yes. Our staff are rangers, and the AFP also assist us. There are times, for example, during full moon phases, when there is a lot of activity on the roads in relation to native animals and there are times when we physically cannot keep up, and the AFP help us.

MR COE: How do you liaise with various mental health service providers, Housing ACT and other concerned parties with regard to when people go into hospital and perhaps their animals are left behind, perhaps knowingly or unknowingly, or there are people with mental health issues? I know the RSPCA inspectors often come across some pretty disturbing situations. How do you coordinate communication amongst the various concerned agencies?

Ms Flanery: In respect of coordinating information, we work very closely with the RSPCA and the inspectorate service. Domestic Animal Services also has provision for long-stay kennels for people who are in need and may not be able to look after their pets. But it is certainly a large area of focus with the RSPCA, and we do try and work with them to accommodate these animals that need long-stay care.

MR COE: How is communication made with Housing ACT or with whoever the agency may be, whether it be government or non-government?

Mr Rattenbury: Essentially, if somebody goes to jail or ends up in hospital?

MR COE: Yes.

Mr Rattenbury: Is that the sort of thing you mean?

MR COE: Yes, that sort of scenario, or if a DAS staff member, a ranger or an RSPCA inspector come across a house which is obviously dysfunctional in one way or another, how do they refer these issues—

Mr Rattenbury: Back the other way?

MR COE: Yes.

Ms Flanery: There is no formal working group that I am aware of, but there is certainly a lot of contact, officer to officer. Last week, for example, some children were taken away from parents and they also had animals, dogs, at their location. The police called the Domestic Animal Services immediately to come and get them to care for the dogs. The Domestic Animal Services rangers stay in contact with the police and find out updates on what is happening. There is certainly a lot of discussion that goes on. We are particularly sensitive to people in need and trying to look after animals. There is a good correlation between people that have pets and then being able to go back to them after their time of care or need.

MR COE: My next question is stretching the committee's charge a little. With regard to Housing ACT, do you know whether there are any frameworks in place to make that communication channel as smooth and easy as possible?

Mr Rattenbury: Ms Flanery has made the right comment—not formally in that sense. But I do know that certainly within Housing ACT there is a lot of talk that goes on across the networks. Of course, Domestic Animal Services has powers so that if there was a report—often neighbours will raise these issues—it has the power to go and inspect. That might alert Housing ACT to an issue. So it does rely on those agencies working with each other in that way. There are no formal MOUs or protocols or those sorts of things. I think that is what you are asking about.

MR COE: Yes. I am no fan of excessive process, regulation or bureaucracy, but is there a need for something like that or is it working reasonably well at present?

Ms Flanery: My understanding is that it is working effectively. I have not heard of any situations where it has not. What I am aware of is that the rangers at Domestic Animal Services certainly need greater training in dealing with people with mental health issues. They are also called into some very distressful situations. So we are looking at how we can help our own staff by dealing with that and perhaps make them more aware of when they need to alert other people.

Mr Rattenbury: It is not unlike the situation we have where mental health workers are sitting in the Winchester centre at Belconnen assisting the police. We saw a media report last week or the week before on how effective that has been in assisting the beat officers with being able to talk to somebody at the other end of the line.

MR COE: Yes, there are some synergies.

Mr Rattenbury: Somebody with better skills or better techniques.

MR COE: I have always wondered whether there is scope for some informal mechanism.

Mr Rattenbury: Given the position I sit in, I will talk with CSD and TAMS about that and first identify whether there are gaps. I have not had reports. But we will have a look at that and see if there are things we could do to improve it.

MR SMYTH: Can I follow up on animals?

THE CHAIR: Yes, Mr Smyth.

MR SMYTH: I recently met a gentleman who had his hand savaged by a rather large dog when he went to the aid of his rather small dog. The family had come by the new dog through, I think, the death of a relative and they had just inherited this dog when they were out one day and it was attacked by the big dog. The owner of the big dog did nothing to assist. This man waded in, managed to separate the animals and had some quite severe nerve damage that has resulted in surgery. I understand he has received a fine for not having his dog registered, but the dog that did all the damage was released back to the owner with an “Only take it out with a muzzle” sort of notice. Why is a dog that savages another dog actually released back?

Ms Flanery: Mr Smyth, I would have to look into the specific case.

MR SMYTH: I will give you the details and specifics of it, but just at a general level, if a dog attacks another animal and injures it and injures a human, why would we release it back into the community?

Ms Flanery: It is released on conditions, so it depends on the nature of the attack and the circumstances. There may be other bits of information that neither you nor I know of at this moment in time.

MR SMYTH: Sure.

Ms Flanery: But, certainly, when we release dogs back to their owners or carers, we have to be assured that those people can look after the dogs properly, that they can be contained and that, when they are out in public, they have appropriate protection measures around them, such as a muzzle. We take that very, very seriously. We take all dog attacks seriously in terms of trying to make sure that the dog does not reoffend. I am not sure of the circumstances of why that dog attacked.

MR SMYTH: I will ask the constituent if I can release his details.

Mr Rattenbury: We would be happy to take that up.

DR BOURKE: Minister, could you tell me what is involved in the Animal Welfare

Authority issuing circus permits? I refer to page 124.

Mr Rattenbury: Yes. We issued two circus permits.

Ms Flanery: Prior to issuing a permit to have animals in a circus—generally dogs and horses—we need to be assured of the welfare of those animals. Our chief veterinarian has an inspection of the animals prior to the circus and sometimes during the circus if any animal welfare issues are raised. We do that any time people use animals in terms of issuing licences for schools and other groups that might be using animals to do any experiments or anything like that.

DR BOURKE: Minister, what were the considerations in the development of the code of practice for the sale of animals in the ACT?

Mr Rattenbury: I will ask Ms Flanery to answer that question.

Ms Flanery: The code of practice for the sale of animals, non-commercial in nature, has had a very long history. We are very pleased to report that it should become enforceable on 21 October—so Monday. One of the reasons it had such a long history is that, first of all, it was developed as a code that had best-practice recommendations in it. Then through changes to the Animal Welfare Act nationally, the code then was able to contain mandatory provisions, so basically making some elements criminal offences.

The Animal Welfare Advisory Committee looked at it once making best-practice recommendations and then they were asked to review it and see if any of the provisions in the code could be mandatory. That was a very challenging process about what is a best-practice recommendation and what is not. For example, if you are the seller of an animal, what information should be provided at the time of the sale and what is the age of the people who can sell animals. The Animal Welfare Advisory Committee decided on a whole lot of elements of that code which are mandatory, or will be mandatory, and they include provision of information and water and transportation requirements and things.

The Animal Welfare Authority, or AWAC as they are referred to, put a lot of work into that code because it is the first time they were able to have mandatory provisions. They also wanted to target animal welfare activities across all species. It is a general code about the selling of animals. Subsequently, AWAC are able to go and have a look at specific codes, such as ones for native animals or reptiles and dogs and cats and things because they have addressed the major issues at the time of the sale.

DR BOURKE: So, this code covers everybody, or is it merely just commercial operators?

Ms Flanery: People selling animals. So it also covers markets and internet sales, and therein lies a reasonable area of difficulty being experienced across Australia. People may want to sell puppies and they might put an ad on the internet, and so it is very hard for a jurisdiction alone to regulate the sale of those animals. But we are trying to get a code in place that affects pet shops in the ACT and other markets and things where certain essential information is provided at the time of the sale of the animal.

DR BOURKE: What about neighbourhood transactions where people sell a chook to a friend?

Ms Flanery: Certainly. That was one of the long discussions within the AWAC committee meetings—people selling guinea pigs to each other and selling chickens to each other. We have already done a lot of communication around what it means to sell an animal. What we are really trying to look at is people that own animals and are responsible for animals are responsible for them for the whole of their life cycle and not just the beginning. I really think this code will help strengthen a lot of the rules around selling and also the information to the public.

DR BOURKE: Does that include giving an animal away?

Ms Flanery: Giving is a little bit difficult, but, yes, certainly there are provisions in the code that say if you are giving something, you must provide a certain amount of information as well so people understand what care that animal might need.

DR BOURKE: And this even extends to live fish and crustaceans in restaurants?

Ms Flanery: It does. The element in the code that deals with crustaceans is not quite finalised. We just need to think through some of the issues about the sale of live animals. Certainly, many consumers like buying live fish as opposed to dead fish, and so that has an impact on commercial enterprises and people's choice.

DR BOURKE: What sort of record keeping is required of sellers?

Ms Flanery: I cannot provide specific detail on the information that the sellers need to provide, but they need to provide information to the consumer when they are selling a live animal. Many pet shops already have a code of practice that they sign up to that is part of their own regulation. This is an additional level to cover other areas that are not regulated, like markets and things.

DR BOURKE: So when you are in a restaurant and you are buying that crab that comes out, there is going to be some record keeping that the restaurant owner has to keep for some time?

Ms Flanery: He is cooking it for you. He is selling it to you live to dead, which is a little different to if you were to take it home and cook it yourself. So some of the information they are asked to provide is how to kill that animal humanely.

THE CHAIR: That draws to a close the animal welfare discussion. We will go on to Canberra Connect and, minister, I bring you to page 19 of the report which says there was a major redesign of the Canberra Connect website earlier this year. Can you advise us of the changes that occurred on the website?

Mr Rattenbury: Yes, certainly. I invite Mr Colussi back to the table for that.

Mr Colussi: We undertook a revamping of the Canberra Connect website, mainly focusing around making a more holistic representation of what Canberra Connect

does and reflecting the needs of the community as to why they contact Canberra Connect. So the front page used to present a lot of things around payments and applications and so forth and now we have broadened that out to have six main icons that talk to what is it you want to do when you are contacting ACT government, do you want to contact somebody, do you want to make a payment, do you want to make an application, do you want to report something—so fix my street is prominent on the front page—or do you want to give feedback to government. They are the types of things we are looking to channel our customer group into as they come into government and then effectively triage that to the right place in government.

THE CHAIR: There is a tab for logging in to your account. What is the operation there?

Mr Colussi: Yes, it is an account that a customer, a citizen, can create to keep track of their communications with the ACT government. So it is a customer relationship management system. A citizen can create an account and keep a track of all the different pieces of correspondence they lodge with government. We talked about municipal services requests. Someone putting one of those into government could keep a track of where that is in the system and receive a response back through that system as to when that job is completed. Or when we have received it they will get an acknowledgement number. Those sorts of things.

THE CHAIR: And can you use that account, too, if you wanted to renew your registration?

Mr Colussi: No, not at this point in time. But we are continually looking to improve the ICT platforms we run our systems on and integrate them where we can. We currently have a number of smart forms that take payments from the community, and we would like to be able to put them on the same platform by having them integrated in some way so you can have full view of that. You would have not only your correspondence but also your payments and your payment history and that sort of thing on that account. There is a bit of work yet to be done around making those systems talk, because it is not only Canberra Connect we are talking about here. People will make a payment for their vehicle registration online, but that is a different system. That is run by JACS, so we would need to be able to integrate with that system. So a lot of work needs to be done on the interoperability across government in making that come to fruition.

MR COE: With regard to the payment gateway, that has now shifted across to Westpac? That was a year or so ago, is that right? Earlier this year, maybe?

Mr Colussi: Yes, earlier this year. Westpac is now the banker for the territory. There is some back-end stuff that Westpac provide so we can present the gateway. But the gateway itself is still owned and managed by Canberra Connect.

MR COE: Has the government considered taking American Express or Diners or other cards as the payment method?

Mr Colussi: The current bill payment policy is restricted to Visa and MasterCard. There is a working group looking at the bill payment policy—the first meeting is next

Tuesday—and that sort of thing will be on the agenda for discussion as to whether that needs to be broadened and how we would like to take that bill payment policy forward. We would like to include not only the method of payment but also how we go about presenting bills to the community. It might be how we facilitate electronic presentment of a bill to a customer or how we encourage electronic payment to government. Then we would look at some strategies around making that happen, including how we broaden the methods and the channels through which people can make payment.

DR BOURKE: And you would also be considering the level of merchant fees that might be charged?

Mr Colussi: Absolutely. Certainly credit cards attract a high merchant service fee. There are certainly cheaper channels that are preferable if we could encourage the use of those cheaper channels, like electronic funds transfer essentially. That would be in the best interests of the efficiency of government, and if we can promote that sort of channelled use that would be something we would look at through that bill payment policy.

MR COE: In terms of the government's bill payment policy, does it rest with Canberra Connect or the Revenue Office for things like rates?

Mr Colussi: Canberra Connect does the legwork, if you like. Treasury have a large influence around how that is structured, particularly around merchant service fees and the whole-of-government banking arrangements with Westpac. They have a heavy interest in that. The development of the policy is done across government. A lot of entities across government are taking payments and have their own interests about what they would like to see in that bill payment policy. It will be a collective across-government approach to developing that policy.

MR COE: Something that has been raised with me is that you are unable to set up a direct debit to a credit card to pay both land tax and rates. I think the only direct debit capability is for an electronic funds transfer from a bank account.

Mr Colussi: It is probably a question that would need to be directed to Commerce and Works. I am not 100 per cent familiar with the territory Revenue Office's arrangements around that. That may be the case; I am not too sure. I could not answer that.

MR COE: And there may be good reason for that.

Mr Colussi: Perhaps.

MR COE: But in terms of the actual capability, would Canberra Connect or Westpac have that capability?

Mr Colussi: Yes, it is possible. You could certainly do that. In fact, we have direct debit facilities available already around MyWay. We have that enabled.

MR COE: What about car registration? Can that be done by direct debit?

Mr Colussi: Again, talking about where these things sit in government, that is a JACS facility which is run through the rego.act website. I understand the payments are through credit card or EFT. I am not sure if they have a direct debit facility attached to that. I should say that something on the agenda for the bill payment policy is to try and standardise that across government.

MR COE: Finally, the government for some time now has been talking about credit card parking machines or machines that accept credit cards. Is that something Canberra Connect has been involved with? I know there is a tender out at the moment, or it has just closed, perhaps. Is that something that you have been involved with?

Mr Colussi: Not directly involved in the tender process, but we certainly have been made aware of the specifications and so forth of that tender. My understanding is that a full range of payment options are attached to that—so credit card, phone and all sorts of things.

MR COE: Is it likely to be a Canberra Connect or government-operated payment service or is the operator going to be responsible not just for the maintenance but also the transactions?

Mr Rattenbury: I am not sure, actually. EDD are leading the tender on that. And it also sits with JACS as well, I think. We do not have that side of parking operations.

MR COE: Not the operations, but as a payment. Canberra Connect has the expertise with regard to payments. I am just curious as to how it all comes together with regard to the transactions.

Mr Colussi: My understanding is the specification allows for all payment facilities and then from that there will be some sort of cost-benefit analysis as to what—

MR COE: Whether it goes to a third party or whether it goes directly to government?

Mr Byles: Mr Coe, I think that question would be best referred to Chief Minister and Treasury Directorate, which I understand has taken the lead on the parking meter issue.

MR WALL: There has been a section on the Canberra Connect website created for fix my red tape. I am wondering how many interactions or submissions there have been for that section.

Mr Colussi: I do not have the number at hand, but I can certainly take that on notice and get that for you. That feedback is routed through to EDD, and they would be taking up the actions as a consequence of that and whatever solutions are put in place from there. But I can get you the number that has been put through that system.

MR WALL: That would be great.

DR BOURKE: Minister, there are Canberra Connect shopfronts at Belconnen, Tuggeranong and Woden, but there are none in Civic. The library here only does

driver licences, proof of age cards and ACTION gold card transactions. Is Civic going to get a full service Canberra Connect shopfront?

Mr Rattenbury: No, there are no plans for that at this time. What we are seeing—and this goes back to our earlier discussion about Gungahlin—is that people are increasingly doing their transactions electronically. I think over time we will see, potentially, a shift in the way the shopfronts operate to being less about payments and more about seeking to help people with more detailed discussions—so more of that service rather than a transactional direction. That is where I expect things to do.

DR BOURKE: According to the website, faulty MyWay cards can only be verified for free at a Canberra Connect shopfront, whereas recharge agents charge \$2 for replacement cards. When the ACTION shopfront in Civic closed down, was it an oversight that there was no facility in Civic to handle some of these trickier MyWay functions?

Mr Rattenbury: Can we come back to that when we bring the ACTION folks in in a few days?

DR BOURKE: Okay.

Mr Rattenbury: It is more of an ACTION thing than a Canberra Connect thing.

DR BOURKE: Good. You could just take it on notice.

Mr Rattenbury: We can give you a live answer in a couple of days time, if you like.

DR BOURKE: I look forward to it.

MR WALL: Just on Canberra Connect, minister, so far as traffic interactions are concerned, obviously you have got the three portals—shopfront, online or over the phone. I was wondering if you might be able to take on notice the numbers that are accessing each service.

Mr Colussi: I think they are in the report.

MR WALL: They are in the report?

Mr Colussi: Yes, in volume 2, page 118 at f.

THE CHAIR: As there are no further questions on Canberra Connect, we might move on to parks and cons. Mr Coe.

MR COE: I am happy to give way to Mr Smyth.

MR SMYTH: That is very kind, Mr Coe. Mr Iglesias, welcome. On page 84 of volume 1 it talks about some of the efforts for fuel management. It is kind of interesting to have this discussion today in the light of what happened in New South Wales yesterday. Under “Road Maintenance” it says that there were 41 identified programs or areas, 440 kilometres to be done, and that only 35 of the 41 activities

were completed. Which ones were not, and does having not completed those activities hinder our firefighting activities in the coming months?

Mr Iglesias: Our biggest challenge last year, Mr Smyth, was the weather. We had a wet year. What we were able to do early on in the piece was have a look at our road maintenance program and make some decisions about what we would prioritise, given that it was likely that we would not get through our whole program. Our priority was to look at our capability in the urban area as well as in Namadgi National Park. We were able to deliver some really good improvements to our road network in the park and also around Canberra Nature Park in and around the city. There was a small number that we did not get to that we thought were of a lower priority. I could not tell you exactly what they were. I would have to get back to you about which ones they were. In the scheme of things, they were the ones we considered to be less critical.

MR SMYTH: So you will provide a list of the proposed 41 projects and the 35 that were done and the reason the others were not?

Mr Iglesias: Yes.

MR SMYTH: Thank you. So those numbers are accurate—you did do 407 kilometres of maintenance?

Mr Iglesias: Yes.

MR SMYTH: Okay. It is interesting because on page 27, under “Fire and Forestry Management”, it actually says you did maintenance of 655 kilometres of fire trail.

Mr Iglesias: Well, there you go.

MR SMYTH: So which is the accurate figure—407 or 655?

Mr Iglesias: What needs to be considered here is that we have what we call bushfire operations plan road maintenance, which is specifically maintenance that we deliver that is targeted at giving us a benefit for bushfire fuel management. But there is a broader program than that that deals with road maintenance that may not necessarily give us the same benefit. For example, in and around Canberra Nature Park we have a huge network of management trails and there are elements to that management trail network that we need to maintain for visitor function.

MR SMYTH: Why is the 655 figure on page 27 listed as fire trails?

Mr Iglesias: They say “fire trails”, don’t they? I will take that on board.

MR SMYTH: Are they fire trails or not, and why the almost 250 kilometres discrepancy?

Mr Iglesias: I will take that on board.

MR SMYTH: Given that we have got this discrepancy, are the fire trails appropriately maintained and ready for the current fire season?

Mr Iglesias: Are the fire trails?

MR SMYTH: Have they been appropriately maintained and are they available and ready for the current fire season?

Mr Iglesias: Absolutely. We have a network of fire trails, as I mentioned earlier, both in the national park and in the urban area, which we prioritise as being essential for maintaining our firefighting capacity. We are confident that we are one of the most prepared jurisdictions when it comes to fire trail management and maintenance in Australia.

MR SMYTH: All right. If you go then to page 85 there is a section called “Storm Damage” that says in December 2010 and March 2012 extensive and widespread damage to the fire trails and road infrastructure occurred, and that restoration has not been completed. Can we have a list of the sites identified in the two incidents and which ones have not been repaired?

Mr Iglesias: Sure; I can provide that.

MR SMYTH: The question is why, from December 2010—three years—and from March 2012—a year and a half—that work has not been completed?

Mr Iglesias: We had two significant storm events in two consecutive years. In fact, when we experienced the March event, we were still dealing with the event from the previous year. What we have, effectively, are two very wet years in succession. It is true to say that there are some sites within the network that are still being worked on from that point of view. Again, this is within the context of risk. That is our strategy—risk.

In light of what nature threw at us, we have got to a point where we believe that we have dealt with the most important ones and, in fact, made gains on where we were before those storm events hit, but there are still certain sites throughout the territory which we are still working on.

MR SMYTH: So you will guarantee to this committee and the community that not having completed all the road maintenance and not having repaired all the storm damage will not hinder the fire effort for the coming season?

Mr Iglesias: I can guarantee that we have made an extensive risk assessment which has looked at our entire road network and has prioritised that road network. We have been able to deliver the works that we believe give us an effective and appropriate access network for the purpose of firefighting.

MR SMYTH: But you will not guarantee that the non-completion of repairing the storm damage and the road maintenance will not hinder the firefighting effort this season?

Mr Rattenbury: You are creating a frame that you want to have there, Mr Smyth. Mr Iglesias has been very clear to you, and absolutely explicit, that his agency—and I

have certainly had a briefing on this because I am aware of the risk that has been put forward to us of this fire season—have undertaken a risk assessment and they feel that they have the network of roads in place to enable them to manage the risk for the territory.

MR SMYTH: So you will guarantee that you are ready and the lack of completion of road maintenance and storm damage will not hinder the firefighting effort this year?

Mr Rattenbury: We have been quite clear that we believe that the risk assessment has been appropriate and that the works that have been done to give us appropriate access—

MR SMYTH: So you will not give the guarantee that the non-completion of these activities—

Mr Rattenbury: I am not clear exactly what guarantee you want, Mr Smyth. You are trying to create a frame here of something that you want.

MR SMYTH: No, I am asking: if a crew is out on a road and they encounter a pothole or damage from 2010 that stops them from proceeding, you will guarantee that the crews will not be hindered in their efforts to reach the locations to put the fires out quickly because these parts of the network have not been completed or repaired?

Mr Iglesias: As far as potholes go, that will not stop us. What would stop us is if we had not addressed creek crossings or if we had not addressed considerable washouts, say, on the Mount Franklin Road, which is a critical arterial road. That is what we can say to you. We have invested a lot of time and effort to deal with those sorts of incidents. Given the capacity and the training of our people, things like rills in the road or potholes in the road are unlikely to be critical. What are likely to be critical, as I say, are those structural defects that have happened during those storms, and those we have addressed.

THE CHAIR: If you have a look at page 85 it says there that not only have you done that work but also you have done extra work, including Mount Franklin Road from Bulls Head to Ginini Gate, which was not in the bushfire operational plan. That is correct?

Mr Iglesias: Yes.

THE CHAIR: So how often does that occur?

Mr Iglesias: Where we see that the bushfire operations plan has dictated a certain task and in the course of the year, given the circumstances of the year, we see there is a need elsewhere, we will deal with our colleagues in the ESA and say, “Listen, we should do this as well for this reason.” And that happens. It is inevitable in an operational environment that we have that flexibility. We do not want to be completely contained by our schedule of events at the beginning of the year, especially when the year can throw many things at you. That is a good example of our capacity to react to an issue we believe is important to ensure the safety of our staff and, indeed, the broader ACT community.

DR BOURKE: Can you tell us about the major access improvements into Namadgi which are talked about on page 85?

Mr Iglesias: The Mount Franklin Road is one of those. For the benefit of members, Mount Franklin Road is probably the most important north-south arterial “road” for our purposes, and it links up the northern and the southern sections of the park. What we have been able to do is upgrade that road for the first time ever to be able to cater for heavy equipment. Say, for example, a fire breaks out in the hills along the border area and we need to get bulldozers in quickly. Prior to this work, it would take a long time to get the bulldozer in. What we are able to do now is put it on the back of a float of a large truck and drive it straight there. It saves us hours and it means that we have the capacity to respond much quicker to a bushfire.

DR BOURKE: This upgrade was a result of your risk assessment?

Mr Iglesias: Yes, absolutely. In fact, it is happening now. We are risk assessing for next year’s bushfire operations plan. You can see how that might work over subsequent years. A good example to relate is the fire that we had earlier this year up in the hills. Had we not had that road in place and upgraded in the way it was, who knows what may have happened. We would have been in there a hell of a lot longer, or it may have burnt a much larger area. It was instructional for me to see the benefit of investing in improvements to road access.

MR SMYTH: Warks Road—has that been upgraded?

Mr Iglesias: Warks Road? I think it has. That is one of the beneficiaries this year. That whole area, Warks Road, that you would be familiar with has benefited greatly in the last two or three years.

MR SMYTH: You also talk on page 85 about fire infrastructure development and say there were 19 projects of which 17 were completed. Could the committee be provided with a list of the 19 projects and which two were not completed?

Mr Iglesias: Sure. I will provide that for you.

MR SMYTH: Can you tell us which two were not completed?

Mr Iglesias: No, I could not tell you. I could not tell you which two were the ones we did not get to.

MR SMYTH: All right. The next section is on equipment. Have all the parks brigade vehicles now received their mobile data terminals?

Mr Iglesias: I believe they have.

MR SMYTH: And have all the staff been trained?

Mr Iglesias: I believe they have, yes.

MR SMYTH: Do they all remember their bushfire number so they can log on?

Mr Iglesias: I would certainly hope so.

MR SMYTH: With the parks brigade, how many units do you have—how many tankers, how many light units?

Mr Iglesias: From memory, Mr Smyth, we are in the vicinity of 13 heavy tankers and a similar amount of light units. I will confirm that for you, but it is in that vicinity. We have approximately 140 staff that we identify for bushfire training every year.

MR SMYTH: Of those, how many, for instance, are located in the Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve?

Mr Iglesias: We have a staff count of about 20-odd.

MR SMYTH: Sorry, no—the units, the vehicles.

Mr Iglesias: We did have a medium tanker at Tidbinbilla, but I do not believe it is there anymore. I think that since the volunteer brigade built its facility out the front door we have reallocated the resources that were at Tidbinbilla.

MR SMYTH: So what resources are available to the staff at TNR?

Mr Iglesias: You mean in relation to—

MR SMYTH: Firefighting vehicles.

Mr Iglesias: I would have to check for you, but I do not think there is a firefighting vehicle based at TNR.

MR SMYTH: So the staff would have to leave TNR, go out of the park and off to the shed, which is not particularly far. You are expecting to be able to use the vehicles that belong to the Tidbinbilla volunteer brigade?

Mr Iglesias: If there was an incident at Tidbinbilla, it is important to know that that would be controlled by the Rural Fire Service. The Rural Fire Service would deploy the resources that it is aware are available within the closer proximity. Typically, that would be a Namadgi vehicle or it could be the Tidbinbilla volunteer vehicle or even the rivers vehicle. But also remember that during periods of highest risk we deploy vehicles all over our estate. We will take vehicles that, say, are based in town, and if the risk is perceived to be at Tidbinbilla or Namadgi, we will place them at Tidbinbilla or Namadgi.

MR SMYTH: But there is no dedicated parks firefighting vehicle there on the Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve?

Mr Iglesias: To my knowledge, I do not think there is.

MR SMYTH: Where did that vehicle go?

Mr Iglesias: I could not tell you, Mr Smyth. I would have to check for you. I do know that when I was working at Tidbinbilla we had a tanker and then we had a light unit. The sorts of decisions made about resourcing are strategic and they are based on the whole fleet that we have available to the Rural Fire Service. That, of course, includes the volunteers.

MR SMYTH: So RFS directed the removal of this unit from TNR?

Mr Iglesias: I could not tell you. I would have to check for you as to how that call was made.

MR SMYTH: My understanding is the unit has gone to Googong. Why would Googong need a dedicated unit and TNR not?

Mr Iglesias: Well, I can tell you why Googong. It would be important to control—

MR SMYTH: But on the same basis that you keep it central and you allocate the resources—

Mr Iglesias: Sure.

MR SMYTH: the predominance of all our fires comes from that direction. They come from Tidbinbilla. In 1919, 1921, 1926, 1933, 1939—

Mr Iglesias: The very big ones, yes.

MR SMYTH: Right. But they do not come from Googong. Why would you take an asset from the most fire-prone area in the ACT—and appreciating that Googong also needs fire protection—and move it to Googong?

Mr Iglesias: I think it is important to note that prior to about 12 or maybe 24 months ago we did not have a fire shed out the front of Tidbinbilla. We do now. So Tidbinbilla—

MR SMYTH: But the resources were in the region.

Mr Iglesias: Tidbinbilla has a dedicated resource with more appliances available to it than it ever has because of the Rural Fire Service facility on the Paddys River Road right out the front of Tidbinbilla. Prior to that, there was one unit within the depot, and there was a large tanker about 10 kilometres north of that. So within the context of the whole strategic scene in that region I think it is true to say that there are more appliances there than there were a couple of years ago. It is just that we are looking at a Rural Fire Service volunteer appliance as opposed to a parks brigade ACT vehicle.

MR SMYTH: Will the parks people crew the volunteer brigade machines?

Mr Rattenbury: Mr Smyth, we are at a fairly minutia level of operational matters here. What is the strategic issue that you are concerned about?

MR SMYTH: I am concerned about the minutiae of the detail where you used to have a tanker in the park that your officers could crew and respond immediately to. I am trying to find out what the arrangement is now. Are parks officers leaving the park to go to the Tid shed to collect a volunteer vehicle to go back into the park to put out a fire, or are they reporting a fire to RFS, who will respond a volunteer crew to go into the park to put out a fire that you no longer have the capability to respond to?

Mr Byles: Mr Smyth, if I may, just as we cannot guarantee a lot of things in life, I am sure, notwithstanding what you said about the precedent about fire in the ACT, you probably cannot guarantee where fire will erupt from or come from. Is the question about location or responsiveness? They are quite different. As you will appreciate—

MR SMYTH: Location leads to responsiveness.

Mr Byles: Yes, but you do not have to necessarily have people in a particular area to appreciate your response times.

MR SMYTH: All right. Why don't we go to the high level? What is the memorandum between your organisation and RFS about response to Tidbinbilla now that Tidbinbilla does not have a dedicated full-time unit within the reserve? Is there a memorandum of understanding?

Mr Iglesias: Yes.

MR SMYTH: And what does it say?

Mr Iglesias: The Rural Fire Service and the parks service agree that where there is a fire—it does not matter where it is, whether it is at Tidbinbilla or anywhere else—the Rural Fire Service will respond the closest available resource. If that happens to be a unit that is sitting out the front in the volunteer shed or if it happens to be one of our own units that happens to be based at Tidbinbilla for the day, they will be responded. It is also important to note that within Tidbinbilla we have capacity, through our own fleet, our own vehicles, with what we call slip-on units, which effectively are utes with a 200-litre tank on the back—

MR SMYTH: I know what a slip-on is.

Mr Iglesias: Of course you do.

MR SMYTH: But a slip-on is no replacement for a medium or heavy tanker.

Mr Iglesias: No, but it allows the first response. It allows a crew person to get out, to see where the fire is, to spot it. If it is of a certain size, they may be able to deal with it. If not, they call in for more assistance.

MR SMYTH: Who made the decision to remove the tanker from Tidbinbilla?

Mr Iglesias: Honestly, I would have to get back to you about what call was made and who made it and why.

MR SMYTH: Will crews from Parks Brigade take the vehicles from the Tidbinbilla volunteer shed? Therefore, do you have keys to the Tidbinbilla shed?

Mr Iglesias: No. The operating arrangements are that the volunteers crew the volunteer appliances.

MR SMYTH: All right.

Mr Iglesias: In an emergency situation, if there is an opportunity and the vehicle is sitting there, I am sure people would take the initiative. But the arrangement is—

MR SMYTH: But can they if they do not have keys? Does Tidbinbilla nature reserve have a key to the Tidbinbilla volunteer brigade shed?

Mr Iglesias: I would have to check. I really would. I would have to check for you.

THE CHAIR: Thanks, Mr Smyth. We might continue.

Mr Rattenbury: If Mr Smyth would care for it, I am happy to arrange a briefing for Mr Smyth to talk with us in more detail about this.

THE CHAIR: Thank you, minister. We might go to page 24, under “Design and development”. There is a dot point there that says:

... completing upgrades at the Yerrabi Pond District Park, Kambah District Park and the ‘snake house’ at John Knight Memorial Park ...

Can you tell us where we are up to? In particular, I am interested in Kambah District Park?

Mr Rattenbury: Yes. I will bring Ms Flanery back to the table for Parks and City Services. While she is getting settled, I can say that certainly John Knight park is now open. That was reopened three months or so ago now. It is as popular as it ever was, certainly from what I have seen from being out there. That is the John Knight park. On the other two—Kambah District Park and Yerrabi—

THE CHAIR: While Ms Flanery is coming to that point, on John Knight park, that was used annually for a car display. There were some concerns about vehicle parking and the sprinkler systems. Has that been sorted out?

Mr Rattenbury: I am not aware of that specific thing. We will take the first couple. Are you right with Kambah?

Ms Flanery: Okay, in respect of the Kambah District Park, I have not got an actual status report on it, but I believe it is near completion and that things have been progressing well. In respect of your second question, which was about the irrigation system—

THE CHAIR: At John Knight Memorial Park. There is an annual car display event there.

Ms Flanery: There is. Just to give me some context—will the irrigation system all be completed by the time of the car rally? Is that your question?

THE CHAIR: No. The question was about some concerns from the ACT government about the event damaging the irrigation system. There were some conversations between, I understand, the Council of ACT Motor Clubs—

Ms Flanery: Certainly we were wary about vehicles going into our public parks and the damage they can cause to irrigation. I will have to have a look at the specifics of it, but given that that event has happened in that park over a long period of time and I am not aware of any major damage, I do not see any real problem. Obviously we try and place the cars in places where they do not drive over the irrigation and the different heads, but the car rally has been a longstanding event which everyone really looks forward to and certainly we will try and accommodate it.

THE CHAIR: Thank you. Questions, members?

MR COE: Firstly, a quick one: where are things at with regard to the review of the dog map, for want of a better term? While we are on John Knight park, I know that John Knight park is currently marked as being dog free, which means, technically, that you cannot walk around Lake Ginninderra without illegally taking your dogs through that bike path going along the lake frontage there. Where are we at?

Mr Rattenbury: I think that is a good example of some of the anomalies that this wider review is taking place on. With better mapping capability and online, that is a driver as to why we want to do it. Have we got timing?

Ms Flanery: We are looking at starting it towards the end of this year. What we are really trying to work out is the mapping technology. We have done a review of where we believe there need to be changes. People will be invited as part of the consultation. There are six meetings planned. Along with some other focus groups, we want to engage Pedal Power and a whole lot of groups of people and interest groups that are not just dog related. We are aiming to start that towards the end of November.

We had a bit of instability with the mapping because you use app map i-technology; we are just trying to make sure that it is user friendly. Short of being able to make sure that goes along, we would really have to produce a UBD-style directory and show everyone before and after, which is very cost prohibitive. I have just got to be really assured that the mapping is all stable, that people know how to use it and that we have the right groups engaged and people have notification around that engagement.

MR COE: From a policy point of view, will ovals be off limits—so playing fields? Will they be off limits to dogs?

Ms Flanery: No. Really, what we are trying to do is take a practical and balanced approach. Certainly if organised play is on, dogs can be there on leash, depending on the size of the event. We are looking at time shared, so looking at before 9 o'clock in the morning or after 5 o'clock in the afternoon, summer and winter. I know many jurisdictions on the coast do this kind of time-sharing arrangements. It will not be a

blanket approach. That is what we are really trying to do—get some road rules, so to speak. In the ACT you can drive at 50 kilometres an hour, and in terms of dogs, in most places you can have your dog on a leash, but in some areas you go and enjoy the open space and have areas where dogs can run around and people are aware of where those places are and when they can do that.

MR COE: As I think I have said in the correspondence, it seems quite odd at the moment. Some playing fields are okay. With Giralang ovals, you cannot take a dog there on leash or off leash—neither. So it is a bit erratic.

Mr Rattenbury: That is exactly why we need to do the work that is being done.

MR COE: Sure. The Pialligo quarry—it goes on and on. I really feel for the welfare of the operator, or former operator. I think he is doing it tough and has done for a long time. Where are things at and when is it going to be operational again?

Mr Rattenbury: The most recent information is that Mr Barac was granted a land use permit on 15 October for the short-term use of part of the site to store and distribute imported stone until 15 April next year, so for a period of six months. There has been a lot of work that has gone on on this. It is not just the welfare of Mr Barac in this circumstance; I think it has been very difficult across the board for a number of people involved in the project, in trying to sort it out. It has been a very complex discussion, as I know you know. There have been three draft licences for the use of the land provided to Mr Barac since July. The most recent of those was on 4 October.

There is a range of matters to be sorted out through that negotiation process, including making the site safe, site restoration, quarrying and filling. So there has been a level of complexity. Also it has involved trying to sort out the issue of fees for site rentals and royalties for the extraction of the stone. There has been a high level of complexity. And I think there is a long history on this where it might be best said that there have been probably some very loose arrangements. From a government point of view, government needs to ensure both safety on the site and also that government is getting a reasonable return for the resources that are being extracted.

MR COE: At present, what do you require from Mr Barac?

Mr Rattenbury: As I said, he has been provided with a draft licence, and we just need to get agreement on that.

MR COE: So you are saying that the ball is completely in his court? You are not waiting upon anything else?

Ms Flanery: As the minister mentioned, three draft licences have been prepared for Mr Barac. At each time there has been negotiation, as there would be in any commercial arrangement. On every occasion, the government has given concessions. We presented him with a draft licence on 4 October, and Mr Barac has asked for further concessions. Now, really, it is a matter for the government to decide how much you want to give and whether it is a good return to government and to the people of Canberra.

In respect to other things that are necessary, should Mr Barac wish to continue with his mining operation, he will need to lodge a development application. So the ball is firmly in Mr Barac's court. We have tried, and continue to try, to negotiate. It is a commercial arrangement. Does Mr Barac want to accept that? Will government move any more on it? But there have been really significant concessions given over the last couple of months.

MR COE: Are you still looking at three plus three?

Ms Flanery: If it was a world where you could make up your own rules, you could certainly design a better licence arrangement than the one that is proposed. Unfortunately, a large amount of land—almost the same size as the actual area that we are proposing to license—has been quarried over a number of years. Certainly, the government should have been on to it in terms of making sure that that did not happen, but there have been loose arrangements. So we can only offer a three-year licence on that area of land which is referred to as the encroachment area. Under the planning act, that is all, legally, that can be offered. There could be a possibility of an extension should Mr Barac or whoever is there be a good operator. But what we have to do on that site is fill it. Under the planning act, that is what has to happen, and preferably within a three-year period.

Mr Barac does not believe that it is viable to do that in three years, and maybe we do not think that it is viable in three years to do that. So we are setting up a structure where there is one licence for the encroachment area for the maximum amount of time that can be done, and then a 10-year licence for what is referred to as block 26, for the area of land that Mr Barac has occupied for 48 years now.

MR COE: What is the 10-year licence for? What is the name of that licence or the purpose of that licence?

Ms Flanery: It is a section 303 licence. It is just that, one, it is mining and is a permissible use on the 10-year licence, and the three-year licence is—the longest period we can give that licence for is three years; we cannot offer an extension.

MR COE: And what is that?

Ms Flanery: They are both 303 licences. They both come under the planning act.

MR COE: So why are two licences required?

Ms Flanery: Because of the time frames. On block 26, where mining is a permissible activity, that can be licensed for a long period of time. On the encroachment area, mining is not a permitted activity. If it is not a permitted activity, there are some provisions which say you can do this but it is only for a very short period of time. Short of that, a whole change to the territory plan would be required, and Mr Barac has never suggested doing that.

MR COE: So it is a zoning issue as opposed to a lease issue?

Ms Flanery: It is both. It is what is permitted use, which is a zoning issue. It is zoned

as broadacre. It is near the airport, so there are certain activities that you would not want to go on there because they might have lights and things near the airport.

MR COE: Are they not the same zone—the two areas in question?

Ms Flanery: They are adjacent to each other. Initially, when the quarry was developed, as I understand it—and it was before both your time and my time—Canberra as a developing city needed some stone, so basically an area on a map was marked out as the area where mining was permitted. Outside that area, it is zoned as broadacre.

MR COE: So are you saying that it actually goes across two different zones in the territory plan? It is not the same zone?

Ms Flanery: I am not quite sure what you are asking.

MR COE: Under the territory plan, if it is the same zone, unless there is a precedent code for that block, I do not see how it is not just a leasing issue as opposed to a zoning issue. Do you understand what I am getting at?

Mr Rattenbury: Yes, I think I do. I think it goes to the issue, as I understand the situation out there, Mr Coe, that the quarry has extended beyond areas that it was permitted to. So we have now got an area of land that essentially—correct me if I get this wrong—needs to be remediated. That is the area that is given the three-year lease, because of what Ms Flanery described for us. That is—

MR COE: Sure.

Mr Rattenbury: But where he is mining in the area where he is permitted to, that is where we get the 10-year lease, because he is operating inside the rules.

MR COE: Yes, I understand that. It does make sense in terms of the intention. But I do not see where the maximum of three years comes in for one area but you can go to a maximum of 10 years in the other area if in fact it is all the same zone.

Mr Rattenbury: I think it is because one of them is for remediation and the other one is for mining.

Ms Flanery: Just to clarify, mining is not a permitted use in what is referred to as the encroachment area. You are not actually allowed to mine there, although mining has taken place. It is a bit like saying that in some areas in streets you can have cafes and other things, but maybe in the area quite close you cannot have other industrial activities. So it is basically a zoning—

MR COE: But in that instance that is because there is a separate zone.

Ms Flanery: Well, it is. It is separate from what is considered as the encroachment area—it is zoned as broadacre.

MR COE: Yes.

Mr Rattenbury: So it is a different zone—which is, I think, what you are asking.

MR COE: Okay.

Mr Rattenbury: Do you want us to again offer a briefing where we get some maps out? Would that help?

MR COE: No; I can look at the maps now—and I will.

Mr Rattenbury: Okay.

MR COE: But I would be amazed if the individual block is zoned differently to the adjacent area.

Mr Rattenbury: Okay.

THE CHAIR: I know Dr Bourke has some questions.

MR COE: Sure.

DR BOURKE: Just leading on to city services in the time we have got left, minister, could you tell me more about the planned audits of skate parks, the development of the standard for their construction and upgrade, and what you have learnt from the recent Belcopalooza skate contest?

Ms Flanery: Certainly. So your first question is about the audit of the skate parks?

DR BOURKE: Yes.

Ms Flanery: Currently there is no design standard for skate parks, so part of the funding will be to work with the skating community to develop standards. That really is to ensure public safety. With skating, you want it to be fun and have an element of risk, but what we are trying to do is develop standards to say that this batter is suitable for children in this age group or of this ability and these elements are suitable for these types of people with these skills—a bit similar to what you might see on snowfields or something like that. That audit is going on. We are working very closely with the skateboard association to look at what we have got and then to make some recommendations about the usage of groups and ability.

Your second question related to the—

DR BOURKE: It was around what you might have learnt from the recent Belcopalooza skate contest.

Ms Flanery: That there are a lot of risky people that do amazing things on skateboards. I did not have the pleasure of going, but I was pretty impressed with the things that I saw. I think it is great that we have a group in Canberra, and it attracted a huge number of people to the area, that were able to provide those facilities. It certainly made me think about what other types of activities we could build on from

that.

DR BOURKE: Is there a curfew at Belconnen skate park or are the lights turned off at some stage during the night or at a particular time? How does that work?

Ms Flanery: I am not sure if the lights are turned off but I can follow that up to see what the lighting arrangements are.

DR BOURKE: While we are talking about lighting, what is the turnaround time for the fixing of streetlights after “fix my street” is advised? If you ring up or log on and say, “Look, my streetlight’s not working,” what is the turnaround time?

Mr Rattenbury: It is actually with Roads ACT, but I know Mr Colussi mentioned it before. I recall he said earlier in the day it was 90 per cent within 48 hours. Again, we can come back when Roads ACT appear, because they have responsibility for that. I will make sure they come with those statistics.

THE CHAIR: Minister, I go to page 24, design and development, and the last dot point talks about public space upgrades. I am interested in Farrer. I remember seeing some of the work being done. Has that been completed?

Mr Rattenbury: I think we are getting close to completion at Farrer. Let me just check my notes on the status of that. Funding was allocated for construction in this year, and it is scheduled for completion by December.

THE CHAIR: While we are there, can you tell us about Waramanga and Red Hill?

Mr Rattenbury: Yes, certainly. Waramanga is scheduled for completion in October this year, so quite soon. Red Hill is scheduled for completion in December this year. We have a number of others underway. With Chapman shops, the consultation has taken place, and that is all completed now. With Hughes shops, the consultation started about four to six weeks ago. With the upgrades, there are a number of phases of consultation, which I am happy to detail, but they are the ones that are in train at the moment.

THE CHAIR: You have pre-empted my next question. I was going to ask: who do you contact to provide the consultation—shop owners, but the community as well?

Mr Rattenbury: It is actually a very good process. The way it works is that it is in three stages. With the first round, there is specific stakeholder consultation around the shop owners and the various obvious local stakeholders, and then there is a community consultation session at the start. Basically TAMS goes out and says, “We’re going to do this. What do you want?” It is a very open-ended thing around people identifying what they like at the shops and what they do not like—that very preliminary aspect.

The consultants will then go off and do a preliminary design which they think picks the various things up, and the second phase of consultation is to go back and say, “Here’s a first go at what we think you told us. Does it meet expectations?” So that is the second point of community feedback. Often there are changes made at that point

and it goes off for further design work until it comes to a final plan, and then it goes to the construction phase after that. So it is quite comprehensive. I have been to a couple of the sessions, and those first ones are particularly good because people just come along and they feel like they are involved right at the start of the process and they feel they have that freedom to really talk, rather than responding to a plan that is already in place.

Probably the area that is contentious—and this has come up in the chamber at various times—is that TAMS, of course, only has responsibility for the public domain. What we do find is that often the shopkeepers respond quite well. With the government putting in money, the various leaseholders respond because they see an opportunity, and it is the right time for them to upgrade. But we do not have the power to force them to necessarily do that upgrade at the same time. That is where I think the community sometimes feels a little bit frustrated because they want to see the complete thing done and the government cannot necessarily do that.

DR BOURKE: Speaking of upgrades at shops, I do notice that the public toilet has now been installed at Cook and is now functional, but there were some months where it was closed off and not working. Was there a reason for that?

Mr Rattenbury: Yes. I was talking about this at the Belconnen Community Council a month or two ago. If I recall correctly, there were some issues with ACTEW, about getting it fully connected. I think there were some delays there in the connection process.

Ms Flanery: That is my understanding, that it was to do with connection and ACTEW servicing.

Mr Rattenbury: I am pleased to hear it is up and going now.

DR BOURKE: Cook residents are delighted.

Mr Rattenbury: I am sure they are.

MR COE: Where are things at with regard to the Downer shops?

Mr Rattenbury: We did discuss that earlier today. Were you here for that conversation?

MR COE: No, I do not think so.

Mr Rattenbury: Just to paraphrase what Mr Bailey said earlier, construction, he is advised, is due to commence early next year. We have just a couple of tenants left that the Property Group is still seeking to rehouse. Construction, of course, is led through EDD, I believe. TAMS and Property Group have the other end and are in the process of moving people out. But there was an extension to early next year. He said earlier that we only have two tenants to find new homes for.

MR COE: I heard what is, in effect, a rumour, that money had been transferred, that money that was allocated for Red Hill and other shopping centres had been shifted

across to Downer. Has any of the allocation for the various centres been shifted?

Mr Rattenbury: Not that I am aware of. In a sense, all the works that were scheduled are going on. So Red Hill, as I said, is almost complete. So the resources have been available, as I understand it, and as I am aware, to undertake the projects that we had scheduled.

Ms Flanery: I am not aware that money had changed or priorities had changed. But we can look into it, if you would like, and give you a more comprehensive answer.

MR COE: Yes.

Mr Rattenbury: If you have any specifics on the rumours, that would be helpful.

MR COE: Yes, sure. With regard to the assessment of local centres, what are you looking for in terms of the criteria that have to be substandard before it gets invested in? For instance, I can think of numerous shopping centres that are in a worse condition than Hughes, yet Hughes is getting an upgrade. So it is not clear to me what makes a centre worthy of investment versus others.

Ms Flanery: Mr Coe, there are certainly a number of criteria, and I am happy to provide that criteria on how we assess our shopping centres.

MR COE: Yes, please.

Ms Flanery: One of the key things is accessibility, so making sure there is adequate parking for people that need accessible parking, age of some of the infrastructure and some of the safety elements. I am more than happy to provide the list of criteria that we assess those shopping centres against.

MR COE: Have you, in effect, assessed every local centre and put them into a priority list?

Ms Flanery: We did a lot of that assessment work last year. I believe we went to all 87 centres. I can provide that information as well.

MR COE: Yes, thank you.

Mr Rattenbury: With respect to Hughes, the accessibility that Ms Flanery is talking about comes into play. COTA is based there; there is the community facility where many elderly people come. There is a high elderly population in Hughes. That is maybe why, despite your perception—

MR COE: Yes, that is right.

Mr Rattenbury: And I have the same perception.

MR COE: That is why the criteria are important, to know what is actually being assessed.

Mr Rattenbury: They are the sorts of things that I understand are taken into account.

DR BOURKE: Of course, the differential there is between what is owned or under the control of you and what is under the control of the leaseholders. That brings me back to the point that was being made before about public perceptions around shop upgrades and wanting to see everything looking nice, not just the parking spaces, the public art and the seats. Have you considered, minister, introducing a requirement before you upgrade shopping centres that leaseholders pitch in and do some minimum standard of upgrade to their properties before you go ahead?

Mr Rattenbury: I am not sure if we could legally do that. But it is certainly something I have given thought to. I have been approached about a number of centres. I have been wondering about how we can, beyond just encouragement, engage more with the stakeholders, whether we can have some financial incentives where there are co-contributions and the like. I would certainly like to explore that, because I think we could potentially leverage a better outcome for the community as a whole. I am just not sure what the mechanisms are. I need to do some more research on that.

DR BOURKE: I also get persistent complaints in my own suburb of Aranda about the state of the Aranda shops. What capability has your directorate got to do something about the state of that property?

Mr Rattenbury: It is certainly not on the program. I know that, back when I lived in Belconnen before I moved overseas for a while, Aranda shops has been an issue for a long time. Again, some of that goes to the agency responsibility. The Environment and Sustainable Development Directorate has the lease enforcement capability. I am not sure what the current status of Aranda shops is in that regard, I am afraid. Certainly, it is not on TAMS's radar.

DR BOURKE: Certainly, there would be an area of public land around that which would be your responsibility?

Mr Rattenbury: Probably.

DR BOURKE: Which is not owned by the leaseholder.

Ms Flanery: I do not have anything specific on Aranda shops, but, once again, I can look at it on the assessment criteria and see the ratings of it, and I am happy to provide that information.

MR COE: In the event that something is identified as worthy of improvement, whether it is a sign, lighting or whatever at a local centre that has not been identified as a priority for the immediate, larger investment, what bucket of funds would such an upgrade come from?

Mr Rattenbury: TAMS has a capital upgrade program which is an amount of money for essentially what are called minor and new works. So if a park bench is particularly needed at shops because there are a lot of old people there, that can be funded, independent of an overall upgrade.

MR COE: But it is that generic capital works—

Mr Rattenbury: Capital upgrade program.

MR COE: Capital upgrade budget as opposed to a specific shopping centre?

Mr Rattenbury: Within the capital upgrade program, which is around \$80 million, there are within that identified areas of work. Some of it is proactive and some of it is reactive. If either you or a member of the community approaches us and identifies a problem, that can be done, and the other aspect is TAMS going around and seeing the problems or having a rolling program, as we do with the playgrounds.

THE CHAIR: We will now go to libraries. Minister, on page 30 of the report, under Libraries ACT, the last dot point under that heading reads “engaging the University of Canberra to work with TAMS on a workplace literacy project”. Can you give us some details on how that is operating?

Mr Rattenbury: I am sure Ms Little will be delighted to, when she gets herself settled.

Ms Little: It is a program that we have put in place with an academic from the University of Canberra, Dr Kaye Lowe. It is not a program that we talk about too much publicly, but it is a program to look at the workplace literacy issues within our blue-collar workforce in TAMS.

MR COE: Recently, Bill Shorten was at the Gungahlin library, about two or three weeks ago, making an announcement there. What channels or approval process would it go through to have a political announcement inside an ACT library?

Ms Little: It comes through Libraries ACT and then goes through to our corporate communications area. Then there would probably be some discussion about the appropriateness or not of that. Having said that, though, it is the NBN site, so I am assuming that would be why there was an announcement there.

MR COE: Minister, were you involved in that approval process?

Mr Rattenbury: No, I did not even know it had happened.

MR COE: Yes, I think it was—

Mr Rattenbury: I did not even see it in the media.

MR COE: It was about two weeks or so after the election. I am guessing on the 25th or thereabouts, or maybe a tiny bit earlier. It was at Gungahlin library. Senator Lundy, I think, Mr Leigh and Mr Shorten were all there. It was broadcast live on News 24. In effect, the crux of the telecast—I do not know what happened on either side of it—was about the coalition’s NBN policy and the difference between that and the former government’s, and also leadership speculation and the Labor leadership ballot. If any person wants to do a political announcement inside a library, am I able to just rock up there and put out the alert?

Ms Little: I will get the detail for you, Mr Coe, but my belief was that it was an event that those people were going to be at that was somehow related to the NBN site. The fact that there was some announcement made was probably not known by us. But I can certainly get those details for you.

MR COE: I'm afraid I didn't get an invite!

Mr Rattenbury: Neither did I! We will review the circumstances of that and provide a report to the committee. We will take it essentially as a question on notice.

MR COE: Yes. I know there are pretty strict guidelines regarding visiting schools and political announcements in schools, and I wonder whether there is scope for similar rules to be in place for libraries, especially given the library doubles up as a school library. So it is almost, in effect, a school library as well.

Mr Rattenbury: We will review the circumstances. Obviously, things happen in libraries that are political at times, in that community councils hold some of their meetings in there, and you or I will go along and talk to them. We will have a bit of a look at what the rules are and the specific feedback on this one and how it got approved.

MR COE: Thank you.

DR BOURKE: Minister, could you tell me more about the digital library services, including Busy Things, Literacy Planet, Mango Languages and Zinio Digital Magazines?

Mr Rattenbury: I think Ms Little will enthusiastically give that answer.

Ms Little: I can certainly do that. Busy Things is a series of activities for young children that are online and that particularly have a literacy focus. Zinio is a series of online magazines, so it is the same magazine that you would get in hard copy, but you get it online electronically. What were the others, Dr Bourke?

DR BOURKE: Mango Languages?

Ms Little: Mango Languages—very important if you are looking to learn a new language. You can download lessons from our website, from Mango Languages, and learn a whole range of different languages—French, German, Thai, Indonesian. It is a very good service if you are planning to travel overseas. You can download onto your electronic device and you can learn while you are in the car, in the bath or whatever.

DR BOURKE: Any electronic device?

Ms Little: Except, of course, if you have the device that is strictly linked to the Amazon service—Kindle. We always have problems with people who have Kindles because Kindle has been specifically designed only to use Amazon as its source of data. But you can certainly download to your iPhone, your iPad or any of the other devices.

DR BOURKE: What are the challenges from the 2010 digital collection management and preservation report?

Ms Little: This is a perennial one for us and all of our colleagues around Australia, and because we are such a small jurisdiction. A lot of the information that preservation libraries gather—so libraries that preserve for historical purposes, such as our ACT heritage library—now is not being produced in hard copy. Community newsletters are going out electronically, records of activities are going onto websites, and it is very hard to capture that data and then preserve it for future research on what it was like to be in Canberra 2013.

We continue to work with colleagues around the country, the national and state libraries of Australasia—that includes people in New Zealand. The National Library are looking at a program where they may go into the data capture. They already capture some websites for us, for the ACT and other jurisdictions, but they are also looking at upgrading those facilities so that we may, in fact, buy services from them, because the amount of money and data storage capacity that would be required for us to do it on our own would be terribly expensive. So we continue to work on that with our colleagues.

THE CHAIR: There being no further questions, thank you, minister and officials. That concludes today's inquiry. The committee will ask that any supplementary questions be lodged with the office within three business days of this hearing, for members. The committee has also resolved that all responses to questions taken on notice and supplementary questions should be provided to the secretary by Monday, 16 December, so there is quite a bit of time to respond.

The committee's next public hearing on annual reports is at 2 pm on Wednesday, 6 November with the Minister for Territory and Municipal Services.

The committee adjourned at 12.45 pm.