



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

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

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

Members:

**MS Y BERRY (Chair)
MR A COE (Deputy Chair)
DR C BOURKE
MR A WALL**

TRANSCRIPT OF EVIDENCE

CANBERRA

MONDAY, 17 NOVEMBER 2014

**Secretary to the committee:
Mr H Finlay (Ph: 620 50129)**

By authority of the Legislative Assembly for the Australian Capital Territory

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

APPEARANCES

Environment and Planning Directorate.....	1
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Amended 20 May 2013

The committee met at 1.31 pm.

Appearances:

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

Environment and Planning Directorate

Ekelund, Ms Dorte, Director-General

Ponton, Mr Ben, Deputy Director-General, Planning and Sustainability

Corrigan, Mr Jim, Executive Director, Planning Delivery

Carmichael, Mr Tony, Executive Director, Strategic Planning

Meyer, Mr John, Executive Director, Construction and Client Services

Simmons, Mr Craig, Director, Construction Services Branch

Fitzgerald, Mr Bruce, Acting Chief Finance Officer, Finance and Operation Support

THE CHAIR: Good afternoon everyone, and welcome to this public hearing of the Standing Committee on Planning, Environment and Territory and Municipal Services, inquiring into the annual and financial reports 2013-14. On behalf of the committee, I would like to thank you, Mr Gentleman, and the officials for coming along today.

Today the committee will be examining sections of the Environment and Sustainable Development Directorate annual report 2013-14 relevant to the planning portfolio. Can I draw your attention to the privilege statement that is before you on the table, on the pink card. Could you please, for the record, state that you understand the privilege implications of that statement?

Mr Gentleman: Yes, I do, Madam Chair, and I will ask my directorate officials to acknowledge that as well.

Ms Ekelund: Yes.

THE CHAIR: Thank you. I also remind witnesses that the proceedings are being recorded by Hansard and are being webstreamed and broadcast live. Minister, do you have an opening statement that you would like to make?

Mr Gentleman: Yes, thank you, Madam Chair, and committee members. I would like to provide the committee with an update on some of the important planning and building developments in the ACT as highlighted in this 2013-14 annual report.

The government is committed to ensuring an innovative and responsible planning system that protects the significant heritage values within the city, and cements the territory as the world's most livable city as well. Transport planning within the ACT is a topic of considerable interest to all Canberrans, whether they walk, cycle, utilise public transport or drive. Recognising the challenges and opportunities that can be unlocked by a well-planned, integrated transport system which encourages an active lifestyle and promotes a healthier population, the government has undertaken a range of activities, including feasibility studies, strategic investigations and travel

management activities.

The government has progressed the transport for Canberra 2012 policy and initial planning for capital metro. Work on the development of the draft light rail master plan is well underway, and we will engage the ACT community in a discussion around the truly connected transport system that we look to achieve later on, and it will be released early in 2015.

Transport for Canberra and the ACT planning strategy work together to respond and to guide Canberra's multcentred structure to create a more compact city with transport orientation that is more economically efficient, socially inclusive, healthy and sustainable.

We are starting to see the benefits of the time and resources that the government has invested, with initiatives in transport for Canberra enabling us to move towards the government's 2026 target of 30 per cent of all journey to work trips being made by walking, cycling and public transport.

This year we released the first transport report card. While the targets are based on the 2011 census data, it is worth noting that this snapshot was before the introduction of the transport for Canberra policy. It is pleasing to note that indicators are that rates of cycling and walking continue to rise, and bode well for 2016.

Maintaining and promoting the rich and diverse history of the ACT has also been a focus of this government. To ensure all Canberrans have the opportunity to learn about and observe our heritage sites, 16 Canberra track signs were installed across the territory, taking the total to 156, plus an additional 14 marker posts. The heritage signage program has increased the visibility of these sites and will assist in the preservation of these sites for future generations.

The government has also supported the collection of historical information using the annual heritage grant program. Year after year, this program has provided further layers and textures to our rich past. The government has invested a considerable amount of resources in the development of master plans for the town and group centres across the territory. These plans, with the assistance of wide-ranging consultation, allow for the high level planning which sets out the objectives and strategies for managing development and change over time.

Master planning activities for the last period reported included the completion of the master plan for Pialligo rural village, the continuation of Oaks Estate and Weston group centre master plans, with draft master plans released for community consultation in June this year; the commencement of the Belconnen town centre, Woden town centre and Mawson group centre master plans, the drafts of which are to be released shortly; and scoping for master plans for Tharwa rural village and the Calwell group centre.

The city plan sets a path forward for the heart of our city to bring back a vibrant meeting point for people to enjoy and celebrate. Launched in March this year, the city plan provides a spatial and strategic framework for the development of the city to 2030 and beyond. The plan brings together community and stakeholder input,

extensive planning work, elements of the national capital plan and the city to the lake proposal, to put forward a clear vision for how the city centre and its parts can develop and change into the future. The city plan seeks to provide developers, government and the community with a clear vision for the future of our city centre, and how it will look and how it will develop and grow over time.

Unlocking development opportunities in the ACT has been one of the great successes of this government. To ensure that future demand for new land is met, planning for areas such as the East Lake urban renewal area is being finalised, with the completion of a range of site studies and investigations.

The government is committed to maintaining a contemporary and responsive planning system. This has been realised through precinct codes and variations to the territory plan to rezone land for residential, commercial and open space uses to be prepared and released for public consultation, certainly about the future development intentions of the area. The community voice, of course, needs to be heard throughout.

The government has introduced new and amended legislation to improve the regulatory environment for the ACT. Extensive consultation was also undertaken as part of the review of the Building Act, which will develop new standards and policy proposals, including the regulation of design and inspection practitioners. Ensuring that building industry and construction quality in the ACT is maintained is a focus of the government. We continue to implement the recommendations of the *Getting home safely* report, and we remain committed to maintaining a world-class licensing system which maintains standards and accountabilities of tradespeople who do business in the territory.

Madam Chair, thank you for this opportunity to discuss the annual report period with you. Both directorate officials and I are happy to answer any questions that you may have.

THE CHAIR: Thank you, minister. I might start by asking you: could you please provide the committee with some detail about the work of the construction occupations section and their focus?

Mr Gentleman: Yes, indeed. The section is a viable instrument of the planning directorate, EPD. The branch is comprised of three sections: policy; construction occupations and utilities; and land and lease regulation. The policy section is responsible for the progress of a number of major government initiatives, including the Building Act review, the regulation of architects, engineers and other design professionals, and ACT government input into the national construction code, incorporating the Building Code of Australia.

The policy area looks at advice to the asbestos response task force, the regulatory reform task force and the Chief Minister's healthy weight initiative, as well as other advice for directorates and industry on licences and issues that will have an impact on the built environment.

The construction occupations section has four teams. It has construction audit, construction occupations licensing, electrical inspectorate, and the plumbing and gas

inspectorate.

THE CHAIR: Minister, with respect to the licence renewals on page 20—new construction occupations licences issued—how does that compare to previous years? Is that an increase? Do you have the numbers for how many?

Mr Gentleman: Yes, the numbers have changed. I will go to directorate officials to give you all the details in that area.

Mr Simmons: Over the course of the cycle we see fluctuations in licences. We are not seeing anything that is out of our normal range of expectation, in terms of the trend in licensing. So we are generally fairly happy with where we are at. In terms of the size of the industry, it is fairly consistent at about 11½ thousand active licences at the moment.

THE CHAIR: Are you able to give a breakdown of the licences as to whether they are residential or commercial?

Mr Simmons: For electrical, plumbing and gas fitting, those classes of licences do not vary by residential or commercial construction. Builders licensing varies in and around the type of classes of work you can do. The C class licence is typically around single residential housing. B class allows multi-unit and other classes of BCA, usually not exceeding three storeys and not in what we call type A construction. And A class licences are allowed to develop all types of building. What you will find is that people who have A class licences tend not to—an A class licence for people building single residential is a bit of overkill.

THE CHAIR: For a C class licence—this is the single dwelling residential kind of homes—

Mr Simmons: Yes.

THE CHAIR: given the ACT's situation at the moment with Mr Fluffy homes and future land release increases over the coming years, will there be enough C class licences to be able to get that work done in a reasonable period of time or will people be waiting?

Mr Simmons: The industry will be more than capable of absorbing any extra building that comes out of that. If you are looking at about a thousand houses, we are currently constructing somewhere in the 3½ thousand range. Our peak a few years back was around 5,000. So the industry has the capacity to both draw labour from other jurisdictions and to cope with increases. There has been a steady increase over the last decade from average building numbers in the low to mid-2,000s up to a fairly consistent 3,000 to 3½ thousand capacity. In terms of the ability to absorb, say, 4,000 homes spread out over three years, which is about 300 per year, it is pretty much within the normal fluctuations of the industry. We would not foresee a problem in absorbing that additional construction.

MR WALL: Minister, while we are talking about builders licensing or licensing generally there has, I know, been some concern from industry bodies such as the HIA

and the MBA about the short courses that are currently being offered, particularly for a certificate IV in construction, which would then enable an individual to get a class E builders licence. What investigations or what policy changes is the directorate exploring to ensure that only suitably qualified individuals are granted a licence?

Mr Gentleman: This is under the asbestos awareness program? No. Construction licences? Yes. I will pass that on to Mr Simmons.

Mr Simmons: Yes, there has been a shift. I will give some history, if you will indulge me. Back in 2006 there was an agreement under the seamless national economy that all regulators across the licensed occupations would move to a uniform system of basic qualifications so that we would agree what was the training package, what people needed to be trained at for every level, and we would create a series of arrangements under the Mutual Recognition Act so that people could seamlessly move from one jurisdiction to another.

As part of this we also saw the creation of ASQA, the Australian Skills Quality Authority, to regulate the registered training organisations within the Vocational Education and Training, VET, sector on their delivery. And there was an agreement struck through the Council of Australian Governments, COAG, that regulators in individual jurisdictions would try to look into what was happening with registered training organisations, RTOs, and accept the outcome of their deliberations within that sector.

There were some elements put in place to address some of the concerns that regulators had about that system. The development of ASQA was clearly one of them. The ability to see what was going to be in a training package was also important and, with those things in place, we should be able to see a quality outcome.

Over time—and it has been eight years since that program started—what we have seen is a much more entrepreneurial approach being taken within RTOs and a lot of institutionalised delivery is starting to take place. In the traditional regulation in the building construction industry you would have seen what we refer to as a combination of experiential and institutional delivery. Some of the RTOs looking at the rules of the training packages have not been able to deliver the courses at 100 per cent on an institutional basis. What they will do is take the course, develop the elements down and then deliver it in shorter and shorter periods of time.

There is the cert IV in building, of which there are now eight, of which only two, with certain modifications, are suitable for licensing outcomes in this jurisdiction. Those delivery mechanisms were typically about 18 months and they would involve being able to see people working on the job. We saw a rapid compression down to about three months and we are now at a delivery which is, in some cases, being touted as even shorter periods than that. That is of concern.

There are two things, though, that get somebody a licence. One is the educational qualification. The other is a minimum two years demonstrated practical experience in the class of construction which their licence has been sought in. We do this by verifications of letters of attestation from other licence holders.

We hear the concern of the MBA and the HIA around the shortening of courses and the ability of people who seem to not have the necessary skills development, although they may have the educational development. There have been some legal cases, the outcome of which has been that the registrar should think more clearly about these things. The last year has seen a stepping away from the strict agreement that was struck back in 2006, to be much more direct about challenging the letters of attestation that come to us and the places from which they come.

That has resulted in some pushing back from industry. It might go something like this: “You need to be more rigorous with people.” We are more rigorous with people. “I did not mean you to be rigorous with the people who are my members because that guy is a good guy and why are you giving him such a hard time?” That balance happens all the time.

Some of those cases are being challenged at the moment. The approach of the last 12 months has been much more rigorous about testing the letters of attestation and also changing some of the requirements to make it a demerit point offence for people who give us false information about somebody. Somebody says, “Yes, that guy worked for me and he was really great,” and we find out subsequently that the person who is giving the letter had never been on the building site and could not have done that. That then becomes a problem for the person, if they are licensed, who gave us that advice.

We are pushing back and being more rigorous in the approach. That is, as I say, stepping away from the strict arrangements that were struck in the COAG deal back in 2006 that we would not do that. But there was a particularly strong case in the ACT Supreme Court which gave very clear instruction to the registrar that in exercising his power he had an obligation and he needed to exercise that obligation very clearly. That was an August 2013 decision. Since that decision we have been much more rigorous in our approach to testing what people put in front of us before they are issued licences.

MR WALL: Mr Simmons, how many complaints have been made against licensees in the reporting period?

Mr Simmons: I cannot give you—

MR WALL: You can take that on notice.

Mr Simmons: I can take that on notice. The complaints that come into the section come in on planning and building matters and they usually separate in about a fifty-fifty split. I can get the exact numbers for you.

MR WALL: And if possible a breakdown as to what type of licence they related to, construction, plumbing, electrical?

Mr Gentleman: Just to follow up with some numbers for Mr Wall, we have approximately an active 11,500 construction occupation licences, including 6,000 new and renewed licences, during the year. There were, I think, a couple of builders there that were an issue out of that total amount.

THE CHAIR: A supplementary, Dr Bourke.

DR BOURKE: Minister, given that you have got these VET providers delivering compressed or concentrated cert IVs and that you are managing this with a regulatory aspect around your category C licences, has any consideration been given to representations back up the chain of vocational education and training providers to say, “This cert IV really does need to have a bit of RPL,” recognition of prior learning or experience around building industry experience, before you hand it out?

Mr Gentleman: Yes, indeed. Mr Simmons, you can report on that.

Mr Simmons: We have an active engagement with our colleagues over in the ACT Education and Training Directorate. Most of the powers with respect to RTOs were transferred to ASQA as the national body. We have a dialogue with ASQA as well. They are a new regulatory body. They are only a few years old and, from experience in a similar environment, it does take a while to get your systems in place to be able to have the kind of impact that you want to have as opposed to having to test out your laws, finding out what you can and cannot do and what the court is going to tell you about what your powers actually are as opposed to what you think they are. ASQA is working through those issues.

We report things to ASQA when we think we have got a problem but we also know, through the size of our jurisdiction, we are very fortunate that we can talk to all our providers. There is some reasonable level of questioning going on about how the delivery is taking place, particularly in some of the newer models. And in some cases we have actually had our own staff who, as a part of building their skill sets, have been involved in some of the training courses.

A huge amount of prior knowledge is assumed and, essentially, our guys who go there will say, “Yes, the course was great but I have this background of knowledge. So I was not learning from first principles.” If somebody was coming in, say a public servant, and decided he wanted to do a cert IV in building, they would not know it by the end of the course. They would not have had enough prior knowledge to be able to get in the door.

Some of that is about target. Some of that is the flexibility that the VET sector has been pushing for, for a long time, to be able to get those things but trying to get those balances right. Being aware that those things are happening is what our obligation is to be checking on. But that is a conversation between all the parties, ourselves with ASQA and ourselves with our colleagues in ETD.

Mr Gentleman: Just going back to my amendment to the answer earlier for Mr Wall, there were actually 305 formal complaints under licences under CO(L)A. That is on page 246 of the report.

MR WALL: And how many of those resulted in investigation?

Mr Simmons: Every complaint has to be investigated.

MR WALL: And then following on from an investigation, how many resulted in conditions or sanctions being put on a licence?

Mr Simmons: That I would have to take on notice. The obligation on the registrar is to investigate every matter that is put before him and then make a decision about whether they proceed or not.

THE CHAIR: Mr Coe.

MR COE: Minister, what changes in direction has the directorate taken since you became minister?

Mr Gentleman: Some of the changes that I have led have been particularly on consultation on the progress of development applications and consultation with industry. I have been focused on going out and meeting with constituents and the industry stakeholders.

MR COE: And was that taking place before or not?

Mr Gentleman: I beg your pardon, sorry?

MR COE: Was that taking place before by the previous minister or not?

Mr Gentleman: I imagine so, yes, but this was my direction.

Ms Ekelund: Upon the request of Mr Gentleman to make sure that we do work closely with industry, we are about to invite people in industry groups to participate in a regular meeting with the directorate. Letters have been drafted and we just are looking into the minister's diary so that he can be in attendance at the first meeting, which we expect to happen either at the end of this month or the beginning of next month so that we actually do have the CEOs or the senior people from all the industry groups sitting around the table with the directorate discussing the critical issues that are of concern to them and also providing an important conduit back into their membership for us.

MR COE: And how frequent will those meetings be?

Ms Ekelund: We expect that they will be three or four times a year.

MR COE: And will it just be the industry bodies or will it extend to community bodies as well?

Ms Ekelund: This particular group is proposed to be industry and peak professionals groups. We already have a planning and development forum that regularly meets, which all community councils do attend and participate in.

Mr Gentleman: On top of that, I have been meeting regularly with community groups since taking on the role. I have met with quite a number of the big community groups at this time and will continue to do that.

MR COE: And what do you think of that with regard to the project facilitation bill or an iteration thereof?

Mr Gentleman: I have not been working on the project facilitation bill but we have been working on other important changes to our territory planning. We had the community councils involved along the way. We had a very good response, I think, most recently from the Kingston-Barton group whom I met with a couple of weeks ago. They were very congratulatory, I would say, of the way that we have approached the omnibus territory variation program. I think that is a good sign that these consultations are working well.

MR COE: But do you think there is going to be any precinct-specific legislation brought before the Assembly any time soon in a similar gist to the project facilitation bill?

Mr Gentleman: That is a matter that has not been decided yet.

MR COE: There was some talk by the government that it has been put on ice and will come back in another form. It has not been decided yet?

Mr Gentleman: No.

MR COE: Where is it up to then? Have there been any developments since—

Mr Gentleman: No. The project facilitation bill has not been brought forward, and that is where it stays at the moment.

MR COE: When it was pulled the government said that we are going to revisit it at some point. Has there been any development in the directorate or your office with regard to addressing that legislation further?

Mr Gentleman: Not on the project facilitation bill, no.

THE CHAIR: Dr Bourke?

DR BOURKE: Minister, could you outline some of the work undertaken by the EPD in terms of customer services? I refer in particular to page 24.

Mr Gentleman: Thank you, Dr Bourke. The directorate has been working well with consumers and, I would say, constituents across the territory. We have two customer service centres, one at Dickson and one at Mitchell. The Dickson one is preliminary, for administrative processes associated with the DA processes; it takes inquiries and deals with processes associated with the construction occupations licensing that Mr Simmons was talking about earlier. Also, it looks at inquiries on counter sales for land information products, lease conveyancing advice, information and responses to people coming to the counter, and phone and general inquiries. The Mitchell one is more focused on the trades. We have certifiers and a government inspectorate there in relation to building application processes, for conveyancing requests. They also do preparation of tax depreciation packages. So they have a counter and phone response and general inquiries as well. During the period there were a number of customer

services processed. I think in total there were somewhere near 57,000 calls to those areas.

DR BOURKE: What sort of feedback do you get from the community in regard to the responsiveness of this customer service facility, minister?

Mr Gentleman: At this stage there has been reasonably good feedback from the community. I will ask directorate officials to give us some more details.

Mr Meyer: We undertake two surveys each year to gauge how effective our services are in terms of meeting our clients' needs. Those surveys have produced some valuable information in terms of where services are working well and effectively. For example, conveyancing is highly regarded, with more than a 90 per cent success rate or the view that it is a very good service. We get some feedback around our electronic service delivery, which indicates areas where we need to make improvements. We usually do follow-up conversations with either the individuals or the organisations that are specifically making the comments to us so that we can better refine the services that we do. We do get a lot of feedback, too, through telephone conversations and across the counter. Again, that is all information that is utilised at regular intervals to review our practices and look to a continuous improvement program.

DR BOURKE: Good.

Mr Gentleman: Dr Bourke, on top of those phone calls I mentioned earlier, there were 1,113 development applications lodged; 42 applications for reconsideration were processed; there was documentation for 17 appeals prepared for ACAT; 4,718 building approvals were received; there were 3,787 certificates of occupancy and use issued; 1,540 certificates of compliance were issued; 18,495 electrical inspections were booked; 14,505 plumbing inspections were booked; 9,159 plumbing plans were approved; 8,594 leasing zone inquiries were processed; 5,413 building conveyancing inquiries were processed; and 2,714 efficiency rating submissions were lodged. And 100 per cent of DAs and BAs were lodged online with eDevelopment. You can see that the directorate is very busy.

DR BOURKE: Just going into a little more detail, then, minister, in relation to the DA finder app—which I found particularly easy to use; congratulations on that—do you have any metrics about how many people are using that?

Mr Gentleman: We will see if we can get some detail for you. It is probably a bit early at this stage, Dr Bourke; it was only launched a little while ago. We will take that on notice.

DR BOURKE: There is no first feel?

Mr Gentleman: I know that it was taken well in the launch from the community groups. They were very keen, as you know. You can download the app; you can look at an area that is specific to your interest. I think that went over really well with the community councils; they could see them, and they would be notified automatically whenever a DA was brought up in that area of interest.

DR BOURKE: I would have thought it would have offered a greater engagement with the development application process so that it improves transparency for the community.

Mr Gentleman: Indeed, yes. They were the responses given by the community councils on the day, for sure.

DR BOURKE: Thank you, minister.

Mr Meyer: Minister, if I could just add to that, in relation to the eDevelopment project, it continues as part of a process of improving that system for industry and the community. We are currently undergoing what we are calling a renovation project, which is bringing the eDevelopment platform up to a contemporary standard. That has involved consultation with a range of community organisations and trades groups, the MBA, the HIA and others, to look at the lessons that we have learned over the last six or seven years and to build in better capacity and better information to provide to clients who are looking for progress of their application, as well as the general public. So we are gradually continuing to improve the operations and standards of that communication with the community.

THE CHAIR: I have a quick supplementary, minister. On page 24, where it refers to 1,113 development applications lodged, is there some way that they are sorted into different types of development applications—like whether they are a house, a greenfields site or a site where they have to do some demolition?

Mr Gentleman: There are different tracks for applications, of course. There is the merit track and the impact track, for example. In the 2013-14 year, the merit track assessment looked at 1,081 merit track DAs, with most of the decisions made within the target time. From 1 July to 30 September this year, the section assessed 307 merit track DAs, with many decisions made in the target time as well. I will just ask directorate officials if they want to add anything on the other tracks.

Mr Ponton: To answer your question, Ms Berry, yes, the system is that when we lodge DAs electronically, we can separate out residential versus multi-unit versus commercial and mixed use, so it is possible to draw some stats in relation to particular types of development.

THE CHAIR: Is there an increase or a decrease in the numbers of different types of development applications that you have noticed?

Mr Ponton: It has been relatively steady over the last few years. Over a period of about five or six years, you tend to see increases and decreases, depending on the market, but generally speaking the numbers have been relatively consistent.

THE CHAIR: Thank you. Mr Wall?

MR WALL: Whilst we are talking about development applications, I will just follow on as to what is the longest processing time on a development application in the system at the moment.

Mr Gentleman: As I mentioned, most of the assessed merit track DAs fell into the target group. There were a few that did not. I will ask directorate officials to come to you with some of those details.

Mr Corrigan: From the 2013-14 annual report, the longest DA that we had to deal with was 492 days. That was our longest DA.

MR WALL: What sort of development work was that for?

Mr Corrigan: That was an estate development plan in Phillip, in the Woden town centre. The Land Development Agency were looking to do some changes there.

MR WALL: On page 229, there is financial management reporting. Point b shows that there has been a four per cent slip in the target for processing applications on time. The target was 75 per cent, but you have only achieved 72 per cent of applications being processed on time. What is the reason for the delay, with over a quarter of applications taking longer than the statutory time frame?

Mr Gentleman: The average number of merit track DAs lodged per month in the first half was 87, so that has increased. There are a couple of those that we mentioned have taken a bit longer. Mr Corrigan?

Mr Corrigan: Mr Wall, you will notice that with the two indicators there, we have measured the average and the median. We are lower on the statutory time frames with the average; because of all the DAs that we get, there is a proportion that takes significantly longer, for whatever reason. I will not go into the reasons now, but we only need a handful to skew those figures. That is why they come down. For example—

MR WALL: Before you go on too much further, Mr Corrigan, could you just give me an explanation as to what the difference is between point a and point b. Point a says “Development application processing times”; the other one says “Percentage of development application decisions made within statutory timeframe”. What is the difference between making a decision and processing?

Mr Corrigan: The processing time is the number of days that it takes to deal with the DA. The median is, as I was saying, calculated as follows: in the course of the year, with those 1,000-odd applications we have got, if we take the average, it just says, “Of the 1,000, what is the average processing time?” It just gives you a result. That is one indicator. The median is, in a way, a more useful indicator.

MR WALL: I am familiar with those definitions, but internally, for you, what is the difference between making a decision on a DA for reporting and processing an application? Or are they one and the same?

Mr Ponton: I might jump in there. They are one and the same. Perhaps for next year we can look at ensuring consistency in that terminology. Yes, processing time is from the beginning to the end, so when the DA is lodged. That includes, in the customer services area, lodging the application, the public notification, the assessment and the decision. Likewise, the other term there, which is decisions, includes the entire

assessment period.

MR WALL: From submission through to the decision being issued?

Mr Ponton: That is right.

Mr Gentleman: Mr Wall, it might be worth while for the committee to understand that the two development applications that took the longest time, those ones that were well into the 400 days, were both from ACT government applications, and the agencies required additional time to modify their development proposals to undertake further community consultation.

MR WALL: I understand that in submitting an application, it goes through what I believe you term a completeness check before the fees are taken. What is the average time period for that process to be undertaken?

Mr Corrigan: For the last financial year, we will have to take that one on notice—the actual time. They take anywhere between five and 10 days.

MR WALL: Is there a statutory time frame that the directorate has for completing that task?

Mr Corrigan: No. It is not actually a statutory process in itself. It is designed to assist us, when we assess the application—that everything is there. It is a completeness check: is the application complete so that we can commence the assessment, commence the notification of the DA, and things like that? That is what it is there for.

Mr Gentleman: You might have incidents, Mr Wall, where, for example, documents are put in with plans. You might have a plan that is put in that looks really good but does not have north on the document so it is very hard to—

MR WALL: I have probably submitted more plans than anyone else in this room, minister.

THE CHAIR: Minister, my question is a bit similar to or along the same lines as Mr Wall's questions around development applications. If a person has put in a development application and it has been approved, and their development application has a certain period before it ceases, or they have to begin their demolishing and development of a site, what recourse does the community have to get things moving quicker than the statutory requirement, if that is possible, or is it just a matter of waiting it out until the development happens?

Mr Gentleman: I will ask Mr Ponton to give you those details.

Mr Ponton: A development proponent, once the DA is approved, has two years within which to commence. That is a right that is vested to the proponent. If a community group or community representatives would like to see that development occur sooner, unfortunately there is not much that can be done to facilitate a faster commencement time. That is generally speaking, although there have been particular circumstances that I can recall where, working with the proponent, it was actually for

a community outcome. The community were keen to see the development occurring quickly, so we included a condition on the approval that brought that two-year period back to a six or 12-month period. So that is possible, but the default is two years.

THE CHAIR: So if it is a two-year wait before anything happens, can it only be changed if you had an agreement earlier, before the development application, or can that happen in the middle of that two-year time frame?

Mr Ponton: It would need to be considered as part of the development assessment and included as a condition. It is normally 12 months to commence and two years to complete, but the act actually provides for a two-year commencement and then you would need to extend the period for completion. As I said, it is possible to include a condition of development approval to limit that time. But once the approval has been issued, then there is not much that can be done in that respect.

THE CHAIR: It is a “commence”, so there is another time frame for it to be completed, isn’t there? So if they started their development on the very last day of the two-year period then you would have to wait for another period for that development to be completed?

Mr Ponton: For completion, yes.

THE CHAIR: What are the time frames on that one?

Mr Ponton: It would depend on the size of the development.

THE CHAIR: Is there a table that shows the sizes of developments and time frames?

Mr Corrigan: Not really, Ms Berry. It is up to our proponents as to how they manage that. There is a link here, though, to maybe a condition of a lease. If it is a new greenfield site, the lease may have commence and complete provisions within that lease, but recently those provisions have been amended, or allowed to be amended, through linking to the extension of time policy that the government adopted in March.

THE CHAIR: On the mediation of development applications and whether or not these have been resolved, what number of DAs were resolved through mediation and what was the target for that?

Mr Gentleman: Yes, it was a good result for those where there was an issue and it had to be resolved. With respect to the percentage of development applications that were appealed and resolved by mediation in relation to their proposal, we had a target of 35 per cent and we actually met 60 per cent during that period, which was a good result. So that meant they could go ahead.

THE CHAIR: In terms of matters that were not resolved through mediation and ended up being considered by ACAT, how many were dealt with in the reporting period and what percentage upheld the directorate’s original decision?

Mr Gentleman: We had a number that went to ACAT and for 100 per cent of those appeals that went to ACAT the decision of the authority was upheld. So that meant

they were correct on all of those matters and all of those decisions. It is quite a good story to tell, in that the decisions made by the authority and EPD have in fact been upheld by ACAT.

THE CHAIR: For 2013-14 what were some of the most notable development proposals?

Mr Gentleman: Blocks 13 and 15, section 3 Phillip—the construction of a multistorey, mixed use development that had 19 storeys in a residential tower facing Melrose Drive, a 10-storey commercial office tower facing Furzer Street with commercial floor space, and 137 residential dwellings with basement and podium level parking. That DA was approved in July this year. Block 59, section 50 Kingston had 156 dwellings and 1,594 square metres of commercial floor space, comprising restaurant, office and retail, with a level of basement parking.

A number of other development proposals approved during the period included the Royalla solar farm, and the Theodore to Gilmore transmission line upgrade. I have seen that develop as I do my Theodore walk on Tuesday mornings. There was the Mugga Lane Resource Management Centre extension, the Molonglo east-west arterial road, the Alexander Maconochie Centre extension, the Common Ground supportive housing project, which you would be aware of, the Moncrieff west residential estate, and, of course, the Woden bus interchange.

I mentioned earlier that area at Woden. It was a good opportunity for me to open an area just across the road. You will remember the old Burnie Court site at Woden. That was demolished some time ago and new construction of a retirement complex and an apartment complex called Sorell was completed by Hindmarsh. I was able to open the Sorell complex, which was quite exciting. Interestingly, it was John Hindmarsh that built the original Burnie Court. He was later able to build the renewed model. The uptake at the time I think was pretty good.

THE CHAIR: I have another quick question on development application time frames. If there was a site where there was a building that was particularly derelict, how derelict would it have to be for the government to insist on it being demolished?

Mr Gentleman: I will ask Mr Simmons to answer that question.

Mr Simmons: The building would have to meet a precondition under section 61 of the Building Act. It would have to be either structurally deficient in such a way that there was a risk of its collapse or that the deterioration of the building was such that it provided a danger to the public.

THE CHAIR: Can you repeat that last bit?

Mr Simmons: There is a precondition under section 61 before the powers of the registrar are engaged at section 62. These powers are used infrequently but relate to where there are dangerous buildings or where the building's inherent safety may put its occupants or members of the public at risk if it is left in its condition. But given the way most buildings in this city have been constructed, it is going to take a fair amount of—

THE CHAIR: Do you have an example of when that has been done?

Mr Simmons: When section 62 has been engaged? With the fire that destroyed the Canberra Services Club, the remaining chimneys were demolished on the order of the registrar, and the clean-out of the burnt sections of the Sydney Building. Those powers were engaged there as well.

DR BOURKE: Were the Aranda shops involved, when they were derelict and in disrepair?

Mr Simmons: The Aranda shops have been the subject of numerous visits from the inspectorate and amounts of work have been done. In fact those particular powers under the Building Act did not have to be engaged. The lessee in question, when shown evidence, took the wise course of action and undertook some demolition and repair of some walls in and around the Aranda shops. The lessees are working through a number of proposals to reactivate the shops.

DR BOURKE: And the Giralang shops have been demolished.

Mr Simmons: They have been demolished, but they never reached a point where they actually represented a danger.

DR BOURKE: Just an aesthetic one.

Mr Simmons: Yes. We do not legislate for aesthetics.

DR BOURKE: That is a pity.

THE CHAIR: Mr Coe, do you have a question?

MR COE: Yes, on a not dissimilar subject—extension of time fees. I note that the receivables for extension of time—

Mr Gentleman: Which page, Mr Coe?

MR COE: Page 176 is probably best. It is also on page 170, but page 176 is probably best. Would you please give the committee a rundown of what impact the stimulus package had on the receivables, what is outstanding and what the take-up rate of the waiver has been?

Mr Gentleman: It is probably a matter for CMTEDD really in the scenario. It is a Treasury matter.

MR COE: But in your financial statement at page 176 you have got extension of time to build non-current receivables and current receivables. One question could be: why are there non-current receivables as opposed to current receivables and what is the basis for those calculations?

Mr Gentleman: I will ask Mr Fitzgerald to answer.

Mr Fitzgerald: The reason for the non-current split is an examination of the recoverability of the money. In this instance we have looked at how long we expect the money to be recovered, and that is a period greater than 12 months. Therefore, we put it as a non-current asset.

MR COE: And how much has been waived as a result of the stimulus?

Mr Fitzgerald: As at the end of June 2014 we had waivers of \$1.8 million.

MR COE: And what was the total amount that was eligible to be waived? It was by application, was it not?

Mr Fitzgerald: It is by application; so we do not have, at this point, a feel on exactly how much is still outstanding.

MR COE: Surely that means that the budget estimate for the receivables is quite a dicey figure, is it not?

Mr Fitzgerald: We make a provision based on best estimates, based on what we know at any particular time, looking at vacant blocks and looking at work undertaken by the fee compliance team. From that, we determine what we believe is a fair provision for the amount outstanding still to be collected.

MR COE: And what is that figure for the 2014-15 financial year?

Mr Fitzgerald: As at the end of the 2014 financial year we had an amount owing of about \$4.3 million, we believe.

MR COE: But how much of that do you expect to actually be claimed?

Mr Fitzgerald: We put in an impairment provision. Effectively we have assessed the recoverability of about \$2 million of that to be not able to be collected.

MR COE: And why is that so, given that the liability goes with the lease, does it not?

Mr Fitzgerald: Correct.

MR COE: Does that mean that in effect these blocks are condemned and are never going to be sold?

Mr Fitzgerald: No. What it generally relates to is the fact that we have assessed the impairment based on what we believe the impact of the ACT stimulus package would be. It is not necessarily that the money will not be recovered. It is actually making an assessment of how much we think will be recovered, after applying the first stimulus package.

Mr Gentleman: As you would be aware, Mr Coe, the government made a decision to provide that stimulus package to the industry to see if we can get a stimulus to the economy by bringing in more construction. Of course that provides a lot of other

structures and supports for the territory. That includes employment, of course, and further business across the territory.

MR COE: What is the total amount of the receivables that is actually not eligible to be claimed through the stimulus package?

Mr Fitzgerald: We would estimate that to be around the \$2½ million mark.

MR COE: Why was that \$2½ million not captured in the stimulus package?

Mr Fitzgerald: The calculation method allowed for collection. There are effectively four different rates of calculation. So these were amounts for revenue generated before the collection period.

MR COE: Regarding note 3 within note 5 on page 170, what are those changes in the calculation method?

Mr Fitzgerald: The calculation method itself. As I mentioned, there are four different types of calculations. We now move to a one-times rate calculation after a period of five years. Previous to that we were looking at a calculation rate much lower. As part of the change in the calculation rate too, they have also removed the land tax component from the rates. Previously the rates calculation had been used to actually assess extension of time because that portion was increasing within the rates calculation. The stimulus package actually removed that portion. We have adjusted the calculation to allow for that, yes.

MR COE: And in terms of the outyears, have there been any refinements about what receivables you expect?

Mr Fitzgerald: We will look at that through the preparation of the 2015-16 budget and yes, I believe we will make a judgement. Generally speaking we would expect the revenues to be decreasing from extension of time because the calculation rate now has changed to a much fairer calculation, in effect.

MR COE: And on those few pages I was referring to, there is mention of the lease variation charge and the collection not being as high because not as many major projects are underway. Is that correct?

Mr Fitzgerald: That is correct.

MR COE: Again for this current year, this 2014-15 year, and for the outyears, do you expect major projects to return to previous levels such that the LVC will increase again?

Mr Gentleman: There is, I think, a distinction here about judging those major projects against LVC and also other drivers in the economy in the ACT. As you would be aware, there is, I would say, some lack of confidence now across the territory on some major projects. We have had discussions with some major developers about some projects that we would have thought that they would bring forward and they are just not ready to do so at this time. However, of course, since the

LVC was introduced there have been 200 lease variations registered. We have also looked at supporting industry in some of their forward plans, I guess, for looking at development across the territory.

The government announced that two-year stimulus package to support the local economy and promote confidence in the sector. That package included the remissions, but some codified fees were frozen as well for two years. That will come into effect on 1 July 2015. Between 6 March 2014 and 30 June 2015 a proponent would need to write to the Treasurer for a waiver until that comes through.

MR COE: Were all of those 200 at the 75 per cent remission? Is that right?

Mr Ponton: No. That is since 2000. I might ask Mr Corrigan to join me but there have been a number of remissions available over that period. In terms of the exact numbers, I will provide those to you and take that on notice unless Mr Corrigan has the answer at hand. But we do have the data available.

MR COE: Would the bulk of those 200 that have paid since codification be at 75 per cent remission?

Mr Ponton: It would be too difficult for me to answer without the data in front of me. I think it would be best if we took that on notice.

MR COE: Just to clarify for your benefit, of the 200, in effect, broken down into the level of remission that was applied?

Mr Ponton: Sure.

MR WALL: I have a supplementary. I was wondering how many leases in the territory are currently liable for an extension of time fee.

Mr Gentleman: Mr Simmons.

Mr Simmons: It is not really a question to which the answer exists, because the periods for extension of time are now quite lengthy periods for residential. They do not occur for six years after the date of grant of the lease, and eight years for leases that are not residential. So there is an extensive period, to the extent that there are any out there, and they do not manifest until people seek to activate the use on a property.

If there is a block of land that is vacant and has not been developed we will not know about it until somebody comes in and says, "Now I want to start to develop. I want to develop this land." It will have to be assessed to see which period of time it was in. If any of it is pre-2008, then it will have a small amount when it was \$1,000, \$1,200 a year regardless of the size of the block. There would be waivers applicable pretty much from 2008 all the way through until 31 March 2014. Then there is the period post-2014.

It is possible there could be leases out there granted in late 2008 that still have not been developed and that will not necessarily trigger anything or anything of substance. Until somebody comes in and says, "I want to develop this undeveloped block of

land,” we do not know that they have got—

MR WALL: Surely there is an estimate or some kind of intention to identify the number of blocks that are out there that would be liable for these fees?

Mr Simmons: The cost of doing that would far exceed any value we would get from it.

MR WALL: If you have got no understanding of the number of blocks that are currently in the territory that are liable for extension of time fees, how do you then put into the budget an amount that you believe is going to be received on those?

Mr Simmons: Back around the 2010-11 financial year we started a process that everything, as it came into noncompliance, was recorded. It is the periods of noncompliance that predate that to which the unknown is. It is a small unknown, and the unknown gets smaller every year but it is still an unknown.

MR WALL: Anything pre—what year was it?

Mr Simmons: From memory it is the 2010-11 financial year. One of our key KPIs is the collection of that data going forward. This was when the fees were starting to accumulate for people. We have been advising them as they went into noncompliance from that period on. So we have got a reasonable history of doing that as people come into noncompliance, but the periods of noncompliance are now, from 1 April of this year, longer. It is the periods where there are people who have not developed our blocks that predate 2008 where the unknown is. The margin of error—and there will be one—reduces each year we get further down the track because the pool of things that are pre-2008 naturally becomes smaller.

MR WALL: How many blocks have been surrendered back to the territory that are liable for a commencing and completing extension of time fee?

Mr Gentleman: We will probably have to do some research on that. We will take that on notice and come back to you.

THE CHAIR: Did you have a time frame in mind, Mr Wall, or just from 2008?

MR WALL: The number of blocks that have been returned back to the territory that are in that—

MR COE: In arrears.

MR WALL: In arrears on that payment.

Mr Simmons: Sure.

DR BOURKE: Minister, could you outline some of the responsibilities within the strategic planning division and some of the activities that are currently underway?

Mr Gentleman: Indeed; thanks very much, Dr Bourke, for that question. There are a

number of things that we are doing in strategic planning. We are looking at, of course, the strategic plan that guides spatial planning in the ACT in conjunction with transport for Canberra, which I talked about earlier. We are implementing the city plan. That is progressing with the urban design framework, a review of the development controls and the transport and movement action plan for the city centre. The Northbourne Avenue corridor study will include a planning review to support integrated land use and transport and preparation for urban design guidelines for the corridor, too.

I talked a little earlier about the master plan program. It has continued to provide long-term planning in our main transport corridors and town centres. Also work has commenced on the preparation for the parking strategy which will be released next year.

DR BOURKE: I have noticed that the Belconnen master plan process is underway. Could you take us through that, please, minister?

Mr Gentleman: Yes. I think it is time for us to look at that. The previous Belconnen centre master plan was quite a number of years ago, so we want to make sure that we get all of the community consultation involved in that process. I will ask the directorate official to give you more details on the master plan process at Belconnen.

Mr Ponton: Certainly, thank you, minister. In terms of the earlier document, the town centre master plan has delivered some very good outcomes, not least of which are the changes to the bus interchange and working with Westfield as part of that work. Following on from that the Belconnen Community Council, in particular, had raised concerns with the planning and land authority with respect to a number of development applications that were being considered, particularly around height, because at that time, or currently, there are no provisions within the territory plan that deal specifically with height in terms of capping the height. There is a criterion that talks about future design character and the like. With the taller buildings that were being proposed in the development, the community council saw that as a key issue, although they did recognise that good work had been delivered through the earlier master plan.

The team and I went out to the council some months ago to have an initial conversation with, first of all, the larger group of the Belconnen Community Council and then with the executive to explore and better understand what were the key issues. It really came down to that issue of height and also parking in the town centre. They were relatively comfortable with the issues with transport and linkages.

Following on from that we are now starting the more formal process with the community. As I said those conversations that we had earlier were really just to get a clearer understanding of where we should be going with the master plan. It is not a wholesale review. It is not a matter of saying, "Basically, the old master plan is out and let's start again." It is about looking at what the previous master plan delivered, what we can build on and it is based on those key issues.

Interestingly, as part of the work undertaken in getting ready to go out and talk to the community and industry around the town centre master plan, we were able to identify that there had been a series of master plans since the 60s, 70s, 80s and early 2000s

that had always foreshadowed taller buildings. That was quite an eye-opener for the community council, and particularly when they saw the earlier models, with 20 and 25-storey buildings, particularly running around Emu Bank, as I recall. That has helped us to shift the conversation. There were some people who thought it had never been intended to have height in the town centre and now they can see that that was part of the original planning. So there is a willingness to explore that further, with us, the industry and the community having a conversation.

As I said we have had those early conversations. We are now doing some more formal work. Hopefully, subject to the minister's agreement, sometime next year we will be going out with a draft master plan, as I said, that builds on that earlier 2004 plan that delivered those really good outcomes for Belconnen.

DR BOURKE: Apart from consultation with the community council, how else will you be engaging with the community?

Mr Ponton: There are a range of ways to engage with the community. There are the traditional methods in terms of ads in newspapers and the like, but we do like to try and engage with a broader cross-section of the community. Community councils are very useful but we acknowledge that they are not necessarily representative of the broadest cross-section. We will look at various drop-in sessions, meet the planner sessions. That might be at the Belconnen mall, in other areas outside the Belconnen town centre itself, to try to capture those people who use the town centre. We have had people who are typically interested—from Hawker, for example—in what is happening in the town centre. We will look to use social media as well to try and capture interest from younger people. We also have a really good program—a communications officer who goes out to schools. We will try and capture some ideas through that program as well.

As I said there are a range of options available to us, Dr Bourke, to try and capture a very broad cross-section of the community base, from younger right through to older people, industry and businesspeople. We will have sessions with traders, lessees and the like.

DR BOURKE: What was the rationale for having no building height limits in the previous Belconnen master plan?

Mr Ponton: The previous master plan had identified what might be desired, but in terms of that being translated into the territory plan that did not occur. A similar thing happened with Woden. There was a conscious decision at the time because the level of development activity was not as great. I do not think anyone really envisaged that we would be seeing proposals for 10 or 20-storey buildings. At the time we were seeing buildings in the order of eight, 10 or maybe 16 at the most. But in more recent times there has been a shift in terms of the capacity of the industry to construct this size of building, and also in terms of the market. The market has shifted and there is an interest from people wanting to live in that type of development. That is why it is important now that we do revisit that particular shift given the large amount of demand that we are seeing. And it is not that height is a bad thing. It is just about ensuring that we achieve that height in an appropriate manner.

Mr Gentleman: Height discussions are quite interesting across the territory. I can remember as a young boy when the Monaro Mall was first built, which is now the Canberra Centre. It was our first three-storey construction, from basement level through to the first level, and it was really interesting. The community was excited about it. They were really on board. In more recent times you have seen a change, probably in the last 20 years. Some community groups express concern about building heights. Interestingly, the younger demographic coming through seem to want to live in taller buildings, in apartment complexes rather than in the older style of building. So it is important that we plan for the future and, of course, take the lessons of the past as well.

DR BOURKE: Thank you, minister. In the consultations that you have had with the community council, do they understand the aesthetic compromise that would be achieved if there was a building height limit and everybody built to the same height—in other words, we have a bunch of tall buildings all at the same height? Is that something that they have managed to appreciate?

Mr Gentleman: I am sure the planners would be very upset.

Mr Ponton: Certainly, Dr Bourke. That is an issue that has been raised in the conversations that I have been involved in with the community council, but Mr Carmichael might wish to expand a little.

Mr Carmichael: We have been out over the last couple of weeks with more detailed plans talking to the community council and also targeting some of the younger demographic. There is strong interest in actually bringing vibrancy back into Belconnen town centre. Part of that is for a range of taller buildings. There is generally support for the style of buildings that is being proposed in the master plan. We will go out in more detail next year, but the early indications are that the local community across the demographic is pretty comfortable with some increased height as long as it is well designed.

Mr Gentleman: Dr Bourke, if I could just come back to the consultation discussion again, during that reporting period there was a focus on engagement. We had officers made more available to the public to explain plans and discuss issues. A good example is the draft city plan. That had staff displays at Garema Place and the Canberra Centre to attract passers-by. Other master plans were also displayed at centres they pertained to. Where appropriate, we also had ACT government directorates—directorates other than EDP—attend as well. If people are really interested in what is happening, in a master plan sense, in transport, we have Roads ACT attend those sessions as well.

We had feedback encouraged in a number of ways. We included online and paper feedback forms, surveys, general email and mail correspondence. For some of the big engagements, we had consultation reports prepared for the minister and placed on the directorate's website so that you could go and have a look and see whether your actual comments were registered there as well. That is a great way of expanding how we consult with the public and stakeholders.

DR BOURKE: There have been some recent proposals for some tall apartment

buildings in Gungahlin, I recall. That seems to have provoked some response as well. Perhaps you could talk us through that, minister.

Mr Gentleman: There was certainly a media story on some towers proposed for Gungahlin, but I do not think we have seen anything come to the directorate as yet.

Mr Ponton: No, that is right. At this stage it is fairly early days in terms of initial discussions with the proponent, but there is no formal application for it at this point.

DR BOURKE: With Emu Bank, there has been a longstanding under-utilisation of the lakeside waterfront there, with a range of fast-food drive-through joints, to put it bluntly, minister. Will the master plan be able to consider some alternative outcomes so that the full beauty of the lake and the opportunity for an enlivenment of that area can be considered?

Mr Gentleman: Yes, for sure. We will expect input from people who live in the area as well. I imagine we will get greater input now that there is more residential within that area. They will certainly give us their feedback on what they think of that lakeside area.

But as you are aware, we have looked at encouraging lakeside living and lifestyle across the territory, whether it is here in the city, with city to the lake, or even in Tuggeranong, at Lake Tuggeranong, where we are doing the key development at the moment. And, of course, it is the same for Belconnen. If people express an interest in living and taking leisure by the lake, we want to help them out as much as we can.

DR BOURKE: A key part of that is going to be the anchor at one end, which is the Belconnen Arts Centre, which, as you may be aware, is still awaiting its second-stage development. There is further work that needs to be done on the lake shore. There is some land and lake area amelioration, which I presume is an EDD issue—is that correct?

Mr Gentleman: Yes, it is. I will take note, too, that Belconnen Arts Centre is much larger than Tuggeranong Arts Centre, so it is interesting to see that it is going for an expanded view. We will have to push the same down at Tuggeranong as well. But it would be a matter that we deal with, probably across government, to ensure the best outcomes.

DR BOURKE: The arts are truly appreciated in my electorate of Belconnen, minister, so one can only—

Mr Gentleman: Mr Carmichael is going to give you some more information.

Mr Carmichael: Dr Bourke, further to that, we are working closely with the University of Canberra. That is also looking to integrate itself a bit better into the Belconnen town centre—to activate those sorts of transit ways with the university. Some of that will be along the lake edge. The students particularly want to see more activity around the lake edge, but part of the master planning for the university itself will complement the work that we are doing so that we can start—as we have done with the ANU, over time merging it with the CBD—trying to do the same with the

extension of the University of Canberra. As it grows, it will grow towards Belconnen, so there will be a better link and that will encourage a lot more pedestrian traffic between the university and around that lake edge into the town centre.

DR BOURKE: Will that form part of the relationship with the University of Canberra Lake Ginninderra secondary college?

Mr Carmichael: We are consulting with all the schools in the area. We will certainly take into account any opportunities there for the secondary school and tertiary school sector as well.

DR BOURKE: Finally, minister, going back to this consultation about the Belconnen town centre master plan, are you also reaching out to those people perhaps who have already bought units in buildings which have not been built yet, who may have particular desires as to what they would like to see in that town centre master plan?

Mr Gentleman: Yes; we are working through how to best get in touch with those groups as well. As I have mentioned, the way that we communicate with constituencies in that area is expanding all the time. On top of the programs that I talked about earlier on, we will look at other ways we might be able to interact directly with people that have purchased in the area but are yet to settle.

DR BOURKE: Thank you, minister.

THE CHAIR: I have a very quick supplementary to that, minister. I received my postcard on the Belconnen consultation, and thank you very much for that, but it does not say on there exactly where in the Belconnen mall the meeting with the planners is. Belconnen mall is a bit bigger than it used to be. Is there a spot? Could you tell us exactly where on the plan?

DR BOURKE: Bigger than the hyperdome.

Mr Gentleman: It is certainly a large complex. In the 1980s I used to clean the whole top floor of Belconnen mall every night.

THE CHAIR: It would be a much bigger job now than it was in the 1980s.

Mr Gentleman: It certainly would. We will endeavour to get that information identified for you.

Mr Carmichael: And also provide signage on the times that they will be there at the various entrances so that people will be guided to where the planners are.

THE CHAIR: Mr Wall.

MR WALL: Minister, the annual report makes mention of the light rail master plan. I was wondering if you would be able to inform the committee when that will be completed.

Mr Gentleman: We are working through that document at the moment, Mr Wall,

across my directorate—and cap metro, for information, as well. We are looking to have that completed for early next year.

MR COE: What information is going to be included in that master plan? Is it going to be preliminary costings or patronage figures, or is it simply going to replace the 300 series buses?

Mr Gentleman: It is a planning document, so it will look at certainly all of the information that has been gathered so far from EPD as well as information gathered by cap metro. It will identify the future potential rail network across Canberra as well, and guide decision-making about future extensions to capital metro. And it will build on the government's work already undertaken on light rail—and integrated land use as well, and transport planning. Of course, that is to deliver upon the government's policies, including transport for Canberra, the ACT planning strategy and the city plan.

MR WALL: Minister, will the document outline the appropriate staging of future legs in the network?

Mr Gentleman: We are certainly looking at that at the moment. My hope is that it will show future staging. It is interesting that you mention it, because there is a lot more information coming in now. There have been changes to some transport arrangements, especially parking in the parliamentary triangle, that have shown a change in commuter move across the territory. A really good example there is my local park and ride down in Calwell. Mr Wall would be aware of that as well. It had limited use up until October this year; once the NCA put paid parking in the parliamentary triangle, that park and ride is probably a third to a half full each day, which is a stark difference. And I understand from Mr Rattenbury that the increase in commuter patronage of buses into the parliamentary triangle has increased quite dramatically. We need to make sure that we have all that information in the dataset to be able to provide any future corridors.

MR COE: Given that paid parking in the parliamentary triangle was flagged more than a year in advance, how is it that the first leg of capital metro does not go near the parliamentary triangle?

Mr Gentleman: That is a matter for cap metro. You asked me about the light rail master plan, and I have given you the details on that. What I said, and I think it is really important, is that we need to learn as we go along to see changes in transport application across the territory. If we see changes, we need to plan for the future.

MR COE: Can we assume, then, that the master planning document, which is due to finish in June 2015, is going to articulate the future rollout into the actual routes that should be rolled out, and in what order?

Mr Gentleman: Mr Coe, you will see as much information in that document as we can possibly provide with all of the information provided to us over this period of time during which we are working the document up.

THE CHAIR: Members, the time has come to an end for the inquiry in relation to this minister's portfolio. If members have any questions on notice for the minister,

please lodge them with the committee office within three business days of this hearing. Minister, I ask that responses to questions taken on notice and supplementary questions—of which there were about half a dozen to you today, I think—are provided to the secretary by Friday, 5 December 2014.

The committee adjourned at 2.59 pm.