



**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY**

**STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC ACCOUNTS**

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

**Members:**

**MR B SMYTH (Chair)**  
**DR C BOURKE (Deputy Chair)**  
**MR M GENTLEMAN**  
**MS N LAWDER**

**TRANSCRIPT OF EVIDENCE**

**CANBERRA**

**MONDAY, 2 DECEMBER 2013**

**Secretary to the committee:**  
**Dr A Cullen (Ph: 620 50142)**

**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

<b>ACT Ombudsman’s Office.....</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>Chief Minister and Treasury Directorate.....</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>Territory and Municipal Services Directorate.....</b>	<b>21</b>

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*Amended 20 May 2013*

**The committee met at 9.30 am.**

Appearances:

Gallagher, Ms Katy, Chief Minister, Minister for Regional Development, Minister for Health and Minister for Higher Education

Chief Minister and Treasury Directorate

Byles, Mr Gary, Acting Head of Service and Director-General  
Kefford, Mr Andrew, Deputy Director-General, Workforce Capability and Governance Division, and Commissioner for Public Administration  
Ogden, Mr Paul, Chief Finance Officer, Policy and Cabinet Division  
Hall, Ms Sue, Director, Corporate Management  
Peffer, Mr Dave, Deputy Director-General, Policy and Cabinet Division  
Dixon, Mr Brook, Director, Economic, Regional and Planning  
Abernethy, Ms Alison, Acting Director, Culture and Communications Division  
Chisnall, Mr Michael, Executive Director, Government Information Office  
Stankevicius, Mr Adam, General Manager, Centenary of Canberra Project Team  
Young, Mr Michael, Acting Executive Director, Continuous Improvement and Workers Compensation

ACT Ombudsman's Office

Neave, Mr Colin, ACT Ombudsman

Territory and Municipal Services Directorate

Goggs, Mr Stephen, Acting Director-General  
Steward, Ms Fay, Executive Director, Parks and City Services Division  
Brown, Mr Jason, General Manager, National Arboretum Canberra

**THE CHAIR:** Good morning, everybody. I formally declare this public hearing of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts open. It is our inquiry into the 2012-13 annual reports. Chief Minister, on behalf of the committee, I would like to say thank you to you and your officials for attending. I know how much you look forward to this.

**Ms Gallagher:** We do.

**THE CHAIR:** The proceedings this morning will commence with an examination of the annexed report of the ACT executive, followed by the 2012-13 annual report of the Chief Minister and Treasury Directorate, relating to matters that fall within the Chief Minister's portfolio. We will then move to the Commissioner for Public Administration, the Ombudsman and we will then do a bit of TAMS, just for interest, on the National Arboretum. Finally, the committee will conclude with an examination of the Chief Minister and Treasury Directorate, the areas belonging to the regional development portfolio. We will conclude at about 12.45 today.

Can I remind witnesses of the protections and obligations afforded by the privilege card and draw your attention to the pink privilege statement that is on the table before you. Could you all acknowledge that you have seen it, read it and understand it? Good. I also remind witnesses that the proceedings are being recorded for transcription and are being webstreamed and broadcast live. Chief Minister, would you like to make an

opening statement?

**Ms Gallagher:** No, I would not.

**THE CHAIR:** We are starting with the executive, Chief Minister. Chief Minister, when will we have a larger executive?

**Ms Gallagher:** The first step is to look at the accommodation issues in the building. At the moment there is nowhere to put another minister. So we are working with the Speaker's office around what the options are.

**THE CHAIR:** Is there a budget for that?

**Ms Gallagher:** There is not. There has not been any funding allocated, so that is one of the issues. There are more expensive options and less expensive options, some of which may be able to be cash-managed. I have to resolve these matters with the Speaker because she has responsibility for the building as a whole, even though there is an MOU between certain parts of the building on the second floor. But we are looking to do the least-cost option; that is my preference.

**THE CHAIR:** Will we be setting up one, two, three, four or more suites?

**Ms Gallagher:** We will be looking at one in the first instance.

**THE CHAIR:** Just one?

**Ms Gallagher:** Yes.

**THE CHAIR:** Ms Porter.

**MS PORTER:** It is not a supplementary; it is really about staffing resources for that member of the executive, not the actual physical office, as it were. What arrangements are you making around providing staffing arrangements for that person?

**Ms Gallagher:** That will need to be worked through, in terms of budgets and an appropriate allocation of staffing resources. Again, I am looking at the least-cost option for that. In a sense, five ministers are managing the workload of what six ministers will manage. Therefore I do not think we need a fully staffed ministerial office. I think there has to be some sharing of resources across offices and pulling together the six ministers' resources through that. But there may need to be an appropriation for the minister's salary and perhaps the chief of staff. Other than that I would be looking to share existing allocations across the offices.

**MR HANSON:** A supplementary.

**MS PORTER:** I had not quite finished.

**THE CHAIR:** Keep going, Ms Porter.

**MS PORTER:** From what I am hearing you say, are you talking about the fact that

this adviser would be working on this particular area already in that minister's office—

**Ms Gallagher:** Perhaps. I have to negotiate with other ministers—

**MS PORTER:** and would transfer across?

**Ms Gallagher:** Yes.

**MS PORTER:** What about the front desk administration? There would be some need perhaps—

**Ms Gallagher:** There will be some additional costs that come through, but we need to work through that. It is related to the portfolio. There are a lot of competing issues that need to be resolved. That goes to the timing of the decision, because that relates to resources and how we find those resources, the building and resolving some of the issues around the building, and then negotiating with ministers about what that might look like when we share resources to support the sixth minister.

**THE CHAIR:** Mr Hanson, a supplementary.

**MR HANSON:** The process for making a decision about who that minister will be: is that a decision that you will make or is it a caucus decision? How does that happen?

**Ms Gallagher:** The caucus will discuss it, yes.

**MR HANSON:** Who makes the decision, though?

**Ms Gallagher:** I am not sure that relates to the annual report that we are here discussing. I think that is just a matter of interest for you, Mr Hanson. It is subject to ALP—

**THE CHAIR:** It relates to the executive.

**MR HANSON:** I think it is pretty relevant to the community.

**Ms Gallagher:** processes, which you do not need to bother yourself with.

**MR HANSON:** I am sure the community would like to know. I am sure the community would be interested in that, don't you think?

**Ms Gallagher:** I imagine there will be members of the committee interested in it, but I do not show any interest in Liberal Party processes because they do not relate to me.

**MR HANSON:** None at all?

**Ms Gallagher:** They do not relate to me.

**MR HANSON:** I have never noticed you show any interest!

**Ms Gallagher:** I am not that au fait with your rules and processes, but this will be subject to ALP processes—

**MR HANSON:** There will be an ALP—

**Ms Gallagher:** The leader will have a view—

**DR BOURKE:** I have a question, chair, if I can get to it.

**THE CHAIR:** We will get there.

**Ms Gallagher:** but in the true spirit of teamwork, we discuss these matters across the caucus.

**MR HANSON:** I thought appointing an executive member would have been an executive decision, not a Labor decision.

**Ms Gallagher:** Well, I am in the executive.

**MR HANSON:** That is right. So that is why I am asking you as the executive: what processes are you going to follow to make a decision about the appointment of—

**Ms Gallagher:** I think I have covered that, Mr Hanson. It is not subject to the annual report.

**THE CHAIR:** Dr Bourke.

**DR BOURKE:** Chief Minister, with respect to volume 2, page 2 of the annual report, could you tell me how the executive's operating surplus was achieved and was it a peculiarity of having an election during the year?

**Ms Gallagher:** What page are we on?

**DR BOURKE:** Page 2.

**Ms Gallagher:** Page 2 of volume 2.

**Mr Ogden:** The surplus was achieved by essentially an accounting treatment. The appropriation is drawn down for all cash payments. The types of payments that were made, though, during the year included annual leave and termination payments associated with the 2012 election. So it drives an operating surplus. It is an accounting treatment.

**DR BOURKE:** Could you go into that in a little more detail?

**Mr Ogden:** Yes, sure. Essentially, anything that is paid from the balance sheet is not an operating expense. But when we draw down the revenue for payment of EBT, we use essentially that cash payment. It is recognised as revenue but it is to pay a balance sheet item. So it does not hit the bottom line.

**THE CHAIR:** Ms Lawder.

**MS LAWDER:** Chief Minister, could you tell us a bit about the impact of having one of your ministers from the Greens, including the impact on the budget, perhaps, of additional advisers?

**Ms Gallagher:** There is a small additional impact. I think that was covered in this annual report reporting period. That was using some of the resources that were available to Mr Rattenbury when he was on the crossbench. So there is an acknowledgement in the parliamentary agreement that he performs two roles: one as an executive member and one as a crossbench member. So there is additional staffing to his office for that. But in terms of the impact of having a Greens member in the cabinet, I must say that it has been a lot more straightforward than I thought it would. I thought there would be a lot more issues than there have been. Mind you, it relies a lot on Minister Rattenbury and I meeting to resolve issues when there are disagreements.

**THE CHAIR:** Mr Hanson.

**MR HANSON:** Following on from that issue, the directorate has advisers for Mr Rattenbury. Some are labelled Greens advisers and some are labelled ministerial advisers. How do you assure yourself that ministerial advisers are not doing Greens work and Greens advisers are not doing ministerial work?

**Ms Gallagher:** That is based on an agreement that Minister Rattenbury and I have. The staff have been trained. We have provided them with training around responsibilities for executive staff and, in particular, cabinet processes and things like that. Minister Rattenbury and I have an agreement about how those staff are to operate. With respect to some of the issues potentially that would arise from time to time where there is crossover, I have no doubt that there is some crossover at times; it is the nature of running a small office and having to respond to particular inquiries or issues that come up on a day-to-day basis. But I feel that we have put the right emphasis on support for that office and Minister Rattenbury and I meet regularly. If there are any concerns, we discuss them and resolve them.

**MR HANSON:** Would you classify the executive business that Mr Rattenbury does as Greens work or ministerial work?

**Ms Gallagher:** That would be Greens work.

**THE CHAIR:** Any further questions for the executive? No? We will move on, then, to the Chief Minister's department. Chief Minister, who negotiates with the commonwealth on issues of interest to the ACT government?

**Ms Gallagher:** Chief Minister's.

**THE CHAIR:** Have you had any discussions with the commonwealth, for instance, over capital metro and whether or not commonwealth land or land over which the commonwealth has an interest will be involved?



**Ms Gallagher:** There have been some very early discussions with the commonwealth around capital metro, and they have really been around information. We have provided submissions to Infrastructure Australia, which is essentially an arm of the commonwealth. So, in that sense, yes, there have been discussions, but not in any detailed sense at this point in time, but I expect there will be as the project rolls out.

**THE CHAIR:** So no discussions at this stage with the NCA?

**Ms Gallagher:** The NCA are aware of the project, and they have not raised any concerns with us. Those processes would normally start once more of the detailed design issues around land and land use are agitated and explored.

**THE CHAIR:** The initial route of the Civic to Gungahlin line, is any of that on land over which the commonwealth holds an interest?

**Ms Gallagher:** Yes, there would be land where the national capital plan provides guidance, and that will need to be negotiated through, because of some of the national requirements that buses, for example, are not allowed to go down the median of Northbourne Avenue and because of the specifications of the national capital plan. So, yes, there are areas where we are going to need their support, but nothing to date. I have not met with the current acting chief executive on this, but I have had discussions with the previous chief executive. I understand a new chief executive will be appointed shortly. Nothing of concern to date has been raised from the National Capital Authority.

**THE CHAIR:** So if buses are not allowed down the median strip of Northbourne Avenue—

**Ms Gallagher:** That is my understanding.

**THE CHAIR:** What leads you to believe that a train will be?

**Ms Gallagher:** My understanding is—and again, I am not fully across all the detail—that trains are allowed but buses are not. But that might just be an historical thing that is not an issue for the NCA now. I am not saying it is. They certainly have not raised it with us. My point was: yes, there are national interests in the route, and we will need to work with them.

**THE CHAIR:** But have you actually checked whether the train can run down the centre of Northbourne Avenue, down the median strip?

**Ms Gallagher:** Yes.

**THE CHAIR:** And it can?

**Ms Gallagher:** Yes.

**THE CHAIR:** And the NCA has agreed—

**Ms Gallagher:** Under current planning, under the current frameworks, yes. And the

NCA have not raised any concerns with us to date. I have had a number of meetings, as I said, with the previous chief executive. We will wait for the new chief executive to be appointed, because we have been in a period of waiting while that recruitment is underway. But they are aware of the project. They are involved to the degree that they need to be involved at the moment, and that will need to continue. And there needs to be a very strong partnership with them.

**THE CHAIR:** Ms Porter.

**MS PORTER:** I realise I did not say good morning to you before.

**Ms Gallagher:** Such politeness.

**MR HANSON:** That minister's job is still on the table, Mary.

**DR BOURKE:** Please!

**MS PORTER:** That is uncalled for. Never mind.

**Ms Gallagher:** It is going to be a running—we will all have to endure that, I think.

**MR HANSON:** No sense of humour, Chris.

**DR BOURKE:** Not where you are concerned sometimes, Jeremy.

**THE CHAIR:** Let us have the question.

**MS PORTER:** Minister, on page 38 of the report, under the heading “Future Directions”, I note the Office of Industrial Relations will continue to participate in the national harmonisation of work health and safety laws, including development of new codes of practice and guidance material.

**Ms Gallagher:** That is right. This is Simon Corbell's area, though.

**THE CHAIR:** Yes, I asked that at the JACS committee. I will protect you from the assault.

**Ms Gallagher:** No, I am happy to go down it. I do know a bit about this, but it is Simon's.

**MS PORTER:** The asbestos and all of those kinds of things?

**Ms Gallagher:** Yes.

**MS PORTER:** They are all Simon's?

**Ms Gallagher:** Yes. He is the minister for industrial relations.

**MS PORTER:** Can I ask another question, then, chair?

**THE CHAIR:** Yes.

**MS PORTER:** On page 142, it talks about the studies assistance program. Is this a safe area to go, yes? Good, I got the nod. Can you please advise us of the range of tertiary studies that employees are undertaking and how that contributes to the work of the directorate? Additionally, how much paid leave can an employee typically access under a study allowance?

**Mr Kefford:** The directorate does take very seriously the need to invest in our staff, and there are a range of opportunities that we provide to them to do that. Chief Minister's and Cabinet and now Chief Minister's and Treasury has been well represented, for example, in the ANZSOG masters program over the last number of years. Our graduates participate with the rest of the ACTPS graduates in a program which includes a graduate certificate in public administration that the ANZSOG institute at the University of Canberra deliver for us.

The details of the question you have asked, we may need to take on notice because they are managed at a level of an individual discussion. One of the things we have done this year, as you know, is implement a new performance agreement, which does place an emphasis on ongoing learning and development. Certainly our enterprise agreements and, indeed, our approach to looking after our staff make this something that Chief Minister's is able to do and has done and regularly does. I know from my own staff, for example, there has been a mix of courses that they have been undertaking, either that they have started while they have been with us or have continued when they have come to us. So in terms of the detail of the coverage, we would need to take that on notice. But it is a program that is well utilised.

**Ms Hall:** We are not sure how much detail you want—and we can provide more—but with the studies assistance specifically, there were 24 employees that undertook studies over the last reporting period. That was at a cost of about \$198,000 all up. Each agreement is different for the particular course that they are undertaking. Some may get time off to attend classes. Some get time off for study. Some get financial assistance towards the cost of the course. So it varies. For us in doing the return on investment, when we look at that cost and when we look at the annual cost of getting an employee into an organisation, it is usually the cost of an annual salary. So in terms of return on investment, 24 people, just having two of those people go through, gives us return on investment. But if you—

**MS PORTER:** Is there a cap on the amount of funds that is available to expend in this way?

**Ms Hall:** It depends on the individual business unit's budgets. It is not done centrally. There is not a set cap in policy. So it would depend what the course was, how relevant it was to the work of the business unit, and that is determined at an individual level.

**MS PORTER:** Mr Kefford, you were talking about your personal experience with your staff. What kind of feedback do you get from them about being able to access this particular facility and how are you trying to manage your staffing?

**Mr Kefford:** I think the reception is very much that our staff appreciate the extent to

which the department is prepared to invest in them. And I can speak from my own experience, having been put through the ANZSOG masters program. The government has invested significantly in my own personal development and obviously, in the context of how I view my employment and so on, that is something that is positive. It is a mix. In some cases some of the most positive reactions I have had have been where we have not actually been paying for the course but where someone has been studying something completely different because they are contemplating a career change and yet we have accommodated that within our framework in terms of time or leave or so on. It is an indicator that the department appreciate what the individual is doing, is prepared to work with them on their own development. So I think it is an enormously positive approach that we can take.

**MS PORTER:** And managing staff issues, that is quite manageable?

**Mr Kefford:** There is no reason why it cannot be accommodated. And one of the things that have certainly been my experience when I have had staff on these programs is that, given that they recognise the investment is being made, very often the effort they make when they are there reflects the extent to which they recognise the opportunities that are in front of them.

**THE CHAIR:** Dr Bourke.

**DR BOURKE:** Chief Minister, volume 1, pages 24 and 25: can you tell me more about the targeted assistance strategy, how it was developed and the highlights of its implementation please?

**Ms Gallagher:** Yes. The origins of this are: we are looking at how our assistance is targeted to particular groups. This was a task force report that provided the government with the targeted assistance strategy, which has led to changes in legislation and some of the support we provide, for example, through no-interest or low-interest loans—some of the recommendations that Care financial planning provided the government—and then we are also looking at repayment of fines, payment plans, sort of periodic payments when people are getting into financial hardship. So we have done a lot of that work. In regard to the outstanding recommendations—and I am looking for someone to assist—the bigger ones, the bigger ticket budget items that we have not progressed or made a decision on, Dave, can you elaborate on that?

**Mr Peffer:** Thanks, Chief Minister. You will see, Dr Bourke, that on page 24 mention is made of 34 recommendations coming out of that. This is really about the most vulnerable members in our community and how we try and pull together all the concessions and support that government provides in a targeted fashion and make sure that that is available. Of the 34 recommendations, there are currently eight that are still under consideration by government in terms of medium and longer-term implementation. The remainder are either complete or in the process of being completed. There is a targeted assistance website which provides full details on the implementation of each of the recommendations.

**Ms Gallagher:** This is in particular where we are looking at people who sit above the concessions threshold but who are still experiencing financial hardship. That is an

area where, I think, we still need to keep our focus. Indeed, the Minister for Community Services and the Treasurer are looking at the way we provide concessions across ACT government, looking at ways to streamline them and to make them easier for people to access and also easier for us to administer.

Even though we have got [assistance.gov.au](http://assistance.gov.au), which co-locates a whole range of information about assistance, Health will have some concessions programs, Treasury has some, ACTEW runs some, Community Services runs some. So part of the work in the next stage is actually looking at how we can have a one-government approach to that, make it easier for people receiving concessions and also make it easier for us to administer.

**DR BOURKE:** Could you refresh the committee's memory about who was on the task force and when they reported?

**Ms Gallagher:** Gordon Ramsay was on it, the Chief Executive of Care Financial Planning, Carmel—last name escapes me at the moment—and there was one other member. Anyway, we can certainly provide that. Sandra Lambert, yes, that is right.

**DR BOURKE:** When did they report?

**Ms Gallagher:** Well over a year ago now.

**DR BOURKE:** You mentioned that there were eight recommendations still under consideration. What were those recommendations?

**Ms Gallagher:** I would have to provide that on notice, but they were the big ticket items—the ones that would come with a considerable cost to the budget. That has been the main reason why we have not been able to progress them.

**DR BOURKE:** You mentioned low interest loans. How do they work?

**Ms Gallagher:** We do not administer the low interest loans. I think that is managed through Care.

**DR BOURKE:** Right.

**Ms Gallagher:** Again, I would have to get some more detail on that.

**DR BOURKE:** Okay.

**Ms Gallagher:** It did go through a budget process, I think probably two budgets ago; or maybe one budget ago.

**DR BOURKE:** Okay. Is the overall approach here not only to pull together and make people who are eligible for things aware of the entire raft of concessions which are available across directorates but also to look at some new opportunities?

**Ms Gallagher:** Yes, that is right. I think we have responded via some of the website that has been done and some of the changes that have been done through the

Assembly. We have put in some extra resources through the concessions program based on recommendations and established the low interest loans or the no interest loan scheme, which we did not have before which other jurisdictions had. That is targeting a group that might not get concessions but who are still on a low income who then need to buy a fridge or pay for some medical bills, and that actually perpetuates the cycle of financial hardship when they have to make those big outlays.

That was the origins of it. The next stage now is to look at how we can make sure more effort is going into actually delivering the concessions, making them easier to administer. As we continue on the one-government agenda, we are identifying more of these areas where, for history reasons—there is no malice; there is no other reason other than that is the way it was established—different directorates run different elements of the concessions program. They all do it very well. They all understand their client base, but we think there is an argument about pulling it all together.

**DR BOURKE:** Thank you.

**MS LAWDER:** I refer to page 12 of the report. There are a couple of dot points here in the results section. I draw attention to the second one on that page, policy officers network, the third one, a guide, and a little bit further down, the digital Canberra project. I wonder if you could talk a bit about the outputs of those. For example, I guess my interest is in the first one, the policy officers network. Collaboration is already one of the values of the public service. So what is an output from this particular network?

**Mr Peffer:** This initiative was really about bringing together some of our lower level policy research from across the different agencies. What we found is that often as you progress into the more senior levels, you have more than ample opportunities to meet with people from other agencies and to start to build those networks. This was really about building more of a community feel earlier on in someone's career to ensure that they do have access to people in each directorate so they can ring and ask a question if they have a particular matter that covers a number of agencies. So it is about getting in early. There was a survey that was done. There were very positive responses to that. We have recently discussed the continuation of that initiative. That was supported by all agencies.

**MS LAWDER:** With the survey, did people say, “Yes, I have rung people from other agencies,” or is it more informal networking?

**Mr Dixon:** Yes, 85 per cent of the respondents agree that it was a positive initiative and that it assisted them making across-government contacts. So it was a very positive response from our perspective.

**MS LAWDER:** I guess my question was: did anyone actually formally ring someone from another agency or did that informal networking take place at the actual meetings? Have you achieved your goal of encouraging people to contact people?

**Mr Dixon:** Yes, we have. There was both the informal networking at the meetings themselves but also from talking to the officers who are involved in the network, they would absolutely call other officers, make contacts and use that in a productive way to

help their policy development and their understanding of across-government priorities.

**MS LAWDER:** Was it not a specific question on the survey, though?

**Mr Dixon:** It was not a specific question on the survey, “Have you contacted someone?” But from the feedback I have received—and I have talked to most of the officers on the network—they have used it in that way.

**MS PORTER:** Can I just ask a quick supplementary, chair?

**THE CHAIR:** All right, a supplementary to that, and then Mr Hanson.

**MS PORTER:** Was there a survey before the actual implementation of the program to see what people wanted, what they were missing out on?

**Mr Dixon:** No, there was not a survey before the network was initiated. There was general policy work done on the gaps in capability across government. That was one of the identified gaps, that at the lower levels of policy officers across government, there was a need to build capacity to allow them to network, to make contacts across government and to provide them with development opportunities as well. They are able to come along to meetings and present to their peers, share their information, share the work that they have done.

We identified that gap. We piloted a policy officers network, which has now been piloted for 12 months. The evaluation, as Mr Peffer has just said, was very positive. On the basis of that evaluation, we have, indeed, decided to extend the membership of the network more broadly. In the initial stages, there were only 50 officers to keep it capped and to keep the pilot manageable. But because it was so successful, we have extended it more broadly to all officers at the ASO5 to SOG C level. Based on the evaluation and based on the feedback that we have received from deputy directors-general across government, we believe it will be a very positive initiative.

**Ms Gallagher:** And it is part of ensuring that we are developing the one public service model right throughout the service. My own view is that it works very well at director-general and deputy director-general level. But as you move down the service, you have the silo system. For good reasons, policy officers who might be focused on schools will not necessarily see themselves aligned with policy officers in TAMS or in the planning area, because what they are doing is so different.

But if we can create more understanding of the areas where there is similarity, the better the service will be, plus the greater the opportunity for flexibility across the service. Another thing that I think the ACT government needs to develop is the ability to move people around the service to get a broader experience of what the ACT government actually does. We will be doing more of this, because I think as you go down, it does get more lost about who you work for, who your customers are and who your colleagues are.

**MR HANSON:** What involvement did you or your directorate have with the Canberra branding? Have you been involved in the process or have you received a briefing?

**Ms Gallagher:** Yes, I have had a number of briefings, as has cabinet. This work was led not by Chief Minister's but through Economic Development Directorate, but it is a one-government project. We are a partner in it; so I have had a number of briefings.

**MR HANSON:** What is your view of the branding? Do you think it is going to meet its objectives?

**Ms Gallagher:** Yes, I do. I think the difference with this is that we have had 15 months of pulling together experts, community leaders and prominent Canberrans around what the strengths of our city are, understanding the image that we want to project outside. I think that fundamentally the strength of the campaign is that it is underpinned by a pretty rigorous assessment of how we need to market ourselves outside the ACT. Part of that first step is what happened last week, which is letting the people of Canberra know where the project is up to and starting to get some understanding around the project.

**MR HANSON:** What feedback have you had so far?

**Ms Gallagher:** In terms of from whom? It has been mixed.

**MR HANSON:** From the Canberra community?

**Ms Gallagher:** Mixed. I would say that some people—it always focuses on the logo, whether the logo is right. People have mixed views on that. I have been shown a range of logos. I am one of those people that likes them all. I go, “Oh, yeah, that’s good. That’s good. That’s good.” This one, I think, has a range of different meanings that kind of hang off it. I do not think we expected everyone to come out and say, “Yes, we like it. We think it is the right way to go.” But it has certainly generated discussion that needs to happen.

In terms of people who have been involved in the project, from the brand council—yes, it is called Canberra Brand Council, or Brand Council—it has been very positive. But they have been much closer to the project, understand it and have been involved for 15 months; so you would expect that, I think.

**MR HANSON:** What do you think we are ready for, Chief Minister?

**Ms Gallagher:** In terms of—

**MR HANSON:** Confident, bold and ready.

**Ms Gallagher:** I think we are launching ourselves into our second century. Again, people will have their own view about what “ready” means, what “confident” means, what “bold” means and what “brilliant possibilities” means. But these have been themes that have come through. When the team have gone around and asked people what defines Canberra and what are our strengths, these are the common themes that come back, that we are a city that has grown to a reasonable size now. We are changing. The nature of who we are and how we look out, the fact that the centenary has provided us with that launching pad. You can say “Ready, confident, bold and



brilliant possibilities”.

I think the strength is that you can use it for a range of different scenarios. Business will say they are ready. The tertiary education system will say they are ready—ready to look out, ready to attract students, ready to attract business. That is the whole point of this brand; it is not just about government. It is about the community as a whole and all elements within it. What we want to see happen is that everybody uses it, everyone signs up to it. I have had a number of people send me emails saying, “We can’t wait to put the brand on our business.” Already we are seeing that people will use it. That has only got to be a good thing for the city, I think.

**THE CHAIR:** Following up on that, what is the role of the Brand Council now that you have launched the logo?

**Ms Gallagher:** I would have to refer that to EDD. I do not have ministerial responsibility for that area. They have certainly been involved for a long period of time and it is a range of different individuals. But I am not sure if it is still currently meeting.

**MR HANSON:** Are you the Minister for Regional Development?

**Ms Gallagher:** Yes.

**MR HANSON:** This does not seem to have any regional element to it.

**Ms Gallagher:** I would not say that it does not. Canberra is the centre of the region. If Canberra does well, the region does well. All of my regional colleagues, all of the mayors and council members will agree with that. They actually will be very positive about this effort. If people are coming to Canberra, then the chances are people are going to the region. That is what they want. Their success hangs off our success. So I would disagree with you on that completely. I have not had any response from my regional colleagues that they are upset about that.

**THE CHAIR:** All right. On page 4 of volume 1 of the annual report is the organisational chart for the directorate. There are a couple of names that are now no longer with us. What is the process to replace Mr Cappie-Wood and when do you expect it to be completed?

**Ms Gallagher:** It has been advertised in the national papers, I think a fortnight ago. We are moving as quickly as we can.

**THE CHAIR:** Who will make the decision?

**Ms Gallagher:** That would be me.

**THE CHAIR:** In consultation with a selection panel or just on your own?

**Ms Gallagher:** There will be a selection panel. I have asked that John Watkins, who is the chair of the Little Company of Mary Health Care, be the chair of that selection panel. And I am seeking two secretaries from the commonwealth to assist, but I have

not heard back.

**THE CHAIR:** Mr Lasek's name is still there in the cultural and comms division. Has that position been filled?

**Ms Gallagher:** No, not at this point in time. It is now a bit interrelated with the head of service. It is a senior position. The priority for me is actually getting a new head of service. I think that in making appointments at that level we should consult with the head of service.

**MR HANSON:** I have a supplementary. Mr Watkins is the chair of a company that has a significant contract with the ACT government. Is there not a conflict of interest there if he is selecting the person that is going to be—

**Ms Gallagher:** He will not be selecting; he is chairing a panel which will provide advice to me. He is a man of enormous integrity, capability and skill, and I think any perception of a conflict of interest can be managed. It is essentially chairing a process which then provides recommendations by three leading people to me to make a decision. I have no concerns around that.

**THE CHAIR:** Will that decision go to cabinet, or will it be yours alone?

**Ms Gallagher:** Yes, it would ultimately go to cabinet.

**THE CHAIR:** In regard to the org chart, Special Projects has two officers listed under it as, I assume, running the special projects. Why do you have two officers running that area when all the others only have one?

**Ms Gallagher:** Because of the nature of the projects that they have been working on.

**THE CHAIR:** What are those projects?

**Ms Gallagher:** One is service ACT. And Mr Ahmed was providing some advice on capital metro.

**THE CHAIR:** So why is he not in the capital metro organisation?

**Ms Gallagher:** I think it was around the timing of the capital metro establishment. He was working on his own, basically; he did not need to be with the agency. As I understand it, he is no longer doing that work.

**THE CHAIR:** So he has been moved out of Treasury. Is this simply that he is just parked there, or is that an ongoing position?

**Ms Gallagher:** No.

**THE CHAIR:** Or what happens?

**Ms Gallagher:** I do not think that is a fair analysis at all. As you know, Mr Ahmed is very highly regarded. He was doing a specific piece of work for the capital metro

project.

**THE CHAIR:** What is the budget for special projects?

**Ms Gallagher:** I think it is the salaries of the individuals.

**Mr Kefford:** Mr Smyth, I would not describe it as a unit. This reflects that there were two senior executives who are shown on the chart doing particular pieces of work. It was not staffed in the sense that, for example, my division is. We could take the question on notice, but the Chief Minister is right: the cost is essentially the salary costs of the executives involved.

**THE CHAIR:** Are there no other senior executives doing special projects?

**Ms Gallagher:** Pardon?

**THE CHAIR:** Are there any other senior executives doing special projects in the directorate?

**Ms Gallagher:** Not under that arrangement. These were particular projects that we wanted to see progressed.

**Ms Hall:** This organisation chart requires us to give a good picture of what was happening at 30 June. It is sort of historical now. Sue Morrell had been working on service ACT. She had commenced there. She was off on sick leave. That service ACT continues, but it is within Dave Peffer's area now. That was just to initiate it. That is why it was shown as separate. And Mr Ahmed was working on some funding options prior to the commencement of capital metro, which were fed into the EDD process.

**THE CHAIR:** You said "was working on". What is he working on now?

**Ms Hall:** He has retired from the ACT service.

**THE CHAIR:** Mr Kefford, you have the Workforce Capability and Governance Division.

**Mr Kefford:** Correct.

**THE CHAIR:** Can you give me a breakdown of the budget for the five groups under it?

**Mr Kefford:** It is recorded across two outputs, 1.2 and 1.3. I am happy to take the breakdown across the branches on notice; I do not have that level of detail with me this morning. But it is divided across those two outputs.

**THE CHAIR:** In, for instance, the Public Sector Management Group, what breakdown of the budget can you provide? Do you do a sub-budget for—

**Mr Kefford:** The first observation I would make is that apart from two IT projects, my budget is essentially for staffing. We can break it down, of course, but essentially

it is a staffing-driven budget. Within that Public Sector Management Group there are a number of staff performing a range of functions under the act, but we do not break it down below that into projects, if that is where your question is going.

**THE CHAIR:** Perhaps it is for Mr Byles then. Mr Byles, is there a chart of accounts that breaks the budget down to a lower level beyond what is represented here in the org chart?

**Mr Byles:** I might call on Mr Ogden to assist me in this, Mr Smyth.

**THE CHAIR:** Thank you.

**Mr Ogden:** In the back of volume 2 there is output reporting, and there is a breakdown by each output of total cost.

**THE CHAIR:** What page is that?

**Mr Ogden:** I refer to page 155—commencing on 149.

**THE CHAIR:** So it begins on 149?

**Mr Ogden:** Yes. You will notice that at the bottom of each of these tables there are total costs by outputs. The original target is as per the budget papers; we actually identify that cost in the budget papers. This volume reports against that.

**THE CHAIR:** But in your chart of accounts for output 1.1, do you have sub-outputs below that—so 1.1.1? Or is the budget not—

**Mr Ogden:** There would be a cost. Like all directorates, we manage to a cost centre level.

**THE CHAIR:** So the cost centre level is 1.1?

**Mr Ogden:** No; this is the culmination of multiple business units within this output.

**THE CHAIR:** Can I have the breakdown for output 1.1?

**Mr Ogden:** I should be able to do that.

**THE CHAIR:** You should be able to do that? Can I have it for 1.2?

**Mr Ogden:** Yes.

**THE CHAIR:** Can I have it for 1.3?

**Mr Ogden:** I would have to have a look at the detail, but yes, we should be able to provide something.

**THE CHAIR:** So you should be able to give me a breakdown of all the outputs to the next level—

**Mr Ogden:** To a cost centre level, yes. But you must bear this in mind. I have one cost centre; I manage that to a cost centre level. But each of the divisions may manage it at a top level as well, so they might not have that further breakdown.

**THE CHAIR:** All right.

**Mr Ogden:** For example, Mr Kefford might manage it at a public sector management level.

**THE CHAIR:** Mr Kefford, do you break down yours below the output level?

**Mr Kefford:** I think Mr Ogden has already given an answer, Mr Smyth. We will provide you with information. Without being overly specific, I think the answer is: both—in some cases, yes; in some areas, no. It depends on the level of financial information that we need to manage particular parts of the business.

**THE CHAIR:** In that lower level, are they then broken down to programs that they deliver, and do you do program budgeting?

**Mr Ogden:** No.

**THE CHAIR:** Why not?

**Mr Ogden:** For the purposes of budgeting, we provide the budget to each of the business units based on what has been provided through the budget process. That budget is then provided to each of the business units or the divisions.

**THE CHAIR:** Do the business units then set a budget or do they just run out of the pot?

**Mr Ogden:** No; they would set a budget.

**THE CHAIR:** Is it possible to get the breakdown of the business unit budgets?

**Mr Ogden:** I would have to look into that.

**THE CHAIR:** Perhaps you can take it on notice. Can we have a breakdown below from the output class to the subclass and then down to the business units and where the business units break it down.

**Ms Gallagher:** We will do what we can to assist, Mr Smyth.

**THE CHAIR:** Thank you.

**Ms Gallagher:** Within reason.

**THE CHAIR:** Excellent. Thank you. Ms Porter.

**MS PORTER:** Chief Minister, on page 17 of the report there is some information

there in a table which shows an increase in the percentage of the community who feel able to have their say on important issues. Could you tell us what you believe are the initiatives that have led to this pleasing result? Additionally, are there any problems with people accessing online services—for instance, older people or other people who cannot access online and cannot access that technology? How does the government make sure that those people are also engaged with the government and can give their feedback, become involved and have their say?

**Ms Gallagher:** It is pleasing to see the increase in people who feel that the consultation process is allowing them to have a say. A range of different initiatives have helped here. With time to talk, certainly we need to keep promoting that as one forum where people can have a say about major projects and things that are under development. It is also about getting the balance right with your standard processes. So we still have the community noticeboard, for example, in the paper that will encourage people to go to certain places to have a say.

We have public meetings for important projects, particularly in TAMS and in areas like Health. We will have forums on specific issues. They usually attract the interested stakeholders and people who understand more about those projects in those forums. Meetings are getting tricky, I think. Fewer and fewer people want to attend public meetings, unless there is an absolutely huge issue that gets people going.

The challenge for government is about how we continue to make sure all of our processes are looking outwards and encouraging people to have a say. In Canberra people certainly approach me, and I know they approach you. There are so many different ways in which people can have a say, whether it be letters, contact with individual MLAs, going to some of our formal consultation processes, ringing up Chief Minister talkback, getting on Twitter cabinet. People will choose the way that it makes sense to them to participate. But it is something we have to keep going with.

The move to better technology and capability across the service will allow us to do it even better—not taking our focus off older Canberrans, because I think we will continue with the traditional ways of consulting. But we have got to be in the active space of where the younger populations are as well, and they are increasingly going to Facebook for all of their information. That is clearly shown in a whole range of different reports that have been done on how people want to get information and how they are changing the way they get information. We have increasingly got to be having a two-way street, so that it is not just a matter of saying, “This is the information we are providing you with,” but it is about putting information out there that people can then manipulate, problem-solve with and create a product with.

It is a very exciting time to be living in, I think. The challenge for governments, which are not known for their flexibility around processes or bureaucracies, is to make our bureaucracy more flexible to deal with some of the changes in technology and the changing way that people want to provide information to government or get information from government.

**MS PORTER:** So it is about responding to changes in technology and the way people access information, while at the same time trying to make sure that you cover the people that do not necessarily want to engage in that way, for whatever reason?

**Ms Gallagher:** Yes. At the moment we are trying to continue on with the traditional ways and also look at the new ways to engage. For a period of time we are going to have to be doing a bit of everything.

**MR HANSON:** In terms of looking at the mix between the different ways of communicating—the digital with Twitter, Facebook and other means—have you worked out what the proportion is in terms of what the government is doing regarding getting its message out? I assume that the newspapers and the free media still play a significant part, whereas the demand might be higher, so that there is a lag between moving towards the digital space. Have you done any analysis? Is there any project?

**Ms Gallagher:** We have got our digital Canberra project which is underway at the moment. It is looking at a number of things. One is how we can solve some of our problems or issues with a digital response, how we support the local ICT sector, how we change our own systems to make it easier and more efficient to run government—not just communications but government services as well, and looking as part of that at getting a good understanding of what people want.

Part of the challenge is that, with people that are engaged in thinking digitally and participating in that, it naturally skews it to digital formats. So people are saying, “We want more on Facebook. We want more on this. We want more on that,” whereas there is still a large part of our community that is needing information across other platforms like radio, newspapers and television.

There is no doubt that those who are 45 and down are increasingly getting all of their information on smart phones and creating the streams that they are interested in. You as an individual determine your micro news strategy, so people are filtering stuff they do not want to know and therefore it is putting more emphasis on the things they do want to know. It is a challenging area, but I think it is very exciting to be looking at some of the changes we need to bring in.

**MR HANSON:** Who coordinates Twitter cabinet? Do you appoint someone as an officer to coordinate Facebook, Twitter and things like that?

**Ms Gallagher:** Not really.

**MR HANSON:** Who does it?

**Ms Gallagher:** Different directorates manage their social media presence under guidelines across government. Chief Minister and Treasury Directorate, through the communications unit and the Government Information Office, manage the actual physical set-up of Twitter cabinet. It does not need a huge amount, now that we are across how it works. So it is really about connecting a big screen with our computers in one room and making sure that it works and then it goes by itself. It does not require a lot of input, really.

For us going forward with Twitter cabinet, it certainly works, but it works with a particular group—those who are active on Twitter, mainly. So it is also about balancing out different platforms. We have had open days. At Belconnen health centre

we had an open day to try and show people the facilities, if they wanted to go along. We also had a community cabinet in that. So we were in a room, and people could come and go and raise issues. Probably 25 to 30 people took up that opportunity, even though hundreds were going through the building. So it is about how you manage all the different ways you need to be out there.

**MR HANSON:** Has the ACT government got a Facebook page?

**Ms Gallagher:** I do not think so. I do not think we use Facebook. I have not noticed.

**MR HANSON:** You might be part of that old school, Chief Minister, that still reads the newspaper.

**Ms Gallagher:** I have not “liked” it, anyway.

**Ms Abernethy:** With the time to talk refresh, we set up a whole of ACT government Facebook page, which we use to share and “like” the Facebook pages from the various directorates. As recently as last week we have been trialling some new ways of posting whole-of-government information on that Facebook page. We have had some really good interactions with the community across the areas of health, education, youth services and disability services. So it is quite new.

**MR HANSON:** Some of the other directorates have their own Facebook pages as well?

**Ms Abernethy:** Some do but most do not, which is why we now have the central—

**MR HANSON:** The whole-of-government thing. So you will post news and information. The directorates contact you and you post things for them?

**Ms Abernethy:** That is correct.

**MR HANSON:** Do you give them admin ability to do it?

**Ms Abernethy:** We coordinate the Facebook page centrally, but we also have an identified communications officer in each of the communications areas in the directorates who has admin rights.

**THE CHAIR:** I have a supplementary, as does Dr Bourke. Do you therefore coordinate the postings daily from the RFS on the weather forecast on their Facebook page?

**Ms Abernethy:** Mr Smyth, I am not quite sure about the weather forecast. I could take that on notice, if you would like me to.

**THE CHAIR:** It is just that on Saturday night, which was, of course, 30 November, they posted the weather and the bushfire danger index for 31 November. You might want to tell them that summer started on Sunday. Getting the calendar right is probably a good start to the year.



**DR BOURKE:** Chief Minister, talking around this area of digital engagement, I notice that—and I think you mentioned it—the digital community connect project is due for completion next year. Perhaps you could tell us a little bit more about that within the context of the discussion around the digital engagement that we have already been having.

**Mr Chisnall:** Indeed, the Canberra digital community connect project has been running. It comes to completion in April next year. It is a project funded by the DBCDE, the federal department, originally. It was associated with the active use of NBN being rolled out across Canberra. Essentially—

**DR BOURKE:** Well, not so much now.

**Mr Chisnall:** It has changed but there is still activity happening. There is still rollout. There are still people that are actively signed on. However, as I say, the idea was that money would be made available from the commonwealth in conjunction with the ACT and other regional jurisdictions, particularly local government. So this funding was within a local government context. The ACT is not a local government, obviously, but in terms of being a region we fit into that category.

Money was being made available to exploit the NBN and, in particular, for the ability to communicate and have a more virtual use of the NBN to communicate between government and the community. So we took advantage of that and we received funding. That turned into the Canberra digital community connect project.

This means in effect that we now have the capability, the technology, based largely around the digital hub at the Gungahlin library, in order to host and promote livestream interactive high definition digital events. With respect to the software itself, the way we have done this is flexible, so that as new technology comes along, as new software comes along, we are able to mix that in, to mash that into the mix to make it current.

We have some very good capability. In fact while this program finds new avenues of usage every day, with respect to some of the ones that we have actually completed, on 9 October, for example, we hosted a digital forum for the Australian age-friendly cities and communities conference. We had a number of people who were having an online forum using this technology at the University of Canberra with our equipment, with our expertise, livestreaming with a level of interactivity with the community.

As recently as last Friday we livestreamed the inauguration of Aung San Suu Kyi at the ANU as she received her honorary doctorate. We put that on our Canberra live website, and since Friday there have been 1,000 hits looking at that. So this project has been exciting. The equipment is there, the interest is there, it is growing and we think it is an important part of our virtual communication.

**DR BOURKE:** With these high definition digital events such as the digital forum for the age-friendly cities, what kind of enhanced benefit does that provide to Canberra as a result of the fact that we are hosting these things?

**Mr Chisnall:** I think it is one of ease of participation. Rather than having to go to an

event on a cold Canberra night somewhere, you can literally do it from your living room or your study. You can literally participate, watch and ask questions. I believe it is about that ease of access, particularly for time-poor people—people with kids who are not going to be able to participate. Whereas if the children are in bed and maybe they are interested in that particular topic, they can participate from home. That is just one area, but in terms of ease of access of community participation, I think it is a winner. But it is early days.

**DR BOURKE:** The project is due to complete next year. What will happen after that?

**Mr Chisnall:** As with the Twitter cabinet, which we also started, the GIO in effect tries to prime some of these ideas and get them going. We know we will succeed when people across the directorates generally are able to use the equipment, where it becomes business as usual rather than something special. The idea is that post April we will continue some support, but we want to disperse the capability, the awareness of the equipment and the technology that exists, and make it just something we do normally.

**DR BOURKE:** Thank you.

**MS PORTER:** Can I just ask what Tasmania is doing that seems to be so successful. What could we learn from the Tasmanians? We are doing well, but obviously Tasmania is doing fantastically.

**THE CHAIR:** What page are you on?

**MS PORTER:** The same page.

**THE CHAIR:** Page 17.

**Ms Gallagher:** I do not know. You would have to go back and have a look to see whether you can get that.

**Mr Chisnall:** I am not sure of the origin of that chart.

**MS PORTER:** All right. It is just an aside.

**THE CHAIR:** A new question, Dr Bourke.

**DR BOURKE:** Chief Minister, what are the next stages of the study Canberra initiative?

**Ms Gallagher:** We are just pulling together a website. That will be the next obvious stage of it. I have the vice-chancellors forum, which feeds into the study Canberra initiative. We recently held another vice-chancellors forum to discuss next steps; really, that is getting a website up and running. We are also looking at another few ideas around promoting Canberra as a university town. I think we need to start slowly, but the ideas are about things like an international student day and university marches, as other big university towns have—things like that. I am not sure we would go down that track straight away, but it is something that should be not ruled out entirely.

When you look at university towns, they do have a big emphasis on encouraging students to be part of community life and also that the city returns respect to them for coming and studying in their town.

Those ideas have been put up through the vice-chancellors forum, and we are working on some ideas around that, including what is the right time of the year to do it. But there is no doubt that the next stage is getting the study Canberra website done—that it is available particularly in Mandarin and that it targets particular markets. That is being done now. That feeds off the trip that I did to China and some of the lessons we learnt there about what people think of Canberra and how they get information about studying in Canberra. It pointed to the need to have a unified message, a bit like the brand work, that the universities and the government work together. And then we all support each other. Basically the universities need to link to study Canberra and we need to link to the universities. It is one package that we are selling, even though the universities will continue to do their own individual marketing overseas and nationally.

**DR BOURKE:** Which particular markets are we most interested in with study Canberra?

**Ms Gallagher:** There is the national market and there is the local market, and we cannot take our eye off that. While the national market has probably reached a point with the uncapping of places—although there is a review underway into higher education, so we will just have to look at what goes on there—the general belief is that the markets of opportunity are the international student markets. But we cannot take our eye off the ball of keeping local students studying here. And in terms of international markets, it would be China, India, Malaysia and places like that, in terms of emerging markets and markets where the opportunity for growth is the greatest.

**DR BOURKE:** So this is primarily an undergraduate market?

**Ms Gallagher:** Not necessarily. Both ANU and UC offer postgraduate programs. I think that, increasingly, shared degrees will be something that are looked at—where you do one year here and two years in China. I do not think we can see international education as a one-way street where we want everyone to come here and learn here and we are not going to do anything about going and exposing local students to the international experience. That came across very strongly in my trip to China—that the Chinese universities are expecting reciprocal arrangements, quite rightly. Again, we need to have a look at how we can further develop that. China is the largest English-speaking country in the world. When you think of it in those terms and you actually visit and see the size of the place and the development that is underway there, you come away thinking that we have to equip our students to a much greater degree to participate in the Asian century. That has to be part of the work that we do here in our response to the Asian century white paper.

**DR BOURKE:** With the different markets that you have talked about—India, China and perhaps the rest of South-East Asia—do you actually have different strategies for each audience that are reflected within the different languages of the websites?

**Ms Gallagher:** In the initial sense it is going to be in Mandarin. We will have another

language; that will be in Mandarin. I am not sure we are going to have other languages on there in the first stage at this point.

**DR BOURKE:** Sure.

**Ms Gallagher:** You would have a different message to each group and then subgroups. The message you send to parents of Chinese students is probably a bit different from what you would send students. That is also part of what we are trying to manage here. You have to work with the agents, work with the parents, work with the students and work with the universities. It is quite difficult to get the study Canberra site exactly right for everybody, but that is what it is attempting to do.

**DR BOURKE:** What are we identifying as our strengths in Canberra competitively against other Australian universities that are going to appeal to these particular markets?

**Ms Gallagher:** That is currently being worked through, but the major strengths would be being the nation's capital and the quality of our universities, particularly UC and ANU. UC has entered world rankings; that means a lot. There is the reputation of our universities. The safety of the city probably comes pretty high. The parents want to know that their children will be in a safe city. For the parents, it will be about there being a quiet environment, encouraging study, which is very important to parents. It perhaps has been seen as a weakness that we are not Sydney or Melbourne, but we are looking at how we turn that into a strength in relation to the choices available. Particularly in China, because of the choices that are available to the rising middle class, parents are seeking out all of the information about where their child is going to be educated. I think the single biggest outlay that a Chinese family will make is on their child's education. Proximity to Sydney and Melbourne will be another one.

So there are different messages. One area we have got to work on is promoting support for students when they are living here—our multicultural community, the fact that we have a large Chinese population and we have a large Indian population, so people will not be isolated in Canberra. Accommodation is the other one. Both ANU and UC are offering an accommodation guarantee to every international student. That is a big selling point to parents, because they want their child to live close to the university and be assured of that.

The other issue is pathways. This is where we have to link years 11 and 12, and to some extent years 9 and 10. It is very difficult to get into a good quality Chinese university; just the numbers of people coming through constrains it. Having a guarantee of a university education is important. If parents think that the pathway is created if they send their child away in years 9 and 10 or 11 and 12, and they have a guaranteed pathway into a university, they will see that as a strength. We are working with UC, in particular, about how we can encourage those pathways to be generated from our secondary schools into our colleges and then into our universities. That will require us to look at different things, like boarding house or dorm accommodation where there are house parents when there are younger students coming through and the proximity of those—for example, Lake Ginninderra, which has already got the partnership with UC, into UC, and looking at a partner high school. All of that is being developed. It is being pulled together under the study Canberra banner.

**DR BOURKE:** And that would build on the existing work that we have already done with bringing overseas students into high schools, both government and non-government?

**Ms Gallagher:** Yes.

**THE CHAIR:** You mentioned three countries—China, India and—

**Ms Gallagher:** Malaysia, increasingly.

**THE CHAIR:** Why not Indonesia?

**Ms Gallagher:** I would not have excluded them, but they were the three that came to mind. But the discussion I have had with the vice-chancellors is that the universities are identifying the markets. Study Canberra wants to align our efforts with their priorities. We have put just over \$2 million into study Canberra over four years. I think there is only about \$240,000 this financial year and then it ramps up for a couple of years. This is a genuine partnership—sitting around the table with the vice-chancellors and saying, “Where shall we place our effort?” In that sense, the government is being led by the universities.

**THE CHAIR:** I think Mr Hanson had a supplementary.

**MR HANSON:** Chief Minister, I know that accommodation has been a bit of a bugbear in terms of its availability and also the cost to students. Have you got any idea how that is tracking and what plans there are for any future accommodation being provided for students by the universities or other providers?

**Ms Gallagher:** ANU and UC have the largest component of international students; ACU and UNSW do not have the numbers that UC and ANU do. The fact that they can provide an accommodation guarantee now, and that is fairly and squarely on their websites to students, is the best possible outcome.

**MR HANSON:** And that is for the first year? Or, if you are an overseas student, is it for the entire degree?

**Ms Gallagher:** You come in. What usually happens, if you talk to the universities, is that it is the first year when they want that guarantee. Then they will make friends and want to perhaps move into a unit with other students, and the parents are happier to support that. No-one is getting kicked out, but they say that experience is that as they go through their degrees they will move into more private arrangements. But the guarantee is the most important thing in the first instance. In relation to other options, the area where we would be keen to work is around the idea of students coming in perhaps at the younger level. We have done partnerships with UC in Belconnen and the ANU in city west. But one of the missing links is that house parent type facility for younger students to come through where there is a bit more supervision for them, giving some assurance to parents that students are being cared for.

**MR HANSON:** I have spoken to a couple of overseas students about how they find

Canberra. It is a mostly positive response, but one thing they say is that essentially they just mix with their own community. So whatever ethnic group it is—Chinese, Indian, Pakistani or whatever—they just hang out with that group and really do not integrate at all within our community or broader groups. Have you given any thought to that—or have the universities, that you are aware of—to try and make their experience more of a Canberra experience rather than just an experience within their own groups?

**Ms Gallagher:** Yes. That has come up in the sense I touched on at the beginning about a welcoming city for international students being very important. One of the ideas which we are looking at is having a reception for international students when they first arrive, like a Chief Minister's reception or perhaps an Assembly reception in the first instance. We have got to build that sense of welcome around that population. So it is having one of their first experiences as a welcome to the centre of the city, with all these Canberrans, and trying to encourage it that way. That is something we are working on through the vice-chancellors forum.

Then each university has its own programs around supporting international students and pastoral kind of programs. It is not unusual that people like to socialise and make those important connections within their own community. I do not think that is unusual, and I do not think we need to necessarily change that. But if there is a perception that Canberra could be more welcoming, that is something we should deal with. So there is this idea of international students day, a welcoming reception or something like that being built into the academic calendar, because then the universities will go and sell that to people overseas. They will say, "The city puts on this event to welcome you and has all this information there and all that." That is the kind of area we are going to go to.

**THE CHAIR:** Ms Lawder.

**MS LAWDER:** I do have a question about the centenary year, and I refer to some points on page 46 of the annual report. I wonder whether you could tell me which external agency will be conducting the longitudinal evaluation of the centenary year which, according to these notes, will take place until 2020.

**Mr Stankevicius:** Yes. As part of our monitoring, reporting and evaluation framework, there are a range of long-term objectives in terms of measuring the significance and the impact of the centenary going forward and within the time frame that you have indicated. Two agencies, the Community Services Directorate through artsACT and the Economic Development Directorate, have both agreed to take on responsibility for certain longer term aspects of the monitoring. That will be supplemented, I suppose, by a special survey next year which we are paying the National Capital Authority to undertake, which is their national perceptions of Canberra survey. They undertook one last year. We are paying for one as a 12-month kind of benchmark as to how Australians are feeling about the centenary within that 12-month period. And then they will undertake their usual one in 2017.

**MS LAWDER:** So when will the first report from the survey next year be provided?

**Mr Stankevicius:** It is up to the National Capital Authority as to when they will

actually deliver that report.

**MS LAWDER:** So you have not outlined a milestone when you have engaged them to do it? You have not said, “We want a report by this date”?

**Mr Stankevicius:** It depends on how long the providers take to do the work. They took about two months to do the survey that they did this year. So we are expecting the same thing next year.

**THE CHAIR:** Did you do a survey to establish a baseline before the centenary started?

**Mr Stankevicius:** Yes. We did one this year, specifically.

**THE CHAIR:** This is the centenary year. Did you do one last year before the centenary events started?

**Mr Stankevicius:** Of the national perceptions of Canberra survey? No, it is the survey that the National Capital Authority do every five years. So they have a benchmark for four years ago. And then there will be two in rapid succession and then there will be one in 2017.

**THE CHAIR:** But in relation to the perception of the centenary, if you do not have a baseline, how are you comparing—

**Mr Stankevicius:** We are comparing February to February, February 2013 to February 2014, and whether the year of activity has actually changed people’s perceptions of Canberra.

**MS PORTER:** So when you are surveying people, you are surveying people from right across Australia as well as from Canberra—is that what you are saying?—with regard to the perception of Canberra as their national capital?

**Mr Stankevicius:** Yes. The National Capital Authority engages Service Innovation lab at the University of Canberra, led by Professor Byron Keating, and they survey people right across Australia about their perceptions of Canberra.

**MS PORTER:** Does the centenary question go to: since you came here for the centenary, have you changed your mind, that sort of question?

**Mr Stankevicius:** I do not know what the specific questions are. I can get back to you on that if you would like.

**MS PORTER:** I imagine there would be some people who came here for the very first time, having had one attitude and got encouraged to come here for the first time because of the centenary, and now may have changed their mind about Canberra being a boring place, as an example.

**Mr Stankevicius:** While tourism bed nights were not part of the goals for the centenary, certainly if you talk to ACT Tourism, they will tell you that 95 per cent of

people who visit Canberra with a negative perception walk away with a very positive perception of the city. You will also find that the surveys done by the Canberra Convention Bureau say that 70 per cent of people who come here for a conference are very likely to return to Canberra within the next four years as a tourist, as a personal tourist as opposed to a business tourist.

**MS PORTER:** And will there be some questions asked of younger people, children, for instance? We do have a lot of children that come through with their parents or without their parents during this year or during any other year. Are these children being asked about their perceptions as well? They are our future so far as that—

**Mr Stankevicius:** I am not sure about the demographics, but I can get a breakdown for you.

**MS PORTER:** That would be good, thank you.

**Mr Stankevicius:** Sure.

**THE CHAIR:** Mr Hanson has a supplementary.

**MR HANSON:** A lot of events which were normal events, annual events in Canberra, were branded this year as centenary events. Have you noticed any difference through that branding? Did it make any difference to the attendance numbers at all?

**Mr Stankevicius:** There were two different kinds of events. There were ordinary events that were just branded centenary, and then there were ordinary events that the centenary gave some additional funding to, to essentially put them on steroids for the year. I think right across the range of events, in terms of the reporting that we are getting, the feedback from the organisers shows a doubling in numbers, a tripling in numbers, in some of the more recent ones. We have heard from people like skateboard organisers, WEMBO and the 25-hour Scott challenge in terms of audience numbers they have never seen before, 200 or 300 per cent increases. The Canberra show had a good bump at the start of the year. And pretty regularly along the year there have definitely been increases, but they have been variable in terms of the percentage increase of spectators, participants or viewing audiences, depending on whether they are broadcast or not.

**MR HANSON:** And in terms of the perception, a lot of the perception of Canberra is obviously driven by what happens up on the hill. How do you separate what has happened federally and people's perception of Canberra—and it does flow over—as opposed to the centenary events that are just about Canberra? How do you distinguish between the two?

**Mr Stankevicius:** The survey done by the National Capital Authority about perceptions of Canberra is a detailed survey that tries to cut through the reeds, I suppose, of exactly those issues. Upfront, certainly the one I have seen in previous years tries to put all the politics at the front and get that out of the way and then ask people literally how they feel about Canberra, what kind of experiences they had, did they meet locals, what venues did they go to, how did they feel about those venues. Unsurprisingly, the national institutions, even when you put the politics aside, tend to



lead. So people have a very visceral reaction to the National War Memorial, for example. And those kinds of places tend to evoke much higher responses in terms of people's feelings and their feelings about Canberra once you put all the politics aside.

I cannot claim to be an expert on how it is you get people's negative feelings about federal parliament out of their head before you survey them about Canberra, but this survey seems to be able to do that quite well in terms of the results.

**THE CHAIR:** In regard to the numbers, you have said some of the organisations had quite significant increases. How much of that is a function simply of additional expenditure and how much do you attribute, then, to the centenary branding? Have you attempted to do that?

**Mr Stankevicius:** No, we have not attempted to do that. I can talk to you about the national masters regatta, for example, that, I think, got double the numbers they got in Sydney last year. You have probably all seen the media reports about Golf Australia and the comparison with the Melbourne women's open last year. Part of that is expenditure obviously, but we are not paying people to turn up. So spectator numbers are definitely due to the attractiveness of the event, but I think there is also a factor that people are learning more about the events.

The thing that we are finding and the feedback we are certainly getting about the centenary community calendar is, even from locals: "We didn't know there was so much on because we were in"—I think the Chief Minister talked before about it—"our silos. We were in our art silo," or "We were in our sports silo," or "We were in our environment silo," or "We were in our intellectual silo," or "We were in our big ideas silo, and we didn't know there were all these other events going on at the same time." The centenary calendar has brought all of those events essentially in one website. So now people are going and just looking at the day and saying, "What's on on 24 November?", and seeing that there is a whole lot more to Canberra than they knew that there was.

**THE CHAIR:** Will you attempt to work out whether or not for the women's golf, for instance, we spent more money than the Victorians did on their event and, therefore, as a consequence, we had more attendance? Will we attempt to undertake that sort of evaluation?

**Mr Stankevicius:** We will in certain circumstances. With regard to commercial events like that, I can report on the basis of discussions with some of the groups that we have sponsored that they are very cagey about how much they get from different state governments. And this is just not a factor for centenary events. You would be aware that V8s experience the same thing when they move around the country and all kinds of state governments are played off by private entities in order to get the best deal and the best range of sponsorship available.

But to the extent that we can get information from places like Golf Australia, from the Walkleys, for example—and you will have seen the Walkley awards this week have just been awarded in Brisbane—I am not sure what Brisbane paid compared to what we paid to bring them to Canberra for the first time in 30 years. So it is a competitive market for events hosting. With the AFL hall of fame, you cannot compare it really

because it is the first time it has been out of Melbourne.

There are things that are unique to the centenary. There are, as you say, things that have occurred before. We will try to work out exactly what the centenary impact is, and certainly we will try to work out that part of the events and spectator reporting back to us from the organisers on the basis of comparisons. But unless we spend millions and millions of dollars on trying to get consultants in to do that, I am not sure we can get a definitive answer.

**THE CHAIR:** So we may never know whether it was simply a product of expenditure or whether it was the fact that it was the Canberra centenary?

**Mr Stankevicius:** I think there are certainly a range of people who came to Canberra for centenary-specific events. And I think there are a range of people who attended events that they did not know were usually happening or that were new in the centenary year. So I think there is much more than a causal link. But whether I can get a professor of statistics or a professor of causal economics to put his hand on his heart and tell you that that is exactly the case according to his statistical model, I am not sure I can find that person.

**THE CHAIR:** How do we then work out whether or not the centenary was effective if we do not know what the causal links are and whether it was a function of expenditure or a function of the fact that it was simply the centenary?

**Mr Stankevicius:** As you are probably aware, we have taken the goals that were developed out of the consultations undertaken by the former Chief Minister's. We have put KPIs against those goals, and we have got monitoring mechanisms in place. And I can provide you with a table that tells you what we are going to do against what the KPIs are against the goals.

**THE CHAIR:** All right. We will have that table, if we may?

**Mr Stankevicius:** Yes, absolutely.

**THE CHAIR:** Again, how do you drill down to see whether the expenditure has been effective? The reverse of that would be if it was the centenary year and they were all coming for the centenary. Then perhaps the question would be: did we spend too much?

**Mr Stankevicius:** They were all coming anyway?

**THE CHAIR:** Yes.

**Mr Stankevicius:** No, I do not think they are. Certainly, the reports from a lot of the groups that (a) asked us for money but (b) just asked us for publicity support were that they were only bringing their national championship to Canberra because it was the centenary year.

**THE CHAIR:** Because it was the centenary year?

**Mr Stankevicius:** Because it was the centenary year.

**THE CHAIR:** Because you gave them money or because it was just the centenary year?

**Mr Stankevicius:** Some people said to us last year when we were giving out the community grants that they would like to bring the national championship for their particular activity or their particular sport to Canberra. They asked whether they could have a bit of support. Some of them have said to us this year, “We are bringing it anyway; could we have a bit of PR support? Could you help us promote it? Can we put it on your website?” But they have not actually asked for money.

You will see on our website that of the 51 community organisations that got centenary community initiatives grants, quite a number of those were running national championships. You will see quite a few down in Tuggeranong. There is the highland games national gathering. Next month we will be having the national unicycling championships. We have had the national clogging convention. There is a whole range. We did not give any money to the national clogging convention. They came here all by themselves. Sled dogging—it is the first time they have ever come to Canberra. They came here with no financial assistance. They came here because it was the centenary year.

**THE CHAIR:** Their national championships were here in August 2000.

**Mr Stankevicius:** Sled dogs?

**THE CHAIR:** Yes.

**Mr Stankevicius:** Okay.

**THE CHAIR:** It is the last race annually of the Australian sled dogging championship.

**Mr Stankevicius:** Around the country?

**THE CHAIR:** There you go.

**Mr Stankevicius:** There you go.

**MR HANSON:** Where do you use sled dogs in Canberra? I do not know.

**THE CHAIR:** It used to be in Stromlo. The 24-hour race would finish at midnight in the Stromlo Forest, before it burnt down.

**MS PORTER:** Do they especially import ice, snow and stuff?

**THE CHAIR:** No, it is all done on bike wheels.

**Mr Stankevicius:** I asked the same question.

**THE CHAIR:** Turning to effectiveness during the year, how many appearances did the *Skywhale* make during the year and how many more will it make in December?

**Mr Stankevicius:** The Skywhale in total—let me have a look—was about 22.

**THE CHAIR:** Twenty-two appearances?

**Mr Stankevicius:** Yes, and it is appearing today.

**THE CHAIR:** In the ACT?

**Mr Stankevicius:** No, 22 appearances across the country, and it is appearing today in Melbourne.

**THE CHAIR:** All right. Of the 22, how many were in the ACT?

**Mr Stankevicius:** Thirteen.

**THE CHAIR:** How many of those were paid for by the ACT government as part of the budget?

**Mr Stankevicius:** As part of the budget for the event?

**THE CHAIR:** For the centenary year, yes.

**Mr Stankevicius:** Fourteen paid for out of the total budget; so not necessarily by the ACT government.

**THE CHAIR:** Sorry, you said 13 appearances in Canberra and you have now said 14 were paid for—

**Ms Gallagher:** We paid for some of the interstate ones—

**Mr Stankevicius:** Yes, we paid for some of the interstate ones.

**Ms Gallagher:** as part of the national program.

**THE CHAIR:** All right, of the 22, 14 were paid for. Of the 13 in Canberra, how many of those were paid for by the government?

**Ms Gallagher:** By the total project costs, which included some philanthropic funding.

**Mr Stankevicius:** Nine. So \$300,000 was the committed cap from the ACT government, and there is \$50,000 of philanthropic funding on top of that.

**THE CHAIR:** So how much per visit to the ACT did it cost us?

**Mr Stankevicius:** What do you mean?

**THE CHAIR:** What was the cost per flight of the *Skywhale* in the ACT?

**Mr Stankevicius:** We did not do a cost per flight, because it was part of that original \$300,000 budget.

**THE CHAIR:** So the four that were not funded from the original budget, how much did they pay for their flights?

**Mr Stankevicius:** That is a commercial-in-confidence arrangement.

**THE CHAIR:** And who are the four?

**Mr Stankevicius:** The four in the ACT?

**THE CHAIR:** Yes.

**Mr Stankevicius:** The Belconnen Arts Centre, Kingston Arts Precinct, Gorman House and University of Canberra.

**THE CHAIR:** Were they asked to host those flights or did they do so voluntarily?

**Ms Gallagher:** They were told, “You must have the *Skywhale* come.”

**THE CHAIR:** It is a reasonable question.

**Ms Gallagher:** Of course it is their decision.

**Mr Stankevicius:** They rang us and asked us.

**THE CHAIR:** How much did Belconnen, Kingston, Gorman House and UC pay for those flights?

**Mr Stankevicius:** That is what I said—it is a commercial-in-confidence arrangement between them and Global Ballooning.

**THE CHAIR:** Chief Minister, are you concerned that groups like the Belconnen community arts are paying the money from their budget to have the *Skywhale* appear, which the taxpayers had already paid for?

**Ms Gallagher:** No. They wanted to have the *Skywhale* appear. We had a fixed budget on this. That provided for particular flights. But as she got more and more popular, she was in demand for certain appearances and it is appropriate that those be funded. They were not—we capped the budget—

**MR HANSON:** Supplementary, when you are ready, Mr Chairman.

**DR BOURKE:** So it has been a very popular initiative.

**THE CHAIR:** Who did people book through? Did they book through the centenary—

**Mr Stankevicius:** Directly with Global Ballooning.

**THE CHAIR:** Did you take a fee for booking community groups or were you just the front of house for the balloon operator?

**Mr Stankevicius:** What do you mean?

**THE CHAIR:** How was the booking made? Was it made through—

**Mr Stankevicius:** People rang us and said they were interested in having a flight.

**THE CHAIR:** Yes.

**Mr Stankevicius:** We put them in touch with Global Ballooning.

**THE CHAIR:** Did you provide that service for any other private sector organisations? So people would ring you and you would put them in contact with—

**Ms Gallagher:** I think if anyone rang the centenary team about a centenary event that was related to another organisation, the centenary event team would have been very helpful in referring them to the appropriate organisation.

**Mr Stankevicius:** If people wanted to book tickets to a theatre program or something at the Street Theatre, yes, of course, we would give them the Street Theatre's number, we would give them the highland games number, we would give them the unicycling championships contact number.

**THE CHAIR:** Are you concerned, Chief Minister, that, for instance, the Tuggeranong Community Festival could not afford to hire the *Skywhale*?

**Ms Gallagher:** I understand there were some negotiations around that. I was not privy to those. There was an arrangement for the Tuggeranong Arts Centre, I think, for *Skywhale*—

**THE CHAIR:** No, community festival.

**Ms Gallagher:** I know; just let me finish. I know where we are going. She was not able to be flown that morning, as I understand it. But I am not there signing up the *Skywhale* or requiring Global Ballooning to fit in with particular events. This is something that just had to be managed. If someone other than what we had funded wanted the *Skywhale*, then they had to make an arrangement with Global Ballooning.

**THE CHAIR:** What was the cost per flight from the fund of the *Skywhale* in the ACT?

**Ms Gallagher:** We can give you a breakdown of that. The overall budget was the commissioning, the artist, the actual manufacturer of the balloon, some of the licensing requirements and then there was a component for flights. I think we have provided that to the committee before in a previous public accounts—

**MR HANSON:** It works out at \$33,000-odd a flight in the ACT.

**Ms Gallagher:** There is your headline.

**MR HANSON:** Is it? I do not know. You should ask the media; they are sitting there.

**Ms Gallagher:** It was commissioning of a piece of art which had costs.

**MR HANSON:** \$33,000 for each flight.

**Ms Gallagher:** It had to be designed, it had to be manufactured and then it was flown here. Carve it up as you like. People know what the budget was. People like or do not like the *Skywhale*. It formed an extremely small part of the overall centenary celebrations. It has had far more scrutiny than perhaps any other project.

**MR HANSON:** I have a supplementary. Have Global Ballooning, which are the company that have been running the balloon, made any profit out of the flights that they have been conducting for organisations, either in the ACT or interstate?

**Ms Gallagher:** I do not know that we can answer around their private business model.

**MR HANSON:** That was not built into the contract? They have essentially had this balloon paid for them by the ACT taxpayer, and you are saying that you cannot tell me whether they have been out there profiting out of that through our centenary year?

**Mr Stankevicius:** What do you mean by “profiting”?

**MR HANSON:** What I mean is that Global Ballooning are a company, so when they operate this balloon and they charge people to do it, as they have done in the ACT and may have done interstate, are they doing that at cost or are they making money out of it?

**Mr Stankevicius:** As I said, it is a commercial-in-confidence arrangement between the people who have requested the balloon and the balloon provider. I am not sure what it is they built into those costs.

**MR HANSON:** Sure. You get the point, though—that the ACT taxpayer has spent \$300,000 on something they have got nine flights for, and you cannot tell me whether the ballooning company that has got this has been out there making a profit out of the ACT taxpayer?

**Ms Gallagher:** Global Ballooning took on the project for the long term. They essentially took a business risk on it, which I think we will all admit was real, once you saw the *Skywhale*. They have all of the ongoing financial responsibilities for that balloon. The reason the ACT government does not own the balloon is because we did not want to become an owner of a balloon. We did not want to have the ongoing costs that a balloon would have. After some fairly rigorous assessment, it was resolved that the arrangement should be entered into which we ultimately did, which was to have a ballooning company that specialises in unusual balloons or large balloons to take on that business risk, and they have done that. My understanding from the operator—and, again, I cannot necessarily give you a global figure—is that when this project was

originally outlined, it was for much fewer flights than have happened for the community.

**MR HANSON:** Fewer than nine?

**Ms Gallagher:** Yes, it was. I think the original intention was that the *Skywhale* was going to fly less than nine times in Canberra. I think it was three. They have actually worked to deliver more flights than was the original intention—

**DR BOURKE:** They have tripled the flights.

**Ms Gallagher:** and have tried to do the flying, in the private arrangements, at the least cost—that is, no profit. That is my understanding. They have been responding to some of the criticism that has been levelled at this project. But they have all of the ongoing business operation costs of the *Skywhale* into the future.

**Mr Stankevicius:** In terms of the \$300,000, there have been 1,447 media articles about the *Skywhale* across the world and we have got international exposure in countries that we would never have otherwise got exposure in.

**MR HANSON:** Is it all positive? Have you done an evaluation of how much of that media reporting is positive and how much is negative?

**Mr Stankevicius:** We have done a sample. We have certainly done all the local reporting and how much are positive and how much is negative compared to national and international.

**MR HANSON:** What is the percentage?

**Mr Stankevicius:** The percentage of negative local reporting is about 60 per cent.

**MR HANSON:** Sixty per cent?

**Mr Stankevicius:** The percentage of negative reporting nationally, and internationally is between 15 and 20 per cent. The large percentage of it is very neutral. Certainly, overseas it borders on positive.

**DR BOURKE:** Did you analyse that negative local commentary by instigation?

**Mr Stankevicius:** By?

**DR BOURKE:** What sparked the negative local commentary?

**Mr Stankevicius:** We did not go into that much detail, unfortunately.

**MR HANSON:** Probably it is the taxpayers wondering why they spent \$33,000 a flight.

**MS LAWDER:** I have another question.



**Ms Gallagher:** People have come up—

**THE CHAIR:** Ms Lawder has a question.

**Ms Gallagher:** Why did we pay so much for the golf? Why did we pay so much for the symphony? Why did we pay so much for the West Indies to play here? All of these questions can be levelled about any program in the centenary calendar, many of which were much more expensive than the *Skywhale*—much more. But no-one seems to have a concern with that.

**MR HANSON:** Jon Stanhope thought it was a political misstep, Chief Minister.

**Ms Gallagher:** Jon Stanhope actually likes the *Skywhale*.

**MR HANSON:** Does he? He thought it was a political misstep, though, didn't he?

**THE CHAIR:** Ms Lawder has a supplementary.

**MS LAWDER:** Was there some exploration of working with local ballooning companies to run the balloon?

**Ms Gallagher:** Yes, there was.

**Mr Stankevicius:** Yes, in the last estimates we went into detail about the tender process. We provided a great deal of information about the procurement process. It was a two-stage procurement process that we went through at the last estimates hearing, involving two local providers.

**THE CHAIR:** A new question. Mr Hanson.

**MR HANSON:** The convention centre: have you had any discussions with the Prime Minister or other federal ministers with regard to the convention centre?

**Ms Gallagher:** Yes.

**MR HANSON:** Would you like to elaborate, Chief Minister?

**Ms Gallagher:** I have had discussions on two occasions with the Prime Minister and on one occasion with the Deputy Prime Minister, Warren Truss, and his junior minister.

**MR HANSON:** In terms of priorities, there is light rail, the north side hospital and the convention centre. Have you awarded priorities to any of these programs?

**Ms Gallagher:** There are priorities within government and then there are priorities across the Canberra community, and they are different priorities. The convention centre, looking at our own infrastructure and the responsibility of the ACT government to fund infrastructure, would not be the number one project. But in terms of government-private sector projects, it would be the number one project—the convention centre.

**THE CHAIR:** What is the government's priority order?

**Ms Gallagher:** There are a range of different projects. If we had the money available, we would not build a convention centre when we have to build hospitals, schools, roads and rail.

**THE CHAIR:** So the hospital is number one?

**Ms Gallagher:** You will see the priorities reflected in the budget each year.

**THE CHAIR:** The committee is asking: when you met with the federal ministers, including the Prime Minister, what was the number one priority that the government put?

**Ms Gallagher:** I am not going to disclose—I have actually outlined what I said. We have had a meeting. In terms of government-private sector projects, it is the number one project.

**THE CHAIR:** And the government's number one project?

**Ms Gallagher:** It is not the government's number one project. It is a commitment—

**THE CHAIR:** What is the government's number one project?

**Ms Gallagher:** I am not going to go into that. You will see that reflected in the budget. There are a number of different priorities, and I am not going to rank one above the other. You will see the full suite of the government's priorities in the budget. They are equally important in delivering the Canberra that we need and that the community expects. In terms of the private sector, and the interest from the commonwealth was around private sector projects or ones where the private sector were involved, I said in my view that the convention centre was the number one project in that regard, and that the ACT government would work with the commonwealth to deliver it, if they were interested. They have asked me to ensure that a business case is developed and provided to them.

**MR HANSON:** By what time frame? When do you expect to do that?

**Ms Gallagher:** We will respond promptly.

**MR HANSON:** What does that mean? Is that later this year or next year?

**Ms Gallagher:** We will respond promptly. It is not going to be my business case. I cannot speak on behalf of other organisations that need to be involved in that. We know where we are with the project. It needs really to go now to a final business case to support the development of the Australia forum project. That work needs to be done and the government is happy to work on that on a very quick timetable.

**MR HANSON:** The shovel-ready plan, investment-ready plan, is in the Greens-Labor agreement. It is part of your government's strategies.

**Ms Gallagher:** Yes, and we will work with the private sector to do that. That is exactly what we are doing.

**MR HANSON:** But you cannot tell me when you expect—

**Ms Gallagher:** I am not going to give you a date. I have a number of different pieces of work underway. The private sector are working with the government, and we are working with the commonwealth.

**MR HANSON:** This was a key part of the election strategy for you and the Greens.

**Ms Gallagher:** What was?

**MR HANSON:** Getting this shovel-ready plan together secured you government, in some regards. You have now been working on this for a year and you cannot tell me when you expect the plan to be delivered for the community. I find that inconceivable.

**Ms Gallagher:** Okay.

**THE CHAIR:** Mr Kefford, on a new question, we receive services from Comcare for all ACT public servants?

**Mr Kefford:** That is right.

**THE CHAIR:** Or are some groups excluded?

**Mr Kefford:** The Comcare policy covers all of the ACT public service and a number of other ACT public sector agencies; the University of Canberra sits under that as well.

**THE CHAIR:** So there is no exclusion on the contract?

**Mr Kefford:** It covers the public sector field, yes.

**THE CHAIR:** For all age groups, for all occupations?

**Mr Kefford:** To the extent that it is covered by the scheme, yes.

**THE CHAIR:** Is there any part of the scheme that does not cover the activities of ACT public servants?

**Mr Kefford:** I think my answer has been that the public service is covered by Comcare, yes.

**MR HANSON:** I have a supplementary to that. I am aware of a case of someone who is over 65 who had a Comcare case, and they were successful. Then, when they were due to receive their payout or whatever it is, they were told, “You’re not getting anything because you’re over 65.” Are you aware of that case?

**Mr Kefford:** Not specifically, Mr Hanson. And I am not sure that we should go into

individual cases at the committee table in any event. I would be happy to have a conversation with you afterwards if that would be of assistance.

**MR HANSON:** I am going to the broader principle: if people are employed by the ACT government, are they still covered by Comcare?

**Mr Kefford:** We sit inside the Comcare scheme. At that end of someone's working career, there are a number of overlapping legislative regimes that come into play. We apply the law in the way in which we have to apply it within the confines of the scheme.

**MR HANSON:** How many ACT public servants would that affect—people who are over 65? How many ACT public service employees?

**Mr Kefford:** If you would bear with me for a moment.

**MR HANSON:** Maybe you can take that on notice.

**Mr Kefford:** I am just looking. The *State of the service report* breaks it down by generation, but not by age, Mr Hanson, so I might take that on notice.

**MR HANSON:** My understanding is that it is a couple of hundred. Would that be about right?

**Mr Kefford:** That sounds like the right number over 65.

**Ms Gallagher:** I would imagine so.

**Mr Kefford:** I am just looking at the graph on—

**MR HANSON:** But you are not aware of whether they are covered by Comcare or what the arrangements are for that category?

**Mr Young:** I am not familiar with the specific case that you mentioned. However, the benefits available under the Comcare scheme are provided under the commonwealth Safety, Rehabilitation and Compensation Act, and that includes provisions to cease incapacity payments based on the injured worker reaching retirement age. Those arrangements are reasonably consistent with most Australian workers compensation schemes that are not running defined benefit schemes.

**MR HANSON:** Sure, but you can see what is happening here. Someone is still working, they are still in the workforce, they get a Comcare claim, and then they are told, "Well, this isn't getting paid out because you're not working anymore." Well, they were. The fact that they may have reached a notional retirement age does not necessarily mean that they did not want to work any longer. Essentially, people are then being excluded from the workforce, or certainly from Comcare payouts, simply because of their age. Is that not the case?

**Mr Young:** If a worker who has chosen to work past retiring age becomes injured, they are able to receive incapacity payments for a period of time. However, it is

correct that the amount of time that they receive those payments for is less if they are past the retiring age. This is an issue that has been considered in the context of age-based discrimination at the national level by Safe Work Australia, and they are making recommendations at the national level to deal with that. However, yes, you have identified a potential scenario where a person past retirement age may not have the same length of entitlement as a person in their 20s, for example.

**MR HANSON:** On my understanding, they have been told—this is an individual case, for sure—“You’re past 65; therefore you’re not getting anything.” And that person was actively engaged in the workforce.

**Mr Kefford:** Mr Hanson, we have given a general answer. We are happy to discuss the individual case with you, but without the specifics in front of us I am not sure that we can provide a comprehensive answer.

**DR BOURKE:** Or should.

**MR HANSON:** Yes; sure. It just goes to the broader point: are the 200 people or so that are working in the ACT government aware of this?

**MS LAWDER:** What mechanisms do you have in place currently to advise workers who reach retirement age that they would not be covered by workers compensation?

**Ms Gallagher:** I do not know that that is what we are saying. Again, it is difficult without the specifics of that individual’s situation.

**MS LAWDER:** I am asking generally.

**Ms Gallagher:** Yes, but people past retirement age would be covered by workers compensation. I think it is around the time that their entitlement is actually paid for, and it is hard to speculate without all of the facts available to us. We are very happy to look into it.

**Mr Kefford:** Chief Minister, that is correct. Comcare, in the administration of its scheme, and we are part of that scheme, provides advice to workers at different stages and in different sets of circumstances. It is certainly not the case that they are not covered. I was talking before about the interaction of different legislative regimes in coverage. It is not the case that they are not covered, but, in the way that there are implications for superannuation and other matters for workers going beyond particular ages depending on what scheme they are in, it is a matter of having that advice available. Comcare has that advice available. The staff within the ACTPS, including in my division, who are responsible for this are able to provide that at the point it becomes relevant.

**THE CHAIR:** I will just finish with a quick question. On page 83, under “Auditor-General’s report—performance audit—ACT public service recruitment”, under “Action to date”, it says, “Continuing”. In the last line it says:

It is anticipated that the update will be finalised by September 2013.

Has that occurred?

**Mr Kefford:** That document has not been finalised, no. The work on that has been progressed through my division and through the People and Performance Council, which is the group of deputy directors-general responsible for this. We continue to consult with our colleagues to make sure that the document, when it is published, is appropriate.

**THE CHAIR:** When is it likely to be published?

**Mr Kefford:** I would like to think it will be settled before we start the new year. It is close; we just have not got to actually knocking it over.

**THE CHAIR:** On page 107, there is reference to a recommendation of the review of the Auditor-General's report 7 of 2010. Under "Directorate implementation" it says:

**Continuing**—A Public Interest Disclosure (PID) management system is being developed. ... Consultation is ongoing with the ACT Ombudsman's Office.

Can we have an update on where that recommendation is?

**Mr Kefford:** In relation to the system or the discussion with the Ombudsman?

**THE CHAIR:** Both.

**Mr Kefford:** In relation to the system, I have worked with my colleagues at Canberra Connect. We now have a pilot system which we are about to roll out to agencies. We have tested that system. It uses the basic Canberra Connect infrastructure to allow us to track and record and for me to fulfil my reporting obligations under that act. It is not intended to be a document management system; it is simply a tracking place. That is in the throes of being rolled out. As I say, we have just conducted a pilot.

In relation to the Ombudsman, we continue to work well with our colleagues in the ACT Ombudsman's office. A number of officials from across the government have spoken at a forum which the Ombudsman's office regularly organises around better practice in complaints handling and management. The extent to which complaints to the Ombudsman decreased, by 30 per cent, this year reflects the extent to which our systems are getting better at dealing with issues before they become larger than they need to be. A good chunk of that improvement relates to the fact that issues are able to be resolved without investigation by direction of complainants or others of information that is already available. The intention of starting with the PID tracking database is, and I have said this to my colleagues, that if I can make it work for PID, and it is a customer relationship management module anyway, we should be able to use it to better track all of the complaints systems that we use across the government. As with all of those systems, if we put them together in one place, we are much better able to use and apply the data that comes out of them than when they are in disparate elements, as they are at the moment.

**THE CHAIR:** Thanks for that. We might take a 10-minute break.

**Meeting suspended from 11.27 to 11.40 am.**

**THE CHAIR:** We will resume. Welcome back, Chief Minister, and welcome back, Mr Kefford, with a different hat on. Mr Kefford, how do you differentiate between your role as a deputy director-general and your role as public service commissioner?

**Mr Kefford:** It is a line that we walk every day both with the Chief Minister and, indeed, with the head of service. In a good number of cases the interests overlap significantly, because both the commissioner and the head of service and, indeed, the deputy director-general are interested in the same sorts of improvements in workplace culture and in the capability of the service. There are times, however, where I need to exercise the independence of the office. So there are occasions—and I briefed Mr Byles to this extent last week—where the commissioner writes a formal letter to the head of service. There are times when I say, “Head of service, the commissioner needs to have a conversation.” So it is one where we recognise the nature of the relationship. We recognise the dual roles, and we are very clear which role we are playing at the point it matters.

**THE CHAIR:** But how in an actual sense do you differentiate, for instance, on an issue which came up in some of the areas that you are responsible for? Do you stand aside?

**Mr Kefford:** We are very conscious, particularly when it comes to, for example, taking decisions about the workforce inside the Chief Minister and Treasury Directorate, if there is a possibility that the commissioner may subsequently need to be involved, then, yes, absolutely, we put in place different reporting arrangements. I will not be part of a decision where we need to keep the commissioner separate. For example, if I were to receive a public interest disclosure in my role as a disclosure officer under the act that related to the actions of the directorate, I would behave in the same way as I would with any other director-general and refer that under the act. Ms Hall, who ordinarily is part of my division, would then deal with that completely in isolation from me so that the commissioner is able to be not in a position of conflict should it subsequently come to my desk in that context.

**THE CHAIR:** Ms Porter.

**MS PORTER:** My question is about workforce planning and its challenges. On page 28 the report notes that there is a loss of mature-age employees and it being a major challenge. However, on page 32 it says that two out of 14 directorates surveyed have initiatives targeting that group. Could you elaborate on how this particular challenge is being addressed?

I have another question also, if you want to lodge it away in your brain, which is: on the same page, 32. It notes that nine out of 14 directorates have initiatives targeting entry-level employees. Can you give us some detail on those initiatives and the importance of retaining entry-level employees? My first one is around mature-age employees and that challenge and what initiatives you have for targeting that group. Then the next one is about the entry-level employees.

**Mr Kefford:** Thank you for your question. The data to which you are referring is the

result of a survey which I conduct on an annual basis for the purposes of this report on all of the directorates. The Chief Minister was talking earlier in the day about pursuing the one government agenda. I think in terms of the management of the workforce and workforce planning, this has been an area where there is a recognised need for us to do better as a service. And as you identified, a number of directorates have particular programs in place that would reflect the particular demographics of their workforce. I think the balance that we will need to strike on this or, indeed, any other issue is having in place initiatives that are relevant at a whole-of-service level but also then leaving space for particular initiatives, be they in nursing or somewhere elsewhere there is a need to continue to attract and retain workers in a particular class.

There is work going on at the People and Performance Council—and, indeed, that will be reported through to the strategic board in due course—about managing the whole of the ACTPS workforce and recognising those areas, as I say, where a whole-of-service effort is going to be the most productive. Indeed, this is will be one in terms of managing the workforce and the sorts of attraction/retention measures that are in place.

Beyond the particular initiatives of course, there are measures in place in our industrial agreements to facilitate older workers continuing to participate in the workforce to the extent that they can, and these go beyond the general flexibility provisions that apply to all of our workforce. So there are provisions in there, for example, in relation to grandparents leave and other mechanisms to assist in that context.

I think it remains an area where, as I say, we need to continue to do work. In one sense, our workforce, when you look at our age profile in the report, looks like other public service workforces in the country. Continuing to retain and attract, first of all, a numerically sufficient but sufficiently capable workforce is going to be something we are going to need to continue to engage with as a service into the future.

One of the things that will help us do that is picking the good things that work in directorates and populating them across the rest of the service. And one of the features of the work we have done around performance management is pick up the good bits that work and apply them elsewhere. That will continue to be our approach there.

In relation to entry-level employees, there is a mix in this context of whole-of-government initiatives as well as directorate-specific issues. The Chief Minister and Treasury Directorate runs the whole-of-service graduate program. And that program reflects the government's commitment to continue to grow the number of entry-level positions, not just in the white collar workforce but in the blue collar workforce. That graduate program is supported by programs which Health and education run in their own right in relation to their particular workforces. Again, I think that is a reflection of a function of size over time where there is a sufficiently large workforce in those areas to warrant that degree of focus.

Then in relation to the engagement of apprentices and trainees in the blue collar workforce, there continue to be efforts made, particularly by our colleagues at TAMS who would engage a significant number of apprentices, given the nature of the work that they do. And, indeed, an issue that has been raised through the enterprise bargaining discussions is removing obstacles to entry level and conversion, as we do



for the graduate program, for example. There is the capacity now for the graduates to convert directly into an ongoing position rather than having to go through a subsequent merit process, which, in other cases, depending on the nature of the traineeship program, has not been the case in the past.

**THE CHAIR:** Dr Bourke.

**DR BOURKE:** As a response to the ACT classification review has been prepared in the reporting period, what were the salient points and what is the next step?

**Mr Kefford:** Coming back to Mr Smyth's opening question, I am happy to talk about that but I have done most of my work in relation to that as deputy director-general at the bargaining table rather than as commissioner. But if the committee is happy, can I navigate that space. The classification review has been in the enterprise agreements for a period. Essentially what that produced was a very significant academic piece of work that examined not all our classifications but most of them and produced a degree of benchmarking data against particular classifications that have been then considered as part of the enterprise bargaining round that is now open.

The way in which that has been dealt with has been through a process, which we have described for the purposes of clarity at the bargaining table, around areas of need. Essentially what we have sought to do is get beyond an argument that says staff would like more money, because that is taken as read. Essentially what we have said is, "Is there an issue in our classification structure or, indeed, our classification rates of pay that is generating a particular and specific attraction or retention issue for us on the ground?" And that work has been informed by the work of the classification review process, as it was undertaken a couple of years ago.

So those matters remain on the bargaining table at the moment. But it has been through that sort of process rather than picking up all thousand pages and five volumes of it and saying, "Let's do it." We have actually sought to engage with our colleagues in the directorates and, indeed, with the unions at the bargaining table to come up with a more tailored response to that, which actually reflects both our capacity to pay more but also where the classifications are generally creating an issue. I think one of the features of that document is that it allows us to draw not just the kind of broad-brush benchmark data but actually a better sense of more directly comparable rates of pay.

**DR BOURKE:** And just talking a little to one side there, you are increasing the number of graduates in the graduate program from 36 to 39 and you plan to diversify the range. What is behind those changes?

**Mr Kefford:** In part it reflects the matters that Ms Porter alluded to before about continuing to grow our workforce and bring in people at the start of a career. And one of the things that the ACT public service offers is a very significant and broad range of options in terms of where a career might end up for one of our graduates. And we very deliberately rotate them through the directorates, central agencies and service delivery lines to give them that breadth. It, of course, reflects the commitment the government made in terms of growing the number of entry-level positions, including graduates, by 10 per cent. And we will do that again next year when our new

graduates start with us in February.

So it is, in part, a very deliberate attempt to bring in and grow our own talent within the organisation. In part, it is a sensible recruiting strategy. As I say, it also reflects the government's commitment in this regard to entry-level and to training positions.

**DR BOURKE:** And what is the significance of change and diversity?

**Mr Kefford:** It is diversity on a range of fronts. The graduate program used to apply in a relatively narrow slice, which might readily be described as the policy stream. We very deliberately sought to expand that to include IT streams and other professions—planning, engineering and so on. We very deliberately sought to bring in the graduates as a cohort and treat them as a cohort at the start of their careers. It mirrors a lot, in that context, the discussion we had earlier in the morning around the policy officers network.

We have also sought to use graduate employment and the attachment of identified positions in next year's graduate program to continue our efforts in relation to identified diversity targets in terms of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders as well as people with a disability. We take very active steps to promote the program, of course, through the universities but also in a more targeted way to those groups in an attempt to secure, through the graduate program, additional staff from those categories, which is all about ensuring that, as a service, we are reflecting the community that we serve.

So there is an opportunity in a round like that to bring people from a range of groups and a range of backgrounds into our service. Obviously that allows us, as I say, to continue to grow our capability but also present ourselves as an employer that does reflect our community.

**THE CHAIR:** Ms Lawder.

**MS LAWDER:** In your absence the role of commissioner is filled on a temporary basis by an acting commissioner; is that correct?

**Ms Gallagher:** No.

**Mr Kefford:** There are two ways—

**Ms Gallagher:** When Mr Kefford goes on leave? Yes.

**Mr Kefford:** There are two ways. When I am on leave, it is often done with the delegation of powers, but, for example, when I replaced Mr Byles at TAMS during the middle of this year, an acting commissioner was appointed by the government for that period.

**MS LAWDER:** If someone is acting commissioner, do they continue in their substantive roles at the same time?

**Mr Kefford:** No. Where we have appointed an acting commissioner, they have also been appointed as acting deputy, so they step into the entirety of my role.

**MS LAWDER:** So that kind of all cascades down?

**Mr Kefford:** Indeed.

**MS LAWDER:** What is the process for appointing an acting commissioner? How do you decide—

**Mr Kefford:** The appointment of the commissioner and, indeed, an acting commissioner, is an instrument signed by the Chief Minister. It is our practice, where we are going down that path, for the directorate to recommend to the Chief Minister a suitable person to act in my position.

**MR HANSON:** Commissioner, on the issue of executive contracts, no doubt you would be aware there have been many cases—in fact hundreds of cases—of executive contracts that have not been signed or have been incorrectly signed, undated, not tabled, incorrectly tabled, not gazetted and so on. Have you conducted any investigation into this to see if there has been any breach of any particular act—the FMA, the Public Sector Management Act and so on?

**Mr Kefford:** Mr Hanson, it has been discussed in the Assembly that the legislative requirements of the Public Sector Management Act for contracts to be tabled have not been complied with in a number of cases, as you have outlined. We did not need to do an investigation to do that. We have been involved in a range of efforts to identify those contracts and to correct it, both historically and in terms of the design of the system into the future, in order to put the service in a position where we are able to meet that obligation. Mr Cappie-Wood and I, and indeed Mr Byles and I, have had lengthy conversations with the Chief Minister about how the public service can ensure that it complies with the legislation in this respect.

**MR HANSON:** We have established that there have been hundreds, perhaps, of breaches of various government acts. As the public service commissioner what steps have you taken to take any disciplinary action against those people who have been in breach of the law?

**Mr Kefford:** I think there is a breach of one act in question in relation to the tabling, Mr Hanson. I think the issues that have also been canvassed in the Assembly previously go to the legal and other consequences of documents not being tabled. But in relation to the conduct, there is nothing in what has happened to suggest a deliberate or wilful intent to not comply with the act. Certainly, we have had very frank conversations with our strategic board colleagues, with our operational staff, to make clear the extent to which the service has failed to fulfil its obligations in relation to the tabling of executive contracts and the extent to which the Chief Minister rightly expects the service to comply with this requirement.

**MR HANSON:** You said there was one breach?

**Mr Kefford:** I said it was a breach of one act. You suggested there were breaches of multiple acts.

**MR HANSON:** Essentially, there have been hundreds of breaches of the act and no-one is culpable. No-one deliberately did it but sloppiness is okay?

**Ms Gallagher:** Yes, it is sloppy.

**MR HANSON:** Sloppiness is okay?

**Ms Gallagher:** No, it is not okay. I have certainly made that clear to officers in uncovering what had been going on. It is unprofessional, it is sloppy and it needs to be fixed. I think “sloppy” sums it up. There was no intent not to do the right thing. I think the process itself has been cumbersome and not well understood. I am not using that as an excuse but I think that has contributed to the problems that have been identified. With respect to some of these issues when they arise—and there are so many in government where problems arise in different areas—my first response is: how do you fix it? How do you make sure it never happens again, before I start saying, “Right, who can I punish for this?” That is the approach I have taken in relation to this. I have explained to the public service that accountability to the Assembly is extremely important, and that is where we have failed in this regard. We were not as accountable to the Assembly as we should have been.

**MR HANSON:** It was not just to the Assembly, was it? Contracts were unsigned and—

**Ms Gallagher:** It did not affect anyone’s employment. It had no material impact on anyone’s employment, their entitlements or their responsibilities—what they were required to do to earn that income from the ACT public service. Where it failed was in accountability to the Assembly. We were not providing the information in the time that is required or the detail that is required.

**MR HANSON:** This—

**DR BOURKE:** What is the reason—

**MR HANSON:** If I could finish, please.

**THE CHAIR:** Dr Bourke, let him finish. If you have a supplementary, you can ask it in a minute.

**MR HANSON:** This came to light because the opposition asked a question about a particular contract. Who in government is meant to be making sure that this sort of stuff does not go on? Whose responsibility is it—

**Ms Gallagher:** You asked a particular question about an individual’s contract, and that answer came back to me, and I asked the subsequent questions about, “Well, if it happened with this, has it happened with anyone else? What are the processes?” So the questions were asked and the information came to me based on that.

**MR HANSON:** Sure, so my question is: who is meant to be looking at this sort of stuff? Is that you as the public service commissioner, is it the Head of Service, is it executive directors? Who is meant to make sure this does not go wrong?

**Ms Gallagher:** There are a range of responsibilities. There are responsibilities at the directorate level, there are responsibilities at the service-wide level, and, ultimately, there are responsibilities at my level. I have to say that there have been gaps identified in all of them.

**MR HANSON:** So no-one is putting their hand up and saying—

**Ms Gallagher:** What do you want? One person that is going to take responsibility for an administrative failure over 10 years or more?

**MR HANSON:** It just seems that whenever there are these administrative failures—

**Ms Gallagher:** I am not going on a witch-hunt for it.

**MR HANSON:** it seems that no-one is culpable or—

**Ms Gallagher:** I have told you who is culpable. It is a range. It is from individual directorates to the service as a whole, at that executive level, to Chief Minister's as a whole. I table them. I must say I mistakenly thought that all contracts were up to date because I table them virtually every sitting week. One would assume that when I was tabling them, I was tabling them to keep the process up to date. I continued what Kate Carnell had done, what Gary Humphries had done and what Jon Stanhope had done. And, yes, I just continued that tabling of documents. What I did not realise and what no-one had told me—and I do not imagine they had told any of the previous chief ministers—was that there were all these other contracts that were not being tabled or had not been tabled because there had been a failure of process. That is what happened.

**Mr Byles:** As Acting Head of Service, I am responsible for the professionalism and the compliance of the ACT public service. So if there is any finger pointing, it needs to be pointed in my direction in the first instance.

**THE CHAIR:** Dr Bourke has a supplementary, then Mr Hanson to finish.

**DR BOURKE:** Chief Minister, have there been any outcomes from the tabling of these contracts?

**Ms Gallagher:** In terms of providing the information?

**DR BOURKE:** Yes. Once the information has been provided, have there been any further outcomes?

**Ms Gallagher:** No, not that I can recall. I would be interested in having a discussion about what members find useful. One of the issues has been that short-term contracts have to be tabled as well, and they can go from anything from a week, and they have to be tabled. So what is it that really provides the accountability at that level to the Assembly without actually generating red tape or bureaucratic tape for ourselves that ties people up? I do not know what members find interesting. Is it the salaries, is it the conditions, is it the people? I do not want to reduce that kind of accountability to the

Assembly, but do you want information when people act for one week or two weeks as opposed to permanent appointments, as opposed to short term, long term? I do not know what members find to be the most relevant information to allow you to do your job. I am interested in how we cut down some of the tape that is associated with this. Having regard to the fact that it provides the Assembly with information, there is a lot of handling of contracts and things that go on in order to do it.

**THE CHAIR:** Any more on that, Mr Hanson?

**MR HANSON:** That is fine, thanks.

**THE CHAIR:** We are about to run out of time for this area. On page 19 of the state of the service report, commissioner, under “Legislative Assembly committee inquiries and reports”, the first paragraph says:

... of its inquiry into Annual and Financial Reports recommended the Commissioner undertake a review of aspects of the Caretaker Guidelines.

Are you going to do it and when will it occur?

**Mr Kefford:** Certainly, Mr Smyth, I will do it. It has been our practice—and I say “our” because that document is published in the name of the commissioner and the Head of Service—to do that in the 12 months preceding the election. Having said that, so that we have not let time pass us by and we all forget, we have already had a preliminary discussion at the People and Performance Council about those matters on which we might seek to amend the guidelines next time based on what happened, while also recognising the particular matters that the committee raised. I have not rushed into a formal review at this point pending the resolution of the review of the elections costings act—forgive me, the proper name of it escapes me but that process has been underway. Given the intersection between that act and the caretaker guidelines, I thought it best to wait for that process to have been concluded before we spend a great deal of time digging into the caretaker guidelines. The other issue that fed into that was, of course, with the commonwealth election coming—one of the documents to which we refer is the commonwealth guide. So we waited for PM&C to finish its business in that context, too.

**THE CHAIR:** The third paragraph in that section talks about the Standing Committee on Public Accounts inquiry into the Auditor-General’s report in relation to emergency department performance information, and that you undertake work around privacy.

**Mr Kefford:** Yes.

**THE CHAIR:** The acting commissioner wrote to all directors-general in June 2013. What was in the letter and what was the outcome?

**Mr Kefford:** That matter was raised in relation to ensuring that directorates were aware of their obligations to properly safeguard personal privacy of executives and, as I recall, came out of the extent to which papers had become public. The acting commissioner, Ms Brighton, wrote to all directors-general and reminded them of that general obligation. When we come to settling the broader guidance around personnel

information, we will include that reference in there as well. To the extent that the reminder needed to be issued, that has happened. We will continue to work with our colleagues around our guidance material to ensure that we do not inadvertently or inappropriately otherwise release information that we should not.

**THE CHAIR:** We will finish there with the commissioner. Thank you, Mr Kefford. We will move on to the Ombudsman. Mr Neave, welcome to the public accounts committee of the ACT Legislative Assembly. I need to bring to your attention the privilege statement there. Are you aware of the statement and the implications of the statement?

**Mr Neave:** Yes, I am, thank you, chairman.

**THE CHAIR:** That is fine. Chief Minister, I did not ask last time. Would you like to make an opening statement on behalf of the ACT Ombudsman?

**Ms Gallagher:** No, thank you. In fact, I was just advising the Ombudsman that this is his time, not mine.

**THE CHAIR:** All right; then you can leave if you want and come back in 10 minutes.

**Ms Gallagher:** That is fine. I am happy to sit here.

**THE CHAIR:** Mr Neave, the heart of what the Ombudsman does is dealt with on page 8 where it talks of the analysis of agencies' performance and ACT government directorates' approaches and complaints. How hard or how easy is it for the average Canberran to know where to go to when they have got a complaint or are concerned about the services provided by the ACT government?

**Mr Neave:** First of all, I think there is a very good understanding in the community in general these days about the role of an ombudsman. There are now within Australia scores of ombudsman, both parliamentary and industry funded. I am certainly very familiar myself with the industry-funded regime. I think, myself, that finding someone to assist a member of the community is considerably easier than it was, say, 20 or 30 years ago when ombudsmen spent a lot of time promoting their existence, and we all still do that.

We have community fora here in Canberra to make sure that those who are in networks which might deal with the more vulnerable in the community get together in our office. We bring them up to date about what we are doing, how we might approach issues and where we can provide some assistance to them. I think the provision of information to the community in general about the existence of ombudsmen is there.

More specifically, we engage ourselves in regular briefings of community representatives because, as we all know, the best way to get the message out about the existence of an organisation which can help is using what is called the network principle. So you bring together people who are assisting others, give them information about what you can do and how you do it so that where members of the community might approach those organisations, they can refer them to us. So there is

a variety of means used to provide information these days.

**THE CHAIR:** Thank you. You mentioned community activity. I refer to the last two dot points on page 20 of your report. You mention that you or your representative attended a forum entitled—“Has the model of the human rights prison worked in the ACT?—a forum organised by the Prisoners’ Advocacy group” and then “a forum hosted by the ACT human rights commissioner to discuss a human rights audit of the conditions of detention for women at the AMC”. Do you have a view on whether or not we have a human rights prison? What was your role at those fora and what were your conclusions?

**Mr Neave:** I am certainly aware that my office has been involved in those fora. In short, I would not see that there is a major problem with human rights in the ACT but that, of course, is an issue for the human rights commissioner to be aware of. The cooperation, I think, between our office and agencies such as the Human Rights Commission is very important because we want to make sure that the services which we are providing are complementary and we are making sure that we are getting the message across in areas of the community that we need to get the message across to.

**MS PORTER:** I have a question in that same area. It is in regard to your community engagement. As the chair said, you attended and hosted several community functions during the period. The first dot point refers to Homeless Connect and an inaugural Homeless Connect day. Could you give us some feedback on that initiative and whether the program was widely attended, whether you found that it was useful? What kinds of services were people that came to that program engaged in? Have you future events planned in that particular area?

**Mr Neave:** I will deal with the last part of the question first. Yes, we will continue our policy of ensuring that we provide information about our services to those in the community sector who are there to assist people, such as those who are homeless. I am sure that if one asks the individual staff members who are present here today about whether or not it was a useful event, then the answer to that would be yes.

I think one of the really good things about having the role as we have in our office, particularly in the ACT, is that the sorts of issues that we deal with are very much issues which those most vulnerable in the community need to raise with an organisation such as ours as well. So that involvement with what I would call broadly the community sector is a critical part of the operations of our office.

**MS PORTER:** In regard to people who come to these fora, are they people who are working in the sector who are providing services to homeless people or are they homeless people themselves?

**Mr Neave:** Certainly, those who are working with homeless people in the community are those who would be invited to such a forum. If someone was in the position of being homeless and approached us, we would do our best to assist them. But they would not necessarily be invited to a forum like that one.

**MS PORTER:** Thank you, for the time being.



**THE CHAIR:** Dr Bourke.

**DR BOURKE:** Thank you, chair. Could you talk me through the remedies for complaints, Mr Neave, about TAMS, which you say are mostly to do with trees and animal services.

**Mr Neave:** I am not entirely on top of the detail of some of the complaints, but what I can—

**DR BOURKE:** It is hard to get on top of the trees.

**Mr Neave:** But what I can say is that we have improved, particularly over the last 12 months I think, our communication and engagement with the various agencies in the ACT public sector. Broadly, what we do in relation to complaints is that we do recommend that those who come to us first of all return to the relevant agency. That would be the case in relation to those complaints that might have come to us.

What we are finding as a result of the work that we have done, which has been directed towards improving the complaint-handling processes within directorates and other agencies in the ACT over the last 12 months in particular, is that when we send people back to the agency to deal with whatever the complaint might be, we are very confident that those people will at least get someone to have a second look at whatever the problem was that someone might have come to us about.

Our focus has been, in broad terms, on appropriate collaboration with directorates and agencies in order to improve the capability of those directorates and agencies to handle the complaints in the hope that whatever the problem might have been, where a person goes back a second time to an agency or a directorate, often they will be dealt with appropriately in respect of whatever the problem might have been.

**DR BOURKE:** Could you tell us a little more about that work that you have been doing with directorates and what sort of processes you have used there?

**Mr Neave:** Yes, we have been bringing together representatives of directorates and agencies, in effect, to all-day conferences within our office. We have had presentations from our staff about how complaints ought to be dealt with and how complainants ought to be dealt with. We have received very strong support from the senior people within the ACT public sector. Indeed, Andrew Kefford himself has spoken at a couple of those functions.

The objective of bringing people together really is to get an exchange of ideas going between those who are handling complaints within the directorates and agencies about how they are handling complaints in the hope that we can get best practice communicated across the directorates and across the agencies. We find that those within directorates and agencies who are handling complaints sometimes find it to be actually quite a lonely job, because you are sometimes not going to please the head of the agency, which suggests that perhaps a matter might have been dealt with better.

But also you are not always able to deal with matters in such a way as to please complainants. It is a lonely job. Having an esprit de corps, let us say, amongst those

who are handling complaints is actually, I think, bearing fruit within the public sector here. We have been working on developing that cooperation and that cooperative attitude to complaints, especially over the last 12 months.

**DR BOURKE:** You draw a conclusion that that process is happening better in directorates now as a result of your intervention. What evidence did you have for drawing that conclusion?

**Mr Neave:** The number of complaints we are actually investigating has gone down this year, which I think is a good sign. If we are concentrating on investigating a smaller number of complaints, then we are able to do a better job in the investigations that we actually do. We are able to concentrate on complaints that might possibly be systemic in nature. Therefore, as a result of handling those sorts of complaints, we are able to make recommendations based on good evidence about how things might be handled better in the future.

**DR BOURKE:** Thank you.

**THE CHAIR:** Ms Lawder.

**MS LAWDER:** Thanks. The ACT government JACS website talks about whistleblowers. The contact is the Ombudsman's office.

**Mr Neave:** Yes.

**MS LAWDER:** But, can you tell me if the Ombudsman in this reporting period received any whistleblower complaints?

**Mr Neave:** So far as I know, no. But I would take that question on notice just to be sure of that.

**MS LAWDER:** Would other whistleblower complaints go to particular directorates and would the Ombudsman's office be aware of all of those?

**Mr Neave:** I am not absolutely sure—

**Ms Gallagher:** Not necessarily.

**Mr Neave:** I do not think we have that role in relation to that legislation, no.

**Ms Gallagher:** A whistleblower can choose the path of going to the directorate, going to the Auditor-General, going to the head of service. There is a range of different options, which I do not think the Ombudsman would be excluded from. It is a pathway.

**THE CHAIR:** Mr Hanson.

**MR HANSON:** Thank you, Mr Chair. In the last year you received 563 complaints about government agencies and FOI. But about 460 of those were not investigated. I am wondering about the reasons for that. I note that some were referred to other

agencies. Could you give me a bit of an explanation on why those matters in the main were not investigated, whether they did not meet the threshold for investigation or whether it is a matter of resources for you? Are other agencies more appropriate to deal with them?

**Mr Neave:** Normally we find that whatever the problem might have been, it is dealt with once contact is made with our office. That is the first point, which I have already given. It is listed in the report there. Complainants were advised to pursue their matter with a more appropriate agency. Also, from time to time these sorts of matters can finish up in court and it is not appropriate for us to get involved because it also might be before the court as well. There is certainly no desire on our part not to look appropriately at those sorts of matters; it is just that we need to decide whether or not it might be better if the investigation was handled somewhere else or the matter was referred somewhere else.

To be perfectly frank, I am not in the business of blaming resources ever. I think that in the public sector one needs to cut one's cloth to what one can do with the resources available. That is what we are doing. We are certainly not over-endowed with resources, but we are managing our resources within a very tight framework at the moment. That is the responsibility, I think, of organisations such as ours at the moment—to do the best we can within the resource allocation.

**MR HANSON:** Have your resources or any lack of resources led to your not conducting investigations that you would have otherwise conducted?

**Mr Neave:** No, nothing has come to my attention which has led me to believe that we should have been investigating something and we have not been able to, to date.

**MR HANSON:** Thank you.

**THE CHAIR:** A supplementary to that question?

**MS PORTER:** On page 3 mention is made of “organisational planning and environment”. It talks about an internal restructure to release resources for strategic engagement with agency stakeholders and community. I was wondering how that advice is progressing.

**Mr Neave:** The restructure within the whole office is now complete. We are having a look at it just to make sure that it is working effectively. What the restructure meant in practice was that we were freeing up resources to do that work of engagement with agencies, which was not complaint specific but rather in developing further, in some cases, the complaint-handling capability within agencies.

We are in the process of making sure that we have got the structure right within the whole office at the moment to ensure that it is working well. It certainly appears to be working. We could perhaps tweak the structure, which means moving people out of what we call the strategic areas which are dealing with that development of capability, for example—part of it—back into operations or operations people back into strategy. It has been quite a change in process and procedure within the office as a result of that restructure, but it does seem to me at this stage to be working pretty well.

**MS PORTER:** Thank you.

**THE CHAIR:** I have a final question; then we will have to move on. On page 22, you talk about the child sex offender register, for which you have some oversight responsibilities.

**Mr Neave:** Yes.

**THE CHAIR:** In the second-last paragraph on that page, it says:

No assessment was made in relation to two criteria, which could not be assessed or were not applicable ...

What were the two criteria and why were they not assessed or not applicable?

**Mr Neave:** I will need to take that one on notice, chair.

**THE CHAIR:** It continues to say that there were some minor errors in administrative practice and they have been fixed. Were any children placed at risk as a consequence of those errors?

**Mr Neave:** I am quite sure no children would have been placed at risk, but once again, to be really sure, I will check and let the committee have a note on that.

**THE CHAIR:** Thank you for your time. We might finish there and move on.

**MS LAWDER:** Mr Chair, could I seek clarification of something that happened earlier?

**THE CHAIR:** Certainly.

**MS LAWDER:** Ms Porter asked a question about Homeless Connect, and then you asked a second question, which I missed. Mr Neave, you answered that you thought it was aimed at service providers. Was that also about Homeless Connect?

**MS PORTER:** That was not the question. My question was about who came to these forums.

**MS LAWDER:** The forums?

**MS PORTER:** Yes.

**MS LAWDER:** It was actually aimed specifically at people experiencing or at risk of homelessness?

**Mr Neave:** No.

**Ms Gallagher:** At service providers.

**MS PORTER:** Service providers.

**Mr Neave:** So it was for providers.

**Ms Gallagher:** The forum.

**MS LAWDER:** I thought the question was about Homeless Connect?

**Ms Gallagher:** No.

**MS LAWDER:** Sorry; I missed that.

**Ms Gallagher:** It was about the forums.

**MS LAWDER:** Thank you.

**THE CHAIR:** When a proof transcript is available, it will be forwarded to you to check; you might like to suggest any corrections, if required. Apart from that, thank you for your attendance today.

**Mr Neave:** Thank you.

**THE CHAIR:** We will now move to the arboretum. Mr Goggs and staff, welcome to this hearing of the public accounts committee inquiry into annual reports. We are now going to look at the National Arboretum. Before we start, I need to ask: have you seen the privileges card, have you read it and do you understand the implications of the card?

**Mr Goggs:** Yes.

**THE CHAIR:** Chief Minister, would you like to make an opening statement about the National Arboretum?

**Ms Gallagher:** No, thank you. In the interests of time, I am happy to go to questions.

**THE CHAIR:** Mr Goggs, would you outline for the committee what preparations the arboretum undertakes each year for fire safety of the arboretum, given the nature of its content and the fact that in 2001 and 2003 fires ran through that area?

**Mr Goggs:** Chair, I think it is probably most convenient for me to ask Ms Steward to speak to that issue.

**THE CHAIR:** Definitely handpassed.

**Ms Gallagher:** He has had a long and abiding interest in the arboretum.

**Mr Goggs:** I have had a long and abiding interest in fire management.

**THE CHAIR:** No prompting of the witnesses, Chief Minister.

**Mr Goggs:** Specifically on the arboretum, I will ask Ms Steward to address you.

**Ms Steward:** All fire mitigation activities are caught up in the bushfire operations plan which is prepared by parks and conservation services, or TAMS, and approved by the ESA. All work is done within that strategic framework. As to the specific measures for the arboretum that are already being undertaken in relation to it, the fact that it is an irrigated area and the mowing regime effectively mean that it complies in terms of a safety standard. If there is any further detail that the general manager would like to provide, I am sure he can answer your question. They are the principal ways that we manage risk.

**Mr Brown:** Just to add to that—yes, we do a lot of mowing and slashing to control fuel loads. Obviously, at this time of year, that is an important part of the operation. We also have recently acquired, thanks to the friends of the arboretum, an emergency fire tanker trailer which will give us a quick response to a fire should one start.

**THE CHAIR:** So you have one firefighting trailer on site?

**Mr Brown:** It is a very small unit; it is only used for initial response. Obviously we would call emergency services immediately if there was a fire.

**THE CHAIR:** Chief Minister, given that the arboretum lies within the purview of parks and city services inside TAMS, why have you chosen to move it to the Chief Minister's portfolio?

**Ms Gallagher:** Because I wanted portfolio responsibility for the arboretum.

**THE CHAIR:** What benefit does the community get from you having portfolio responsibility rather than the territory and municipal services minister?

**Ms Gallagher:** They have got their Chief Minister in charge of the National Arboretum. I think that comes with a whole range of benefits, myself.

**THE CHAIR:** In terms of reporting lines, why don't you just move it across and not leave it in TAMS? Will it remain in TAMS?

**Ms Gallagher:** I do look at these things, particularly when there is going to be a change to the administrative orders. For the centenary year, for its first year in operation, I wanted to keep management of it. That is why it is part of my portfolio. I do not think it is a major issue. TAMS brief me. We have joint advice going to both Minister Rattenbury and me, if required. It has worked really well. I like single directorate reporting, so I see the benefits of that, but in its first year, in the centenary year, in continuation of the work I had done in the lead-up to the centenary year, I kept portfolio responsibility for it.

**THE CHAIR:** Does that mean it will revert to TAMS when—

**Ms Gallagher:** Not necessarily. As you know, the administrative orders are a matter for the Chief Minister.

**THE CHAIR:** That is why I am asking the question.

**Ms Gallagher:** And any changes—

**THE CHAIR:** Is it under consideration, Chief Minister?

**Ms Gallagher:** All areas are under consideration when we are looking at that.

**MS LAWDER:** A supplementary on that?

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

**MS LAWDER:** Given the split between Chief Minister's and TAMS, is there much overlap with regard to service delivery or provision for the purchasing of services such as irrigation or the purchasing of other services? Is it a duplication of effort?

**Ms Gallagher:** No, not at all. It does not sit administratively within the Chief Minister's directorate; it sits within TAMS. They report to a different minister. All of the synergies and opportunities from running other areas within parks align with the arboretum.

**THE CHAIR:** Questions?

**MS PORTER:** Chief Minister, on page 30 of volume 1, the third dot point under the "Future directions" heading on page 29 states that in 2013-14 TAMS:

... will establish a scientific research committee to assist in the ongoing review and management of forest research programs ... on climate change, biodiversity and threatened species.

Can you give us an update of what that committee will work on? I understand the overall focus, but is that related specifically to the arboretum forests?

**Ms Gallagher:** It is, to the arboretum.

**MS PORTER:** The arboretum forests, okay. Can we have a bit more explanation about it.

**Ms Steward:** What we did from the outset, through the Chief Minister and the strategic advisory board, was develop a research policy. Part of that policy meant that we wanted to make sure that any research that we do with our institutional partners such as the ANU is done in such a way that the knowledge gain can best inform how we manage the arboretum and its development; it also recognised that there needed to be an expert group to provide us with advice. So a research coordinating committee will be established. At the present time, with one of the members of the board who is representing ANU and the science community, we are in the process of crafting up what the proposed program and priorities of research will be, as well as the members of that committee, which will be then put through to the Chief Minister for endorsement. That will be early next year. That is going to be a really important function of that committee.

**MS PORTER:** You mentioned the ANU. Where else would you draw committee members from?

**Ms Steward:** Under the policy, there are five. The five of them include the arboretum, the major ACT research institutions—as I said, ANU is our principal partner at the moment, but that does not mean there might not be others—and the community. At this stage in the piece, in terms of a community representative, there will be some candidate names to be put forward to the Chief Minister. But in terms of the community, it would be somebody who has a good understanding of forests, arboreta and generally that particular discipline. As I say, through our strategic advisory board we are presently canvassing some names and suggestions to put through. We will be advising of that.

**MS PORTER:** Thank you.

**THE CHAIR:** How many of the forests are native to either Australia or this latitude?

**Ms Steward:** I will have to refer to the general manager for that one.

**Mr Brown:** I could only give you approximates. I will take that question on notice. There are approximately 10 forests that are native to Australia. I could clarify that for you.

**THE CHAIR:** All right. And in terms of the latitude? If we are going to conduct a scientific experiment on something that is not native to the country and is not found in this latitude, aren't you conducting a research project that is already, from its very start, different from the effect of climate change on those forests in their native environment?

**Mr Brown:** I think that once the research group has been established the parameters of the extent of the actual research that is going to be undertaken would be clearly defined. Obviously, from the arboretum's perspective, doing research on our native trees is preferred. There will also be research on other plants in terms of how they are coping in the Southern Hemisphere and how their growth rates might compare with those coming from similar environments in the Northern Hemisphere. So there is some credit in undertaking research for both exotic and native tree specimens. But you are correct: it would most definitely be most desirable to look at our native species first.

**THE CHAIR:** A supplementary, Dr Bourke.

**DR BOURKE:** Going back to the future directions for the arboretum, the report also talks about more education programs for primary, secondary and tertiary students. Can you tell me a bit more about those programs and what you have got planned?

**Mr Brown:** We have had over 4,000 students come through the arboretum since we have opened. One of the areas that we are looking at at the moment is engaging directly with schools across the nation to invite them to the arboretum to undertake activities. At this point in time most schools have approached the arboretum and



asked us what we offer. We have not promoted what we can offer to our full capacity as yet, because we are waiting for certain works to finish, including the main car park. We are quite confident once we start talking to other schools across the nation in regard to the programs that we are offering that we are going to get a significant influx in students coming through the arboretum.

Some of the education programs to date have been looking at, again, our native forests and how we are trying to establish forests at the arboretum, particularly in relation to a site that has undergone significant fire in the past. Another area we have recently started to look at is where we can partner with other organisations and look at different types of environmental education opportunities for primary school children, right up to senior school in terms of years 11 and 12. So we are looking at that at the moment.

Our school holiday programs have been extremely popular. We have used some of those programs to test some of our proposed education strategies. They have worked very well. In fact those programs have been booked out generally within 24 to 48 hours after being advertised.

**Ms Steward:** It might be worth mentioning also that in terms of the design of the programs we are aligning it with the Australian curriculum. Once again this is a national destination centre, so we want to make sure that we have as many students as possible from interstate also coming to the arboretum for learning purposes. So it has got a broader reach in terms of our program.

**DR BOURKE:** What sort of people do you have at the arboretum with the skills to develop and run this program?

**Mr Brown:** We have an education coordinator who has a background in education from a cultural institution. We also utilise the existing skills of our staff from our horticultural team. As I mentioned earlier, one of the biggest benefits we have is partnering with other organisations and groups in delivering environmental outcomes. We have recently been discussing some options with the ex-director of education at Royal Botanic Gardens in Sydney in terms of helping us set up some programs and develop some programs with her, so that we can run those programs ourselves at the arboretum.

**THE CHAIR:** Ms Lawder.

**MS LAWDER:** I am sure you are aware there was recently a media article about charging extra for people with mobility issues for the *Voices in the Forest* concert. I was wondering what the rationale behind that was. I am sure you are aware that it should not cost any more because one has a disability to attend an event, and obviously you cannot go down that big hill. The media article talked about having a lovely view up at the top, but people are not booking those tickets for the purpose of having the uninterrupted view. Can you tell me the rationale behind charging extra for those tickets?

**Ms Steward:** With the fees and charges, if it is a private event or a private function, they pretty well set their own fees and charges in accordance with their own policies, I

suppose. From the point of view of accessibility, you are right; the amphitheatre does have serious limitations, and it really is around the perimeter at the top that probably provides the safest access point. Again, the determination of the fees or the prices associated with that would be set by the private organiser. I think in that case there were discounts, as well as discounts for parking. There is probably not much more I can say on that.

**MS LAWDER:** It is listed as a highlight of the year, so I thought you might have had a bit more sway over perhaps the pricing.

**Ms Steward:** No. In terms of any other function that is organised by an organisation other than government, we would not be dictating to them what their pricing should be.

**MS LAWDER:** You would not normally list functions held by other organisations in your highlights, but you have listed this.

**Ms Gallagher:** It is one of the biggest ones.

**Ms Steward:** Yes.

**Ms Gallagher:** We do work in partnership with the Village Building Company, who bring that event to the arboretum. I am sure it will continue to grow over the years.

**MS LAWDER:** It is not a reflection on the event, which was fantastic. It is about the disability pricing.

**DR BOURKE:** The report talks about implementing the final stages of the irrigation master plan. What is involved and what are the principles involved?

**Ms Gallagher:** There are lots.

**Ms Steward:** We are up to stage 3.

**Mr Brown:** At the moment we are up to stage 3, and we have tapped a bore on site recently which is proving to provide us with excellent flow, which is great news. We will be utilising that water to pump that up to Dairy Farmers Hill and distribute that through forests and, of course, new developments such as the event terrace over time. At this point in time we are at the design phase in terms of the plant and equipment and the piping to take that to Dairy Farmers Hill, now we know we do have water flow, which is great. We would see construction there commencing early in the new year.

**THE CHAIR:** You pay for a licence for the bore and an amount per litre removed?

**Ms Steward:** Yes.

**Mr Brown:** Correct.

**THE CHAIR:** How much are you budgeting to pay for the bore?

**Mr Brown:** I would have to take that question on notice. I could not answer it accurately at the moment.

**THE CHAIR:** Fine, thank you. We might finish there, members, and move on to regional development. Thank you very much, Mr Goggs. You have done extremely well in your first outing as acting director-general.

I think everyone present has heard the briefing and has seen the privilege statement before. On page 26, Chief Minister, it talks about the ACT-New South Wales memorandum of understanding for regional collaboration. Could you detail what are seen as some of the drivers blocking efficient service delivery to communities and, indeed, on the fourth line, what regional economic opportunities have been identified and worked on since signing the MOU?

**Ms Gallagher:** What are the blockers to—

**THE CHAIR:** Yes. What things block efficient service delivery to the communities, and then what are the regional economic opportunities discovered?

**Ms Gallagher:** The general one would be the jurisdictional boundaries and the different approaches and the different planning undertaken. What we are actually seeking to do with the MOU on regional collaboration is to align some of our data and some of our service planning to better plan for the region and not plan in isolation for the ACT as a large region surrounds us. The population of those communities surrounding us exceeds our own population—and, indeed, for New South Wales, not to be planning in isolation from what is happening in Canberra. So there are blockers, but they are historical blockers, I think. What we are trying to do now is to better plan for a region, with the population.

**THE CHAIR:** Given the interests of time, perhaps you could take this on notice: in regard to things that are blocking efficient service delivery, could you break that down into the areas of health, education, transport, emergency services, justice, tourism, planning and economic development, and report back to the committee?

**Ms Gallagher:** What am I agreeing to take on—the blockers in each of those areas?

**THE CHAIR:** In regard to the blockers, if you could break it down further by those eight areas.

**Ms Gallagher:** It would be the same reason, though. It is just that different governments or councils do different things and plan for their own communities in isolation. Looking at it as a regional community, I think we are getting better about talking about it as a region. Certainly, in health there have been a lot of advances. I would have to have a look at what more we could provide you with.

**THE CHAIR:** That is fine. Ms Porter.

**MS PORTER:** On the same page, the next dot point talks about a regional land use infrastructure framework. Chief Minister, could you describe the work of that

framework between the ACT and New South Wales? What work is being done under that framework?

**Mr Dixon:** Thank you for the question. This is one of the three priorities under the New South Wales-ACT MOU—a regional land use and infrastructure framework. This goes to some of the drivers that the Chief Minister has just spoken about. We are a broader region with growing demographics and there are a lot of employment linkages, service linkages and education linkages.

This study, first of all, looks at those sorts of drivers—what the demographics of the region are, how they are changing, how it is impacting on service demand and also infrastructure demand and then how we work together as a region, New South Wales, ACT and surrounding councils, to take those challenges and those emerging issues into account. The outcome of that work—there have been a range of both studies and consultation with our colleagues in New South Wales and the surrounding regions—will be a regional land use infrastructure framework, which will allow us to give greater consideration to some of those drivers and also methodologies for working together on shared infrastructure and how you might share costs for that infrastructure.

**MS PORTER:** This is to do with the six councils which are within one hour of the ACT.

**Mr Dixon:** Correct.

**MS PORTER:** Is there similar work contemplated for the councils that are further away or the regions that are actually further away? Will that be future work that will be done?

**Mr Dixon:** That is correct. The focus in the first instance is on the C plus one councils, those councils that are within a one-hour drive, because obviously they are the councils with the greatest interaction with the ACT. So that is where we can get the best return on our investment for the time we put into this project. Over time, as we work out which methodologies work best here, what frameworks and mechanisms work best, we will expand that to C plus two and so on.

**DR BOURKE:** What sense do we have that the commonwealth is still committed to this process, given the change in the commonwealth government?

**Ms Gallagher:** With the regional—

**DR BOURKE:** Yes.

**Ms Gallagher:** It is probably the same. They are very keen on strengthening regional communities, perhaps more so on the region rather than on the city—in the surrounding areas of New South Wales. They have disbanded—

**THE CHAIR:** It is now with the Deputy Prime Minister.

**Ms Gallagher:** I think they have disbanded the major cities unit, from my

understanding, and renamed it “regional communities”. They have given it another title. So I think what they are saying is, “We’re not that interested in focusing on the cities. We want to actually focus on the regions.” So, in that sense, I think it will continue. I think we have lost some money under the RDA funding where we had a number of projects. I think they are all on hold. That is right, isn’t it?

**Mr Dixon:** That is correct.

**Ms Gallagher:** They are on hold at this point. So that is a concern, because we had not actually got any money out of the RDA rounds. We have got one project up, I think. Certainly in four rounds we did not get anything. We will have to see what happens there. I think the focus will continue to be on the regions and, in that sense, we have probably positioned ourselves pretty well with the work that underpins this. We have a very good understanding of our demographics. We have a pretty good and growing understanding of the regional service requirements, and I think that can only strengthen our case to the commonwealth, if it is required.

**THE CHAIR:** Ms Lawder, to finish.

**MS LAWDER:** Under the MOU, it refers in the annual report to a scan of existing strategic documents to identify 10 priority areas, a number of which are being further examined. Can you tell us what specific policy planning or service delivery initiatives have been identified as a result of this MOU?

**Mr Dixon:** Thank you for the question. Under the ACT-New South Wales MOU one of the three priorities is economic development. That has been work that has been progressed in the first instance under the greater capital region initiative. There was a scan of regional economic opportunities, policies and work that has already been done. From that there were 10 priorities identified, as you have said.

From those 10 priorities, there were three that were further progressed. The first one was waste stream mapping, which was progressed with the region and with the councils. The second one was a review or a scan of regional training and skills requirements. That work was done with our regional stakeholders, including the RDA and councils. That work will then be used to inform the current preparation of a regional directions statement, which is where we will articulate with our colleagues in New South Wales what some of the regional economic priorities are and how we intend to deliver on and make it have some achievements against those.

**THE CHAIR:** Members, we might call it quits there, as we have overstretched our time just a little. Chief Minister, thank you and all of your officials for appearing today. Any questions taken on notice are due with the committee secretariat no later than Monday, 13 January 2014. For written supplementary questions from members, you have three days from the publication of the proof transcript becoming available. If you have any questions, could they be forwarded, and we will forward them to the relevant area. Again, they should be answered by no later than Monday, 13 January.

Chief Minister, on behalf of the committee, I would like to thank you and your officials for attending today, and we will forward you the proof transcript when it is available so that you may check it and suggest any corrections. With that, I formally

close the hearing.

**The committee adjourned at 12.51 pm.**