



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

**STANDING COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT AND TRANSPORT
AND CITY SERVICES**

(Reference: [Annual and financial reports 2016-2017](#))

Members:

MS S ORR (Chair)
MR S DOSZPOT (Deputy Chair)
MS T CHEYNE
MR M PARTON

TRANSCRIPT OF EVIDENCE

CANBERRA

TUESDAY, 7 NOVEMBER 2017

Secretary to the committee:
Mr A Snedden (Ph: 620 50199)

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

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Privilege statement

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Amended 20 May 2013

The committee met at 9.27 am.

Appearances:

Office of the Commissioner for Sustainability and the Environment
Auty, Professor Kate, Commissioner
Dickson, Ms Kirilly, Senior Manager

Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate
Tetley, Ms Melissa, Senior Manager, Strategic Finance

THE CHAIR: I will get the formalities out of the way. Welcome to this public hearing of the Standing Committee on Environment and Transport and City Services inquiry into annual and financial reports 2016-17. Today the committee will be examining the annual report of the Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate and associated agencies for the 2016-17 reporting period. We will begin with the annual report of the Office of the Commissioner for Sustainability and the Environment. We will then move to the report on the operation and administration of the Energy Efficiency (Cost of Living Improvement) Act 2012.

After morning tea we will move to the Environment Protection Authority and sport and recreation services, followed by environment and heritage matters, including the Conservator of Flora and Fauna and the ACT Heritage Council. I would also like to note that I said we would be looking at the energy efficiency. We are also looking at climate change and sustainability in that period.

For our first witnesses today, can I draw your attention to the privilege statement? It is the pink card on the desk. Can I ask for the record whether you have read the privilege statement, and that you are comfortable with the provisions?

Prof Auty: I have read the pink form and I am comfortable with the content of it.

Ms Dickson: Yes, I have read and acknowledge the privilege statement.

Ms Tetley: Yes, I have read and acknowledge it.

THE CHAIR: Professor Auty, did you want to make an opening statement?

Prof Auty: I am happy to do that. Thank you very much for the invitation. I will start by acknowledging the Ngunnawal people, as is customary in my office, and also in the ACT. I have now been the commissioner since May 2016, when I took up this role, and this is the second annual report that I have produced for the purposes of the Assembly's observations of the work being done in my office. In the year since the first report under my watch we have undertaken a number of pieces of work, and you will see that we have responded to a number of requests to reply to general commentary about territory matters. That is outlined in the report.

Of the work that we have been doing, two significant pieces of reporting have been the state of the environment report and also the implementation status review. The

second of those has also come in under my watch. And while it was provided after the time of this particular annual reporting period, it did in fact constitute much of the work that the office did.

I would like to take you through those two pieces of work to give you a bit of an idea of what we are doing and what we have been doing in the office in 2016-17. The state of the environment report is of course a major piece of work for the office and a major piece of work for the ACT. We have responded in this particular report to what occurred in respect of recommendations in the previous reporting period, and you will see that that is part of the report here before you.

In relation to the forthcoming state of the environment report due in 2019, I have had my office engaged very actively in working on environmental economic accounts to try to render that particular discussion relevant for the purposes of policy direction in the ACT, as well as responding to the indicators that we have previously had on board, and we will continue to do that. That piece of work in respect of environmental economic accounts brought together a major steering committee, which is outlined in the appendices to the report, and the work has been ongoing in the office with two people full time on it.

A proof of concept is on the website, and I would invite anybody to have a look at that. I do not have the officer who was involved in that work here with me today but we are certainly prepared to answer questions over time and we are requesting feedback in response to it.

In relation to the implementation status report, which is a document which was in fact tabled after the period of this particular reporting for the annual report, you will see that I have taken a lot of trouble to try to involve the public in that and in fact amongst the people who provided commentary about the manner in which the ACT's climate change policy unfolds there is a commentary from Susan Helyar from ACTCOSS. There is a commentary there from Dr Sophie Lewis, who is an ACT climate change specialist from the ANU. There is also a commentary there from Dr Liz Hanna, who is associated with the ANU and involved in climate change and health matters. And we also have, in that particular report, observations from Romilly Madew from the Green Building Council; Catherine Townsend, who is the ACT Architect; and also Evan Findlay, who is working on electric vehicles at the ANU.

The other commentary that is there is in fact from Dr Dave Griggs, who is an IPCC author, and he speaks of the role of sub-national governments in respect of climate change and commends the ACT in relation to the work that has been done here in the ACT about leadership on climate change.

The other work that the office has been invited to undertake since the last time I presented an annual report is of course the independent audits into the strategic assessments on both Gungahlin and Molonglo. Those pieces of work are coming together. We have contracted into the office auditors for the purposes of that, and I am endeavouring to make sure that my team acquires skills in relation to that as well.

The other piece of work that we are involved in as an ongoing prospect is the lower Cotter. We recently convened the expert working group on that, and we held the first

of those meetings at the Canberra Institute of Technology, to which the office has recently moved, and we were happy to use their sustainability precinct for the purposes of that particular conversation.

During the last year we moved once to Macarthur House. We have of course now moved out of Macarthur House and we have moved to the Canberra Institute of Technology, and I am very pleased to have those premises because it brings us into the orbit of their sustainability precinct, and we also have more space and, I might add, we have saved some funds in relation to our rental.

I am happy to answer any questions. I have with me a person who can talk about finances and I also have Kirilly Dickson who can talk about investigations that the office has been undertaking.

THE CHAIR: I think we will just do one question along the table and then come back. I did want to have a look at the environmental economic accounts, how that is going to be a focus within the state of the environment report and what you see that bringing to the report in the future as a new methodology for presenting the case.

Prof Auty: The proof of concept is on the website, and I will undertake to provide a copy of it to all members of the committee if you have not in fact got that at this time. The reason that we have embarked on that work is that there has been a lot of discussion about the way in which an economic or accounting exercise would assist governments to develop policy. If I use one specific example from that work which might assist you to understand why I think it is important, it is to do with the assessment of the value of volunteering in the environment in the ACT. And while that is not, strictly speaking, something that other environmental accounting exercises have undertaken, we have demonstrated by that—by taking the numbers of volunteers, by taking the view that they would, if they were paid a certain amount, be representative of a particular expenditure—that at least 20 per cent of the budget that is taken up for the purposes of environmental action or activity in the ACT can in fact be further attributed to environmental volunteers.

It is a very interesting exercise because what it shows is that, if we have a policy lever that looks after environmental volunteers generally by either providing coordinating services or the assistance that volunteers need for the environment, we are saving in dollar terms a great deal of money because volunteers contribute their labour effectively free, or gratis, and that is something that the environment ultimately receives the value of.

The manner in which these accounts have played out, generally speaking, is that they have demonstrated that there is a value in, say, tourism, which is ecotourism. They have demonstrated that there is a value in water provisioning, which is the way in which water is useful not just for the environment but also for the community. And they have demonstrated that there are ways in which carbon sequestration is also capable of being valued.

The work that we have done is a proof of concept. It has been done for the purposes of examining whether it will be useful for the state of the environment report. At this time, the feedback I am getting from the parties who have been involved is that it has

been a very useful exercise and we should continue to explore it.

THE CHAIR: I am happy for you to forward a copy. Just to clarify, though, is it looking primarily at indirect and direct benefits or are we looking at externalities? How do we quantify the environment?

Prof Auty: It can be looking at all those, and it depends on the way in which the account is put together for the particular or specific analysis. We have an account on the question of land. We have an account on environmental condition. There is also an account in respect of biodiversity, waste water, air emissions and environmental expenditure. The air emissions one is probably the easiest one for the layperson to understand and, without saying that that is what most members of the public would find easy, it certainly demonstrates the way in which we can contemplate the value of an account for understanding the way we think about greenhouse emissions or other pollution challenges.

THE CHAIR: I look forward to reading this document when it comes.

Prof Auty: And I might say, we are also happy to provide a briefing to parties if you want a briefing. The person who has brought that together in my office is currently taking some well-earned long service leave and when she is back I will make sure that she is available for anybody who wants a specific briefing about those matters.

MS LE COUTEUR: Could I just very quickly ask, because I have got your website open, and I cannot find where you are talking about—

Prof Auty: I am guaranteed that it is on the website. I have not in fact been to it. I think it is under the state of the environment report page.

MS LE COUTEUR: I looked under that and that just gets me to the 2015 report.

THE CHAIR: What we might do is, if you keep having a look, we can check in again. I am just conscious of time so that everyone gets a question.

MS LE COUTEUR: I just thought it might be a quick one.

Prof Auty: Can I just say, on the website, one of the officers in my office actually keeps the website up to date. We do not have a website specialist doing that work, and I am confident that it is there. It is just a question of where you will find it. Thanks very much for pointing that out, because if it is difficult to find in this environment it is probably difficult for the public to find as well.

MR PARTON: The annual report at page 43 refers to submissions made, and I note 12 submissions were made in 2016-17. Can I ask, because I am keen to know: what was the rationale for the Commissioner for Sustainability and the Environment making a submission to a day to celebrate reconciliation—your say community consultation?

Prof Auty: Thank you for that question. That came directly from me. It was not something that any previous commissioner had thought was important. It did not take

a lot of time in the office to make that submission. I thought it was an important matter to make an observation on because I take the view that Aboriginal people's involvement in the environment generally is important, and for that reason alone it came directly from me. It did not take a lot of office time to compile. It was simply to say that I think, as the commissioner, that there was a need for that to be considered, and for that reason the submission was made.

MR PARTON: It just strikes me as being a long way outside the remit of sustainability and the environment, that is all.

Prof Auty: Yes, I accept that. As I say, it did not take a lot of time to do but I did think it was a matter upon which the office ought to make an observation. It was a personal matter, as a direction from me, to a staff member, and I think it took a matter of an afternoon for the submission to be put together. I take your point and, in doing so, I did take the view that it was outside the remit of the office but I also thought it was important for the office to make an observation about it.

THE CHAIR: The submission said:

- indicated support for the ACT Governments' current activities pertaining to Indigenous acknowledgement and inclusion ...

Did that interact with how Indigenous women's culture is closely linked to the environment? Did it pick up on those, in a sense?

Prof Auty: It was because of that inclusion and because of that engagement that I picked up on the fact that we ought to be making a submission. As I say, it was not a detailed submission, it was not a long submission, but it was important from the point of view of the office to be acknowledging Aboriginal peoples involved within the environment and the manner in which we celebrated that one way or another.

MS CHEYNE: On pages 40 and 41 of your report you outline a number of measures you have taken through the year to increase engagement, how you were tracking on social media and a range of competitions you have held. What sort of engagement did you have for your two competitions, finding Canberra's most amazing tree—and I am keen to know where it is—and the logo for the cycling competition for the #CBR women ride?

Prof Auty: Can I take that on notice?

MS CHEYNE: Sure.

Prof Auty: Because those competitions were not specifically run by me, they were run by our comms person at that time, the person who was doing the communication.

Canberra's most amazing tree was in fact a photo competition and we just simply asked people to provide us with photographs of the tree that they thought was the most amazing tree. It was a means of engaging the public about visualising the environment and thinking about how they might explore and celebrate it.

In relation to the logo, we were interested in getting the people who are bicycling in this territory thinking about what might be useful to encourage more bicycling. I think that in relation to that we got one particular school to submit a number of logos. But I will certainly provide you with the numbers, if that is of assistance to you.

MS CHEYNE: That would be great, yes.

Prof Auty: Neither of them was ground breaking to the extent that thousands of people responded. But both were ways of just getting the public to think about how our social media might engage with the environment and how they might be part of it.

MS CHEYNE: And what future campaigns do you have planned?

Prof Auty: We continue to be involved with the parliament of youth, and two of my officers have been along to speak to teachers in respect of that for next year. We continue to have engagement with the universities. Now that we are at the Canberra Institute of Technology we will be renewing the early links that I had with them about what they are doing at CIT.

We maintain an ongoing relationship with the universities generally and we also maintain a relationship with schools in the ACT through the parliament of youth. As a general proposition I respond to a request to attend conferences, talk to whoever might be wanting to hear about what we are doing. For instance, this week I have been to talk to the environmental dean at ANU about state of the environment reporting. That was an exchange where they were interested to know how they might assist us in respect of reporting. I also wanted to be telling them about what we were doing about the ACT state of the environment report.

I will be going this week, at the expense of the University of Queensland, to Brisbane to talk about social sciences and the environment and about the manner in which the multidisciplinary efforts that can take place might be useful in respect of policy development and engaging a broader remit of scientists in what we know we need to do about environmental issues. That is just this week, for instance. It varies considerably.

I have, this year, asked the team to include at the end of the document a list of some of the things that I did over the past year, and that is only some of what was undertaken.

MS CHEYNE: And will there be more competitions to engage younger people?

Prof Auty: We will try to do that. The officer on my staff who did that has moved on to take on the executive director role at SEE-Change; so I have not continued that role explicitly, as was the case in the first six to nine months of my time as the commissioner.

MS LE COUTEUR: I would like to ask you about ecological footprint. It is on your website, I know. It is there at 8.9 global hectares, which I believe was based on the 2011-12 data. Are you expecting that in the 2019 state of the environment report you will reassess this with more current data, or possibly even before that, and possibly have some more discussion about what this actually means?

Prof Auty: It is a very blunt figure, is it not?

MS LE COUTEUR: Yes.

Prof Auty: It is quite alarming in a way.

MS LE COUTEUR: Very alarming.

Prof Auty: To that extent I appreciate the question. I have not at this time, further commissioned an ecological footprint analysis. It was done by an expert from outside the office on the last occasion. There is no reason why we should not or could not be doing that, and I anticipate that we will think about that for the purposes of the state of the environment report through to 2019.

I am not an expert in ecological footprinting. From the point of view of explaining what that means to the public, it is quite difficult to do when you have a look at the report that has been compiled by that expert. I am satisfied that that figure is accurate. It was work that was commissioned by a previous commissioner. I am satisfied that it was a very thorough analysis of what the ACT ecological footprint was. But I am not an expert in explaining it or advising you about how it was compiled.

It is on the agenda for discussion in the office about the next state of the environment report to consider replacing that particular report with an updated one.

MS LE COUTEUR: I put my vote for updating it.

Prof Auty: You would like an updated report. I will take that on notice. Have you found the proof of concept on the website?

MS LE COUTEUR: Not yet but that does not prove that it is not there. I have only got the small screen and I have not got my proper mouse, so I am not as good as I would be with a real live mouse.

THE CHAIR: A real live one?

MS LEE: Commissioner, on the ecological footprint, on pages 9 and 11 there are a few references to the need to improve habitat connectivity and the importance of urban forests. We have had a bit of discussion about the need to update the data but, based on the information you currently have, can you give us a broad-brush view of what more we could be doing in the ACT?

Prof Auty: Thank you for the question. There is a very interesting report that has come out of the University of Melbourne that updates the work they have put together for the City of Melbourne about its urban forest. That particular piece of work actually has a study of tree cover in Canberra, and I am happy to make that available. I received it as a draft. It is now, as I understand it, a published document. I have made it available to the directorate and I am happy to make it available to any member of the committee or all the members of the committee through the secretary.

THE CHAIR: Would you mind circulating that, along with the link to the website that Ms Le Couteur is—

Prof Auty: Okay. What that work tells you is that certain trees in the Canberra tree cover, urban forest, will do reasonably well under a two-degree future. There are trees that will struggle under a two-degree future and there are trees that will simply not survive under a four-degree future. So it rather depends on the way in which you analyse the projections as to climate change what you might or might not find alarming in that report. I can certainly provide it. It also takes you to what is happening with other cities. It provides you with an analysis of the work that has been done on urban forest in Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane and Adelaide as well, to give you a bit of an idea of the comparative issues.

We made submissions in relation to Haig Park. I have discussed this matter with the people in the EPSDD, about the work that was being done about Haig Park. That is where we made available to them the work that had come out of the University of Melbourne, Burnley and the City of Melbourne for the purposes of determining what trees might be the best trees to plant in a climate change future. They may not be the trees that we can provenance from the ACT historically or appropriately now. So it is a matter of adaptive management as much as anything else.

I am happy to provide that report. I can certainly do that today, and I will do it through the secretary.

THE CHAIR: You have highlighted the transport and practice. I want to get a better feel for what you think, going forward, are some of the issues we need to look at from a climate change adaptation perspective. Transport is obviously highlighted, but just a broad overview.

Prof Auty: Transport is highlighted because it is clearly the next big issue once the ACT meets its target in 2020. We all know that, so I do not think that that is a revelation coming from my office. I was very interested to see how much interest there was in electric vehicles, which is one of the matters under discussion in the implementation status review. There is clearly a community interest in doing something about this, and it may be a hip pocket nerve as much as anything else. We found with the implementation status review that there was still some real need to be working harder on community engagement and also thinking about what happens to people who might be on the lower socioeconomic part of the ladder in the ACT. Those points have been made in the implementation status review.

There is no doubt that the challenges will be multifaceted and that there will be maladaptation along the way. We know that that is the potential: we fix one thing and it results in problems for the other. We also know that we cannot rely on particular sectors to do all the heavy lifting. There has not been in my office at this time a really deep engagement with business in the ACT but we are certainly involved with the engineering firms. It seems to me that there is a role for business in all of this in its interactions with the ACT government and it seems to me that that is being satisfied by some of the discussions that I have been privy to through CERI et cetera.

THE CHAIR: What do you see the role of business being?

Prof Auty: Business will always be capable of leading and capable of demonstrating that they are taking the view that co-benefits are important. That has certainly come through in what has happened since the Paris talks internationally. Business will be leading in relation to things like electrification of their fleet, and if they are we ought to celebrate those sorts of achievements. Business can lead in relation to their premises. It is clear that the Canberra airport, for instance, is one great example of that occurring. The work that is in the implementation status review from Romilly Madew from the Green Building Council demonstrates the clear interest in doing something about commercial properties. That is something that business can be involved in as well.

Without wanting to be trivial or trite about this, we can all do more than we are. Having arrived at the CIT building, where do not have a composting facility, my little office—six people, no more—has set up composting out of the tea room. It is trivial, it is trite, it is small beer, but the reality is that all of us can do more than we currently do.

In relation to government policy, there is a raft of strategies and plans. All of those strategies and plans will be reviewed over time. I am aware that some of them are under review as my reports are coming together. It is important that in those strategies and plans being reviewed the community is involved.

One of the points I made in the implementation status review about the issue of offsets in the ACT, which has been a matter of heightened concern for many people, is that that might be one of the things you might like to consider for a citizens jury, for instance, and see whether the community wants to have a say about how offsets play out in that way. There is a range of ways in which we can respond.

THE CHAIR: What are some of the opportunities you see for offsets going forward?

Prof Auty: We will be discussing those matters in the Gungahlin and Molonglo strategic assessment audits.

THE CHAIR: Here in December.

Prof Auty: Yes. At this stage I am not in a position to talk about what the outcomes might be in respect of those audits.

MS LEE: Commissioner, I know that the office has dealt with some complaints in this reporting period, but my understanding is that the office has not conducted a formal inquiry or an investigation since 2012 looking into Lake Burley Griffin and the water quality and all of that. Is there any reason why there has not been a substantive inquiry or an investigation since then? I grant that that was before your time.

Prof Auty: I cannot speak for other commissioners. In my time, the eastern grey kangaroo complaints came through. We have received a subsequent complaint in very recent times, and that matter is still under review. We have received a complaint about the little eagle and the Ginninderry development. That matter is currently before the administrative tribunal here in the ACT, and to that extent I have not embarked on an

investigation of that. I have not received other specific requests or complaints, save that there was one in relation to a development at Kaleen, which was also before the administrative tribunal and which I understand was resolved at mediation. I am not privy to how that was resolved. To the extent that that was the case, that matter is not proceeding in my office at this time.

MS LEE: One of the other complaints is about the smell at Tuggeranong from the tip. I think we have all had issues about that. My understanding is that some people who are complaining about it go to your office because you have got the expertise that we as MLAs do not have. We can do as much as we can to write to the minister and say, “Fix it.” It could be that it is just not very articulated in the report, but it does not seem to go into much detail about what your office has been able to value add in terms of that complaint, in addition to what we have already been trying to do, which is write to the minister and say, “Hey, here is the response.” Can you articulate that in a bit more detail?

Prof Auty: I can. In relation to the foul smell at Tuggeranong, we received a complaint from a representative complainant. In taking that on board—it arrived prior to my time as the commissioner and continued in my time as the commissioner—we took advice from the EPA, and I understand the minister intervened to respond to that complaint. That being the case, I have not taken further action about that complaint, but I have invited complainants to further complain should they wish to. The view I took in relation to the response from the minister was that the matter at that time was responded to and finalised, pending any further complaint, which I have not received.

I hear your question, which says that people do come to the office. I have not had a lot of people come to the office with a complaint about that. I have had that one complaint, and it has not been renewed subsequent to that advice being received from the minister and my advice to the representative complainant. Does that answer the question?

MS LEE: Yes.

MS LE COUTEUR: As Ms Lee said, you have not done any inquiries for some time. Have you got the capacity to do inquiries if they are necessary, or is this just basically a resourcing issue?

Prof Auty: It is not a resourcing issue, in that resources have not precluded us from doing the work that needs to be done. Should we receive a complaint that required the sort of investigation that would require additional staffing or resources, I would make that known to the relevant minister or to the EPSDD and indicate that the office was probably not at full capacity to deal with that matter, if it did require a really full-blown investigation.

So it is a matter of the chicken and the egg here. It has not been the reason that matters have not proceeded to date. I cannot speculate on what might happen with, for instance, the little eagle complaint. I will need to wait and see what transpires as a result of that.

Clearly an investigation, and we would all be aware of this, would take very clear

analysis of the material, very clear scrutiny of that and expertise in relation to what are said to be the scientific niceties of the issue. That would require my office to be further supported to do that sort of work. There is no doubt about that. I am comfortable with the skill level in my office, and my team are always working a lot harder than their nine-to-five jobs would invite you to think they are. But we would require specialisation and to that extent we would require some further support.

MS LEE: Going back to the 2012 formal investigation into Lake Burley Griffin, there were a number of recommendations made in that report. I appreciate that it was before your time but I think people would expect that the office has a continuity attached to it. Have you had a chance to look at those recommendations? It has been five years. Have they all been undertaken? Are you happy with the progress, especially given the topical issues that we have had a huge injection of funding, both ACT and federal, for the clean-up of waterways and that a bill was tabled only last week about some changes that may be coming to the use of Lake Burley Griffin? Are you satisfied as the current commissioner about the work that has been undertaken looking at Lake Burley Griffin?

Prof Auty: You will see in the annual report that I have responded to that particular complaint. We are talking about pages 30 onwards in relation to Lake Burley Griffin. We required the relevant directorates to respond to the recommendations that had been made. We have received those responses to the recommendations that were made at that time.

Things change. We are talking about the environment and we are talking about the potential for there to be quite significant changes. To the extent that there might be changes, the office would of course pick up and run with those issues and would be happy to do so.

The answers that I have received to the recommendations to date are outlined in the annual report and, to the extent that they are, I am satisfied with what I have received. However, the environment is a moving, shifting issue. Should there be changes, we would obviously be very interested in taking those on board and continuing to scrutinise those outcomes.

THE CHAIR: Given the time, we might leave it there. If anyone has further questions they can put them on notice.

Prof Auty: Thank you. We are responding by providing you with the link to the proof of concept to make sure that that is there. And I will check that website, Ms Le Couteur, and make sure that it is very clear for the public. We are also providing the report, which will have draft on it but is no longer draft, in relation to tree cover from the University of Melbourne and the City of Melbourne.

THE CHAIR: Thank you. On behalf of the committee, thank you for attending. Responses to questions taken on notice at this session should be submitted to the committee office within five business days of the uncorrected proof transcript becoming available.

Prof Auty: Could I just confirm we have not taken any questions on notice.

THE CHAIR: No, just a few requests for documents.

Prof Auty: Thank you.

Appearances:

Rattenbury, Mr Shane, Minister for Climate Change and Sustainability, Minister for Justice, Consumer Affairs and Road Safety, Minister for Corrections and Minister for Mental Health

Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate

Ponton, Mr Ben, Director-General

Rutledge, Mr Geoffrey, Acting Deputy Director-General, Sustainability and the Built Environment

Bygrave, Mr Stephen, Executive Director, Sustainability and Climate Change

Sibley, Mr Jon, Director, Energy and Waste Policy

Malouf Ms Ros, Senior Manager, Sustainability Programs

THE CHAIR: Thank you, everyone, for attending this morning. We are part of the way through our morning session of the Standing Committee on Environment and Transport City Services inquiry into annual and financial reports. For all of our witnesses joining us, can I draw your attention to the privilege statement, the pink card on the desk. Are you familiar with it, and have you understood everything contained in the privilege statement?

Mr Rattenbury: Yes.

THE CHAIR: Minister, thank you for coming along today. Would you like to make an opening statement?

Mr Rattenbury: No. I am very happy to go straight to questions. The work that the directorate has been doing over the past year, which is contained in the annual report, is quite well known. I am happy to go straight to questions.

THE CHAIR: I would like to go to page 83, which looks at the ACT climate change adaptation strategy. At the last annual reports hearings in March we were told that there was an inter-directorate committee being formed to start to progress the work. I would appreciate an update on how the work is going, particularly against the deliverables for 2017.

Mr Bygrave: We have two groups established to implement the adaptation strategy in government. The first is an adaptation steering committee which has been recently changed to a climate change steering committee. This comprises all directors-general across the different directorates in the government. This provides oversight and a governance role in monitoring and ensuring that the adaptation strategy is on track.

Beneath that group is an adaptation working group which I chair. That comprises senior officials from directorates across the government. That is essentially responsible for implementation of the different actions. There are 27 actions across a range of areas, including risk management, living infrastructure, education and awareness raising. The adaptation working group comprises, as I mentioned, senior officials from all the different directorates to ensure that the implementation is on track.

Across the 27 actions, around 15 are currently ranked green. The remaining 12 are orange. There is none in the red category, so everything is either ahead of track or on track.

THE CHAIR: You draw particular attention in the report to the living infrastructure strategy. Can you give me an update on how that is progressing?

Mr Bygrave: This is a very interesting strategy. It looks at urban forests, it looks at water and it looks at soil health. The aim of this strategy is to ensure that we have a resilient city, well planned into the future, to be able to address the impacts of climate change which are already happening. As we know, there are more extreme weather events. I think there was snow in the mountains yesterday, for example. We had a heatwave in February which had a major impact on our energy system.

This living infrastructure strategy is about building a resilient city across those different elements of water, soils, urban forests and other things to ensure that we have that resilient city. Therefore it involves a lot of interaction across different directorates. TCCS is a key directorate there because they are responsible for the urban forest. I refer also to the emergency management area, building heat refuges, for example, places where people can go in heatwaves, particularly the most vulnerable in the community, the elderly. This is also about incorporating those elements into the strategy.

THE CHAIR: So that it is clear in my mind, will the strategy be looking at ways to implement things or will it be identifying needs?

Mr Rattenbury: I missed the start of your question.

THE CHAIR: I am trying to get clear in my mind what is meant by a strategy. When you say you are putting together a strategy, will this be a high-level policy document that says urban forests should do this or waterways should do that, or will there be some implementation actions as well?

Mr Rattenbury: The climate change adaptation strategy contains a series of actions that are being implemented as we speak.

THE CHAIR: I am speaking specifically about the living infrastructure strategy that has been developed under the—

Mr Bygrave: Yes, it is the same response. Essentially, the strategy outlines 27 actions and they are all being implemented. The living infrastructure strategy is not just a strategy; there are actions to deliver against the strategy.

MS LEE: I have a supplementary on the adaptation. In terms of the ACT's temperatures, can you outline how long they have been monitored for and whether that is publicly available?

Mr Rattenbury: It is publicly available. We do not have it to hand, I do not think.

Mr Bygrave: No.

Mr Rattenbury: We are happy to provide that.

MS LEE: That would be great.

Mr Rattenbury: From memory, the records date from about 1920 in the ACT. But we will get an exact figure and provide that to you.

Mr Bygrave: Generally speaking, minimum temperatures have shown the most increase over that period of time. The adaptation strategy also refers to a number of expected events as we move to 2050, in particular, and 2070, with the number of heatwaves doubling, for example, over that time frame. This is why we have an adaptation strategy, to be able to prepare for those impacts into the future.

MR PARTON: I might focus briefly on the Actsmart programs for business.

Mr Rattenbury: Yes, of course.

MR PARTON: The Actsmart lighting efficiency web tool was launched in partnership with the Canberra Business Chamber and the ANU to develop a free web-based tool to allow businesses to estimate savings associated with upgrading their inefficient lighting to LED technology. How many businesses have accessed this tool and how many have made changes as a result of it?

Ms Malouf: The business tool is, as you said, an online tool. That has been accessed by about 35 businesses this year that have directly come back to us with questions. Often there are questions such as, “Will this produce the right amount of lumens for us? We have a specific need, a manufacturing need,” or they are in an area that has special lighting, such as a gallery that has special lighting. They come back with more questions. Other than that we do not actually have a record; everyone does not register per se. It is a free service that any business can use, medium, large and small.

MR PARTON: I guess it is difficult to know exactly what effect it has had.

Ms Malouf: It is, but the feedback we are getting from those 35 businesses that have come through is, “My electrician has suggested a different type of light; is that suitable for this fitting? Do I have to replace the whole fitting? Someone is trying to sell me a different product that is not on your website tool; can you help us with that as well?” Certainly, indications are that people are taking action.

MR PARTON: Good. I am glad you are here, Ros.

MS CHEYNE: I want to talk about wood heaters and the wood heater replacement program. I know the program has been running for some time now. On pages 72 and 73 there is information about what subsidies were available. It says approximately 1,143 wood heaters have been removed from service, but that is the total; is that right? I am interested in how many were removed in the last financial year.

Ms Malouf: You are right; the 1,100-odd is since the beginning of the program. There

was a peak at the beginning of the program which has tapered off. In 2016-17 66 people applied to the program and we had 49 applications, with only nine wood heaters solely removed. You can actually remove a heater and get a rebate for just the removal, if you have another heating system in place. So you do not have to replace it with something if you already have the replacement in stage. We decided there was quite an impost on getting rid of a wood heater. It is quite expensive to drop off at the landfill and it is quite heavy. A lot of people get external people to remove it for them, so there is a \$100 rebate to encourage just the removal of the wood heater.

Mr Bygrave: We want to correct the record regarding the previous answer.

Ms Malouf: There were 28 businesses attached to the program, not 35.

MR PARTON: Okay.

MS CHEYNE: The annual report for the last financial year said that one of the main ways that the replacement program was advertised was through radio, and the committee's recommendation was to utilise a greater variety of media. The government's response was that they would use direct mail, whole-of-government message and print advertising in local, free community publications, the website and social media. I am interested in direct mail. Did that occur in this financial year and who were you targeting?

Ms Malouf: We did a direct mail-out to some suburbs in Tuggeranong. We did a Kambah direct mail-out and we did get a response increase. We had more in that area that actually replaced their wood heaters.

MS CHEYNE: That is good to know. Do you have a sense of how many wood heaters are left in Canberra? I hear occasionally that people are buying them and installing them or going out of their way to put them in. So while we have this replacement program and some people, particularly those who have old ones, are taking them out, some people are going out of their way to put them into their new house.

Ms Malouf: We hear exactly the same thing. From the last census, which is the only information we have to go on, there are about 8,000 wood heaters—people tick that as their primary source of heating—across the city. New wood heaters that are sold now have some national requirements to be much more efficient and the smoke particulates are much less in a new system. So there are guidelines. They might be getting rid of an older system but they are certainly replacing it with something much more efficient.

MS CHEYNE: So it is a bit less of concern. We would still prefer that they were not, but we are a bit less concerned if we have some new ones coming in. We would prefer to get rid of the old ones.

Ms Malouf: The newer ones are much more efficient; in relation to comfort as well, they are much better at warming the area.

MR PARTON: Was that figure of 8,000 just for their primary source of heating?

Ms Malouf: Correct.

MR PARTON: Potentially, there could be five times more than 8,000.

Ms Malouf: Yes, we do not have that data.

MS CHEYNE: I appreciate that this is not your area, but the EPA will be appearing later today. In terms of complaints over the past three years on environmental issues and actions taken, for solid fuel heaters in 2014-15 there were 127 complaints. It went down to 82 in 2015-16 but it is back up to 100 for this financial year. Do we think that that might be related to new houses? Do we have any idea about where the complaints might be coming from?

Ms Malouf: The EPA would be best placed to answer that, because they would know the nature of each of those complaints.

Mr Rattenbury: Certainly, the government has made an effort in recent years to run the “don’t burn tonight” campaign. There is probably a correlation between those cool, still nights where the inversion layer is particularly prominent and people notice the smoke much more than they will on windier nights. There could be some seasonal variability there. Hopefully, there is also an impact from the campaign which says, “On those inversion nights, don’t burn.” As Mr Parton was saying, a lot of people probably have a wood fireplace as well as their other heating system because they like the feel of it sometimes, and they are the people we are particularly targeting in those “don’t burn tonight” campaigns where—I do not want to say it is a luxury—it is a nice thing to do rather than a necessity.

MS CHEYNE: I also appreciate that people might know how to complain better than previously.

Mr Rattenbury: Some of that, potentially, yes.

MS LEE: I have got questions on carbon emissions. Strategic indicator objective 4, particularly indicator 4.1, talks about implementing policies to achieve the ACT government’s target of net zero carbon emissions in the ACT by 2050 and in government operations by 2020. What is the current level of emissions and how are they measured as at 2017?

Mr Rattenbury: The ACT does an annual greenhouse gas inventory that is publicly available and actually gets tabled in the Assembly. Those figures are all available. Do we have the figures to hand?

Mr Bygrave: About 4,000 kilotonnes.

MS LEE: Four thousand?

Mr Rattenbury: Yes. The inventory for 2015-16 shows a stabilisation in emissions over 2014-15 with emissions just over 4,000 kilotonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent, and what we expect to see is a significant drop in the next couple of years as all the

renewable energy projects come on stream. All indications at this stage are that we are on target to achieve the 40 per cent reduction below 1990 levels by 2020.

MS LEE: And on the carbon challenge, almost 3,000 people—2,989 people—have registered for the challenge since 2015. How is their contribution measured and what percentage of ACT households does this represent?

Ms Malouf: Our carbon challenge was a schools program that got households to be involved through their school community. It was a primary school competition to join up to the carbon challenge. The challenge had a series of challenges involved that schools could sign up to. They could sign up to growing some vegetables at home, hanging out the washing and turning down their heating.

We got some really interesting feedback, including “My five-year-old is following me around turning the heater down every time I turn it up,” which is exactly what we are after. The emissions were saved over that period of the competition, which was a four-week competition, and we counted each school’s activity, each household’s activity, and we attached it to each of the schools so that we ended up having a school-by-school result.

MS LEE: Was there a target set at all or milestones by any chance? You were hoping, “All right, we are going to aim for 35 schools,” but only 22 registered or—

Ms Malouf: We were hoping to get about 20 schools.

MS LEE: You exceeded?

Ms Malouf: We definitely exceeded. It went a little gangbusters, which was great. Primary schools are a great force that are willing to pretty much be involved in anything that we have, which is fantastic.

MS LEE: And were there any other milestones that you set for that program, aside from the number of schools participating?

Ms Malouf: We have an annual number of households signing up. We have a target for that. We are trying to track to get 4,000 registered users to the program this year and we are about 3,200 at the moment. We are hoping to sign those up in this financial year.

THE CHAIR: Just following on from Ms Lee—noting the inventory of gas, the summary of resources and moving to electricity—we just had the commissioner for environment in and she identified transport as being the next big area. Can you give us an update on what you are looking at to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from transport?

Mr Rattenbury: I certainly can. I did not hear the commissioner. Forgive me if I am repeating this but—

THE CHAIR: I can fill you in. Basically we were just talking about the same thing. Once we are onto renewable energies, we have actually done quite a bit there in

regard to renewable electricity, which makes emissions from our transport sector the next big challenge.

Mr Rattenbury: Certainly past 2020 we expect the transport emissions in the ACT to be responsible for over 60 per cent of the ACT's greenhouse gas emissions. This obviously presents a significant challenge. The government is currently developing a new climate strategy. There are two elements to that climate strategy: first, further mapping out our pathway to our zero net emissions target by 2050 at the latest; and the second part of that is to develop an action plan from now until 2025 or from 2018 to 2025. There will be two components to that. One is that longer term vision of knowing where we are going. We need to have that longer term answer to help us guide the trajectory and then the seven-year specific program of what we are doing.

In terms of transport emissions, this is obviously subject to a degree of community consultation and also in partnership with Transport Canberra and City Services. But the primary mechanisms will be journey reduction, actually reducing the need for people to travel as much by having more compact communities and improved access to active transport such as walking and cycling.

The second component will be improved public transport and the third component is the electrification of the vehicle fleet. In broad terms there is a lot of detail that needs to go behind that but in broad terms that is what we will need to do to tackle those transport emissions.

Mr Ponton: As the minister said, we need to work very closely with our colleagues in Transport Canberra and City Services and the minister is working with the minister for transport. We have started those conversations, particularly in light of the fact that Transport Canberra, who are now responsible for transport policy, have started work on reviewing the transport strategy. We will be working very closely with them to ensure that our needs in terms of reducing emissions are adequately captured in that policy document.

MR PARTON: I am fascinated as to how, on a city-wide basis, you achieve the targets that we are talking about in that transport space. Obviously most of the emissions are not coming from government use, are they? They are coming from private use. Other than the measures that you have outlined in terms of encouraging less travel and better public transport, surely there has to come a point where, to achieve the targets that you are talking about, you must come up with some sharper measures to encourage people to get out of their cars?

Mr Rattenbury: As I said, there is a series of strategies. Some people will necessarily, because of the design of the city and their lifestyles and all those other reasons, continue to need to drive. And that is where the electrification of the fleet comes in. We will, over the next decade, see, I think, a significant increase in the number of electric vehicles in the market by dint of reduced price, improved availability and improved infrastructure for recharging.

There are stories circulating, certainly in regard to existing vehicles, about bringing out a new Tesla that is at a much lower price point. It is still expensive for a lot of people but it is \$A50,000 to \$60,000 which plenty of people spend on their cars. And

the other side to that would be that we are seeing stories of very cheap electric vehicles being made in China. I expect there will be a certain amount of drive that just comes from changes in the market.

MR PARTON: What I am more worried about is charges that might be put in place in inventive and creative ways to try to encourage people not to drive.

Mr Rattenbury: There is no work in the ACT specifically being done on a congestion charge at the moment. There is work being done at a national level that is in its very preliminary stages, being done through the Transport Infrastructure Council, on what is called road user charging. Governments are being given policy advice that as more vehicles become electrified—at the moment the key way that government puts a price on driving is through fuel excise—that fuel excise disappears; so there is contemplation of how governments generally achieve revenue in an increasingly electrified vehicle fleet.

MR PARTON: I am sure you have got a view on that.

Mr Rattenbury: On what?

MR PARTON: I know it is a national issue but on how they—

Mr Rattenbury: There have not really been any concrete options put forward yet. The only example we have seen is the New Zealand government gave a presentation at COAG earlier this year or last year in which they have set up GPS tracking of their heavy vehicle fleet. The industry was very supportive of that, interestingly, but it is very conceptual at this stage. It is not something that is really a clear policy proposition to have a view on.

MS LEE: On electric vehicles, you were talking about obviously making sure that you have got the infrastructure for recharging. Has there been any thought given to new apartments, for example, having that capacity? Some of the feedback that I have had from people who are interested in going electric with their vehicles has been, “But I live in an apartment and it just hasn’t got quite the same capacity as living in a home.”

Mr Ponton: I can answer that with my planning hat on.

MS LEE: I appreciate that part of it would be—

Mr Ponton: The short answer is yes. We are hearing that as well, that there is concern that people want to buy electric vehicles but they do not necessarily have the capacity to charge in the apartment complexes. Therefore they need to drive elsewhere to charge the vehicles or there is considerable cost or issues with bodies corporate to achieve charging points in their basement car parking spots. Yes, we are very alert to that and as part of the ongoing review of the Territory Plan we will be looking to address that issue.

MS LEE: Again on emissions—going back to that, moving away from transport—only last week, minister, you announced in a media release six projects that received

the community zero emissions grant. Granted that media releases are always short and sharp, I was wondering whether you might be able to articulate in a little more detail some of the projects. It seems the figure is quite strict in terms of accuracy but the description itself is not all that detailed.

Mr Rattenbury: Let me start broadly and then Ms Malouf might add some detail for me. The objective of this program is to trigger a degree of community energy to help the government roll out innovative projects when it comes to reducing emissions. It came from the fact that there are community groups saying, “We would like to do this,” or, “We think we can contribute this.” And we believe that they can do things that government cannot necessarily do and we want to allow some of that creativity to flourish. That is the intent behind the program.

This is the first time we have run it. We have received 19 applications and were able to fund six out of the funds that were available. In terms of your question about the specificity of the dollar amount, each of the projects has quite a detailed application behind it and those numbers match the budgets that we were given. That is it broadly. Are there specific questions beyond that you wanted to ask?

MS LEE: For example, SEE-Change will receive \$22,160—as you say, it was a quite specific amount—to engage project home builders and developers. For somebody who obviously does not know too much of the detail of the application, it seems like it is not enough money to actually build anything but it is a lot for just going out there and presenting an idea. I was just wondering whether you could provide a bit more detail.

Mr Bygrave: I can answer that question. The funding for SEE-Change is to support a zero emissions building that will be open to the public so that people can come into that house and see how this building has been created, how it has been designed and built to be zero emissions, and that can set an example for others who can come in and say, “Oh, wow, they put in this heat pump system,” or, “They have put in this insulation, or rooftop solar, or double glazing, draft proofing, weather sealing and other things and actually I can implement that in my own home.” It is a demonstration project, which will have quite a wide regional audience. They will be advertising this home and promoting it through their channels to enable members of the public to come in.

The other five projects were across a range of different sectors. As the minister said, the aim of this program is to support grassroots community organisations to build from the ground up to support the government’s top-down policies and programs, and to show that, yes, this transition to zero emissions actually can occur. There are projects to support waste, including a very large anaerobic digester, I think, through the environment centre grant, to support, again, multi-unit residential apartments where they have nowhere to compost their organic waste. This will collect organic waste from multi-unit residential apartments in the West Basin area.

Other grants were to support repairing bicycles so that more bicycles could be available in the community to, again, support the active travel shift that we need to see to go to zero emissions in the transport sector. They are just a range of examples to support community organisations.

MR PARTON: What is the Unions ACT grant for a deep engagement program? What is that?

Mr Bygrave: Unions Act submitted an application to do a number of events through the working community, in particular to support workers in this transition. Unions ACT is generally supportive of the transition to zero emissions by 2050 at the latest. They put in an application to basically promote this transition through workers and across their membership. This would involve workshops and a range of other events with the worker community in the ACT.

MR PARTON: And what is the process for those successful applicants to report back? I am sure at the end of their projects they are reporting back on what they have achieved?

Mr Bygrave: That is right. I will ask Ros to answer the detail of this but broadly we will have a project plan agreed between the parties, there will be various milestones and payments made against those milestones, there will be reporting commitments from the applicants against those milestones before the payments are made.

Ms Malouf: At the end of the project they will have to be acquitted to ensure that they met all those milestones. We will be tracking them along the way, also at the end of the project, to make sure they met those key performance indicators that they put in their applications, which were all very realistic.

Mr Rutledge: Each of these projects was really chosen because of their being able to target new audiences: Unions ACT getting unions involved in helping workers; the compost; and Woden Community Services, which is for lower income and vulnerable young people. The minister has encouraged, as have Ros and others, as these projects roll out, whilst we still need a formal acquittal program, there to be advertising on social media, because the grant is about getting the message out.

I think we will see from each of these organisations social media posts that we will support and little updates to the community all the time. You will probably see more activity around these small investments in the grant program than the formal grant acquittal process which, of course, we will undertake.

THE CHAIR: I want to switch to a slightly different focus. From what is written in here, it seems like the Multicultural Festival cooking oil recycling program was a great success. Can you give me an overview of that? I am particularly interested to know how this might be expanded to other events.

Ms Malouf: Yes, we have the Multicultural Festival. You are exactly right: it was a fantastic success this year. We not only recycled the cooking oil; we also recycled water, used washing-up water, which was diverted off to be cleaned and sent off for recycling, rather than it going down any kind of drain system.

The festival in 2017 had more than 10 tonnes of recycling, which is a great commitment by both the festival and the community. We have approximately 66 events each year. We have already hit that number for this financial year, so we are

looking at more events this year that can recycle—

THE CHAIR: Hang on. When you say you have 66—

Ms Malouf: We have already passed 66 events for this year.

THE CHAIR: But you target 66 events?

Ms Malouf: We had 66 events. We do not have a target.

THE CHAIR: Okay.

Ms Malouf: We will help anyone who wants to be involved.

THE CHAIR: All right.

Ms Malouf: Some of those are large events, like the Canberra Show, and some of them are smaller, like local school fetes, soccer carnivals and those types of things. Each of those events can recycle up to whatever they like. Some events are very good, like the National Folk Festival. They do public space organic recycling, which is very innovative and challenging.

THE CHAIR: Can you just take me through what public space organic recycling is?

Ms Malouf: It means they do not do just back of house; they do front of house as well. Putting it out for the public to use—to scrape their plate off and then put their plate in a separate bin—can be a challenge if you have not got a crowd of people willing to do that. So sometimes we encourage basic recycling to start with and we build on it every year to develop more.

When we first started with the Multicultural Festival, we only did cardboard recycling. We are now doing cardboard, mixed recycling, oil and water, and grey water recycling as well.

THE CHAIR: Will you be doing the Multicultural Festival next year?

Ms Malouf: Correct; yes.

THE CHAIR: And is there any intention to then expand the program? Is there anything more we can recycle?

Ms Malouf: We are trying to get more of it recycled, both at the front end and the back end. Bumping in tends to be a busy time, in that you are not always as good a recycler as you would like to be. We want to get much more involved at the bump-in stage and also the clean-up at the end stage. That is where we have room to improve.

THE CHAIR: What benefits do you see coming from improving the bump-in and the bump-out?

Ms Malouf: I think the traders—hundreds of traders set up stalls for the Multicultural

Festival—take that message back to their workplace, whether it be a club or a community group. They are learning those messages at the Multicultural Festival briefings, and also how to do it on the day as we have a team on the ground.

THE CHAIR: Just out of interest: what do you do with 800 litres of used cooking oil?

Ms Malouf: It is sent for recycling to make biodiesel.

MR PARTON: Can I focus on Bellevue at Royalla? It is a 500-hectare property recently listed for sale. The Royalla Solar Farm is located on 50 hectares of that property. Its owners, the Dutch fund management company DIF, have a 30-year lease, I believe, on its occupancy, which was made with the current owner of Bellevue. What confirmation has been made that this lease will not just pass to the new owners? Are there any concerns at all about the sale of Bellevue?

Mr Sibley: My understanding is that Royalla is a private lease arrangement with the lessee, who has the rural lease for that land. So we are not directly involved in it.

MR PARTON: All right. So there are no concerns of any possible change?

THE CHAIR: Maybe that question would be better put to the planning section.

MR PARTON: Would it? You are obviously aware that the property is up for sale?

Mr Rattenbury: Yes. It was in the paper on the weekend. I think most people know about it now.

MR PARTON: Would anything preclude another company establishing a solar farm on the property, given the connections that are already in place?

Mr Rattenbury: An additional solar farm?

MR PARTON: Yes.

Mr Rattenbury: I do not think so. They would have to do it on spec. The ACT government is not offering any additional reverse option feed-in tariffs at the moment. So if someone were to do that, they would be doing it as a commercial operation. They would need to go through the usual planning processes, DA process, all of those kind of things.

MR PARTON: I do not know whether it is a little bit out there, but was there any consideration given to the ACT buying the land for future solar expansion?

Mr Rattenbury: No.

MS CHEYNE: I go back to wood heaters; going back through some previous annual reports re-sparked my interest. The response to a question on notice for the 2015-16 annual report hearings states that the replacement program spent \$18,808 on advertising and promotion of the program to increase uptake. Do you have figures on

how much was spent in 2016-17?

Ms Malouf: I do not have that detail with me. I will endeavour to get that back to you or take it on notice, if we can. The entire budget for the wood heater program was \$40,000 last year. That included the advertising and the money for rebates.

MS CHEYNE: There is the line “to increase uptake”. Going back through the last five annual reports, year on year, I see we have struggled to get past 35 each year.

Ms Malouf: Correct.

MS CHEYNE: In terms of marginal gains, it is a pretty low margin. It looks like, from the 2012 to 2013 financial year to 13-14 it was 34. The next year was 18. The next year was 38, and then the next year 29. In terms of spending quite a lot of money on advertising it and doing direct mail-outs—indeed, I certainly appreciate that the committee had recommended that you do more targeted advertising; and perhaps to inform our future recommendations—is it worth it? Is \$18,000 or \$19,000 on advertising and promotion worth getting between 30 and 40 people to give up their wood heaters?

Mr Rattenbury: Clearly we would love it if more people were taking it up. This year we undertook some new ways of trying to promote it. We found a householder who had made the changeover. We made a video with her, which we put online. It is obviously quite cheap to do. We are trying to think about better ways to engage people. That lady was able to tell a story of not only how she had been able to get a really efficient system but also her neighbours being happier and her house being warmer because she got better heat distribution in the house. She had a very positive story to tell. I guess we were trying to think about new ways to promote it this year. It is an ongoing challenge.

MS CHEYNE: Of course I want fewer wood heaters; that is not my line of questioning. But in terms of value for money, is the program—I appreciate it has now been around since the early 2000s—still achieving its goals when the gains are so marginal each year?

I know that we heard earlier that newer wood heaters are better. But if we are getting 100 new wood heaters every year for the 30 that are getting taken away, and it is still costing us quite a lot of money to promote it, is it really worth it?

Ms Malouf: Just to add to what the minister said: in the 15-16 financial year we made a decision to try to invest a little bit more in advertising to see whether it made a difference. Questions were being asked about not a lot of people knowing about it. So that will be significantly less. It has been significantly less each year since then. I do not have the exact numbers but significantly less. And that, as you said, did not make a difference.

We have gone to the other methods of telling stories and going into people’s homes to tell more of a story, rather than not a story. The EPA guys will be able to tell you this afternoon the suburbs that have bans in certain areas, what the decision is and why that decision was made on banning wood heaters in some of the newer suburbs.

MS CHEYNE: And so the budget this year was \$40,000?

Ms Malouf: Correct. Yes.

MS CHEYNE: Has that changed over the years with the lower take up?

Ms Malouf: Yes, that has reduced over the years.

MS CHEYNE: You are not budgeting and then having heaps left over at the end of every year?

Ms Malouf: No. Correct. Yes.

MS CHEYNE: I have a question on the curtain program. Everyone loves talking about curtains and wood heaters; I am sure everyone is as excited as I am.

Mr Rattenbury: This is a great program. This program really makes a difference to people.

MS CHEYNE: It is a pretty short question. In last year's annual report I saw that 60 homes had curtains installed but in this year it is 163, which is excellent. I have no complaints there. Minister, will funding continue to be provided for this program, which seems to be making a difference?

Mr Rattenbury: Yes, it will. I think this is very important. It makes a big difference both in terms of people's energy bills, comfort and privacy, and decency of the home that you live in. So yes, I am very supportive of this program.

MS CHEYNE: How are the volunteers to make these curtains identified?

Ms Malouf: They are identified through St Vincent de Paul. They are identified and screened through St Vincent de Paul. Also the participants in the program are identified through St Vincent de Paul, through the energy assessors that we have through our low income program. So the households of need are getting them.

MS CHEYNE: Okay. Great.

THE CHAIR: I think I read in the report that the program had expanded to include efficient appliances. Am I imagining that?

Mr Rattenbury: No. As part of the low income support program, people can have old, inefficient appliances replaced with new, much more efficient appliances.

Mr Bygrave: There are various draught-proofing activities. There are various workshops and education sessions. There is also a low income split system program, and we are about to release a low income solar program as well.

THE CHAIR: Can you give us more detail on the low income solar program? What are you looking at doing there?

Mr Bygrave: This is essentially to provide subsidies for low income households to also be able to access rooftop solar, so that rooftop solar can be accessible to anyone in the community. This will be delivered through providers to vulnerable households.

Ms Malouf: The households of need will be identified through the St Vincent de Paul program. Also, members of the public can contact us directly to become part of the program.

MS LEE: I want to talk about energy storage and batteries. The next generation renewables auction secured \$25 million in industry funding to support the rollout of smart battery storage across 5,000 homes and businesses. What does \$25 million of industry funding mean? Where did the funding come from?

Mr Rattenbury: As part of the bid that companies made to win a contract with the ACT government, they contributed to that fund, as part of the cost of their initial project. That is where the funding has come from for that program.

MS LEE: Where are the batteries actually manufactured?

Mr Rattenbury: The batteries are supplied through industry battery suppliers. The government have a program, and under the current phase of the program there are eight suppliers in the ACT who can provide the batteries. They are local companies. They source their batteries from a range of providers, such as LG and Siemens. There are a number of brands that they source the batteries from.

MS LEE: Are there any plans, discussions or thoughts about establishing production within the ACT? Is that something that is doable or even being considered at this stage?

Mr Rattenbury: I have not heard any proposals to establish that. It is obviously a large-scale manufacturing project. I am not aware of any.

Mr Bygrave: No, but it is probably worth mentioning the grant that the government has also provided to ANU to establish a world-leading battery research program in the ACT. This will recruit an expert from around the world. The ANU is actually sourcing an expert from around the world as we speak. This will establish a leading research program looking at battery storage, grid support and also at the different chemical make-up of batteries. It will be a world-leading program to establish the ACT as a leader in this space.

Mr Rattenbury: I would not necessarily expect to see that sort of heavy manufacturing taking place in the ACT, but we are seeing a number of the spin-off projects around it. In addition to the project Stephen has mentioned, ITP here in the ACT are running a project out at the CIT at Bruce. They have a range of batteries that they are testing under Australian conditions. Reposit Power operate out of Fyshwick and provide an ancillary service with their Reposit box, which does the job of managing the power in the battery. So whilst we are not seeing that direct manufacturing, we are seeing a number of ancillary projects, which probably fit more with the ACT's history of not being a heavy manufacturing centre but being a skills

and service-led centre.

Mr Bygrave: Just to correct the record, it is \$5 million from the ACT government and the ANU is putting in \$3 million; so it is an \$8 million overall project in the ANU.

MS LEE: What costs apply to households or businesses in installing batteries? Has that been calculated?

Mr Rattenbury: It depends on the size of the system that somebody installs, but the current grants round provides a discount of around 24 per cent. Packages generally vary from around \$10,000 to \$14,000. That includes the battery and a solar system on the roof. Obviously, that varies depending on the size of the system and various other components, but that is the kind of ballpark number that we are talking about.

MS LEE: What is the lifespan of a battery?

Mr Sibley: One of the requirements of the program is that the suppliers offer a minimum 10-year warranty on the battery itself. There are other warranties that apply to the inverter and other system components. Generally, batteries gradually degrade over time and the end of life for a battery is typically defined as when it loses 20 per cent of its capacity, and sometimes more than that. At the end of its life it will still be useful but it will not be at full performance. One of the important requirements of the scheme is that suppliers offer an end-of-life take-back from the customer.

MS LEE: That answers my next question.

Mr Sibley: They are not lumped with what is potentially a pretty complicated thing to get rid of. That is a little bit ahead of where the national scene is at in terms of product stewardship, but there are moves nationally to develop a product stewardship supply chain for the end of life of batteries, which should come online by the time these batteries start to reach the end of their life.

MS LEE: Is that a contractual obligation that the suppliers have?

Mr Sibley: Yes, it is.

THE CHAIR: I want to get an update on the community garden grants, noting that the program funding has expanded. With respect to eligibility criteria, I would like to get an idea of what sort of gardens have been funded this year and what impact it is having.

Mr Rattenbury: We are just finalising the latest round of community garden grants. I expect those to become public in the next few days. That is \$40,000 worth of new community gardens this year. We have expanded the criteria now to make it available to bodies corporate. We believe that potentially, with some of the large buildings, there is quite an audience there to participate in a community garden. It delivers that range of benefits, not only the environmental benefits but also the community-building benefits that come from people collectively working on a project together.

THE CHAIR: Can you run through some of the projects during 2016? Where are you seeing demand for community gardens coming from?

Ms Malouf: We are seeing the demand through some of the organisations that have other services that they offer to the public. With the low income sector, we did a launch of this year's grants at a community garden run by Belconnen Community Service. They have gardens available, but they also do a food rescue program. They get food rescued by OzHarvest from supermarkets and give it back to the public. People can come in, use a voucher, do some shopping and also access the community garden. That service also offers an amazing traineeship program. They have built the most amazing wood pizza oven. A wood pizza oven was built as a construction final project. It was a great opportunity for people to go into trades; young, vulnerable people. Every single one of them has since gone into an apprenticeship, which is fantastic. It is linking more than just a community garden; there is also the needs base regarding other facilities people need.

THE CHAIR: Can you go through a little bit more of the detail? What are the criteria for applying for a community garden? What criteria do you have to meet?

Ms Malouf: This year's criteria were expanded—just to build on what the minister said—to include bodies corporate. That was a new part of the criteria. You need to have the available land. If it is government land it needs to be approved by our colleagues at TCCS, to be able to use that piece of land for that facility. It needs to have access to the broader community, so it needs to offer maybe food to homeless organisations or be broader than just available only to the tenants of that site. It can link with a school, a community group, a church group or anyone else that is broader than the community that uses it.

THE CHAIR: Provided you have the land and you have a linkage to the wider community, you are pretty much free to apply for the grant?

Ms Malouf: Absolutely, yes.

MS CHEYNE: Has there been a little bit of a delay in the announcement of this most recent community grants funding round?

Mr Rattenbury: A couple of weeks.

MS CHEYNE: It seems to me that, depending on who you speak to in the community, some people say Melbourne Cup day is the day on which you should start planting certain things, but a whole other set of people would say that October is the priority time for planting. Has there been any reason for that? For future funding rounds, will it be earlier in the spring season that people will be informed if they are successful?

Mr Rattenbury: Yes, that is a good bit of feedback.

Ms Malouf: Some of the applicants actually missed some of the detail. They were great applications. We did not want them to miss out, so we had to go back and forth a few times to make sure that we got it right. That caused some of the delay as well.

MS CHEYNE: Okay, that sounds reasonable.

MS LEE: In July 2015, \$25,000 was offered and there were eight successful grants, and in April 2016, in the second round, \$50,000 was offered and there were six. It seems that even though there was more money the number of successful applicants went down.

Ms Malouf: Correct.

MS LEE: For this year—sorry if I missed this—have you said, minister, how many actually—

Mr Rattenbury: From recollection, there were eight successful grants.

MS LEE: \$40,000?

Ms Malouf: Yes, \$40,000. We increased the grant amount. We were finding that \$5,000 was not a big enough buy-in to actually apply. With government money, we need to be very responsible with those dollars, so we need people to tick off some boxes for us. We were finding that \$5,000 was not worth people's while. We have increased it to \$10,000 so that they can do some good investment in their community garden—great fencing, some good irrigation—that is much more long term.

Mr Bygrave: It does not mean that all the grants will be \$10,000; it will be up to \$10,000.

MS LEE: Yes, I was going to say, if there are eight, \$40,000 does not divide into \$10,000 each.

Mr Rattenbury: Some people need an upgrade of a certain bit of componentry. The list will come out in the next day or so, but one of them was for only \$3,000. That is what they needed.

MS LEE: Did the expansion to include bodies corporate make a big difference in terms of more applicants?

Ms Malouf: We had a few more applicants. If the program goes on, it will give some support to bodies corporate, because they will know it is coming. Bodies corporate have an infrastructure whereby they have to go back to a meeting once a month. If the people were not there to make the decision, they had to wait for another month. It did not quite fit in with getting the applications in. I fully expect that future rounds may well have some more bodies corporate involved.

Mr Bygrave: As I mentioned earlier, there is a real barrier to people living in multi-unit residential apartments being able to compost their organic waste. We were getting this feedback through the various community consultations on our climate strategy to 2050 at the latest. All the feedback coming from the community was: "How do we compost our waste if we are living in a multi-unit residential apartment?" That is why we expanded the program eligibility criteria to include bodies corporate. You will see that there are some successful applications being

announced very soon by the minister.

MR PARTON: Electricity prices in the ACT: the ICRC report in May this year noted that wholesale electricity prices increased by 112 per cent. At the time you as minister were critical of the increases but insisted that the ACT would continue to have some of the lowest electricity costs. I know that is the position that you continue to hold. What I want to ask about is: the government has now transferred the cost of tree lopping from Transport and City Services to ActewAGL. I know that there has been some explanation in the public space about this but can I, for the purposes of this hearing, get you to explain why?

Mr Rattenbury: Certainly. We have transferred that because the feedback I received was that the service was not being done to an adequate standard. There were concerns through the strategic bushfire management process that we needed a higher standard of pruning of the trees to, as much as possible, ensure that trees do not make contact with power lines and start fires.

A key recommendation coming out of the Victorian royal commission into bushfires in 2009 involved a large number of deaths in that fire being attributed to power line contact with trees. In order to ensure that the work was done properly, and essentially to improve the service, I was advised the better approach was to have ActewAGL Distribution undertake the work.

MR PARTON: Does that translate to Transport and City Services failing to do that job properly?

Mr Rattenbury: They were not adequately resourced. This is about improving the performance. ActewAGL Distribution already does an amount of this work in another space. The view was that they are capable of doing it very effectively for a good price and that they would be well placed to do it.

MR PARTON: You say that Transport and City Services were not adequately resourced. Obviously, they were resourced to some extent to do this work and now they do not have to do it because ActewAGL are going to do it. I cannot help arriving at a conclusion that the consumer ultimately is going to pay for this because ActewAGL will just pass it on in the form that has been stated in the public space, but we are not getting any relief. What is going to happen to the money that would have been spent by Transport and City Services to do that job that is now being outsourced to someone else that is going to pass it on to consumers?

Mr Rattenbury: TCCS were already paying ActewAGL to do some of the work on their behalf. In terms of your suggestion about some transfer going on here, some of that money was already being transferred to ActewAGL, and that will not be the case anymore. The bottom line is that TCCS have a lot of other things to do and they will now be able to spend that money on other projects, whether that is lawn mowing or maintenance of parks and gardens around the city. They have a whole range of pressures—maintenance of playgrounds and the like—and they are always under pressure to do more. You all send us letters regularly about wanting TCCS to do more things.

MR PARTON: In effect what we are seeing here is a backdoor increase in taxes and charges, a backdoor increase in cost of living.

Mr Rattenbury: There is nothing backdoor about it. I have been perfectly up-front about it, Mr Parton. I walked into the Assembly and told you what was going to happen. There is nothing backdoor about that. I have been perfectly clear. Consumers are paying for an improvement. A judgement that I and the government have made is that we think it is worth that bit of extra cost to improve the safety and the reliability of the network. We saw an instance in the ACT earlier this year where 23,000 homes suffered a power outage during a major storm event as a result of trees coming into contact with power lines. There is a trade-off there between safety and reliability and cost, and we formed the view, and we believe the community will support the view, that it is better to do this work properly.

MR PARTON: We do not really have any other choice, though, do we?

THE CHAIR: Given the time we might go to questions that are a bit more focused on the annual report. Ms Cheyne, do you have any more questions on wood heaters?

MS CHEYNE: No, I have fully exhausted myself. Can I ask about coffee cups, though? We talked about it at the last annual report hearings and it has been incredibly topical.

THE CHAIR: Yes, the *War on Waste* has been a popular topic.

MS CHEYNE: I would like to note that I raised it well before *War on Waste* did. Can I put that on the record?

THE CHAIR: It is in the *Hansard*.

MS CHEYNE: I raised it in March. *War on Waste* was not until July. At the time we had a good discussion about it and you said you had been to some industry conferences and that across Australia people have different views about whether the cups could be recycled or not. The impression I gathered at the time was that we think that most cups in the ACT can be. There is a plastic layer but if people continue to put them in the recycling, those with the plastic layer will just be counted as contamination. I understand that we can deal with a 10 per cent contamination in a load. Hopefully, I am right so far.

Ms Malouf: Yes, that is correct.

MS CHEYNE: Of course, the *War on Waste* came out and said, “No, coffee cups can’t be recycled anywhere,” but in the ACT we think that they can. I know that the advice overall is that the best option is to buy a keep cup or a similar receptacle and use that. With the confusion that has arisen—and I know that the ACT government has gone out of its way to try and provide some clarification—have we seen more contaminated loads or have we seen a reduction of coffee cups in recycling, and are they now actually going into waste, which, it seems to me, would be a bad outcome?

Ms Malouf: We do not have the data on that because TCCS look after that contract.

From our perspective, going to schools and businesses and doing a lot of work in the event space and being at events, coffee cups is the question we get asked about at every single event, over and over. We are happy to let people know that they can put them in recycling. You are absolutely correct; everything you said was spot on.

We have had a lot more correspondence which we have had to address, to let people know that, yes, you can put it in. *War on Waste* certainly had one view of recycling. The waste industry gave a response to the *War on Waste* through their waste magazine which said it was not 100 per cent correct, which was probably a little bit too late to stop some of those thoughts. We are now actively letting everyone know. Through our business program we have access to approximately 53,000 staff, and we are saying, "Put them in the recycling. It's okay. We will sort it out at the other end. There are very few that are actually not recyclable, so don't try and work it out at your coffee shop. Take a reusable cup." That is our first step. "If you can't, definitely make sure you put it in your recycling bin. We will sort it out for you."

THE CHAIR: Is there any focus through the programs you run on helping businesses move to a keep cup model? I know Frankies at Forde has done it. I forget the date, but at some point during this year they said, "We're no longer going to give out takeaway cups. You have to bring a keep cup or have your coffee here." That is a great initiative from a business, but is there anything that you could do to facilitate more businesses taking that approach, given how much Canberrans loves their coffee?

Ms Malouf: We require 75 per cent of staff at an accredited business to have staff education. We are talking to people and saying that reuse or avoidance is always better. That is certainly encouraging that model. We would probably like to make sure that all the coffee cups are actually being recycled at the back end as well. What happens to all the milk bottles? That is our kind of question. What happens to the organic coffee grounds? Let us really get a good recycling program going at the front of house and also at the back of house.

MS CHEYNE: Just to remove all doubt, should we be taking the lid off or is it okay to leave it on, in terms of that contamination?

Ms Malouf: It makes no difference. It will come off at the other end, anyway. The sorting process will loosen it, so do not hang over your recycling bin, pull it out and take the lid off. It is okay; just put it in as is and we will figure it out at the other end. Both the lid and the cup will be recycled.

MS LEE: That is just for coffee cups; it is not for regular bottles for recycling?

Ms Malouf: In relation to lids?

MS LEE: Yes.

Ms Malouf: You can leave lids on or take lids off. It makes no difference. They get recycled, anyway.

MS LEE: Bottles as well as—

Ms Malouf: Yes.

MS CHEYNE: What about orange juice?

Ms Malouf: Yes, or water.

MS LEE: I have got into the habit of it now, but I do not have to do that anymore?

Ms Malouf: You do not have to do that anymore.

MS LEE: My partner will be happy because I tell him to do it all the time and he says, “It doesn’t make a difference.” I will tell him he was correct

Ms Malouf: Sorry about that!

MS LEE: I continue with *War on Waste* and what the ACT is doing to address that. As you know minister, we have had a lot of proposals from proponents about plastic to fuel, waste to energy and all of those issues. I think the FOY one is now gone. The CRS one in Fyshwick is the proposal that is currently in the community arena. There was been talk of this technology being used extensively in Europe, and how it is meant to be greener and better for the environment. Given the stage that this proposal is at—I know that you have come out publicly to say that you oppose it—could you clarify whether your response was in your capacity as a Green or as a minister? If so, will it not put you in a difficult position, given that an EIS has not even been submitted, lodged, as yet?

Mr Rattenbury: The views I expressed were the views of the Greens party. I do not think that creates any difficulty in any processes. We all, as members of this place, have our views on things. But of course the EIS process is run independently by the directorate, so I do not see any issues.

MS LEE: And if the proposal were to go to cabinet?

Mr Rattenbury: If the matter goes to cabinet, I will put my views just as the other ministers will. There are a number of ways you can assess these projects. For example, if we look at it for the purpose before the committee today, waste to energy, the ACT will have 100 per cent of its power coming from renewable sources by 2020. At the moment we do not have any need for any further energy supply. We have adequate energy to meet that goal in 2020 so there is no need for the ACT to seek to purchase more power.

I went to the public meeting and the proponent said that this will help the ACT meet its renewable energy target. He was wrong because we have adequate contracts to meet our renewable energy targets. There are a number of ways one can assess these projects. That is obviously the discussion that needs to be had. There are some very strong and mixed views in the community about the worth of this project.

MS LEE: Do you think there are any issues, whether public or for your own benefit, in your role as minister in terms of the fact that ActewAGL is one of the proponents?

Mr Rattenbury: No.

THE CHAIR: I want to have a chat about the pilot of the distributor energy exchange program being run.

Mr Rattenbury: Mr Sibley is going to enjoy telling you all about that. I know he is very enthusiastic about that.

THE CHAIR: Give me as much detail as you want because I am very keen to hear about it.

Mr Sibley: The distributor energy exchange program, or deX as it is known, came out of an arena process. The Australian Renewable Energy Agency and the ACT had the opportunity to participate in a series of workshops talking about the next stage of the evolution of the grid. Obviously one of the key things is greater participation by consumers. They might have batteries or appliances that can be turned on and off depending on whether that is beneficial to the grid.

We came out of that workshop serious with this deX concept. The ACT's role in that was to help coordinate between the project team that were developing a trading platform for distributing energy resources and the national energy market institutions such as AEMO, the Australian Energy Market Commission, as well as experts from the ANU in the process. Our involvement was about trying to get policy relevant information from this initiative and build up the expertise of local stakeholders in the ACT in what is a pretty exciting commercial domain.

The simple explanation of deX is that it is a trading layer that exists between the electricity distribution network—for example ActewAGL Distribution—and potential battery aggregators or demand side service providers who are managing appliances and things in people's homes or chillers in commercial buildings. This trading platform allows for a price to be settled and those services to be transacted to support the network.

For example, ActewAGL Distribution might say, "Between 3 pm and 6 pm in summer we need support in this part of the network. We'll offer you \$X per megawatt of support that you can provide." People can then basically bid in and say, "I can provide this much at that price." Someone else can say, "I can provide this much at this price." It is a way of opening up the market for distributor energy services.

THE CHAIR: If I am understanding correctly it could be, say, an individual householder or businesses that has solar panels. They generate some electricity through those. They store it in their battery. The national energy market can come along and say, "We need a bit more supply at this point in time. Can we purchase this from you?" Is this the idea?

Mr Sibley: Yes; there are probably a couple of things to say there. First, deX is only one solution to this. It is an alternative to the platform that Reposit Power provides. It is worth noting that Reposit is quite a lot more advanced and is already working on these services with ActewAGL Distribution.

The deX platform, rather than focusing on providing services to the wholesale market to make up for shortfalls in generation, is focused on providing support to specific parts of the grid to deal with peak demand issues, over-voltage issues or other quality of supply factors.

THE CHAIR: Is the idea to even out the demand fluctuations?

Mr Sibley: Yes, it has the potential to do that.

THE CHAIR: I understand from what you have said that the government has had a view to looking for policy formation and that has been their involvement. But can you give me a bit more of the wider project? Is it doing a trial in a particular area?

Mr Sibley: Two locations were identified for trials: one was the United Energy network around Mornington Peninsula in Victoria; the other was on the ActewAGL Distribution network in Canberra. I understand that ActewAGL Distribution is working with GreenSync, who is the proponent of deX, on that trial. But at this stage no specific plans have been locked in.

THE CHAIR: The trial has not been undertaken yet?

Mr Sibley: No it has not.

THE CHAIR: Is the next part of it figuring out what the trial will be looking at?

Mr Sibley: The discussions between ActewAGL and GreenSync have a commercial dimension to them so I probably cannot go into that in too much detail here. They are actively discussing potential locations. They are looking at locations that have particular grid issues. That includes where there is new development that has a thin connection to the grid and they want to keep demand low. It may be a part of the network which has very high solar penetration and they want to create loads or shift loads to during the day to soak up that solar to avoid over-voltage issues.

THE CHAIR: This is sort of related. It is quite interesting that we are looking at these more flexible ways of generating electricity and so forth. The other part to the conversation we have had quite a bit is what to do with multi-storey developments in the sense of finding the flexibility. We have heard it with the composting and the opportunities for generation. They would present you with a reasonable mass to do.

This is a bit of a broader question within this ongoing policy discussion. Has any thought been given to how we might be able to maximise potential for multi-storey developments to achieve some of this electricity generation and moderation?

Mr Sibley: Those developments definitely do play into this. You can do things with variable speed drives on fans that are ventilating car parks and things like that. Often there are centralised boilers or chillers that you can control to realise commercial benefit, reducing it at peak times and utilising it more at off-peak times, having those technologies respond to real time price signals. The deX platform would enable those kinds of transactions. Certainly other providers such as Reposit are moving into this space as well.

Mr Rattenbury: The recent legislation that we brought to the Assembly was, at a policy response level, part of that story: enabling the aggregation of apartment buildings into single providers. In that scale they can participate in the market in a more cost effective way. It becomes attractive to service providers to potentially partner with a whole building when they can aggregate perhaps 200 people with 200 accounts into a single account and to transact that way.

MS LEE: Going back to the low income household programs, are you able to let us know—and you might need to take this on notice; I am not sure—the cost of providing that program? Do you have that?

Mr Rattenbury: Any particular part that you had in mind?

MS LEE: In terms of the in-home assessments and that type of visit. I do not know whether you have those figures in front of you.

Ms Malouf: The entire contract, which St Vincent de Paul have, including all the collateral that we supply and the replacement of appliances, is a \$920,000 budget.

MS LEE: Per year?

Ms Malouf: Yes.

MS LEE: Is it cost effective compared to the previous? Is it better? How does that compare with previous arrangements before this program was commenced?

Ms Malouf: I am not sure there was a program before this one. This has seen many iterations. We do evaluations—robust evaluations—of all of our programs every three years. They are externally done to make sure we are delivering what the householder, business or school needs. Is the program meeting the needs? Is it keeping up with the industry and developments that are happening there? Some items were removed from the low income program because they were deemed not to be meeting a cost-benefit ratio over one. One of those was washing machines, which was removed from the program in the last evaluation. The curtain program has moved to a volunteer program. That has raised the cost-benefit ratio over one.

MS LEE: I suppose it is pretty hard, but have there been measurements about the impact of it, in terms of reducing greenhouse gas emissions? Is that measured in any way?

Ms Malouf: Yes, it is. We do a life cycle of an appliance replacement—a new fridge replacing an old fridge—draft-proofing. The annual savings made—the greenhouse gas savings for the low income program—in 2016-17 was 132 tonnes. This was not including behaviour change. Behaviour change is very difficult to measure.

MS LEE: Yes. I can imagine.

MS CHEYNE: When will the other directorate's trial of the e-bikes evaluation occur? It says during 2017-18 but that is it. Will we know sooner or later? Or has it

occurred?

Ms Cook: We are expecting the e-bike evaluation to occur this year—later on this year.

MS CHEYNE: Later this calendar year or financial year?

Ms Cook: This calendar year. Yes.

THE CHAIR: On behalf of the committee, thank you for appearing today. Responses to questions taken on notice in this session should be submitted to the committee office within five business days of the uncorrected proofed transcript becoming available.

The committee suspended from 11.23 am to 11.43 am.

Appearances:

Ramsay, Mr Gordon, Attorney-General, Minister for Regulatory Services, Minister for the Arts and Community Events and Minister for Veterans and Seniors

Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate

Peffer, Mr Dave, Deputy Director-General, Access Canberra

Jones, Mr Greg, Director, Construction, Environment and Workplace Protection, Access Canberra

Dix, Mr Rodney, Manager, Environment Regulation and Protection

THE CHAIR: Welcome to the Standing Committee on Environment and Transport and City Services inquiry into annual and financial reports for 2016-17. We are going to kick off our middle session with the Minister for Regulatory Services, looking into the Environment Protection Authority.

As we have new witnesses before us, can I please draw your attention to the pink card on the table, which is the privilege statement. I believe you should all be familiar with that statement. Can I ask, for the record, whether you have read the privilege statement and you are comfortable with it?

Mr Ramsay: Yes.

THE CHAIR: On behalf of the committee, thank you for appearing. Minister Ramsay, would you like to make an opening statement?

Mr Ramsay: No. I am very happy to simply acknowledge the great work that goes on and to open up the questions.

THE CHAIR: We do have a shorter period for this. I think it has been indicated that some people might have quite a few questions. I am happy to go to Mr Parton first and then progress down the table.

MR PARTON: I hope this does not seem like a silly question, but—

Mr Ramsay: No question is a silly question.

MR PARTON: It may just get down to the way that I interpret an annual report. I am on page 322, codes of practice. It says:

Codes of practice are ... developed by particular industries and approved by the Minister.

This is the one that I am worried is a silly question: which minister approves the codes of practice? So often in this area we do straddle a number of portfolios.

Mr Jones: I am assuming that a code of practice is a policy matter in terms of how it would cover the industry and the particular businesses within that industry. I am assuming it is the EPSD or the environment minister. But we can check that and come

back to you.

MR PARTON: All right.

Mr Jones: I am assuming it is in the policy space because I am not aware that it is in our regulatory space, if that answers your question.

MR PARTON: A more specific question in that area: is the ACT commercial waste industry the only one with an industry-wide code?

Mr Jones: That would make sense, given the interest that the government has in controlling waste and particularly its priorities with recycling. I think it is really important from a whole-of-government perspective that there is a whole-of-ACT approach to that. To me, it would be very appropriate to have a whole-of-industry code for that.

MR PARTON: And if you can just give me a ballpark figure, how many businesses in the ACT are signatories to that code?

Mr Jones: I would need to take that on notice and perhaps get some advice from the policy area for that.

MR PARTON: And are you able to tell me how frequently businesses are visited to ensure that they are meeting that code's requirements?

Mr Jones: I would need to take that on notice as well.

THE CHAIR: Can I just clarify, noting that you are taking all that on notice, that my reading of this is that this is an industry led-initiative, the codes, and they would bring it forward. Am I right in that understanding?

Mr Peffer: I understand that the code of practice was accepted by the government in October 1998, I imagine following a period of consultation with industry. And it was accepted by the then Minister for Urban Services, Mr Smyth.

Mr Jones: And at the moment the responsible minister for that is Minister Gentleman.

MS CHEYNE: I raised this at the last annual report hearings. Sorry if this is all déjà vu, but I have a question on noise complaints, at pages 328 and 329. One of the recommendations we made as a committee on last year's annual report was that the EPA review how it puts its data on noise complaints and, correspondingly, enforcement actions in its annual report, with a view to more clearly identifying the relevant datasets and the relationship between them. It was agreed in principle that from 1 July 2017, which I appreciate is not the financial year that we are looking at in this annual report, a new complaints management team would be set up.

I just want an acknowledgement that on pages 328 and 329 we have still got the same complaints and how they have been handled is still presented in the same way. If it helps, I think where the committee was heading on this was: there were 40 complaints in the financial year for "Air conditioners/fans/heaters noise" and there were

234 actions taken. But we do not have a sense of what other, different action was taken. Of those 234, were 80 warnings, 100 visits, 20 fines—things like that? That is probably the breakdown that we are looking for in future annual reports, if that is possible.

Mr Jones: We certainly took on board your comments, and I do recall those in terms of the detail. I guess an action is any sort of contact, follow-up—whether it is a phone call, a letter advising what their responsibilities are, perhaps a warning letter—and then ultimately a notice of infringement or advice that we are going to take infringement action. They are all considered to be actions taken.

With the formation of the complaints management team within Access Canberra, that will produce a wide range of data which we can use to report on and, as you acknowledge, that started on 1 July in this financial year rather than last. That will change the reporting.

MS CHEYNE: Could we look forward to receiving that in the next annual report? I have got no idea if we are doing two fines for the 2,100 enforcement actions or if it is 2,100 fines.

Mr Peffer: In terms of enforcement action taken, there were 33 warning letters sent on the basis of complaints and six infringement notices issued for noise levels above the noise standards.

MS LE COUTEUR: I am going with Mark Parton in asking a silly question because I seriously do not understand. At page 328 we have got “Noise complaints” and we have got the number of complaints received. I was looking at amplified music noise for 2016-17 and there are 251 of them. However, if you go down to “Noise complaints actions taken” we have managed to have 1,127 actions taken. This just does not make sense.

MR PARTON: The question, I think, is: if there were 251 complaints received, how could there possibly have been five times as many actions?

MS LE COUTEUR: How can you have five times as many actions?

Mr Jones: Because, as I was explaining a little earlier, an action is a contact—a phone call, a letter as a follow-up, a warning letter or an infringement action—and you can have four or five actions based on the one complaint, as we move along with that one area. There is that level of interaction from that, to educate and engage with them, and if that issue has not been resolved then it escalates into further action.

MS LEE: As you say, if the issue has not been resolved, generally you would not know until the person who initially made the complaint comes back to you and says it actually has not resolved the issue. Does that mean that that does not get counted as a second noise complaint, if that makes sense?

Mr Jones: It would be based on one complaint, but we follow up with the complainant as well and we give feedback to the complainant about what we are doing and what the reaction is. We ask them: “Has the noise subsided?” Quite often,

with noise complaints particularly, they are just one-off complaints where there is a party or something like that and, even though it may be obnoxious for the neighbours at that time, it is not an ongoing matter.

There are other people that may be playing loud music or have an air conditioner unit or whatever and the complaint is ongoing and that is where you get the ongoing and the multiple contacts. It really depends on the nature of the noise, the issue and how we deal with it, including keeping the complainant informed and having ongoing interaction with the emitter of the noise or the issue so that we can get that resolved for everyone.

MS LEE: And the contact that you make with the complainant—not the emitter of the noise but the complainant—is that counted in your stat as well as an action?

Mr Jones: Yes. That is all part of the interaction for that particular complaint. That complaint would trigger a range of interactions which are then recorded in terms of how much—

MS CHEYNE: So any contact is an action?

Mr Jones: Yes. I guess it is a record of our work involvement with that particular issue that has been raised with us.

MS LEE: I am just looking at the building works noise, which is 127. Does that 127 come from complaints about one site, because it is building works, or does that include, for example, one site—let us say, light rail—but 50 complainants? How is that counted?

Mr Jones: It depends on whether it is a one-off incident: for example, if a building site was doing some overtime and there was noisy machinery operating and if there were multiple complaints on that. It depends on the circumstances. If it is just that one issue then that can be, I guess, recorded as one. If it is from multiple sources, and especially over a period, then that is obviously recorded as multiple complaints.

MS LEE: So in a situation where you have got, say, one piece of machinery but there are 50 different people who have complained about it that is counted as one noise complaint?

Mr Jones: Yes. In fact, I can get a bit more detail from one of the inspectors if you would like some details.

MS CHEYNE: Yes, we would. I would like to go back to my line of questioning at some point, but this is all relevant.

MS LEE: As the commissioner said, if you have one noisy piece of machinery and it is a one-off thing but 50 people have complained about that one, is it counted for annual report purposes as 50 complaints or is it counted as one?

Mr Dix: No, it is counted as one. With the two different tables within the annual report, the first table relates to new complaints that are received for that particular

reporting period. With the actions there is so much more, because it takes into consideration the new complaints and the ongoing matters which have carried over from previous years. While for 2016-17 we may have received 500 new complaints, we may have over 1,000 matters that are active that we are currently receiving further complaints about.

MS CHEYNE: So in your actions, you might still be dealing with something that—

Mr Dix: We are dealing with five years, three years or two years ago, yes.

MS CHEYNE: is not reported this year because it happened in June 2016?

Mr Dix: Yes.

MR PARTON: I note we have had an increase in every category here in terms of noise complaints—every category.

Mr Dix: Yes, we have.

MS CHEYNE: Yes, it is up by 39 per cent.

MR PARTON: Yes. Do the minister or officials have a view as to why that is reflected in these reports?

Mr Jones: Part of it is accumulated complaints, which are ongoing from financial years, but it is also a reflection of the ongoing growth in Canberra, suburban growth, and some of the areas where the complaints are coming from, in terms of infill and new construction.

MS LE COUTEUR: It says “new complaints”, so there is not a carryover.

THE CHAIR: We might return to Ms Cheyne’s substantive question.

MS CHEYNE: I think Mr Jones was referring to enforcement actions that are carried over.

Mr Jones: Yes, the enforcement actions.

MS CHEYNE: New complaints are just in this financial year.

MS LE COUTEUR: I thought he announced it for the complaints—

MS CHEYNE: No, I think that was just—

Mr Jones: I was talking about the actions, the accumulated actions over time. New complaints are just new ones that come in for that financial year.

MS CHEYNE: We have an increase of 39 per cent in new complaints—no, in actions taken. But the number of new complaints has also increased, as Mr Parton noted, quite dramatically. I can appreciate where some of these figures come from, such as

building work noise. There is quite a lot of construction happening around the place. But it seems that, for example, complaints about amplified music noise are something that is not going down.

MR PARTON: People are having fun, aren't they?

MS CHEYNE: They are. That is an interesting statistic for me because we do have more and more apartments going up, and I imagine that is probably—tell me if I am wrong—where a lot of those complaints are coming from, where people are living in close proximity to each other. They are not going down but they are not going up dramatically, either. Is there anything that we could be doing as a government or that the EPA could be doing to try to educate people about how to live politely with other people?

Mr Jones: Yes, exactly. The numbers are generally increasing, as population growth does. Canberra's population density is increasing as well, so there is that increased element there. A lot of the noise complaints are right across Canberra, not just in mixed use or high density living. Pre-Christmas, when the number of noise complaints increased, we did a big campaign at this time last year in terms of advising people about how to be good neighbours and how to be noise-sensitive. We ran a big campaign, combined with EPSDD, on noise awareness. The theme, if I remember correctly, was, "Your noise is your neighbour's noise as well." It was to say, "Think of the impacts of what you do and how it impacts on your neighbour." We do have awareness campaigns. I did a fair bit of media on it raising awareness of noise from parties, amplified music and checking the operation of equipment, whether it be lawnmowers, leaf blowers, power tools or whatever, and making sure they are in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions.

MS CHEYNE: Is this also because more people are home over that December-January period, so they are perhaps a little more sensitive to it? They are there to hear the noise that is happening?

Mr Jones: It is a range of things. People are more active outside because the weather is warmer. People tend to have outdoor parties rather than indoors or going out. Because the weather is warmer, neighbours have their windows open and noise travels further. It is a combination of a range of things. Generally, people are more active outside, so they generate more noise and people are more receptive to the noise. But we do run awareness campaigns to say, "Your noise is other people's noise as well."

MS CHEYNE: Will you be doing that again this year?

Mr Jones: It is a matter of how intensively we go this year. Usually we put out reminders at about this time, as the weather warms up a bit, and especially leading into Christmas time, about parties and awareness of neighbours.

MS CHEYNE: Is December the highest peak for you in terms of noise complaints?

Mr Jones: No, February is about the highest peak in terms of noise and noise complaints.

MS CHEYNE: Do you have a highest peak day, and is it 26 January?

Mr Jones: I am not quite sure, but anything is possible. The number of noise complaints slowly increase when the warmer weather comes—November-December particularly. It peaks in about February and then tapers off. About May-June is when there is the lowest number of noise complaints. So there is that late summer peak.

MS CHEYNE: With solid fuel heaters, we have a wood heater replacement program. That has had a big reduction over a long period of time, but over the last three or four years that replacement program has been marginal in terms of reductions. Moving away from noise, I note that heater complaints have gone up. Again, it is not dramatic, but they have gone down and then up. Can we attribute that to anything?

Mr Jones: I think it is partly increased awareness. With the campaign, especially the rebate campaign, there is a heightened awareness. Generally, Canberrans are very environmentally aware, especially during winter months, where you get the inversion layers and smoke tends to stick around.

MS CHEYNE: Do you find you have a concentration of people complaining when there are those nights with the inversion layer?

Mr Jones: In some ways I think that relationship is the opposite of noise. As people have their heaters on during winter, obviously, that is going to be generating wood smoke, especially if your timber is not as dry as it should be; if it is a little bit green or a little bit damp then that is going to smoke more, whereas a higher temperature tends to produce less smoke. That does obviously peak in winter, as you would expect. On a cold, still night where you get the inversion layer the smoke does tend to sit.

MS LE COUTEUR: My understanding is that there was a change in the conditions for selling firewood, a change to regulations rather than the licence. Is that related in any way to the changes in the level of complaints?

Mr Jones: I do not think so. Anecdotally, the numbers are quite small in terms of wood burning, especially with some of the older heaters. I am not aware that that would be a factor in how the number of complaints or the number of environmental issues are related to that. I do not think it is related.

MS LE COUTEUR: Have you had any complaints about firewood selling as distinct from the combustion of the firewood once it has been sold?

Mr Jones: No, not that I am aware of. Again, the numbers are very small in that area. Most of the issues that I am aware of with firewood selling are about making sure that the firewood is the correct weight and people are getting what they are paying for, which is a consumer law issue—weights and measures. Again, that is on the consumer side rather than the EPA side, but the main concern is underselling on firewood by weight rather than quality or use.

MS LE COUTEUR: This is a follow-up to Ms Cheyne's question. If you go to page 327, environmental issues and actions taken, I had looked at this and thought, "This is the number of complaints." But, given the conversation we have just had about noise

complaints, would I be correct in believing that I did not understand this? This does not give you any idea of how many complaints there were; it only tells you how many actions you took. Is that a correct interpretation?

Mr Jones: Yes. That table on page 327 is the actions taken.

MS LE COUTEUR: Is there any way of finding out how many complaints there are?

MS CHEYNE: There are 843, but we do not know the breakdown. It is at the bottom of page 326.

MS LE COUTEUR: New complaints, but we do not know the breakdown.

MS CHEYNE: Yes, but no breakdown.

MS LE COUTEUR: Is there any way of finding out what the numbers of complaints for things were? When I read this I had not particularly noticed the 843 figure that Ms Cheyne pointed out. I just thought that this related to the number of complaints. But clearly it has no particular relationship.

Mr Peffer: We will take that on notice.

MS LE COUTEUR: Could you come back with this maybe as a table, with complaints?

Mr Peffer: Sure.

Mr Jones: On 328 we have it for noise, but we do not have it for the total number of complaints. We identify what the total number is but we do not have that break-up. Yes, we can provide that. That is no problem.

MS LE COUTEUR: I was actually going to ask about the proposals for waste energy. Obviously this is a topical issue. With the proposals that have been made in the ACT or have been flagged, how does the EPA decide whether it is going to put a submission in about the developments as part of the EIS process?

Mr Jones: The EPA as regulator has a role in making sure that whatever gets approved through the planning process has appropriate environmental controls for its operation, post planning approval. The EPA puts submissions into the DA process, and what we make sure is that—through either environmental authorisation or other conditional mechanisms—what are considered appropriate controls for whatever the activity is are conditional for the lease. Usually the detail is through a mechanism such as an environmental authorisation, for example. With regard to details such as stockpiling and how the plant would operate, you would not have that in the lease condition but you would have that in a quite detailed environmental authorisation. The EPA inputs into those processes, but its main input is in those controls if it goes through the planning process.

MS LE COUTEUR: Generally speaking, you are saying you do not get involved pre-DA approval; it is just that if the planning authority decides to approve something

you will then say, “Okay, you have got to make sure your stockpiles are no more than five metres high or 10 cubic metres”—whatever?

Mr Jones: The EPA is a mandatory referral for a DA. We do have some input but that input tends to be higher level input at that stage of the process. I guess that is more of an in-principle stage in the whole-of-government approval. What we do highlight is that we, through our environmental controls, would put on substantial controls about how the operation of that plant or factory or whatever it is would operate, including the outputs from that plant, such as emissions.

We would have very detailed requirements in an EA about what emissions were permissible and how those emissions would be identified and reported on to the EPA. We would not necessarily do those inspections but we would require, for example, an expert auditor to report, at the proponent’s expense, independently to the EPA on a quarterly basis to prove that they were meeting all of their stated emissions targets.

MS LE COUTEUR: But, taking that as an example, when the DA came you probably would not have put something in saying, “Dear ACTPLA, if you are going to approve this then you must say no more than X particulates,” or whatever?

Mr Jones: What we do is look at the plans, the proposal, at that high level and we would identify that we would have, in our own environmental controls, those detailed environmental enforcement requirements, particularly on emissions and how their site was operated. For example, for stockpiling storage of fuels, run-off and all those sorts of environmental things, you would not put that level of detail in the earlier, higher level planning stage. Part of the reason for that is that the process does not go into that level of assessment, but partly some of that detail has not been worked out and has not been modified in order to meet the EPA’s emission controls.

I guess the DA and the planning processes are higher level, in-principle approval. If it gets past there, then that is where we would put on our more detailed emission and other environmental controls.

MS LE COUTEUR: Do you have the situation where something has been approved at this high level then it comes down to looking at what they are actually building and you say, “Okay, the requirements are X, Y and Z,” and the proponents just say, “We can’t do that,” or “We can’t do it in an economic fashion”?

Mr Jones: If the emission requirements, for example, make the plant or the proposal either non-viable or non-commercial then so be it. Having all the environmental or the EPA approvals is part of the requirements before they become operational and, if that stops the proposal prior to it becoming operational, then that is what it would be.

MS LE COUTEUR: How often, when something is approved at this higher level and you then put forward what you actually want, does the proponent say no?

Mr Jones: I do not have numbers, but most of what we are talking about is fairly significant or new proposals. There would be some level of negotiation in terms of what they are, but fundamentally the EPA would have its environmental duties under the legislation to commit to and it would stick to those, based on the advice that we

would get and the requirements under the legislation.

MS LE COUTEUR: Can you take on notice how many times something to which you gave high-level, in-principle approval, when it came to working out what was actually happening, was not proceeded with because of EPA requirements?

Mr Jones: We would not approve at the higher level. That is a planning requirement. The original application would come in to EPSD as a planning requirement. The EPA is a mandatory referral. We would have either an objection or no objection. There is a planning decision and then we, the EPA, would have some requirements to put on before they became operational. I guess there are those multiple stages.

MS LE COUTEUR: I appreciate that that is the process, but my question basically is this. As you have said, you are a referral authority. You have seen all of them, potentially. It has been approved by ACTPLA. I appreciate that it is ACTPLA that approves it. Then the detailed design comes. From what you said, that would be the first point at which you say, “Okay, but you cannot discharge more than whatever; your stockpile is a maximum of whatever.” Does it come back and then they do not proceed and they say, “This is on the basis of environmental issues which were not made clear at the beginning”?

Mr Peffer: That would be a commercial decision for the operators and I am not sure that they would necessarily come to government and say, “It is this range of conditions that have made this commercially unviable.” It could be a combination of things, conditions put on by not just the EPA but a range of other referral entities. It could be utilities; it could be a range of things or it could simply be a change in the market. For us to give an accurate picture of that, I am not sure that is something that we could actually do.

MS LE COUTEUR: I do not want an inaccurate picture. My final one is: do you intend to make a submission once a proposal is put forward by Capital Recycling Solutions? It has been well and truly canvassed in the press. I am sure you are aware of the potential waste to energy incinerator proposal.

Mr Jones: Whether we put a submission in—as I said, we are a mandatory referral under the planning process—

MS LE COUTEUR: I appreciate that.

Mr Jones: We will certainly put in our comments on that one, but, again, that is at a high level. We would certainly flag that there would be environmental conditions that we, the EPA, would put on that would need to be met before that operation was allowed to commence.

MS LE COUTEUR: So you anticipate that you will put something in for Capital Recycling Solutions?

Mr Jones: As a mandatory referral, yes.

MS LEE: The supplementary that I have got is on this process in respect of the Hume

recycling facility. Obviously, as you probably are aware, there is a lot of community interest in that as well. Can you give us, I suppose, what submission, if any, the EPA made at that DA planning stage and then also tell us, after that, when you get to the more detailed stage of the environment authorisation stage, what the status of all that is at the moment?

Mr Jones: I will give you a little background on how that started because I think that is very relevant to your question. That is an industrial area that it is in. Its lease purpose clause allows for a very wide range of activity to occur in that industrial area. When the company first set up, it began stockpiling material which was capable of being recycled. Certainly a lot of it was. Because there was no initial processing, there was no EPA trigger for what it was using that block for. There were no immediate or explicit environmental approvals required to stockpile material. There are still environmental responsibilities that need to be met in terms of dust and run-off and things like that but there are no direct approvals for just stockpiling material. That is how they first started.

The company then began recycling its stockpile that it had been accumulating. That triggered the requirement for environmental authorisation, because they were undertaking an activity on that site. The EPA put on an environmental authorisation which included stockpile limits and emphasised the various environmental controls that they would need for the operation of that site—again, run-off, dust, contaminants, and things like that. Because of the level of accumulation of that stockpile, what we considered a reasonable stockpile size for that site and that activity was less than what they had already accumulated. We gave the operator six months to comply with those requirements under the environmental authorisation.

MS LEE: And when was that?

Mr Jones: That EA was issued in March this year, and six months later was something like 23 September this year. Those stockpile requirements were technically exempt under that EA, and that exemption expired, if you like, on 23 September.

We did a regulatory assessment of whether they were compliant with their stockpile at that time, and they were non-compliant. We issued them a warning as well as an environmental order to focus very specifically and very rapidly on bringing that stockpile and any other requirements on that site to within the conditions of that original environmental authorisation that they were issued in March. Significant progress has been made under that environmental order to come to those stockpile limits.

We probably attend the site two or three times a week, having discussions, monitoring, dealing with complaints from some persons—local people—in terms of dust and other material allegedly leaving the site. We have ensured that the material stored on site has been tested several times for contaminants and we have ensured that their dust suppression mechanisms are as efficient as they possibly can be, given the state of the operations. Significant progress in coming to that stockpile limit has been achieved and continues to be achieved.

There are requirements that if the wind reaches a certain level—and it is roughly 12 to

15 knots, which is not all that strong—then operations will cease because it allows dust to leave the site despite the water spray dust suppression. That slowed him down, given that spring is typically a windy period, and also he had some machinery breakdowns which slowed his operation for a few weeks.

There are requirements in the environmental order that has been issued that if certain milestones have not been reached—roughly, monthly, which we audit and measure—then we will alter the amount of material that comes on site versus what goes out. At the moment, we are allowing that—it is around about—for every one unit that comes in, three units, by volume or weight, must leave the site.

At the end of this week there will be a milestone audit done. If they have not reached a particular milestone that is within that order then that ratio will change to one to six, which means that for every one unit of material that comes in, six will have to leave, to accelerate and get him to focus on that process. We are about to have that audit at the end of this month and that will tell us whether he is compliant with that order and meeting those milestones, with a mechanism within that order to tighten up his operations, if required.

MS LEE: I have two follow-up questions on that. Firstly, at the current stage I understand that you have said they have made significant progress. Has that now aligned with the original scope of what they were meant to do or is it still some way off? Secondly, if there is a fail of the audit that comes—and I understand that there is that reduction in the ratio—are there other enforcement actions that you have available to you to take?

Mr Jones: The order itself has milestones with triggers, as I said, to come to an end. If at the end of the order—and I cannot recall immediately what that period is but it is something like four months—they have not met the EA requirements, they will be in breach of that order and there are significant regulatory penalties involved. There is a stepped process to get to the end of that order to encourage and require that the operator become compliant.

Our main aim is to make sure that they are compliant with the environmental authorisation right at the beginning, rather than to punish. That is why the order has been drafted to increase that ratio of what leaves versus what comes in, to ensure that he continues to work on that.

Our view would be that, if we just went very hard with very strong infringement or enforcement action, he may cease to operate his business and the onus of that block would potentially be on the government and it could be left with an expensive clean-up bill. That is, clearly, not in anyone's interest. He is operating a legitimate recycling business and we want to encourage him to do that but to do it under the conditions of the environmental authorisation.

MS LEE: And just finally, in terms of your visits two to three times a week, are you intending to continue them until the end of that four-month order period?

Mr Jones: Yes, absolutely.

THE CHAIR: We might leave it there, given that we have reached the end of our time. On behalf of the committee, thank you for attending today. I believe we have four or five questions taken on notice. The responses to those questions taken on notice should be submitted to the committee office within five business days of the uncorrected proof transcript becoming available. Thank you once again.

Hearing suspended from 12.27 to 1.59 pm.

Appearances:

Berry, Ms Yvette, Minister for Education and Early Childhood Development, Minister for Housing and Suburban Development, Minister for the Prevention of Domestic and Family Violence, Minister for Women and Minister for Sport and Recreation

Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate
Priest, Ms Jenny, Director, Active Canberra
Gordon, Mr Garry, Director, ACT Property Group

THE CHAIR: Welcome back to the Standing Committee on Environment and Transport and City Services inquiry into annual and financial reports for 2016-17. We are now commencing with the sport and recreation services session. On behalf of the committee, I would like to thank you, Minister Berry, and your officials for attending. Can I please draw everyone's attention to the privilege statement, the pink card on the desk? As this is the first time you are appearing today, can you please acknowledge that you have read and understood it?

Ms Berry: Yes.

THE CHAIR: So we are all good with the privilege statement?

Ms Berry: Yes.

Ms Priest: Yes.

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

Ms Berry: No; I am happy to go to questions.

THE CHAIR: Minister, the government has announced an increase in support for women's elite sport by extending the performance agreement with the Canberra Capitals. What does this agreement include?

Ms Berry: It is an agreement to fund the Canberra Capitals for four years. This is the first time they have ever had a four-year funding agreement, the same as for the elite men's teams—a forecasted funding amount that they would be able to rely on. They have never had that before, so that was the first thing we did. Their performance agreement is being reviewed right now, and that will match up to the review that was done previously on performance funding agreements. In particular, what we want to make sure of with the funding agreement for the Canberra Capitals, and for the Canberra United team as well, is that they meet the community expectations and that there is a significant community benefit from those clubs.

THE CHAIR: I believe we have also offered to increase support to Canberra United. Can you give a little bit of an overview of how this funding will help Canberra United in the A-League?

Ms Berry: It is the same as with the Canberra Capitals: it gives them a sustained funding commitment from the ACT government over a four-year period. It means they can attract more sponsorship because sponsors will be attracted knowing that the teams have a secure funding plan for a period of time. I know that one of the things that was significant for those teams was having that secure funding. That meant the base funding was already there and they could go out and get further sponsorship to attract players to the teams.

THE CHAIR: Continuing with the theme of supporting women in sport, I believe there is a strategic partnership with Cricket Australia to bring international cricket to Canberra. How much of a role did this commitment play in having the two women's Ashes T20 matches played at Manuka?

Ms Priest: Those arrangements are currently with the venue. Manuka Oval and the venues team are managing those particular arrangements. As was notified recently in the media, there is a bid by Cricket ACT in to Cricket Australia for BBL men's and women's teams, and they are currently working through the development of a business case for that.

THE CHAIR: That gives an overview of women in sport and what we are doing at the semi-professional and professional end. I wanted to get a bit more of an overview on what we are doing at a more local level to provide support for women in sport.

Ms Berry: In the whole country there has been a fantastic shift towards supporting women's sport. Leading up to the election last year, I went out and had some conversations with young women and girls, particularly at Gungahlin College. We talked about the different kinds of barriers that they faced in participating or engaging in sport. They talked to us about things like making sure that the infrastructure was more inclusive and female friendly, making sure that they had the chance to hook up with other women and girls to try out new sports together, and also having role models, which goes to the funding for the Canberra Caps and Canberra United. It deals with the adage that if you can't see it, you can't be it. Having role models here in the ACT for young women and girls to aspire to was an important part of those funding agreements for the two women's elite teams. It is about having more inclusive infrastructure, being able to catch up with other women and girls to try new sports or have somewhere they can find out what opportunities there are in sports, and having role models to aspire to.

About a month ago we launched the active portal, which is an online portal for women and girls' stories about sport, to be shared in an online internet space. That is being done in partnership with Her Canberra. It is still being worked on and finalised, but at this stage it has some stories on there about some of our women's sporting teams. It is a way for women and girls to catch up and find out what is happening around the neighbourhood; they might want to go and try something new or go together. With regard to female-friendly or more inclusive infrastructure, Ms Priest might want to go into some detail about some of the grant rounds.

Ms Priest: The sport and recreation grants program for this year closed for applications on 1 November. So we are currently assessing those applications. It had its criteria amended to include incentives for getting sports more involved in

providing opportunities for women in sport and recreation. That included infrastructure upgrades, picking up on the minister's point of having more female-friendly infrastructure. There are some really simple things that can be done in infrastructure to make it more female friendly. For example, the old days of the urinal are a thing of the past. Providing facilities whereby that is not a confronting thing in change rooms that could be used for either men or women is an example of how infrastructure, existing or new, can be made more female friendly. The notion of having the ability to have mirrors, power points and things like that in change rooms is also being looked at.

We are doing a piece of work within Active Canberra over the coming six to 12 months that will look at a design guideline. We are working with our colleagues in Transport Canberra and City Services. That would actually embed and enshrine some of those more female-friendly aspects within the design standard for infrastructure. That is another piece of work that is going on.

Also under our grants program we have provision in there now, and again through refinements to the eligibility criteria, for a women's sport and recreation participation and leadership program. Again, it is about looking for sports to be insightful and engaging in or developing programs that are about attracting and retaining more women in their sport.

Ms Berry: As soon as we started talking about making changes to infrastructure so that it would be more inclusive, the community immediately adopted that and started talking about it as well. The infrastructure upgrades and the pavilion upgrades that are happening out at Phillip oval will all be more inclusive than the pavilions of the past, where they were really designed for male athletes and that was it. These ones will be much more inclusive. That is the way of the future. There will be some retrofitting of facilities. One of the pavilions was upgraded out at Gowrie. It had been burnt down, so they had to upgrade that one, and the upgrades included more inclusive—

Ms Priest: Female friendly.

Ms Berry: female-friendly change rooms. There are no mile-long urinals; there are toilet doors and those sorts of things.

MR MILLIGAN: You mentioned some barriers preventing females from entering sports, and you are looking to upgrade facilities. Are you able to give any indication as to how many clubs or associations applied for these grants?

Ms Priest: They closed on 1 November. I could take it on notice and get a sense of that for you.

MR MILLIGAN: Sure.

Ms Priest: I do not have that information at my fingertips today.

Ms Berry: There is another thing we have also introduced, as part of our moves towards supporting women in sport. We are encouraging clubs who have—

Ms Priest: The operational funding, the triennial funding?

Ms Berry: Yes, the triennial funding agreements that we have with clubs. Those clubs have been asked to move to 40 per cent female representation on their boards. Clubs are starting to email us to tell us when they are doing that and when they have achieved that. Most clubs are already at that point. There are some who are not, and they have three more years to do that. We will help them get there if they have some challenges along the way.

MR PARTON: If they have challenges, though, what do you do? What is the endgame there, if you get to three years and some clubs have not done that?

Ms Berry: They have known about this for 12 months now, and many of them have already moved to 40 per cent. In addition to the conversations that we are continually having with the boards and with club members, the ACT government, through another portfolio, that of the Minister for Women, is updating and refreshing the women's register. That will include opportunities for women to put their names onto a register, maybe to partner with organisations, to put in the registration details so that they can be available for boards, including sporting clubs—making sure that there is a pool of women that they might not be able to access through their own clubs, but looking more broadly for women who might be accessible in different areas like the women's board register.

MR MILLIGAN: Do you have any sporting codes that you can give as an example that are finding it difficult to attract women onto boards, depending on the type of sport that is played? For example, are Rugby League or Rugby Union having trouble?

Ms Priest: No, not necessarily. We are working closely with them over the three-year period that the minister mentioned. For those that are signalling or where we are getting a sense that they are having some challenges, obviously they are the guys that we will be targeting in terms of hooking them up with the skills-based board opportunities that might avail themselves through the register and various other means and ways. We can provide them with governance training and support as well. It will be a horses for courses thing. We will look to target the ones that are having challenges along the way.

Ms Berry: But not a single club has said that they do not want to do that.

MR MILLIGAN: Are you working directly with the clubs or through the associations?

Ms Priest: Yes, the state sporting organisations, the peak organisations.

MR MILLIGAN: Not directly with the clubs?

Ms Priest: The triennially funded, yes; their peak bodies.

Ms Berry: Everybody is really keen.

MR PARTON: In regard to the Capitals and Canberra United, obviously they have to

report back to you on what they have achieved. What are the KPIs for those teams? What do they have to show?

Ms Priest: There are a range of measures. One of the things that is probably worth mentioning now—the minister might want to talk to it a little bit further, but I can give you a quick snapshot—is that we are going through and we have written to all of our recipients of performance fee agreements, and we are undertaking a review of those agreements. There are a number of metrics, including visitation, bed nights, brand exposure and community engagement. There are a whole range of things that they need to report back to us on under their existing agreements. We are doing a review of those agreements to ensure that they are still of a structure that is serving the government, the community and the sports well. Everyone has been very open to having a look at that and making sure that, moving forward, those agreements, in terms of their accountability and best bang for buck for everyone, are working best for us.

We are also moving along a pathway of having an annual partnership plan. The language associated with performance fee agreements is starting to evolve and has done over recent years. You would be aware that a number of these agreements have been in place for a number of years. The newer ones are working on the basis of an annual partnership plan, where we sit down and map out the year's activities and all the touch points, particularly with the community, as the minister mentioned. We make sure that we are working with them and that they are working with their other partners—for example, Canberra Capitals with Basketball ACT—and working with other directorates. For example, the Education Directorate, another one of the minister's portfolios, is another area where we would be looking to get greater leverage and line of sight to our elite teams, particularly with the women, into schools, where you have that captive audience of girls, and looking at the leadership that these women who are playing at the elite level can provide to girls and women.

MR PARTON: In that space—and it may seem like a shallow question—how important is winning? Your reach multiplies with success, doesn't it?

Ms Priest: Absolutely. It is all part of a complex package, as you would appreciate. We have all seen the journeys of different teams in Canberra. Canberra can be a bit of a fickle crowd—

MR PARTON: Have you noticed?

Ms Priest: Yes—and follow the winners. We want to help to foster and provide for an environment for these teams, men's or women's elite teams, that gives them the best opportunity to perform the best, to recruit the best.

MR PARTON: That is all you can do.

Ms Priest: That is right.

Ms Berry: With winning, people pick a team and it does not often change in their life.

MR PARTON: No.

Ms Berry: Winning is an important part of it, but if you change a team you are in trouble. Everybody will have a go at you.

MR PARTON: Where is the government up to with the consultation with key stakeholders on the new ice-skating centre?

Ms Berry: There was funding provided to the Ice Sports Federation to do some preliminary work with the ice sports community and more generally about what facility they would like in the ACT. I think that work is still progressing?

Ms Priest: That is right. The Ice Sports Federation has formed, and we are working very closely with it at the moment, basically investigating what a new facility, if there was a new facility, would need to incorporate to be financially viable and of use to the entire ice sports community—everyone from recreational skaters to your Brave ice hockey team. I think there is a female ice hockey team, the Pirates, coming into play as well. It is about testing that and getting an understanding of what a new facility would need to look like and how it might need to operate to be commercially viable.

Ms Berry: All of this is occurring as well with their current ice facility.

Ms Priest: Absolutely.

Ms Berry: That also needs to be an important consideration as part of this conversation. That conversation is still happening, because that is a—

MR PARTON: In what way, though?

Ms Berry: It is looking at the different kinds of options. What are their plans for that ice facility? It is a privately owned facility, and we do not have a clear picture of what the plans are for that facility by the owners of that facility—what they want to do, whether they want to see that expanded, whether they want to do more there at that facility.

MR PARTON: You must have asked them?

Ms Priest: Yes; they are absolutely aware. I have been in discussions and had meetings with the owner-operator of the ice facility, and they certainly know the investigative work that is underway. Before the government is in a place to make any decisions, obviously, this piece of work will need to be done, and we are working towards a time frame that would see something coming back to government hopefully towards the back part of this year. We are getting close—

MR MILLIGAN: 2018?

Ms Priest: 2017.

Ms Berry: This year.

Ms Priest: That is information that would come to government so that we can

consider the “where to from here”. It is about getting a sense of what it might look like, and then there needs to be consideration of whether it is economically viable, whether we can come up with a facility and a model that works and meets all the requirements and is affordable. The option of partners and who might operate it needs to be factored in and considered. Consideration would need to be given to where it would go. Obviously, at that point in time, some further and ongoing discussions would need to be had with the operator of the existing facility. They are obviously a key stakeholder and an interest group in this piece of work going forward.

MR MILLIGAN: Who is actually conducting this study, and who has been consulted on this?

Ms Priest: The project approach that is being taken is that the Ice Sports Federation was formed with the deliberate purpose of exploring with the government—having made representations to the government—what a new ice facility to meet the needs of the ice community in Canberra might look like. They are being used as the key conduit at the moment, while this piece of work is going on, representing the interests of all the various stakeholder groups in the ice community and being part of the advice that is being provided to the consultant. The consultant that we have on board at the moment working with us is Lockridge. They are assisting us with the work. At the moment they are going through the process of responding to the brief that we have provided to them, which we developed in consultation with the Ice Sports Federation.

MR MILLIGAN: What discussions has the government had with the current owners of the ice-skating rink here in the territory? Is there the possibility of any flexibility being given to the owner of that facility to possibly include a different line of business running alongside an ice-skating facility there, to make it more viable?

Ms Priest: As I said, at the moment we are not focusing on where this thing would be. The piece of work is really focusing on what a new ice facility might look like to be viable and to cater for all of the needs of the various ice groups. Once that piece of work has been done, there is a next stage that needs to follow that would consider where it goes, who such a facility might be impacting on and how that would need to be addressed, relative to any plans going forward.

MS CHEYNE: I am conscious that, in our recommendations to last year’s annual report hearings, No 1 was that the minister report to the committee during our 2016-17 annual report hearings on the progress of the development of Stromlo pool. I am aware that this year’s annual report notes that community consultation was completed to assist in the finalisation of the procurement process. The government response to our 2015-16 annual report, which I think was in September, stated that specification documentation for the request for tender to design and construct Stromlo pool “is in the process of being finalised”. That is the longest preamble to a question, but what I am getting at is: is there any update to either of those that you can provide us with?

Ms Berry: I do not think there is at the moment, just that the tender has gone out. When does that close? It is very soon, though. It is before the end of this year, isn’t it, that we should get—

Ms Priest: That is right. I am just wondering whether Garry Gordon from Property

Group, who has now looked at it as well, might be able to assist us.

Mr Gordon: We are looking after the construction and tender process of the pool. In fact, the tenders closed 25 minutes ago and we have got a team of people getting all the documentation together to start the evaluation process. They will probably take a break around 3 o'clock. We are under quite a tight time frame to get that assessed. We are looking to evaluate the three respondents by the end of November and, hopefully, have a decision on a contract award either at the end of November or in early December. It is quite imminent.

MS CHEYNE: It is three respondents? That is accurate as at 25 minutes ago?

Mr Gordon: Correct.

Ms Berry: You are hearing it fresh, at the same time as I am.

MR MILLIGAN: In this tender process is there any likelihood of a dive pool being included in the Stromlo pool development?

Mr Gordon: Excellent question. The factoring in of a dive pool is a very expensive asset. The pre-tender estimates were around \$16 million to construct a dive pool. In the current tender request we have asked for the respondents to tell us what a dive pool would cost but actually in their proposals identify where it could go. We have got the planning in place for a pool. But as at today we do not have the funding to cover the pool, the program swim area, as well as a dive pool.

The government set aside \$33 million for the facility and obviously if a dive pool costs \$16 million it is a major outlay over and above that. But we will be taking the information back to cabinet for consideration of the holistic responses from the tenderers. When we evaluate that, we will have a lot more information about the costs and affordability.

Ms Berry: And it is important to note that this is the first part of this development and the tender has asked for future expansion of this initial part.

Mr Gordon: Exactly.

Ms Berry: Yes, which could include a dive pool or other kinds of facilities.

Mr Gordon: Yes, in the future.

THE CHAIR: Just out of interest, you said the community consultation for Stromlo pool was finalised. What was the feedback you actually got from the community consultation?

Ms Priest: The feedback from the community consultation, which is up on the your say website, really was asking the community: in addition to the core facilities that have been committed to by government for the \$33 million, if the budget allowed, what would the community see as other priority facilities—for example a splash park, a gymnasium, other things that the community that will utilise the Stromlo pool would

seek to prioritise? That was the sort of feedback that was provided.

When the tender process commenced and went out and the tender documentation was refined, it was refined with a view to reflecting, to the best ability possible relative to the known sorts of costings—and Garry talked about the dive pool being cost prohibitive in the current budget—other things, budget allowing, that might be able to be included. Obviously the government would like to see the most realised for \$33 million and so it is giving options.

MR MILLIGAN: My question is in relation to ground maintenance and the satisfaction received in relation to that. It states in your annual report that the target that you set for satisfaction for ground maintenance was 93 per cent; yet it has fallen short, at only 88 per cent, for ground maintenance satisfaction. I am just wondering what the government is doing to address this concern at the satisfaction levels for ground maintenance.

Ms Priest: I think one of the things to reflect on there is that the methodology for assessing sportsground satisfaction use has changed in recent years and the metrics and the percentage rates that were set have changed in recent years. The methodology for actually collecting the data has changed in recent years. That does give some level of explanation for the satisfaction rate or target not being met. There is a slightly different methodology. For example, there was a category in the survey that was “neither satisfied nor dissatisfied” and that is no longer counted. That has provided a little bit of a skewing of the statistics.

Notwithstanding that, I think there is always an ongoing effort made to balance the optimisation of use of our sportsground assets and the ability to maintain a range of things being undertaken. That is ongoing, including a two-year annual restoration period and the resting of sportsgrounds, which also gets met with some interest at times, although sports are getting much more understanding of the fact that it is in everyone’s best interest to rest the fields over the period while the restorations are going on so that the restorations can occur but also so that the quality of the grounds is improved. I think there are ongoing efforts being made to ensure that the maintenance undertaken across our entire asset base is done to the best capacity possible and working around the usage needs of all the different sports.

We are always open to receiving feedback—and, in fact, now it is my colleagues in Transport Canberra and City Services who are looking after the asset. But certainly we have always been open to, and I am sure the minister would be keen that we are remaining to be open to, having ongoing dialogue with the sports about any concerns that they have and any ways within our capacity that we are able to address those issues. If there are specific issues or concerns that you are aware of out in sporting land we would be more than happy for those to be directed to us so that we can tackle them. But the stats are a reflection of a change in methodology. That was a long answer, wasn’t it? Sorry. Did I answer your question?

MR MILLIGAN: What was the number of respondents, do you know, to this survey?

Ms Priest: I do not know offhand. We would have to find that out.

MR MILLIGAN: Just in relation to ovals undergoing maintenance, roughly at any given time how many ovals do we see offline due to maintenance?

Ms Berry: Yesterday they were all offline because of the rain.

MR MILLIGAN: But other than that, with actual scheduled maintenance, how many ovals can be expected at any given time?

Ms Priest: It really does vary. Under our facilities improvement program, if there are specific restorative works happening then there may be a requirement to take an oval or ovals offline for a period while those major pieces of work are being done. But, as I mentioned in my earlier answer, there is a twice-a-year period where we shut down the ovals for two weeks. We really do try to make that non-negotiable and take all the ovals offline, but we do have a level of flexibility. We have tried to accommodate sports so that if you have got finals or the need for a bit of pre-season stuff we try to work around that and provide the odd field or work-around synthetic provision, which is a different set of rules again.

It is really important for our natural ovals that we rest them for that two-week period so that they get the opportunity to regerminate, to recover from the season's use, particularly the winter season's use. It is pretty heavy. They get that spring benefit of growth and over-sowing, fertilising et cetera that goes on and then kick off into the new season—two weeks, twice a year.

MR MILLIGAN: And what was the main dissatisfaction from the community in regard to oval maintenance? Was it sort of leaning to—

Ms Priest: I do not think we have got a level of qualitative data there, but I could double-check that with my colleagues at Transport Canberra and City Services and see. There generally are satisfied and very satisfied rankings. I am not sure of the extent to which there is a level of qualitative data but I can double-check that.

MR MILLIGAN: In response to a question on notice I sent through to the minister, the minister stated it is around \$50,000 per hectare for maintenance per year average cost, I think it was?

Ms Priest: There is a recipe, yes.

MR MILLIGAN: Obviously that takes into account maintenance that is being conducted on low-grade ovals and also maintenance conducted on our elite ovals and it is averaged out, I would assume, between all ovals?

Ms Priest: When you say “elite ovals” are you talking about—

MR MILLIGAN: All our enclosed ovals, the ones with bigger facilities and—

Ms Priest: The maintenance of all our ovals is probably around the same but the usage is different. The elite ovals, the enclosed ovals, have a different usage than do your community district playing fields, for example—a different level and, I guess, quantum of use because they are largely reserved for those more elite matches. They

probably get less intensive use than some of the district playing fields.

MR MILLIGAN: Obviously that adds to the cost of ground hire for clubs, and our grassroots sporting clubs are affected and end up paying more to help prop up our elite sports due to those maintenance costs, and it raises membership fees?

Ms Priest: For Gungahlin enclosed oval or Greenway enclosed oval, again, I can double-check but I think you would find that turf management practices are very similar for both, with the maintenance regime and what we do to the turf at those enclosed ovals versus what we do at those district playing fields and generally available urban open space ovals that are unrestricted when they are not booked for formal sporting use; anyone can come off the street and kick a ball, walk a dog or whatever on them. It is just the intensity of the use that will be the difference.

MR MILLIGAN: And you would not happen to know what it cost the government to resurface the Gungahlin enclosed oval for the drainage? No-one can really explain why that oval was built with the wrong infrastructure, the wrong design on that oval, that did not allow for proper drainage. Obviously it cost a fair bit to resurface.

Ms Berry: I do not know. If you have got a bunch of questions that you want to ask specifically about that oval, I think we could probably take that on notice. It would be best.

Ms Priest: Yes. We are happy to do that.

THE CHAIR: As Ms Cheyne pointed out, from the last annual reports we had another recommendation, as well as the one that Ms Cheyne raised, which was about an update on Boomanulla Oval. I note that it is a point made in the annual report. Can I get an update on how that project is progressing, please?

Ms Priest: In early 2016 there was an initial expression of interest process. Following the response to that, where there was only one successful respondent, Winnunga Nimmitjyah, there was a tender process opened and it was available for Winnunga to respond to. Working through that process—it was a single select tender offered to Winnunga Nimmitjyah and there was flexibility built into that tender—it became apparent that there was some more work required. In particular—it was envisaged by both the expression of interest that was released and by the request for tender—there was an opportunity for the person invited to respond to the request for tender to seek funding that was made available through the Indigenous advancement strategy to develop a guiding strategy for Boomanulla Oval.

The tender evaluation panel, in its deliberations with Winnunga to this point, agreed to defer the process while Winnunga applied for funds under the Indigenous advancement strategy being administered by Active Canberra, which they did and were successful in being granted. The reason we are administering those funds is that when the former lessee, ACSRA, was wound up, the ACT was at risk of losing the commonwealth contribution from the Indigenous advancement strategy. We put in an interim application to the federal government and were successful in receiving those funds, and we have been administering them since.

One of the aspirations through that Indigenous advancement strategy funding was to look to support a process whereby Boomanulla Oval would be returned to its operations. Winnunga has only recently completed and submitted, as part of its interim response to the tender, a strategic plan. There are a number of stages through the tender that they are required to respond to before they put in their final tender response. It came in in September, and that is currently under consideration and receiving attention.

There are a number of complex issues related to Boomanulla Oval, which I am sure you would appreciate, not the least of which is funding and operational models and the aspiration that would see that facility very much returning at some stage to Indigenous management and ownership. It is very important, so that whatever process takes it to that place does not see the oval end up where it did when the former lessee was wound up. We want to make sure that whatever is put in place is sustainable and is going to work for the best interests of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, and indeed the local, community.

MR MILLIGAN: Is there any time frame as to when this oval will be formally handed over or managed? Is there any goal?

Ms Priest: I do not have a time frame at the moment.

Ms Berry: We have just had the first part of the strategy and we have to look at that with Winnunga.

MR MILLIGAN: It was estimated—correct me if I am wrong—at \$3½ million to get that oval back up to standard in terms of maintenance costs; is that correct?

Ms Berry: There is a lot more that would need to be done at Boomanulla than just the oval. It is a significant piece of land. That is why it has been important for Winnunga and the community to make sure that there is a whole piece of work, not just for a piece of oval.

MR MILLIGAN: Would the government be prepared to put some funding towards that or would Winnunga be liable for the whole cost?

Ms Priest: These are questions that will need to be considered and answered by the government when there has been the opportunity to present the full detail of the business case and model to them, and we are not quite at that point yet.

MR PARTON: You mentioned a little earlier the upgrade of Phillip oval. Where is that at, and where will it end up at? I know that you are a bit excited by it.

Ms Berry: It is very cool. The oval has been completed. I think the lights have been put in and it will be ready for cricket this summer.

Ms Priest: The indoor component is absolutely nearing completion. The new home for Cricket ACT is just about complete and we are working on a launch date for the minister to make that all happen.

MR PARTON: Excellent.

Ms Priest: That will definitely be before the end of the year. The other component, which relates to the AFL and the existing amenities and change rooms and their headquarters, will be completed in the first quarter of next year. So it is pretty exciting and—

MR PARTON: Yes, it is wonderful.

Ms Priest: there will be a staged release and activation of that facility as things come online. Definitely, the indoor cricket component and the headquarters of Cricket ACT are just about there.

MR PARTON: Good.

THE CHAIR: We might wrap it up there.

MS CHEYNE: I have one quick question. I have noticed, and I have even played at, the new disc golf course at John Knight park. Have you had any feedback, informally or otherwise—I know there is a formal disc golf group—about whether anyone is particularly happy with the facility? From my own observation, it seems to fit quite nicely into the environment. It is not very obvious, but, when you find it, it is easy to navigate.

Ms Priest: I think it is early days, but that is another one that we are looking to have a fairly significant activation of in the not-too-distant future. No, I have not personally received any feedback. You are right; it was one of those things—and it was one of the interesting parts of the proposal that really attracted us—that can fit within other things.

Ms Berry: It can be formal or informal.

Ms Priest: Indeed; that is right. Did you say you have played it?

MS CHEYNE: Yes. I only got one goal.

Ms Priest: Apparently, it is a hugely growing sport.

MS CHEYNE: Yes, so I hear.

Ms Priest: So it is pretty exciting. There is a significant course in Jindabyne.

MS CHEYNE: I have played that one.

Ms Priest: We are working up an activation where we will see people from Jindabyne travel down and take part in an event down here at John Knight. We are pretty excited about it.

THE CHAIR: That brings us to 2.45, which is when we are scheduled to finish. On behalf of the committee, thank you for attending. Responses to questions that have

been taken on notice at this session should be submitted to the committee office within five business days of the uncorrected proof transcript becoming available.

Hearing suspended from 2.43 to 3.15 pm.

Appearances:

Gentleman, Mr Mick, Minister for Police and Emergency Services, Minister for the Environment and Heritage, Minister for Planning and Land Management and Minister for Urban Renewal

Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate
Lane, Dr Annie, Executive Director, Environment and Conservator of Flora and Fauna
Iglesias, Mr Daniel, Director, ACT Parks and Conservation Service
Ponton, Mr Ben, Director-General
Spencer, Mr Gary, Chief Finance Officer
O'Connell, Ms Jennifer, Manager, ACT Heritage

THE CHAIR: This is the last session for today of the Standing Committee on Environment and Transport and City Services inquiry into the annual and financial reports for 2016-17. This session is with the Minister for the Environment and Heritage and will cover environment, heritage, the Conservator of Flora and Fauna and the ACT Heritage Council. Welcome, minister and officials. As this is your first appearance today, can I please check you have all seen the privilege statement on the pink cards on the desk in front of you and that you have understood the privilege statement?

Mr Gentleman: Yes, we do.

THE CHAIR: Once again, thank you for attending, minister. Did you wish to make an opening statement?

Mr Gentleman: Yes, if I could have a few minutes. Firstly, it is my pleasure to be able to introduce some of the work done over the last financial year on how we conserve and manage our environment. It has been a very busy year across the Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate's environment division, which encompasses water resources, conservation research, nature conservation policy, ACT natural resource management, the parks and conservation service and also environment protection policy and heritage.

A key priority has been the ACT government's commitment to improving the quality of our waterways, within both Canberra and our surrounding region, and we are working closely with the Australian government and the community to deliver on this commitment. The ACT healthy waterways project is a \$93.5 million joint initiative of the Australian and ACT governments to protect and improve long-term water quality in the ACT and further downstream in the Murrumbidgee River system.

Consultation and development approval took place this year on a range of infrastructure across our suburbs, such as ponds, wetlands and rain gardens, and construction has already begun on the first ACT healthy waterways project, which will see two new wetlands built at Isabella Pond and the Lake Tuggeranong catchment.

To facilitate this work, both Isabella Pond and upper Stranger Pond were fully drained

earlier this year, and this de-watering allowed for the removal of more than 3.8 tonnes of carp, an introduced freshwater pest species. The carp removal work provided the opportunity to fill several knowledge gaps regarding carp populations in the ACT, which will be critical to discussions and planning for the potential release of the carp biocontrol under the national carp control plan.

As part of the broader ACT healthy waterways project we are working to change behaviours through the H2OK: keeping our waterways healthy education program. The program is improving our waterways by encouraging behaviour change. It kicked off in February this year with an advertising campaign, followed by drain stencilling and art installations, a grants program and an industry training program tackling erosion and sediment control during the building and development as well.

Community involvement is a key component of our efforts to improve water quality, and the launch of the Waterwatch catchment health indicator program, or CHIP, report in October showed what can be achieved when governments and the community work together. The report was made possible thanks to the dedicated group of over 200 Waterwatch volunteers who visited over 220 sites along our rivers, creeks and wetlands every month and collected water quality data. The annual CHIP reports are providing invaluable information and are guiding our priorities for catchment management projects.

In all of these projects we have been able to work with the community to get better information and better environmental results. Similarly, we have been supporting the development of a skilled and capable Landcare community in the ACT through a program aimed at improving the efficiency and sustainability of pastures and grazing management. Training has been wide ranging, from weed control to ensuring healthy grazing practices.

Last financial year the directorate welcomed the parks and conservation service into the fold. It is good to see Coops here in the gallery. The parks and conservation service established a new healthy country section and recruited an Indigenous-identified healthy country manager in late 2016 in recognition of the interconnected relationship between the health of the environment and the cultural wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

The kickstart my career through culture program is another new initiative, designed to re-engage young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders in school and set them up on pathways to successful lives. It has been delivered in collaboration with Greening Australia, the Education Directorate, CIT and a range of local Aboriginal businesses and traditional owners.

It should not be overlooked that, through the annual implementation of the bushfire operations plan, the parks and conservation service keep us all safe from bushfire. This year more than 95 per cent of the bushfire operational plan was completed, with 6,041 hectares of strategic grazing on the edge of residential areas, 4,733 hectares of slashing in urban areas, 542 hectares of physical removal of fire fuels and 437 kilometres of fire trail maintenance.

The ACT parks service now has three of the fast, light unit firefighting vehicles and

can deploy up to four remotely located portable weather stations that provide government and the Bureau of Meteorology with accurate and reliable real-time weather data in locations directly relevant to fire forecasting and operations.

The government have continued our pioneering research work with the ANU and the Woodlands and Wetlands Trust, and during the year the first eastern quolls were reintroduced into Mulligans Flat and began breeding, which was a remarkable achievement. Other adults from Tasmania were added to the sanctuary to further boost the population, and I understand T-shirts will be available soon to promote Mulligans.

Following extensive proprietary work, eastern bettongs were released into the lower Cotter catchment during the year, and this was the first stage of determining whether bettongs can be established beyond the fence of Mulligans. Early results have been promising and have taught us and our project partners much about monitoring feral animal control. If the lower Cotter catchment project is successful it will greatly improve our knowledge on reintroductions in unfenced areas and provide a release site to transfer bettongs from Mulligans Flat and Tidbinbilla to help manage overpopulation of those sites.

This year the environment protection policy team has continued to update policies made under the Environment Protection Act, including contaminated sites and environment protection policy, implemented legislative changes to introduce stricter emission standards for wood heaters and participated in national reforms to harmonise the management of agricultural, veterinary and industrial chemicals.

Finally, the heritage part of my portfolio hosted a very successful heritage festival this year which attracted a different demographic, with 73 per cent of visitors having never seen it before. The festival hosted 164 events, including a highly successful open day at the Gungahlin Homestead. And the council continued its work in processing the ACT heritage register nomination list, reducing it by approximately 30 to just over a hundred places and/or objects. The six places and objects that were registered include the historic watercolour journals of George Jefferis and John Whelen and St Joseph's Catholic Church.

All in all, it has been a busy year. I do want to thank Dean Freeman, whom you will see on the cover of the annual report, for his work and his passion for our environment and Indigenous heritage. We have got some fantastic outcomes for our local environment, which is so important to many Canberrans and is valued highly by visitors. With that, the team and I are ready for any questions that you may have.

THE CHAIR: I want to ask a question of you about ACT healthy waterways and the basin priority project, given that that is quite a substantial project for the ACT. You noted in your opening statement that you have done consultation throughout this year and started on the first project. I appreciate that you gave a bit of an overview on that. Could you please provide a little more detailed information as to the two projects that have commenced, the future prioritisations and just what we expect to see from that work, particularly in the Tuggeranong area, where the first project has commenced?

Mr Gentleman: In fact, I had a quick look at the Tuggeranong project yesterday. The work of the engineering side is almost complete. Now they are starting to do the work

on the base of the ponds. But I might pass over to the directorate, to Annie Lane, to give you some more details about where we are up to.

Dr Lane: There are three other projects ready to commence later this month. That is a rain garden and creek restoration work in the Tuggeranong catchment and also one in lower Molonglo. That is kicking off the first bit of the commonwealth-funded projects. We have a priority list now of 18 projects, plus the two wetlands at Isabella, plus a couple of research projects which are looking at the dynamics and the processes that lead to water pollution and particularly lead to blue-green algae blooms in our lakes. They will be very important to inform land management as we go forward. The minister mentioned H2OK. That is also part of the healthy waterways project and is in full swing at the moment and into the spring campaign. We are proceeding on track at this stage.

All the projects have to be finished by June 2019. It is a very tight time frame, and of course we also have a funding envelope that cannot be negotiated either. In order to prioritise the projects, we have been driven by the parameters of water quality, best value for money, other aspects like location in the landscape and so on and also the community feelings about some of these projects. As we move into the construction phase, we are engaging very closely with communities. Community members will receive letters about the work that is happening around the place. There is signage going up so that they are well informed about what is happening in their backyard almost.

There were a number of projects that we were not able to proceed with for various reasons. There were a few that were near the airport. There was a risk of bird strikes. So we had to drop those. There was another one in Curtin that the community did not feel comfortable having in such close proximity to their residences. We also dropped that one. There will be further announcements in the near future about all the projects that are coming online.

THE CHAIR: Can I just clarify: you said there were three projects ready to commence, a rain garden in Tuggeranong and a rain garden in the lower Molonglo. I think I missed one.

Dr Lane: A wetland in the lower Molonglo and a creek restoration project in Tuggeranong as well.

Mr Gentleman: It is probably worth while just mentioning how we went about the community consultation. Out of all this process we touched base with some 3,000 people in August and September 2016. Out of that we received another 80 submissions as well. Out of that process there were about 188 options that were tested, which led us to the short list of the priority programs that we have in place.

THE CHAIR: And when you say 3,000 people were contacted or consulted and there were a number of submissions, what were the things that you did to consult those people?

Mr Gentleman: There were several workshops. Dr Lane will have all the details.

Dr Lane: We had workshops at all the catchments. There are six priority catchments in the region. We had workshops and information sessions, drop-in information sessions, so that people could come in over a period of a couple of hours, look at the preliminary designs, make their comments, pick up information and then go on to the your say website and post any comments there. And we responded to those comments that were made.

THE CHAIR: Am I right in assuming that it was during that consultation that things such as the bird strikes at the airport and the Curtin residents' views—

Dr Lane: Certainly for the Curtin one, but the bird strike took a bit more investigation. That was really when we started to get down to some of the design work and seeing whether we could mitigate some of those risks. But in conversations with the airport it was fairly clear that we would not get the water quality outcomes we were looking for, so it was probably better to move on to other projects where we could get that better cost-benefit analysis.

THE CHAIR: And the two projects that are underway, the Isabella Pond—

Dr Lane: The Isabella wetlands?

Mr Gentleman: The Isabella Pond, yes.

THE CHAIR: Is mid-2019 their completion date? When are they looking at being completed? I know you have got the finite date for the program, but is it a—

Dr Lane: Those two that are underway now should be finished by about this time next year. They are very large projects, if you have seen them.

MR PARTON: I still do not fully understand how, when you get a large amount of rain, Isabella Pond does not just fill up again.

Mr Gentleman: They have opened the weir.

MR PARTON: But when you look at it, it is an amazing job, isn't it?

Mr Gentleman: Yes, it is fantastic.

Dr Lane: The water will really slow down and dissipate across the channel, and vegetation will take up water. The whole point of it, I guess, is to slow the water down so that sediments drop out of the water as they move through the system and improve the quality.

MR PARTON: If we had had exceptionally high rainfall in this period, would it have become a tougher job?

Dr Lane: In terms of construction?

MR PARTON: Yes.

Dr Lane: Definitely, yes. That is one of the risks that are difficult to manage for—the weather. We have been pretty lucky at this point. We love to see the rain but not extensive periods of rain, because that will really make it difficult, I think, given the time frames.

THE CHAIR: Just to get my head around the technical part of it, it is basically taking out a more formalised structure and putting in place a natural bed? That is essentially what you have done, and that has allowed the water to permeate through?

Dr Lane: That is right, and just making a much larger area for the water to settle in.

THE CHAIR: The holding capacity of it?

Dr Lane: Yes. There is a lot of revegetation work that needs to happen as well, and again the success of that is quite contingent on the climate.

Mr Gentleman: What we have learned from the past is that the stormwater drains have been set above normal aquifers. In the past, prior to European habitation, you would have had a creek bed running down. Monks Creek is a really good example. It comes down from the back of Theodore and down through Isabella, down to the catchment at Isabella weir.

Normally what would have happened is that as a rainstorm occurred the water would have dissipated through the earth into the aquifer and been treated in that sense, but since introducing concrete drains that has not been able to occur. We can get it there when it arrives at Isabella weir and, as Dr Lane said, allow it to spread and allow the water to dissipate into the earth.

MR PARTON: And that is the essence of the project, is it? That is pretty much the guts of it?

Mr Gentleman: Yes, plus the introduction of water plants to clean the water when it is in place.

MS LAWDER: You mentioned a rain garden. Is that the one near Fadden Pines, Chisholm?

Mr Gentleman: It is a different tributary there.

Dr Lane: I am not quite sure.

MS LAWDER: The rain garden one. There was a development application sign up on the corner of Coyne Street and Bugden Avenue about the rain gardens a while ago.

Dr Lane: Possibly that one. I can check on that, for sure.

MS LAWDER: And was the creek restoration the one through Monash?

Dr Lane: I believe it is, but again I will confirm that.

MS LAWDER: I also wanted to add—perhaps you would like to say a few words about it—congratulations to the healthy waterways team for the award you won the other night at the Planning Institute awards.

THE CHAIR: That is right.

Mr Gentleman: Yes, congratulations to the healthy waterways team. They are doing a fantastic job and they are really passionate. The exciting thing is to see the community come on with our team as well. When we launched the CHIP report down at the edge of Stranger Pond, the excitement of the volunteers and our team was really evident. It was great.

MS LE COUTEUR: Could I just talk to you about the community feedback on Curtin. How did you work out that it was bad enough to stop it? I have heard feedback in both directions. I have heard from some near neighbours that that would have been a vast improvement on what was there at present. I am not saying you made the wrong decision, but how did you make it?

Mr Gentleman: It was a judgement call on the amount of value we saw out of the treatment of that particular area and whether or not we could get a similar amount of value out of doing a treatment in another area where the community was not upset about it. I think that is the rationale.

MS LE COUTEUR: And what, if anything, is currently being planned for Yarralumla Creek? Curtin was one that was but clearly is not at this point in time. But further upstream in Lawson, is any of that actually proceeding?

Dr Lane: We have four projects in the Yarralumla catchment. We have a rain garden, a pond and two creek works. A couple of them, obviously, are along Yarralumla Creek, where, as you would probably know, there is quite a lot of deep erosion happening. There is quite a lot of sediment going through that system. That is an area where we really want to try to reduce that sedimentation going into the water.

MS LE COUTEUR: In Lawson? Is that where they are going?

Dr Lane: There is one that is near the equestrian centre.

MS LE COUTEUR: Very much lower Yarralumla Creek.

Dr Lane: Yes. It is a challenging one because there are some heritage considerations to take into account there. We really have to make sure the design is actually going to increase protection of those particular sites. There is a lot of work happening with the consultants now to make sure that we get the right design in there and still get the water quality benefits.

MS LEE: How is the ACT tracking against targets outlined in the ACT water strategy in terms of pollutants?

Mr Gentleman: We recently did the announcement of the CHIP, which is the Waterwatch program. That gave us some pretty good results on the health of our

waterways. The treatment that we are talking about now will greatly improve that health. I had a really good conversation with one of our Waterwatch volunteers. There was an event we did in Heritage Week this year where Aunty Matilda House gave a talk on living at Red Hill camp. She talked about our local Indigenous people, where they would fish on the weekends. They would go to a place called Chain of Ponds, which we believe is around the Dairy Road area, where the wetlands are. In those days there was quite a bit of food available in the Molonglo River. There was a lot of cod and crayfish and freshwater mussels, which we have not seen in our streams since European settlement. I am advised from the conversation with the Waterwatch people that some of the freshwater mussels are coming back in the upper part of the Molonglo. That is a good sign for the territory. But in regard to specifics, I think Dr Lane has the detail.

Dr Lane: The water strategy, striking the balance, is a 30-year strategy, and we have five-year implementation plans. We are just a little past the halfway mark of the first implementation plan and have done a review. There are 18 major actions overall in that implementation plan. Nine have been completed. We have 16 that are ongoing.

MS LEE: Nine have been completed?

Dr Lane: Nine have been completed. Sixteen are ongoing and progressing as planned. There are five actions in progress but with some issues to be addressed. And one action is due for commencement in 2018. Of course, the strategy brings together a lot of the work we are doing in other areas of our water portfolio. For example, healthy waterways is an important component in delivering the water strategy. The minister mentioned Waterwatch, which is also a very important part. The establishment of the cross-border catchment management coordination group was another achievement. That involves the local councils, the NCA, Icon Water, the relevant ACT directorates, and the upper Murrumbidgee catchment community group. Also there is the review of environmental flows that is happening at the moment; that is a really important part of it, and that will contribute to our water resources plan.

The catchment coordination group has been a very important vehicle for the H2OK campaign as well. The different regions have also launched their own campaigns, which is fantastic. It has also been important for progressing conversations across the border; for example, between Icon Water and Queanbeyan-Palerang council on the sewage treatment works, on a joint approach to that. So in terms of cross-border coordination, it is delivering at this stage.

MS LEE: On page 45 of the report, one of the dot points talks about reviewing the Canberra urban lakes and ponds plan of management.

THE CHAIR: Ms Lee, we started off with this line of questioning on the ACT healthy waterways project. If there are no more supplementaries on that, we might move to the next substantive and hold the other stuff till we get back.

MS LEE: Okay.

MR PARTON: With respect to action plans for endangered species, action plans are referred to on page 236. Two action plans have been prepared this year for the scarlet

robin and the pink-tailed worm-lizard. How do you arrive at the destination for those two? Can someone please talk me through that?

Mr Gentleman: Yes. Dr Lane will have all the details for you.

Dr Lane: Is the question about why we have developed action plans for these species?

MR PARTON: How do you identify those two species and how long does it take to prepare that sort of plan? How is it followed through?

Dr Lane: We develop action plans for our threatened species. Those two species are threatened in the ACT.

MR PARTON: How do you know that?

Dr Lane: Because they are quite rare in the landscape and they are under threat. Also, particularly in the case of the scarlet robin, it has been shown that their population is in decline. Over a period of 30 years we have information that the Canberra Ornithologists Group—the COG—has collected, showing that they are in decline. That is a very good reason to look at what the threats are to these species and how we can address and try to mitigate those threats.

With respect to how long they take to produce, they take quite a while. As you can imagine, we need to consider all the information that is out there. Sometimes we need to collect new information. Fortunately, we have a very active community who hold quite a bit of information that we have access to, so that is fantastic. We have another eight or so action plans that are almost completed. They are associated with the natural grasslands. The grasslands strategy is just about finalised, and that includes eight action plans as well. We have quite a few action plans that are current.

MR PARTON: Are these plans proving to be effective? What sorts of results are you expecting out of these action plans?

Dr Lane: We are expecting a reduction in the threats to various species. Often that is about managing the habitat—making sure there is not undue disturbance to these habitats, whether it be through invasive species, plants and animals, or whether it be through appropriate fire regimes, for example, and appropriate grazing regimes.

MR PARTON: There is a limit to what you can do, though, isn't there?

Dr Lane: That is right. There are things that are beyond our control—climate, for example, and sometimes wildfire, flood and things like that. But, as best we can, the action plans formalise a lot of the work that we are already doing. Often all of that work is already funded; it is part of our day-to-day operations. It is not just about informing the people who are doing the work; it informs researchers and people in other jurisdictions as well. So it is a good practice to have action plans for threatened species.

Mr Gentleman: If you have further interest, Mr Parton, if you have a look on the

COG website—canberrabirds.org.au—you can look at particular species that are mapped out over a lot of years, with mapped out areas where the birds actually breed or where they have a bird habitat and where it has been reducing or increasing. It is quite interesting.

MR PARTON: I came across a spotted pardalote on the weekend up at Gibraltar. I am told that some of them nest in the treetops and some have little tunnels in the dirt, and it had a little tunnel in the dirt which was—

THE CHAIR: Did you put that on the nature map?

MR PARTON: No.

THE CHAIR: You should. It is a beautiful photo. I encourage you all to check it out.

MS CHEYNE: I have a lot of questions about kangaroos and culling, and fertility management; that is probably the best term for that. I expect there might be some supplementaries from my colleagues. I note that the controlled species management plan was released in May this year, following a decent amount of consultation. It is quite a detailed management plan, one which I admit I am not really across. I am interested in whether you can talk me through some of the main aspects of it. Are there optimum kangaroo densities for different types of vegetation in the ACT? How are we achieving that or how do we plan to achieve that, through both fertility management and culling, and what are the proportions? I am very aware that the fertility stuff is new and there is a bit of a trial, but I am interested in the long-term plan for that as well. That is a very big question.

Mr Gentleman: I might begin by saying that the plan is endorsed by scientific evidence on the population and the impact that the kangaroo population has, particularly eastern grey kangaroos, on our ACT flora and fauna. The evidence is quite strong that the number of kangaroos that we had in the past really damaged the opportunity for other species to survive and thrive in our nature parks. Dr Lane would have all of the information on that.

Dr Lane: You are right; it is a big question, so I will break it down as much as I can. The kangaroo management plan that was released this year builds on the kangaroo management plan that was released in 2009. That management plan is still current and this one adds to that. Since that time there has been quite a lot of research undertaken. The new management plan incorporates all of the new research.

MS CHEYNE: Was I reading that there have been eight reports?

Dr Lane: Yes, and most of them have been done locally, on our own species here. That is an important point. There are some new arrangements there whereby the land manager of public lands—that is, the parks and conservation service—has to implement the plan, which means it needs to manage the kangaroos on its land, essentially. Other aspects include the humane treatment of kangaroos and updating that, making sure that that is current as well. Otherwise, essentially, the policies in that kangaroo management plan are the same as those from 2009.

There is an indicative density of kangaroos for different ecosystems. I say “indicative” because we are still continuing to research, and sometimes it is difficult to get a handle on the relationships between the flora and fauna that we are studying and the kangaroo density because there is such variation between years and there is such variation between sites as well—the vegetation characteristics, the soil type et cetera. Also the land use history has a big impact, and what other land uses have been. Some sites degrade; some do not. It is very difficult to ascertain that cause and effect. We do know that vegetation structure is very important for a number of species, and particularly some of our threatened species—for example, the reptiles. Having a structure that is conducive to their shelter, habitat, nesting and so on is really important. That is something that we pay close attention to.

We do kangaroo counts every year in selected reserves, in those that we think may have excessive numbers of kangaroos. In those counts, and in considering numbers to cull, we also consider the climate. Has it been a wet year or a dry year? In wetter years, where there is more grass, we would want to retain more kangaroos in the landscape because kangaroos are very important in the ecosystem. They are very important for manipulating that structure I talked about, and the diversity. So we certainly want to retain them as the primary grazers in our reserves.

MS CHEYNE: Do you do a count and then after the count say, “Okay, in these different parts we think that to get to that indicative, optimum level, we need to cull X number”?

Dr Lane: That is correct. We are showing that, with consistent culling over time, we need to cull less. There might be some reserves now where we might not cull at all because the population is at a level where we believe it is probably at an optimum for the health of the ecosystem.

MS CHEYNE: With the fertility trial—and from reading that, even though it is in quite small numbers, it has been quite effective, both the hand delivered and the dart one—I think I read in a document that it can be hard to administer this fertility drug, particularly in trying to capture kangaroos. Is the dart controlled way easier to administer? If the trial continues to be successful, is it likely that we will continue to see it become a greater tool in terms of managing kangaroo numbers in the ACT?

Dr Lane: Certainly, dart delivery is more efficient, but we are still working on refining that, because, as well as darting the kangaroo you also need to mark the kangaroo so that you know that it has been darted. At this point the manufacturers or the designers have not been able to come up with a dart that can carry both the vaccine and the marker in the same dart.

MR PARTON: Face recognition for kangaroos!

MS CHENYE: So you can use the dart but you still have to capture them at some stage to—

Dr Lane: No; what we have been doing is having two shooters—one shoots the dart and one shoots the marker, almost simultaneously.

MS CHEYNE: Is it ultimately more efficient, if you have to have two people?

Dr Lane: Possibly not; that is why we are continuing to work on refining this dart. If that can happen then it will be more efficient. You are right; it is very effective in both hand injected and dart delivered. At least 80 per cent of females are rendered infertile for a number of years. We are still continuing to collect information to determine for how many years, but in the past the trials have shown it has been for up to eight years. In the next couple of years we will go back to the three sites that have been treated and pick up any females that were missed. Probably the next stage is just to continue to collect information and to refine the dart. It could then be used, particularly on small populations, to manage those populations. The next challenge for that trial would be to also see how well it can work on larger areas and larger populations. So it is a work in progress, but I think that, over time, it can be used in an increasing number of sites and reduce the need for culling in those sites.

MS CHEYNE: I also read in the management plan that, with most kangaroos which are culled, their meat is used for fox baiting and things like that in the ACT; otherwise the carcasses are buried. Where are they buried?

Mr Gentleman: I do not think it would be appropriate to talk about the location.

MS CHEYNE: Could we talk about it more generally? Are they buried in a range of locations or is there a big grave for kangaroo carcasses somewhere? Do carcasses have any environmental benefit?

Dr Lane: I might hand over to Daniel.

Mr Iglesias: In relation to where they are buried, we can say that they are in a spot where we can safely dispose of them and which will not cause us any issues in the future. For the safety of the program we do not like to disclose exactly where it is.

MS CHEYNE: I understand that.

Mr Iglesias: What was the second part of your question?

MS CHEYNE: Do the carcasses have any environmental benefit?

Mr Iglesias: Yes, they do. In fact, recent work that we have done suggests that where carcasses are left out in situ they actually have a localised effect. Lots of invertebrates, for example, appreciate the nutrients, which in turn provides food for birds. Where we can we do leave them; we do let them lie. But as far as the kangaroo cull is concerned, we do pick them all up. We like to account for them all, just to be sure that everything has gone as it should have with the actual animal. In relation to roadkill, for example, most of them end up in nature reserves and their nutrients are recycled.

MS CHEYNE: Really? If a kangaroo is killed on Gungahlin Drive, does a ranger take it to Mount Painter or to a nature reserve for other animals to eat?

Mr Iglesias: Effectively. We will be sensible about the spot. In some instances that is absolutely the case. In other instances, for example, on the Tuggeranong Parkway, we

might move them to the side of the road or a little bit in. They are still in the environment and they are still serving a purpose if it is not in a nature reserve.

MS LEE: This might be just a clarifying question because I am not sure if 100 per cent understood what you were saying here. On page 51, under the subheading ‘Kangaroo fertility control research’ you have got that in July 2016 there was a 90 per cent success rate in preventing breeding in the following year of the female kangaroos that were vaccinated. Then when you go further down it says:

Results so far for the second year indicate ... 100 per cent ...

Are you talking about the same kangaroos? In the first year some had joeys but then in the second it looks like none did or are you talking about a new set of kangaroos? Sorry, I am just a bit confused.

Mr Gentleman: Which para was it again?

MS LEE: The fourth paragraph down on that page, minister, on the left-hand side of page 51, the one that says “Kangaroo fertility control research”. Sorry, I am just confused about whether you were talking about the same 54 female kangaroos. In the first year they had a 90 per cent success rate but then in the second year it is looking like it is 100 or whether you are talking about a completely new group of kangaroos.

Mr Gentleman: The first one was dart injections and the second one was hand injections, I think.

Dr Lane: Yes that is correct.

MS LEE: I get that bit but then it goes on to say:

Results so far for the second year indicate ... 100 per cent ...

Does that mean all of them, as in dart and hand injected, or is it—

MS CHEYNE: I think in the first year 87 per cent did not have a baby. Of those that were injected in that same year, by year two none of them had a baby.

MS LEE: That is what I mean. Is it the same group of kangaroos?

Dr Lane: It is the same group. I think we went back and picked up, got the couple that—

MS LEE: The supplementary that I have is in relation to kangaroo management in urban areas like Red Hill reserve, that type of thing, because we have heard stories of people who have come across some aggressive kangaroos. They are obviously not able to go and shoot them or anything. What management plan is in place for managing kangaroos in the urban areas?

Mr Iglesias: Living in the bush capital we have all sorts of encounters with all sorts of animals. You mention people coming across—

Mr Gentleman: The environment minister had an encounter, I think.

Mr Iglesias: A kangaroo is not a naturally aggressive animal. In fact all the attacks, the very few attacks that we have—and I am speaking nationally now—of kangaroos on humans have been when a human has disturbed a kangaroo. For example, a golfer looking for a golf ball has come across a kangaroo and the female has misinterpreted.

In the case of the Red Hill Nature reserve it is widely known that kangaroos are there. And what we say to people is just be mindful. If you are with a dog on the lead, usually it means that the kangaroo will be long gone but still the possibility is there that you can surprise it. The best thing to do is just stop and turn around. The kangaroo is not going to want to come at you. It will only feel as if it has to do that if it has been completely surprised. Typically our urban wildlife rangers provide this sort of advice to people all the time.

MS LEE: It is more of a public education strategy?

Mr Iglesias: Absolutely.

MS LEE: What was the cost of the cull this year and how does it compare to previous years?

Mr Iglesias: In the interests of accuracy I think I might give this to Mr Spencer

Mr Spencer: The figures in relation to the cull are being finalised at the moment. It does take some time for those figures to flow through the financials and we are very careful to make sure that we do the calculations on those right. That will take a little more time. I would suggest probably in the next month or so we will have the figures.

MS LEE: And in terms of the cost of the vaccinations, do you have those figures or are they also—

Mr Spencer: No, not at hand.

MS LEE: Do you have them available so that you can take it on notice or—

Mr Spencer: What we have got budgeted—

Dr Lane: The total budget for the fertility control project trial is \$930,000 but that is over a number of years. There is \$243,000 for this financial year, the one that we are in currently. But that covers all aspects: research, staff time planning, field work, a vehicle, importing the vaccine plus the equipment for the trials.

MS LEE: And how many kangaroo vaccinations is that budget based on?

Dr Lane: That is the number that we have to date, 145 or thereabouts.

MR PARTON: I just want to ask: if we had done no management of kangaroo populations, if we had done no culling, if we had done none of the fertility stuff, if we

had done nothing—it is a hypothetical—where would we be at in some of these locations? What is your belief of what the consequences would have been?

Mr Gentleman: We certainly would have had a dramatic loss of native flora and fauna, particularly impacting on endangered species. Dr Lane will give you some more information but I might ask Mr Iglesias to come back. We went for a walk with rangers just the other day at Symonston across from the Alexander Maconochie Centre. It is a controlled site. And the flora there is a lot different from other areas because it has not had much European grazing, if you like. The whole structure of the earth and the structure of the vegetation is different and the native species are coming back into that area because we have retained it as a nature park, if you like.

Daniel, just on Symonston and then we will go back to the—

Mr Iglesias: In some of our grassland areas, such as the one the minister describes, kangaroos are part of the landscape. But if you have taken out the top predator, kangaroo populations can increase and they can keep increasing and only be limited by the amount of feed that is available to them.

In your scenario, an area like Symonston, if there were no culling, could look very barren indeed, potentially. I think what is quite relevant is the Auditor-General in, I think it was 2015, undertook an investigation into Canberra nature park and all the hills and ridges around Canberra, some of our most accessible nature reserves. And one of the key threatening processes she identified was overgrazing by kangaroos.

Effectively, when we have systems that are sensitive to overgrazing, if we do not control these animals, if we just let them go, what we will find is that in certain years, when the environment just does not decide to play ball, for example when we are in drought, these animals will denude large areas of landscape. And some of the animals you mentioned earlier would directly suffer as a result.

Dr Lane: Just to add to that, I think the other thing we would find is that kangaroos would be coming more and more into the urban area and grazing on our sporting fields for example because, of course, kangaroos love shortish green grass. That is their preferred feed. I think we would probably get a lot complaints about kangaroos in playing areas, playing fields and so on.

MS LEE: In 2014 I think there was a report by CSIRO on some research on the correlation between kangaroos and vegetation. Did the directorate commission that report, and what were the findings? Has there been any further research undertaken in that area?

Dr Lane: Yes we did commission that report, on a couple of years data that we had collected. The findings of the report were varied but they did find a positive relationship between the richness and diversity of the ground layer, the herb layer, and a low kangaroo density. From zero to two kangaroos per hectare for example, that increased richness and diversity. Above that they could not find a relationship. They also found a relationship between the density of kangaroos and, as I mentioned before, the structure of the grass layer. Increasing kangaroo density reduced the height of the grass and reduced that structural diversity that is quite important.

But I think something that the report has really pointed to is just the complexities or the difficulty in finding a cause and effect relationship in ecological systems over short periods and over different sites. I think probably they indicated that climate and variability play a big role also. They made some recommendations actually about changing the survey design. We took that up and are now looking at the off-take of kangaroos—how much grass they actually take off, how much they actually eat—and trying to relate that to density. We are getting some results there. We are showing that the more grassed areas of a particular height and palatability, the more they will eat. That is an important finding.

We have collected another two years of information and we are now just going through an internal review of the analysis of that information.

THE CHAIR: Ms Cheyne, did that cover your concern?

MS CHEYNE: I will quickly clarify. The Animal Justice Party yesterday released a media release referring to this report. I am not really sure why it has come to their attention three years later but that is not for me to make any assumptions about. But within the media release they did say that the government is dismissing fertility control as an alternative to the killing. I think I heard the opposite today but I just wonder if you could please state for the record: is the government dismissing fertility control?

Mr Gentleman: Certainly not. As you have heard, we are still looking at the options for fertility control. We have had some very good learnings from that. The issue is that we are not confident yet that it can take the place of the cull. Of course, the numbers involved mean that we need to ensure that we have a sustainable population to ensure that our flora and fauna is kept at a level that is acceptable and that we can look after endangered species as well.

MS CHEYNE: And particularly with trying to get the dart so that it brands the kangaroo; I do not know how these things work.

Mr Gentleman: Marks.

MS CHEYNE: Marks them in some way as well as injecting the vaccine. Do we have funding available? You said we are working with the makers to do that but are we providing them funding to try to get them to do that or are they just doing it off their own bat because it would be useful elsewhere?

Dr Lane: No. We are funding them to do that. We will call them designers, dart designers. I do not know.

MS CHEYNE: And is that part of the \$900,000 over a few years and the \$200,000-something this year?

Dr Lane: That is correct.

MS LAWDER: My question relates to the Heritage Council. In the annual report on

page 234 it says there are currently 108 places or objects on the nomination list. Last year's annual report said that there were 136, so it is reduced by 28 this year. At this rate, it will take about five years just to clear the backlog that is on the heritage nomination list. What is the reason for the slow progress for clearing the backlog; and what strategy has the directorate or Heritage Council introduced that has helped clear some cases but will help to clear the rest of the backlog?

Mr Gentleman: They do fantastic work. Our Heritage Council does a lot of listings that are put forward to them to have a look at over time. Many of them can be the same area or the same idea but with several sub-listings underneath. We are trying to assist them as much as possible. There are some more appointees coming forward for the council itself. Mr Ponton will have some more information on it.

Mr Ponton: I will ask my colleagues to provide some further details shortly, but it is important to note that whilst we have reduced the number of nominations by that 28 to 30, there were also during that time additional nominations. It is not just a case where we have dealt with only 28; we have dealt with the others that are coming through.

MS LAWDER: I did not suggest that only 28 had been dealt with.

Mr Ponton: No. I just wanted to make that point. The other thing to keep in mind is the work that is involved in dealing with a nomination. Some nominations are much more complicated than others, simply because of the research that is required to ascertain whether or not there is any heritage value and, if there is heritage value, against which criteria we need to make the assessment or the nomination.

In terms of the particular strategies that have been put in place, I might ask Ms O'Connell to comment.

Ms O'Connell: Each year, the council put together a priority list of what nominations they will look to assess over the next 12 months. As Mr Ponton said, new nominations come in all the time. They determine that priority list on a range of issues. They will look at places that have an impending development threat or where there might be land release coming up. They will look at places where there might be a thematic gap in the register. They might think that there are not enough Aboriginal scar trees on the register and look at prioritising some of those.

They will look at assessing like-for-like places. The way the heritage assessment process works is that to determine if something is unique, for example, you need to look at like-for-like places. They might bundle up all the rural homesteads and do all the historical background research; that helps speed things up as well. There are also other factors that come into play. They will look at the chance of appeals: if we only chose ones that had a high risk of appeal, we would need additional resources to run those appeals, so we stagger those out. They look to include some precincts each year as well, to give owners certainty. They are the general criteria they use for determining priorities.

They used to do it by calendar year, but we have recently changed that. In 2006, they looked at 31 nominations that were included for priority assessment. While they made 32 decisions during that year, only 11 of those were for places on the priority list. The

remaining 21 decisions were for new nominations that came in: they had more urgency about them; they might have been a development threat or such. So sometimes those nominations within the priority list fall to the bottom of the pile, if you like, because of new urgent nominations.

MS LAWDER: Are you able to provide us with the list of this year's priorities that are on the list?

Ms O'Connell: Yes, we can do that.

MS LAWDER: How many do you expect to clear in this coming financial year that we are in at the moment?

Ms O'Connell: I am just having a quick look.

Mr Gentleman: While we are looking up the detail there, I can advise that, of course, the council provides advice to the directorate in regard to heritage appeals. With anything that is going to ACAT, the council provides that advice. Their workload is widespread.

MS LAWDER: I think I asked about resourcing earlier this year, whether the council was adequately resourced. I note that in last year's annual reports hearing, which was earlier this year, recommendation 14 of the committee said:

The Committee recommends the Minister for the Environment and Heritage report to the Committee during its 2016-17 annual report hearings on staffing levels within ACT Heritage and whether they are still adequate to meet statutory requirements under the *Heritage Act 2004*.

I could not find it specifically in the annual report. Are you able to point me to where the staffing levels and this recommendation might be covered in the annual report or are you able to provide me with a verbal update now?

Ms O'Connell: I do not think staffing levels are necessarily specified in the annual report, but we have a staffing level of 11.34 FTEs; that is a head count of 14, so there are a few part-time staff as well. As we mentioned, ACT Heritage provides operational support to the Heritage Council, which is an independent statutory body. Their main function is to provide decisions on heritage nominations and provide advice on planning matters and development applications.

We undertake a range of delegations for the Heritage Council so that they can focus on making registration decisions. Most of the heritage advice and approvals are provided under delegation; the more complex, meaty matters will go to the DA task force. There is the council and then it breaks off into task forces. There is a DA task force and a register task force. That is a way to make the workload more efficient so that decisions can be made before council meetings.

We are above target on our DA advice. Our target is quite high, at 90 per cent; we are usually 91 or 92 per cent on that. In terms of the nominations, we are reducing those at the rate of other jurisdictions throughout Australia, other states and territories. We

are not falling under the number of decisions they are making.

The nominations are complex, particularly when you add precincts into those. You could be looking at 200 to 300 individual blocks. Each house has to be assessed for integrity; the history of that place individually has to be looked at as well. Then you also need to look at making heritage guidelines if the place is registered, which goes out to public consultation.

Heritage has recently moved into the environment division, and there are some really good synergies there. For example, within environment, there is the capital works area. They are now coordinating some of the capital works projects, which has freed up staff a little and taken the pressure off there, which can give more focus in assessing nominations.

Mr Ponton: When I took on this role in April, I had a conversation, mindful of the previous concerns about the nominations in heritage, with Dr Lane. In addition to the proposal to bring heritage to the environment division so that we could capitalise on the skill sets to free up some capability, I reallocated some funds to provide for a senior manager of the area. At the moment a SOGB level is the most senior person. We are bringing in, and it is yet to be advertised, a senior officer grade A at the senior manager level, as I said, to provide some more strategic capability within that team. We are very mindful of the need to continue to build that capability.

MS LAWDER: I am just about finished. I think I spoke before about the accountability indicators and that they do not appear to provide a lot of clarity about the work. Have you looked at better accountability indicators? For example, there is one about assessing within a statutory time frame, which is 100 per cent, which is fantastic—congratulations—but it does not talk about the number, how long they may have been on the register, and things that—

Mr Gentleman: I can give you some numbers, Ms Lawder, if you would like.

MS LAWDER: I am not asking specifically about the numbers, I am asking about whether you are going to develop new or different accountability indicators?

Mr Gentleman: The indicator for those statutory DAs is 15 working days. I think that is a pretty good time now.

MS LAWDER: Yes. We talked last year a lot about Oaks Estate, which had been hanging around for a long time. This year, you have had one for—I think Mr Gentleman might have mentioned it—St Joseph's church in O'Connor, which you have gotten through within 12 months, which is fantastic. I am just trying to understand the differences. Why was it so important to get St Joseph's through?

Mr Gentleman: I do not think it is necessarily the importance; it is the amount of secondary work that has been done, you will remember, from when I was replying to you earlier on. There might be one aspect of a heritage submission, if you like, but it may have 20 or 30 subsets within that, whereas something like St Joseph's might be a much simpler prospect to have a look at. But there is an incredible lot of work they are doing within their statutory time frames, which I think is quite impressive.

MR LAWDER: Sure. I said congratulations.

Mr Ponton: And in terms of the accountability indicators more broadly, certainly that is something across the directorate that I will be looking to do in the coming period.

MS LE COUTEUR: I was wondering how you assess Indigenous heritage as part of the heritage assessments?

Ms O'Connell: Any place or object can be nominated to the heritage register, including Aboriginal places and objects.

MS LE COUTEUR: If you do it mainly only for things that have been nominated, what about new suburbs going out? Are you involved in those at all?

Ms O'Connell: Yes, definitely. The Heritage Act provides protection for all Aboriginal places and objects, whether they are known about or not known about. When we register an Aboriginal place or object on the heritage register, these are the really special places that we want to highlight that are important to the Aboriginal community. They might be scar trees, corroboree grounds or really significant artefacts. But all places are protected.

Within the land development system, in the greenfield context, there is a process where, first, a cultural heritage assessment is undertaken. A developer will engage a consultant who will develop that report. It is a desktop study and an initial on-the-ground survey. They involve our representative Aboriginal groups; they are required to be consulted in relation to those. Quite often they go out with the consultant or archaeologist to do those walk overs.

The next stage is an excavation permit. Within that cultural heritage assessment, they will identify potential areas of archaeological importance; they then apply for an excavation permit to do some subsurface testing. Again, RAOs go out and are involved, usually, in the digs. The final report goes to them before it is submitted to the Heritage Council for approval.

MS LE COUTEUR: So it is based on things you dig up? Do you consider sacred sites and songlines and how the current Indigenous inhabitants can still interact with the landscape?

Ms O'Connell: We have not registered any songlines as such, but certainly cultural landscapes are registered.

MS LE COUTEUR: That would be sacred sites, initiation sites?

Ms O'Connell: Yes. Corroboree grounds, all those things, yes.

MS LE COUTEUR: So we have got some of those actually registered?

Ms O'Connell: The corroboree ground at Oaks Estate, along the Molonglo River, is a current provisional registration. That is about to have a final decision at the next

council meeting next week. They will decide whether or not to make a final registration on that.

MS LE COUTEUR: Would it be possible—I am asking on notice—to find out how many sacred sites, corroboree sites, songlines and things at sites, as distinct from diggings, have been registered?

Ms O’Connell: Yes. We can get that information.

Mr Gentleman: The one that I talked about earlier, with Matilda House and the Red Hill camp, is a good example of that. We have retained that area and it is actually signposted, so you can go there and have a look and understand. There is an interpretative sign that tells you how they used to live there at that time.

MS LEE: Minister, does the government have any plans to update the Heritage (Representative Aboriginal Organisations) Declaration 2006?

Mr Gentleman: We have a look at it every once in a while, and see which bodies might be able to provide more information for us.

MS LEE: Okay. What do mean by every once in a while? Is that every couple of years?

Mr Gentleman: Yes.

MS LEE: Is it a requirement for Aboriginal organisations to be registered with the register?

Mr Gentleman: I think it is.

Ms O’Connell: The RAOs are declared by the minister under the Heritage Act. There are four RAO groups that are registered. The RAO system was looked into during the review of the Heritage Act when amendments were made in 2014. The consensus was that the RAO system is working well, so we have not looked to make major changes to that. The more RAOs that perhaps would come on board would mean a change to the system, essentially, because the way the system works currently is that all RAO groups must be consulted. As I was talking about before, that often means they go out on site and undertake surveys. While the Heritage Act does not specify that they are remunerated, part of that process is that they are for their time, because it is significant time for them to do that. So, if you had 20 RAO groups, you would definitely need to change the whole system.

MS LEE: Separation distance guidelines for air emissions are referred to on page 45 of the report. What stage is that up to? It says it was preparing the draft separation distance guidelines.

Dr Lane: I believe we will be going out for consultation on those guidelines at some stage next year. I cannot say definitely, but they are in the final stages. It just depends on the time frames for consultation and whether we can squeeze that in before the end of this year.

MS LEE: In terms of consulting with the various stakeholders, as you have mentioned, the report mentions developers, the business sector, government agencies and the community. Did that take place before the draft was done, or is that going to happen with the consultation?

Dr Lane: It has already happened.

MS LEE: Is the consultation that is about to take place next year broader, with the public, or is that with the same groups to make sure that you have captured—

Dr Lane: I think it would probably be both. We would go back to targeted stakeholders but also make it open to the public.

Mr Gentleman: It is interesting how the community evolves over time. As you know, we are doing the burn right campaign to educate people on the right way to use wood heaters, for example, so that we do not have too much particulate dropping into the inversion layer. I have noticed that a number of outdoor retailers are now providing outdoor burning facilities, log fires and these sorts of things, that we have no control over at the moment. It will be interesting to see the monitoring as we go into the next winter, to test what the particulate level is for wood smoke in the ACT and see whether it has grown with this new idea of burning outside.

MS LEE: Has there been any consultation with the firewood suppliers in that regard?

Mr Gentleman: No, I do not think that we have got to that yet. From what I have noticed, it appears to be a new component in retailing to try to sell another product. I do not know how much it is being used. I suppose we get an idea from retail sales, but then it may well sit in the backyard and not be used. It depends how many people use them. I think the air testing will show us.

MS LEE: On those guidelines that we were just talking about, I suppose “guidelines” suggests that they will not have any sort of power in terms of enforceability or anything. Is it more designed to be a public education tool?

Mr Gentleman: Yes, very much so. But we do have controls over wood heaters in new homes, of course, and that is important too. It may be that we need to strengthen those guidelines in the future. I think we will have a look at what we get in environment emissions during the next winter and judge from there.

MS LE COUTEUR: Let us move to page 68, which is the Molonglo River park plan of management. Community consultation on this started in 2013, from memory, but it has not yet been finalised. Could you let us know what has caused the delay and when it is likely to be finalised?

Dr Lane: Yes, it has been a while. There has been additional information that has been collected. We have also done a fair bit of work in establishing some of the parameters around rehabilitation of those areas, and there have also been some discussions around the buffer edge that is required to Kama Nature Reserve. But we do intend to go out for consultation in the very near future. Mr Iglesias can tell us

more.

Mr Iglesias: We are preparing advice to the minister, which we believe will go up before the end of the year, that will hopefully see the plan go out for public comment shortly thereafter.

MS LE COUTEUR: Quite an amount of work has been done in this area, the Molonglo River park. How is it appropriate for all this to happen when you are developing Molonglo around it without a plan of management?

Mr Iglesias: The process that we have looked at for lower Molonglo has been a different one; it has been an adaptive process. For the first time, I think, in the territory's history, our management planning has actually kept pace with development so that we can influence at the margins exactly the nature of the area to be reserved and, vice versa, respond to the realities of land development. That has seen some great wins on both sides. What that has meant is that we have relied on adaptive management. We have accepted from the outset that, as we develop the area, we are not going to wait till it is all finished before we do a management plan; we will do it at the same time. That has meant that the management plan has been able to "learn" from our adaptive management.

We have created a document in the past couple of years which is effectively an adaptive management plan. It is not a statutory management plan but it informs our operational response and can then be used as one of a series of documents, together with a management plan, that can see us deliver some good outcomes for the lower Molonglo.

I will give you an example. That part of the Molonglo River park which is completed, which is Wright and Coombs, has already had some good decisions made about recreational management. We have been able to put some shelters and some viewing points in. We have been able to make decisions about the alignment of walking trails and the spots that we want to highlight as key recreational focus points in those areas. We have been able to do that because we have had this adaptive management plan. It has also informed our thinking in developing the actual management plan.

Mr Gentleman: You have probably seen some other work we have done along the edge there too with the Barrer Hill work. This is where we are looking at removing trees from urban areas that are a danger to the urban area, or some trees that have fallen in parkland, and reinstalling them at Barrer Hill as native habitat. It is working a treat, actually. Native birds and wildlife are using those trees as habitat already. It is a good learning.

MS LE COUTEUR: I still do not really understand why it is better to not plan in advance. The cynical view of what you have said would be that you are saying it is adapting to what the development people want to do. You say there are some wins on both sides. Are there any wins on the sides of the parks and the conservation? From what you have said it could easily be interpreted that you are being squeezed all the way by land development. That is an easy interpretation of what you have said. It may not be correct, but maybe you could give us some more examples as to why that interpretation is not correct, because that is what it sounds like.

Mr Gentleman: There is a reality that land development started along the Molonglo River in 1927. A major lake was filled in 1964, which was a big intrusion on the original Molonglo corridor. What we are doing now, as Daniel said, is adaptive: understanding what has happened previously, learning from that and putting in place plans for the future to ensure that we get the best outcomes we can, with development.

MS LE COUTEUR: Nonetheless there has been significant development in that area in the past five or six years that—

Mr Gentleman: In the past 100 years a whole city along the river—

MS LE COUTEUR: We have done some planning, I think, in the past hundred years.

Mr Ponton: It may help to clarify that, in terms of the area that is being developed, the Territory Plan, the National Capital Plan amendment before that and the strategic assessment essentially set the development boundary. So the risk of development intruding into environmentally sensitive areas has been addressed. Now it is getting down to the detail of how we manage the area that will be outside the development area.

Mr Iglesias: It is more about the boundary of the development. In fact that has been said. In the development being decided we have made a commitment to the commonwealth that we would protect x hectares. That is not in question.

MS LE COUTEUR: It did sound like it was, from what you said.

Mr Iglesias: No. What I was trying to articulate, not very well, was that when you have development happening at the same time that you are developing a park, you get benefits. I will give you an example. With some of the stormwater control that is being developed as part of the development precinct, we have been able to speak to the developers and say, “You know, that solution you have got might end up causing erosion downstream in the park, so why don’t we take the opportunity to address the issue now as opposed to waiting for it to happen.” We can do that because we have got those people operating at the same time we are operating.

It is very much a case of finding synergies. Similarly, in relation to protecting pink-tailed worm-lizard habitat, we have been able to have efficiencies in the way that we can protect the habitat by thinking about contractors and materials that are used in common on both sides of the fence, but to the benefit of the territory by getting efficiencies there as well. It is that sort of benefit. In the past, where nature reserves have been dedicated in the ACT it has been the bits that have been left behind after development. That is not the case in Molonglo; it is a much better way to do it.

Dr Lane: While we have not had a public management plan in place, there certainly have been plans, more at an operational level and a strategic level in trying to implement some of the things that we have learned. We have learned some fantastic things in this particular park, innovative things for rehabilitation that are incorporated into the management plan. So I guess in some ways it has been quite a benefit. But we are certainly intending to get that out as soon as we can.

MS LE COUTEUR: You earlier said you thought this year.

Dr Lane: Yes, that is the intention.

MS LE COUTEUR: That will be a draft plan for public comment? I am wondering what will actually go out.

Dr Lane: It would be a draft plan for public comment, yes.

THE CHAIR: I would like to talk a little bit about weeds.

Mr Gentleman: Always topical.

THE CHAIR: I am tossing up between healthy country and weeds. I want to talk about both, but maybe someone else can ask about healthy country. I want to get a bit better idea of some of the spending you have done on weed control and how you see that helping with the overall biodiversity within the region. Page 62 highlights quite a big investment in invasive weed control, and I think there are a few bits on page 64 on biosecurity—new and emerging weeds. Can you take me through a little bit about what you have been doing over the past year to manage weeds within Canberra?

Mr Gentleman: Firstly, let me say that we get input from our weeds advisory group, and parks and conservation prioritise control works to protect high conservation value sites from invasive weeds that pose the highest risk. Whilst we look at those sites that are within parks and cons, we also work on the rural fringe, with our rural landholders. Some of them do fantastic work and some do not. One of our rural landholders that spoke to me earlier this year said that he was bitterly disappointed that he and his wife spent so much time on their particular block, but the leaseholder next door did not do anything, and it was very hard for them to keep up with that work. I am pleased to see that he and his partner are doing that work. We had \$2.2 million spent on weed control contracts in 2016-17 and 5,000 hours of operational control work was undertaken by parks staff, and a similar amount of time by Parkcare volunteers, in controlling invasive weed species.

Mr Iglesias: With the review that I quoted to you, Mr Parton, I think I attributed it to the Auditor-General. That was a mistake. It was actually the Commissioner for Sustainability and the Environment. Another key threatening process is environmental weeds. Being an urban centre, there are potentially literally hundreds of weeds that can get into our protected areas. We prioritise them into what we call our environmental weeds operational plan, which is available online, and it outlines line by line all the weeds we are going to manage, where they are and how much we think it will cost us. As the minister said, that is a commitment and an investment of over \$2 million per year.

We cannot get every single weed in the place—it is just impossible—so we prioritise them. We know the ones that are of the highest environmental concern; African lovegrass is one of them. We are in a similar sort of environmental niche as southern Africa and a lot of the weeds from similar environmental niches find their way into Australia and take off. It is a similar story with some Argentinean weeds. It is a big

problem. African lovegrass has spread from the south to the north. It is about controlling the key sites and keeping it out of some of our most precious grassland areas. We preserve a larger amount of grassland area than anyone else in Australia, so it is really important that we keep it clean of weeds. African lovegrass is one of them.

Dr Lane: I will add that our community groups are really critical in managing our weeds, our Parkcare groups in particular. They have their weed days where they go out and spray weeds and so on. Other parts of the environment division are also involved in weed management: our natural resource management programs and our rural services. Invasive weeds are a key threatening process and therefore we need to manage that threat in order to protect our threatened species. Our environmental grants and our rural grants programs also give money to community groups to manage weeds, so there is quite a bit of other spending on weeds as well.

Mr Gentleman: I am glad Mr Parton has a passion for African lovegrass. It follows on from Val Jeffery's passion for African lovegrass in his area of Tharwa.

MR PARTON: Very much so. We had conversations in the past.

Mr Gentleman: Yes, you would have.

MS CHEYNE: The *Canberra Times* reported a few days ago about how the NCA—I know you are not the NCA and that it is a federal responsibility—will be using goats around Lake Burley Griffin to deal with blackberries. I know kangaroos are good at keeping the grass down and that we have other animals that help, but are we going to be investing in any South African Boer goats?

Mr Iglesias: If the NCA can demonstrate that they can control their goats then we will—

MS CHEYNE: Is that the issue: that we think we might have goats roaming around?

Mr Iglesias: It is a great initiative to give it a go. If we can keep them in a confined area, if they are not just a run-of-the-mill nanny goat but goats that have been accustomed to doing this and have been brought up for this purpose, if you like—trained a little bit—maybe they do have an application. There are certainly areas that we manage that are extremely isolated—they are goat country, so they are very difficult to get to.

Mr Gentleman: There are some new technologies, as I say. I am not sure whether committee members have noticed this, but on the edge of the arboretum there is some fantastic lawn and the arboretum staff have purchased a lawnmower which is remote controlled and runs on tracks. It can actually mow on a very steep slope and the operator stands well back, probably a hundred metres away, and operates the mower going up and down the very steep slope. So there are technologies that are available, too.

MS LE COUTEUR: Is that under the eagle's nest?

Mr Gentleman: Where I saw it, it was actually very close to the—

MS LE COUTEUR: Village centre?

Mr Gentleman: The entertainment arena.

MS CHEYNE: In short, we will be watching carefully how the NCA's trial goes.

Dr Lane: We watch with interest.

MS LAWDER: I have been a passionate weed questioner for a few years, so I did not want to miss the opportunity. With respect to whisky grass and coolatai grass, do you have a risk management plan for them? Are they already in the ACT and, if so, where?

Mr Iglesias: We have had—this is from memory, so I will check my answer after I provide it—an outbreak of coolatai grass which necessitated a pretty quick response to get on top of it. I think it required us to visit some homes and get to the bottom of where the home owners were able to get the stock from. I might stand corrected but I believe it was coolatai grass. At this stage we do not have either of those two species in our parks. It tends to be in these sorts of situations that they see the light of day, in people's yards.

Sometimes nursery people in good faith just are not aware of it, or it turns out that a plant is identified as a potential weed subsequent to it being already available in the nursery business. We work very closely with our local nurseries; we have a really good relationship. They are very receptive to getting advice from us with respect to looking at their stock and maybe thinking twice. In relation to a specific management action plan, I do not think we have one for either of those two.

Mr Gentleman: To add to your lexicon, Ms Lawder, some of the new incursions that PCS and city services are looking at are Mexican feather grass, fireweed, madeira vine, moth plant, bridal creeper and African fountain grass.

MS LAWDER: What about Shasta daisy outbreaks in national parks? Is that happening, too?

Mr Iglesias: Yes. That one comes up probably annually. We discover little pockets of it up in the alpine areas. Again we have a biosecurity-type response. Once we find it or a walker says that they have seen it, we will deploy our people and they will try to eliminate it. In those situations we are eliminating. With a lot of weeds they have jumped the gun and it is about control, but with the Shasta daisy example, we can still eliminate it if we get there early enough. We have also helped our New South Wales colleagues to get rid of daisies over the border. It is in our interest to keep them out of our parks across the border.

MS LE COUTEUR: Can I ask a bit more broadly about strategies? We talked about a number of specific weeds. Do you develop an overall weed control strategy? I assume you do.

Mr Iglesias: Yes.

MS LE COUTEUR: For a period of time?

Mr Iglesias: The current weed strategy is valid until 2019. It is on the website. It broadly identifies the key risks across the territory. It looks to engage with the public and say, “We think it’s these; what do you think? This is our proposed response; this is what we’re going to rely on. This is where we think there are opportunities for you to help us.” It is that high level stuff that we do. It is a useful process to challenge the community to help us in operationalising the strategy. It basically guides our thinking for the next 10-year period.

Mr Gentleman: It is worth while noting too—and I talked a little about new technology earlier—that we have got smart maps on the website now that show all the invasive weed control areas. You can go to the biosecurity section of the EPSD website and have a look there. Some of the tools we have used in mapping have included drones. We have been able to use some of those new technologies. That was recognised and resulted in the PCS’s senior invasive plants officer receiving the innovation award in the 2017 ACT public service awards for excellence.

MS LE COUTEUR: You said the strategy was for two years.

Mr Iglesias: Ten years.

MS LE COUTEUR: I thought you said 2019. Unless I have lost it, that is only two years away.

Mr Iglesias: I will double-check it but it is a 10-year—

MS CHEYNE: It is 2009 to 2019.

Mr Iglesias: That is right. I think that is the span.

MS LE COUTEUR: We are coming to the end of the 10 years. Presumably you will start before 2019 and—

Mr Iglesias: Yes, potentially next year we will review it and produce a next 10-year horizon.

MS LE COUTEUR: From a funding point of view, are you expecting that then there would be funding for the years going on from there? I note that there is only two years worth of funding in the budget.

Mr Gentleman: Generally we fund through the budget for programs. It is up to me and the advice that I can get from my experts to go in and argue for more money in the budget accounting.

MS LE COUTEUR: I was thinking in terms of the strategy for length of time. It is difficult to do this if there is not any money in the forward estimates for it.

Mr Gentleman: Yes. As I said there, it is budgeted for programs. If the program is

that length of time then that is what we will be asking for.

MS LE COUTEUR: We could expect that in 2019, when there is a new 10-year weed strategy, there will be a new commitment of funding? That is basically what you are saying would happen?

Mr Gentleman: Subject to cabinet decisions, yes.

MS LE COUTEUR: Subject to cabinet, of course, but I am sure your cabinet colleagues would see the necessity for this?

Mr Gentleman: I will work on them hard.

MS LE COUTEUR: But that would be the process?

Mr Gentleman: Yes.

MR PARTON: Let us talk about Canberra urban lakes and the Canberra urban lakes and ponds plan of management. Has the review of that plan of management been completed and has a new plan been developed?

Dr Lane: Yes, that review has been completed and a new plan has been drafted. The old plan is quite old and we have a number of new lakes that need to be incorporated into that plan of management. We are going through some internal briefing. We have actually engaged with the relevant stakeholders in drafting that plan. We have done the internal consultation, particularly with lake users groups for example, and we anticipate taking that draft out for public comment again in the near future.

MR PARTON: Broadly speaking, though, in terms of the differences between the two, what are the major differences between the old plan and the new plan?

Dr Lane: As I mentioned, it brings into the plan the new ponds that have been constructed since the last plan. It would update water quality matters. We have learnt a lot about water quality in the interim years since the last plan. It would potentially point to the new legislation that is currently under development for the Lakes Act and it would include some of the activities that are permitted on particular lakes and ponds. That needs to be updated in relation to the new legislation as well.

MR PARTON: And how will that new plan be communicated?

Dr Lane: I guess how we do most of our plans, we open it up for public consultation; we put it on your say. I think there would be quite a bit of interest, given the number of people who use our lakes and ponds. A survey that we did around 2015 showed that about 80 per cent of people who live in Canberra in some way, shape or form use the lakes and ponds in their districts. I think there would be quite a lot of interest. We will open that up and make it possible for people to contribute their comments.

MS LEE: Dr Lane, as you say, the current plan was quite old; it was 2000. Did that plan have a lifespan? As you know, the water strategy is 30 years, the weed management is 10 years. Does that actually have a lifespan and, if so, when was it

until?

Dr Lane: I am not sure of that but I will check up and get back to you on that one.

MS CHEYNE: Can I ask about tree protection and applications for tree damaging activity. Dr Lane, is this your responsibility?

Dr Lane: The Tree Protection Act—

MS CHEYNE: I know it comes under a different minister.

Dr Lane: That is correct, but as conservator I have involvement, yes.

MS CHEYNE: So I can ask you questions about it?

Dr Lane: Yes.

MS CHEYNE: And if I should be referring them to the minister for TCCS, please tell me and I will do that.

Dr Lane: Okay.

MS CHEYNE: I note that in both 2015-16 and 2016-17 you had just 29 reconsideration requests, presumably when you have declined an application. Do you get any feedback about the time frame, which I know is legislated, about how long people have to respond? I have had some people raise with me that a decision perhaps has been made on a Friday and perhaps sent on that Friday but our friends at Australia Post are not as quick as they perhaps used to be and sometimes people are not getting that correspondence for some time and then only have that kind of two-week time frame to make that reconsideration request.

I was just wondering if you have received any feedback not necessarily about the time frames that you are providing but perhaps it is more due to Australia Post only delivering a few times a week or whatever it does now. Have you had any feedback of that kind?

Dr Lane: I have not had any feedback but the tree protection unit in city services may well have.

MS CHEYNE: I will ask them. In both years, five decisions changed following reconsideration. I think it is probably unfair to ask for the details of those but generally are there particular things that might result in a decision changing? Is it usually people providing more information?

Dr Lane: It is considering a balance of things, environmental as well as social for example, as well as the criteria but also considering the impact that a particular tree might be having on the property owners, for example. There is one case I can recall where the family was quite upset about the risk that they felt a particular tree was posing. I imagine some of those things would be taken into consideration.

Solar access is another one to consider and the impact of that and ensuring that there is adequate solar access for both the property owner and neighbours and whether that tree has deteriorated in some ways since the first consideration, and sometimes that happens. The age of the tree, the health of the tree, general practices like that.

MS LAWDER: I want to ask about an item in the CMTEDD annual report. On page 198 it refers to capital works, and \$800,000 for “conservation management plans for heritage buildings (feasibility)—GPO”. Has that been undertaken by the heritage team of EPSDD?

Mr Ponton: I would suspect—and Ms O’Connell can tell me if I am incorrect—that that is related to funds provided to Property Group to undertake conservation management plans for heritage-listed properties that it manages. The work would not be undertaken by the heritage unit; it would be undertaken by experts acting for the property owner—in this case, Property Group—and those conservation management plans are then required to be assessed and approved or not by the Heritage Council.

Mr Gentleman: Albert Hall would be a good example of that.

Mr Ponton: Yes.

MS LEE: With Lake Burley Griffin, are you able to advise how many times the lake has either been closed or rendered unusable in the past year because of algal blooms, stormwater damage or other pollutants?

Mr Gentleman: We will try to get that information for you.

Dr Lane: I have some information. I am sorry; I do not have it for Lake Burley Griffin.

MS LEE: You do not?

Dr Lane: I will have to get back to you on that one.

MS CHEYNE: Do you have information on Lake Ginninderra?

MS LEE: Do you mind taking that on notice and then perhaps giving the information for Lake Ginninderra and Lake Tuggeranong?

MS CHEYNE: Is it a TCCS question?

Mr Gentleman: NCA.

Dr Lane: That is correct. That is probably why I have not got it.

MS LAWDER: Do you have the Tuggeranong figures with you?

Dr Lane: I do. Last year Lake Tuggeranong was closed for 120 days. I do not have any figures for this year.

MS LAWDER: Is it TCCS or your department that put up the “lake closed” signs?

Dr Lane: Access Canberra would do that.

MS LAWDER: I noticed the other weekend there was one that said “open” and one that said “closed”. I was a bit confused. I did not go swimming.

MS CHEYNE: What are the figures for Lake Ginninderra?

Dr Lane: Lake Ginninderra was closed for around 50 days. Lake Tuggeranong, as you probably know, has been closed on some days every year. Since 2011, it has been closed for in excess of 80 days or so. Lake Ginninderra closed in 2009, 2012, 2015 and 2016, and not in 2013 or 2014. It is very much dependent on weather, climate conditions, plus rain events flushing nutrients into the system.

MS CHEYNE: Including leaves?

Dr Lane: Including leaves, yes, but particularly chemicals—fertilisers and the like.

MS LAWDER: With Lake Tuggeranong, are the works currently underway going to have a very positive effect on future closures?

Dr Lane: That is the objective.

Mr Gentleman: That will help, Ms Lawder, along with the education program for home owners. That is the important thing.

Dr Lane: That is right. That is very much a critical aspect, for people to change their behaviours in terms of what they allow to go down their drains or run off their blocks. That is really critical.

Mr Gentleman: The message is: only rain down the drain.

MS CHEYNE: Once there is an algal bloom in a lake—I recall a period last year when Lake Ginninderra was quite foul; it felt it was for longer, although I appreciate in other areas it was for much longer—do we have to wait for it to be flushed out by further weather events or is there something that the government or an average citizen can do to make sure they are not making it worse?

Dr Lane: No, it is just a time factor: waiting until it dissipates, conditions change or it is flushed out, as you say. And do not go in the water.

MS LE COUTEUR: Can I ask some more questions of you in your role as conservator? I am talking about DAs this time. How many times a year approximately do you make recommendations about trees as part of a DA process?

Dr Lane: That would probably vary year on year, obviously. I do not think I would have that information.

MS LE COUTEUR: Is it in the tens, hundreds or thousands? I do not think it could

be in the thousands.

Dr Lane: No. A lot of those, depending on the matter, are delegated. But it would be in the tens, I am guessing. If you would like a more precise number, I can get that for you.

MS LE COUTEUR: Thank you very much. Given this small number, would you have an idea of whether your recommendations are usually followed, not followed or is it sometimes a bit halfway? If there is a bunch of five trees and you say, “Keep the lot,” do you end up with half of them, so that it is partially followed?

Dr Lane: It is probably a combination of all those categories that you have just outlined.

Mr Ponton: The conservator provides advice in relation to a set of criteria. The planning and land authority, in considering a development application, can consider the removal or impact on a tree, considering different criteria.

MS LE COUTEUR: Given that, is this process effective for protecting trees?

Dr Lane: It provides another layer of scrutiny, so I think it is a very good thing to have a conservator role. I do not think it is very common elsewhere. I think it is a very beneficial and important role.

MS LAWDER: If it is not followed is a penalty applied?

Mr Ponton: This is in relation to the planning and land authority making a decision that is contrary to or inconsistent with the advice of the conservator. That decision is not taken lightly. There is an internal committee that consists of people not only within the development assessment area but within strategic planning, with a representative of the conservator. That committee will meet and consider the criteria both in terms of what the conservator needs to consider and in terms of what the planning and land authority needs to consider and then provide advice to the assessment team about whether or not it is reasonable to consider a departure from the advice.

MS LAWDER: As well as the information that Dr Lane is going to provide about the number of decisions, can you also provide information on the number of times a recommendation was and was not followed, or partially followed?

Mr Ponton: If the information is readily available, yes, certainly.

THE CHAIR: Page 48 refers to improved water sensitive urban design in the ACT. Can you give me an overview of what it is you are looking at achieving with the practice guidelines for water sensitive urban design? I am thinking specifically of the projects going forward. Are you looking at ponds and creeks or are you moving into other areas as well?

Dr Lane: This is to provide guidance. The guidelines were in the Territory Plan previously. They have been taken out of the Territory Plan so that they can be more

easily updated. There are revised standards for water sensitive urban design as well. We have learnt a lot about water sensitive urban design structures, so we are trying to incorporate those into our urban planning.

The sorts of structures that we would be looking at are permeable surfaces rather than hard surfaces where water runs off. The guidelines vary depending on the size of the development block. Coupled with this are sedimentation or construction and building guidelines which provide guidance to builders about managing run-off from their blocks. These two work hand in hand. Alongside you could also link that to our H2OK campaign around managing sediment.

THE CHAIR: From that it sounds like there will be quite a bit done within those guidelines to look at how the impacts of what you are building can be minimised in the sense of water run-off. Is there going to be anything to do with, say, harvesting the water to use in other applications?

Dr Lane: I think that is part of it. Recycling your water is a pretty good strategy. That would again depend on the size of the block. For smaller blocks it is probably not a feasible option. For larger blocks it may be.

MS LEE: With the practice guidelines for water sensitive urban design that will be released in 2017-18, who did you consult with to develop that, or is that still an ongoing process at the moment?

Dr Lane: We had workshops with industry. We were very much informed by industry, what they thought was reasonable and practical. That really helped to shape the guidelines, as well as internally with other government directorates like Transport Canberra and City Services, for example, who have a very important role to play in this regard.

THE CHAIR: When you say “industry”, what is captured by that term? Are we talking about developers, landscape architects or all of the above?

Dr Lane: I think it is all of the above. Certainly, the construction industry is probably the focus there.

THE CHAIR: I look forward to seeing them.

Mr Gentleman: There are some good examples. There was a demonstration project in Watson. I am just looking at the map to see if I can find the address. We will see if we can provide that for you.

THE CHAIR: You are not about to give us a private residential address, are you?

Mr Gentleman: No, just the street. There were some water sensitive urban design projects that were done by the private sector and there were some really good environmental outcomes for those areas.

MS LAWDER: I understand Dr Lane may be retiring?

Mr Gentleman: You have pre-empted my announcement.

MS LAWDER: I am sorry.

Mr Gentleman: Dr Lane will be retiring later this year. I want to thank her for the work that she has done for us over the period.

MS LAWDER: Hear, hear.

MS LEE: Hear, hear.

Dr Lane: Thank you very much.

Mr Gentleman: We wish her well in any new role she takes up, or even just in retirement. We might ask her to come back every now and again to help us out.

MS LAWDER: Tell him he is dreaming!

MS LEE: Maybe you will sit on this side and ask the questions.

MS LAWDER: Thank you for your service.

MR PARTON: Thank you. I can see you will be missed greatly.

THE CHAIR: On behalf of the committee, thank you to all who attended. I remind members of the committee that supplementary questions should be lodged with the committee office within five business days of the uncorrected proof transcript becoming available. For witnesses, responses taken on notice should be submitted to the committee office within five days of the uncorrected proof transcript becoming available. Responses to supplementary questions should be submitted to the committee five days after the questions are received. The committee's hearing today is now adjourned.

The committee adjourned at 5.11 pm.