



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

SELECT COMMITTEE ON ESTIMATES 2018-2019

(Reference: [Appropriation Bill 2018-2019 and Appropriation \(Office of the Legislative Assembly\) Bill 2018-2019](#))

Members:

MR A WALL (Chair)
MS T CHEYNE (Deputy Chair)
MS C LE COUTEUR
MS E LEE
MS S ORR

TRANSCRIPT OF EVIDENCE

CANBERRA

WEDNESDAY, 20 JUNE 2018

Secretary to the committee:
Mrs N Kosseck (Ph 620 50435)

By authority of the Legislative Assembly for the Australian Capital Territory

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

APPEARANCES

ACT Public Cemeteries Authority	318
Office of the Commonwealth Ombudsman	409
Transport Canberra and City Services Directorate	318

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Amended 20 May 2013

The committee met at 9.32 am.

Appearances:

Fitzharris, Ms Meegan, Minister for Health and Wellbeing, Minister for Transport and City Services and Minister for Higher Education, Training and Research

Transport Canberra and City Services Directorate

Thomas, Ms Emma, Director-General

Edghill, Mr Duncan, Deputy Director-General

Corrigan, Mr Jim, Deputy Director-General, City Services

McHugh, Mr Ben, Acting Executive Director, City Places and Infrastructure

Little, Ms Vanessa, Director, Libraries ACT

Alegria, Mr Stephen, Acting Director, City Presentation

Marshall, Mr Ken, Director, Roads ACT

Trushell, Mr Michael, Director, ACT NoWaste

Childs, Mr Daniel, Director, Capital Linen Service

McGlenn, Mr Ian, Director, Transport Canberra Operations

ACT Public Cemeteries Authority

Bartos, Mr Stephen, Chair

Horne, Mr Hamish, Chief Executive Officer

THE CHAIR: Welcome back, Minister Fitzharris, for day four of estimates. Today we are focusing on Transport Canberra and City Services, ACTION, and the ACT public cemeteries, who will kick off. To bookend the day we will have the ACT Ombudsman. Before we kick off, can everyone please indicate that they have read and are familiar with the pink privilege statement in front of them?

Mr Corrigan: Yes.

THE CHAIR: Since we have the Public Cemeteries Authority with us, I will kick off with a question asking about southern memorial park. What is the current status of that facility, given it was highlighted as a priority in previous inquiries?

Ms Fitzharris: Certainly, that is the case. As you will know from the government's response to the committee inquiry, the government will be pursuing options for southern memorial park. There will be a market sounding to investigate one of a number of options about how the government could potentially work or partner with someone in the marketplace about how that southern memorial park will be delivered.

Mr Corrigan: The minister alluded to the fact that the committee inquiry last year made recommendations around southern memorial park, and the government agreed to continue exploring the options. That is what we are doing. Some earlier master plan work has already been done. We will do that. The context is, as well, that the government also agreed in the committee inquiry to review the Cemeteries and Crematoria Act. The act has been around since 2003. It is time to have a look at that and how it operates.

In doing that, we want to kick off a review of the act in a fairly sensitive consultation

exercise later this year, because one of the things we need to look at is the concept of renewable tenure, not with existing graves but going forward. As part of that discussion context, we also want to look at how we manage cemeteries going forward; what the role for southern memorial park is; and, as the minister alluded to, how it is delivered.

We have suggested to the minister, leading into that review of the act, a market sounding. It is not a procurement exercise. It is very important to point that out. Over time we have had approaches—and the cemeteries authority indeed has had approaches—from various companies that want to run a crematorium or various things like that.

We thought that we would go to market in an open way and say, “This is the situation we have in the ACT moving forward. We think a second crematorium is a sensible idea.” We are saying, “Okay, market, what’s a good way of managing that going forward?” That can then inform the cemeteries act review and a discussion with the community around—basically, you would appreciate—quite a number of sensitive issues. That is it in a nutshell.

THE CHAIR: How much more capacity is there at Norwood for future years, and then likewise for ground burial at Woden and Gungahlin?

Ms Fitzharris: Norwood is private.

THE CHAIR: Yes. Norwood is private. Obviously, the capacity within existing facilities needs to be looked at. I imagine you are looking at that—

Ms Fitzharris: Across the city.

THE CHAIR: across the city in line with when the southern memorial park comes online. I am curious to get an idea of what the forecast looks like on those facilities.

Mr Bartos: Norwood is outside the purview of the cemeteries authority. Norwood is outside our responsibilities. You will understand that space issues are less relevant in relation to cremation because the remains are—

THE CHAIR: The footprint is smaller.

Mr Bartos: The footprint is much smaller. Space issues arise in relation to ground interment. Hamish Horne will give you an idea of what the capacity is at both the Woden and Gungahlin cemeteries in relation to ground burial.

Mr Horne: At present we are expecting Woden to reach practical, full subscription by the end of this year.

THE CHAIR: Okay.

Mr Horne: That means that a large portion of the burials that would have taken place at Woden will now be transferred to Gungahlin. This will mean that Gungahlin, which—under the current arrangement, under the current burial rates—has about 40

years, will be reduced to about 25 to 30 years. Norwood Park, in terms of its cremation capacity, has adequate capacity for the future. It is not really about that. It is more about providing choice for the community.

MS ORR: Can I clarify: when you say that Woden will be full, burials will still happen there; it is just that plots will not be for sale?

Mr Horne: That is right; plots will not be for sale. There will be a very small number of plots in a very small number of small denominational spaces, but the vast majority of the large denominations, which include Catholic, Anglican and Orthodox particularly, will be sold out. They comprise about 80 per cent of the burials.

MS ORR: People who have purchased a plot will still be buried there. It is just that you will not be able to purchase plots?

Mr Horne: Yes, we expect burials to continue at about 60 per cent of the current rate for the near future.

Mr Bartos: Obviously, over time, that will decline as the pre-purchased plots are taken up. It is also important to understand that Woden is divided up into particular denominational areas for different religions. This reflects what the prevailing standards were at the time that the Woden Cemetery was established. It means that there will be different rates at which capacity is reached for different religious groupings.

THE CHAIR: For the southern memorial park, what environmental impact work has been done on the inclusion of a crematorium?

Mr Horne: Yes, we have done a plan study, which essentially found that the effect of a crematorium would be—I think the two key words were—“insignificant” and “negligible”.

THE CHAIR: Who conducted that?

Mr Horne: That was done by Heggies, an environmental air quality consultant.

THE CHAIR: Has the report been made public or has it been published?

Mr Horne: I do not believe it has. It is part of the work that was done towards the master plan for the site.

THE CHAIR: What was the reason for the government to use a private operation model as opposed to running the facility themselves? Have you taken that decision?

Ms Fitzharris: That decision has not been made. The inquiry recommended a range of things. As Mr Corrigan said, the cemeteries act is to be reviewed and a range of things are to be followed up. In the context of the broader work and the government agreeing to develop southern memorial park we want some options before us before a final decision is made. One of those options has been to undertake a market sounding to see what is available. Another option remains the case that it could be something

the government could undertake in partnership with the authority. As has been stated, it is not a procurement exercise; it is an exercise in what is out there and what others are doing.

THE CHAIR: When will that activity be undertaken?

Mr Corrigan: We are looking to kick that off in the next couple of months with a view to informing the consultation phase around the cemeteries act—

THE CHAIR: How long do you expect to have those feelers out in the marketplace?

Mr Corrigan: We have not determined the full program yet. It is not a procurement exercise, but it is similar in terms of time frames.

THE CHAIR: Obviously, there is going to be a period when you are actively consulting with industry to say, “There’s potentially an opportunity here. What might that look like?”

Ms Fitzharris: Yes.

THE CHAIR: I am sure that is not going to go on indefinitely.

Ms Fitzharris: No.

Mr Corrigan: No, definitely not. We need to perform that review of the act. We need to move on, as the minister said, to inform the government so some decisions can be made into next year.

THE CHAIR: When do you hope to have those briefs prepared for government to make that decision?

Mr Corrigan: In the very near future. The minister has already agreed to the approach, so within the next couple of months.

THE CHAIR: That will be when the market sounding commences.

Mr Corrigan: Yes.

THE CHAIR: When do you foresee the market sounding being completed?

Mr Corrigan: It depends obviously when we start. So say we start in the next few months—July, August in to September—that would feed into a consultation exercise around October-November, not getting too far into the Christmas period. That is the sort of time frame we are working to at the moment.

THE CHAIR: Mr Corrigan, I am not trying to put you under pressure and stipulate firm dates, but I am trying to get a sense of whether it is a two-year process or a six-month process.

Ms Fitzharris: I think in this calendar year we will make good progress. Of course,

that will include working closely with the authority in the context of what is in the marketplace. Obviously, the authority is in the marketplace as well.

MS LAWDER: I am mindful there was quite a bit of community concern about the expansion of the Woden Cemetery. There are people in the Tuggeranong area who would love to have a cemetery closer than Gungahlin but others have an opposing view. Have you done any community consultation at this point, or when might that take place?

Ms Fitzharris: None more recently, but I understand there was in the past; is that right?

Mr Horne: Indeed. Preliminary to the master plan development there was extensive public consultation.

MS LAWDER: When was that?

Mr Horne: 2010-11.

MS LAWDER: How did that consultation take place?

Mr Horne: It was multifaceted: it was a telephone survey, there were drop-ins, we had stuff in libraries, we had a couple of town hall meetings and we went to visit various interest groups, including the Tuggeranong Community Council, Woden Valley Community Council and Weston Creek Community Council. It was a fairly wide-ranging exercise.

MS LAWDER: Was there anything done like letterbox drops of the suburbs over the hill?

Mr Horne: Sorry, I missed letterbox drops. We did about 12 or 13 suburbs in that area.

MS LAWDER: I live in that suburb and I do not recall seeing anything about it.

Mr Horne: That is not an uncommon comment, unfortunately. But we did many thousands of letterbox drops.

MS LAWDER: Are you able to give us the complete number of letterbox drops that you did?

Mr Horne: I would have to take that on notice.

MS LAWDER: That is what I meant.

MS LE COUTEUR: Will the consultation be all encompassing and include the tenure options and whether southern memorial park will be a private or a government operation? Will those two issues be part of one consultation? Although they are clearly related, you could have different views on both.

Mr Corrigan: The consultation can be quite broad ranging. The committee's inquiry last year started to raise the issues to the forefront of the community's mind. It is certainly driven from a review of the cemeteries act, because that is really important. The concept of renewable tenure and those sorts of things must be picked up through the act. So that is the major lead, I suppose, of the consultation. But because broader issues have been raised, particularly the southern memorial park—the community now appreciates that Woden is fully subscribed at the end of this calendar year—they will need to be part of the consultation.

We are looking at a fairly broad range in approaching the community, but we will do it with a discussion paper putting forward the situation of cemeteries and the crematorium in the ACT going forward, where we are at, what the trends are telling us—the usual logical things—and then outline the options the government is considering moving forward.

Part of that obviously will be the discussion around southern memorial park and the review of the cemeteries act: what is the best way going forward, how do people feel about the concept of purchasing tenure and all those sorts of things and how should crematoria be managed?

It needs to be all encompassing. It will be interesting to see what interest there is with the market sounding. We might be surprised by the response. The community may get concerned, too—what does it mean for the remains of their loved ones and things like that? We are not making any assumptions at this stage and we need to be quite sensitive about it. We are sensitive about all our consultations, but this issue is particularly sensitive.

MS CHEYNE: But if renewable tenure was put forward as an option or even did go ahead, people would not have to subscribe to renewable tenure.

Mr Corrigan: No.

MS CHEYNE: Maybe that is part of the consultation. I was on the committee that inquired into cemeteries and the view that came through was that that should be an option available for people but we should not be mandating that.

Mr Corrigan: No.

MS CHEYNE: I am all for it; it makes sense on many levels.

Ms Fitzharris: Come the point where the government makes a decision about how to proceed with southern memorial park, I think it would be sensible to refresh the community consultation at the time, because it is a locational issue for the south of Canberra. But in terms of consulting on the model, the government will need to provide some more information about how the service might be delivered and how southern memorial park might be developed. The locational subset of that will be of most interest to people in the south of Canberra, particularly the adjacent suburbs.

MS LE COUTEUR: Minister, I am feeling more confused now. Mr Corrigan suggested it would be a consultation on both issues but you are saying that after one

has been worked out you would have to refresh the other.

Ms Fitzharris: There will be planning-related issues around southern memorial park that will go through necessary processes.

MS LE COUTEUR: I thought most of the planning issues for southern memorial park had been looked at. As Mr Horne said, a master plan has already been done. I did not think there was a huge amount of planning uncertainty.

Mr Corrigan: The master plan work has been done; that was a master planning exercise. Southern memorial park would still need DA approval and I am pretty sure that sort of proposal triggers an EIS as well. So it would need to go through statutory planning processes as well. The work we are doing—consulting on how we manage cemeteries and crematoria going forward, renewable tenure and the act itself—will then inform government decisions. We are hoping the government will make some firm decisions about southern memorial park, and that will trigger those statutory processes as well. But that is into the future.

MS LE COUTEUR: So it will not be a second lot of consultation except insofar as the planning system has a lot of statutory consultation. That is all you would be doing afterwards?

Mr Corrigan: It depends on the outcome of what we do this year and what advice we provide to the government. If the decision is to go ahead with southern memorial park then the statutory processes get underway. We would not need to do any further work by then. The EIS process is an excellent consultation exercise in its own right. So it would go down that path with the DA as well.

MS LE COUTEUR: Mr Corrigan, you are basically saying going ahead with southern memorial park is negotiable? We may not, in fact, be expanding burial spaces or we may not be expanding on the south?

Ms Fitzharris: No. As I said the government accepted the recommendations to proceed with southern memorial park. Now we need to best understand how we do that. But the broader context of the committee's recommendations was to review the act. Southern memorial park is a subset of cemeteries and burial services right across the city.

MS LE COUTEUR: So the government still intends that the southern memorial park will be developed somewhat similarly to the master plan. The issue is the ownership of it—whether it is going to be the cemeteries authority or someone else?

Ms Fitzharris: Yes.

MS LE COUTEUR: That is what is being consulted about and not whether we are going to have one or where we are going to have it?

Ms Fitzharris: No.

MS LE COUTEUR: Okay.

Ms Fitzharris: We are doing the market sounding; we are not consulting on that aspect at this stage.

MS LE COUTEUR: How long do you think it is likely to be before the southern memorial park will be operational?

Mr Corrigan: It depends on the outcome of the market sounding. The management operational model could be a private sector project. That is what needs to be tested. It may be that the cemeteries authority has the best model going forward. The approvals will take some time, and then with the construction you are probably looking at a couple of years to really get going. You have to establish all the facilities to support that. Assuming it goes into the budget cycle process—there would be some need for capital funding initially depending on the model that goes forward—it would be that sort of time frame—a number of years.

MS LE COUTEUR: So five years or so?

Mr Corrigan: From next year, a two to three-year period.

Ms Fitzharris: I would expect the government to make a decision in the next 12 months. I would also expect in the government's decision-making on southern memorial park that it would have a mind to the interaction between the operations of southern memorial park and the sustainability of the authority. That is an important point. We need to understand not only what is available to help the government deliver southern memorial park but also the interaction on the authority considering the sites they already operate and the longer term challenges they have in making sure they remain sustainable.

Part of the government's decision-making once the market sounding information comes back in will be to have a mind to the future of the authority as well. It is ultimately about city-wide provision and extending and increasing access across the city.

MS LAWDER: Will there be another round of public consultation given that it will be quite a long time between—

Ms Fitzharris: On what?

MS LAWDER: The southern memorial park. I understand you have said there is a master plan. A lot of people will have moved into the area after that.

Ms Fitzharris: As Mr Corrigan has said a few times, there will be the statutory processes around a DA and an EIS.

MS LAWDER: But will it be similar to the previous one with letterbox drops and drop-in centres, or do you feel that has been done with the master plan?

Ms Fitzharris: I think it would be what you would see in a major development with public consultation through both an EIS and a DA. You will see a variety of different

ways of doing that. It would be fair to say it is probably going to be even more extensive. We will have more tools available to the government to do that this time than we did in 2011.

THE CHAIR: Are there further questions for the cemeteries authority or are we happy to move on?

Ms Fitzharris: I will raise one issue that has been brought to my attention in the last 24 hours regarding the Woden Valley Community Council. They have provided advice to me and to the committee when they were looking at the issue of cemeteries in the ACT. I had been advised that the Woden Valley Community Council had previously supported the expansion of Woden in 2014 under the previous minister. That was my understanding right up until the Woden Valley Community Council leadership changed.

The previous leadership have advised me that the council did not support it at the time. I understand the council wrote to the committee during the committee's hearings last year to advise the committee of that. I was not made aware of that at the time. So from Woden Valley Community Council's point of view, they have advised the Assembly some months ago of their longstanding views. I was not advised of that as far as I can find at the moment.

I want to put on the record that my previous advice was that they did support it. I have now seen documentation to show they made submissions at the time that they did not. But the government undertook a range of work in 2014 around Woden community and residents in the Woden Valley which showed their support for the expansion of the cemetery at the time. Nonetheless, putting all of that on the record, that expansion is not proceeding.

THE CHAIR: Let us turn to city services.

Ms Fitzharris: Sure.

MS CHEYNE: Guess what I am going to ask about? It is waste.

Ms Fitzharris: Where would you like to start?

MS CHEYNE: I start with something that has been of national interest in terms of recycling and China. I think I have seen a communique about waste ministers having a meeting a little while ago. I am very interested to know how what China is doing or not doing is impacting the ACT and what we are doing about it to lessen the impact.

Ms Fitzharris: That was a meeting of environment ministers that Minister Rattenbury attended while Mr Gentleman was away. I will hand over to Mr Corrigan.

Mr Corrigan: I will ask Michael Trushell, Director of NoWaste, to talk in a bit more detail about this. From the environment ministers' national perspective, it is certainly on the agenda at a national level, which is excellent. The commonwealth government, the federal department of environment, is assisting in a range of measures going forward to assist all the states and jurisdictions with how to manage the issue.

Turning to the ACT, we are in a very good position. Our MRF, our resource facility out at Hume, has not been largely impacted by China. The material that goes to them and the material they sell on the markets is mostly sold on national markets. The paper goes to Visy. A lot of the other material is staying in Australia. Some of those companies may on-sell it, but it has not directly impacted them yet, which is good news.

The other thing to keep in mind about China is that it is probably a wake-up call, which is good. But the amount of material actually going into our MRF from the domestic kerbside collection is about 3½ per cent of the total waste generated in the ACT. It is important to keep that in mind. We are not talking about this huge impact. It has an impact, obviously, but it is also a wake-up call on how to manage it.

MS CHEYNE: Can one of you expand on the percentage sizes of waste at the MRF and the different levels of recycling and waste generally?

Mr Corrigan: It is an interesting one to follow in the ACT. About a million tonnes of waste is generated every year. That is across the board. It is residential, commercial and industrial sectors—the whole bit; demolition waste and all those sorts of things.

We recover approximately 70 per cent. About 700,000 tonnes is recovered each year. When we look at these kerbside collections of the yellow bins, they collect about 30,000 to 35,000 tonnes a year. That is the three to 3½ per cent; so it is great. A lot of 10,000 tonnes represent one per cent. But that is how much is going into our MRF from the domestic collections.

These are the points I am trying to make: it is good to keep in perspective just how much waste we are dealing with, as important as it is; also, our MRF operator sells most of the material into domestic markets. They are not being hugely impacted, although there is an impact occurring in the industry.

THE CHAIR: While we are on that, there has been a significant increase in the amount of plastic particularly that they have stockpiled at the facility. What is the reason for that if it is not the Chinese market?

Mr Trushell: I was not aware there was a particular issue around stockpiling of plastics.

THE CHAIR: Either they have changed the way they are storing it on the site or the volume has increased in recent months.

Mr Trushell: Shortly after the new contractor took over the facility, they made a decision at board level that they would make a significant upgrade to the plant. It was around addressing fire risk. They increased the external storage areas through essentially concreting all the existing unconcreted areas.

MRF fire is certainly an issue. There have been a large number of those, not just in Australia but elsewhere. Generally, it occurs around the processed and bundled material before it is moved offsite. With such a significant investment in the plant, the

approach was to move more of that material outside the plant in the event that if it did catch fire, the whole facility did not burn down.

MS CHEYNE: The waste feasibility study was completed and reported on earlier this year. I note something that has been raised with me, and I suspect with other members, about the conversation about green bins. Will they allow for organic waste? I saw in that study that there was a recommendation, or at least it was a moot point, that it should be considered. Is someone able to talk me through what the considerations are? Will it go ahead depending on what the community's feedback is, based on the report? What kind of changes do we need to make to how we deal with waste for it to be affected?

Ms Fitzharris: Mr Corrigan and Mr Trushell will talk a little more, but this is certainly something that clearly came out of the waste feasibility study as something that we could pursue, not only for waste management and recovery purposes but also to help meet our climate change emission reduction targets. This is because of the emissions that come from putrescible waste, particularly at landfills.

I think there is an enormous opportunity there and it is one of the key recommendations from the waste feasibility study, which is open for consultation for another couple of weeks. Certainly, I know the team has a pretty good sense of what is happening around the rest of the country and what the ACT might need to do to actually develop this initiative to include it in our kerbside pick-up in one way or other.

Mr Corrigan: Having read the waste feasibility study, I highly recommend it. It is an excellent piece of public policy. It outlines some road maps to try to increase resource recovery. As the minister alluded to, we have our waste strategy in the ACT; we have certain targets about the resource recovery by 2025 and these sorts of things. That is approaching very quickly.

As I mentioned before, at the moment we recover about 70 per cent. What the waste feasibility study is outlining is how to increase those targets above 70 per cent, heading towards 80 per cent. If we can achieve 80 per cent, we would be one of the world's best in terms of dealing with waste without a waste to energy component, but we can come back to that in a minute.

It outlines some road maps about how to recover certain amounts of material that go into the waste stream. One of the biggest impacts straightaway is the organic waste. The whole idea is food organics, garden organics, ground organics. That is what the FOGO service stands for.

Green bins are being rolled out at the moment across the territory, as you are aware. The waste feasibility study is asking the community what their views are around these things. To date, the interest has been high. There has not been a huge amount of interest, but people who have responded and interest groups in the ACT are very interested. As the minister alluded to, we think it is an excellent service to proceed to because of two advantages: it captures this organic waste and makes viable fertiliser products from it that can be sold into that industry but also it keeps the methane out of the landfills.

Methane is a very potent greenhouse gas. At the moment we are capturing methane in the landfills because waste has been dumped there for years. Going forward, if we can reduce the amount of waste that decomposes in the landfills that is excellent so that we are not producing that gas in the first place.

To answer your question, moving forward we have not designed this whole scheme because of procurement—what model we go forward with. It is a bit like the cemeteries discussion—the role of the private sector and these sorts of things.

However, to go forward in one way, shape or another in a city the size of Canberra—400,000 people; 130,000 residences—to capture their green waste from a mixture of single detached housing through to multi-units, we would have to design a system. Multi-units present a challenge. Actually, it is a lot of waste. The estimates are significant. I think around 40,000 tonnes of green waste could be captured with this service.

That would be one of the bigger services—possibly the biggest—in the country if we went down this path. We have to deal with that material. We have to find a location, involve industry, determine how it is managed—those sorts of things.

MS CHEYNE: I guess it is a council issue everywhere else. It has just been little councils that have been doing it, whereas for us it is a much—

Mr Corrigan: It is the scale. The scale is massive.

MS CHEYNE: Yes, the scale changes.

Ms Thomas: Just to add to that, our whole mantra around recycling is to look at reduce, reuse, recycle. The waste feasibility study is really good at highlighting that pyramid and making sure that we are focusing on reducing our use of materials in the first instance. I think the team, certainly the NoWaste team, are very passionate about education and considering how much food we are wasting to begin with.

Before we get into the solutions space of how we recycle all this food waste, we really need to concentrate on how we collectively as a community reduce the amount of food that we are just throwing into the waste pile.

MS CHEYNE: This is my final question on green bins. Are we on track to roll out green bins in Belconnen in September? Are you able to advise when I can tell my constituents they can register?

Mr Corrigan: We are underway with the procurement of the whole-of-Canberra service at the moment. We are actually in that phase. Unfortunately, we cannot give any specific dates. We are on track with our procurement process, all being well. People can register around that August period with a view to the service starting in September, but I do not have specific dates. We are on track; we have finished the actual procurement phase; we are in that contract negotiation phase. That is where we are at.

MS CHEYNE: So we are pretty close.

Mr Corrigan: Close, but no dates at this stage.

MS CHEYNE: But not definite. But I can say that it will be before September that people can sign up, hopefully.

Ms Fitzharris: Yes.

Mr Trushell: We are in the process of finalising the contract negotiations. Once the signature is on that, we can then finalise with the contractor the actual timing for the rollout of the registration. System capability is there but we cannot commit to a date until we close the contract. It is very close. Mr Corrigan is right; probably August and it is probably a little closer to the start date than we have thought in the past.

But as it is a much bigger whole-of-Canberra procurement, there are greater considerations. The process, because of the scale, was more complex and it was important to ensure that we got the right long-term result. It probably has taken a little longer than ideally we would have liked, but we are definitely on track for the September commencement.

MS LEE: Mr Corrigan, earlier you referred to the waste to energy concept. Certainly, it was raised in the waste feasibility study. Can you give the committee an update on where the government is at—perhaps this is more of a question to the minister—with the concept? I understand that it was taken off the table in terms of the Fyshwick site. But I am speaking generally, as a concept, given that it has been raised as a recommendation by the waste feasibility study.

Ms Fitzharris: To develop a waste to energy policy?

MS LE COUTEUR: Yes.

Ms Fitzharris: Yes, that is right. That work is underway. We expect to have consultation on that in the next couple of months. I think it will probably be a paper explaining the range of different types of waste to energy that exist, and what waste to energy already exists here in the territory and has already been operating for some time. It will then ask for consultation to inform the government on making a policy around waste to energy. I think we need to do that. It was a recommendation of the study, so that work is underway. Do you want to talk more to specific time frames?

Mr Corrigan: The minister alluded to the fact we are underway, and we commenced that work. We want to go out with a discussion paper. Again it is quite a sensitive topic; we appreciate that. The minister alluded to the fact that there is a spectrum of waste to energy proposals. It is not all about incineration and burning. There is anaerobic digestion. There are all sorts of other ways that energy can be generated from that. We want the discussion paper to say, “This is what’s there. This is what happens. Here’s other experiences. Here’s international experience”—these sorts of things—and talk about what it means in terms of, again, resource recovery for the territory. We can then gauge from that what the community really believes about these things to inform government policy.

Interestingly, through the waste feasibility study—in the early phase; the research phase that preceded the consultation last year—we did a market sounding to the waste industry. We said, “Look, here’s all the waste streams in the territory and what is happening,” asking them how they could assist. A large proportion of those industry bodies that came forward are in the waste to energy business. What we found was interesting. We said, “We’re government. We need a policy here because one way or the other what is the way of going forward?”

The waste feasibility study does talk about some options. It talks about one of the other pathways—as we call it—termed “process engineered fuel”. It is like making fuel out of residual recovered waste and maybe importing it from elsewhere. That is a concept. That means it is not dealt with here. That is one of the things the waste feasibility study touches on as well.

MS LEE: Have you got a time frame to give the committee, in terms of that discussion paper?

Mr Corrigan: Yes. As the minister alluded to, it will be in the next few months. Again we want to get something out for discussion with the community this calendar year with a view to informing the government and then, moving to next year, saying, “Okay, what are the policies,” so we can make some decisions. That involves industry as well so that industry players who are interested in this space know what the territory will and will not allow.

MS LEE: So I can tell my concerned constituents that this year there will be some consultation?

Mr Corrigan: We definitely—

MS LEE: Yes, thank you.

MS LAWDER: I think you had said that you had recovered about 70 per cent of waste? Do you know how much that is in tonnes?

Mr Corrigan: It is 700,000 tonnes.

MS LAWDER: Recovered or in total?

Mr Corrigan: In total recovered. I was going to say that one million tonnes are generated, and we recover 70 per cent.

MS LAWDER: How much of that was Mr Fluffy waste?

Mr Corrigan: I might ask Mr Trushell because some of that stuff we do not include. Mr Fluffy waste cannot be recovered; it goes to landfill.

Ms Thomas: I think generally we recover over 70 per cent. We would be looking at the accountability indicators and seeing that our estimated outcome for this year is 62 per cent. That is because of the Mr Fluffy outcomes.

MS LEE: Is that purely because of Mr Fluffy?

Ms Thomas: It is hard to say exactly because we have still got measurement systems coming in place and improving over time. But Mr Fluffy has certainly had a big impact on the amount of waste going into landfill over the last couple of years.

MS CHEYNE: I guess it has increased the overall waste in the territory as well?

Ms Thomas: Indeed.

MS CHEYNE: And that is why—

Ms Thomas: And reduced the percentage recoverable.

MS LAWDER: You had a target, I think, of 75 per cent, and it was 62 per cent achieved—attributable to Mr Fluffy. But was it solely the Mr Fluffy or were there other factors?

Mr Trushell: There were some other factors. The current methodology relies on a voluntary recycling survey. We have a major recycler who, for the last couple of years, has declined to contribute to that survey. The Auditor-General will not allow us to estimate that number. Therefore that, I guess, artificially depresses the recycling rate as well.

There have been a couple of other aberrations. For example, there was the demolition of the Currong flats, which was heavily asbestos contaminated. You will get these sorts of periodic aberrations where you undertake a particular exercise. That has occurred historically. If you go back to the data over the last decade, 15 years, you find those occasional glitches. But the Mr Fluffy one has been incredibly big. I think last year there was over 500,000 tonnes of Mr Fluffy waste.

MS LAWDER: Is the target again 75 next year? Given that not all the Mr Fluffies have been demolished—there are other blocks being demolished—is it likely that you may not achieve the 75 per cent again this coming year?

Mr Trushell: It is true. We are coming towards the end of the Mr Fluffy program. I think by the end of this year we will have done in excess of 90 per cent of those houses. But there will be some residual that carries over. We have a number of other projects as well. For example, there is the rehabilitation, which is referenced in the budget, of Parkwood, and around the west Belconnen site. There is the redevelopment of Ginninderry, where we have identified a contaminated site. We are going to find that there will be un-forecasted land filling of material like that, which is necessary.

MS LAWDER: Do you feel you will achieve 75 per cent in the coming year, recovered?

Mr Trushell: I think we will get closer to that than we have in the last two financial years. We have still got a number of these projects which are impacting that number. I think it is important to look at the underlying trend, if you like. The headline number,

which accounts for those, I suspect will not be at 75 per cent. But we will need to see.

MS ORR: I want to pick up on the green bins. You mentioned that the apartments, as we have heard before, have been a bit tricky. I wanted to get an update on what you are looking at with them and how you are going with finding a solution because I am sure everyone in apartments would love to be included.

Mr Corrigan: As part of the waste feasibility studies, more than just that report went out. A lot of things have gone on in the last couple of years. One of those is the TCCS management code. It is a code to advise architects and developers on how to manage waste in multi-unit apartments. There are rates and thresholds for when wheelie bins are needed. Because there are so many apartments wheelie bins will not always work.

As part of that, we are reviewing that code with industry. Part of that is to say, “Okay, before we can get to green waste, how do we separate red bin waste and yellow bin waste?” We are looking to review that code to make it more performance based. We are saying to industry, “We’re open to a range of options, but you tell us how you are going to allow people living in apartment buildings to separate their waste.” At the moment a lot of apartments have chutes for waste. It may be dual chutes. They are some of the options that we are looking at.

With the green waste it is tricky because, again, you have to separate it. With multi-units do you go to three-chute systems? We are not quite there yet with the industry. With smaller multi-units, we are exploring other options on how to manage that. It may be a more communal service.

That is all part of designing that service going forward. It is important because, if the service is being collected once a week and there is some sort of hopper arrangement with putrescible waste, there are health issues and things like smell. We still have more work to do. Right now we are working with the control code and industry. We are underway trying to get a more flexible approach that meets a number of needs. It is interesting as we get different objectives clashing with each other. We are trying to work with the architects to get good design, so it is not all driven around the size of garbage trucks and things like that. How do we allow flexibility while ensuring resource recovery so that people are doing the right thing and separating their waste, and those sorts of things?

MS LE COUTEUR: You have been talking about the waste feasibility study and the waste energy options. Agreed, there are a number of potential ways of doing this. One of those is incineration. I am wondering why the government has not ruled that out. My understanding is that it has been well established that incineration of waste is environmentally pretty poor or worse.

Mr Corrigan: Again that is why, with this policy work we are going to do and with putting a discussion paper out, we want to say, “This is the full spectrum. This is how it is done. This is international experience.” Those issues you allude to, we can cover. The government has not ruled it out. It has not ruled it in. If we are going to establish a policy we need to look at the full spectrum. I think that is only fair and reasonable in a discussion about what is the best way forward.

Ms Thomas: We still get asked a lot of questions about why we are not following down the path of Scandinavia and other countries that do use that. I think it is of interest to the community still that we put it out for discussion and let people have the discussion. Our discussion paper, I imagine, will include the very relevant information about damage to environment, other respective requirements and things we should consider.

MS LE COUTEUR: You could lower the blood pressure of a lot of people in the inner south in particular if you were to say that waste to energy, while that is possible, would not be by incineration.

Ms Fitzharris: Maybe Mr Trushell can talk more broadly about that policy issue.

Mr Trushell: Our research would contest that statement around the environmental impacts of incineration. At least half the cost of most modern incineration plants is around the cleaning and scrubbing of the emissions.

In the EU these facilities are widespread. In France it is mainstream. In Paris there are three of these facilities processing million tonnes of wastes within three to five kilometres of the Eiffel Tower. I visited a facility in Vienna last year, which is in the city, which is considered a tourist attraction. The facility was designed by one of the city's historical environmentalists.

In terms of the science, I would say that it is contestable. Certainly, in Australia there is federal funding and, as part of the response to China, the federal government is renewing its efforts around encouraging waste to energy. In Victoria they have just sustained the funding. In Western Australia they are starting to commence work on a number of those waste to energy projects. We feel that it is appropriate to undertake a formal policy process to have that position clarified rather than simply make a policy judgement which would actually fly in the face of, arguably, a lot of evidence of the fact that incineration is both mainstream and acceptable within the EU, which have some of the most rigorous environmental standards.

At the same time we were very mindful of the concerns of the community. Certainly, large-scale incineration is an immature industry in Australia. One has to take into account the differences between Europe and Australia. In a lot of cases we have seen early movers who perhaps do not have a track record in this area. That is also a relevant consideration. The waste feasibility study felt that a formal policy process which engaged with all stakeholders to clarify the territory's position was a better way of dealing with this rather than simply making a recommendation which, arguably, was not based around the evidence.

MS LEE: You talked about your visit to Vienna and those studies that you have done so far on how things are happening in the EU. Did any of those lessons that you came away with deal with what they do about truck movements and that type of stuff?

Mr Trushell: These cities do not have a choice. They do not have landfills. If you look at the sprawl of a lot of these cities, they have to deal with the waste within the city.

The other benefit of these things is that it creates energy independence, which is less of an issue for Australia than for Europe, for example. A lot of time they are bringing in gas and other things from eastern Europe and Russia. In a lot of cases they are very dependent on other countries. That creates significant risks. The other benefit in European countries where it is very cold is that, because they are fairly dense, they can use the heat generated out of this for heating within residential and commercial areas. There are a number of characteristics of these facilities within Europe which are arguably different from the circumstances in Canberra but which are necessarily valid to their circumstances.

MS LE COUTEUR: There was a proposal in Canberra, which obviously you are well aware of, to use our train system to bring waste in. This is not a question I thought I would be asking, but is it in fact the government's vision that we might become a waste hub and that the train system and track system would be used to move waste to Canberra? Is this one of the industries that we see as part of our waste policy? Is this an industry that we see? It is the logical conclusion of what you have just been talking about.

Ms Fitzharris: No, I do not think it is. If you want to develop good policy and not rule anything in or out, you need to go through a good process of explaining the evidence that currently exists and then the government can consult further on that and make a decision down the track. But that is entirely hypothetical.

It might be worth while talking through TCCS's engagement with the current operators of the proposed facility, whatever that may be, in Fyshwick. If Mr Corrigan could talk to that, it might give you more information than I think the current public debate does. It will fill in some of those gaps for you.

Mr Corrigan: The proponents, Capital Recycling Solutions, have been wishing to consult us for some time or discuss it with us. We actually asked them to not do anything until the waste feasibility discussion paper was put out to the public. "Before we talk you need to see what is in that discussion paper and how that informs your business model and those things," noting what the proposal is. We have had recent discussions with them about their proposal.

We have made quite clear to them what the waste feasibility discussion paper is about and some of these policy issues we are looking to explore. They understand that. At the same time they are going through their own statutory process, and procedural fairness has to be applied to them. They are going through the EIS process at the moment and they have made their own business decisions about how they are modifying their scheme. That is their business. We are allowing that to happen.

As part of the EIS process TCCS has given its position on the EIS to our colleagues in planning. We made a submission on the EIS and we pointed out some deficiencies in the EIS from our point of view. We have also made quite clear what the waste feasibility study is about, the outcomes there and, as Emma Thomas alluded to before, the reverse pyramid about the hierarchy in waste management—those things—and then how they fit into that. We made that quite clear to them.

Part of my role is that of the statutory waste manager. Under the act I am actually the

waste manager. I have also written in relation to the EIS to advise them about going forward and the regulatory requirements that would be needed in the waste space if indeed the proposal went forward any further.

That is where things are at. Michael, do you want to talk in any more detail in terms of our commentary on the EIS? It might be useful.

Mr Trushell: Yes. We provided a policy strategy operational response to the draft EIS. We certainly feel there are a number of issues which need to be addressed. We met with CRS representatives after the waste feasibility study initial consultation and after we submitted that EIS response.

We have explained to them our concerns and the challenges that we have put to them around what we think they need to do around that. Currently, that EIS does not include waste to energy. It is purely—essentially, in simple terms—a proposal which seeks to draw landfill waste out of the territory, recycle a certain component and transfer the rest to Woodlawn. We are not necessarily convinced there is a benefit to the territory in redirecting landfill waste from Mugga Lane to Woodlawn. We have expressed that to them.

What I will say, though, is that they have shown a willingness, particularly with the waste feasibility study now being released, to adjust their proposal in a way that better reflects the needs of the territory. I think the benefit of the feasibility study being released is to clarify that and, once we go through the policy process, I think that will be really important so that industry across Australia is very aware of where the territory stands on that. That will inform decisions by particular companies and proponents around bringing solutions to the ACT.

MS LEE: In terms of all of your discussions that you have with the proponents, at any point has there been a discussion about alternative sites? Has that ever come up?

Ms Fitzharris: On whose side?

MS LEE: I assume the proponent's side. They are obviously an issue.

Mr Corrigan: Capital Recycling Solutions?

MS LEE: Yes.

Mr Trushell: Not really. Access Recycling, which is an associated company that has various businesses, is already operating there as a scrap metal recycler. They are transporting scrap metal out of the ACT and taking it up to Port Botany. Mr Perry's background is around recycling in the rail industry; so there are particular reasons why he structured his business around that. They have invested in that rail line, which arguably is beneficial for the territory. Certainly, if we can move recycling out of the ACT via rail rather than road and directly to the ports and other places, arguably there is some benefit around that.

Essentially, they see certain synergies and arguably different sorts of business models that they can run on that site. With the benefit of the waste feasibility study being

released and with the feedback we provided to them, that has given them some food for thought around how they may reshape the way they do things in addition to what they are already doing.

We are also involved with licensing the existing operation there. We are engaging with them around that and ensuring that facility is run well and, arguably, is appropriately zoned. In a sense I think their business model is based around that site. What they do in the future is a matter for them to consider—how they might reshape that based around the planning approval process.

It is pretty clear at this stage they have abandoned the waste to energy component. I think they have heard the community views on that and I think they have responded. They now are reconsidering the waste feasibility study and the feedback that we provided them around the alignment of their current draft proposal with the strategic needs of the territory.

Beyond that we have not been engaged with them in any way in terms of encouraging them or involving ourselves in this proposal. This is purely something that they have seen as an opportunity and they have been running with it.

MS LE COUTEUR: Mr Corrigan, you talked about how you were involved in the statutory process and it appeared to me that basically all you can really do is say that something that is really bad will not happen or should not happen. Is there a way that from a waste point of view you could intervene to say that this would be actually a good outcome, this is what should happen rather than just you cannot do this because it is too bad?

Mr Corrigan: Sorry, I do not quite follow.

MS LE COUTEUR: Can you intervene to improve outcomes rather than just say, “No, this is too bad. We will not have it”?

Mr Corrigan: I am just trying to think of the circumstances in which we would do that. The Waste Management and Resource Recovery Act came in in 2016. Obviously, we are commencing the regulation of the waste industry in the ACT but that involves registering all waste companies and all waste transporters. It is quite a big task. There are probably over 300 companies in the ACT. We are on the right road there by doing that.

In regulating them in this way—sorry for the pun—we are cleaning this up. What we are finding as the businesses come in is that they are all not alluding to anything that is untoward—anything wrong going on. What we are finding sometimes is that approvals are not in place or they are old. Maybe there are some environmental authorisations that need to be fixed up. From that point of view it is a positive. It is saying, “Okay, imagine the businesses and things coming in.” I think where you are going in terms of intervening—maybe theoretically, I suppose—is that, if a company came to Canberra with an amazing proposal and they wanted to talk to us, we would intervene and talk to them.

As Michael outlined, we raised issues with Capital Recycling Solutions in terms of

the policy direction the government is taking. If someone had an amazing proposal, we would talk to them about that as well. Who knows; maybe some company will come in and say, “We heard you want to do FOGO. We will take all that waste for you. You will not have to worry about it, ever. We will deal with it. We will turn it into fertiliser.” What an amazing outcome. Who knows?

Ms Fitzharris: Can I just say I think your question has already been answered to the extent that the EIS involved contributions from government departments to that process which, in addition to community input into the process, has involved waste policy input. Those are the discussions that have been taking place and that have just been outlined. In a sense that has already happened.

The discussion between TCCS and CRS has actually improved. As Mr Trushell just said, we have put forward to them some issues and concerns that TCCS have. That is in fact exactly what is happening now and it is within the context of the EIS. But that is a good place for the government to have those discussions with individual proponents of projects in whatever sector.

Mr Trushell: Can I just add one really tangible example of the benefit of this legislation? As part of the process of licensing our e-waste processor who takes the ACT e-waste under the national television and computer recycling scheme, they had a stockpile of leaded glass and they were unsure what to do with it. Our regulatory team, as part of engaging with them and doing a sort of audit onsite of all the material that was there, came across this stockpile and actually directed them to a processor in South Australia that would take the material.

As part of the sticks and carrots of imposing the licensing condition that they would move that on while at the same time identifying a market solution for them is an example of where legislation, with the assistance of the regulation and with the assistance of findings markets, got that stockpile moving. It is that balance of the regulatory kind of pinch but at the same time not just being there and telling them to do things. They are trying to facilitate solutions as well.

MS LE COUTEUR: On the regulatory side I have been shocked recently. The CDS proposal clearly is saying that there are recyclables in the landfill and that this assistance model which they put out is saying that shredded paper or basically any sort of paper that is not big would not be recycled in the MRF. What are we doing to ensure that recyclables actually are recycled and that we can have faith, for instance, that the MRF actually does recycle everything that goes to it?

Mr Trushell: The MRF takes yellow bin material, mainly from councils but also from the ACT kerbside and also from commercial operators. But they can only process what they receive. Under our contract there are key performance indicators around material to market. There are key performance indicators around material that they are allowed to take to landfill. They are highly incentivised, though, to market the material.

If they send it to landfill they pay for it to go to landfill. The only way they can make money is through the gate fee that they receive from material going in and the money they make from selling it out the other end. With the MRF model they are

incentivised to not take anything that is not going to actually be able to be marketed.

We work with them around their education and other activities to try and ensure that we are giving them clean feedstock. The CDS would be a great initiative in terms of giving them very clean material that will have a high value of stock coming out of the yellow bin and that will then drive the performance and the recycling of that material.

We are also at the moment working with them and within TCCS around developing markets for the glass and are particularly looking at opportunities within our own capital works to use that material. We are working with the likes of Boral and Downer and those sorts of companies that produce the asphalt, the concrete and the other material that is used by our contractors. We work in a number of different ways around trying to drive the recycling and the performance. Similarly, they are a licensed facility under our waste legislation and we also drive performance through that licensing as well as through the contractor.

MS LAWDER: On waste and recycling, are there any plans to expand Mugga Lane Resource Management Centre?

Mr Trushell: The current area that we are constructing and using is stage 5. That went through an approval process some years ago for the EIS et cetera. Essentially, what we are doing is building landfill cells as we need them within that approved area. There is already a master plan of a number of cells and as the territory requires those then we would continue to recommend to government that they fund the construction of those cells.

At the end of the day, waste has to go somewhere. We have had plenty of examples of emergencies and other programs like Mr Fluffy et cetera. It is also fraught with problems for the growth of the city. The urban renewal program is going to drive a lot of demolition of old buildings. We know a lot of those old buildings contain asbestos. Often that material cannot be recycled safely. It has to go into landfill. If you are looking at waste hierarchy, landfilling sits at the bottom but it is essential in the event we are not in a position to recycle material.

MS LAWDER: Will any of that building of new cells involve exposing the tip face as happened back in 2015?

Mr Trushell: No, certainly not on my watch. I do not think it gets any better the second time.

MS LAWDER: You are currently seeking to improve on what was approved back in 2015? There is no further expansion planned at this point or—

Mr Trushell: No, there is no further expansion beyond stage 5. We do not have land beyond stage 5. What we are focusing on is trying to get the maximum use of that space through driving up the compaction rate, to ensure that we are getting high compactions and utilising the space around the design and to ensure that we are maximising the available volume through design. We will also focus on the environmental controls, ensuring that we minimise odour risk; managing the leachate; managing the methane; managing grey water runoff; managing litter and all those

sorts of things—essentially focusing on those regulatory aspects of a high-performing landfill—and also maintaining our social licence to operate that facility with regard to the surrounding communities.

THE CHAIR: Ms Lee, a substantive question?

MS LEE: Thank you. You will be glad to know I am going to go off waste.

MS ORR: I have one more waste supplementary, and I know everyone wants to put it to bed after that.

MS LEE: We may as well stick with the topic.

MS ORR: I literally have one more.

MS CHEYNE: We will move to a less rubbish topic.

MS ORR: One thing we have not mentioned in the very exhaustive conversation so far has been the container deposit scheme, which is also quite a big component of waste processing within Canberra. Can you give an update on where that is up to and how we are going with the container deposit scheme?

Ms Fitzharris: It commences on 30 June. We have launched the initial few sites. That will be expanded over the course of the next year. It is a really well-designed scheme that has learned from other schemes, particularly those around our border, about how we can best support the community to recycle their containers.

There was initial work done which showed, from research, that the Canberra community really valued face-to-face contact around returning containers, so that has been built into the model. There are really significant and very exciting partnerships with the community sector and charity groups in terms of the delivery of the scheme through the operator of the scheme, which is Re.Group, the same organisation running the MRF. We can talk a bit more about where they are and what it will look like.

MS ORR: Yes.

Mr Trushell: The minister recently launched information around the number of drop-off points. That has been a live process, and as of 5.30 last night, I am advised that there will be nine drop-off points available at the commencement. Under the legislation, the network operator were only required to have two, but I am advised that there will be nine, including two bulk depots, four Salvos store-based express points, and three Vinnies store-based express points across the ACT.

MS LE COUTEUR: Will there now be any in Murrumbidgee? They were lacking in the first. There was nothing in Murrumbidgee in the first list.

MS ORR: The electorate of Murrumbidgee?

MS LE COUTEUR: Yes, the electorate of Murrumbidgee.

Mr Trushell: At the moment the stores are based around Mitchell, Fyshwick, the Tuggeranong area, Phillip and Dickson.

MS LE COUTEUR: Phillip is in Murrumbidgee.

Mr Trushell: Within 12 months they are required to have 18 collection points across the ACT. Obviously, the issue is about finding suitable sites and partners to partner with under the social enterprise model. I think they are doing a pretty good job considering they had a 12-week mobilisation period from signing of their contract to the start of scheme, starting from nothing.

MS CHEYNE: But there are more people who they are having the conversations with? We are going to double within a year?

Mr Trushell: Correct. There will be 18 within a year. That is the requirement under the legislation.

MS LE COUTEUR: You talked about conversations. Will people be able to deposit containers outside office hours? Or is it that because you want conversations, you are going to have to do it when these facilities are staffed?

Mr Trushell: It is a shopfront-based facility.

MS LE COUTEUR: Yes, but they are not open all the time.

Mr Trushell: No, they are not; they are not going to be. It is similar to South Australia. We have not based our model around 24/7 reverse vending machines. Those are being looked at as part of an augmentation of this, but we based ours very much around what operates in South Australia very successfully. The key is to have them in the right locations and also have them open on weekends. South Australia gets an 80 per cent return rate. We would be pretty pleased if we got an 80 per cent return rate with that sort of arrangement.

MS CHEYNE: What sort of condition do the cans, in particular, have to be in? I think I have read in the FAQ that they have to be in “reasonable condition”. If I crush my “prop” here, would it be accepted?

Mr Trushell: Yes, it would. That is one of the advantages of not using reverse vending machines. Reverse vending machines have barcode readers, so the container has to be intact. We will initially allow crushed containers. The idea is that it is going to take a while for people to get used to this, and the last thing we want is some family turning up with crushed containers and being turned away. The scheme coordinator and network operator are really comfortable with that. I think over time we would like to educate the community to—

MS CHEYNE: I am thinking more about people who do rubbish going around in your local community park or something. Often they are in a different condition to that.

Mr Trushell: I think we will get to a point of having to determine which way we go

around this, but the initial idea is that we just want to collect the containers; we do not want to be too restrictive.

Clearly, if you start moving into more automated technology, you have issues around the equipment's capability to identify a container. Within two years, there will be a change to the marking; all the jurisdictions with CDS have agreed to move to a common marking. At the moment, if you have a container, it will have "Northern Territory" and "South Australia". There will be a generic marking for all containers across Australia; all the jurisdictions have agreed they will give industry two years to tool up and get rid of old stock for that.

Within two years, we may be in a situation where we have to be a bit more careful around that, particularly if there is more harmonisation across the jurisdictions. There is still an aim of trying to get a national scheme up, which will be the best way of doing it, but at this stage we are trying to ensure that we do not make it too difficult for the community to engage with the CDS.

MS CHEYNE: Yes; we want people to have a good experience.

Mr Trushell: That is what we would like, yes.

THE CHAIR: Will the government of the territory or the scheme coordinator and operator be entering into an agreement similar to the one with Woolworths that they have in New South Wales where Woolworths retail points become collection points?

Mr Trushell: Not at this stage, no.

THE CHAIR: Is there an aversion to doing that or is it just that that opportunity has not arisen?

Mr Trushell: It is the decision of the network operator. In New South Wales, Tomra, who are the network operator, chose to do that. That has some pros and cons. Our approach, as I said, is based more around the South Australian face-to-face experience, not necessarily getting locked in with one particular supermarket or business. That is not to say that that cannot be looked at down the track if there is demand for that and an appropriate model, but I am sure Aldi, Coles et cetera—

THE CHAIR: I was going to say that I would caution against picking a winner, essentially.

Mr Trushell: We have to be careful about that, yes. Secondly, in relation to the car park at the supermarket, we know that we have had traffic congestion at Queanbeyan and things like that. There are a number of considerations. On balance, we think the model that we are going with at the moment will be appropriate for Canberra. I was quite impressed with the robustness of the South Australian model. I also like the fact that it drove employment, particularly enterprise-based employment opportunities, around this. And the thing with our network operator is that it is very much driving an opportunity for people to donate to charities, particularly local charities, as well, so there are other social aspects to the design of the scheme.

THE CHAIR: As far as the containers that come through the yellow lidded recycling bins are concerned, what scrutiny is there to ensure that only waste collected in the ACT from 1 July actually receives the refund through the MRF operator?

Mr Trushell: We will accept the containers that will come through Queanbeyan, and potentially, if the council enters into a deposit sharing agreement with the MRF, we will be able to receive those refunds as well. There is not a lot of scrutiny, because at the end of the day the scheme allows for the fact that we have quite a porous border. We have had people in Canberra going across into Queanbeyan, and we are going to have the same thing coming back our way a bit. Ten cents is 10c, so there is not a particular arbitrage opportunity around that.

THE CHAIR: It has been put to me that the additional plastic that is stored at the MRF facility in Hume is being stockpiled until the scheme commences in the ACT.

Mr Trushell: No.

THE CHAIR: No?

Mr Trushell: No. The incentives within the contract drive the flow-through of material. What has happened at the MRF is that the China issue has affected commodity prices in Australia. Our MRF are really well positioned, but like everyone else, they are competing in a more difficult market. They have focused a lot on improving the quality of their processing to remove as much contamination as possible. That creates a superior commodity which allows them to compete within a challenging market. And there is the reason I mentioned before around the external storage for fire reasons. There is no particular focus around plastics, as far as I am aware.

MS LEE: I want to go to ovals.

Ms Fitzharris: Sportsgrounds are under Minister Berry, even though they are managed by TCCS.

MS LEE: In that case I am going to throw my question to Ms Lawder.

MS LAWDER: Unsurprisingly, this is about dogs. You said last year, minister, that you would double the number of animal rangers at domestic animal services. The budget has funding for two additional rangers. It appears there were 15 staff previously, eight of whom were rangers, and now there are 20 staff and 16 rangers. How have you doubled the number of rangers and still maintained the staff who are not rangers?

Mr Alegria: We have engaged directly eight additional domestic animal services ranger staff, as committed to by the minister late last year. Those staff are in place and working as we speak on a range of compliance and education matters.

MS LAWDER: Sorry, if there were 15 staff before and now there are 20, how could you have engaged an additional eight?

Mr Alegria: The premise of your question in terms of the 20—

MS LAWDER: I think those numbers come from a question on notice.

Mr Alegria: I can talk to the structure we have now. The term “ranger” is used for a variety of functions. We have the front-line rangers out there in the field doing the front-line work. We also have investigations rangers; we have senior rangers that manage and oversee the staff; we have animal behaviour rangers that help manage the animals in the pound, and so forth; and we have an educational role for rangers. It really depends on the definition of what you are calling a “ranger”. But with the front-line service delivery ranger staff providing services to the community, we have eight additional people in those positions. That is a very clear increase in the resources available.

MS LAWDER: Prior to October 2017—1 November was when the minister talked about doubling the number—how many staff were investigators but not counted as rangers?

Mr Alegria: We had two.

MS LAWDER: And how many today are investigators and not counted as rangers?

Mr Alegria: At the moment we have four ranger staff in the investigations unit. That is effectively a doubling in that unit.

MS LAWDER: So four are counted as rangers?

Mr Alegria: Yes.

MS LAWDER: Are there any investigators who are not counted as rangers, as was the case previously?

Mr Alegria: Yes. In terms of the new rangers we have counted two of those investigator positions as being ranger positions. We have five rangers in what you would consider the day-to-day in-the-field-type work ranger positions, and we have one in the victim support education position. That is obviously a very important outcome of the work that was done last year through Mr Doszpot and others to address that victim support aspect.

MS LAWDER: Did you say there are now 16 counted as rangers?

Mr Alegria: In terms of front-line ranger staff working at the domestic animal facility and providing those daily services we have 15. In terms of the front-line investigations functions we have four. In terms of the support functions we have two.

MS LAWDER: Of those who are counted as rangers, have they all, including the new staff, been fully trained in handling dangerous dogs?

Mr Alegria: That is not a straightforward question to answer. I can say they have all been trained, but, like anything, the training is the first step towards gaining

proficiency and competency in a given skill. So the staff have the tools they need; they have been trained in a range of things, including the new legislation, but also in customer service and approaching and dealing with conflict situations. They have those basic skills and training. However, a number of new staff are still learning the nuances of applying those in every situation. I guess I am saying we are not yet at our complete capacity and our highest expertise.

MS LAWDER: How many of those 15 rangers are on the DAS ranger roster?

Mr Alegria: All of them, in effect, are on the ranger roster. As you would know, we have a 24-hour response service for serious incidents like dog attacks. With that we have not only the on-call, front-line ranger staff, but, if necessary, we can call in our investigations rangers, our senior managers and so forth to respond as required.

MS LAWDER: How many authorised officers are there?

Mr Alegria: All the staff that deal with and implement legislation are authorised.

MS LAWDER: The 21, I think that you have, are all authorised?

Mr Alegria: I can come back to you with an exact figure but certainly everyone who deals with the legislation and interacts with the public, including me for example, as the senior deputy registrar, are authorised under the legislation. That is a basic prerequisite for them to be able to do their work.

MS LAWDER: Given you have said, I think, all of your staff, including you, have had that customer service training so far and they may have other ongoing training requirements, how is it that a lost, elderly dog was euthanised within 24 hours of being handed in to DAS despite a vet's advice to the DAS ranger on duty that the dog was not distressed or ill?

Mr Alegria: I am certainly aware of that situation. I guess the issue at hand is the welfare of the animal. In this case I have been advised that the animal's welfare was a concern, and that is certainly a situation in which we can elect to euthanise the animal for its own welfare.

MS LAWDER: So the DAS officer's view is more important than a vet's view?

Ms Fitzharris: I certainly acknowledge this situation. My advice is that this is being seriously investigated at the moment. We particularly acknowledge the owner of the dog, and I think in this instance we would be happy to discuss that outside this room. But I have made clear that this needs to be seriously investigated.

MS LAWDER: This goes back to my question about training and support of the DAS staff and the way in which DAS staff follow their own procedures in terms of holding a dog for seven days while attempts are made to find an owner and the inconsistencies which appear in that a dog involved in an attack in Watson was patched up and given back to its owner, whereas an old, lost dog—

Ms Fitzharris: We have had this discussion in the Assembly and I would encourage

you, particularly on a matter that is before the coroner, to not make a link between these two cases. As I have said, in the more recent case—

MS LAWDER: I am contrasting the ways in which dogs were, at least on two occasions, treated in quite different ways, and I was not making any links.

Ms Fitzharris: But both those matters are under investigation, including a matter that is subject to investigation by the coroner.

MS LAWDER: I am not asking about the particular event that the coroner is investigating.

Ms Fitzharris: You are making links between events that you know are the subject of an investigation by the coroner and—

MS LAWDER: No, I am contrasting.

Ms Fitzharris: And it is best investigated by the coroner rather than in a setting like this.

MS LAWDER: Do DAS officers read microchips in dogs?

Mr Alegria: Yes, they do.

MS LAWDER: And did that occur in the case of the poor dog that was euthanised on the long weekend?

Mr Alegria: As the minister said, we are taking this matter very seriously. The owner of the dog is, naturally, upset that he has lost his dog.

Unidentified speaker: He is here, the owner, by the way.

Mr Alegria: Thank you. Sorry about what has happened. We are investigating this matter very seriously. I think it is probably not that helpful to try and predict the outcome. I think it is better we find all the facts.

MS LAWDER: When do you think full training of your rangers will be completed, at least in terms of basic induction and being able to follow DAS's own procedures in handling of dogs, let alone an ongoing training requirement?

Mr Alegria: As I say, all the staff have been trained to the point where they are able to perform their functions. There is a mentoring role for them, of course. As I say, I do not necessarily accept that we have not adhered to our procedures in this case. We need to investigate it and find out exactly what has happened so that we can then provide some feedback and some closure to the owner.

THE CHAIR: Who is carrying out the investigation?

Mr Alegria: Our investigators will be carrying out that investigation. They are a team of professional investigations-trained people; they are not the same people that were

involved in the circumstances and—

THE CHAIR: When is it envisaged that the investigation will be wound up or concluded?

Mr Alegria: Obviously, we will be pushing to do that as soon as possible, noting the circumstances, and obviously we are very keen to provide closure and provide some findings back to the owner of the dog. We will do that as soon as we possibly can.

THE CHAIR: Why was the decision taken to use existing in-house staff to conduct the investigation rather than impartial third parties from outside the directorate?

Mr Alegria: That is our standard procedure. However, when a matter like this, which has got some complexity to it, has been investigated and a brief of evidence is produced, it actually goes to a wider committee which involves people from outside our direct area—the regulatory advisory committee, which includes TCCS legal representatives who have had nothing to do with it. That is an element of rigour in how that decision is then recommended up to the next level, which is generally me.

Normally, I would have had no involvement, and I have no involvement, in the investigation; I simply receive the completed brief with all the recommendations that I then reassess and make a decision on. And in fact, we could even then take it to the next level up and go to our registrar for them to review that decision. There are a number of checks and balances in the process that ensure that it is a rigorous process that has integrity.

THE CHAIR: What is the process then supposed to be for a DAS officer that picks up or collects an animal outside core office working hours?

Mr Alegria: As Ms Lawder suggested, the first step is to see if we can identify the dog and contact the owner. That is No 1.

THE CHAIR: The second step?

Mr Alegria: The second step, if we cannot, generally it will get impounded and then further efforts will be made to locate the owner.

THE CHAIR: Once the dog is impounded, what is the duration of the dog's stay in—

Mr Alegria: Seven days.

THE CHAIR: And how many attempts, according to policy, should be made to contact or engage with the owner?

Mr Alegria: There is no particular number of steps but I can say that our rehoming rate is pretty good; it is up in the mid 90 per cent. Ninety-something per cent of dogs that are impounded are either rehomed or reunited. We do make every effort. Obviously, it is in our direct interest to look after the welfare of the dog, to get it out of the pound, to reunite it with its owner.

MS LAWDER: We had eight rangers before and now there are 15. Were any of the additional seven—

Ms Fitzharris: Sixteen.

Mr Alegria: Sixteen, yes.

MS LAWDER: I thought you said 15 before—15, four and two?

Mr Alegria: Fifteen, four and two but, as I say, the investigations rangers are included in that, as are the support rangers for victims of dog attacks.

MS LAWDER: Were any of the 15 previously employed under a different classification in that area?

Mr Alegria: Yes. It is part of—

Ms Fitzharris: It will have been the existing eight.

Mr Alegria: Yes, that is right. The existing rangers were all reclassified.

MS LAWDER: And any of the new seven? Were any of those already in the area but doing some other work?

Mr Alegria: I would probably have to come back to you with that level of detail.

MS LAWDER: That would be good. Are the two admin staff not rangers? Is that correct?

Mr Alegria: They are front-line people that work directly with the community every day on a range of matters including registrations, lost dogs, impound, ex-pound et cetera. They have a crucial role in supporting the work of the rangers that are out in the field.

THE CHAIR: We might stop there and take our morning tea break.

Hearing suspended from 11.04 to 11.23 am.

THE ACTING CHAIR (Ms Cheyne): We will resume with Ms Orr asking her substantive question.

MS ORR: Minister, I turn to some of our funding commitments in the budget. There is \$10.9 million to expand city services.

Ms Fitzharris: Yes.

MS ORR: If I am reading my notes correctly, there is \$10 million for more weeding and graffiti removal. I want to get a better idea of these funding commitments, what they will entail and the services that will be delivered as part of that.

Ms Fitzharris: We can certainly talk to both parts of that question, but the bottom line is more city services to respond to the growing city. Part of that funding is funding in the budget each year for new suburbs, new assets that effectively TCCS now own. It is to invest in new city services, including simple things like the provision of new rubbish bins. It is also looking after the public realm in these new areas.

In addition, the other \$10 million component is about an injection into more city services across those things that I know we all hear about from the community, such as mowing, weeding, graffiti management, and lake and pond cleaning. Who would like to respond to this? Obviously, there is a lot of work underway with the better suburbs initiative that we would be really happy to talk about as well. It is linked. We wanted to make this investment in funding and then go through the more medium-term process with the better suburbs initiative.

Ms Thomas: I will start by saying that the presentation of the city is so important to us that we have a group that does this work. It is called city presentation, because we really care about how attractively the city is maintained. It is a growing city. We have more people in the city than ever. It is fantastic that we can now add some extra funding to that to keep up. We have some more details on how many more mows and how much extra weeding we do. I will let Mr Alegria talk to that.

Mr Alegria: As the minister and the director-general have said, the better suburbs initiative provides a range of additional services to improve our city. Specifically, we have four years of additional funding for mowing. That is what we call surge capacity mowing. That allows us to program in those peak times, particularly spring and early summer, when grass growth can be a challenge to maintain. That is when we often get community concern. We have funding to throw some more resources and contractors at that to keep that program on track, which is fantastic.

We have also got money for lake and pond cleaning. Again, we understand that there is huge growth in the number of lakes and ponds throughout the city, well over 100 now. We now have funding to clean those lakes and ponds. We are also looking at innovative ways of doing that, working with our colleagues in the roads area to try to get that litter and waste removed.

THE ACTING CHAIR: What do you mean by “innovative”?

Mr Alegria: Innovative just in terms of thinking about it differently. You would know we have a stormwater system.

THE ACTING CHAIR: Yes.

Mr Alegria: We also have the lake system. Rather than looking at them as two separate entities, we are actually looking at them as a system and asking, “Where is the easiest place to remove the rubbish in lakes and ponds?” It is not climbing through the reeds on the edge of the lake. It is actually at the gross pollutant trap upstream. We are thinking that maybe we should be focusing more on that level of service at the GPTs, rather than waiting until the stuff gets into the lake itself. It is just trying to continuously improve the way we deliver services.

We have ongoing money for our graffiti program, which you would be familiar with. It is a really great program. It is very effective in managing graffiti, engaging with street artists to prevent graffiti and also improve the public realm through our huge range of public sites.

We have extra weeding on our arterial roads. We know that the presentation of the city, for visitors and those coming in on our major entry roads, is very important to the community and to us as a directorate and a government. So we have resources for extra weeding there.

We have some money for further work on our urban forest to address some of the outstanding maintenance matters that we have there. We will actually be able to catch up on a backlog there. We have money to clean bus shelters, to do an intense clean of the bus shelters every year. That is getting out with the steam cleaner and giving them a really good clean.

We have also, excitingly, some money next 2019-20 financial year for the adopt-a-park initiative. This is going to be a really great way to help the local community to become part of the management of our public realm. All in all, there is \$10 million over four years, which is money that will really make a difference at the front line.

MS ORR: You mentioned that you will be doing something with the urban tree forest. Can you give some detail on what those works will be?

Mr Alegria: We receive around \$10,000 inquiries every year related to urban trees. We know that we have a huge urban forest of 760,000 trees. This money will be spent to improve and enhance how many of those jobs we can get to. We always get to the high priority safety issues. They are number one. They are not at issue. But we will be able to get to a lot more of those, particularly the community requests and the things that are not as high on the list as a safety issue, but they may be an amenity issue. We will be able to get to those sorts of jobs with this additional funding.

MS ORR: Do I understand you to say that the additional funding will allow for more response to the community inquiries?

Mr Alegria: Partly; we have to triage all of these things. If we get a storm event or something happens where we need to prioritise safety, we will do that without apology. However, wherever possible, obviously, we want to respond to the community. Maybe they want a tree planted on their nature strip. We can potentially allocate resources to that. We can address the amenity pruning issues. We can be a little more proactive in addressing some things.

Ms Fitzharris: There is also funding in the budget for more trees to add to the urban forest. That responds to a whole range of other different policy objectives right across government.

MS ORR: Can I clarify the position with those trees? I think that outside this committee, in the general discussion, there has been a little confusion as to whether

those trees are going into new suburbs that are being built or whether they are in addition to what would have been going into those.

Ms Fitzharris: In addition.

MS ORR: In addition, yes. You mentioned the adopt-a-park program, which is new. Given that it is new, anything you can tell us about that would be great.

Mr Alegria: It is not funded until 2019-20. So we now have 12 months to plan. But the general proposal is that we provide relatively modest but substantial grants to community groups to work in their local neighbourhoods. It might include people who want to contribute to their local park by perhaps providing them with some tools or equipment. People might want to get together as a street and look at some improvements they could make on their street, for example. We are developing that framework. The idea is to engage people. We talk about the shared responsibility as being a really key thing for our city for the future. This is sort of a tool to allow people to actually participate.

MS ORR: The funding will not come in until the financial year after next. What is the time line for developing how the program will work, roughly? I am not asking for specific dates at this point in time. What opportunities do you envision for communities actually to get involved in that process?

Ms Fitzharris: In the design?

MS ORR: Yes.

Ms Fitzharris: Yes, I think this is a great opportunity. I think the better suburbs initiative will be one of the key elements. We will discuss exactly how the community can be involved. It is a Labor election commitment that we are really pleased to fund. There are a couple of examples which spring to mind. Your example in Giralang is about a build of something. This would be a slightly different scheme. But that example of how you have worked with the community in Giralang is great. The Lyneham common is another example of where there has been collaboration.

More recently, there have been a couple of other examples around raising issues in individual neighbourhoods about how people can participate. I think there is an enormous interest in the community about how we might go about this. It might look slightly different in different parts of the city. We are really excited to gather some ideas but I think the first stage of this, more broadly, is the better suburbs citizens forum and the work that they will develop under the better suburbs statement, which will happen over the next three to four months.

MS ORR: We have referred to better suburbs quite a few times. It has been an ongoing process. Can you provide an update so that we are all on the same page? From what you are saying, you are looking to interact quite a lot.

Ms Fitzharris: Yes. I think the better suburbs initiative is really the foundation piece of work. I think TCCS understands exceptionally well the community we live in and the needs of the community. It really prioritises working with the community and

understanding how different parts of our city operate, right down to a neighbourhood and street level, across TCCS. I have always said that no matter where you are in Canberra, no matter who you are, no matter how old you are, no matter what you do for a job, you will come into contact with something that TCCS does every day. There is an extraordinary depth of knowledge but also a real commitment to working with the community.

I do not know how many community council meetings the collective workforce in TCCS attends; they are at community meetings all the time. But in terms of city service delivery, as the city grows there are decisions to be made about the level of service across the city, the level of amenity, how the community wants to get involved, what is most important to them. There was funding in last year's budget. There was some community engagement late last year, which has been released, around the sorts of things that the community views as the most important in their neighbourhoods. That was phase 1. Phase 2 has been really the sort of direct democracy work that will lead to a citizens forum later in the year.

That citizens forum is selected from a range of people who would have received letters about participating in that. We will then develop a better suburbs statement. At the same time, there are also kitchen table discussion papers that literally will be going out very soon. They are available on the website. We can even table one for the benefit of the committee. This is something that community groups, families and streets can actually use to help guide some discussions about what is happening in their neighbourhoods, what they would like to see as part of city services being delivered right across Canberra. As we grow, some suburbs are coming to life and some suburbs are older. I will table that for the committee.

THE ACTING CHAIR: What happens with the kitchen table conversations? Are they being fed to government or are they being fed to the community forum?

Mr Alegria: Yes, to the community forum. The minister mentioned that first consultation process. We got some great information from that. I guess these will go to the next level in terms of providing—

THE ACTING CHAIR: Yes, a bit more granular.

Mr Alegria: Yes, a bit more granular. That will be fed into the forum as well. Then the forum will also have some other information available that they will use. They will have subject matter experts to help them understand what we do, why we do it, and that will inform their decision-making.

THE ACTING CHAIR: So the forum will not be making any of the financial or expenditure allocation of money decisions until they hear that input from the kitchen table conversations?

Ms Fitzharris: Yes.

Mr Alegria: Correct. I mean, day five is the—

Ms Fitzharris: Just in terms of that commitment in the budget of around \$1.9 million

on local upgrades, given that we have this process and we have a citizens forum with 65 members of community representative organisations, as that conversation with them progresses and as they come to understand the range of different things happening across the city, it is a very practical, real exercise that there is \$1.9 million in this year's budget for them to determine how best to allocate. But I have asked that a proportion of that go into playgrounds, given that there has been considerable interest in playgrounds from the community.

THE ACTING CHAIR: I will be able to see for myself in a moment, but are there particular questions in the discussion map asking people to think about playgrounds?

Mr Alegria: If you look at the map, it provides the scope of the better suburbs project, which includes playgrounds. It is really very much up to each individual family group, or whatever it may be, to decide what is important to them. We know playgrounds are a high interest topic for the community at large; so we expect that we will have a fair bit of feedback. Certainly it is not the only—

MS ORR: On playgrounds, this issue comes up a lot in my electorate, as you can probably imagine. It comes up in everybody's electorates a lot. A lot of the feedback I am getting, though, is that the playgrounds the government provides have been great, particularly for younger children, but there seems to be a growing perception that older children are not being included, or even, as we are looking more to public spaces for a whole range of ages, older people, grandparents and the parents who are going down to the parks with the children. People want more multi-use spaces. Another thing I hear come up quite a bit is that while some people really like the crazy, out-there, fantastic playground equipment, there are other people who are looking at more nature play and alternative options to what we do traditionally.

Can you give a bit of an update on how, in the work that you are doing, we can start to bring all these different perspectives in.

Ms Fitzharris: This is exactly right. There are different needs. There is everything from the playground in Moncrieff to the smaller nature play parks, one down at Tuggeranong Park and one at Telopea Park. There are a range of different needs. Skate parks are not particularly included in this, but they provide a different level to a different part of the community and different age group. There are kids and grown-ups of all ages. TCCS are very aware of that, and play needs change over time; there is a real interest at the moment around nature play.

Ms Thomas: We have delivered a number of nature play playgrounds in recent times, but also all the exercise equipment that has been extensively refurbished around the city does cater to adults and different age groups. I think we have the start of that, but this process will contribute to make that even better.

MS LE COUTEUR: Last year the Assembly passed a motion for not this budget but the budget afterwards. Where does the better suburbs process that you are doing now sit in terms of the commitment for next year?

Ms Fitzharris: It certainly informs that. As I mentioned in the debate in the Assembly, we had already been discussing how we can have that sort of conversation with the

community. For a whole range of reasons, there would be multiple examples, even in my time, about how we best invest in city services and local neighbourhood infrastructure equitably across the whole city. The opportunity with the better suburbs initiative, and the forum and very in-depth process that it will be led through by TCCS and Democracy Co, sets us up perfectly with some funding to allocate to understand how that process might work. In my view, it is a really good way to test this early on so that we actually have something under our belt before we proceed with that more fully next year.

MS ORR: Just going back to the original one, you mentioned that there would be more mowing. Mowing comes up a lot, as I am sure everyone can appreciate. Can you run through the mowing schedule for Canberra?

Ms Fitzharris: There are a few different components. Mr Alegria can talk through those.

Mr Alegria: At the beginning of the season that can vary. It depends completely on the weather, the rainfall and the temperatures. At a point, September-ish, we will expect to begin mowing. Our program is listed on the website. In essence, we have a suburban mowing program which seeks to try and mow suburbs generally every four weeks. That is the program. The arterial roads are managed through contract arrangements; they are effectively mowed every five weeks. Through the season, we expect the arterial roads to be mowed five-ish times, give or take, depending on the season, and with the suburbs it is generally more like seven or eight times through the season. It is very much a seasonally dependent program.

You would understand that we sometimes have delays with wet weather, which not only stops us from mowing but then also increases the growth, so we have to manage that. We have the surge mowing money there for that purpose. In the peak season, we also have almost competing priorities where we really have to look after fire hazard stuff and line of sight as a priority. In that situation we may need to allocate all of our resources to those particular high-risk areas, rather than doing a general mow through the suburbs. That is sometimes when we get community concern. People see a park where maybe only the pathways and the edges are mown, and the rest is not, and they say, “Why would you do that?” The reason is that we need to focus our resources on doing that level throughout our estate rather than—

MS ORR: So the additional funding will go to those surges?

Mr Alegria: Yes, the additional funding is going to help us try and keep to that four-week program as much as we can, to meet community expectations and also to meet our safety and risk issues.

Ms Thomas: We are not just relying on new funding, though. We have been focusing pretty heavily on how we can make more of our resources. We gave a directors-general innovation award to one of Stephen’s mowing teams this year because they had come up with a very innovative way of changing their shift patterns and working out in the fields to give them more capacity to mow more. It was a really fantastic thing for your team to do.

THE ACTING CHAIR: And do you tell people about that? Is that available anywhere?

Mr Alegria: That was rolled out in the north of Canberra last season, and we are going to expand it out to other areas.

THE ACTING CHAIR: It just sounds like a good news story. Is there somewhere that we can find out more about it?

Mr Alegria: I am not sure if we have done any media or anything like that on it, but we certainly—

Ms Thomas: We can take that on notice and provide more to the committee.

THE ACTING CHAIR: Yes, or do a media release; I do not mind.

MS ORR: I wanted to check within that, while we are talking on the city services. In relation to the \$5 million for better footpaths, verges and public spaces, I think we have also had it raised with us that there was a commitment to allow the community to nominate missing links or places. Is that going to be included in this \$5 million?

Ms Fitzharris: It is part of the normal process anyway, but not specifically right now. Again, it is one of those questions that is perhaps not specifically in better suburbs but where there is a system of how to assess equitably across the city, based on a range of different factors and where investment is most needed. That continues.

Mr Corrigan: Roads is on this afternoon's agenda. Roads ACT manage all the physical assets. Very quickly, people already let us know now where there are missing links or safety hazards and things. We approach those in a way similar to what Stephen has outlined with the mowing program. We always look at safety and those sorts of things first; we respond very quickly there. In terms of missing links and the \$5 million that remains through the budget process, that will certainly assist us in looking at some of those key missing links in the network.

THE ACTING CHAIR: I have two things. While we are talking about broader city services, I would like to go to street sweeping. I note that the schedule is available online but the PDF name says "August 2014". Is that the last time that the schedule was updated? If so, how do we decide if there is enough street sweeping? And does the schedule get reviewed? Is it coming up for review, given that it is four years later?

Ms Thomas: Again, that is probably more of a matter for our roads people, who do street sweeping. We are looking at innovative ways that we can change the way that we do street sweeping. I am really happy to continue to have those conversations.

Ms Fitzharris: I am just having a look at that. I cannot see the 2014. Could you show me?

THE ACTING CHAIR: It says it in the URL title.

Ms Fitzharris: Okay. Certainly, my advice is that it is up to date.

THE ACTING CHAIR: Secondly, in the annual report hearings last year we talked about graffiti and the time frames for the removal of graffiti. I think that the answer was that offensive graffiti is removed within a 24-hour period. I am wondering why that does not appear as an accountability indicator.

Mr Alegria: We have reviewed the accountability indicators. That is probably, in my mind at least, more something that we would work with at the business unit level. It is not necessarily a high-level strategic indicator of our output or the outcome. It is kind of an operational thing, in my view. That would be why it is not in those indicators.

THE ACTING CHAIR: Do you keep a record of how often we are meeting that 24-hour time frame, from a report or being aware of it?

Mr Alegria: Those services are contracted out to our graffiti and removal contractor. Often, they will remove that graffiti if they see it. It may not even be reported; they will just remove it on the spot without waiting for a report. At other times, a report would come in and they would not be aware of it; they would then put it on their program. The contractor tries to work in a fairly systematic fashion. However, if there is offensive matter that they have to attend to, they will go off track and do what needs to be done to remove it. It is fairly responsive. I am not aware of any situations where they have not met that time frame.

THE ACTING CHAIR: Is graffiti on public housing assets a responsibility for Housing?

Mr Alegria: Yes.

THE ACTING CHAIR: In terms of graffiti more broadly—I think this is a question I asked last time—how soon, generally, should we be expecting graffiti to be removed if it is not offensive but is on a public asset? I know they are working through reports as they get them, but I do have some that are months old, since the report. I am just wondering what the triage process is. I completely understand that there are lots and we are working through them. But being able to explain that to people would really help.

Mr Alegria: It does depend somewhat. There are some situations where it is very difficult, time-consuming and expensive to get it off—on overpasses and things like that. Signs are another issue where removal from the sign means that the sign can be rendered inoperable because the reflective coating gets affected by removal and we actually need to replace the sign. So there are a range of circumstances where the time frames may, unfortunately, extend a bit. I would certainly welcome any specific examples. We can follow that up.

THE ACTING CHAIR: I am happy to follow up separately.

Mr Alegria: Yes, absolutely.

THE ACTING CHAIR: Could you consider—perhaps this might form a recommendation—making that information public: that these are the things that might

affect responsiveness. I did not know about the reflectiveness of the sign. I do not want people to crash just because you are trying to get rid of some graffiti. I think people would very much understand that. But knowing that and being able to access that, perhaps on the graffiti page, would be really helpful.

Ms Fitzharris: That is a good point. The complexity of some of these issues still surprises me reasonably often, with the range of different things that are being dealt with and the implications of particular actions and the like. It is a great suggestion to provide some of that information online.

MS LAWDER: I have some questions about the table on page 25 of budget statements H regarding accountability indicators for city maintenance and services. In fact, I probably have questions about every single one of them, but I will try to keep it brief. Accountability indicators a, b, c, d and i are being removed or discontinued. What is the reason behind that?

Mr Alegria: As I said before on graffiti, the satisfaction indicators are more of an indicator that we should be using at the business unit level to help inform our own programs and not so much outcome-type indicators. There are so many factors in “satisfaction” that it is not particularly useful for us help inform our work. For example, the playgrounds or even the local shops accountability indicators are influenced by many factors and we have control over only a few.

We have control over the cleanliness and maintenance and safety of these areas, but we do not have control over, for example, the privately owned buildings in the local shopping centres, which add to the public’s perception. That is absolutely fine, but people’s perception of whether a shopping centre is acceptable is influenced by many things, not all of which we can influence.

Public toilets are another great example. We have clean and serviceable toilets but they are not necessarily modern and fancy, so people think, “Urgh, I don’t want to go in there; they’re dirty.” But they are actually not dirty; they are actually clean.

Those sorts of indicators are helpful, and we will continue to collect satisfaction data every year through our TCCS survey and they will definitely inform our business planning, but they are certainly not the high level strategic indicators that are useful for holding ourselves accountable.

MS LAWDER: Could you explain a bit more about the TCCS survey—who completes it, how many responses you get and that kind of thing?

Mr Alegria: The TCCS survey is undertaken annually. It is a random survey that gives us some statistically significant information. We report on those outcomes, I believe, in our annual report. I do not have the numbers off the top of my head—

Ms Fitzharris: Thousands and thousands.

Mr Alegria: Yes. It covers a range of topics right across the directorate, and not just city services. It covers all the things we do, in essence. That is a key measure for us to collect the data, see how we are tracking and then inform our own business processes.

MS LAWDER: Are you able to provide the committee with a copy of the most recent survey results?

Ms Fitzharris: The surveys are currently being done at the moment.

MS LAWDER: The most recent completed one?

Mr Alegria: Yes, certainly.

MS LAWDER: The notes to this table say that the accountability indicators will be changed to key performance indicators. Is that different to the results of the survey?

Mr Alegria: The key performance indicators are what I was referring to as our business indicators that we use to inform our own business. The key performance indicators will be drawn from a range of sources, including the annual survey. So that will continue and that will be used, as I said.

MS LAWDER: Is that publicly available anywhere, the key performance indicators and the progress or achievements against them?

Mr Alegria: There are an internal way of us managing our business. We adapt them and use them as we need to to improve our business. As more information is available or some benchmarking data is accessible, we might feed that into our system and use that for our own purposes. It is a continuous process.

MS LAWDER: As to abandoned vehicles, when does the nine days begin for your accountability indicator?

Mr Alegria: When the vehicle is reported to us.

MS LAWDER: To you? Not to the police?

Mr Alegria: If we have to remove it, obviously we would start our clock from when we are actually informed.

MS LAWDER: So the police refer it to you?

Mr Alegria: Or the public, yes.

MS LAWDER: It looks like you did not quite meet the target of 100 per cent within nine days.

Mr Alegria: Yes. Noting, from memory, that there were 1,300-odd vehicles in this category.

MS LAWDER: Do you have a feel for the reason why the target was not achieved?

Mr Alegria: Yes. In most of the situations, again, it is due to things beyond our control. Sometimes ACT Policing have a reason why they need to retain a vehicle in

its location. Obviously we will comply with that and will not remove the vehicle. We work with ACT Policing to try and minimise that time so that we can remove the obstacle to amenity, but that is one of the major reasons why we have that not quite 100 per cent.

MS LAWDER: Do you have data indicating, of those that were not retrieved within the nine days, how many were retrieved within 20 days, 30 days, 50 days? Do you break it down that way? What was the worst case scenario?

Mr Alegria: I do not have that to hand, but we track all of the cases.

MS LAWDER: Would you be able to take that on notice?

Mr Alegria: Yes.

MS LAWDER: For example, there is a car on Outtrim Avenue blocking the footpath. It has a sticker on it from 2 June and it is still there today. How does that happen, especially when it is a safety issue, where it is blocking the footpath?

Mr Alegria: If a safety issue is identified on the spot, we have the ability to move the vehicle immediately. I would be disappointed if there is a safety issue that has not been attended.

MS LAWDER: Because that is about 15 days or more now.

Ms Fitzharris: We will have a look into that one.

MS LAWDER: If you miss the nine days is there a pattern of leaving them so that you continue to achieve nine days for new reports?

Mr Alegria: No, not that I am aware of. Are you talking about an internal process?

MS LAWDER: Yes.

Mr Alegria: No.

MS LAWDER: So you are not aware of particular reasons? This car was tagged on 2 June with a couple of stickers on the back.

Mr Alegria: As the minister referred to earlier, there are always complexities in these situations. It may be that we have been able to locate the owner of the vehicle, and it may be that they have said, "Oh, I'm going to move that vehicle. I need another couple of days. I've got to get the mechanic," or whatever. In those situations we try and work with the person. Obviously a vehicle can be a valuable thing and we do not want to be heavy-handed and remove things if there is an opportunity for the owner to do the right thing. I am not suggesting that is the case with this one, but we certainly try to work with the owners, where we can identify them.

MS LAWDER: I will move to one of the last indicators—a new one—annual operational cost per hectare of actively maintained parkland. It is a benchmarking

process across Australia. Is this the first time we will be benchmarking using that process?

Mr Alegria: Yes.

MS LAWDER: Are you aware of the comparable costs? For example, what is the lowest cost in Australia, what is the highest cost and where do we fit within that?

Mr Alegria: Yes. I am certainly aware that we are at the low-cost end of the spectrum across Australia. We have deliberately chosen this one because we have control over the costs, within reason, of what we deliver here. We also know that the functions of many other local council include mowing, and we can actually compare ourselves directly. That is a really useful way of assessing our performance. We have put this one in here as a relatively new benchmark because it helps us define ourselves and measure our own success. The benchmarking report we use includes something like 30 other local councils. It is a fairly good sample size and we can measure ourselves well with that.

MS LAWDER: What is the cost of accessing that yardstick benchmark report?

Mr Alegria: It is insignificant; it is a matter of a few thousand dollars a year.

MS LAWDER: Is the latest report publicly available?

Mr Alegria: Because the yardstick report is funded through the contributors, I am not sure that it is publicly available. Obviously the data is of value to the participating organisations. I could get back to you on whether that is the case.

MS LAWDER: What is the format in which data is provided to yardstick? Is it hard copy, electronic file? What information do they have access to?

Mr Alegria: Each jurisdiction or each agency or each service provider, whatever it may, be provides a response to a survey—a set of questions which ask all the relevant information. That is drawn and provided from our own data and our own information sources. It is a self-generated format.

MS LAWDER: What drove the decision to go down this benchmarking path?

Mr Alegria: It is really continuous improvement. We deliver local government services in this directorate, by and large, although there are some state functions. We know there is a wealth of information and knowledge out there with other local councils and we are trying to tap into that to learn from their experience. As a small jurisdiction we cannot necessarily generate all of our own reports and things; we need to tap into other jurisdictions. It is a best-practice approach that we are continually evolving.

Ms Thomas: It is something we are exploring across the broader directorate as well. We are keen on looking at our performance in different ways and seeing if we can, as Stephen said, constantly improve on what we are doing. This is a first step in us exploring that, and we are happy to continue with that.

THE CHAIR: I have a couple of questions about the Capital Linen Service whilst we are in this space. I notice that there is an increase in the subsidy for Capital Linen Service in the budget. What is the basis for the increase in funding?

MS ORR: Which page are you looking at?

Mr Childs: Sorry, could you repeat the question, Mr Wall?

THE CHAIR: Why is there additional funding going to the Capital Linen Service as part of the budget?

Ms Fitzharris: Are you referring to page 20 or—

THE CHAIR: On page 20 there is an increase of about \$130,000.

Mr Childs: What we are forecasting in the budget this year is a 1.2 per cent growth in volumes of linen delivered, our sales, and that translates into a small increase in our sales revenue.

THE CHAIR: But you are forecasting a decrease in the total tonnes of laundry delivered?

Mr Childs: Yes. That is a completely separate issue. I can explain that.

THE CHAIR: Talk me through it.

Mr Childs: The two are obviously linked. What we are doing this year is trying to better align ourselves with New South Wales HealthShare. We purchase our linen, particularly for the health sector, from very similar suppliers—in most cases the same suppliers. That is an approach to try and standardise our products in the event of business continuity arrangements. But it is also to use their buying power.

What we have done as a matter of course is review the weights of each linen item. And what we have established is that the weights that we have recorded in our business systems are higher than our actual weights. That is just through a change of suppliers over years. What we see there is a reduction by about 7½ per cent in our total sales volumes expected. What we are anticipating is an actual increase in sales of about 1.2 per cent. But as it stands here, it looks like a decline.

THE CHAIR: What contracts does Capital Linen Service hold with the ACT government? Obviously you have mentioned Health.

Mr Childs: Health is the main one. It is our largest customer. We have some small contracts, really, with emergency services. Other than that, that is it. Most of them are under the ACT Health banner.

THE CHAIR: What contracts exist with commercial operators?

Mr Childs: There are a range of contracts there. What we have now is about 80 per

cent of our revenue tied up in contracts. About 40 per cent of that is ACT Health. The remainder is contracts with hotels around Canberra. Some of those are large hotel chains with a number of hotels underneath them. Others are small owner-operator hotels, Airbnb operators. There are a range of different models. Those hotel contracts range anywhere from two years to three years.

THE CHAIR: Is the contract with Health at what would be commercial rates? What is the process? Does Capital Linen Service tender for that contract or—

Mr Childs: Absolutely. We just went through a competitive process. ACT Health ran quite a competitive process there. We had to show, I guess, that we were competitive. We were benchmarked against other jurisdictions as well as other laundries.

THE CHAIR: Is there a dividend being returned to a directorate or the government for the current financial year? Are you forecasting one for the following year?

Mr Childs: The way we saw that this year is that, through that competitive process—the 2016-17 financial year—we returned a small profit. And that was through a range of things but primarily by trying to become more productive in the workplace. We reduced ACT Health pricing. Essentially the return to government was through reduced pricing to ACT Health.

Ms Thomas: The linen facility has a number of quite complex pieces of equipment, as you can imagine. It is pretty hard to go out there and fold doona covers and things. It is an amazing facility. We have had to reinvest in some of that equipment as well.

THE CHAIR: It is just, I guess, one of those things. The linen industry is a very, very competitive industry. And if government continues to operate the service at a loss when charging commercial market prices, it begs the question why we are in this space when there are other operators that could do it for less.

Mr Childs: Absolutely. Competition is pretty tough in the ACT. And clearly we would not be here today, particularly with more than half of our business being the private sector, unless we were able to provide a good service and benefit to the community and to the private sector.

THE CHAIR: What benchmarking or evaluation is done of the prices that Capital Linen Service is putting to market, compared to other commercial operators?

Mr Childs: It is difficult to benchmark in the private sector. Clearly our competitors are in the business of sharing the pricing. But what we can say is that the majority of the tenders that we bid for we are successful in winning. And we win that on a basis of providing quality, reliable and cost-effective service. For the last two years we have done a net promoter score survey with our customers. I think this is the third year that we have done that. We got a net promoter score of 10 in the first year, which is our baseline data. The year before this it was 30 and last financial year it was 50. Fifty is considered quite a high level of customer satisfaction. We know that our customers are happy with our service. They know that we do provide a high quality, reliable linen service. And that is through both the private sector and also through the ACT government as well.

MS CHEYNE: That was fascinating. I want to ask about streetlights. Is that capital works?

Ms Fitzharris: Roads, later this afternoon.

MS CHEYNE: Could I go back quickly to the community forum?

Ms Fitzharris: The citizens forum?

MS CHEYNE: Yes, the citizens forum. We have sent 4,000 invitations out. That has occurred. Is that right?

Ms Fitzharris: Yes.

MS CHEYNE: What sort of take-up do we want? Do we want 400 people as part of the forum or 40 or 10?

Ms Fitzharris: We will take 40 but we—

Mr Alegria: We actually released an additional 2½ thousand random invitations through vote compass, which is an electronic way of contacting people.

MS CHEYNE: So 6½ thousand have gone out?

Mr Alegria: Yes. I think we have received—do not quote me—roughly 200 acceptances to those invitations. We want to gain 40 people from that pool to represent the community at the forum—a selection of those 200 respondents—to make sure that it is a representative sample of the community.

MS LE COUTEUR: What variables are you looking at in terms of representation? I am presuming there are going to be age and gender, but are there any other things that you are looking at?

Mr Alegria: Yes. Democracy Co consultants are managing that process for us. But certainly we want to make sure we have a representation from age groups and from geographical locations in Canberra as much as we can. We did not ask too many personal questions in the little survey because we obviously did not want to put people off. In addition to those 40 community people, we also have representatives from the disability, age, youth, Indigenous, business and refugee sectors and also one rep from each community council. We think, collectively, with the six government subject matter experts as well, we have got a pretty good mix of people that gives us enough people to be able to manage the process over five days.

Ms Fitzharris: Those groups are represented in the other 25. The 40 come from the letters that have gone out. The other 25 are the representative groups—government representatives and business representatives.

MS CHEYNE: If we have got constituents who are particularly energised about municipal services and where improvements should be made and they have not

received an invitation, should we be directing them towards the kitchen table conversation?

Ms Fitzharris: Kitchen table.

Mr Alegria: Definitely, yes.

Ms Fitzharris: Yes.

Mr Alegria: It is not really an invitation-only thing. The random nature is very important. We deliberately chose not to target specific groups other than those representative groups. The kitchen table guide is the perfect way for constituents or other interested parties to have input to the process directly.

MS CHEYNE: How are we going to measure that this process, this forum, is successful?

Mr Alegria: We really—

MS CHEYNE: I am sure a better suburbs statement will be one measure. In terms particularly of allocating the money, you could see some very good outcomes, but I could also imagine some different outcomes.

Ms Fitzharris: There is also a survey as part of the kitchen table discussion guide; so constituents that are particularly interested have another chance to put their views directly, through the—

MS CHEYNE: Okay, great.

Ms Fitzharris: Certainly, we have to get the balance right regarding commitments we have made around the better suburbs initiative, in terms of the government listening to and hearing from the community. The deliberative process is one that they will work through. There are a variety of different ways of doing that. The statement will be developed by the citizens forum. They will present that to government later in the year. Government will then have to make decisions as usual. I think it is a really rich process with wide representation. People will learn a lot and they will be able to contribute a lot. We are really looking forward to what comes out of this. Democracy Co have a track record on delivering initiatives like this.

Mr Alegria: The other part is that we will know from the community themselves how they want to be engaged going forward, and what their ambition for engagement is. That will help us to inform our future engagement processes, for example. If people think, “This was fantastic; I got a lot out of it,” and they can see a statement, they can see that we have come up with some action plans to address whatever they come up with in the statement and there is a level of engagement, we may be able to continue the process into the future, to build on that experience. I guess you could see it as a first step towards a new way of relating to the community.

The outcomes statement is the tangible outcome, but, of course, it will not stop there. We need to repay the community for their investment by actually showing what we

are doing to put into action their recommendations, and continue to engage.

MS CHEYNE: When and how regularly will the forum meet? It seems like a pretty significant task. Are they going to get some sort of nominal payment, or maybe a substantial payment, for participating?

Mr Alegria: They are going to meet for five days. 21 July is the first day, then 4 and 5 August, which is a weekend, and then 18 and 19 August.

Ms Fitzharris: It is all on the website.

Mr Alegria: They are getting paid a nominal honorarium for attendance, if they attend on all of the days.

MS CHEYNE: Finally, on the better suburbs statement, when I think of “statement”, it is not legislation, it is not guidelines and it is not policy. What is it and how will it bind government in terms of delivery of city services?

Ms Fitzharris: It says “outline the priorities to improve city services in Canberra”. Hypothetically, the forum might say, “We would like the government to look at weeding, and we would like the government to prioritise weeding for the next four years.” It will be a deliberative process, with information provided about what sorts of things can guide the government. Certainly, I expect to receive the statement, and I expect it to have gone through a process that I can trust so that I can say to my colleagues that we can trust this process, that there has been a very rich engagement over a period of time, it is well designed and people have had an opportunity to have their say.

That is it, in theory. From seeing what comes to my inbox every day, and from understanding what comes through on my street, we have a feel for it. This process allows us to have more of a two-way conversation. You have been president of a community council. I know that sometimes, with the issues discussed at a community council, the broader community has a strong interest in them. My experience of going to community council meetings is that there is virtually no-one under the age of 25, there are very few women, there are very few people with a disability and there are very few new migrants. We might actually find that there are a range of different issues that come up.

Community councils have a broader role to play and often have a real sense of some of the bigger issues that are going on, but this is a great opportunity for people to talk amongst themselves about, “I live in an older part of Canberra,” “I live in a new part of Canberra,” “I live in a house,” “I live in an apartment,” and “These are the sorts of things that make a difference to me.” When you put people in a structured setting to have those conversations, they inform each other and learn from each other as well. I think that will be a fascinating part of this process—people experiencing the city in different ways, particularly as it grows. There is 1930s development, through to the 40s and 50s—almost decade by decade development in neighbourhoods—so there are quite different experiences of our city.

MS CHEYNE: Also, it is about adding to the transparency of government processes.

This is less of a question and more of a comment: even in my 18, going on 24, months here, it is about learning how much things cost. Shade sails are quite expensive; surprise, surprise! That sounds sarcastic but it is not meant to be. They are expensive. A lot of people think you can just do it quickly, but you cannot.

Ms Fitzharris: I would probably get a lot of correspondence and commentary. Often it is very immediate feedback such as: “Why did you make this stupid decision?” or “Why on earth was that done?” The directorate gets quite a lot of commentary like that and always deals with it very professionally. There is often good reason for some of the complexity behind some of the decisions that any government needs to take about the delivery of city services.

MS CHEYNE: You mentioned weeding. While we are talking about city services, you said before that there is more money for weeding.

Ms Fitzharris: Yes.

THE CHAIR: Minister, you and I have talked before about weeds growing in the middle of the road, at intersections and things like that. Will that maybe be targeting those?

Ms Fitzharris: Yes.

Mr Alegria: Yes, very much so. The weeding ultimately is an amenity issue, but we understand from feedback from the community that even though the weed is dead it is still an eyesore because it is still standing. That is the kind of thing we want to tackle, to try and improve that level of amenity.

Ms Fitzharris: Do you want to talk about how that is integrated with other services—mowing, weeding and litter pick-up?

Mr Alegria: That is right. We need to mow arterial roads, for example, but before we do that we have to litter pick; otherwise we will be mowing the rubbish on the side of the road. Obviously, we have to program all of our work to that end.

Ms Fitzharris: The container deposit scheme—

Mr Alegria: That may help. Also, we are working more closely together as an organisation to try and align what we do in the roads maintenance space with what we do in the city presentation space, so that we are more efficient and streamlined. We are also looking at new technology. We are looking at procuring a mechanical litter picker that can run along the side of the road and pick up the litter without actually having to—

MS CHEYNE: Really?

Mr Alegria: Yes. That would be a great safety—

MS CHEYNE: Is that budgeted for or are you just looking at it?

Mr Alegria: I believe that has been signed off.

Ms Fitzharris: It is in our budget.

Mr Corrigan: We are going to trial one of these machines that we are purchasing—

MS CHEYNE: I am excited.

Ms Fitzharris: It is much safer.

Mr Alegria: Yes, much safer.

Mr Corrigan: Very soon.

MS CHEYNE: I am excited. Please let me know.

Mr Alegria: Then there is the order of works.

MS CHEYNE: Take it on notice; I want to know when.

Ms Fitzharris: Would you like a ride?

MS CHEYNE: Yes, actually.

Ms Fitzharris: There are probably some safety issues there.

MS CHEYNE: I probably want to drive it.

Mr Corrigan: On the safety issue, one of the biggest hazards for our workers is working near major roads. Of all the work that we do, that is the one that comes up repeatedly from our workers. This will enable that to be done much more safely than having—

MS CHEYNE: I hope it is very successful.

Mr Alegria: Also, it is about getting ahead of the game. With, say, shrub beds, if the weeds get out of control, obviously it is a big job. But if we can get on top of the weeds, mulch and prevent weeds from growing, that is the kind of thing we want to try and get to so that we are on top of those sorts of issues and we are not constantly reacting to issues; we are proactively going out there. This funding will certainly help us with that.

THE CHAIR: On the mowing of arterial roads and those sorts of services, what surge capacity is factored into the budget this year for the spring season?

Mr Alegria: In the better suburbs bid there is \$400,000-odd earmarked for that purpose. Obviously we can use that as required in terms of the seasonal conditions.

THE CHAIR: So \$400,000 in addition to the seasonal contracts.

Mr Alegria: That is right.

MS LE COUTEUR: I would like to move to the libraries please.

MS CHEYNE: Can you please say “giggle and wiggle” for *Hansard*.

MS LE COUTEUR: One of our favourite programs is giggle and wiggle. I was not going to ask any questions about it, Ms Little, because we all love it, even if we are not going to giggle too much today about it. I am going to ask a possibly more difficult question: you have community rooms within the libraries, which is great. How do you work out how much groups are charged for using those?

Ms Little: We have a four-tier charging regime that is very heavily influenced by national competition policy. As a government agency we are required not to compete unfairly with the private sector. So at the upper end, at the commercial end, our prices are set in relation to commercial rent. So if you are a company or profit organisation, you are charged a fee in line with what a private person would be charging for a room. Fees are discounted after that. There is a not-for-profit community fee, a fee for other government agencies and a category which is free of charge for unincorporated, small groups, one-off kind of activities.

MS LE COUTEUR: So if you want a free room you should stop being an incorporated group. I am asking this question on behalf of a group that has found itself no longer in the free category and it was very disappointed to find that out. They are not small, but they are not rich.

Ms Little: One of the things we also look at is whether the organisation that makes the booking charge a fee or a membership fee to the organisation. That determines if they are fee paying as well as being incorporated. I think I know the organisation you are talking about. They charge a fee for membership, so we put them into the category where they make a very modest contribution to the use of the room. I understand there were situations in the past where organisations had done deals with some of our individual library staff. When we centralised the booking system we discovered some of those and we had to rectify them.

MS LE COUTEUR: Is the information about your four tiers publicly available?

Ms Little: Yes, it is on the website.

MS LE COUTEUR: Competitive neutrality? You are competing against the clubs who offer community groups free rooms. Some people clearly have some reasonable issues about meeting in a pokies venue.

Ms Little: Yes. We are also competing with the hotels, so competitive neutrality comes into play. We only charge the commercial rate to commercial organisations.

MS LE COUTEUR: Good. But I am saying that when your alternative cost is zero and they provide the coffee as well it is hard to see that competitive neutrality is one of the issues.

Ms Fitzharris: Other community organisations use schools and halls also. They charge fees for the hire of the community facilities as well. It is just not clubs and libraries; a whole range of other community facility rooms are available at a modest fee, based on the renter.

MS LE COUTEUR: I know, and I will be asking more questions of the department of education, but an issue I hear all the time from community groups is that they either cannot find anything—apart from the clubs, which they may not wish to use, and the clubs get full anyway—or the charges for ACT government facilities are beyond their means. I appreciate that the ACT government is possibly not making a profit out of them; I am not suggesting that. It would be an interesting question on notice: how do you work out what rate you charge these groups?

Ms Little: As I said, there are four tiers—

MS LE COUTEUR: You have the four tiers. But say I qualify at whatever rate. Presumably your rates have something to do with your costs—or maybe I am wrong in that?

Ms Little: They are historical, I have to say, and they rise with CPI. Again they are looked at in relation to what other organisations charge.

MS LE COUTEUR: So they do not relate particularly to your costs?

Ms Little: No.

MS LE COUTEUR: One of the things that annoys people is they can see there is no additional cost for the library to have them meeting there but they are being charged.

Ms Little: There are costs associated with additional cleaning and that kind of stuff that are absorbed. But I am happy to take it on notice and give you a more detailed response.

MS LE COUTEUR: One of the great things the library does is assist seniors and other people who have issues with computers and online literacy. I know Woden does some teaching, but do all libraries have these programs?

Ms Little: They do, but the amount varies. Obviously we do not do quite as much of it at Kingston because that is a smaller space. But all of our libraries do one-on-one sessions for people who are learning the new technologies. We do small groups as well. But the feedback is that the one-on-one sessions are much more helpful for people. We get everything from, “What’s this and what do I do with it,” right through to, “How do I access government services online? Can you show me how this website works?”

MS LE COUTEUR: So you deal with accessing government services online. This is not TCCS but Access Canberra, but you basically have to use a computer to do an awful lot of interactions with the ACT government. If you are someone who finds that challenging, would your staff be prepared to help people through that?

Ms Little: Our staff already do. That is core business for us.

MS LE COUTEUR: That is what we want to hear.

Ms Fitzharris: If we had a bit more time we could talk about all the things the librarians do—it is a very extensive list.

MS LE COUTEUR: Do you have queues of people wanting to access your computers? How many are available—you can take that on notice—but do you have enough? I know you have to book them.

Ms Little: The booking is more about demand management during the day than it is about the number of computers we have. We have enough computers. In some branches they are used really heavily; in other branches, not quite so. Obviously it links to the demographic of the community around the library. We do not have a problem with the number of computers. To be honest, the booking process is more about resolving the arguments people used to have about the time and whether it was time for them to be on the computer or not.

MS LE COUTEUR: You mentioned the Kingston library. Have you done a cost benefit of that?

Ms Little: Kingston library is performing quite well. We have recently done some work on the performance of all the branches, and it is performing quite well. People seem to love it. The brief we gave to the architect when we built that library was “trendy New York loft bookshop”, and we think we have achieved that.

MS LE COUTEUR: It is not quite a loft; it is street level. But apart from that, yes.

Ms Little: But that is the look I wanted.

MS LE COUTEUR: Given it is successful, are you considering doing something like that in areas where there is not a full library?

Ms Little: Not at this time, no.

MS ORR: I want to get a better sense of the \$3.2 million for local libraries. What services for the libraries is that going towards?

Ms Fitzharris: That work was done with the library service. It had been effectively operating at a deficit for some time. A pretty extensive process was done with ACT treasury on how to support libraries better in the long term to make sure their budget was sustainable. With this investment of funds, it now is.

Ms Little: That work showed that this jurisdiction is one of the most cost-effective jurisdictions in the country.

MS ORR: Could you take on notice the detail for that?

Ms Little: Yes.

MS LE COUTEUR: I will have some questions on notice.

THE CHAIR: I encourage members to put questions on notice; it is a good way of dealing with areas we did not get to cover. We will suspend.

Hearing suspended from 12.32 to 2.00 pm.

THE CHAIR: Welcome back to the afternoon session of Transport Canberra and City Services. We will start this session at output class 1, looking at ACTION and bus operations. I believe everyone is familiar with the privilege statement.

MS ORR: The budget provides \$1 million for improving the rapid transport network.

Ms Fitzharris: The infrastructure.

MS ORR: The infrastructure, yes. Can you run me through this funding commitment? What are you hoping to achieve from it? I think there are quite a lot of changes across the whole bus network. Can you contextualise within that?

Ms Fitzharris: Which one would you like to start with? The overall changes first?

MS ORR: At your discretion.

Ms Fitzharris: Yes.

Mr Edghill: The specifics of the budget initiative in there will largely be driven by what happens at the conclusion of the community consultation process that we are going through at the moment with the new network. As we move towards a more frequent network, focused upon new rapid routes and more frequent routes, we know that there are some activities that can be undertaken to enhance the customer experience.

It is not just about the buses and the routes themselves; we are taking a more holistic view across the entirety of the network. We are looking at everything from customer offices at interchanges and signage to wayfinding. We are looking at other initiatives such as ticketing systems and so forth. This budget initiative will allow us—definitely once we have concluded the community consultation process—to undertake some infrastructure upgrades, particularly at interchanges, where we know interchanges will be a feature of the new network.

It will also allow us to construct new stops that may be necessary to service predicted high patronage on certain of the new rapid routes. It will also allow us to make other modifications through the network to the roads or signage or any other smaller items that will help facilitate the introduction of the new bus network. That is the initiative.

MS ORR: Is there anything that you wanted to talk about more broadly with the changes?

Ms Fitzharris: I expect there will be interest in the new network. We would be happy

to talk about that. As Mr Edghill said, it is out for consultation at the moment. One of the key features was moving—we were at two rapid routes—to four last year. We had committed to expanding that to nine. We have been able to expand it to 10. We will also change local routes around the rapid routes as well. As well, there are some changes to provide more school services for school kids getting to and from school. There are a range of different elements to the new network. We are really looking forward to getting a range of views on how people will use the new network.

This is a fundamental change—a real step change—in how the bus network works here in Canberra. For many years we have seen success, particularly on the rapid services. Particularly since last year's update to the network, with the two additional rapid services, the green and the black rapid, being added, there has been a significant increase in patronage on weekdays. That has happened particularly on the green rapid, certainly on the weekends. That goes to what Canberrans have been saying for a very long time about what they would like to see in a bus network: more frequent, more reliable services, seven days a week.

We have a number of options before us, but there are only so many options for managing how you provide services right across the city that provide more frequency, more reliability, seven days a week. That will involve, as a new network, some more interchanging, but people interchange now. This certainty that we have seen since the introduction of the two new rapids last year is about a frequent, reliable route. It is about a network that people can become familiar with, whether it is on a Tuesday, a Saturday or a Sunday—same route, same number. This is the step change that Canberrans have been telling us for a long time they want. We are consulting now over an eight-week period on how people can use that service.

There will be quite a few changes for some people that currently use services which, in some cases, may serve them well. But we need to approach this with the right balance between how we manage and operate the network right across the city and how more people can use public transport, with more frequent, more reliable routes that get them to where they need to go quicker. We cannot have a bus network that delivers someone from every suburb to every other suburb; it needs to be a balance. We have already had quite a bit of feedback on the network. We will continue to gather that over the next eight weeks.

There are a range of different sessions, both with community councils and some quite detailed work with school communities, around some of the changes that they can see. I would note that there is a more than 30 per cent increase in the number of buses going past schools in the new network. That will mean more of your normal route services, as opposed to dedicated school services. Overwhelmingly there are more bus services travelling past schools right across the city. Currently there is quite a level of inequity in terms of school coverage. We can talk through the detail of that a little bit more. This makes it a more equitable system and a system which provides more coverage for school kids.

Overall, the intention of the new network is to increase patronage right across the city. This has the flip side of decreasing congestion on our roads, lowering our transport emissions. We know that, come 2020, when our electricity sector is 100 per cent renewable, our next biggest sector for carbon emissions is the transport sector. We

need to make some real changes to private vehicle use in the city if we are going to be able to meet the targets agreed right across the board in terms of reducing emissions in the ACT.

There is quite a bit of change in this network; we certainly understand that. We are very open to hearing feedback from people about what the changes might mean for them. I note that over the last year we have seen increased patronage—I think a 17 or 18 per cent increase during the week and a 65 per cent increase in patronage on the weekend. There are benefits to having a seven day a week rapid service complemented by local services. We have some good data. A lot of the changes that have formed the design of the new network are based on multiple surveys with the Canberra community about what sort of network they want, as well as pretty detailed customer data through the MyWay system, which has now been available for some time.

MS ORR: I think that there has already been quite a bit of discussion generated. One of the things that I have observed—I have had quite a few questions about it—is the multidirectional loops. I have had a lot of people asking, “In peak times will the bus go both ways? Is it going to go one way? What’s the frequency?” As multidirectional is quite a new change for Canberra, can you, for the record, tell us all about it?

Mr Edghill: A number of multidirectional loop services are proposed in the new network. There are some in Gungahlin, for example. These loop services are largely replacing routes that maybe meander a little more, and which come less frequently. So the idea is that these local loop services will feed into the local town centre or to rapid route connections.

We see there being two key advantages to having these circular services feeding into the local town centre. The first one is that, for somebody planning their trip, they can go on the loop in the direction that is going to get them to the town centre most quickly. An unfortunate feature with some of our local services at present is that—particularly if you happen to be at the beginning part of the route—it can take you many different places before you get into the town centre, which is predominantly where people want to go. You have the advantage of going on that part of the circle which is going to get you to where you want to go to more quickly.

The other advantage comes down to frequency. If, for whatever reason, you just missed the bus that will go the short way, there is another option across the street that will get you to the town centre also. It may get you there more quickly as well; it will just be the slightly longer portion of the circle. As we have designed the new network, of course we are bound by the constraints of the road network in Canberra. There are other factors that we need to take into account, such as putting buses past schools and past other points of interest. We have tried, wherever possible, to minimise some of the meanderings so that we are providing a more direct service for our customers.

MS ORR: The other question I have been getting quite a lot is about transferring between services. Obviously, there are going to be a lot feeding into the town centre hubs. A cursory look at the map would suggest that there are transfer points at other parts of the journeys. There are a lot of questions around distances and ease of transferring between places. Can you give me a little bit of an idea of the thinking that

has gone into getting those the best they can be?

Mr Edghill: Certainly that is an area of interest through the community consultation process that we are going through at the moment. We want to receive the ideas of our customers and, just as importantly, people who are not yet our customers, as to what would work best for them.

There are some things that we know already. One is improved wayfinding at interchanges so that, if you get off the blue rapid at the city interchange and want to transfer to the whatever other colour rapid it is, it is easy to do. It was kind of okay when we had just two rapids, and even now that we have four rapids. But we are conscious that, once we have 10 rapids, including light rail in the system, improving wayfinding at interchanges will be important.

The other element that we are really paying quite close attention to is rejigging our internal arrangements a little bit so that we have customer officers at the interchanges. At the moment, with the way that we are structured, we have transport officers, who do a great job. They look after bus incidents; they look after customers at interchanges. If we have big incident on the network, it can mean that people are drawn to where they are needed. But we would like to put in some more dedicated customer officers that we know will be there at the interchanges to help people.

One of the things that we note is that interchanging is not new. It is not radical either in our own bus network or, for that matter, in other places around Australia or around the world. We already have almost 3,000 students per day interchanging or using an interchange in our network as it is. We have already got thousands of adults who are interchanging in our network. We do not think that it is something which is going to be entirely unfamiliar for our passengers.

The other neat thing—because we have been able to put some smarts into the design—is that when you are interchanging, and you know that the next bus will be there with a high degree of frequency, you are more quickly getting off one bus and onto the next bus. It is about moving the network as quickly as we possibly can.

MS ORR: Is there anything that you are going to be looking at in regard to the journey planners to help with those interchanges? My IT skills on the journey planner are not the best they could be—I will admit that quite openly—but is there something that is going to help people like me who might not be great at using the journey planner?

Ms Thomas: It is absolutely an important part of our public transport network. We recognise that we can do some great improvements there to help people understand the new network. One of the advantages of having the rapid and frequent service is that people will generally have less reliance on timetables because we know the next bus will show up quite quickly. But that does not mean people know exactly where to get on a bus and where it is going to be. We are reviewing our options in journey planning at the moment. We are aiming to have a new system in place by the end of the year.

MS CHEYNE: We have just been talking about the use of interchanges and people

getting off and then on, but the frequency of the buses coming should relieve some of that pain a bit. Some of the feedback that I have had from people who live in Belconnen and work in Woden, and vice versa, who currently take the 300, or some of us who work in the city and take the 300, like Ms Le Couteur and me, is that with travelling that way and having to get off, there might be some issues. For able-bodied people that is probably no problem, but for some people who might have some accessibility issues, that might present an extra barrier to taking the bus. Has that been taken into account or mitigated in any way in this design?

MS LE COUTEUR: Also there will be a time cost to it, presumably.

Mr Edghill: There are a couple of points there. In terms of facilitating the movement of less able people, it is part of our thinking and something that we would welcome detailed feedback on through the community consultation process.

In terms of what we are doing with our fleet, for example, we are investing in a lot of new buses at the moment; a lot of the non-accessible orange buses that we have will be phased out of the network. And when we are looking at our trunk routes, which are meant to be moving high numbers of people, our preference, when we are putting buses into the routes, is to use the newer buses, which are disability compliant. There is also the topic of the customer officers that I spoke about before, having customer officers who will be at the interchanges and readily accessible. Part of their role will be to help everybody, including people who may have mobility issues.

In terms of whether it will take longer or not take longer, of course for individual circumstances individual journeys may change. But, as a whole, the way we are looking at it is that the journey time is not just about the time you get on the bus and it starts moving to the time that you get off it; a very important component is how long you spend waiting at the bus stop to actually get on the bus in the first place. In many instances, at the moment that can be longer than the bus journey itself, which is unfortunate. By increasing the frequency of the buses, on balance, we think we are attracting more people into public transport as it is.

Our fundamental goal here is not to make things worse for people; it is to make a better public transport system and encourage people onto public transport. By making buses more frequent, we are giving people generally faster journey times but also greater certainty so that they know they can turn up without the timetable and have a degree of confidence that a bus is coming along soon.

We did not design the network in such a way that we would move somebody from Gungahlin to Tuggers on a single bus. As the crow flies, it is probably about 42 kilometres; I do not think that is something that people expect of any bus network in an urban setting anywhere. What we are doing is making a lot more frequent bus journeys available, with seamless interchanges. That will give people more choice and help them get to where they want to go more quickly.

When you look at the new network as a whole, compared to where we are today, you can see that the number of bus trips which are available is substantially more. We moved from something like 3,400 to over 4,300 on regular route trips on a weekday, so there is more than a quarter uplift in the choice that we are providing to our

customers.

MS CHEYNE: Will there be some modelling done before the network is finalised that will show the difference in times to travel for people? I guess that is caught up in your journey planner conversation.

Mr Edghill: What you will not have seen in this phase of consultation is an actual timetable, because what you need to do before you can put the timetable out is lock down exactly where all the buses are going. There will be a much shorter, effectively, third phase of consultation after this consultation where we will be putting the timetable out and saying, “These are the actual bus times.” That will give people at that point in time a very specific idea of exactly how they will get from A to B.

MS CHEYNE: Will that be consultation or information sharing?

Mr Edghill: The main thing to get right is the routes and where they are going. That is the main point of consultation. The idea of putting the timetable out is that we will be the first to acknowledge that they are sometimes big and complex beasts, and if there is something hidden that needs to be drawn to our attention, that does not quite work right, there is that opportunity for us to make tweaks at that point in time to make the system better overall.

MS CHEYNE: Something that came up a few times in the plan for Belconnen was demand-responsive services. There seems to be one for Lawson.

Ms Fitzharris: Lawson, yes, and the hospitals.

MS CHEYNE: Until that road is built. I will be strongly suggesting to the suburban land minister that that road be filled.

Ms Fitzharris: Across from Aikman Drive there?

MS CHEYNE: Yes, exactly, but also the circular route between UCH and Calvary. What will demand responsive mean? Will it be where you press a button and it comes?

MS LE COUTEUR: Press a button on what? A phone? The bus stop?

Mr Edghill: We are really excited by demand responsive. In fact, we have a demand responsive service as it is at the moment that we operate; it is our flexible bus service. Again, we will be the first to admit that there is room for improvement there.

Our real focus on demand responsive services is on the technology side of those services. There are any number of trials and actual services both in Australia and elsewhere in the world. Using smarter technology may mean that somebody can phone the call centre or press a button on their app. The bus might not be a full-sized bus—it might be a bit smaller and suited to the purpose that it is serving—but it will turn up much more quickly and take people to where they need to go.

There are three areas that we are looking at. We have already mentioned two. The

other one is the AMC. We think it is an opportunity to provide a service that will be much better for our customers, much more efficient for the bus network and therefore of greater benefit to everybody.

With the AMC, for example, we run a fixed bus service. I think it comes with a two-hour frequency, so it is not particularly great in terms of frequency. And because it is a fixed bus service it may be operating at times when visiting hours are not actually available at the AMC. With that and the other two examples that we noted, somebody might be able to press a button or make a call and note that the bus will be there within—this is part of the process that we need to go through—say, half an hour or less. It will then pick them up when they want to leave and take them to where they want to go. That is better for the customer; better for us, because we are not dedicating a whole bus to something that not a whole lot of people are actually using; and therefore better for everybody, because that might be a full-sized bus that can go into a rapid network.

It is a kind of win for everybody, and it is leveraging off technology to provide a better service for all.

MS CHEYNE: Are there opportunities for more of these if this consultation period over the next seven or eight weeks identifies that there might be some gaps where people were previously using things? Something that has been suggested to me already is that people are going from Fraser, Flynn or upper Charnwood down to the shops at Charnwood and also to Kippax along that route, and that has been taken away a bit. Could that, for example, be an opportunity for this demand responsive service?

Mr Edghill: We very much welcome any feedback; we will certainly keep an open mind. There might be slightly different looking demand responsive services in different areas, depending upon what is actually needed. Demand responsive for the AMC might work a bit differently from some of the hospitals that we were talking about, just because of the time of the day that we know people might want to go out there. We do not have any set views at this stage as to exactly what it would look like. We are very interested, as part of the community consultation, to hear views about how demand responsive can best work for our customers.

MS LE COUTEUR: Could demand responsive work more at the weekend and late at night? We used to have the night rider service, which was not quite demand responsive but was not your normal bus either.

Mr Edghill: Yes, absolutely. Night rider is a great example. Two years ago—we did it last year also, and the night rider still exists—we were the first jurisdiction in Australia to marry demand responsive services in the form of Uber and our public transportation network in a way that we think was really neat. We have seen increased patronage there.

It means that, rather than the night rider bus going everywhere, we were able to run the night rider buses more in a corridor. You would be given a code when you got off the bus, you would give it to the Uber driver and they would drop you to your front door within a radius if you got on within X metres of where the bus stop was. The

advantages were that we saw increased patronage; it was cheaper for people to get home from the city—I think we had some examples of students getting home for a dollar or whatever—and we were able to run those buses more efficiently so that it cost the ACT taxpayer less. That is an example of being a bit smart with these things, where everyone is a winner. We are very open to those sorts of ideas that may arise.

MISS C BURCH: Going back to staff at interchanges, you mentioned that will be increasing with the new funding for the rapid infrastructure. Can you talk a bit more about how many staff there are in terms of transport officers and customer service officers at the moment and whether that is likely to increase to?

Mr Edghill: Because we run early morning and late night services—they are obviously spread throughout the day—we do not have everyone available to be on call at once. But approximately how many do we have?

Mr McGlinn: Currently we have 22 field transport officers and two customer service officers that operate during office hours in the city and at the Woden bus station.

MISS C BURCH: And what is that likely to be increasing to?

Mr McGlinn: Our preliminary look at it shows that we will ascertain how many students and members of the public will go through the major stations, but at other stations we are looking at having two customer service people across the morning peak and then in the afternoon peak we will have another two. Plus our transport officers will still be located there, providing some platform assistance and monitoring of the network and transfers. However, as Duncan referred to before, we can be called out to emergency situations. It is extremely important that we do still have a presence in the bus stations.

Mr Edghill: That is per station, but future numbers have not been finalised yet. That is something that we will land upon once we have received the totality of the feedback during the community consultation process.

MISS C BURCH: Going back to consultation, as well as MyWay data—and you mentioned that MyWay data has been used extensively in devising the proposed new network—and also talking about trying to increase patronage in general, what has been done in terms of data and consultation to talk to people who do not currently use the network to see what they require and what can be done to get them to use the network?

Mr Edghill: The MyWay data that we have is very rich and has helped us develop the new network. Indeed, when it comes to the school network we work very closely with the Education Directorate and we are looking at some of the school-by-school enrolment data to develop what we have developed.

We have undertaken consultation which extended to not just people who are currently using the bus network but people who are not using it. We freely acknowledge that amongst major cities, capital cities in Australia, Canberra has very high rates of car usage and there is definitely an opportunity there for us to be increasing public transport patronage. Off the back of the previous consultation that we undertook, we

know the things that are more likely to attract people to using public transport are frequency, better operating hours and more direct trips. That does not come as a great surprise to us.

If you look at very high-level data on our bus network at the moment—and we have got four rapid routes—financial year to date they have carried 7.1 million people, about 40 per cent of our patronage. Straightaway the data was telling us that 40 per cent of people who are travelling on our network are travelling on four rapid routes. From the consultation that we have undertaken, the experience of other jurisdictions and other public transport agencies and the way that people are just voting with their feet at the moment, we know that the rapid is a service which attracts people into public transport; hence the significant focus upon rapids in the new network in terms of the sheer number of them.

The fact that we have brought an additional rapid in there that was not initially contemplated and the fact that we have actually brought forward the introduction of all rapids in one hit, rather than in stages over the next few years, means that we are very confident that once the network is bedded down and people are used to how it works—and there will be change for our customers, both with the introduction of light rail and our broader changes—what it will be doing is laying the foundation for a step change in patronage growth in Transport Canberra.

MISS C BURCH: It seems there has been a significant focus on data and consultation with people who use the network and not necessarily with people who do not use the network.

Ms Fitzharris: In terms of both research and community consultation, there were extensive pieces of work done in 2015 and 2016, including a widespread community survey. We would love more people who do not use the network to provide us with information. But it is one of those challenges. The household travel survey which has just recently been completed gives us very fine-grained information on how people are choosing to move around the city. But you are right: it is a challenge.

In terms of the consultation that we are doing, I think the preliminary feedback we got was from people who already use the network, and for some of them there will be some changes. But really this is a city-wide operation that has a lot of, literally and figuratively, moving parts. The evidence so far is that what people have said that they want in theory is what the network is designed to deliver. It is what succeeds in other cities.

We simply have to increase our level of public transport usage. I think we see that the rapids, to the extent that they are 40 per cent of the patronage at the moment, will move the most number of people most frequently, and that is the biggest impact we will get, particularly at peak times, to reduce congestion and to move more people to and from where they need to go. This network simply cannot be a door-to-door service—it is not what a public transport system is there to do—but it is moving a lot of people quickly along 10 rapid routes, having local services, trialling some demand-responsive and, as was said, different-looking services to meet different client and customer needs.

The more that people can tell us what it would mean for them to catch a bus in theory is great, but the increase in patronage we saw with the two additional rapids last year is the best data we have got that these services have increased patronage, particularly on the weekend. That is the best data we have got, I think, about people that were not currently using it that we think are now using it. And we just want to see that continue to grow.

Ms Thomas: I was going to add that the public transport system as a whole is not just the bus network itself. There are other elements such as the journey planner and the ticketing system. For people who have never tried it before it is a bit of a barrier to them starting to use the system. The better we can improve that information, the more it will help people understand what is available to them. “Where do I get a ticket from, do I even need a ticket anymore and how do I pull all that together to get on the public transport system?”

Ms Fitzharris: There are other components to that—whether it be active travel, walking, cycling groups, buses on high frequency routes where you might have a bike cage. But we do better than, I think, just about anywhere else with having bike racks on the buses. Light rail will have the capacity to take bikes.

Park and ride is a really important part of the mix. The take-up at Wanniasa park and ride has been very significant. Part of the funding in this year’s budget is to have another fresh look at our park and ride strategy right across the territory, including, obviously, needing park and ride in Woden to help deliver stage 2 of light rail.

It is the supporting elements to the bus network as well that are also integral to getting people to understand the network. I think once people start to understand how to use it, they build confidence and they know what they need to do. What we would like to see is that those people that currently use the network perhaps only to go to and from work start to use it at other times of the day—on the weekends so that we get more people being able to have the same route number bus and the same route on the weekend as they might take to work, and/or running later into the evening, particularly on the weekends, which we have talked about in the Assembly before.

MS CHEYNE: Ms Thomas, you mentioned, and other officers also mentioned, integrated ticketing and the new ticketing equipment. What does that look like? I understand that a few years ago we were talking about trying to integrate with New South Wales and trying to have one card for everywhere. Increasingly, I have had people ask me, “Can I tap on and off with my credit card or my watch?” Can they use whatever it is to—

Ms Fitzharris: Or the guy in New South Wales that imbedded it in his hand under his skin.

MS CHEYNE: Yes.

Ms Thomas: integrated ticketing is an essential part of where we need to get to for the whole public transport network. It is a very complex system behind the system. You can imagine that the ticketing system needs to understand whether people are getting on buses and ultimately light rail. Some ticketing systems across the country

help people with park and ride and a whole swag of other things.

The MyWay ticketing system is coming towards the end of its life. It was purchased a while ago. The team have been looking at a new public transport ticketing system that will give us all of those opportunities for a modern ticketing system and really good flexibility of use. Do you want to talk about it, Duncan?

Mr Edghill: Yes, I am happy to. We are in a procurement process at the moment. We have short-listed bidders and we are going through the RFQ process. Ticketing systems are complex. It takes a while to procure them and then put them in place. Essentially, what we will be moving to is what is called an account-based system. At the moment, the data, the smarts, is contained on your MyWay card itself. That is why your MyWay card is important. With an account-based ticketing system, the smarts actually sit in an account that sits kind of in a cloud.

What that means is that the thing that you are swiping is actually not the thing that stores the value. It is the thing that is telling the account to debit however much the fare is. What that means is that there is a lot more flexibility in what you can have in your hand to swipe.

MS CHEYNE: It could be multiple things.

Mr Edghill: It could be your phone. You could have something like a MyWay card. It could be your watch. Certainly, what you see in London, for example, and in other places is being able to swipe your Mastercard or your Visa card. The convenience of that is that the fare still costs the same amount of money. It is not like you are being charged more to use it. But you do not have to go to the newsagents and get a separate MyWay card or something which is already existing in your wallet.

That has advantages for existing customers. It has advantages for people who may be occasional users of the system. It has advantages in actually tracking people into the system. Given Canberra's status as a tourist destination, it also makes it easier for people coming from interstate.

How then does that integrate with other systems? I think the holy grail in the ticketing world in Australia is that you can go anywhere in the country and use whatever. The account-based ticket system will actually help us get to that point. The Opal technology is—there are newer technologies out there at the moment. By moving to an account-based system—we increasingly see other jurisdictions move to it; Queensland is a little ahead of us—we might overtake them in terms of implementation. But once you have different jurisdictions that can link up the accounts in the background, that is when you are at the point where you can go from Canberra, get on the bus in Brisbane, tap your MyWay card and use the public transport there.

MS CHEYNE: Because New South Wales has a slightly newer system, they are probably not where we are; so we are potentially going to leapfrog them.

Ms Fitzharris: We are going to leapfrog them.

Mr Edghill: Yes.

Ms Fitzharris: Whereas they leapfrogged us with—

MS CHEYNE: And then they can catch up to us.

Mr Edghill: Yes.

MS CHEYNE: The ACT leaders.

Ms Fitzharris: Yes, that is right.

Mr Edghill: In time everyone will be account based. The neat thing about that is that then you are into the world of mobility as a service. That is where you are able to use the technology platform, in time, to do things like not only your journey planning that we were talking about before. Maybe you can also pay for your whole journey, including bike share, taxi and your public transport all on the one system. That is where it starts to get really exciting. That is where transport technology is moving internationally, and we will be part of that.

Ms Thomas: We still will need some form of card for people who do not have phones or who do not have access to Mastercard, Visa card-type activities. That is one of the considerations of the team as well, still to provide options for people.

MS CHEYNE: So your black Transport Canberra card can stay. I quite like it. I am fond of it.

Ms Fitzharris: Yes, it might not be the exact card, but—

Mr Edghill: I can guarantee you it will not be the exact card; something a bit newer.

MS CHEYNE: I will enjoy my time with it while I have it.

Ms Thomas: It will be a collector's item.

Ms Fitzharris: Importantly around that, though, while procurement is underway, for the commencement of light rail there will be integration with the MyWay card.

MS CHEYNE: Yes, whether you are taking the bus or whatever, it is not going to cost you more to—

Ms Fitzharris: If one day you are taking the 200 from the Gungahlin town centre into the city and use your MyWay card and next day light rail is there instead, you will be able to use your same card.

MS CHEYNE: From what you are saying, minister, due to where we are in the procurement process, it is pretty unlikely that the integrated ticketing, what Mr Edghill is talking about, will be underway—

Ms Fitzharris: Yes, on day one.

MS CHEYNE: for light rail.

Ms Fitzharris: It will be impossible to do that.

Ms Thomas: We did that for a reason.

MS CHEYNE: But maybe in 2019?

Ms Fitzharris: Yes, but there was a good reason.

Ms Thomas: We did that for a reason. We did not want to introduce light rail, be introducing the new ticketing system at the same time and have that possibility for confusion. We want to have everyone using the same ticketing system across both forms of transport before we change the ticketing system over.

MS CHEYNE: So likely time frames are—

Mr Edghill: It very much depends upon the procurement process. I think MyWay became operational in 2011; so we have a back-stop date of around 2020, by which time we need to know what we are doing with the new ticketing system.

MS CHEYNE: I have a question about off-peak travel for seniors. It is free. Is that continuing in this year's budget?

Ms Fitzharris: Yes.

MS CHEYNE: I think originally it was a one-year trial. Is it now permanent? Is it still part of a trial?

Ms Fitzharris: It is continuing this year as well. We will have another look at it this year. There is no expectation at this point that it would stop. It has proven successful.

MS CHEYNE: Clearly, Ms Le Couteur has some views on it as well, and perhaps others who have shadow responsibility for seniors, but I have had amazing feedback about it.

Ms Fitzharris: Yes, we have heard great feedback.

MS CHEYNE: People have actually got rid of their cars. It is so good.

Ms Fitzharris: Yes, we have had feedback from all sorts of groups. For example, a network of GP clinics who particularly treat clients who are very disadvantaged and often find travelling to a GP appointments very difficult have found this useful. Transport Canberra went above and beyond in actually delivering this commitment. It has serviced people really well.

MS LE COUTEUR: I agree with you that it has been very good. Apart from the fact that it would be nice to establish that it will be ongoing rather than a trial, the only other real complaint I have had is that you exclude students. I can understand why.

But the issue is that students who are members of a family that is getting a concession card actually have the same financial needs as other concession card people. They are just students as well.

Ms Fitzharris: Do you mean school students or university students?

MS LE COUTEUR: I was particularly talking about school students rather than uni students. There is probably a whole other set of issues.

Ms Fitzharris: We will look into that, yes.

MS LE COUTEUR: I have been told about disadvantaged families where the parents have concession cards and can use them but the kids cannot because they have student cards.

Mr Edghill: We have an existing student travel program that I think may already be addressing what you are talking about. But we can dig out the details of that.

MS LE COUTEUR: This is not just for going to and from school. Kids sometimes move around, apart going to and from school. I am talking about weekends and other times.

MS CHEYNE: Going back to the bus consultation, we are going out for consultation because what is proposed is not set in stone. Is that correct? With what has gone out, there is capacity for tweaking it. Is that right?

Ms Fitzharris: Yes. In terms of delivering the commitment to the nine rapids, plus now I think the 10, it is something we would maintain.

MS CHEYNE: Rapids aside, more on the local services.

Ms Fitzharris: Yes, rapids aside. There will be a variety of different things. For people who currently use one that gives them a direct route, it might be very winding from their suburb to another suburb. There might be people all of a sudden finding they are getting picked up who previously were not. We need to factor that in. But there will be some options for us to look at that and make reasonable judgements on the types of feedback that we have.

MS CHEYNE: I am not saying to overhaul it again. I am saying that hearing back from people's lived experiences when they are able to see it can help make some tweaks to what is currently proposed.

Ms Fitzharris: Yes. And I would say on that matter that that is exactly right. It is this constant challenge that all governments have around consultation. This is the proposal, and it is not pulled out of thin air; it is based on broad principles, the operation of the networks, practicalities about both our suburbs and the network itself, how often the buses go, the number of buses, the working conditions of the bus drivers and all of those things. It has been very well thought through.

Having said that, it is a proposal; we welcome people's feedback on that and we will

do our best to take that on board. If there are some areas where a number of people raise an issue, if they say, “Maybe that does not make sense. We can do it this way,” we are very open to that. I would encourage everyone who is contributing to it to bear that in mind. We did not put it out for consultation for just this purpose. I have had a number of comments myself which, if you had the benefit of having a constructive discussion with someone, might be framed quite differently.

This is not unfamiliar. We have recognised that it is quite a significant change, but it is based on very consistent, broad community feedback on what we see works for people and drives an increase in patronage and what we see has worked around the world in terms of good planning for bus networks.

MS CHEYNE: In this current proposal, Xpressos have gone. Is there any capacity, if it turns out that there are actually a lot of people using them, for them to be restored? Or does the data that you have actually show that they are not the most efficient?

Mr Edghill: When we are looking at the network as a whole, what we are trying to do is to attract as many people to it and to move as many people as we possibly can. The Xpressos have a number of elements which are suboptimal.

I can give you an example, the 705 Xpresso from Tuggers to Belco yesterday. In the am peak, there were three trips that moved 40 people. I know I am just looking at one there, but there are a few things that get impact from that.

The first one is that if you just look at the distance from Belco to Tuggers in the first place, it is 27 kilometres. If you were to contrast that with Sydney, for example, you are looking at the same distance between Homebush and Dee Why. That is the sort of distance that in other jurisdictions people intuitively do not necessarily expect a one-bus trip on. That one Xpresso is something where, by putting it into the rapid network, for example, rather than moving 48 people, we could move hundreds of people with that bus. So we can move more people by putting it into the rapid network.

The other issue with Xpressos is that once they have finished their run, quite often they are dead running somewhere else. There is not enough time to turn around, particularly the last ones, and come back the other way, because people are already at work at that point in time.

Xpressos fill a purpose, but if I contrast rapids and Xpressos, we have four rapid routes that have carried 7.1 million people so far this year. The 19 Xpressos that we have carry less than 10 per cent of that number—and less than four per cent of our total boardings. Purely from a data perspective, they are not delivering the best bang for buck for our customers.

By making those Xpressos effectively rapids and putting them into our rapid network as a whole, we are delivering more choice for our customers. If you miss one Xpresso, maybe there is not another turning up. If you are able to use the rapid network, you have got the confidence of frequency there. We are potentially moving many more customers by leaning towards that. At present, within Transport Canberra operations, we do not see a compelling argument to bring back the Xpressos. Our preference is to put it into the rapids. Our evidence is already telling us that people want more rapids.

MISS C BURCH: Can I ask about accountability indicators? We can see from the accountability indicators and the budget statements that the electric bus trial has been rolled forward for a year. I would like some information on why that is.

Mr Edghill: Very happily, we have electric buses in our network at the moment. The trial is underway. There are some key themes that are running through the future of public transport. We have touched on some of them today, like demand responsive mobility as a service. Electro-mobility is a very big thing for us. Over time, there will be a reducing cost of electric buses. And they have some operational benefits. One of our financial exposures is the cost of diesel fuel. Also, the ACT government has a number of emissions targets. Once we achieve 100 per cent renewable energy, by 2020, the transport sector—not just Transport Canberra but the broader transport sector—will be the biggest contributor to emissions in the territory.

We are interested in keeping the buses on the road for as long as possible. There are a couple of hiccups at the outset in actually getting the buses here. To be honest, that was part of the trial for us. If we are going to potentially be procuring electric buses in the foreseeable future, even those hiccups are things that give us some pretty good learnings about some of the challenges that are associated with bringing electric buses on board. So even those hiccups have been really valuable to us.

The buses are just in the ordinary network at the moment. They are moving passengers. I am sure that other than the noise, some passengers probably do not even realise that they are on electric buses.

MISS C BURCH: To clarify, the trial has not been delayed; it is ongoing. Is that what you are saying?

Mr Edghill: The trial is underway at the moment.

MISS C BURCH: It is underway; it is ongoing. Okay.

Mr Edghill: Yes. There were some hiccups getting the buses on the road in the first place. We changed the potential supplier. The supplier we have at the moment is the supplier for the buses you would see if you are at Sydney airport, for example. At the airport and in other locations around Australia where they use electric buses, they are the electric buses that we have here. Even when the trial ends, we would not commit to anything at the moment, but we are predisposed to continuing to see how those electric buses perform over an even longer period of time.

MISS C BURCH: The other indicator is compliance with the Disability Discrimination Act. Why was that outcome not met?

Mr Edghill: We have about 420 buses in our fleet, so when you are talking about one or two per cent, you are talking about not very many buses. In the current procurement round, we have seven buses that turned up this financial year. We will have 33 turning up in the period between now and December. It is really just a timing difference from June and July, between the financial years.

MISS C BURCH: On transport more generally, have there been any forensic accounting contracts issued by TCCS in the last few months?

Ms Thomas: Forensic accounting?

MISS C BURCH: Forensic accounting contracts, yes.

Ms Thomas: I think you might be referring to some forensic accounting that we are doing in a contracting area that was not related to transport. We were looking in general around a number of procurement contracts across some of the other areas of the directorate.

THE CHAIR: Is this related to the matter that is currently before the courts?

Ms Thomas: No, it is not. We were doing some audits for procurement across the board. It is one of the areas that we are focusing on very strongly as part of our internal audit capability. We were doing auditing through that process.

THE CHAIR: Who is carrying out the audits?

Ms Thomas: For that one in particular it is KPMG.

THE CHAIR: What triggered the audit?

Ms Thomas: What triggered the audit was a number of different procurement contracts that we were looking at, particularly around our panel contracts where we have a number of people on panels, looking for areas where we could make improvements to that.

MISS C BURCH: I would like to go back to accountability indicators and light rail. We have seen that five of the six accountability indicators associated with construction were not met. What has caused those delays, and have there been many other internal milestones or deliverables that have also been missed?

Mr Edghill: The accountability indicators which are in the budget papers are not contractual milestones; they are accountability indicators that the ACT public service came up with in preparing the budget papers, obviously more than a year ago now.

When you look at the project agreement between the ACT government and Canberra Metro, the key milestone is getting light rail up and running. What Canberra Metro have seen as they have developed the project is that they have rightly focused their attention on the areas which are most critical to getting light rail operational, critical path items. When we look at something like completing the termini, for example, is building the termini on the critical path to getting light rail operational? Actually, no, it is not. During the week, I think two nights ago, we saw a light rail vehicle moving under its own power into the Gungahlin terminus.

There have been a few critical path items, but the things Canberra Metro have really been focused on have been predominantly the utilities and relocating the utility services. The other early critical path item was delivery of the light rail vehicles. On

both of those fronts we now have half of the LRV fleet here in Canberra. It does not need a trained eye, and I am not a trained eye, but if you look at progress along the light rail line, you can see that we are out of the ground now and progress is coming along at a rapid pace.

Why did some of those accountability indicators move? It is because Canberra Metro is actually focusing on the more important stuff to get the system up and running, and responding to circumstances on the ground. With at least one of the accountability indicators, you could probably argue that we have been a bit conservative in the estimated outcomes. With the dynamic testing of light rail vehicles, for example, there was dynamic testing of light rail vehicles which commenced in the factory in Spain, and that happened before February. So it is quite arguable that that one actually happened before time. Then there are the other items, like the maintenance control centre. We now have vehicles which are undergoing testing commission and which are moving under their own steam—not steam; it is a bit more modern than that—on the tracks.

THE CHAIR: We argued that it was old technology!

Mr Edghill: Exactly. That has not required the main control centre to be complete by the time we nominated here. I think it is reflective, predominantly, of Canberra Metro doing what they are meant to do, which is focus upon the critical path and respond to what is happening on the ground there.

MS CHEYNE: Streetlights. We have a new contractor, Electrix. I have seen some media releases that we should expect some things to work a little bit better. In some of the older suburbs there have been significant cable faults and lights have had to be left on for a longer time for safety reasons. What improvements should we expect to see more broadly?

I understand a letterbox drop was done last night or the night before in Flynn advising residents that a number of lights require attention and letting people know that work is underway. That is a fantastic step forward in keeping people up to date about what is happening. I am keen to know whether this sort of stuff is stipulated in the contract. What other improvements can we expect? Are lights going to be repaired more quickly? How are we going in terms of replacing some of the old lights?

Mr Marshall: Yes, absolutely. The new contract has been on board since 1 May. So what is happening at the moment is some transition activities. Principal among those is the establish of the new contractor's systems and processes. There is a period of a number of months in the initial period of the contract for them to establish those systems, and we will see them take full effect in the early months of the coming financial year.

I absolutely concede that in the process of transitioning from the previous arrangements to the new contract our capacity was impacted, and that resulted in responsiveness to defects not being what we would wish it to be. That impacted more significantly on the more complex faults—underground cable faults, the sorts of faults that require the coordination of a number of different resources and sometimes a forensic process to determine exactly what the problem is. Sometimes that process can

be iterative.

Then there are a range of work health and safety and other concerns that need to be taken into account, particularly when working underground on cable faults. So it is absolutely fair to say those more complex problems have been impacted more during the period of transition from one arrangement to a new arrangement. The result is some backlog of that type of work that has been handed over to the new contractor.

In the first couple of months of the new contractor's tenure they are working very hard to get through the problems that have been impacting on the network for too long now. They are making very good progress on that, I am happy to report. We expect that handover workload to be eliminated by around the end of July or some time in August.

In terms of what the community can expect from the new contract, it is an exciting departure from traditional contracting in that it is very focused on customer outcomes; it is an outcome-focused procurement. Those outcomes, broadly speaking, are in three categories relating to the attributes of the network that will be established over the term of the contract.

The first is about energy savings, so we can expect by the end of the contract a network that is using significantly less energy than it currently does. That will be achieved by way of a significant upgrade to LED technology. That happens over the first two to 2½ years of the contract.

The second category of outcomes is around other cost efficiencies—reduced maintenance costs associated with the LED technology but also, very importantly, higher levels of customer service. That is principally made possible by the computerised control systems that LEDs make possible. Once the network is substantially upgraded it will be possible for it to be remotely controlled by computerised systems. That will detect faults on the system and monitor the performance generally of the network.

There will be two sets of systems: one that controls and monitors the network itself and another that controls the workflow. That is about the contractor programming works in the most efficient manner possible and having real-time information available via computerised systems so that members of the public can access, if they want to, a system that can give minute-by-minute updates on the condition of the network and what activities are being undertaken on the network.

The third category of outcomes the contract will deliver is around smart city capabilities. The idea is that once the contractor has built those communications and computer systems that are primarily used to operate the streetlights in a smart manner, the same capacity capability can also be made available for a whole range of other applications run by us or, indeed, by any third party.

That will be a communications network that spans the entire city. There are 80,000-odd lights in the city, so if you think of a web of communications where we have 80,000 comms-connected and power-supplied sites that gives us the capability to put sensors and controllers across the entire city, the potential of what third parties

might do with that capacity is essentially limitless.

THE CHAIR: There was a lot of discussion in recent time around the sale of the streetlight network. Is that no longer on the table?

Ms Fitzharris: Yes, no longer on the table. This is instead the path the government went down with the new contractor.

THE CHAIR: What will be the arrangement for third parties to access the streetlight infrastructure for smarter technologies and communication technologies?

Mr Marshall: That would be a simple commercial arrangement between a subcontractor to Electrix, which is the provider of the communications network. That would be a simple licensing arrangement with the provider of that service.

MS CHEYNE: Minister, was it you or one of the officials who said that there may be new ways of informing the community about when a light is out—maybe putting something on the light or trying some other way of letting people know, “Hey, we know, and we’re doing something.”

Ms Fitzharris: That is what we were talking about in terms of a letterbox drop. I sign a lot of letters to people who have registered a light on fix my street where an assessment is done and the work requires more than the simple changing of a light bulb. Some members of the community find it frustrating that nothing has been done for months, but it might be because the solution will take a few months. We are looking at a range of different ways to inform the community. Hopefully, the letterbox drop is one that reached people in Flynn.

MS CHEYNE: Yes. I have had great feedback.

Ms Fitzharris: The contractor is looking at the best ways of doing that. Would that be fair to say, Ken?

Mr Marshall: Absolutely.

Ms Thomas: There are a few different ways we are trying to better communicate with our customers when we have feedback. We are looking at ways we can better use fix my street and we are hoping to make some changes to that further down the track. We are also trying to communicate better with people who have reported certain defects. Ken mentioned that as part of the energy performance contract there is incentive for Electrix to change different light globes to make them better energy performing.

If we know a streetlight is out and it is on that list, we do not want to go back twice, so how do we communicate that with people? The team is currently working through how to best communicate all the different approaches we are using for streetlights so that people do not feel the frustration of: “Oh, nobody’s doing anything about this.”

THE CHAIR: We will suspend there for a 15-minute break.

Hearing suspended from 3.13 to 3.32 pm.

THE ACTING CHAIR (Ms Cheyne): I am acting chair while Mr Wall attends to other business.

MS LE COUTEUR: I want to move to light rail stage 2. I notice that you put out a June update which I have not had a chance to read thoroughly.

Ms Fitzharris: I understand.

MS LE COUTEUR: Please excuse me if I am asking questions to which there are answers in there. I note that it is going to take 25 to 30 minutes to get from the city to Woden, which is close to twice the current time of 16 minutes.

Ms Fitzharris: I know we have had this conversation but, if I could interject, it is not the same route.

MS LE COUTEUR: I appreciate it is not the same route.

Ms Fitzharris: It is twice as long.

MS LE COUTEUR: Civic and Woden have not moved.

Ms Fitzharris: No, but the route that goes from Civic through Barton to Woden is a different route. It will therefore take a little longer and of course today's times will not be the same as the projected times for the route through Barton after stage 2 of light rail.

MS LE COUTEUR: Today's times will not be the same as projected? Are you saying that what you have put in the June update is not what you are actually expecting the times to be?

Ms Fitzharris: No, that is—

MS LE COUTEUR: I did not understand what you said.

Mr Edghill: There are two things. One is that the preferred corridor for light rail stage 2 is not a like-for-like comparison with the blue rapid, which is quicker, just as it is not a like-for-like comparison with the green rapid, which is longer. I think what the minister was saying there is that journey times on the blue rapid at the moment, as with potentially the entirety of our road network, over time will begin to slow where buses are stuck in car congestion unless something is done to address that car congestion.

MS LE COUTEUR: Maybe I will go more into that later but I will start on what are the substantive things I want to say. Clearly, as you mentioned earlier, Mr Edghill, one of the issues for people is directness and speed in terms of whether public transport is attractive. The current proposal for light rail is slower than the current 300 proposal. Hopefully, public transport will do well in south Canberra and we will have a lot of people moving from south to north on public transport. Have you considered doing what is done in many other rail systems, enabling both an all-stops, which is the

current proposal, and an express system?

Mr Edghill: If I might address one thing at the outset, we are very conscious that looking at light rail stage 2 as simply Woden to the city is not exactly the right way to be looking at it. For somebody who is travelling from Dickson to Barton, for example, it puts a very different complexion upon the route. We are looking at it from a Gungahlin to Woden via the city and Barton route. Likewise people coming from Woden who are going to Barton will actually find it much more convenient.

In terms of the second part of the question, we have not yet determined the exact operational parameters. It is an idea we are very happy to explore as we continue to develop light rail stage 2. It is not a feature that is common amongst light rail systems—in fact I am not sure if I can point to another light rail system where it works like that—because of a few features. One is: where you have slower and faster light rail vehicles on the same network you start to get potentially bunching at various points, which creates operational issues. There is also a customer experience issue where typically they would want some degree of certainty as to: if they get on any tram is it going to stop at all stops or not? Having said that, it is an idea that we are very happy to explore as we develop the project.

MS LE COUTEUR: I agree. In Melbourne, for example, you have the heavy rail system which has all stations and an express but in Canberra we seem to be doing a tram's job and a train's job in one. Some trains in Melbourne are an express. We currently have express systems but it does not seem that we will in the future. The light rail is not providing express? The 200 has provided an express, the 300 has provided an express. We are not going to do that in future?

Ms Thomas: An important thing to note is that we do not think of light rail as separate to the overall bus network as a whole, and we are just doing the bus network changes as part of integrating light rail stage 1 today. If we look at the light rail stage 2 development pathway, we will be looking at all those factors as we start to consider light rail integrated into the overall bus network as we move further into the project once we understand what it will be doing.

MS LE COUTEUR: Does this mean that you are anticipating that the 300 bus will remain?

Ms Thomas: I do not think we are anticipating any of those things at the moment but we have an open mind on what the network might look like into the future.

Mr Edghill: In the document that went out today, as Emma noted, we are really putting in the new bus network for stage 1 close in time to it becoming operational. There are a lot of caveats in the document that went out today but it is talking about 2023-24 by the time it is actually procured and up and running. We have got through the—

MS LE COUTEUR: But that is not what it says—2025 to 2030.

Mr Edghill: No, in terms of when light rail stage 2 will actually be built.

Ms Fitzharris: No, to 2023-24.

MS LE COUTEUR: Sorry.

Mr Edghill: We are anticipating that that is still a few years away by the time we have got commonwealth planning approval, procured it and then actually built the thing. In that period, closer to when light rail stage 2 is operational, then we will of course have a much greater view at that point in time as to what the bus network will do. But we could not sit here today and provide a very firm direction as to what exactly the bus network will look like at that point because there is still a lot of work to do till we get to there.

Ms Fitzharris: As we have discussed before, I think it is really important to separate out two things. One is a current bus service that is pretty much Woden to Civic and one is a light rail service that is Woden through Barton to the city, which will increase the accessibility of that public transport route for multiple people. You will have stops at Hughes, at Curtin, at Deakin, at Yarralumla, four stops within Barton and Parkes, one along Commonwealth Avenue Bridge and two in the city. That is fundamentally different.

In this comparison with the 300 from Woden to the city you are talking about people who currently catch that service and really only that service and cannot get on and off in between. I appreciate that. As we have discussed, there may be other options around that but at the moment we are talking about light rail, as we have also discussed.

We are hoping that with the new bus network, patronage will increase quite considerably over the course of the next four or five years before the light rail to Woden is completed and we may start to see some different travel patterns. We may start to see more and more people along Adelaide Avenue wanting more stops along Adelaide Avenue. That currently cannot happen but, if it were to happen, that would inevitably make that journey time slower for people who get on in Woden and get off in Civic but it would allow more people to actually use that service.

I appreciate the question but, as we have mentioned, the bus network that is now being consulted on for stage 2 will be the conversation we will be having in four to five years time. A lot will change in the interim.

MS LE COUTEUR: But we are having the conversation about light rail stage 2 now. You are designing it now, as I understand it. If you are going to make any physical provision for express routes, it is going to happen in the next year or so.

Ms Fitzharris: But bear in mind that an express route would then mean that it would inevitably exclude going through Barton as well. The fixed route will be through Barton, and the fairly overwhelming response in terms of that route—

MS LE COUTEUR: I have heard that message, yes.

Ms Fitzharris: In terms of the comparable travel times there, I am not sure, but we can certainly, as we said, factor this in. But I would fundamentally disagree that light

rail stage 2 through Woden with the preferred route should be contrasted with the current 300 that only stops at two stops between Woden and Civic.

Ms Thomas: There are other operational things that we will consider as we get into the more detailed planning of light rail such as how long the dwell time is at various stops and what will happen there. I think it is not so much a physical infrastructure problem as much as how we operate the light rail vehicle once we start planning for how that will be operated.

If I can give you an example, in Adelaide the light rail that goes from the city to Glenelg beach does not have an express route but it does have some stops where people essentially press a bell for it to stop at. If the bell is not pressed it will keep going through. That is an operational outcome of how to operate that tram at the time.

MS LE COUTEUR: Mr Edghill just said that was not a satisfactory solution, however, because it would not be—

Ms Thomas: Sometimes it might not be. I am just saying that they are things we need to consider in the operational make-up of the system. They are things that we will consider as part of how we operate the light rail vehicle, including its operating hours, how it gets from Gungahlin right through to Woden and a number of other factors in the actual operation of the light rail vehicle.

Ms Fitzharris: It is not ruled out.

MS LE COUTEUR: Having not all stations is not ruled out but you would not have a timetable which had a faster—

Ms Fitzharris: That is one of the issues we can explore.

MS LE COUTEUR: I note from my brief look through the pretty pictures that they are looking very pretty because you have taken out the bus lane and put in trees, which may be due to the NCA. That is certainly so. A decision has been made, I take it from this, to stop the express bus?

Ms Fitzharris: Are you talking about Adelaide Avenue?

MS LE COUTEUR: I am talking about Adelaide Avenue, yes. One of your pictures has trees where the bus lane used to be.

Mr Edghill: They are very definitely artist impressions at the moment. There is a long journey that we need to go through with the commonwealth before any decisions are made. I would not categorise that as being how it will look; it is an example of one of the potential outcomes. In this particular picture one of the lanes is still marked T2 but there are actually better cycling facilities down Adelaide Avenue and more greenery. There is still a very long way to go. I would not take that as being set in stone but it is an example of how we can enhance Adelaide Avenue through the project.

MS LE COUTEUR: Is it a real possibility that the light rail would become a substitute for the 300 route because the 300 route's lane will be turned into trees?

Mr Edghill: No, the trees are in the median. No decisions have been made about the bus network when light rail stage 2 becomes operational. Nothing has been ruled in and nothing has been ruled out. It will be something which is firmed up much closer to the time. The specific picture that we are looking at has more trees in the median with light rail. It is actually still showing T2 on one of the lanes but there is also an enhanced bike lane there. That is something of a conversation starter, if you will, to show that light rail is not just about moving people from A to B but light rail, if we progress the project sensibly and in close cooperation with the commonwealth and the NCA, can be enhancing not just the travel experience but the urban realm and its surrounds.

MS ORR: While we are talking about trees, does the use of trees in your indicative artist impressions signal an intent to continue the light rail corridor having that presence of trees?

Ms Fitzharris: Absolutely, yes, subject to the requirements of the commonwealth. I think you could expect the commonwealth would pay close attention to it as they did during stage 1. Certainly, a key feature that was always part of the stage 1 route is the replacement of trees and the planting of additional trees. You would know very well that the barren landscape that was the median of Flemington Road now looks totally different. It is now not only planted with trees but also landscaped. The majority of Adelaide Avenue at the moment too is a version of Flemington Road for most of its length.

MS LE COUTEUR: I appreciate that the light rail will be a better option for a number of people; I am saying that there are people for whom it will not. Removing the 300 will make an impact. One of the issues is going to be at Woden. Everyone who is south of Woden will have to interchange. Currently, the 300 series is about every one to two minutes in peak hour. You are planning six minutes, which is significantly less frequent. How long do you think this will add to the journey with interchanging in Woden for everyone south?

Mr Edghill: Again, because we have not made any decisions about how the bus network will operate when light rail stage 2 is operational, it is too early for us to provide specific answers. Certainly, for individuals, the network will change. There will be different circumstances for every person. Obviously, light rail vehicles will carry more people.

For example, somebody may want to go into Barton. One of the reasons we are suggesting light rail stage 2 goes through Barton and Parkes is that there are a number of not only cultural institutions but employment nodes in that area. Some people will likely get to work more quickly than they would otherwise because it will take them to where they want to go.

Through the community consultation process that we undertook on light rail stage 2 a little while back, there was an overwhelming public preference for putting it through Parkes and Barton as opposed to the direct route which was on the table. But the overwhelming public response was actually, “No, we want to go through Parkes and Barton because there are places there that we need to get to.”

MS ORR: Mr Edghill, you mentioned in that that there is still quite a process to go through before you get to the detailed planning for light rail stage 2. What is the process you have to go through? Where are we up to? What is next?

Ms Fitzharris: With the commonwealth in particular?

MS ORR: Yes.

Mr Edghill: It is a reasonably complicated process. It was complicated for light rail stage 1; it will be even more complicated for light rail stage 2. We are cognisant that we are going past areas of very great national significance. That means particular attention will be paid to what we are proposing through that area, from the commonwealth government in particular.

The project is the subject of a commonwealth joint standing committee inquiry. Submissions were made to that inquiry, which closed on Friday. Emma and I as officials will be attending a public inquiry being held by the committee tomorrow afternoon. The JSC inquiry is the first part of the process. Really, where we go from there is very much dependent on the commonwealth, its views on the project and how it would like its process to develop.

In very broad terms, we anticipate that we will appear before the joint standing committee inquiry. Following that we will begin the environmental impact assessment process, which will cover both territory and commonwealth planning requirements. As we are going through that, our intention is to work very closely with the NCA in developing some of the rules of the game for the urban design outcomes associated with the project.

Once we have been through that and once the NCA has had an opportunity to form its views as to where the concept design is up to, we will then need to go through a commonwealth parliamentary approvals process. This is where it is a little bit different from stage 1, in that there is an act which relates specifically to the parliamentary zone. It is not a law, but it needs approval from both houses of federal parliament to progress the project. That follows a commonwealth ministerial referral into parliament.

Once we have gone through that process, the NCA would be in a position to issue its works approval. A number of things happen in parallel; a number of things need to happen sequentially. It is not all within the control of the ACT government. The commonwealth government, appropriately—and as we have known from the outset—will have a very great say in what we are doing, particularly inside the parliamentary zone. Once we have worked through those processes, we are into the world of procurement, finalising design, construction. Light rail stage 1 was a journey with many moving parts and light rail stage 2 will be too.

MS ORR: How closely are you working with the NCA on getting through this?

Mr Edghill: Exceptionally closely. We were working with them through last calendar year and this calendar year. Many of the features of the project that you see in the

light rail update that went out today have been shaped by conversations we have had with the NCA along the line. We have had the opportunity to walk with the NCA board along the alignment. We have had very close dialogue with the NCA. We recognise the importance of them to the project.

MS ORR: Is there any indication of how long these processes might take, or is that up to the commonwealth?

Ms Fitzharris: If I could add to that, I think that the collaboration with the NCA is an extension of the significant collaboration on stage 1 as well. I think the NCA understand the project very well and were very supportive throughout the first stage. Indeed many of the approval processes were works approval processes through the NCA as opposed to development application processes through our own planning system.

The TCCS has an excellent track record in working with the NCA and that has continued. Since then, I have met with the commonwealth minister for territories, John McVeigh. We both await the recommendations from the committee inquiry as well. But from the ACT government's point of view certainty is foremost in our minds. More certainty more quickly allows us to proceed with what the government has, for a long time, committed to the community to deliver.

We have offered, on multiple occasions, in person and through correspondence, to provide whatever information they might need to help them form that decision. We continue to stand ready to do that, including that appearance tomorrow evening by TCCS at the committee's inquiry.

MISS C BURCH: Do the \$1.3 billion to \$1.6 billion indicative costs announced in that report today include operating? Is that in current or nominal figures?

Mr Edghill: That is just the capital cost. That number is the capital cost because what we have not determined yet is the exact procurement model for light rail stage 2. Whether there would be availability payments or not associated with it is something which is still to be determined.

They are in nominal dollars, which means future dollars. When you look at where we were on light rail stage 1, you see that for light rail stage 1, the business case, capital costing was \$783 million. That was obviously in dollars that we are building now. If we are building in a number of years time, escalation is included in that. The \$1.3 billion to \$1.6 billion is comparable to where we were with light rail stage 1 when you take into account the fact that you have to add additional in there for escalation over time. There is that component, which is a large component of a base of \$783 million.

There are unique circumstances associated with light rail stage 2, particularly with bridges. If you add bridges in there, that gets you closer to the \$1.3 billion and to the \$1.6 billion. The other big factor is—because we are at an early stage of the project—that we have made an additional risk allowance which is greater than the risk allowance that was made at the end of the business case process for light rail stage 1. On that basis, the \$1.3 billion to \$1.6 billion is comparable to where we were on stage

1 when you take into account future dollars, when you take into account some of the unique engineering challenges with stage 2, and when you take into account the additional risk contingency that we have put into that number.

Ms Thomas: It is probably pretty important to note that, should the outcomes of the inquiry mean that anything was markedly changed, we would have a different cost profile. That is why the inquiry is quite important for us—to understand and get that certainty that the minister was talking about.

MS ORR: Are we able to talk about roads while we go through the transport mix? My question is on roads in my electorate. The first one relates to the duplication of William Slim Drive. It is on the record publicly that funding has not been allocated because negotiations are still going on. But the works are intended to be progressed. I wanted in particular a timetable, a time line, for that one.

Ms Fitzharris: There is further work for the next financial year to update and refresh previous design work and development application work. Then the construction costs have been provisioned—I think we will be able to do more work on that over the course of the next financial year—but provisioned with caveats around the ongoing negotiations and discussions with the commonwealth about their plans for the CSIRO Ginninderra site.

MS ORR: Are there any timings on it? You will update the study this financial year?

Ms Fitzharris: This financial year. We would certainly have more to say next year about where we might go with that. That really is dependent on considerable work that I know that the commonwealth is continuing to do around that CSIRO site.

Mr Corrigan: We will refresh the design work that the minister mentioned. We will get a new development application through. Development approvals last for about two years before you have to act on them. That gives us that time frame. As the minister mentioned, once we know the commonwealth intentions with the land and other decisions about how we manage the road network and the volumes of traffic that are using William Slim Drive, that will allow the government to say, “Okay, do we then enter into that procurement phase?”

MS ORR: I think that was the only road I wanted to ask about.

MS CHEYNE: With the duplication will there be opportunity identified in the design to connect pathways into Lawson? Probably the minister received the Belconnen Community Council’s email newsletter—they have been suggesting a new shared path around that northern peninsula of the lake. Could work be bundled up in that?

Mr McHugh: The current design includes shared path connections across and underneath William Slim Drive into the existing suburbs. The design does not include the additional path you mentioned, but in the design review process over the next 12 months we can definitely take that into consideration.

MS LAWDER: A few years ago there was an accountability indicator about street sweeping and it has been discontinued. Are you able to give me a feel for the number

of kilometres that were swept in the previous financial year, what is planned for next year, and what is that as a percentage of our roads?

Mr Corrigan: I will take the detail on notice.

MS LAWDER: How many streetsweeper trucks are there?

Mr Corrigan: Six.

MS LAWDER: How many staff are authorised to drive the trucks?

Mr Marshall: Not many more than there are vehicles. It would be of the order of eight or nine officers who are suitably licensed and trained.

MS LAWDER: Can you give us a breakdown for the past year of how many days of the week all sweeper trucks were in use?

Mr Marshall: I would definitely have to take that on notice to do the calculation.

MS LAWDER: What I am getting at there is more information about whether there are instances where trucks are not on the road because of a lack of drivers through annual leave, training, sickness, that kind of thing?

Mr Marshall: It is not impossible, although it is relatively unlikely. There are absolutely circumstances where all six vehicles will not necessarily be working on a given shift. There are maintenance requirements and other reasons why trucks would be taken offline from time to time. It is conceivable that that could be due to unavailability of personnel, but I would expect that to be the minority of cases.

MS LAWDER: Are the trucks leased?

Mr Marshall: Yes.

MS LAWDER: Are all the trucks leased for the same period or are they staggered?

Mr Marshall: They are not all on the same expiry date. I do not know the expiry dates; they come up from time to time, so they are staggered.

MS LAWDER: When they are down for maintenance, that would be covered under the lease, presumably? That maintenance is not carried out by TCCS staff?

Mr Marshall: The very routine maintenance is carried out by the operators. Any repairs or more substantive scheduled maintenance is not done by TCCS staff.

Ms Thomas: It is worth noting that we just increased the fleet size by one this year, so we have increased our fleet size to meet the demand.

THE CHAIR: Mr Marshall, will you take on notice the expiry dates of the six lease arrangements for the existing fleet? And of the eight or nine employees who are, in your words, "suitably qualified", how many of them are rostered to drive the vehicles?

Mr Marshall: Currently six are permanently rostered, and there are others who step in as required.

THE CHAIR: As the roster operates, what is the typical daily operation of the six vehicles? You mentioned there are often instances where they are out of operation. What does the roster look like? Is it fortnightly, weekly or monthly?

Mr Marshall: They work continuously, so they work standard hours, a standard shift every day of the month except for accrued days off.

THE CHAIR: Ultimately, all vehicles are in use each day?

Mr Marshall: Yes.

THE CHAIR: Barring maintenance or illness?

Mr Marshall: Yes, that is right, and occasionally outside normal hours. One or two may also work on a Saturday.

THE CHAIR: For the current financial year, how many days was a truck out of action either for maintenance or for—

Mr Marshall: I absolutely have to take that on notice.

MS LAWDER: Where do they stay overnight? Are they all in one depot or are they throughout the city?

Mr Marshall: They are at the depot at 255 Canberra Avenue, Fyshwick.

MISS C BURCH: I have a question about active travel. There is a budget measure for better infrastructure for active travel. It largely talks about off-road bicycle infrastructure and the active streets for schools program. What is being done more broadly to improve pedestrian and cycle infrastructure, particularly given that the new bus network is largely going to require people to walk further to bus stops and tram stops?

Ms Fitzharris: The latter part of that question is not necessarily true, but there is a lot of work underway to improve active travel—walking and cycling. There has been a considerable focus on schools over the last few years and further investment in schools, both in terms of giving school kids and their families the confidence and the skills to walk and ride to school safely, and in terms of infrastructure improvements around schools to complement that. That is the active streets program.

There has been the introduction of the school crossing supervisors at 20 schools—the lollipop people at schools. The response to the combination of all of those things around schools has been extremely positive. Then there is a range of other measures underway through the active travel office, the active travel advisory group, which includes a number of ACT government areas and stakeholder community organisation representatives to guide our broader investment.

In this budget you will see particular investment in town centres and on improving access to town centres, principally in Belconnen, Woden and Tuggeranong. The work in Gungahlin is well underway. There has already been significant investment and improvement in the Gungahlin town centre as well, in addition to expanding the age-friendly suburbs program and upgrades to footpaths across the city. Does anyone want to add anything?

Ms Thomas: I just add that specifically with city to Gungahlin we had some early funding as part of the light rail works as well. Some of that funding was used to upgrade some of the corridor for active travel, specifically for links to the light rail route. We had that in mind with the light rail vehicles being able to take bikes on them. Getting people safely to those points was part of that as well.

MS ORR: One of the initiatives you have put in place, I believe, is the lollipop—

Ms Thomas: The lollipop people?

MS ORR: Yes. Do you have any indication of how that has helped with travelling to school?

Ms Fitzharris: So far it is anecdotal in multiple pieces of feedback from school communities about the success of the program. The question we get more often is: “My school was not in the top 20. When will you expand it?” They are a kind of presence as part of the school community as well as providing alternative drop-off points for parents. It might be this “part way is okay” idea. You may not need to walk or ride all the way to school, but you may be able to be dropped off part way to school.

You might want to drop off your kids on the way to work 400 or 500 metres away from the school. Some of the active streets infrastructure provides a clear path for a drop-off point. But others might be dropping off at one side of a road where there is now a school crossing supervisor so that parents are not potentially driving right up to the school gate. They may be dropping their kids at various locations a few hundred metres away, knowing that the kids will be safely able to cross the road at a certain point.

It also helps to control traffic flow past the school. If you go past schools in the morning, you will see quite a few kids and parents backed up waiting to cross. They will then cross at a certain time. That means that the traffic is not stopping and starting as much as if it were a normal pedestrian crossing.

In terms of access to light rail, there are a lot of examples and there has been a lot of work, particularly along the Northbourne corridor, linking up a few footpaths. There is one in Franklin at the moment, which has just about been completed. It links the southern part of Franklin along Well Station Drive to Flemington Road. That was not previously there. That is a direct shared path. It really improves that accessibility to light rail right along the southern side of Franklin.

That is a very specific example. There is still quite a bit of work to do; it is relatively small-scale. But it will make a really big difference if you are walking in work gear,

pushing a pram or on a bike both to the safety and to the amenity of using that path. Some of it is large-scale; some of it is quite small-scale. But it can make a really big difference.

MISS C BURCH: You just mentioned safety, which leads into my next question. What is being done to improve safety for passengers and commuters, particularly after dark? I know that street lighting is often a big complaint for people who walk in our suburbs.

Ms Fitzharris: Specifically in relation to light rail or more broadly across—

MISS C BURCH: More broadly for passengers and commuters using light rail or buses.

Ms Thomas: Light rail is a good place to start. Our stations have been designed with the very latest safety features. Every stop will have emergency call points. They will have full CCTV and excellent lighting. But as we migrate, especially with the new bus network, we have funding particularly to look at CCTV at some of the interchanges. We have CCTV there already but with Woden particularly, we are interested in upgrading the CCTV there. The camera quality and technology are much better now. We can have far better high definition and in different light levels it works a lot better. That is one of the initiatives we will be undertaking.

Mr Edghill: On top of that, we mentioned before the customer service officers at interchanges. With the new buses come new CCTV cameras on the buses. So our CCTV coverage on the buses themselves is pretty good. Then on top of that, just in terms of the way that we operate day to day, there are a number of safety activities that we undertake.

One example is that senior managers within the business will get out and look at our workshops, our interchanges and at other public locations as part of our broader directorate safety activities. Then also within Transport Canberra itself we get the likes of myself and our senior managers out of the office to look at what customers may be actually experiencing or what our staff may be experiencing.

That is not necessarily to say that we are the safety experts. But what it means is that we are casting a fresh pair of eyes over what we are doing. As a consequence of that, there is a process of continual improvement within our depots and the behind-fence facilities but also with our customer-facing activities to try to enhance safety in our organisation.

We focus on a number of things at Transport Canberra. No 1 is safety. Right up there also are the customers. Part of the journey that we have been on since the establishment of TCCS and Transport Canberra—it is not to say that we were bad to begin with—is to try to continually improve what we are doing with a customer focus and with a strong safety focus as well.

MISS C BURCH: Is there anything in particular after dark if we are talking about buses running later? Also, women's safety after dark is quite a topical issue in the media at the moment. Is there anything around that in terms of improving street

lighting or footpaths?

Mr Edghill: Yes. I think that probably cuts across everything that we are doing. We have collected quite a lot of officials up here, haven't we?

Ms Thomas: It is a big team effort, footpaths and public transport. Yes, we are doing lots of work to upgrade footpaths and—

Mr Corrigan: Upgrade lighting as well.

Ms Thomas: upgraded lighting. The electrics contract features in this to have better quality lighting. It will be different lighting with LED lighting in there. We are upgrading interchanges. We have customer service operators out there. Across the whole spectrum of TCCS it is really our focus to have the city attractive, safe and easy to move around. That is what we are really focused on doing across all of our services that we provide.

Mr Corrigan: In respect of some of the capital works we do—some of the footpaths and those major shared path upgrades that the minister mentioned before—lighting is a component. If lighting is already there, we check that it is adequate. We upgrade if necessary or we include new lighting if necessary.

In addition to the streetlight program that Mr Marshall outlined before, we receive additional requests in respect of outages. We receive requests when people see that the lighting is poor, often in car parks, near schools, universities, CITs, things like that. We investigate all of those. There are some recent upgrades that have been undertaken. In Tuggeranong, for example, some recent work has been done.

Just recently we had some concerns at the Civic pool car park. There were some fairly serious issues there. We have recently upgraded that. So we take it on board all the time. It is very topical and we are very attuned to it, very aware of it.

MS LAWDER: I have a question on the CIT car park in Tuggeranong.

Ms Fitzharris: Is that the car park out the back of CIT?

MS LAWDER: Yes. I know it was covered by a couple of arms of the existing streetlights, but it is really dark in the middle of the car park. Tuggeranong Community Council have raised it with you as well. Is there funding in the budget or are there any plans to improve the lighting in that car park?

Mr Corrigan: I will ask Mr Marshall to get the details. We have done lots of improvements already. The Tuggeranong Community Council has raised it with me and also the Tuggeranong Arts Centre has raised it with us. Ken can talk to this in some detail. We are having a further look at it to see what—

MS LAWDER: If you pop down there at 8 o'clock at night, you will see what it is like.

Mr Marshall: The process has been, as quickly as possible, to make some impact.

That was the installation of some rear-facing lights off existing columns. The question has been, in consultation with CIT, to try to understand the after-hours parking demand from the student population. We have been in consultation with CIT about that and we have been directly monitoring the usage of the car park, having installed those lights initially.

My understanding is that we have determined that there is demand beyond the area that we managed to light with that first intervention. There is now planning underway to install some additional lighting to give some extra capacity.

MS LAWDER: I want to ask you about Pialligo pedestrian upgrades. It is budget paper 3, page 133. Can you run through what planning is going to be undertaken as part of that and what are the safety issues that you are trying to address—just a bit more info about it?

Mr McHugh: To people who know Pialligo, and Beltana Road in particular, it can be quite a busy place, particularly on the weekends, with the range of nurseries and other businesses. There is a lot of business activity out there. There is not a lot of on-site parking provided at a lot of these locations along Beltana Road, and a lot of visitors to the area will use the gravel verge and try and cross the road. We have had a number of approaches from the community about how we can improve the amenity for pedestrians and also improve the availability of parking out there. That is generally the scope of work that we will be looking into this next financial year.

MS LAWDER: Is it planning, or is there any funding to actually implement something?

Mr McHugh: The first budget allocation is to do the planning and some concept design and cost estimation work that would feed into a future business case.

MS LAWDER: Is the directorate doing that or are you outsourcing or contracting out that work?

Mr McHugh: The directorate will manage that. Any particular concept design work is likely to be consulted out.

MS LAWDER: If it is going to be consulted out, will it go to tender?

Mr McHugh: Typically, that work would go to tender, yes.

MS CHEYNE: I want to go to the Tillyard Drive intersection upgrades. The budget is for design work and construction work over two years. Are you able—it is fine if the answer is no—to give any further detail about when we might expect construction to be completed, particularly at that intersection, because the lights are going to be at Lhotsky and Tillyard, and Tillyard and Ginninderra? Is there some early thought about how that might work? I am envisaging the lights at Bunnings in Belconnen where we have a kind of two-stage process, but I have had quite a few questions about it.

Mr McHugh: It will be a two-step process. The first step will be to complete the

design work. Some early concept design work was completed which fed into some reports that were released earlier this year. We are preparing to go to market to get a design consultant to finalise those designs. That is currently in train.

The second phase will then be to go to market to tender for a construction contractor to deliver those. That is likely to occur in the fourth quarter of this calendar year to begin work, with the intent of completing that work within about nine months. That takes us through to towards the middle of 2019 for completion.

In terms of how the signals will operate, absolutely they will be a coordinated pair of traffic lights. There is a bit more distance between Tillyard and Lhotsky and Tillyard and Ginninderra than there is at Bunnings in Belconnen. It is challenging from an operational perspective because of the proximity of the two sets of traffic lights, but absolutely it is important that those two sets of signals are coordinated and work well together to make those intersections operate safely.

Ms Thomas: While we are doing all the design work, we are also considering interim measures. If we can do some other things around the intersection—

MS CHEYNE: That would be amazing.

Ms Thomas: Recognising that we want to design it properly, making sure that, with the complexity of the design, it all works properly. In the interim we will look at other measures.

MS CHEYNE: The problem is still live. That very unfortunate accident last week drove that home.

Continuing on intersections, I have seen in the past few budgets, and it is there again, reference to work on the William Hovell and Bindubi Street alignment. We have quite a bit of roadwork going on at the moment at the top of John Gorton Drive, which is not quite aligned with Coulter. I am wondering what the intent for that area is, what it is going to look like in the future. What is being aligned where? Could more be shared about it? It keeps appearing, so there is clearly some work being done, and I know it is into the future, but it is obviously a major consideration.

Mr McHugh: Yes, absolutely. There is currently a feasibility study being undertaken, which is being led by EPSDD, into the interchange at Bindubi Street and William Hovell Drive, which includes the extension of Bindubi Street down into Molonglo 3. That is considering all the different intersection types and interchange types that would be most suitable for that location. They will consider things from ramp connections to the various interchange solutions, also taking into consideration that that is the trunk public transport route from Molonglo into the city, so needing to accommodate future public transport types at that interchange is key.

MS CHEYNE: By “Bindubi Street extension,” are we thinking that Bindubi Street will just kind of cut across the road and keep going?

Mr McHugh: Continue over. Yes, exactly.

MS CHEYNE: And go parallel with John Gorton?

Mr McHugh: Yes. We will move into Molonglo 3 and head down towards John Gorton Drive. We will intersect just to the north of the river bridge, which is another project which is funded in next year's budget, to move into the next stage of design. They have done some early thinking on that bridge, and there is some work to be done in the next financial year to progress that work.

MS CHEYNE: Is there work to align Coulter Drive with the top of John Gorton Drive?

Mr McHugh: At this stage, that intersection will be a series of two sets of traffic lights. There is the possibility in the medium to longer term of looking at continuing John Gorton Drive as a grade-separated interchange across to Coulter Drive. That is being considered in the early designs of that intersection.

MS CHEYNE: This might be more a question for the Suburban Land Agency. I appreciate that Wintergarden was purchased and is at that bottom bit of Coulter Drive. We have previously heard evidence that that area cannot really be developed but is really important in terms of future duplications of roads and interchanges. Is my interpretation of that right?

Mr McHugh: Yes. There is also currently a feasibility study looking at the duplication of William Hovell Drive from that intersection at Coulter Drive all the way out to west Belconnen. That piece of work is looking at the potential for a new intersection which would provide access into that area that you are talking about.

MS LE COUTEUR: I will follow up something Miss Burch asked about earlier about electric buses. We established that the trial is still happening; it is just taking longer than expected. I notice that, very positively, there is funding for new buses. What will they be? Electric? Hybrid? Hydrogen? What will they be?

Ms Thomas: The team is doing a lot of market research at the moment. At the moment we are buying Euro 6 new buses, which is the highest standard of diesel buses, but for the future we are very interested in what future technology will bring. It is really important when we are buying such a big volume of buses that we have a supplier that is able to provide the buses and—

Ms Fitzharris: And they are good buses.

Ms Thomas: And that they will be provided with quality and operate to the conditions. Because it is a relatively new technology, we are still exploring that. I do not think you want to add to that?

Mr Edghill: No, other than to say that when we go to the market for the next lot of 40 buses, we are inclined at this stage to draft the procurement documents so that we can receive proposals around electric buses. Once we know what is actually on the table in front of us, we can make a decision as to whether we continue with diesel or whether we go down an electric path. There are a lot of moving parts in terms of—

Ms Thomas: Or less moving parts.

Mr Edghill: Or less moving parts, depending on which way we go. There are a number of factors to consider, including price and also the longevity of the buses and so forth. What probably gives you an indication of our thinking is that we are progressing a new Woden bus depot, and in some of the public procurement documents that we put out there, we are interested in building that in a way that is futureproofed for an all-electric fleet out of that depot.

MS LE COUTEUR: I walk past that regularly, and I am well aware of it.

One of your accountability indicators said that there was going to be an updated fleet strategy, expected to be completed by the end of 2017-18. Has it been completed, and if so, is it publicly available?

Mr Edghill: We expect to complete that this financial year. The accountability indicator above is interlinked. We expect to complete that this financial year for the budget papers. Then, of course, it is a decision for government as to how, when and if that is put out in the public domain.

MS LE COUTEUR: Given what we have just talked about, and the longer life cycle of buses, which is clearly a very long time because we still have the orange ones going—I am not complaining about that; I actually find it quite confusing the way we have changed colours, but that is a whole other discussion—what is the time frame before we get to a zero-emissions fleet, given that this is clearly one of our commitments given the greenhouse gas emission commitments?

Mr Edghill: We have 420-odd buses. Clearly, it would not be financially efficient for us to turn around and scrap all of those and replace them with fully electric buses. It is difficult to answer that question. Yes, at the moment we are using some of the yellow buses for 20 or 25 years. That is probably a bit longer than what we would optimally like to use them for. It is conceivable that some of the buses that are coming into the fleet now will be used for potentially a period which is less than that, but if we are being realistic as to when we are going to get to a completely zero-emission bus fleet, it is something that will have to work its way through the system over quite a number of years. It is not something which would happen in the zero to five-year time frame, for example.

MS LE COUTEUR: I appreciate that it will not be zero to five years—clearly, it is going to be more than five—but how long is it going to take? Presumably that is part of your fleet strategy and your decisions now as to what you are purchasing.

Mr Edghill: It will partly depend upon what happens when we go to market for the next lot of buses and how ready the market is to supply electric buses to us. We know that the manufacturers of electric buses are a bit different. What we see in Australia is manufacturers of diesel buses. We cannot definitively answer that question until we know when the starting line is. When we know what the starting line is, we will have a better view about the procurement process.

Having said that, within Transport Canberra we are keenly aware of the ACT

government's emissions targets. We are keenly aware that from 2020 transport in all its forms in the ACT will be the largest emitter. Balancing customer, price and operational requirements, we are very mindful to be at the forefront of the move to electro-mobility in Australia. We just cannot give a precise date as to when we will be zero emission.

MS CHEYNE: I am just looking for a yes or no answer. Can you please extend 40-kilometre-an-hour zones in town centres, particularly Belconnen town centre?

Ms Fitzharris: Yes. We might start there, given the Belconnen bikeway.

THE CHAIR: I remind the minister and officials that the committee asks that answers to any questions that have been taken on notice are returned within five days, day one being tomorrow.

Appearances:

Office of the Commonwealth Ombudsman

Manthorpe, Mr Michael PSM, ACT Ombudsman

Pfitzer, Mr Paul, Senior Assistant Ombudsman, ACT and Defence Branch

THE CHAIR: We have the ACT Ombudsman with us for the final session of today's hearings.

Mr Manthorpe: I am very happy to be here this afternoon to assist the committee.

MS ORR: The budget has allocated \$1.1 million to strengthening the reportable conduct scheme. Can you give an overview of how that money will help in investigating claims?

Mr Manthorpe: Yes, certainly. Reportable conduct is an area where we have picked up new responsibilities this financial year, and those responsibilities will be expanded further next financial year. This financial year we have picked up responsibility for reportable conduct—that is, in essence, allegations of harm or inappropriate conduct directed towards children in the care of a variety of employers in the ACT, such as schools, childcare centres and so forth.

We have been active throughout this financial year at working with all of the entities subject to that scheme to ensure that they understand what they are required to do, they have in place arrangements to investigate and report and appropriately manage any allegations that come to their attention, and they are familiar with the way the scheme operates and so forth. That has been very much the focus this financial year in terms of the group of entities subject to the scheme in its initial iteration.

From 1 July the scheme expands off the back of legislation passed by the Assembly to churches, and that has required us to work closely with the policy agencies in the ACT as well as Assembly members at times to ensure the churches are aware of what is coming. We have been seeking to train and educate and engage with them. We have been doing some quite active work in that space with the church organisations around Canberra.

Once that kicks into play we anticipate we will be receiving reports of reportable conduct from those entities. We will be ensuring, as we have been this year with respect to the narrower group of entities, that reports of harm or allegations of harm and so on are being appropriately handled by the churches as well as by the other entities covered by the scheme.

MS ORR: How do the tasks you have been delegated go to meeting the implementation of recommendations of the royal commission's report? Is the work you are doing going towards supporting that implementation?

Mr Manthorpe: Yes. It is certainly consistent with the direction of a number of the recommendations. Of course, the national royal commission made many recommendations that go way beyond reportable conduct. Reportable conduct is one of those reform elements not just in this jurisdiction but in certain others, and I hope it

will enable us to achieve some of the goals of the royal commission and cover off on some of the recommendations therein.

MS ORR: Given there are new responsibilities and new funding, is there a review period to ensure what is going on is correct and adequately resourced?

Mr Manthorpe: In terms of resourcing I do not think there is a review period per se. Of course, as you are all well aware, there is an annual budget and we will be carefully monitoring the extent of work that comes our way from the reports. Some of the unknowns when you set up a scheme like this are how many reports we are going to get, how much work will be involved in looking at those and how many times we will want to do a deeper investigation into particular matters, for example. So there are some unknowns when you set out on a scheme of this kind.

We are comfortable with the amount of money the Assembly allocated to us for the financial year that is about to end. We are comfortable with the additional money the Assembly has allocated to us for the financial year that is about to start. But we will keep that under careful review as the reports come in and we will see how we go from there.

MS LE COUTEUR: So you are not concerned there is nothing for the outyears because you think they will look after themselves? There has only been funding for two years, and presumably this is an ongoing issue?

Mr Manthorpe: Yes, that is right. That is something we will need to come back to the ACT government about between now and two years time to have a discussion about our experience and what the cost is. It may be something, too, where over time the cost can be reduced. Quite a bit of the activity this financial year with respect to the first part of the scheme and next financial year with respect to the expansion of it is about awareness raising and training and bringing people up to speed with the scheme. One might anticipate that over time the need to do that will come off a little bit. Indeed if the scheme achieves its goals and children are safe then perhaps the scheme will work to mitigate the risk that occurs to children. Let us hope so.

We will be keeping all that under review and we will be coming back to the government in the normal budget process, like many other entities, to seek further funding as we need to in the outyears.

MR HANSON: Who are people required to report to? Is it you and/or others? Are there a range of people they can report to?

Mr Manthorpe: Under the scheme they are required to report to my office.

MR HANSON: So you get the report. What do you do with it? Do you investigate? Do you refer? What is the process?

Mr Manthorpe: I will ask Mr Pfitzner to fill in the gaps if I do not cover all the detail. Imagine in a childcare environment someone perceives that a child carer has inappropriately hit a child. The employer is required to report that to us as reportable conduct. We will then be saying to the employer, "Okay, what are you doing about

that allegation?” What comes to us typically is an allegation; it is not necessarily proven. We then work with the employer to ensure the allegation is appropriately followed up. We will not investigate ourselves if we are satisfied that everything that needs to be done is being done by the employer.

There might be circumstances where we choose to investigate, however, where we think there is a systemic issue at play or perhaps the allegation has not been adequately dealt with at first instance. So investigatory powers are available to us, but in the first instance we want to be satisfied that the entity is appropriately investigating it.

Then let us imagine the allegation is upheld and the entity comes to the view that some inappropriate harm and treatment of a child has occurred, then we will want to know what they are doing about it by way of perhaps, from one extreme, reporting the matter to the police, which has occurred in some instances, through to less serious remedies such as counselling or training an employee, matters of that sort. That essentially is the process.

MR HANSON: Do you report on your statistics? Is that going to be in an annual report? Where are you going to be saying that you received X number of complaints and conducted X number of investigations?

Mr Manthorpe: I do a quarterly report to the Speaker. Indeed the most recent one was tabled in the Assembly a week or two ago, I think. I will provide more information in my annual report. We are compiling statistics about the number of reports, the broad nature of those reports, the nature of the entities being reported about, and our sense of how the scheme is going. You can certainly expect a good assessment of that in our annual report, but we also report quarterly.

THE CHAIR: Whilst we are on reportable conduct, how many reports do you typically receive on an annual basis, basically in the current financial year?

Mr Manthorpe: I can give you a number to the end of May 2018. For the period from 1 July 2017, when the scheme started, to the end of May, we had had 121 reports. Those had primarily come from out of home care, early childhood education and care, and the schools sector.

THE CHAIR: Are you seeing any sort of trend? Is there a case of over-reporting? The question I am leading to is: what has been the outcome of those reports? Has there been a substantive issue behind them?

Mr Manthorpe: It is a mix. Of that 121, we have closed 57. When I say “closed”, we have come to the process that I was describing to Mr Hanson a minute ago. I will come to the outcomes in a second. The ones we have not closed are therefore still in the process of—

THE CHAIR: Still active?

Mr Manthorpe: Yes. Someone is going through a process of investigating or looking at those. Of the ones we have closed, there have been nine where the conduct has been

found to have occurred, the complaint has been sustained, which is 14 per cent; 31, which is about half, where there was insufficient evidence to sustain the complaint; two where there has been a lack of evidence of weight to sustain the complaint; 12 where the matter was found to be, in effect, false, so where an allegation has been made that has just been found not to stack up; and eight where there may have been some conduct occur, but it was not at the threshold of reportable conduct.

I should add, though, that although in many of those cases, therefore, we have come to the view that the conduct was not necessarily sustained, in a number of those instances, even though definitive proof might not have been available to sustain the complaint, the entities who are reporting are using the reports and so on to make sure that they have got the procedures in place, the training in place, the know-how in place, to remind their employees to do the right thing.

MS LE COUTEUR: The additional funding that you have been given for the first couple of years, according to the papers, was to enable you to undertake additional investigations and support the introduction of religious institutions into the scheme. Will there be enough time? Come March, the current legislation changes. Is that enough time for these issues or are they going to be determined on a commonwealth level so it is not really an issue for you to consult and deliberate on?

Mr Manthorpe: I think it is enough time for us to work with all of the religious institutions in the ACT to get the scheme up and running. I may have said this in this committee before—I cannot recall—but one of the pieces of counsel we gave to our colleagues in the ACT government was, “Don’t rush this too much.” It is a worthy thing to have a reportable conduct scheme in place, in my view, and a worthy goal to extend it to the churches, but let us proceed at a speed that we can manage.

I think that is being achieved. I cannot really speak in any detail about what is happening at the commonwealth level, though I know that, through COAG, the various states and territories are giving consideration to a whole range of the royal commission recommendations, including whether or not to set up reportable conduct schemes and the like. That is unfolding in the environment. There are a lot of similarities between the ACT scheme and the New South Wales and Victorian schemes.

I am not sure that is a very complete answer to your question. The other point, touching back on the question Mr Hanson was asking a minute ago, is that there is a review mechanism in the budget papers for us to consider the funding requirements for the scheme in 2019-20 and going forward. We will just work with that.

MR HANSON: The incoming FOI legislation has been delayed. Are you ready to go, and were you in any way responsible for the delay? Were you one of the organisations that was essentially saying that they were not ready to go, or was that within government?

Mr Manthorpe: I am not aware of a delay. I am familiar with the legislation that is currently in place.

MR HANSON: The original legislation had a start date, and that was delayed, I think, by 12 months.

THE CHAIR: It was delayed from the beginning of 2017 to the middle of 2017. Is that right? Or was it to the beginning of 2018?

Mr Pfitzner: It was originally due to commence on 1 July 2017. I think there was a six-month extension passed by the Assembly. It did commence on 1 January 2018.

MR HANSON: And you are all good with that? It is happening?

Mr Manthorpe: Yes, we are good with that. It is happening. We are now receiving—and have been since 1 January—applications for various forms of intervention off the back of that legislation. The sorts of things that we are receiving applications for include applications for review—that is to say, applications that we review decisions taken by agencies, subject to the FOI Act—to see whether those decisions stack up or not. We are starting to work our way through those. Some of them have been finalised; more of them are underway.

We are engaging with agencies on what are known as deemed decisions. If an agency does not deal with an FOI request in the statutory time frame, a decision is deemed to have been made that the agency has refused to hand over the documents. That then triggers engagement with us. We have had an application about extension of FOI processing time, a couple of individual complaints and 11 inquiries relating to the operation of the acts. So we have had a variety of submissions, applications and the like.

MR HANSON: Are the directorates complying with the act?

Mr Manthorpe: As a general principle, my sense is that they are. There is an element of the act that calls for the creation of the disclosure logs. That was part of the open access provisions of the act. We are aware that some agencies are still working their way through that and that they will put some material up but they still have some way to go in some instances. Some of those have written to us. We will be addressing that in our reporting at the end of the financial year.

MR HANSON: Is the workload as you had anticipated? Is it more? Is it less? Is it plateauing?

Mr Manthorpe: I think it is too early to say that it is plateauing. I think it is roughly in accordance with what we anticipated at this stage.

MR HANSON: In terms of general complaints about the ACT government agencies, has there been a spike? Has there been a decrease? Is it pretty much on trend? What has been happening?

Mr Manthorpe: It has gone down a bit this financial year. We are already close to the end of the financial year, so I have a number that anticipates what we think it might be. We think we will receive something in the order of 360 complaints about ACT administration this financial year and about 100 in addition to that about

ACT Policing. That is a bit down on last year.

For me, that triggers the obvious question: what does that mean? Does it mean that the citizens of the ACT are happier than they were before? I do not know whether I would reach that conclusion. It might be to do with awareness of our services. In that context, we have been putting in a whole lot of effort in the last six months to work with a variety of stakeholders, including stakeholders from minority groups and vulnerable members of the community. We have been working quite closely out at the prison. We have been working with the Indigenous community and a variety of other people to try to engage with appropriate stakeholders. We also have been engaging with ACT agencies themselves to alert them to the fact that we are out there, that we are keen to help people.

So perhaps we will see a turnaround in those numbers. But they have gone down a bit. Whilst a lot of our activity has been focused, as the previous questioning highlighted—

MR HANSON: The numbers might have gone down in terms of the complaints, but when you looked at those complaints, what about the severity of them? How many are still being actioned? For how many was there no case to answer? Do you have those stats as well?

Mr Manthorpe: Yes, we do. As is always the case—it is the case for every ombudsman-type entity around the country, and it is certainly true of our commonwealth jurisdiction as well—we do not investigate everything that comes to us.

It is a bit like how I was describing what we do with reportable conduct before. A good place to start is to see whether the entity that is dealing with the matter can investigate and appropriately deal with it. If that can happen appropriately, we are happy with that, rather than us having to investigate. We investigate something in the order of 20 per cent of the matters that come to us.

In terms of the outcomes of those, I think the trends are broadly consistent with previous years. We are seeing that sometimes what really needs to happen is that the individual just needs to get a better explanation of what has happened to them. They may have been at the end of a decision from some arm of government that they did not like much, where it might have been the right decision at law but it had not been properly communicated or the construct might not have been adequately communicated. That tends to be something that we can help with quite a bit.

Then there are smaller numbers where either decisions are reversed—there is a small number of those—or a person might be unhappy about how long it has taken to get a decision. We can nudge the relevant agency and get a decision taken. And sometimes we can extract from the relevant agency an apology to a person for a delay, a mistake or some other aspect of delivery.

I do not think there is any sharp worsening or stand-out issue for us at the minute, although I must say that we continue to look. Since I have become the Ombudsman, I have been pressing my focus to try to get underneath the complaints and test whether

there are any systemic or other issues that are there. We continue to examine that question.

MR HANSON: On that, since you have taken over, have you identified any gaps in the service that you are providing? I am not necessarily talking about just internal matters but about things where the Ombudsman could be doing more or areas where perhaps you are wasting effort because it has been duplicated by someone? Have you found any strategic changes that you want to make?

Mr Manthorpe: I certainly do not think we are wasting effort. In this last 12 months, we put a lot of effort into standing up the functions that we have just been talking about. But I want to keep a close eye on a number of things.

The outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Canberra, in a variety of ways, are not what you might hope they would be, for example, in terms of their interaction with the police, their presence in the prison and the like. I am keen to ensure that groups such as that one are appropriately heard and engaged with in our work. That would be one.

We continue to look carefully at how actively and effectively agencies are engaging with us on things like reportable conduct in our wider jurisdiction.

I probably do not want to go any further than that today. What I would say to you is that this question of what the statistics are telling us is something that I am continuing, and will continue, to examine closely.

MR HANSON: I will put my further questions on notice.

Mr Manthorpe: Sure.

THE CHAIR: Thank you, Mr Manthorpe. That concludes today's public hearing. On behalf of the committee, I would like to thank you and the Ombudsman's office, Minister Fitzharris and the officials from Transport Canberra and City Services, and the Public Cemeteries Authority. With questions that were taken on notice today, I remind everyone that the answers are due back with the committee secretary within five working days, day one being tomorrow.

The committee adjourned at 4.59 pm.