



**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL
TERRITORY**

**STANDING COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION
AND COMMUNITY INCLUSION**

(Reference: [Inquiry into annual and financial reports 2020-2021](#))

Members:

**MR M PETTERSSON (Chair)
MR J DAVIS (Deputy Chair)
MS N LAWDER**

TRANSCRIPT OF EVIDENCE

CANBERRA

MONDAY, 28 FEBRUARY 2022

**Secretary to the committee:
Mr J McAdam (Ph: 620 70524)**

By authority of the Legislative Assembly for the Australian Capital Territory

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

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Amended 20 May 2013

The committee met at 9.19 am.

Appearances:

Davidson, Ms Emma, Assistant Minister for Seniors, Veterans, Families and Community Services, Minister for Disability, Minister for Justice Health and Minister for Mental Health

Community Services Directorate

Rule, Ms Catherine, Director-General

Murray, Ms Christine, Executive Group Manager, Inclusion and Participation

Harkness, Ms Tracey, Senior Practitioner

Gibson, Ms Sally, Executive Branch Manager, Quality and Regulation

THE CHAIR: Welcome to the third public hearing of the Standing Committee on Education and Community Inclusion into annual reports for 2020-21. The committee wishes to acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land we are meeting on, the Ngunnawal people. The committee wishes to acknowledge and respect their continuing culture and the contribution they make to the life of the city and this region. We would also like to acknowledge and welcome other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who may be attending or watching today's proceedings.

In the proceedings today we will examine the annual reports for the Community Services Directorate in relation to disability, women's affairs policy and services, early childhood development, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander affairs; and the Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate in relation to skills, sport and recreation, the Building and Construction Industry Training Fund Authority, and Major Projects Canberra in relation to the delivery of the Canberra Institute of Technology campus redevelopment.

The first time that witnesses speak, could they please acknowledge the privilege statement? Please be aware that the proceedings today are being recorded and will be transcribed and published. When taking a question on notice, it would be useful if witnesses used these words, "I will take that as a question taken on notice." This will help the committee.

As we have no opening statements, I will jump straight in with a question. Minister, Australia's Disability Strategy 2021-31 was released late last year. What work is now required of the ACT government to respond to it?

Ms Davidson: Before I hand over to the director-general to answer that in more detail regarding the time line for the work we are doing on the ACT's disability strategy, I would like to note that the ACT disability strategy will set the scene for how we think about disability in this city over the next 10 years or so. It is a really good opportunity for us to take a strengths-based approach to disability and talk about all of the great things we will be able to do as a community if we can be the inclusive community that we want to be, and support people with disability to engage in all aspects of community life, including employment and education, as well as basic things like being able to access public spaces and all of those things.

The co-design approach that is being led by people with disability is a really important way of making sure that what we have in that strategy reflects what people with disability in our community want to see. I will pass over to Catherine Rule to talk in more detail about the process.

Ms Rule: I have read and acknowledge the privilege statement. We worked very closely with the commonwealth on the development of Australia's Disability Strategy and shared our learnings from the disability strategy that we have here in the ACT. We are now moving to work very closely with the sector. The disability sector in the ACT is very engaged and very active. It is really important that we work closely with them on the development of a new disability strategy, that it is enduring, and we are not rushing to get something in place. We would rather make sure that we consult effectively and extensively with the sector. Ms Murray can give you the actual time line that we are working to.

Ms Murray: I have read and I acknowledge the privilege statement. Thank you so much for the question. It is important to note what a difficult period of time it has been for the ACT disability community for the last 12 to 18 months, particularly with the impact of COVID. We have heard from the community that they do want to work with us; they want to work collaboratively over a longer period of time and do proper co-design, rather than have just a quick, shoot-from-the-hip kind of response.

The Disability Reference Group is co-leading the consultation with the community. Consultation will open in March. Each of the representatives of the Disability Reference Group will lead area-specific parts of the consultation. We have tried to design the consultation so that everyone can have an opportunity to be part of it. We are co-designing, through kitchen-table conversations and small group conversations. We are having conversations and consultations across Canberra, across times.

It is a really important focus, and certainly we have heard from our Disability Reference Group members that this is a design that is led by people with disability and supported by government. That is certainly the approach that we are looking to take.

MR DAVIS: Minister, last year I received a number of emails from constituents with a disability about the federal government's move to change the NDIS and move to a model of individual assessments. I understand that their campaign was successful and that policy was changed, but I would like to know what the ACT government's role was in advocating for those changes; and, in particular, you as the minister.

Ms Davidson: My role was basically to represent what the community was telling me. We have really engaged, informed people in our disability community who have demonstrated fantastic leadership in providing advice and feedback to my office and to the Office for Disability within the Community Services Directorate about what it is that they need the NDIS to be doing and where the issues are for their community in the changes that were being proposed over the last year.

It was my job to make sure that the things they were telling us were being heard by the decision-makers in federal parliament. It was about making sure that the two times that I went to inquiry hearings, in July and September or October, people from our

Disability Reference Group came with me, so that the federal parliament could hear firsthand from people with lived experience as to how this was going to impact on them. It was about making sure that we were putting in written submissions that reflected the feedback that was coming from the community, and making sure that the federal minister for disability had a really clear understanding of our expectation, as the ACT government, as a partner in this scheme. Given that we are contributing over \$700 million to this scheme over the current agreement, the scheme needs to live up to its intent about choice and control for people with a disability and support their human rights.

MR DAVIS: If the federal government were to have a change of policy, given that we are partners in the scheme, and move to a model of individual assessments, have you done any modelling of what impact that might have on the ACT budget, and if we would still be able to provide the same continuity of care for those with a disability?

Ms Davidson: It depends very much on the detail of what they think individual assessments are and how it will work, as to how it would impact on the ACT. Certainly, what they were proposing to do last year would have had some very severe negative impacts for people with disability in the ACT community.

There are already inequities in the system where, for example, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, people with psychosocial disability, for example, are under-represented among people who have NDIS plans. People from low socio-economic backgrounds also have difficulty accessing the same level of support in NDIS.

I would expect that, under what was being proposed last year, those inequities would have got worse rather than better, with the kind of model of individual assessments that they were proposing. They were talking about decisions being made by assessors who are using a tick-box method to work out whether someone should get a plan and how much should be in it, rather than having a thorough understanding of that particular individual's circumstances and how an NDIS plan can best support them. Any model for independent assessments needs to be constructed in such a way that it reduces inequities in the system, not increases them.

MR DAVIS: Knowing what you know, being as involved in this campaign and these conversations with the federal government as you have been, do you foreshadow any risk of the conversation about independent assessments coming back, or do you feel confident that this campaign is won and Canberrans with a disability can feel confident that this will not be a threat to their continuity of care going forward?

Ms Davidson: I am not hearing anything from the federal minister at the moment about any plans to bring that back immediately. But I am always ready to represent ACT people with a disability and make sure that the NDIS continues to improve on meeting its original goals around choice and control, and that any changes to it need to be co-designed with people with disability in the community, just as the original scheme was set up to do. That is where my aim will be.

With respect to what gives me hope, I refer to things like the issue of people being in hospital when they could be at home with their NDIS supports, but they are having difficulty getting home because of the NDIS taking too long to process paperwork and

get those supports in place—people with complex cases and situations like that. We are making some good progress there, in terms of working with our federal counterparts in NDIS to try and get some of those people home faster. That gives me hope that it is possible for federal and state governments to work really well in partnership going forward, if people come to it with those shared concerns about wanting to make sure that people with disability have access to the right supports to live an ordinary life, just as they should be able to.

If we can continue to take that approach going forward, we will be able to achieve some really good things. But there are two parts to this partnership. We will just have to wait and see.

MR DAVIS: The minister's answer to that question gives me cause to ask one last supplementary, because you mentioned, Minister, people with a disability in hospitals. Has the ACT government done any modelling, with respect to a perfected or well-improved NDIS, of the sort of at-home care that you are talking about, and what kind of efficiencies that might lead to in our public hospitals in particular? My specific question is: do we know how many people with a disability are being cared for in our hospitals who could be better cared for at home?

Ms Davidson: Yes, we do. It varies from day to day, but it is usually somewhere between 15 and 20 people with disability who are in hospital beds who clinically would be better off at home with the right supports in place. We are trying to get them through those NDIS processes. That does not sound like a huge number of people, but it should be kept in mind that we are a city of only 420,000 people, so 15 to 20 people being in hospital beds, sometimes for months at a time, actually has quite an impact on our hospital system.

The other thing that can be really worrying for people with disability going into hospital is if they are not able to take their NDIS supports with them for normal daily living—things like feeding and personal care support. While hospitals are able to provide support for those things where it is necessary, a lot of people with disability feel much more comfortable having their regular care provider help them with those things, particularly if it is a person with really complex needs. They do, understandably, worry that there will be health impacts if they go into hospital and cannot access their regular care providers. That is quite a large number of people.

We want to make sure that people with disability feel safe to access whatever kind of clinical care they need when they need it, and that systems like the NDIS are just there for support and to make sure that that happens.

MS LAWDER: Minister, there are about 8,500 people on the NDIS in the ACT. According to the ABS, there are tens of thousands more people in the ACT who identify as having a disability. What is the ACT government doing to support those thousands and thousands more people who are not currently on an NDIS package?

Ms Davidson: You have raised a really good point. There are around 80,000 people with disability in the ACT, and only a relatively small number of them have NDIS plans. I will hand over to Catherine Rule in a moment to talk more about our disability support programs in the ACT.

One of the programs that you may have seen reported on in annual reports, and it received additional funding in the last budget, is the ISRP program. It does a fantastic job of supporting people with particularly complex needs who might otherwise have fallen through the cracks with NDIS. It looks to see that a combination of things, like housing support, in making sure that people do not end up homeless, drug and alcohol services, mental health, and disability support services for physical disabilities, are all taken care of holistically, and that people with those complex needs do not slip through the cracks anywhere.

I will hand over to Catherine Rule, who can talk more about our other disability programs.

Ms Rule: In addition to ISRP, there are a range of programs that we offer here in the ACT, including things like housing support, CAYPELS, which is an equipment loan scheme for children and young people, which is one of a kind in the country, and connections through the health system. There are a whole range of interventions that we can offer. Of course, the NDIS was only ever designed to cater to a proportion of the disability community.

It depends on the individual needs of people; we try and work with them to determine what additional supports they may need. Of course, in consulting with the sector on Australia's Disability Strategy, we will be looking to ascertain where people see gaps, and be able to provide advice to government about what kind of additional supports may need to be in place.

The NDIS is now a relatively mature scheme. When the last disability strategy was put in place, the NDIS was still in its infancy. Now we are in a position where we can see some data over time and really get a sense of what needs are out there in the community and what additional supports we may need to provide.

MS LAWDER: Whereabouts would you find that consolidated data about the number of people with disability in the ACT, and all of the supports that are being provided to them, whether it is through the NDIS, housing or other programs? I think you mentioned the ISRP. Is there a consolidated report?

Ms Rule: There is not. One of our challenges is to get the data to inform the programs that we provide. We are working with the commonwealth and other states and the territory on a program called the National Disability Data Asset. It is also in its early stages. We are looking at opportunities to link datasets, which is really what this program is about. How do we get a picture of people who are accessing the health system for the purposes of their disability, who may also be in the housing system or who may be in the justice system? How do you get all of those datasets to come together to get a complete picture? There is work in train on that, which is promising.

In the meantime we rely on how engaged the sector is. There is nothing better than asking the people who have a disability and live with disability to tell us what their needs are. We are lucky in the ACT in that, in a relatively small population cohort, just by talking to a highly engaged and organised sector, we can get a really good picture. In the longer term, we are hoping to bring some better data to the table to help

inform these things.

Ms Davidson: There is also the interesting situation of the commonwealth holding some really helpful data that can help us to identify how many people we have in the ACT with particular disability needs, so that we can then provide better services. This is another example of how we want the commonwealth and the ACT to work well together. The commonwealth has access to datasets like MADIP and DEX; they can give us a good picture over someone's entire lifetime of what kind of services they need to access. But a lot of those datasets are reliant on being able to identify people who access a particular type of service, whether it is a health service, a housing service, something in education, or whatever it might be.

There will be people out there in the community who have disability but are not accessing services. With some of those people, to better understand where the service gaps are, it really requires that qualitative experience of sitting down in consultation with people to understand why they are not accessing services. Is it because the services on offer do not meet their needs or is it because they have found other solutions that can help them, so they do not need to come to government to seek help? Things like the consultations on the ACT disability strategy can give us a fuller picture of what people's life experiences are and how we can best support people.

MS LAWDER: In that data, and in the work that you are looking to do, will you also be able to look at that intersectionality? For example, is there a greater gap for women in accessing services or people from a multicultural background, or both? Will you be looking at that level as well?

Ms Davidson: I am always interested in looking at intersectionality, particularly for groups that we know are under-represented in the NDIS, because that indicates to me that that is where some of the issues with structural problems with the NDIS are, and that they need improvement—for example, the under-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, people with psychosocial disability, or people from low-SES backgrounds.

The commonwealth probably holds the best datasets that can give us information about that intersectionality—datasets like MADIP and DEX, which I was talking about. For us in the ACT, it is about being able to do qualitative work, where we are sitting down and talking with people with disability, and being able to go to the commonwealth and say, “Can you help us to better understand the picture from a quantitative perspective about how many people have these intersecting things going on in their lives?” That is what will really help us. It requires the commonwealth and the ACT working together in partnership. That is where you can make some really big changes.

Ms Rule: Australia's Disability Strategy has strong themes around this issue of intersectionality. The key themes that are in that strategy—employment, health, housing and transport—are all about identifying those areas where people with disability have to access other service systems, what their experience is like and how we make sure that they are getting access to the things that they need to lead a full and meaningful life, just as everybody else without a disability is able to do.

Ms Davidson: We also have some great diversity amongst our representatives on the Disability Reference Group, which really helps us to understand those intersectionality issues.

THE CHAIR: Can we get an update on the Disability Justice Strategy?

Ms Davidson: Before I hand over to Christine to talk more about the Disability Justice Strategy, there are a number of disability action inclusion plans that are in progress at the moment. There is some good work being done across a number of directorates. I will pass over to Christine to talk about progress on the Disability Justice Strategy.

Ms Murray: Thank you for the question. The strategy was launched in August 2019. The achievements in the first two years were highlighted in the second annual report which was tabled. One of the biggest strengths of the Disability Justice Strategy is the employment of specific disability liaison officers. We now have eight disability liaison officers spread across the system. We get these disability liaison officers together regularly to meet as a group to continue to strengthen the relationship.

Those people are on the ground forming relationships. They are not actually only supporting individuals with a disability. There may be people who have never identified that they have a disability but who connect with the justice system and do not quite understand what their part in the justice system is or why they keep ending up in this space. The disability liaison officers are critical people who can support the individuals as well as policymakers in terms of making reasonable adjustments to the system to ensure that people may have another alternative.

I have noticed that there has been a higher increase in people who have been supported through the ISRP program who may not have identified that they have ever had a disability. By going through the tool that has been implemented through the Disability Justice Strategy, we have been able to identify that the primary reason for the difficulty in intersecting with the justice system is because of their disability. We have been able to step in there.

I am really excited about the best practice guide that is being developed with ACT Policing to support their interactions with people with disability. There has been a lot of work done, and the Disability Reference Group has been involved in supporting those conversations as well. Making those adjustments on that initial point of contact with the police is absolutely critical, and they are fully engaged in terms of how we improve that.

Our eight disability liaison officers are currently with corrections, child protection, community corrections, Canberra law courts, DPP and police. We are seeing on the ground—it might not have come up in the report, or that you would be aware of—the groundswell in reasonable adjustments that have been made, both on the ground and through the development of policy which seeks to utilise the identification of disability tool that has been created and agreed to, in order to see whether there is a better alternative for support, rather than simply following the normal processes. Is there any additional detail that you would like, Mr Pettersson?

THE CHAIR: I have one clarifying question. Are those initiatives that have already been put in place or is that in the future work pipeline?

Ms Murray: We already have the eight disability liaison officers in place in all of those locations. They are on the ground and many of them have been working for some time. In corrections they have been in place for a while. We are currently doing a trial of the tool in Bimberi. That is currently in place. We talked earlier about the intersections—how the trauma of the disability and the youth intersection works, and whether we need to look at the development of a slightly different differential tool. They are all in place at the moment.

It is a continuing conversation as to how we embed the policy that has been created within ACT Policing et cetera. Obviously, the action is undertaken but there is ongoing work that we need to continue to build on.

Ms Davidson: In terms of ongoing work, the best practice guide that Ms Murray was talking about earlier, which is really exciting work, should be completed in the middle of this year. There is also a pilot program for free legal advice and early linkages to supports for people who come into custody at the watch house after hours.

Also, 86 staff members across the justice system have already participated in easy English training so that they can develop accessible documents for people with disability who have low literacy as well. There is quite a bit of work that is ongoing there, and we will keep progressing that work. I look forward to giving you an update on that at the next annual report hearing.

THE CHAIR: I look forward to it.

MS LAWDER: You mentioned you have eight disability liaison officers. At what level are they and are they all full time, part time or a mixture?

Ms Davidson: I might pass over to Christine who can answer that.

Ms Murray: I understand that they are all full time. I am just double checking, if I may. They are at the ASO5 level.

MR DAVIS: Minister, can you please outline specifically in what circumstances restrictive practices are most likely to occur and what is the current Senior Practitioner law reform process seeking to achieve in this space?

Ms Davidson: Sorry, the question was about what restrictive practices we see most often or—

MR DAVIS: No, specifically I would like to know when they are most likely to occur. It probably would be useful to know what kinds of restrictive practices but when specifically they would be employed.

Ms Davidson: When they are most likely to occur. Before I hand over to our Senior Practitioner to be able to provide that detail, I think this outlines the importance of having a reporting system in place for restrictive practices so that we can better

understand what leads to a restrictive practice being put into place and what the outcomes of using it are. It is protective not only for the person who may experience a restrictive practice but also for care providers or teachers, educators, who might need to use a restrictive practice. Everything is clearly documented and they can understand what has actually happened.

Just because something is reported does not necessarily mean that it should not have happened but it means that we need to be very clear about what led to that happening and what the outcomes of that were. That is what can help us over a period of time to understand trends that might be emerging or better practices that we could use instead, which is why positive behaviour support plans are also so very important. But I will hand over to our Senior Practitioner who can talk more about those restrictive practices.

Ms Harkness: I have read and acknowledge the privilege statement. In terms of the circumstances under which restrictive practices are most likely to be employed, the legislation talks about them having to be in response to a behaviour of concern. When the person has a behaviour of concern that puts them at risk to themselves or other people in their setting as well, the legislation also outlines the conditions under which the restrictive practices can be used. They need to be the least restrictive alternative for that person. They need to be used as a last resort and for the shortest period of time as well.

The legislation also expects that they may be used in a crisis situation but they need to be part of a planned approach and contained within a position-behaviour support plan which has the aim of not only just reducing the behaviours of concern for the person but also has a real focus on improving that person's quality of life so that there is less likelihood of those behaviours of concern impacting on that person or others. I am not sure if you require any further information.

MR DAVIS: I wanted a bit more information about the law reform process that I understand is taking place currently and what our ambitions are for that process.

Ms Harkness: I might refer to my colleague Sally Gibson as that is under her purview.

Ms Gibson: I have read and acknowledge the privilege statement. The aim of the current reform is quite minor really. But one of the restrictive practices described currently in the act is the use of coercive behaviour or gestures. It was put that there would be oversight of a restrictive practice. However, it is never going to be accepted as a restrictive practice; it would never be approved in a plan. It creates confusion having it in that description of restrictive practices. It also is inconsistent with any other jurisdiction's description of restrictive practices. No other jurisdiction has that there. One of the amendments proposed at the moment is to remove that from the list of restrictive practices.

The other amendment is to strengthen the regulation making-power. You can currently make regulations but it is to give a bit of teeth to regulations that may be made in future under the act. Any regulations made have to go through the legislative-creation process as a piece of subordinate legislation; so they would be consulted on.

Ms Davidson: I would just like to add too that the Office of the Senior Practitioner have done some really good work consulting with various providers who are affected by this legislation, including education and care providers, and we are also engaging with the relevant unions to make sure that what we are talking about doing is well understood and that we have a really good understanding of how things work in practice for people who are working with people with disability.

MS LAWDER: I note that restrictive practices were a specific area of interest for the Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability. Submissions were invited, including data on the use of restrictive practices. Does the ACT government have that data and is it publicly available?

Ms Davidson: I might hand back to Sally Gibson in a moment to talk about data. We do have a system for collecting and keeping that data. As this is a relatively new piece of legislation for the ACT, it has taken us a while to start getting data in there and getting all the providers understanding how to report and meet their obligations. The data in these systems is always more reliable once things have had a little time to mature and everyone is understanding how to make use of the systems that we have got. But I will hand over to Sally Gibson who can talk more about RIDS, our data system.

Ms Gibson: Thank you, Ms Lawder, for the question. Our data system, as the minister said, is relatively new. Our annual reporting on data in the ACT started in 2019-20, I think. The numbers are growing. That does not mean that there has been an increase in the number of restrictive practices used. It means that our providers are getting better at reporting the restrictive practices. Over the next few years we expect to see that number reach a plateau and then hopefully start to come down when it is a true reflection of the actual instance of restrictive practice.

We have a data system that has been in use in Victoria and that we have adapted for use in the ACT because of course our legislation is slightly different. But Ms Harkness can speak about the actual numbers, if that is of interest.

MS LAWDER: Not so much the actual numbers but whether you have a trend and is it chemical restraint that is the most frequently used, for example?

Ms Gibson: Again, I will hand that to Ms Harkness. I suspect that is true.

Ms Harkness: Certainly the trends in ACT are similar to the trends outlined in other jurisdictions as well. Chemical restraint does remain the highest number at this point in time in terms of practices used. That information is certainly in our annual report in terms of the actual numbers and, as Ms Gibson already outlined, there has been a steady increase in those reports over the last few years as well.

The only other thing I would say is that a lot of the work that we do is on education and support to the sector and the different sectors that we work with in terms of trying to drive down the use of restrictive practices and making sure that people are using the least-restrictive alternative and using it only in those kinds of unique circumstances where they need to be employed as well. A lot of our work is looking at alternatives to using restrictive practices, such as positive behaviour support plans.

We have ongoing seminars with the sectors as well. For example, last year we did trauma-informed positive behaviour support, a whole range of different activities around working with the sectors to try and improve practice and influence practice in the right way in terms of reducing those restrictive practices over time.

MS LAWDER: I want to ask about the third-person support trial. How many people with a disability have been diverted because of that program and do you have a cost per person?

Ms Davidson: I will hand over to Christine who can talk some more about that particular trial and the numbers of people involved. Yes, we have got some really good people in the Office for Disability who have really strong engagement with the sector. It is one of the advantages of being a relatively small jurisdiction. That enables us to better understand the detail of how we can better support them. I will hand over to Christine who can talk about the numbers in that third person.

Ms Murray: Thank you very much, Ms Lawder, for the question. As you are aware, the trial is currently being undertaken in the watch-house. We are particularly focused on trying to get earlier supports in place for individuals, and the focus is on working with both police and, I think, the system on creating that cultural change.

We have been working with Legal Aid who have a lawyer who can come in and actually work face to face. Unsurprisingly, the face-to-face issue has been impacted by COVID and things are being done more remotely. There is an impact with the COVID restrictions. But early indications in relation to the broader cultural change work have been really positive.

I think there is about, on average, two referrals a weekend, and we just want to make sure it is a steady and well-conceived process that is undertaken. But we are really looking forward to, now that the restrictions have eased a little, getting more of that face-to-face work where we think that will really create some dividends.

Once we have had a chance to review the outcomes of the trial, we will be really keen to have a look and see if there are any amendments that we can make. But we do think that that is the right place to put some effort in. A lot of what we are doing in the disability justice strategy is changing policy, changing culture.

MS LAWDER: And did you have any data on the cost for person so far?

Ms Murray: No, I do not have any data on that cost per person so far.

MS LAWDER: Will you be, going forward, looking at it?

Ms Murray: We can certainly have a look at how we would actually capture that.

Ms Davidson: I think too, when we are talking about such a small number of referrals—when we are talking about things like two people per weekend—rather than looking at things like an average cost per person you would be wanting to look at what is the range of services and supports that people might need access to, because

that gives you a truer picture of the complexity of the service being provided.

MR MILLIGAN: My question is on the implementation of the Charter of Rights for Victims of Crime. I would just like to know how many issues we have raised against the charter of rights and how many of those complaints were raised by people with a disability.

Ms Davidson: I will hand over to Catherine Rule, who can answer that question, I think.

Ms Rule: I am just checking in with my team but I suspect this is not a question for the Community Services Directorate and may be better directed to our colleagues in JACS or to Minister Cheyne, perhaps, in her capacity as Minister for Human Rights. But it is not a CSD responsibility.

THE CHAIR: The ACT has been through a tumultuous period for the past couple of years. I was wondering how many people with a disability are still being aided with the respite from COVID grants?

Ms Davidson: The respite effect and recovery grants program has been a very successful program in being flexible enough to meet people's needs both last financial year and the one before. I know that, for example, in its first round from April to June 2021 there were 816 people who were helped, and in the September to October 2021 round we had, I think, 432 people who received grants, which totalled \$105,000.

One of the key things about those grants was that they were delivered in a very flexible way to meet individual needs and to get the money out the door to those people as quickly as possible. But it was really interesting to see the number of people who used those grants to do things like pay bills that they had not been able to pay.

What that indicates to me is that we still have some inequities for people with disability and for their carers—the 80,000 people in this city with disability and the 50,000 carers we have in our community—who have reduced access to income from things like paid employment and commonwealth payments that can support them. That tells me that there is some significant work to do in making sure that we address those inequities, and I am looking forward to having those conversations as part of the ACT's disability strategy. I might pass over to Christine Murray who can talk more about the respite effect and recovery grants that have been completed.

Ms Murray: The respite and recovery grants were developed from the ACT COVID disability strategy. Again, something that we heard from people with a disability and the organisations that are in the sector was that this is a real area of need. The design was a one-off payment. The first round was a payment of up to \$500 and the second round was \$250. At least half of the applicants were not known to our current support services and, as the minister has indicated, it was a surprising number of people who actually achieved some relief by paying bills. Some people paid bills. Some people actually built up their freezers. One of the other things that people told us was that actually had allowed them to have a fully stocked fridge. It also gave us an opportunity to refer people to the relief network. That interaction was really important. Some people asked for things like some support towards an older iPad or a re-imaged

iPad, just to help in terms of something that was a bit of a distraction.

We do need to acknowledge that, in total, we supported 816 people—and that is 816 individual people. If you received the \$500 in the first round, you were not entitled in the second round.

We need to give a bit of a shout-out to Carers ACT, who actually threw in \$20,000 as well because they saw it as such an important grant round for people and an important initiative.

We work to have a really flexible administration, and we actually worked really closely with 11 other organisations. This is one of those opportunities where government worked really well with a very strong sector. We worked with ADACAS, Advocacy for Inclusion, the Australian Red Cross, Capital Region Community Services, Carers ACT, Communities@Work, Meridian, the Multicultural Hub, Working with Community Services, Women with Disabilities. Hadrill Accounting, an NDIS registered provider, assisted in making their payments and ensuring all the accountancy side of things were all tied up.

It certainly was incredibly well supported and well received and made a huge difference with such a little amount in allowing people to actually spend the money on what they needed. The feedback has been incredibly strong on that.

MR MILLIGAN: Under the education and training of staff in human rights, the disability conference on e-learning is mentioned, and 358 participants completed it. As I understand, there are 2,565 fulltime equivalent staff within the directorate. Why are the numbers so low and do you have a target for increasing the number of people that are completing this course?

Ms Davidson: I suspect that that might actually be a question better directed to the human rights minister too, Minister Cheyne, if that is about a human rights-related conference or program.

Ms Rule: Those human rights staff do not sit within the Community Services Directorate.

MR MILLIGAN: It is actually in relation to disability training and identifying working with people with a disability.

Ms Rule: But they are not our staff.

Ms Davidson: The great thing about the ACT government's whole-of-government approach to looking holistically at people with disability is that the human rights minister also does some work in this area. I am sure that if you are able to direct your question to Minister Cheyne she will be able to provide you with some more detail.

MR MILLIGAN: Hopefully this question is under this directorate: when will a disability offender framework be delivered?

Ms Davidson: Sorry, that sounds like a question for the JACS area. We did have a

really good discussion earlier about the disability justice strategy, though. You might find some useful information there.

Ms Rule: Sorry, may I correct the record on one item before we close?

THE CHAIR: Of course.

Ms Rule: On the question from Ms Lawder about the disability liaison officers, just to clarify, there are actually a mixture of classifications depending on which part of the system they are working in. In child protection, we have a SOGC officer, there are two ASO6 officers in corrections and the remainder are ASO5s. It is a mixture of classifications, depending on which setting you are working in.

THE CHAIR: Thank you, Minister Davidson and all your officials. The committee will take a short break.

Short suspension.

Appearances:

Steel Mr Chris, Minister for Transport and City Services, Minister for Skills, Special Minister of State

Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate
Arthy, Ms Kareena, Deputy Director-General, Economic Development

Canberra Institute of Technology
Cover, Ms Leanne, Chief Executive Officer
Steff, Ms Cheryl, Acting Executive Director, Corporate Services
Whale, Mr Andrew, Executive Director, Training and Education Services

Skills Canberra
Andersen, Ms Josephine, Executive Branch Manager

Major Projects Canberra
Edghill, Mr Duncan, Chief Projects Officer
Power, Ms Rebecca, Project Director, CIT Campus Woden Project

ACT Building Construction Industry Training Fund Authority
Carter, Mr Glenn, Chief Executive Officer

THE CHAIR: Welcome, Minister and all the officials. As we have no opening statements, we will jump straight into questions. JobTrainer was clearly one of the largest, and the newest, skills programs introduced in 2020-21. Can you give us a bit of an update on the overall outcomes of the program?

Mr Steel: Sure. There have been two stages of JobTrainer. I will hand over to Skills Canberra to provide a bit of an update on how things have gone under JobTrainer 1 and what we are expecting in terms of JobTrainer 2—the current release that has already been put out to the market, and the take-up.

Ms Andersen: Thank you, Minister. Good morning, everybody. I would like to acknowledge that I have read and understood the privilege statement. As of 31 January this year, there were over 2,500 students enrolled in JobTrainer, over 70 training products. That is enrolments from JobTrainer phase 1 and the latest release under the extension and expansion of JobTrainer.

The break-up of those is 2,731 students in the first phase and 149 learners who enrolled in places that were released in November last year. In relation to the uptake of training places by Canberrans and the enrolments to date, 58 per cent of enrolments are women; 2.8 per cent identify as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander learners; 17 per cent identify as a person living with disability; 44 per cent are job seekers; and 48 per cent are young people aged 17 to 24, noting that those categories are not mutually exclusive.

THE CHAIR: Great. What sorts of courses were most popular?

Ms Andersen: The most popular courses in the first phase of JobTrainer, the top 10

courses, were: Introduction to Organisational Cyber Security; Preparatory Skill Set for Professional Graphic Design Practice; Certificate III in Individual Support, to support the aged-care sector, Certificate III in Information, Digital Media and Technology; Certificate III in Early Childhood Education and Care; Certificate III in Fitness; Accounting Fundamentals; Certificate IV in Cyber Security; Introduction to Project Management Practice; and the Diploma of Community Services. They comprise the top 10 enrolments.

THE CHAIR: Were any of those surprising or did they follow similar trends?

Ms Anderson: They certainly reflect skills needs areas and the feedback that we have received from employers throughout various consultations on where the skills needs are, and where the jobs are, at the moment.

Mr Steel: With JobTrainer 2 it will be slightly different in the sense that the eligibility has changed for JobTrainer 2. The qualifications across certain areas—early childhood education and care, individual support, mental health, ageing support and cybersecurity—don't just include the eligibility criteria that people undertaking those courses need to be job seekers or young people; other people are also included. So we are expecting a wider group of Canberrans to be able to access the JobTrainer program as part of the second round, under those particular course areas.

THE CHAIR: Great. Where are students choosing to undertake their JobTrainer course?

Ms Andersen: In relation to the enrolments to date, the CIT has been allocated 2,638 places and private RTOs have been allocated 1,102 places.

THE CHAIR: Great.

MS LAWDER: Of the placements you mentioned, the numbers to CIT and to private RTOs, was every single place taken up?

Ms Andersen: We are working through that process now. It is too early to calculate completion rates at this point, but we are working through that process so that, if there are students who did not commence for any reason or who are not going to complete, that those funds can be reinvested in further releases.

MS LAWDER: Okay. In the ACT, my understanding is that about 80 per cent of VET places are filled by private RTOs. What was the rationale for allocating more than twice as many places to CIT, as opposed to private RTOs?

Ms Andersen: For the first phase of JobTrainer, CIT was offering far more short courses, which are obviously lower cost and shorter in duration, whereas, with the Skilled Capital release for phase 1, where private RTOs were able to bid for places, the mix of courses was about 90 per cent for qualification—so higher cost and lower numbers.

Mr Steel: I think it is also important to say that CIT is the largest RTO in the ACT and therefore would be expected to deliver more training to Canberrans. We, as a

government, believe that they are the cornerstone of our vocational education and training system, providing high-quality VET. That is why we have a commitment of providing at least 75 per cent of total VET funding to CIT. That is a commitment that we have been transparent about, that we brought to the election and that we will continue to deliver through VET funding. We are currently in negotiation with the federal government on their proposed changes to VET funding. As we have that discussion, we are absolutely clear with them that we will not tolerate cuts to public TAFE providers and increases in fees for TAFE students. We support CIT, and that will continue through all of our funding programs.

Having said that, JobTrainer 2 is being delivered in a slightly different way to JobTrainer 1, so we are expecting a wider range of RTOs to be able to deliver places under the program, under future releases, going forward. I will hand over to Josephine Andersen to provide a bit of detail about the process of allocating the places in future rounds and the expression of interest process.

Ms Andersen: Thank you, Minister. As the minister said, we have changed the approach slightly for the release of places under the extension and expansion of JobTrainer. The key reason is the expanded eligibility that the minister referred to earlier. We need to ensure that there is the market capacity to deliver to a wide range of students.

Also, we have key targets to meet in relation to aged care. We need to deliver 575 training places through JobTrainer 2.0 and 170 digital care places. The change in approach is that the three streams are Skilled Capital releases, which are for full qualifications and shorter accredited courses. The second stream of the program will be called the JobTrainer employment job start program and that will be mainly pre-apprenticeship, taster type programs, to support people into employment or into further education and training.

The third tier of the program will be foundation skills and employability skills training, largely non-accredited training. The training providers will be expected to deliver wraparound supports to learners through to completion. In relation to the way RTOs are applying for places for the Skilled Capital stream, the first tier of the program, we are requesting that training providers submit an expression of interest. The expression of interest needs to demonstrate strong support from local employers for the people who undertake the training, to achieve a job outcome at the end. That is the way that training places will be allocated for that first stream, this time around.

MR MILLIGAN: In the recent ROGS report, it states that 80 per cent of students complete these types of short courses through independent RTOs; however, the majority of funding, particularly the JobTrainer funding, goes to CIT. Why is that the case, when the majority of students go through independent RTOs?

Mr Steel: I have already answered that. We are strongly of the belief that a public TAFE is the foundation of our VET system here in the ACT and we have a commitment to provide at least 75 per cent of funding. We know the quality of training that CIT delivers. We can be confident in that training. That is why we provide opportunities for our public sector to have funding under JobTrainer but also the private sector has an opportunity. As Ms Andersen mentioned, we have a much

greater focus on job outcomes through the second tranche of the program, which is open to a wider number of places, through both private RTOs and CIT. We are expecting, and we are hoping, that the RTO industry will respond to that by engaging with the industries that they work in to deliver those courses, to make sure that they are relevant and that they can deliver that job outcome at the other end.

MR MILLIGAN: In effect, you are saying that you are not as confident in the independent RTOs to deliver courses to the students of the ACT? You have got more confidence in CIT to deliver those courses; hence the reason for giving them 75 per cent of the funding?

Mr Steel: We have strong confidence in the quality of training that CIT provide and their engagement with industry, absolutely. We also know that there are a range of good private RTO providers out there and we are providing both of those sectors, private and public, with opportunities to deliver the JobTrainer programs, especially through round 2, with the changes that have been made to the program and its delivery.

MR MILLIGAN: Thank you.

MR DAVIS: Good morning, Minister. I have been contacted by a few of my constituents who are wrapping up year 10 this year, or last year, and are interested in taking on apprenticeships or jobs in the building and construction sector, which is very exciting. But they are concerned about some of the Facebook advertising they are seeing coming out of CIT that says, “Come and study carpentry at CIT,” the difficulty being that CIT does not advertise apprenticeships and cannot connect them up with jobs but simply delivers the courses. Can you talk me through what CIT does with a young person in that instance to connect them to an employer and to make sure that they can take up the training if they are interested?

Mr Steel: I will hand over to Leanne Cover, from CIT, and the team.

MR DAVIS: Thanks.

Ms Cover: Thanks, Minister. I have read and acknowledge the privilege statement. The institute has a lot of connections with industry. Obviously, many of our trainers and assessors are working in the industry themselves or have just recently come out of the industry, so they are very well connected to where those jobs are. They have very strong connections in terms of referral and connecting students with any interest that comes through to the institute with potential jobs.

We work really closely with the job networks and the group training organisations to make sure that those connections happen. We make sure that those connections are happening across a variety of areas, not just students coming in through our website or through connections with other students or our staff but also through the ACT Education Directorate and through industry. We have very strong relationships there as well. Our staff are members of all the peak bodies and associations that industry employers are connected to, so we pick up information and can exchange those ideas and those job opportunities through those contacts as well.

MR DAVIS: And how often does that happen? I am just trying to understand very specifically what the process is if a young person gets excited because they see the social media marketing that says, “Come and study carpentry at CIT.” Then they approach CIT, who tell them, as I have had it put to me by a constituent, “You will need a job provider to be enrolled in the apprenticeship.” They did not have a job provider to enable them to be enrolled in the apprenticeship, so my constituent has not followed through further to take up that training. I am just trying to get some specificity about what you would do with a young person, in particular, in that instance, attracted by the marketing, who does not yet have a job.

Ms Cover: Sure; thank you. I might ask Skills Canberra to set the broader context for apprenticeships before I give a more specific example around CIT, if that is okay?

Ms Steff: Thank you, Leanne. Mr Davis, the process for engaging in an apprenticeship is for a prospective apprentice to contact not a job provider but the apprentice network provider that operates in the ACT, Sarina Russo. Sarina Russo provides those gateway services for prospective apprentices to connect with an employer and with the training provider and also facilitates the signing of the training contract.

Ms Cover: Once that student makes contact with us, that is at the point of enrolling in a course and making sure that they have the supports and the right information they need to engage in the training.

MR DAVIS: Are there any instances that you are aware of in recent memory, say, the last 12 months, where CIT was contacted by any person, but specifically a young person, I would like to know, who was not able to be matched with a job provider and therefore could not take advantage of training?

Ms Cover: I am not aware of any, but I am sure that, with over a thousand staff and some 24,000 students coming into the system on an annual basis, there could be some follow-up required. I am very happy to take on notice any follow-up of any specific constituent that members would like me to try to follow up on, to see if there are any issues there.

MR DAVIS: Yes. Thank you.

MS LAWDER: I wonder if I could ask about the delivery of the CIT campus redevelopment at this point? The annual report gives the estimated completion date for the Woden CIT project and bus interchange as September 2024. On the website it currently says that it will be opening in 2025, but last week, in the Major Projects Canberra hearing, Mr Edghill mentioned that the contract for the main building is currently being finalised. So are we still on track for a September 2024 completion date and opening in 2025?

Mr Steel: Thanks. I will hand over to Duncan Edghill in a moment, but, as Mr Edghill mentioned in the previous hearing, there have been some challenges for the construction sector, not only in terms of disrupted supply chains resulting from COVID-19 but also the huge amount of wet weather that we have had, which obviously has an impact on construction and some of the first stages of the project that

are associated with the bus layover and the construction of the new interchange. Because we are in a sensitive commercial process at the moment to establish the preferred tenderer for package 3 of the works, which is the new CIT campus, they will be working on the construction program, so that has not been finalised at this point in time. Mr Edghill can provide some further detail about some of the challenges.

Mr Edghill: I have read and acknowledge the privilege statement. The original pre-procurement estimate had construction completion at that date, at the end of 2024, with operational commissioning and moving and whatnot by CIT to happen afterwards. I did note at another hearing last week, as the minister mentioned, that there is definitely pressure on the CIT program and there are a number of factors that feed into that, primarily, at present, related to the interchange work. Before we can build and complete the CIT campus proper, which is being built on the location of the existing bus interchange, we of course need to vacate the existing bus interchange, which in turn means that the new public transport interchange needs to be constructed.

We are seeing probably three factors which are driving pressures on the program for the public transport interchange. They are, in some respects, interrelated, but I did note at a hearing last week that some of the utility works in particular are proving challenging for us at the moment. That is an issue with some of the utility works like Telstra cables and so forth. We can't undertake those works directly ourselves; they are non-contestable utility works. So we are beholden to the utility companies in that respect. There are challenges in getting crews to Canberra to undertake certain of those works, so that is probably the key pressure for us at the moment.

Of course, we had COVID lockdowns at the back end of last year and we are still working our way through those in the sector generally, and on this project in particular. Adding to the mix is the unusually inclement weather that we have had over the summer period. When you are digging in the ground and opening up trenches, it is not a great time for it to be raining a lot.

So we do not have a definitive completion date at present, for the reasons that the minister outlined. Firstly, we are in the process of contract negotiations with the preferred respondent for the CIT campus proper, so it would be a little premature to pre-empt the outcome of that. One of the factors that we are working through with the preferred respondent relates to the program and what we can do to mitigate some of the challenges that we have experienced so far. Also, the public transport interchange contract is a two-phase contract, with the second phase to be negotiated as well, but there is definitely pressure on the CIT part of the program.

MS LAWDER: Thank you. That is very comprehensive. We heard rain, supply chain disruption, COVID, bus interchange, utilities. There are a number of factors impacting on the project already. Are you saying that the opening, at the start of 2025, will not be achieved?

Mr Edghill: Minister, are you happy for me to respond to Ms Lawder?

Mr Steel: I will hand over to Duncan, but what Mr Edghill has clearly said is that we are currently looking at finalising the program. There is still some further discussion to be had about the exact construction program and there may be opportunities to

catch up a little bit, but that has not been determined. The good thing is that CIT is involved, as part of the governance of this project, right the way through, so we are working closely with the major stakeholder that will be occupying the building, so once the program has been finalised they will be able to start preparations well in advance to make sure that they are ready to move in at the appropriate time. Duncan.

Mr Edghill: Thank you, Minister. I think you probably took the words from my mouth. We do not have a definitive date at present, Ms Lawder, but there is definite pressure in that program, for the reasons I noted previously.

MS LAWDER: Thanks. Are there other projects—for example, the UNSW Reid project—that may have a flow-on delay? Is it dependent at all on the CIT Woden project? Are there other projects, not just the UNSW Reid project, that depend on the completion of the CIT Woden and bus interchange project?

Mr Steel: I might hand that one to Ms Arthy, Deputy Director-General, CMTEDD.

Ms Arthy: Thank you, Minister. I have read and acknowledge the privilege statement. We are currently working with Major Projects Canberra on how everything lines up in terms of UNSW. At this point, there is no issue, purely because UNSW's plans are to start on the car park side of Reid and, as Mr Edghill said, there have been delays there for the same reasons, with supply chain problems, weather and COVID. At this point, there are no issues. There of course is a dependency, because there will be a point in 2025, probably towards the end of 2025, when UNSW is planning on being on the side of Constitution Avenue that CIT currently holds, but right now there are no issues that I am aware of.

MS LAWDER: Finally, if I may, could you run me through, to date, in the procurement process for the CIT Woden campus and the bus interchange, and potentially UNSW Reid, who is the government person that helps with procurement issues? Is that called an integrity adviser?

Mr Steel: Are you talking about a probity adviser, Ms Lawder?

MS LAWDER: Probity. That is the word I am looking for. What involvement to date has the probity adviser had?

Mr Steel: I will hand over to Mr Edghill to talk about the probity processes, which are outlined by Procurement ACT in the probity guidelines, for further detail, Ms Lawder. There are project-specific details which Mr Edghill can provide.

Mr Edghill: Yes. Thank you. For the CIT Woden campus procurement process—and that is by far and away the largest part of the project by dollar value—there is an external probity adviser involved, a law firm by the name of Sparke Helmore. They have been involved throughout that procurement process. I am not on the evaluation panel itself, but my understanding is that the probity adviser, for example, will attend the evaluation panel meetings and is available to take any questions that anyone involved with the process may have. So there has definitely been a probity adviser closely involved in that.

MS LAWDER: Okay. I will leave it there. Thank you.

THE CHAIR: I was wondering how the Woden and broader Canberra communities have been engaged and involved in decision-making about the future campus. What sorts of consultation activities are underway?

Mr Steel: I will hand over to MPC to provide some further feedback, but we have been out consulting with the community on the public spaces around the campus and what they would like to see as part of that. There will be substantial public spaces as part of this project for the revitalisation of the Woden town centre, as well as, of course, what is happening inside the building, which is critically important. I will hand over to MPC to provide some further detail about how that process is being run, as well as the earlier engagements that we have had with the community.

Mr Edghill: Thank you, Minister. I might make a few remarks, if that is okay, and then pass to Rebecca Power. Community engagement in the process is very important and has been very important from the outset of the project. I think we are conscious, within the project team, that we are building not only a vocational education facility and campus but that the changes which will be made as a consequence of the project will be of beneficial impact to the Woden town centre more broadly. For that reason, it has been important for us to ensure that we are gathering community feedback throughout the process.

There is a survey which is open at the moment, as the minister mentioned, relating to the urban realm aspects of the projects in particular. But if I go back, probably a couple of years now, even some of the fundamental decisions that we are making about how the campus will sit on the site and the capacity of the facility have been guided by public consultation. Going right back to some of the fundamentals, where we were looking at some of the early concept designs, there were a series of choices that we had—in simple terms, do we make it really, really tall in one section and open grassland on another or do we try to balance the height of the facility across the entirety of the site? The reference design, as it stands at the moment, is a reflection of some of that very early guidance that we received from the Canberra community.

We are very conscious that there has been community interest not only in the CIT campus itself but in the associated public transport interchange. Issues such as shading and greenery, shelter and so forth are all common themes whenever we have spoken to the community, both through formal survey processes online and through the myriad of other processes. That is particularly in Woden, in Westfield and the surrounds, where we have spoken directly to the local community. With that, hopefully I have not stolen too much of Rebecca's thunder, but I might pass it on.

Ms Power: Good morning. I have read and understood the privilege statement. Thank you, Duncan. Yes, we are doing a lot of things to make sure that we are engaged with the town community and so forth, including the YourSay survey, which was extended and is now closing in February. We have had pop-ups established fairly recently in the local library to make sure that we are engaging with people from all demographics who may not have full access to the technology, to try to make sure that we are again reaching out to all those stakeholders.

We are also establishing a full stakeholder engagement plan, which was done in conjunction with our procurement process with our package 3 contractor, but also well and truly across CIT, along with CSD and TCCS. One of the key stakeholder groups within that stakeholder management plan is a community group, and that community group will engage throughout the design process, moving forward, to ensure that all of the voices are heard and we are able to encourage inclusion in our design process.

THE CHAIR: That is great. Are there any other supplementary questions? No. do you have a new line of questioning, Mr Milligan?

MR MILLIGAN: Yes, thank you, Chair. My question is in relation to JobTrainer and the funding of that particular program. As I understand it, anyone who goes through an independent RTO needs to fully complete the course before the independent RTO receives any of the money of JobTrainer. Is that correct?

Mr Steel: I will hand over to Josephine Andersen from Skills Canberra.

Ms Andersen: Mr Milligan, that is not correct. We actually pay training providers when a learner completes a unit of competency. In the case of some qualifications, there are over 20 units of competency, and each time a learner completes, the training provider submits a notification of completion, and that payment is made within the fortnight.

MR MILLIGAN: And if they do not complete a unit of competency, there is no payment at all; is that right?

Ms Andersen: That is correct.

MR MILLIGAN: Does this same rule apply for CIT?

Ms Andersen: Yes, in relation to their access to contestable funding, absolutely.

MR MILLIGAN: So it applies to CIT and independent RTOs.

Ms Andersen: That is correct; yes.

MR MILLIGAN: And if the student does not complete any of the competency units, does that money go back into the pool again and is available for other students?

Ms Andersen: That is correct, yes. For anyone who either does not commence or does not complete, that funding will be reinvested in subsequent releases under JobTrainer.

MR MILLIGAN: Okay, thank you.

Mr Steel: Just to provide some further comment on that, when people do not complete their courses, it can be perceived as a failure, but among the reasons why someone may not complete a course is that they have got a job, so there has been an employment outcome as a result of studying, which is one of the whole reasons we

have the vocational education and training system.

So, yes, while people might complete a few competencies and then not go on to complete the full qualification, often for that particular individual and the industry that they have gone to work in, it has actually been a success. So it is important that we put it in that context sometimes, and that is why the system is geared to try and support and encourage RTOs to get people to complete units of competency, but ultimately some people do not end up doing that, and that is because they have gone on to get a job, which is great.

MR MILLIGAN: Okay, so I guess you can speak on behalf of CIT. When students leave a course from CIT, does CIT run any surveys or ask the student as to why they left the course?

Mr Steel: Leanne, did you want to comment on that one?

Ms Cover: Thanks, Minister. We have done some research in this area, and I will just ask our Executive Director of Education and Training Services, Andrew Whale, to give you some information about the survey that we have just done in the last couple of years in relation to JobTrainer.

Mr Whale: I am Andrew Whale, Executive Director, Education and Training Services and I have read and acknowledge the privilege statement and I understood it. Over the last couple of years—and this is not limited to JobTrainer; this is across all our courses, but we had a particular COVID focus as well—we have contacted almost 300 students and asked them why they did not complete. There was a combination of main reasons: they were changing industries; they were exploring different career options and were changing direction; they had a lack of time due to work or family commitments; they were finding a job or receiving a promotion and could no longer continue; they may have lost employment; there were medical reasons, or COVID specific issues likely to do with schooling children at home and things like that. So 86 per cent of those that we surveyed gave reasons that were—again, this is not an excuse—out of CIT’s control or any RTO’s control; they were reasons to do with their own family life or issues around their employment circumstances.

And I think that is also reflected in the national survey, which is run by the NCVET every year, which shows that for CIT, almost 85 per cent—84.9 per cent—said that they achieved the main reason for their training when they came to CIT. That is above the national average, which shows that there are different reasons and different experiences that students are expecting and have, leading up to the training and during the training.

MR MILLIGAN: Okay, thank you very much. Thank you, Chair.

THE CHAIR: I have a supplementary question following on from that. What impact would you say that making VET free has on students’ willingness to take on training and completing it, and the diversity of students that actually take up that training?

Ms Cover: It is probably a little early to give you a definitive of categorisation around that. The COVID impact, I think, has complicated things. Many students have care

duties or other complexities in their personal lives or their employment lives that coincide with their training engagement, so I think that it is a little bit early for us to see the impact of those courses being free.

Certainly, we have got lots of interest. Our numbers of students have actually increased at the institutes, and we are seeing signs of recovery after COVID. Obviously, there is a lot of interest in those courses that the government has subsidised and made available free, particularly short courses and particularly in areas where people are looking to supplement, reskill or upskill their qualifications for the way that the economy is moving and for the jobs of the future.

Mr Steel: I think it probably reflects, to a degree, where the economy and the labour market is at, at the moment. There are, in many industries, significant skill or workforce shortages, so there are a lot of job vacancies in many industries. Now, that may cause people to go and skill up to get into those jobs. So that might pull people towards undertaking JobTrainer courses, but at the same time, there may be a number of people who can move into jobs without needing to go into training. I think we will see that settle down over time and we will get a better picture about the extent to which this is driving demand for the skills training. The system will always reflect where the economy and labour market are at, at the moment. At the moment there is a high number of vacancies across a range of industries, so that may be affecting quite significantly the number of people in training at the present time.

THE CHAIR: You will have to forgive me, but the demographic data for JobTrainer was shared earlier and I cannot recall the finer points of it. Do the demographics of people taking up JobTrainer reflect that of the wider VET offering?

Mr Steel: I will hand over to Skills Canberra to provide some analysis about that.

Ms Andersen: Mr Pettersson, at this stage, yes, they do. The VET system in the ACT does very well for learners with a disability, for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander learners and for women, including significant improvements in the uptake of women in traditional trades. JobTrainer has certainly reflected that.

THE CHAIR: Minister, skilled migration has been a very hot topic in recent years because of the border closures and shortage of workers in many industries. Can you please talk us through the ACT's specific skills migration programs, how these were affected by COVID-19, and what the future looks like?

Mr Steel: The major impact that has been felt is from the caps on migration that have been put in place by the federal government during the COVID-19 period. That has meant that we have not seen as many people come from overseas to Australia to be able to undertake skill migration. Many people are already here and so they have been beneficiaries of the various programs that are in place.

But this is something that we are looking at closely in the context of workforce and skills shortages at the moment and the need to find people to work in some of these industries where they are struggling to find people in Australia, particularly here in the ACT in certain industries. I will hand over to the team at Skills Canberra to talk through the program and the work that we are doing on the critical skills needs list,

too, which identifies those areas of critical skills needs that then supports our migration program and the subclasses of visas that we have responsibility for.

Ms Andersen: As the minister said, over the two program years of 2019-20 and 2020-21, there was a reduction in the number of overseas applicants we could invite to apply for one of our skilled visas. The commonwealth's the border closure affected those numbers, but in the last two program years, about nine per cent have been overseas applicants, 69 per cent have been interstate graduates who have come to Canberra for employment, and around 22 per cent have been Canberra residents.

In relation to the program itself, in 2020-21 we were able to nominate up to a target of 1,400 nominations for either a 190 permit visa or a 491 provisional visa. The scope of nominations in terms of country of origin: the top five were India, Nepal, China, Pakistan and Bhutan. In the last program year, in relation to occupations, the highest occupation group that received a nomination was accountant, followed by a registered nurse, civil engineer, software engineer, ICT business analyst and computer network and systems engineer, chef, program developer, enrolled nurse, project administrator, quantity surveyor and systems analyst. So the program is certainly working well against our critical skills list.

In relation to the next iteration of the critical skills list, that will take effect on 1 July. We currently have a skills needs survey out, and we have promoted the opportunity very strongly to local employers to participate in the survey and identify their skill needs moving forward, not only in the skilled migration space but in relation to training and how skilled migration and training can work together to support employers to access a skilled workforce.

THE CHAIR: Wonderful.

MR DAVIS: I would like to get a better understanding about what we are doing as a government to support, particularly, young people who are interested in the physical trades—I used carpentry as an example before—with some of those initial start-up costs. I am talking about getting a utility vehicle—even a used one is \$10,000—buying their tools, hardhats et cetera. It is quite an expensive line of work to get into at the beginning. What are we doing as a government to help with those costs?

Mr Steel: There is a significant amount of investment, both by the federal government and by the ACT government, to support apprentices and trainees. We have had an increasing number of apprentices and trainees over recent years, and we have primarily been focusing on subsidies for the actual training itself in the ACT, but there are a huge range of other supports, which I will ask Josephine Andersen to outline, both at the federal government level and at the ACT government level. The Construction Industry Training Authority also provides support in the construction industry in particular, which would support many of the trades that you are talking about. And I believe that they will be on hand to talk about that.

Mr Carter: We have had some Webex issues this morning, but we have managed to dial in, so my apologies for not being there at the commencement of the meeting. In answer to the question, the authority provides to employers incentives to employ apprentices. We provide a range of incentives to subsidise employers for employing

women in non-traditional trades, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in trades, people with a disability and also people who are what we call a mature age—an incentive for those aged between the ages of 25 and 44.

On top of that, the authority provides an annual apprenticeship incentive allowance to group training organisations that employ apprentices across all trades. The previous incentives I spoke of apply to up to 13 trades—it can be more—in a particular year. It does not usually cover the areas of carpentry, plumbing or electrical, because, from our advice and from the history, there always seems to be a significant interest in those trades from individuals. The incentives we provide help to support those areas where there may not be as many people interested in some of the trades. They are all very important, particularly in the finishing trades. More often than not, they need to pay in excess of the award allowance, simply because sometimes to attract these people they have to try and get them from other, higher-paying jobs or they are mature age and the rate that they need to be paid is in excess of that. But we do not provide an incentive to any apprentice who is working in the industry, other than training rebate incentives should they wish to upskill outside of their apprenticeship program.

MR DAVIS: You just mentioned that there is pretty strong demand, particularly for some of those building and construction trades, but we also know that the government has a very ambitious forward infrastructure plan and we are hearing about an ongoing skills shortage. Do you think we might be able to encourage more people to take on apprenticeships in the building and construction trades if we increased the supports for some of those initial start-up costs?

Mr Steel: I am happy to answer that one and also to continue on, because I do not think we fully outlined the huge suite of programs for apprentices, particularly in the construction industry. The ACT government focuses on the training supports for apprentices and trainees through the Australian Apprenticeship User Choice Program. This is a demand-driven program. So anyone who wants to take up a trade in industries with nationally recognised qualifications—from cert II through to a cert III and advanced diploma—can. That support will be provided for their training. It is a demand-driven program, so we will support people to take up apprenticeships—as many as want to.

We provide additional support for funding to trainee organisations to assist apprentices and trainees to complete their qualifications, and subsidy loadings for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander learners and learners with a disability. There is support for ACT apprentices who want to travel interstate for structured job training. There may be travel allowances available for them. In addition to what the ACT Building and Construction Training Fund Authority has outlined with their \$6,000 in employer incentives for a first-year apprentice, the Australian government's Boosting Apprenticeship Commencements wage subsidy has been supporting apprentices and trainees. That was a 50 per cent wage subsidy paid to employers for the first 12 months of training, up to \$7,000 per quarter. That has been a significant one that has changed recently. That was ending in March last year, I think, and Ms Andersen can provide some further detail about that and the additional information that you have requested.

Ms Andersen: As the minister said, there are a range of incentives and payments available from both the Australian government and from the ACT government. If we look at the Australian government, there were two different wage subsidy programs for employers to take on a first-year apprentice, one which has finished and one which continues until the end of March,.

The commonwealth also provides access to trade support loans for certain apprentices, to help them with those kinds of start-up costs, with buying equipment and that kind of thing. From an ACT perspective, Mr Carter has already spoken about employer incentives available through the Training Fund Authority. In relation to skills needs areas—and many of the trades are in shortage—the ACT government provides up to a 72 per cent subsidy for the training. In addition to that, there are loadings and additional support funding to support apprentices and trainees who might need a bit of additional assistance to get through their apprenticeship.

I can certainly provide you with a worked example of what that might look like. If, for example, a group training organisation is taking on a first-year apprentice in electrotechnology electrician, the RTO receives over \$12,000 in training subsidies, and \$500 if the student identifies as an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander learner or as a learner with a disability, and an initial payment when the training plan is completed. The Training Fund Authority provides supplementary funding as well for apprentices employed by group training organisations, and up to \$3,000 to support the apprentice or trainee through to completion if they require additional support funding.

The employer, which is a group training organisation in this case, can also access the Boosting Apprenticeships Commencements wage subsidy—50 per cent of that apprentice's wage in the first year. A wage subsidy which was recently announced is called the Continuing Apprenticeship Commencements subsidy. It applies in the second and third year of that apprenticeship, where an employer can claim 10 per cent wage subsidy in the second year and a five per cent wage subsidy in the third year. The Training Fund Authority also provides funding to support field officers, and there is also a completion incentive of between \$1,500 and \$3,000 paid by the Australian government to the employer.

On completion of their qualification, the apprentice is eligible for a \$300 completion payment. If they are living away from home, they are also able to access an additional payment per week from the Australian government. I mentioned trade support loans before and that can add up to over \$500 per month over the second year of an apprenticeship. Then, subject to other age and eligibility criteria, that person might be eligible for youth allowance, ABSTUDY or AUSTUDY as well.

Mr Carter: I mentioned before that the incentives are also provided to employers of Australian school-based apprentices from the authority at 50 per cent of the skill shortage rate of \$6,000 for the first 12 months, \$4,000 for women in non-traditional trades, \$4,000 for Indigenous and \$4,000 for mature-age students, which does not usually apply to school-based apprenticeships.

MR DAVIS: Great, thank you.

Ms Andersen: I forgot to mention that the apprentices themselves can apply for a fee

concession, if they are experiencing financial hardship, and that is up to 50 per cent of the student fee.

MS LAWDER: I just want to go back the CIT project bus interchange. The budget in 2022 showed an increase of \$40 million for the combined project, and the revised project value is at \$240,000 to \$300,000. What is the discrepancy between those two figures—between the budget papers and the annual report? This is on page 119 of the annual report.

Mr Steel: I will hand over to Mr Edghill from MPC to talk about that. Obviously, the final costs of the project are being negotiated right now, so I will not have the actual project costs until that has been signed off. But Mr Edghill can certainly talk to the forecast in the budget.

Mr Edghill: Thank you, Ms Lawder. I have just turned to page 119. What is the figure that you are referring to?

MS LAWDER: The final project value, I think according to page 119 of the annual report, was—

Mr Steel: Which annual report, Ms Lawder? Are you talking about MPC or CMTEDD?

MS LAWDER: Major Projects.

Mr Edghill: The \$240,000 to \$300,000?

MS LAWDER: Yes.

Mr Edghill: My apologies, can you repeat the question please?

MS LAWDER: In the budget papers it says there is an increase of \$40 million for the combined CIT project bus interchange. That was in the budget page 342. I just wonder what is the difference between those two figures; why the discrepancy?

Mr Edghill: Sorry, we do not have the budget papers open in front of us. Is it possible to take that on notice please? I am just wondering whether it may be a matter of what falls into the outyear, beyond the forward estimates. I suspect that is the answer, but if we may—

MS LAWDER: Sure. What I am looking for is: when and why did we decide to leave the extra \$40 million allocated? Is it a cost blow-out of some sort? Where did this come from? That is the kind of information I am looking for.

Mr Edghill: Thank you, Ms Lawder. As mentioned, we will confirm this, but our suspicion is that that is a number that simply relates to what fell in the year beyond the forward estimates, but we will take that on notice.

MS LAWDER: Okay, thank you.

MR MILLIGAN: By way of introduction to the question, businesses were quite heavily affected by the light rail construction that happened in Gungahlin and along that route. A motion was brought forward in the Assembly for the government to provide support and a pathway forward as to how government can support business. There was a document that the government produced on lessons learnt, to ensure that the effects of light rail construction would not have as big an impact on businesses going forward. My question is: what is the government doing right now for businesses in the CIT Woden Valley area? We have already seen some construction going on there. What is the government doing to support businesses in that area?

Mr Steel: I am happy to hand over to Major Projects to talk about their quite extensive engagement with business. This will be occurring right through the project, particularly with construction underway on the layovers and the interchange. In the first instance there have been some changes to the traffic environment. There has been particularly extensive engagement with nearby businesses like the Hellenic Club to make sure that they can continue to operate and that their patrons still have access to the car park and understand how to get in to visit the Hellenic Club, as well as with other businesses around the town centre.

The closure of Callam Street has meant there is a different way of getting around, and that will change throughout the program of construction. With Easty Street reopening next month, that will make a big difference in terms of the movement south to north, and vice versa, throughout the town centre. Of course, with the future plans for a north-south connection, there will be further opportunities there. It is also about working with businesses to harness the benefits of the project, which ultimately will support them, once it is built, in terms of having 6½ thousand students and staff in the Woden town centre who will be utilising the local businesses.

It will bring a lot of activity to the town centre, not only after construction but during construction as well. I am sure there will be a lot of tradies using some of the businesses around Woden. Of course, we will need to engage with them, listen and communicate clearly about the different stages of the project. That has already been happening, as part of the project. I will hand over to the project director to provide some further information.

Mr Edghill: As the minister mentioned, a lot of the engagement which has been occurring to date with local businesses has been primarily around traffic management, given the stage of where the project is up to. As noted before, we have not yet finalised contracts for the main works for the CIT Woden facility, but we are in contract negotiations with the preferred respondent.

Once we have entered into the contract, we will have a much better idea as to exactly what the construction process will look like—how the preferred respondent will actually stage the construction; and, in turn, that will mean we will know what disruption may lay ahead. In turn, that gives us an opportunity to talk to local businesses in a very pointed way.

A number of lessons have been learnt out of the light rail project. The physical circumstances of this project are a little bit different to what we saw in the Gungahlin town centre. One of the lessons learnt was around the coordination of projects in an

area. We are working with TCCS in particular to make sure that we are as coordinated as we possibly can be in terms of when we are closing one street and opening another. In terms of the works in Easty Street and Launceston Street at the moment, we are trying to arrange those in such a way that we are closing one after one has been finished. That is a lesson that we have learnt from all of the road works that were happening in Gungahlin during the light rail stage 1.

There is another issue where the physical circumstances are a little bit different here. With light rail stage 1, there was a lot of discussion around the hoardings and whether they were somewhat permeable or solid, when they get moved out and so forth. Because of where we are working, the physical circumstances are a little different from the Gungahlin town centre, of course. Even so, once we get into the construction of the CIT facility itself, there will be lessons around where we put hoardings, how we use shade cloth, and how we move around the fencing that we will employ on this project.

MR MILLIGAN: Minister, you mentioned that you are working with businesses so that they can harness the benefits of the project, obviously during as well as post. My question is: what does that actually mean? What do you mean by working with business to harness the benefits of the project during and post the construction phase?

Mr Steel: Obviously, post-construction speaks for itself, in terms of having 6½ thousand extra people in the town centre who will be using shops, cafes and going to the Hellenic Club. There will be a huge amount of activity associated with the new campus, which we expect will be really significant in terms of supporting the vibrancy of the whole Woden town centre and the businesses there.

During construction, it is about making sure that we can work with businesses, as Mr Edghill has mentioned, around hoardings, so that customers know that businesses are still open, despite the construction happening. There will be people moving around the construction site that may use those businesses as well. We will work with them and listen to them about what their needs are in terms of being able to promote their business throughout the construction period. The project team can speak further about that.

Mr Edghill: We have our Major Projects Canberra offices in Woden. We are in the Callam Offices, which are those octagonal-shaped pods. We have a great view of what is happening on Callam Street and on the worksite. It also means that, to the extent that we need to use external spaces for, community meetings and so forth, there is that opportunity for us to support local businesses, given our location close to the project.

MR MILLIGAN: You mentioned hoardings—to work with business to help to promote them. Will there be potentially any financial support that can be offered? Also, is the government considering reducing any fees or charges for businesses to help them through this period? You have mentioned that construction workers will go and support businesses, but I am sure that does not necessarily equate to the number of people that the business probably would have handled before this construction period.

Mr Steel: The construction footprint is quite different here to other parts of Canberra and other projects. There are businesses that will be affected by this project; there is no doubt about that. The Hellenic Club is the one that is most proximate to the current set of construction works that are happening. With Callam Street, largely, the businesses that are along it still have good access into Westfield, for example. The whole of Callam Street is not closed off. There is a construction zone that currently goes through that does not have any active frontage on it. It is not like Gungahlin Place, where light rail was literally being built right next to shopfronts. It is not an active street.

We are trying to create an active street with this project. That is what I meant in terms of the benefits that this will provide in the long term. The engagement has been around traffic, primarily. We have been able to work through a lot of those issues, particularly with the Hellenic Club. That will not be to their total satisfaction; certainly, we have provided access in there as best we can. We will continue to have that discussion and dialogue going through.

There are no plans to provide any incentive payments. I do not think there is any very good precedent for that nationally, in terms of compensation for losses. We are not sure that there will be that significant effect, anyway. We will continue to work through, as best we can, particularly on the communication, which I think was the major piece of feedback on other major infrastructure projects that we have undertaken—the clear communication about the program ahead of time, to enable businesses to plan and make sure that their customers are aware of changes to traffic arrangements and those sorts of things, to the best possible extent.

That is the process that we are going through here. If you have a particular business in mind, Mr Milligan, let us know, because the team is engaging directly with businesses. The team from MPC is literally down on the construction site in Woden and can talk to businesses who want to engage with us about the program.

THE CHAIR: I was hoping to get an update from the training fund authority for the reporting period. Were there any emerging trends?

Mr Carter: For the reporting period 2020-21, the emerging trends were particularly around mental health training and mental health awareness. Industry spoke quite keenly on the need for particular programs that addressed that, particularly in the early stages of 2020-21, with site closures and the reorganisation of labour to ensure that separate teams were working on different projects and, if there was a group of workers that were affected with COVID, it did not affect the ongoing business on other projects.

Particular trends vary across different sectors within the industry. Certainly, in the last three to five years, the strongest trend across electrical installation areas would be the solar PV and solar battery programs. There is a lot of PPE and facial fit for protective equipment during COVID, particularly when the health restrictions required workers externally to be wearing face masks and that type of thing.

I would say that first aid is always popular—first aid CPR. There are a number of sectors that constantly refresh on an annual basis, particularly with all of the changes

around COVID and health restrictions in that respect. In the reporting period those would be some of the key areas.

We did see an uptake in programs, particularly in the areas of Certificate IV, Diploma in Building and Construction, Construction Management, Site Management and Site Estimating—those programs that were more conducive to being done via a virtual setting as opposed to face to face and hands on, which particularly relates to scaffolding programs, rigging, dogging and that type of thing. I would have thought they were the key differences and the key changes within the reporting period.

MS LAWDER: On page 11 it talks about the funding to employers operating apprenticeships for RTOs and GTOs. Can you tell me a bit more about where the funding went? Were they private RTOs, government owned or operated RTOs, or a split between them?

Mr Carter: For the registered training organisations, I am going to achievements in entry-level training. The figure of \$1,600,059 predominantly is spent on private group training organisations and private RTOs that often have an RTO status within their group training organisation.

Funding does not go from the authority to CIT, unless it is an individual rebate that is provided to the actual applicant via CIT. CIT will pass on the rebate on our behalf, having made a pre-application for the calendar year period. That assists individuals with the amount of money they have to pay. They do not actually get the funds; they receive the funds from us but they pass that on through a reduced fee.

Primarily, that amount of money went to group training organisations that employed in the area of 390 apprentices during the reporting period, and also the skill shortage trade areas; we spoke before about the incentives to private employers that employed apprentices across the range of skill shortage trades identified by the authority, together with the incentives for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and women in non-traditional trades.

We did have a continuation of an Indigenous scholarship program in that period. That has also been extended for the period 2021-22, which is in partnership with CIT and the Yurauna centre, where the authority is providing scholarship funds for the full cost of training for the fees associated with the training. The ACT government funds CIT to deliver the training. We have over \$18,000 worth of scholarship payments to Indigenous Australians. Three people are undertaking the cert II in construction pathways. They receive up to \$1,000 each. There are four qualifications from a cert IV area across building, including site administration and site management. They receive \$2,000 each, per applicant. There are a further three applications in the Diploma of Building and the Diploma of Building and Construction Management.

MR MILLIGAN: On the skill shortages, we have not had the migration levels over the last couple of years that would help to bridge that gap. You have previously mentioned certain industries where there is a skill shortage. Could you remind us what industries those were? What is the government doing to increase the enrolment numbers of students to help fill those gaps in those industries with the skill shortages?

Mr Steel: I will take that one; I think it is a broader question about various industries. We have been consulting throughout the pandemic with the skills industry advisory group—it is made up of a range of different industries and RTOs—to get a sense of where those skill shortages are. Indeed, I think this is an issue of broader workforce shortages—literally, a shortage of people to be able to undertake and take up vacancies in the job market.

This has informed the various skills lists, which are updated. Ms Andersen mentioned the critical skills list which informs the skilled migration program. There are also other skills lists which we have for the Skilled Capital program. They are updated from time to time to make sure that the skills and the qualification requirements reflect the demand in the job market and in the industries. There are a wide variety of industries, most of which would not be a surprise to you. One of the reasons that JobTrainer has focused on the areas of aged care, disability, early childhood and digital skills is because those are areas where there is a critical skills need. That is why the eligibility requirements were loosened as part of JobTrainer 2, to enable all people to be able to undertake those qualifications for free, as opposed to just jobseekers and young people.

We will continue to update those skills lists. I will hand over to Josephine Andersen to provide some further detail about how we engage with industry on those skills areas.

Ms Andersen: As I mentioned before, we are currently surveying local employers and industry bodies for information on emerging skills needs, as well as current skills needs. That will form the basis of the ACT skills needs list which will commence on 1 July this year. Likewise it will also support development of the critical skills list for migration purposes.

In relation to the existing ACT skills needs list and the existing critical skills list, the existing skills needs list was developed following consultation in April and May last year. As the minister said, there is a very broad range of occupations and qualifications on that list. There are 90 qualifications across 106 occupations. The critical skills list for migration purposes is also developed following consultation and according to labour market analysis conducted by Skills Canberra, using our forecasting of industry needs and entitlement model. It is somewhat restricted by the national skills lists. However, that also includes a very broad range of occupations that are in skills need in the ACT.

THE CHAIR: Are there any further questions for the TFA? If not, we might give them an early mark, if that is all right with the minister. Thank you, TFA. We will go to Mr Milligan for the next question.

MR MILLIGAN: My question is in relation to Skilled Capital. How many places were provided through this initiative? Were they additional places? How many places in total were offered?

Mr Steel: This links closely with the JobTrainer program, which has used Skilled Capital as a mechanism to deliver places. I will hand over to Skills Canberra to talk about that.

Ms Andersen: The places that were offered through the Skilled Capital stream of JobTrainer were additional places. As I mentioned before, for round 1, there were 554 Skilled Capital enrolments with private RTOs. In the recent release of Skilled Capital, there have been 686 places allocated.

MR MILLIGAN: Was that 686 in total for independent RTOs?

Ms Andersen: No, that was a mix of places provided to CIT and private RTOs.

MR MILLIGAN: In how many of these places have the students actually completed?

Ms Andersen: Very few at this stage, Mr Milligan, because some of these courses are up to two years duration. So we do not have any robust completion data at this point.

THE CHAIR: Minister, what work is the government doing to encourage women and people from diverse backgrounds into non-traditional areas of vocational education and training?

Mr Steel: There has been quite a bit of work going on, particularly in providing opportunities through our pipeline of infrastructure program—the pipeline of infrastructure that has been going on. For example, on the raising of London Circuit project and the stage 2A light rail project, we will be working towards a minimum 10 per cent labour spend on employing and supporting apprentices and trainees, particularly women in trades and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander apprentices. The Canberra Hospital expansion has been a particular success story. We are working towards a 30 per cent ratio of apprentices, trainees and cadets across the total workforce. As part of that, a minimum of 10 per cent of subcontracted trades will be focused on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

With CIT Woden and the establishment of a new vocational education and training building, we are looking at how we can support apprentices and trainees on that site as well. That one will be focused not only on ensuring that we have CIT apprentices and trainees involved but also on looking at those other communities. I will hand over to MPC to talk a little bit about that.

Mr Edghill: As the minister noted, we are conscious that, with our large and more complex infrastructure projects in particular, there is an opportunity for us to not only build what needs to be built but to leverage off those projects to achieve even greater outcomes for the community across a range of factors and across employment and local industry in particular.

There are probably two points to make about the approach that has been taken. The first one is that, across our portfolio of Major Projects, we look to adhere to all ACT government policies when it comes to employment, diversity and so forth. On each one of our major projects, we do try to take a specific area of focus. The idea behind that is that, rather than spreading industry very thinly across every single project in multiple areas, it allows bidders, and us, to focus on achieving a great employment or skills outcome; across the entirety of our portfolio we then have all bases covered.

As the minister mentioned, with the Canberra Hospital expansion project, for example,

there is a very strong Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander focus, both in terms of employment and in terms of spend on subcontractors who identify as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander entities. With the CIT Woden project, there is a very strong focus upon women in construction. Indeed, we are very fortunate that the project director on that project from the government side, Rebecca, who is here with me, was the winner of the NAWIC Crystal Vision woman in construction award for 2020. So we definitely have a very strong focus upon women in construction and trades on that particular project. As the minister mentioned, with light rail, we also have an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander focus, a women in construction focus and the other areas of focus that were mentioned.

One of the features of the way that we approach it through our procurement processes is that we set out very clearly to bidders what our objectives are and then we let the bidders come back to us with the specifics of exactly what it is that they propose as part of the process. That has been a great approach to date, in the sense that we have been pleasantly surprised on a number of occasions when industry have been reasonably ambitious in what they think they can achieve. That then gets hard baked into plans, the contract and so forth.

Very definitely, we are conscious that on our major projects, as well as building the buildings, there is an opportunity for us to try and leverage great outcomes for our community in terms of skills, employment and so forth.

MR MILLIGAN: As I understand it, there is a certificate II in construction training offered to students who attend ACT schools and colleges. Could you give an update in terms of the numbers that have gone through that course, particularly in the last 12 months, the calendar year?

Mr Steel: We will probably have to take that on notice, unless Skills Canberra has the data on that available.

Ms Andersen: Minister, I believe that would be in the education portfolio, but we can certainly talk to them and get an answer.

MR MILLIGAN: I am not sure whether you will be able to answer this one: is this course only offered through CIT or is it also offered through independent RTOs?

Mr Steel: In terms of the school setting or are you talking more broadly?

MR MILLIGAN: In terms of the school setting, yes.

Mr Steel: I will hand over to Skills to provide some background on which RTO delivers that training in the skills setting.

Ms Andersen: We will have to take that on notice. It may be a course delivered by CIT. Until we find out which course it is, I am not able to answer that question.

THE CHAIR: Minister Steel and officials, thank you. The hearing is suspended until 2 pm.

Hearing suspended from 12.04 to 2 pm.

Appearances:

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

Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate
Tanton, Mr Graham, Executive Group Manager, Property and Shared Services
Kelley, Ms Rebecca, Executive Branch Manager, Sport and Recreation, Economic Development
Arthy, Ms Kareena, Deputy Director-General, Economic Development

THE CHAIR: Welcome back everybody. The committee will now turn its questions to sport and recreation and the Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate. If everyone could acknowledge the privilege statement, that would be wonderful. As there are no opening statements, I have the first question. Minister, I was hoping to get an update on Gungahlin pool.

Ms Berry: I will get Mr Tanton to provide an update on where the construction and improvements at Gungahlin pool are.

Mr Tanton: As an update on the progress of the Gungahlin Leisure Centre, in late December we finalised the waterproofing testing of the facility. That went well. We are currently tiling. We commenced tiling on the western side of the pool, which is the deep end of the pool. The membrane goes on before the tiling. It is quite a laborious program of applying another waterproof membrane over the concrete carcass and tiling has commenced on that side. The lighting upgrades to the pool area have also been completed. There has been good progress made to date. In saying that, with the current COVID environment that we work in, it is an ongoing body of work to manage the contractors and the like. Tiling has commenced and we are still looking, at this point, at completion by mid this year.

THE CHAIR: That is good news. I am no expert on building pools; after you do the tiling, is there any further work required to the pool?

Mr Tanton: Once they have done the tiling, they will obviously grout in between the tiles and the like. There will be some further works that we will be doing as repairs and maintenance—the balance tanks and so on. It is ongoing repairs and maintenance. Once the tiles are on, the grouting has been finalised and any particular waterproofing has been put over the top of the actual tiles, the pool will be recommenced. There will be some further works on balance tanks and the like as part of the normal repairs and maintenance, which we will look to schedule at the same time so we do not have to be taking pools offline anytime soon. That is the progress to date.

THE CHAIR: That is good news.

MR MILLIGAN: Can you give me an update on the Stromlo pool? Is part of the Stromlo pool closed at the moment?

Mr Tanton: Not that I am aware of. I have had no updates to say that it is closed. It has been temporarily, from time to time, just around resourcing for COVID and staffing with regard to the COVID impacts. If staff get sick, they cannot place staff on short notice, because they have health and safety obligations and training that each of the staff members need to undertake before they can be put on the pool deck, so to speak—resuscitation and the mandatory training that they need to do. I am not aware of any pool closure at this point in time.

MS LAWDER: Gungahlin pool has been closed for quite some time—since, I think, March 2020. Civic pool is in some, I guess you might call it, state of disrepair. How does that lead to only a one per cent fall in satisfaction with the management of aquatic centres which we see in the annual report, given the state of our pools?

Mr Tanton: Obviously I was not part of the survey. It is done independently through an external provider, so I could not actually give you a scale of it. I think there is a fair level of amenity within the ACT that is very good. Whilst there are some facilities that we know are starting to age—and we do know that the Gungahlin Leisure Centre has been off—there is a level of access to pools, including the new ANU pool that came on-line, Stromlo, which is obviously a very good facility, and the Tuggeranong Lakes pool as well. There is quite a large amount of amenity. Further work is being done also to assist with the splash pool at Dickson pool and at Manuka as well; over the past year and during the closure, there has been ongoing investment into those pools, which we will continue to do as part of the repairs and maintenance program.

Ms Berry: With the work that occurred at Dickson pool, some of the upgrades that were delivered there were delivered under the Local Roads and Community Infrastructure Program. That delivered upgrades to the splash park, which includes the toddlers pool, improved accessibility to the front foyer, cafe and reception areas, as well as some rectification of some leaks that had occurred doing the splash park. There have also been some capital works delivered at Manuka pool, one of Canberra's oldest pools, which included an upgrade of the soft floor under the playground, upgrades to the emergency lighting, as well as putting a fence in there, although that did require some heritage approval at Manuka.

MS LAWDER: How is the survey distributed? How do people know about it? Is it a random selection? Is it sent out to anyone who is a registered user of the pool, if you have a membership, and how many responses were there to the survey?

Mr Tanton: I will need to take that on notice regarding how it is actually implemented by the providers, or the people that actually do the survey. I am happy to come back to you with that.

MS LAWDER: Thank you.

MR MILLIGAN: Going back to my question about the Stromlo Leisure Centre pool being closed, there is a Facebook post by the Stromlo Leisure Centre themselves stating that there are maintenance faults being conducted right now with the 50-metre pool and that the top end of the 50-metre pool is currently closed. Is that going to suffer the same or a similar fate as the Gungahlin leisure pool did? Are they similar issues?

Mr Tanton: I do not believe they are the same issues. Again, it is something that you have just brought to my attention, so I will need to take it on notice. I will go back to my officials and get an understanding of what that may be.

MS LAWDER: How is it the case that part of the pool is closed for maintenance and you do not know about it?

Ms Berry: I think I can provide some explanation for the Stromlo Leisure Centre. I am just looking at Facebook now. Its post was five days ago on a maintenance fault. Contamination can occur in some of the pools, so sometimes the pools need to be closed while that contamination is cleared up. The management of the centre really is within the remit of the management contract, which is the YMCA in this case. We will endeavour to find out what occurred five days ago at Stromlo Leisure Centre and see what the updates are. I cannot see that it continues to be closed, but it looks like on that day there were some issues, according to the Facebook post. We will endeavour to find out what is going on there.

MR DAVIS: Minister, I want to take us back to a conversation that we had in this hearing a little while ago about rental fees for sportsgrounds. I know that the ACT government allowed free access to those sportsgrounds for some clubs during COVID-19. In particular, we cited the lack of fundraising ability for a lot of these clubs. I have been meeting with a number of community sports organisations recently and earnestly preparing for the government's response to my earlier motion on the question. They have raised with me that these fundraising issues are still a real problem for them, that there is still a limited cash flow through a lot of our community sports clubs and that paying to rent sportsgrounds is proving to be a barrier. Are we open to revisiting that policy?

Ms Berry: That is a question for hearings on Friday with TCCS sportsground management.

MR DAVIS: I remember we had this conversation last time. As per that conversation, TCCS manage and administer the fees but they do not set them. It is this group that sets the fees. So I am asking specifically whether we are still going to keep fees in place for the hiring of community sports facilities, at least for the short term, while clubs are still struggling.

Ms Berry: There is not at this stage, but it really is a Friday question. I can answer it again on Friday, but I can say now: not at this stage. Of course, I meet with, and sport and rec regularly meet with, community clubs and other sportsground hirers to discuss ways that they can be supported through what has been a difficult time for everyone. At this stage, there is no intention to extend any sort of relief in that space, but we are always open to continuing the conversation about how we can support sports clubs. Again, Mr Davis, this really is in the sportsgrounds space of hearings. Today we are doing the pools.

MR DAVIS: Thank you. We will chat more on Friday.

MS LAWDER: I refer to the CMTEDD annual report, volume 1, page 65. It talks

about additional nationally identified priority athletes supported by the ACT Academy of Sport. It says it is primarily due to additional netball athletes after the cessation of the netball program partnership and scholarships on 31 March 2021. Can you tell me what other sports were featured in the elite sport participation programs and how many athletes for each sport?

Ms Kelley: At the ACT Academy of Sport, our program partners for last year were hockey, rowing, cycling, rugby sevens and swimming. On a year-to-year basis—generally on a four-year cycle, tied in with the Olympic and Paralympic cycles—those partnerships are determined by national sporting organisations and which areas they wish to partner with. We are proud of the fact that our ACT Academy of Sport is valued by those organisations. I would need to take on notice the actual breakdown of athletes across those sports falling within the 134.

On top of that, we have a number of individual scholarship holders who are supported on an annual basis across a wide range of sports. The netball athletes noted against the report for last year was because Netball Australia had a change in tack with their strategic approach, their high performance program for the territory. So we were on a transition arrangement for those athletes for a year. Now any categorised netball athletes are eligible for support under our individual athlete program moving forward.

MS LAWDER: In a similar vein, the next dot point on that page says that the number of organisations funded to support participation opportunities in sport and recreation exceeded the target of supporting 89 organisations. Where were the additional nine organisations from—what types of supports and organisations?

Ms Kelley: The full list of those is in the annual report. From year to year, they are areas of application we cannot really guarantee. Through the nature play program, which is one of our programs, we tend to have a broader range of non-sport organisations—early childhood centres and others—who are really keen to run physical activity programs and to achieve the objectives of our grant funding in this space. Typically, from year to year, 80 is always our target because that tends to be a good number of organisations for the grant program to have the impact across the community that we would like. We can certainly provide that full list for you, if you would like it.

MS LAWDER: Thank you. I am not sure if this is the right place—I am sure you will bear with me; it is something I am very interested in and I suspect Minister Berry is too—but I was a little alarmed by recent reports about the Canberra Capitals maybe no longer having a home in the ACT. Can you tell me what may be being done to make sure that we can keep the Caps here and give them a home?

Ms Berry: As you will recall, the Australian Institute of Sport, which was the arena where the Canberra Capitals, amongst other teams, were playing a lot of their home games, was closed by the commonwealth—the federal coalition government and the Sports Commission. Despite our best efforts, we were unable to negotiate at that time with the federal government for the facility to be restored so that the Canberra Capitals as well as the GIANTS could continue to play there, and so a number of other activities could continue, not just sport. The most successful team in Australia, the most successful women's team as well, our Canberra Capitals, did not have a

home.

We have continued to negotiate with the federal government to try and get an outcome for the Australian Institute of Sport. In the meantime, the facility has been used as a testing and vaccine centre by the ACT government during the management of the health pandemic that we have all been going through. For the short-to-medium term anyway, while we get through the vaccinations of the five- to 11 year-olds, as well as boosters, the AIS will continue to be used as a vaccination hub.

However, we will work with the Canberra Capitals. If their games end up having to be played interstate because we cannot secure a facility here in the ACT, we will work with the Canberra Capitals on ways that we can support them financially. If the final, should it happen—and we have all got our fingers crossed that it will—unfortunately ends up going to Wollongong or somewhere else then we will work with the Capitals on how they can be supported in that space.

MS LAWDER: Is there not somewhere at UC that may be a possibility, or might they consider building something?

Ms Berry: I am sorry; I thought you were talking about the short term, as far as the current finals are concerned.

MS LAWDER: Certainly I am interested in that, but in the longer term as well.

Ms Berry: I understand that the University of Canberra have, as part of their master plan, a basketball facility and centre of excellence, if you like. As part of their master plan strategy for their whole future, that is probably a medium to long-term strategy for the University of Canberra. It would not be something that would meet the needs of the Canberra Capitals in the short to medium term. That is why we are still open to conversations with the federal government, although I would have to say it has been a long and tiresome journey to get to any sort of ideal situation where we can have the institute restored, at least for the short term, for the Canberra Capitals and other teams and activities that use that facility.

THE CHAIR: I have a similar supplementary on the lines of elite sport. What role does the ACT government have in supporting our Olympians, both summer and winter?

Ms Berry: The ACT government provides equal funding support to both our Canberra Olympic teams and the Paralympic teams. Something that was introduced a few years ago when I was first appointed as sports minister was that they both would be equally funded for the Olympics as they fell. I might ask Ms Kelley to provide a bit more detail.

Ms Kelley: As the Olympics and Paralympics approach, the funding that the minister is referring to is a contribution to the national team appeals for each of those games as they occur. On a daily basis, we like to say that we support our local Olympians and Paralympians through the ACT Academy of Sport. We are a recognised Olympic and Paralympic training centre at the AIS. We have a suite of staff across athlete performances, strength and conditioning, nutritionists, sport scientists, and sport

psychologists, who are all really assisting these athletes in their training environments as they qualify within every four-year cycle towards the games.

Beyond that, in each Olympic and Paralympic year over the last couple of games, we have also had a specific athlete training assistance program that has been offered to athletes who are prospective selectees for the Australian team. Last year, that was in the order of \$100,000. It was distributed to 32 athletes, many of whom were Tokyo-bound and, as you are probably aware, we had a number of medals. It is great that the ACT government's support is actively supporting those athletes in those results.

MR MILLIGAN: Obviously, the last 12 months—even 24 months—have been quite challenging for all of our sporting clubs, particularly our grassroots clubs. I noticed in the annual report that the government saved quite a bit of money in investment, some \$3.6 million, from things such as not holding any AFL matches at Manuka Oval. There were also savings with the Stromlo Forest Park enclosed oval feasibility study. Did the government hand out any grants to any sporting clubs or associations, for the purpose of upgrading local facilities or infrastructure or for additional programs? Was that considered by the government, and was the government approached by sporting clubs for this additional funding?

Ms Berry: I might ask Ms Arthy to provide some information on that one.

Ms Arthy: There are a couple of things tied up there. There are the savings that were made as a result of the elite sporting contracts, particularly with the AFL. Essentially, we have rolled over those outstanding funds to get additional activity for this year or next year. That funding is not available for other purposes.

In terms of other sporting grants, I believe that we ran a few rounds of sporting grants. Ms Kelley might be able to talk about the general sporting grants. Typically, with anything related to the elite sports, we were able to roll over existing contracts to get content. Ms Kelley, do you have anything else to add?

Ms Kelley: Yes. The usual sport and recreation grants have been brought forward, as you may be aware, through the COVID period to assist cashflow for organisations. A number of sporting organisations are also receiving funding through the business support grants, which were run through government in terms of alleviating hardship through the period as well. That was certainly an additional funding stream that sports benefited from.

MR MILLIGAN: What was the uptake like? Was there significant investment in local infrastructure through these additional grants and the funding that was brought forward?

Ms Kelley: The level of funding was not greater than in any other year, with the primary infrastructure investment being through the Capital Assistance Program. That is featured within our grants program each year. The 2022 sport and recreation grants will be announced imminently. In terms of additional funding of infrastructure last year on top of what we would otherwise usually expect through our grant program, there was not any.

MR MILLIGAN: This is probably more of an estimates question however, is the government considering increasing the number of grants that are available for grassroots investment in infrastructure, going forward 12 months?

Ms Berry: As I responded to Mr Davis's question, we are obviously very keen to continue to work with sports clubs and communities about how we can continue to support them. The government is also keen to deliver on its parliamentary and governing agreement, with regard to commitments made to sports communities around various infrastructure across the ACT. That includes our commitment to build a new tennis centre at Amaroo, in your electorate. I know you will be keen to hit a ball with the likes of Kyrgios, perhaps, Mr Milligan! We would like to see you out there having a crack at that. There is the ice rink over in Tuggeranong as well. Millions of dollars are being spent on sports infrastructure across the city, not just in the upgrades of smaller community clubs.

MR MILLIGAN: You mentioned the ice rink. Can you give a bit of an update on where that is up to?

Ms Berry: Yes, we can, Mr Milligan.

Ms Kelley: The government received a proposal from the proponent, Cruachan Investments, in mid-January. That proposal is currently being assessed by government. We anticipate having a decision on that in the coming months.

MR MILLIGAN: Potentially, with design and construction beginning this year some time?

Ms Kelley: We cannot say at this point in time, because it depends on the proposal and the government's consideration of that.

THE CHAIR: Can I get an update on the new tennis facilities in Amaroo? How are they coming along?

Ms Berry: We are continuing to work with Tennis ACT on progressing that commitment that the ACT government made to build that new facility at Amaroo. I do not think we have any more updates.

Ms Kelley: I have a bit of detail. We have engaged a consultant to work with us on the development of an estate development plan for the site. As the minister mentioned, both Tennis ACT and Tennis Australia are represented on the project control group—working really closely with them as the design progresses. Probably our next formal step will be the submission of that estate development plan for approval, which will then finalise our design requirements.

MR MILLIGAN: I recall that the estimated cost of that build was around \$12 million; correct me if I am wrong. Have any studies been done in terms of the watercourse that runs through the proposed area? We saw what happened with the Home of Football. Can we potentially see something similar happen with the location chosen in Amaroo?

Ms Kelley: Owing to the experience with Throsby, that work was front of mind with that particular site in Amaroo. We have engaged and invested early in the due diligence around the ecological assessment of that site, which includes water flow. That has all been considered within the design process.

THE CHAIR: The committee will now question the minister in her capacity as Minister for Women, and in relation to the Community Services Directorate. The committee will suspend for a few minutes.

Short suspension.

Appearances:

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

Community Services Directorate

Rule, Ms Catherine, Director-General

Summerrell, Mrs Jessica, Executive Branch Manager, Inclusion and Participation

Murray, Ms Christine, Executive Group Manager, Inclusion and Participation

Evans, Ms Jacinta, Executive Group Manager, Strategic Policy

Pappas, Ms Helen, Executive Group Manager, Children, Youth and Families

Plater, Ms Janet, Executive Branch Manager, Children and Families, Children, Youth and Families

Thompson, Ms Melanie, Senior Manager, Child Development Service, Children, Youth and Families

THE CHAIR: Welcome back. The committee will now turn our questioning to the minister in her capacity as Minister for Women, in relation to the Community Services Directorate.

MS CLAY: Minister, I am interested in our gender lens on our budget. I was very pleased to hear the Chief Minister recently tell us that the next budget—the budget being prepared at the moment—will have a gender lens applied at the decision-making stage rather than simply a statement at the back end. Can you talk us through how that might look different this year from previous budgets?

Ms Berry: The CSD, as you know, has been working with a range of economic academic experts to develop education materials around how we present the gender-responsive budgeting, and it will look different from how it has looked previously. CSD and CMTEDD are working together to develop those approaches, making sure that we are identifying the right principles for an effective and sustainable gender-responsive budget that makes sense and delivers what we want it to deliver, rather than just a tick-box, if you like, or ink on paper.

We are continuing to produce the annual women's budget statement. That will be the same or similar over the years, but our gender-responsive budgeting processes will be developed, and the gender analysis will occur by the end of this year. There is still some work happening in that space. Officers may be able to provide other updates.

Mrs Summerrell: I have read and acknowledge the privilege statement.

As the minister said, the ACT government is still continuing to progress gender-responsive budgeting. As the minister mentioned, we have engaged with a number of academics who are known experts in this field to provide advice on what the international examples of best practice look like, to guide those discussions across government. We have been working very closely with the wellbeing framework team within the Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate. We know from that work that international best practice tells us that an effective and

sustainable approach to developing a women's budget statement and gender-responsive budgeting need to be underpinned by an established process as well as by indicators. It also needs to be aligned with the treasury and central agencies and to have a whole-of-government focus, which is why we have been working with the wellbeing team on that.

We will continue to look at what that evidence base of wellbeing data in the ACT could look like and how that will then go on to enable more effective targeting of government policies, including through reporting on the wellbeing of specific groups, and work towards progressing further gender-responsive budgeting. As part of that expanded implementation of the wellbeing framework that is happening through the CMTED Directorate, the wellbeing framework team, alongside CSD, have committed to continuing to develop approaches to gender budgeting.

MS CLAY: I am pleased to hear that. It is interesting. We have the wellbeing indicators sitting with CMTEDD, but our gender lens budgeting is not sitting with CMTEDD, and international practice tells us that it should sit with treasury; is that what you have just told me? Is it better if it sits with Treasury and with the wellbeing indicators? Is that the way most people are doing this kind of gender lens budgeting?

Ms Berry: Before Mrs Summerrell provides some information on that, the approach that we have taken in the ACT is that we have just developed the wellbeing framework, and we do not want to overlap and double up on things. Mrs Summerrell has explained that, yes, in fact the evidence is showing that we embed the gender-responsive budgeting process as part of the wellbeing framework that we have in place. It is the Office for Women that is working on getting all of that information together from various academics, and working with CMTEDD on how that will work, with respect to embedding it within the wellbeing framework.

Mrs Summerrell: That is right, Minister. Obviously, with CMTEDD leading it, being a centralised agency, we are working very closely with Treasury and the CMTEDD team. That strong, very gender-specific advice is where the Office for Women can really assist with that information, and we will continue to work with the wellbeing team as they continue to look at this from a whole-of-government perspective. Where these things are really successful is when you do have that influence, and it infiltrates across all aspects of government and policy decision-making. A centralised agency and the wellbeing indicators are a great way for that to happen.

MS CLAY: That sounds really promising. Will we see some accountability indicators in the budget that is coming up, to measure the effectiveness of the gender aspects of the wellbeing framework?

Ms Berry: We are expecting to get this process underway with the gender-responsive budgeting by the end of this year. We will probably have a little bit more information after this budget, I would say.

MS LAWDER: Minister, I would like to talk a little about the gender impact statements that were introduced by CSD as part of a commitment under the first action plan of the ACT Women's Plan 2016-26. I asked a question about this in October, I think it was at an estimates hearing. I was told they were not tracked; there

is no way of knowing how many people might be doing them. What is the point of having these gender impact statements if (a) ACT government employees are not required to complete them, (b) are not required to submit them or (c) it is not tracked in any way?

Mrs Summerrell: Thank you very much for the question. The gender impact assessments are a really important tool, and we definitely encourage directorates to use them. With their continued use, obviously, we are able to look at more information and more data that is available. They are a really valuable tool to assist the ACT government to consider the impact of gender in policy and planning. The Office for Women remains available to assist any directorate or area that would like assistance with the completion of that tool.

They are part of a toolkit that is being used to assist with developing further work in the impact analysis process. The Office for Women will always remain available to help; and using that and encouraging areas to use it is one of the priorities of the Office for Women.

MS LAWDER: The answer I got to the question on notice was:

The use of the gender impact analysis tool—

which is what you may be calling it now—

is not tracked. There is no requirement to submit completed templates to the Office, and the Office for Women does not keep statistics on the number of requests for assistance.

Are you able to give me a ballpark figure for how many people have asked for assistance—just a bit of a guess?

Ms Berry: The reason why it is not tracked, Ms Lawder, is that it is a support service, if you like, for directorates to be able to use to check in and see how people are feeling. I do not know whether we would have numbers available. We could definitely take that part of the question on notice and see whether there is anything available from different directorates. The purpose of the tool is just to provide those supports and to use it as a tool not as a mandatory reporting process.

MS LAWDER: I agree with the intent, and we have just talked a bit about having a gendered lens. I have asked questions in the past about how important that is. But how do we know that people are using these toolkits, and what indicators or what information do you have about how effective the toolkit is? I would imagine there has been some cost associated with developing this toolkit. In terms of an outcome for what you have put into developing the toolkit, how are you measuring that? Do you know whether anyone has ever even accessed it via the website or the intranet? Do you keep those sorts of statistics?

Mrs Summerrell: That is right; the data is not tracked and collected like that. I cannot answer today exactly how many requests we have had. But I do know that there are some instances where the information has been used, and used quite

successfully. I know that the information has been used in the development of some of the wellbeing impact assessment materials.

When an area reaches out to the Office for Women for that assistance, the Office for Women will remain available to be involved along that journey with that area, and it can glean information that way. As the minister said, it is designed as a tool and it is not mandated. We are encouraging people to familiarise themselves with it so that they can use it independently and so that they can use that information to be able to understand the impact of gender on their decision-making process.

MS LAWDER: How are you encouraging them to access that information?

Mrs Summerrell: It is a requirement in some of the materials that people have to submit that they complete the assessment. Where they reach out to us, obviously, we have those conversations. That, in itself, generates really fruitful and productive conversations about how women can be impacted differently by the policy decisions that are being considered. What is important is that we want to encourage people to use it as a genuine investment and not as a tick-box exercise to say that they have done it. We want people to familiarise themselves with it so that they can get that genuine benefit out of it.

The wellbeing income assessments, which are mandatory, include a gender component, and that is something we can then be informed by, once that comes through. So there is a multiple-pronged approach there as well.

MS LAWDER: Did that particular item in the first action plan of the ACT Women's Plan have anything about measurement—measuring the impact or measuring the frequency of use for that or any other items in the action plan?

Mrs Summerrell: I would have to check that. I cannot recall that off the top of my head, but I am happy to check that. I may be able to find that information while we are still online and answer it a little bit later.

MS CLAY: We are all very wildly enthusiastic for gender impact analysis not to be just a tick-box, and it is great to hear some really strong language around that. Can you talk us through one or two examples of decisions where it actually has shaped decision-making, maybe where the Office for Women has worked with somebody, and it has actually changed the policies and programs and budgeting that they do?

Mrs Summerrell: Minister, are you happy for me to answer that?

Ms Berry: I was just going back through some of the files in my head, but, yes, if you start, Ms Summerrell, I will follow up.

Mrs Summerrell: Sure. I was doing a similar thing in my head, Minister, as well. What comes to the forefront of my mind initially is the work that the Office for Women has done with the wellbeing team around the wellbeing impact assessment tool and how they have used the information available to them to guide that conversation about what meaningful wellbeing indicators look like and then how we can use those wellbeing indicators to inform policy design. But also, as I mentioned

before, with it being a centralised agency, it gives the Office for Women the ability to understand a little bit more about what is going on in other directorates that might not be as obvious to us, I guess, sitting in a non-centralised agency, for want of a better description.

That information and the wellbeing indicators are going to look at gender-sensitive design principles, as well as how the wellbeing impact statements are going to be measured. They are some examples that I can think of initially that go to how some of that data has been used. All of those things are still a work in progress, though, and I think that the way we use this data and gender-responsive budgeting and policy design is something that a lot of areas across the country and internationally are still working through—how to make that change meaningful. So this is new territory for us, and where we can use the data and the information as best we can, we are definitely doing that, but it is still a work in progress and we still have some work to do across the territory on how we do that.

Sorry, as I have been talking more things have come to mind. I do know, and I think Ms Murray has some more information on how this, that the consideration of gender in our emergency response has been something that we have been looking at a lot recently. We have been looking at using the information that we have obtained through that data that has been available to us, and being really mindful, in an emergency response, about the impact on women. We have used that information to change how we have responded, and we have changed some of the things that we have done, as well as just having more of an awareness about particular situations and the impact that those situations have had on women. I do not know, Ms Murray, if you wanted to add anything more to that.

Ms Murray: Just briefly. I have read and acknowledge the privilege statement. The work that is being done across government in relation to the consideration of gender in emergency responses has been quite a significant piece of work and it has been a real opportunity for both the social recovery team and the Office for Women to utilise their skills set and knowledge base. We have been working with the academics on some work more recently, to really influence a change the view across the ACT Public Service and service system to look at how we are impacting differently.

I know that our Deputy Director General, Anne-Maree Sabellico, recently presented a paper in relation to this, internally and across government, which caused significant reflection, I think, in terms of the differential outcomes for women, and often the flow-on for children. There is a lot of data that we have in relation to the COVID response, but also some of our bushfire community responses and also responses to floods, et cetera. We have had a horror few years, as you know.

So I think that that is, yes, still a work in progress. But it moves me, and I think the team, that things have been looked at very differently based on this data, this information, and the conversation we have been able to lead about the differential impact, and, as Ms Lawder has spoken about in different sessions, the intersectionality within the particular group. So it is gender, it is age, it is multi-cultural backgrounds and how that intersection works. So, again, it is work in progress, but that is a fabulous piece of work that is being undertaken. Thanks, Ms Summerrell.

THE CHAIR: I have a new line of questioning. I was hoping to get an update on the progress of the second action plan 2022.

Ms Berry: Thank you, Chair. We launched the 2026 action plan in 2020 and we will be reporting soon on the actions that we have completed or are implementing since the plan was launched. Of course, some of the priorities within the second action plan were around increasing the participation of women in traditionally male dominated workplaces, as well as in higher paid roles, to make sure that we can break down that bias around women being able to do that kind of work.

The second action plan has committed a target for 10 per cent of female employment in the construction industry. To that end we have put a couple of programs in place to provide women and girls, particularly young girls in school settings, the opportunity to engage in those sorts of construction-based environments, rather than just allowing it to go through to the keeper, if you like, in that they would not normally have those chances.

So we have a program that we are doing with construction. Canberra Institute of Technology Trade Skills Program has also provided some funding to that project, and we are working with schools about what that will look like within our school communities. That program is being provided by the CFMEU. We also have a program that we are working on with NAWIC and other organisations to increase those opportunities for young women and girls to engage in construction in ways that they might not have had the chance to previously. I might ask Jess Summerrell to provide a little bit of detail about those programs and others that are happening out of the second action plan.

Mrs Summerrell: As the minister mentioned, we have a couple of programs that are underway at the moment, specifically focusing on women in construction, in particular. The Understanding Building and Construction pilot program is one of the programs that the minister just mentioned, and that is a partnership between the Office for Women and the National Association of Women in Construction, known as NAWIC, as well as the Education Directorate. That program is designed to support the implementation of action 2.2 under the second action plan. That program will be commencing later this year in schools.

The program introduces young people to the industry through the use of the Australian curriculum, and it provides general capabilities for years 7 and 8 and then actual work studies for years 9 and 10, to improve understanding of the building and construction industry. This is a particularly exciting program. It is a pilot program and all of the curriculum and materials, as I mentioned, are aligned with the Australian curriculum. The goal of this program is really to establish a strong foundation for all students to proceed into an Australian school-based apprenticeship or pathway, should that be their choice, or into further education on completion of the program, with an understanding of the opportunities that are available in the industry, as well as the importance of fostering safer and inclusive workplaces.

As I mentioned, it is a partnership between NAWIC, CSD and the Education Directorate, so there are specific roles in actually developing the curriculum—teaching roles that are developing that curriculum so that it aligns with the Australian

curriculum. Within that we will see students have the opportunity to go on site and participate with hands-on, practical experiences in trades, and they will do a one-week placement on site. Whilst the program is very much designed at encouraging the participation of girls and young women in this industry, there is a component that does focus on our male students and works with them to help them understand what a safe workplace looks like for everybody. It works on how we can make sure that that message is something that we start to talk about with both males and females from those earlier years.

So that is that project. Then there is another project, as the minister mentioned, that is a partnership with the CFMEU. That project is looking more at the safety of our work sites and how we can ensure that work sites remain safe for everyone who participates and attends a work site. That program again reflects the second action plan in encouraging more people into male-dominated roles, but it recognises that in order for people to do that we need to make sure that those environments are safe and inclusive, and that we need to listen to what we are hearing about the reasons they may not be considered either of those things at the moment. We need to address them at the same time as we try and increase the participation of people at those sites.

THE CHAIR: Great. So when is reporting back on the implementation of the second action plan likely to occur; and when does work commence on the third action plan?

Mrs Summerrell: Minister, are you happy for me to answer that?

Ms Berry: Yes. Just to start, I will be making a report on the actions out of the second action plan in March. I will make a statement to the Assembly which will detail all of the actions out of the second action plan, but also some of the highlights that Ms Summerrell has just pointed to on our targeting an increase of 10 per cent of women working in those more male-dominated areas. Those two programs that she has identified are our start to achieving those targets within the construction sector.

THE CHAIR: And then work on the third action plan?

Mrs Summerrell: Yes, the third action plan is very much in the forefront of our minds. I want to recognise that the start of the second action plan was delivered in 2020, which was the beginning of when our world changed significantly. As the minister mentioned, she will be providing an update very soon on the progress of where things have got to with that, but I want to recognise the enormous amount of work that has happened across government in a really difficult time to progress a range of actions within the second action plan.

Consultation on the third action plan is definitely something that we are starting to consider at the moment. We do need to be mindful about how we plan for that. If there is one thing that I have learnt recently it is that you need to have multiple plans that cover off everything, because all of the plans will likely get cancelled and we will have to do something else. So, we are looking at how we can have multiple mechanisms to able to communicate and consult. Ultimately, the premise will stay the same as it did with the second action plan, and that is that we are really committed to making sure that we engage with women from across our community to find out what really is important to them and how that can be reflected in future action plans. That

will remain our priority once we develop a little bit more what those engagement sessions look like.

THE CHAIR: Ms Lawder.

MS LAWDER: You mentioned the tender that went to the CFMEU. Was that the women in construction industry liaison officer tender?

Ms Berry: Yes.

MS LAWDER: Have there been any updates provided; are they publicly available?

Ms Berry: I might have to ask Ms Summerrell if she has any updates on that program. COVID has restricted us a bit in our ability to have visitors within school sites, so I am not sure whether that has impacted any of the work so far, or whether there actually have been school visits.

MS LAWDER: Is that the other project? That is the one that NAWIC got, or are they both the same type of thing?

Ms Berry: No, they are different. I will ask Ms Summerrell to provide some detail on that one.

Mrs Summerrell: Yes. The project that the CFMEU is doing is the industry coordination project, and there have not been any publicly available updates on that particular project as yet. We have had multiple conversations with them. The Office for Women works really closely with them on the progress of that project. I know that there have been some delays, obviously as a result of COVID, in some of that work, but I also know that they are working really hard and really closely with the Office for Women to progress a project plan and those things. But nothing has been released publicly at this stage.

MS LAWDER: Do you know how frequently they are meant to report, and have these publicly available reports? I have heard from some other tenderers that that was part of the requirement.

Mrs Summerrell: I would have to go back and double check, I am sorry. I do not have that available to me right now.

MS LAWDER: Is it a negotiation between you and the successful tenderer, in this case the CFMEU, about changes to the timeline due to things like COVID, or is it taken as a given that you will give them a bit of extra time? How does it work?

Mrs Summerrell: There was a tender process, as I am sure you are aware, for the procurement of this piece of work. Alongside the way our contracts, grants and deeds—all of those things—are managed, there is close contact and updates sought to understand if there are impacts of COVID or other things, and what that looks like. We work really closely with any of our providers to make sure that they are able to deliver what is required, notwithstanding that the situation over the last little while has been really difficult for lots of people. We are working closely with all of our

organisations and contractors in the current environment.

MS LAWDER: Has there been a formal contract variation to take into account these COVID-related delays?

Mrs Summerrell: Again, I do not have that information available to me right now. I would have to take that on notice.

MS LAWDER: Thank you. I think I made the point in the budget hearings that the CFMEU has no women on its board, and it was a surprise to me that the contract about women in construction was awarded to the CFMEU rather than, for example, another organisation the minister has already mentioned, NAWIC, which is an organisation run by women for women in construction. What impact or analysis is done during the tender process about the participation of women, or is that part of the gender equity strategy?

Ms Berry: Perhaps I will start. I guess the aim for all of this, which is where I started from, Ms Lawder, is our joint intention to increase the number of women, and therefore women in organisations like the CFMEU and the MBA, for example. In peak construction bodies that have very small numbers of female representation, it is our goal to improve those situations so that there are more women within that sector. We have already aimed for that target of 10 per cent, and to achieve our target we developed these programs to ensure that that can occur in a safe way, so that women and girls seek out work in construction and are welcomed onto construction sites and other male-dominated workplaces and male-dominated peak representative bodies. For the Office for Women and for the ACT government, it is about acknowledging that there are significantly small numbers in those areas, and we want to work with the organisations that also need to improve in that space to help us to meet those targets.

MS LAWDER: Do you know when gender equity strategies were introduced in the ACT as part of a tender process?

Ms Berry: Sorry, I did not hear.

MS LAWDER: Asking companies whether they had a gender equity strategy.

Ms Rule: Is your question about how that relates to the procurement processes, Ms Lawder?

MS LAWDER: Yes, and when did that come into play in the ACT?

Ms Rule: We can take that on notice and check with our colleagues in Procurement ACT.

MS LAWDER: Yes, thank you. I am interested to know. I feel perhaps it might have been 2017, but I am not 100 per cent sure, and I wondered—again, you will not know all of this detail—how many successful tenders there have been and contracts awarded, versus how many of them have gender equity strategies in place. If that data is not collected, why do we do it? Why do we bother if we are asking people to have a

gender equity strategy but we are not collecting the data or giving some kind of weighting to those organisations that do have a gender equity strategy?

Ms Berry: I think that is a good question, Ms Lawder. I will find out if we can get that on notice for you. As I said, it is one of the areas that we have been focused on in improving the outcomes for women and girls across a range of different areas. Construction is one, obviously, that stands out as an area that has a very low number of women and girls who participate or strive to have a career in any manner of construction, from a brickie's labourer to chippy and all the way up to project manager.

One of the areas where we have been able to see significant change in female representation on traditionally male-dominated areas is in the sport space, which goes to this question that you are asking, about making that change and then influencing that change by putting in place targets for sports organisations to meet. I remember that we required sports bodies to meet at least 40 per cent female representation, otherwise they would not receive their triennial funding that was provided by Sport and Recreation. They were provided with a timeframe and supports to be able to do that. In this construction space, we have set a target of 10 per cent, which we think we can meet. We are working with various peak representative organisations across a range of different areas to meet the aim that we have put together as part of our women's action plan.

We have a process within government now where we are getting advice from various academics to move towards a gender responsive budgeting process through our wellbeing framework. As Ms Summerrell reflected on, over the last couple of years there has been quite a significant amount of work done in this space to meet better targets than we have seen in this space. So, let us take on notice the detail of your question around the gender plans for tenders, but it is probably in the procurement space more than ours. We will see if we can find you some detail, otherwise you might have to ask that question if that hearing is still available.

MS LAWDER: In either of the contracts we have spoken about—the one for the CFMEU and the one to NAWIC ACT—or in a different project, is there a focus on keeping women in construction?

Ms Berry: Ms Summerrell?

Mrs Summerrell: Sorry, can you just ask the question again. Is the question about whether the contracts say anything about keeping women in construction, or are you asking whether we have a focus on keeping women in construction? I am sorry, I just missed that.

MS LAWDER: The second. Is there any work being done about keeping and retaining women in construction?

Mrs Summerrell: The industry coordination project, which is the one that looks at safety and culture and how women are feeling about the workplace—particularly, obviously, in the construction industry—has a focus on the retention of women in the industry. Obviously, you could argue that if we can improve some of those issues, that by virtue of improving those issues, that in itself will lead to increased retention,

hopefully. But that project is particularly around culture, safety and retention of women in the construction industry workforce.

MS LAWDER: Okay. You said that you would take on notice the question about the reports and whether they are publicly available—that type of thing—didn't you?

Mrs Summerrell: Yes, I will. I am sorry, I do not have the contract details in front of me.

MS LAWDER: Thank you.

THE CHAIR: Ms Lawder, you stole my question. Ms Clay, do you have a substantive question?

MS CLAY: The Office for Women has an awful lot on, at the moment, with the gender lens restructure on how we do our budgets, and there is an awful lot of work supporting women in emergency services and supporting women with a lot of standard government services. How many FTEs do you have over there in the Office for Women?

Ms Rule: I can give you a specific number—we have eight full-time equivalent staff in the Office for Women—but those are not the only people in the directorate who work on women's matters. Obviously in the child, youth and families part of the department, there is significant work going into supporting all families, but with a particular focus on women. Likewise, in all the other areas of our business, whether it is Indigenous affairs, disability, seniors or veterans. There are a whole host of pieces of work that go towards supporting women.

Likewise, in our emergency response work around COVID, we have been very focused on supporting particular cohorts of the population who might be disproportionately impacted by COVID, and that obviously has included working with women's groups around things like family safety and domestic violence. So, whilst there are eight in the Office for Women, the number actually providing support to women is much greater than that.

MS CLAY: How many of those eight FTEs are working on some of these structural issues? Again, I always come back to the gender lens budgeting, but there are probably a few whole-of-government structural issues. How many people have you got working on that?

Ms Rule: I will throw to either Ms Murray or Ms Summerrell to talk about the specifics of what those eight people are doing. But, again, I would also say that that eight does not include, for example, the time I might spend on it or the Deputy Director-Generals, or the EGMs or the EBMs. So there is a whole range of people who are contributing to progressing this agenda. The cross-government coordination particularly tends to happen at a more senior executive level.

Ms Murray: Thank you so much for the question. I think that is a really important point that Ms Rule adds into the mix—that it is not taking into account those people who are broadly focused on the work up the line. Equally, part of the roles of all of

the areas within my division, although they are small, is actually to effect a culture change and to change the behaviours within other areas of government. So in relation to some of those last lines of questioning, it will sit largely with procurement, because we are experts providing advice in relation to another area's body of work, in an area of expertise.

Our hope is that the small can influence the many by picking and choosing very carefully how we influence on policy across the board. In relation to gender budgeting—which I think for many of us is a passion, Ms Clay—we do not count in those eight my involvement or Ms Summerrell's involvement. But, equally, we know that there are staff who are working on that at the Treasury level and also in the wellbeing indicators team within CMTEDD.

So whilst it is tricky to say that at the moment I have eight FTE in the Office for Women, actually there are a lot of us who are championing the change and trying to impact that across all of government. And they are pretty awesome, the team that I have!

MS CLAY: Thank you.

MS CLAY: I am also very interested in active travel, making it easy and convenient and safe for women. I think everybody benefits from that. I have noticed that we are not performing particularly well on our perceived safety for women. I think that has been tracking that way for quite some time. I would just like to unpick the page 43 figures. We have got night and day targets for feeling safe. The daytime target was 93 per cent. We got slightly under that, 92 per cent, which is pretty close to the target, but that is still eight per cent of women who do not feel safe during the day. In the night-time one we were aiming for 41 per cent of women feeling safe and we have got 36 per cent. Every time I see this figure—and it came around last year too—it strikes me as very low. What is going on with that and how are we going to change it?

Ms Murray: As members will remember, this is an area where I see the targets every year. I am saddened by that, absolutely. We can talk to you about, “This is a perception; this is a particular survey.” We can talk about how we are tracking in terms of a national level. I think this is twofold in terms of our response. Firstly, we are talking about women's safety a lot more. There has been a huge amount of work done by the ACT around women who have not felt safe at work, women who have not been safe at home in domestic and family violence situations and sexual harassment.

Actually, the public conversation is really strong to say that this is not good enough. I think that the more we talk about it, the more it is highlighted as an issue. That can have a negative impact on the perception of safety. What we can do is utilise the momentum that we have with women's voices being heard to inform the secondary part of the conversation, and that is, “This is what we are going to do about it.”

We are absolutely focusing on whole-of-government actions—things like the design sensitive principles that we are working on—so that when we are working with our infrastructure colleagues, we are designing a cityscape that is better lit with fewer hidden corners. We listen in terms of where are the areas that have been identified that have the highest levels of feelings of being unsafe—I can think of a number of them

off the top of my head—and how do we inform the reclaiming of those? Much of it is lighting; much of it is about getting greater activity into those areas.

I think Haig Park is an excellent example of where we have invested a lot with our colleagues at the CRA to look to reclaim that as an area that was identified where women did not feel safe, specifically in relation to the broader mapping where that work was undertaken. But we are not just going to identify it; we are going to deal with it. We are going to step forward and actually reclaim that.

I could probably go on forever, and I will not, because I am known for that. Like you, Ms Clay, I read that and I am sad every time, but this time it feels very different. We are talking about it—I think we are talking about it strongly—and I think that we have a real opportunity to make a change and influence, particularly around urban design principles and also some of those things that we know affect women's safety and perceptions of safety. I hope that answers the question, because I could go on for a long time.

MS CLAY: It does in part. All of the answers you have given me make perfect sense. I am the spokesperson for transport and active transport as well. It strikes me that most of the solutions are probably outside of your area. Most of the things you have struck on are infrastructure spend—lighting, paths. Haig Park was basically a physical redesign. It was not really behavioural change or cultural change; it was a physical redesign. If we have a very stark reminder here of how far we are falling short, do you think we have enough money going into the budget for those infrastructure changes that are clearly the solution?

Ms Murray: The examples that are really clear are probably the infrastructure ones. I think that we cannot step away from the importance of the conversation as well, carrying that conversation forward, and some of the work in a different portfolio that the minister is leading around the conversation about consent through the Youth Advisory Council and the conversation about sexual harassment at work. These are the critical parts that are not as tangible and are not as easy to point at as new lights or lower walls or fewer trees and more activity in a space. I was thinking about the weekend activation of Haig Park, to actually get more foot traffic through. In terms of the question about funding, I will leave that for the minister to comment.

Ms Berry: Ms Clay, I think you were alluding to the fact that we have a significant cultural issue that, as Ms Murray said, is being addressed within another portfolio area. The fact of the matter is that women are not afraid at night that there is a woman who is going to come out and attack them from behind a dark tree; they are worried that it is going to be a man that is going to attack them, and that is the issue that we are faced with. Whilst we can fund all of the physical and practical measures, like lighting and making areas that are dark or less visible less scary for people, the reason they are scared is because they are scared of men. That is another bigger, trickier and more complex area that we need to make significant cultural change around.

Having the Office for Women and Transport Canberra and City Services working with the sector on understanding those issues more, through the women's centre for health survey which collects that information across the city about how women are feeling, and then making adjustments or changes so that women feel safer when they

are out at night or in places that might be less visible is something that has happened over the last few years. It has seen significant change in breaking down those silos of government and opening up and listening to services that represent and hear from women, like the women's centre for health, and actually working with them in partnership to make our city feel safer for women and girls when they are travelling, regardless of how that is.

Ms Murray: I might add that the women's safety audit is a program that I think really bears fruit in also changing the culture of the organisers of major events in terms of how they perceive and how they construct, as well as some really tangible, real-life experiences. We have seen some significant changes to some of the events that we have had in place, small scale and large scale, because we have continued to promote the women's safety audits and that function and support that we can provide.

MS LAWDER: We have spoken a little about public transport and active travel. It is my understanding that there is no gender reporting as part of registering for a MyWay card. So how can we be better informed about women's public transport habits, especially, if we are not collecting that type of information?

Ms Berry: I think you are right. It probably goes to a question for Transport Canberra and City Services about how transport will be monitored and information collected so that we can get hold of that data in future. You are right; it is not collected at the moment; so we have what we have. But, yes, that can always be improved.

MS LAWDER: Is it not something that the Office for Women can work with their cohorts in Transport Canberra? Surely you are not a siloed government?

Ms Berry: We are not, and we do it continuously. That is why we are working on the gender responsive budgeting, collecting the academic advice and information and then working across government to have that embedded in our wellbeing framework.

MS LAWDER: On the public transport and travel front, can you not work with them to get that information?

Ms Berry: We do work with Transport Canberra and City Services; the Office for Women does. Ms Murray, did you have some more information for Ms Lawder?

Ms Murray: All of the feedback that we receive from a multiple variety of sources, including questions such as from this committee, we can use to inform actions under our third action plan. We are very happy to take any advice that we receive for things to throw into the mix for the third action plan.

MS LAWDER: I have a question about gender-sensitive urban design, but I will put it on notice.

THE CHAIR: That concludes this session.

Short suspension.

THE CHAIR: The committee will now turn to questioning Minister Berry in her

capacity as the Minister for Early Childhood Development and, again, in relation to the Community Services Directorate. Officials, if you could acknowledge the privilege statement when you speak for the first time. As there are no opening statements, Ms Lawder.

MS LAWDER: Meeting demand for child and family centres—I note that for the past four reporting years, occasions of service at child and family centres have exceeded the target of 8,250, and for the past two years they have been about 33 per cent above target. In the hearings last October we were told:

Our forecasts are based largely on where we are now, but we are going to need to reset and look at those projections into the future.

That was from the transcript, page 56. What are the future projections for the demand on the child and family centres?

Ms Berry: I think we are still progressing with that work. As you will have noted, that was from October last year, not that long ago, although in COVID times it feels like it might have been. I might ask Ms Pappas to provide a bit more information on the comments that were made in October.

Ms Pappas: I acknowledge the privilege statement. You are right, Ms Lawder; there is work that is underway to understand the volume of work and the range of work that happens across the child and family centres. At the end of last year we introduced a new IT system into the child and family centres. The data that we are developing and were able to get out of the centres will really help with that projection work. It will help us to understand where the greatest need is and how we might adjust accordingly.

It would be important for us to say that the different centres have different needs. Really, centres are there to respond to the individual needs of those communities and the individual needs of families that come into the centre. From time to time you will see that there is a greater need for parenting sessions and less need for case management, and then other times it reverses. It really is about trying to establish a flexible response to families as they are walking through the centre doors.

MS LAWDER: This has been a four-year trend of demand exceeding the target. Are you saying that you did not start much forward planning until we talked about it in October last year?

Ms Pappas: We have been doing some work. The IT system has been in development for some years. It has taken some time for us to get to this place. It is not that we have not been doing anything, but we have greater capability now that we can extract more data, and more accurate data, out of the system for us to be able to progress that work.

We also need to think about what are the services that families are looking for and how do we respond to that, as well as what is going to be the work of the services and supports of other community organisations that either base themselves from the centre or deliver programs from the centre. It is not just the child and family centres that do work from the centres; it is a whole range of different services and supports that offer services and supports to families in those local regions.

We expect the data that we are able to get out of the system over the next 12 months will really help us with that projection work. We absolutely recognise that the trend is over four years, so we have to continue that work and finish that work as soon as we are able to.

MS LAWDER: What is the time line for this forward planning to actually build something or provide additional services to meet demand? If we are only looking at it now and it will take the next 12 months to get the data, by that point the trend may start changing all over again. How long is it going to take to provide enough services to meet the demand?

Ms Rule: I do not think this work will ever be done. It is an ongoing process of managing the supply and demand. Ms Pappas has just articulated that this is an ongoing process of managing a supply and demand equation. Obviously over the last couple of years the service delivery has been impacted very significantly by COVID, and the balance of services being provided online are now trying to return to face to face. I do not think we could ever say that this work will be finished. We will always be managing what kind of demand is happening and adjusting our supply within the available resources.

MS LAWDER: Are the child and family centres currently able to meet the demand. If not, when do you project that it will no longer be the case? When do you project that we will be able to meet demand?

Ms Berry: I think the response to the question is that the demand will change and that will be a fluid thing across different parts of the city as the needs in those different parts of the city change. Different programs will be put on at the different centres to meet the needs of those different communities within different parts of the city. That will change based on demographics, based on population and based on needs that are identified by our community sector partners that work out of our child and family centres to identify the different kinds of supports that we need to keep in place. Those supports are developed and then programs are implemented across the various centres.

If I can direct you to the Community Services website. You can see across the centres the variety of services and supports that are provided over and above the child and family centre supports facilitated by the various partners and community groups that the child and family centres have and engage with to ensure that we meet the needs, as far as we possibly can, of different groups as they arise in different parts of the city. As our city has grown, that has certainly needed to be the case. We have had to move and shift and change and provide a variety of options at centres in those nearby areas that different groups can access as they need them. I do not think it is something that is set in a plan that never changes. This will be ongoing and change as the circumstances change across our city.

MS LAWDER: There is obviously quite a lag, though, because there has been four years of extra demand and we are nowhere near meeting that demand now. It just seems like a circular argument.

THE CHAIR: I think we will take that as maybe a statement. Can someone talk to

me about how the child and family centre client satisfaction survey is undertaken?

Ms Plater: I acknowledge the privilege statement. We have a satisfaction survey that we provide to all clients who have finished services with our child and family centres. Each quarter we contact those clients after their case is closed and ask them a series of questions, including their satisfaction with the service that they received. We do that each quarter after each of the services that they receive. We collate that data and put that into the final year reporting time.

THE CHAIR: Looking at some of the historical results—97 per cent, 99 per cent, 98.6 per cent—those are remarkable results. Has there been any consideration that there might be selection bias occurring in how this is taking place?

Ms Plater: We are always looking at the information that we collect and whether we are collecting the best information that we need. One of the opportunities of introducing a new child and youth record information system for the centres is that it gives us an opportunity to review our data and the way that we are collecting it. One of the things that we are planning to do, now that that is in, is to look at the timing of when we collect information and also whether or not we have the right questions to capture the right information. We think frequency is something we also need to deal with. Those will be some of the things that we look at as we go.

THE CHAIR: Are they phone calls from staff directly to—

Ms Plater: They are, yes. They are phone calls from staff, where the questions are asked.

MR DAVIS: I am interested in discussing the government's agenda around raising the age of criminal responsibility and, in particular, what the role of child and family centres might be in that work; and, more specifically, what services and increases in capacity have you identified that might need to be provided for the appropriate social change required to make that shift from a criminal to social justice response?

Ms Rule: This is a complex matter. The ministerial responsibility for raising the age of criminal responsibility sits with the Attorney-General, Minister Davidson and Minister Stephen-Smith, not with Minister Berry. But I can say that, as a directorate, we are working across portfolios with our colleagues in JACS and across the Community Services Directorate to look at the complete service response that might be required around that minimum age work and what service interventions might be needed, whether it is from the child and family centres or through some of our other programs, to make sure that there are the right service supports in place. I expect that in the near future we will provide advice to government on what options might be around that. The child and family centres and the Child Development Service are just one part of a whole service system, but ministerial responsibility sits elsewhere.

MR DAVIS: I understand that. I am quite clear about which ministers in government would be responsible for delivering the change, but as a service provider to young people—and a number of young people would fit in the age bracket of which we are talking—do you have a time frame on that work that you have identified about when you will be able to get that advice to government about what pressures you might

expect on your services or what changes you might need to consider in the delivery of your services?

Ms Rule: I cannot speculate on the timing of government consideration of those things. It really is a matter for government. All I can say is that we are working with government and the responsible ministers to look at a wide range of options and service system responses to support whatever policy position the government settles on.

MR DAVIS: If you cannot give an exact date, are you at least confident that that work or the appropriate advice would be able to be given to government before they made any legislative change, if they chose to do so?

Ms Rule: All I can say is that there is lots of thinking across government going into what the appropriate service system responses might be.

MRS KIKKERT: My question is about the Child Development Service, on pages 80 to 82 of the annual report, regarding autism. Last year, on 24 November, I moved a motion that all members of the Assembly should note that stakeholders are reporting a large increase in low income Canberra families seeking autism assessments for young people aged 12 and above. Minister, do you have an accurate sense of how many families are in this situation and why this number is surging?

Ms Berry: I will ask Ms Pappas to talk about that a little more. There is probably a range of reasons, not just one reason, why we would be seeing increased numbers of people seeking assessments in the ACT. I will ask Ms Pappas to go to some of the reasoning behind that.

Ms Pappas: Mrs Kikkert, was your question about the demand for older children, young people, regarding access to autism assessments?

MRS KIKKERT: No. There is a large increase in low income Canberra families seeking autism assessments for young people aged 12 and above. That is what stakeholders have recognised within the community, and I would like to know whether you are aware of this, how many families are in this situation and why the number is surging.

Ms Pappas: I cannot speak to the income level of those who might be seeking autism assessments. Last time we were having this conversation we said that we did not have line of sight to those families with young people over the age of 12. We do not have a line of sight as to how they might be accessing their assessments in the private market. We do not have that data. I cannot talk to you about whether there has been a surge in that age group.

Certainly, the Child Development Service was set up as an early intervention response, recognising that the earlier you get involved, and you can do your assessments and intervene in the development of children, the better it is for them in terms of their outcome. We can certainly talk in some detail about those kids, birth to 12. But we do not have line of sight and we do not have data about those older kids in the private market.

MRS KIKKERT: Why do you not carry the data for kids aged 12 and above who are referred to a private psychologist? Do you think it is quite important to have this data?

Ms Pappas: People do not access private psychologists through the Child Development Service. There is a direct line of sight. There is no mechanism, and private psychologists would have no reason to provide that data to us.

MRS KIKKERT: No, I meant being referred. Community Services would obviously refer kids over 12 years old to a private psychologist. Would you consider that it is quite important to have that data?

Ms Pappas: We do not have a huge demand. Janet can provide the detail of that, but my understanding is that we do not have a lot of interest in or requests through the Child Development Service for access to private psychologists for those older cohorts of kids. People understand that the Child Development Service is really focused on earlier support and earlier intervention for these kids. The service system around families would be encouraging them to go directly to private psychologists. Very few families come to us asking for advice and support for 12-plus. Janet, correct me if I have said anything wrong there.

Ms Plater: Anecdotally—and we did check this before this session today—we are not getting any phone calls with questions or requests to assess older children, but we do know that we advertise as a service until 12. Therefore we do not have the data. We would certainly be keeping records if people were requesting assessments for the over 12s and, anecdotally, we do not have very high numbers.

MRS KIKKERT: Considering it is a statement from the stakeholders themselves, that they see an increased number of families who have kids over the age of 12 seeking autism assessment—and perhaps this question is to you, Minister—would you consider seeking data from those stakeholders?

Ms Berry: Mrs Kikkert, there would be no requirement for data to be provided to anyone, from a psychologist or from psychologist services. It is a health record. It would be something for the client as to whether or not they would support it. I think I understand where you are going here, and this is probably another one of the challenges that has been—

MRS KIKKERT: Just for clarification, Minister, I am not asking the government to seek data from psychologists but from stakeholders, community services providers, who are seeing families. That is who I am referring to.

Ms Berry: Again, that would be private information provided to those community organisations by an individual or a family, for reasons of their own, to get some kind of support service; I do not know. You are asking something to which I do not have the answer.

MRS KIKKERT: We are just seeking numbers; we are not seeking private details of families. Do you think that having this data is quite important for the government to have, in order for you to understand how many families need services beyond the age

of 12 for autism assessment? We are just talking about numbers, not privacy issues here.

Ms Berry: I do not know how well informed that data would be. I do not think it would provide us with the information that you are suggesting would be helpful for us. The challenges in this space are with the NDIS and the packages that are provided in that space. You might want to go and ask questions of the National Disability Insurance Scheme and the NDIA, as to how those supports to individuals are funded.

MRS KIKKERT: But we both know that NDIS does not actually cover autism assessment after mild recognition by parents themselves or their children. That is pointless for families. Obviously, you have answered the question about collecting data from stakeholders who have seen an increased number of families asking for assistance for their children aged 12 years and over, to see whether they are in need of autism assessment. Obviously, you think it is not important to have that, Minister.

Ms Berry: I do not know whether you were listening to what I was talking about just then, Mrs Kikkert, but that is absolutely not the case at all. There are a range of supports for young people regardless of whether or not they have had a diagnosis, across a variety of areas within the ACT government's remit. Some of it is not. With the data that you are asking me to ask for, I do not know that it could be collected in a way that would provide the advice that would be needed to address any of this. I do not know that that data would provide a fair picture of what was happening as per your suggestion.

MRS KIKKERT: Are you looking at increasing the age of eligibility to seek autism assessment for those 12 and over—kids who are 15 or 16 years old—so that perhaps in the future they are able to receive autism assessments? Some families cannot afford to see a private psychologist.

Ms Berry: The response earlier by Ms Pappas was that the earlier that you can diagnose autism, the better the outcome for the family. The purpose of the Child Development Service is to do that identification of autism or other learning difficulties or delays earlier.

MRS KIKKERT: Of course, but that is unhelpful for a child who is 15 years old who needs to have an autism assessment. Would you consider increasing the age eligibility for autism assessment within a family and community centre so that they could be included in that if their parents cannot afford to see a private psychologist?

Ms Berry: It is not a decision that the government is considering at the moment, Mrs Kikkert. I would not be making such an announcement of a future policy decision in front of the committee today, in any case.

MRS KIKKERT: That is why I am asking about having that data available. You would understand that there is an increasing number of families out there who are in need of this service, yet it is not provided by the government. With the data, do you think that it is important? In the future you might consider it again, because there is a huge demand out there.

Ms Rule: Mrs Kikkert, we engage broadly with stakeholders around pressures on the service system and where demand might be coming from. If there are particular stakeholders that you think we should be talking to in terms of the provision of this data, I am very happy to initiate a conversation with those stakeholders who may hold that data that we do not hold at this point in time.

MS LAWDER: I want to ask about the early years engagement officers. Can you give me a bit of an idea about what the early years engagement officers do? For example, do they work exclusively with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families or do they support some other groups? Can you provide a bit more background for me?

Ms Plater: Thank you very much for the question. We have a partnership with the Education Directorate, who fund the early years engagement officer roles who are located in the child and family centres and in our Child Development Service. It is a really important role to connect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families with our services, and they are largely connected through the Koori preschools. There are a number of Koori preschools across Canberra, and our engagement officers will go out to those preschools and talk to families, and they are connecting and building relationships. They will mention and talk about referrals and services that are available in the child and family centres and other centres that they can refer to.

The other role of the early years engagement officer at our Child Development Service is to assist our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families who are accessing our Child Development Service programs, to smooth the way and assist them to navigate the services that are there. I will ask Melanie Thompson to talk about that role.

Ms Thompson: I acknowledge the privilege statement. Thank you for that question. It is always a great opportunity to talk about these roles and the wonderful work that they do. The early years engagement officer roles, as Janet said, sit across our branch. The way that we talk about these roles is that they are a conduit between our services and the community. The roles specifically focus on warmly referring families between the Koori preschools and into the CFCs and the Child Development Service—also, any families that are in the child and family centres and the Child Development Service that may benefit from a referral into the Koori preschool.

What that looks like in practice is that our early years engagement officers will attend our CFC programs during the term and make connections with families. That is to build relationships and to provide information about the role that they play. They attend the Koori preschools as well, and provide information to families who attend there. That is really important in terms of a connection point and providing information about our services. They also play an important role in referring into the three-year-old preschool program. We find that this works really well, and it is a really fantastic collaboration between CSD and the Education Directorate, and one that we treasure.

MS LAWDER: You said that they attend the Koori preschool, and they can do a warm referral to the child and family centres if required. Is that what you said?

Ms Thompson: Yes.

MS LAWDER: When they attend the Koori preschool, what does that look like? Are they having a class? Are they there when parents are dropping off or picking up? Are they helping in the class? What model are you using?

Ms Thompson: The way that it works, Ms Lawder, is that the early years engagement officer will attend at drop-off, which is a time when families are attending. Their role is to connect with families rather than specifically do support work in the preschool setting. It is about attending and building relationships with families, and with that referral it may be that some families just need some information. Where a family may need more support, they may meet them at the child and family centre and introduce them to the intake worker. Similarly, with the Child Development Service, if the family requires more support, active support, the early years engagement officer will attend with the family—maybe meet them at a drop-in clinic.

We try and tailor our response to where the family is at and what the family needs. For some families it is just information and a brochure; for other families it requires more active support and more time to build a relationship. The benefit of the roles is that we can definitely work in that tailored space and work with where families are at.

MS LAWDER: Are there any instances where families may not be attending preschool and not attending child and family centres? How do you reach those families and make them aware of what is available?

Ms Thompson: That is a great question. For families who may not be attending a Koori preschool, or there might be some attendance, the preschool teachers are really great at working with families. We will often work with the Koori pre and they may identify the family, and the preschool may give them a call and offer services. The preschool teachers, of course, can also do a referral, or our staff can contact the family and check in, and see whether there is anything we can do to support them.

MS LAWDER: Is there a similar early engagement program for any groups other than in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander area?

Ms Thompson: The way that the Child Development Service works is that we very much apply that tailored response to families that we work with across the population as well. For some families, where there is more support needed, we will do more active follow-up, and we may involve our social work team to engage with families where there may be some more support required.

MR DAVIS: On page 89 it talks about the allied health pilot. The government outlines that the trial found a high prevalence of neurodiversity and disability need from children in custody. Has this prompted a change in attitudes and needs-based training for those who are working in the youth justice system?

Ms Berry: Mr Davis, it is not us; it is Minister Davidson.

MR DAVIS: That is all right. I will put that one to Minister Davidson.

MRS KIKKERT: I have a question in regard to raising awareness for early diagnosis of autism; we spoke about that briefly earlier. The motion that I moved last year, and that the government recognised, was that there should be an increased likelihood of early diagnosis of ASD by taking steps to increase awareness amongst both parents and professionals. Can the minister update this committee on what specific steps the government is taking to achieve that increased awareness?

Ms Berry: Ms Pappas, can you provide some information there? Otherwise it might cross over into different directorates, Mrs Kikkert.

Ms Pappas: I will have a go. I will not be able to answer the whole question because I think it is associated with the reform work that CSD is leading in terms of early support and all of the work that sits within Jacinta Evans's portfolio. But there is a pretty extensive network across the ACT of paediatricians and health professionals in the private area and in public sector health education who are very aware of or able to identify when very young children are starting to demonstrate or display behavioural symptoms or issues that require further investigation or further assessment.

You do not always start with a behaviour and get to an autism assessment, but the Child Development Service receives about 10 to 12 new referrals every month into the Child Development Service for autism assessment, so it is a very well-known service and it is very well utilised. Those people that support children in those various settings are very well aware about how to refer, why they would refer and when they would refer those children and parents. That could be in a childcare centre or it could be in a health or an education setting, as we talked about. It might be a maternal child health nurse who might be seeing a child in the really early months of their life.

The Child Development Service is one support; it is about looking at what other support is available for them to meet their particular needs at that time. It is more than just an autism assessment, because autism assessments are pretty well known and there are good referral processes and good information out there for families.

MRS KIKKERT: Going back to the original question, who should I be asking about this? Ms Pappas, did you say Jacinta Evans?

Ms Pappas: Anne-Maree, Jo Wood or one of our DDGs might be able to talk about some of the work around earlier support.

MRS KIKKERT: I am specifically talking about raising or increasing awareness for both parents and professionals, as stated in the motion that was passed last year. I am wondering about a comparison between what you were doing previously and what you are doing currently, regarding increasing awareness of autism assessment diagnosis. You mentioned before, Minister, that this is probably not the right forum in which to ask this question. I have follow-up questions. I want those questions to be answered correctly by the correct people. I will probably be putting them on notice, but I would like to know who I should be directing those questions to.

Ms Berry: Ms Evans, is there something that you can add to help Mrs Kikkert?

Ms Evans: I acknowledge the privilege statement. Mrs Kikkert, the work to increase

people's awareness of children's developmental delays broadly and the need for early intervention is being progressed through work that both Minister Berry and Minister Stephen-Smith are engaged in around the first 1,000 days strategy. The first 1,000 days strategy—work had commenced on this during the COVID period, and we have now put some further supports around it, to complete the work this year—is our opportunity to look at what parents need to know to achieve the best outcomes for their children and how the community can support them.

The work that we are doing around the strategy at the moment to increase people's awareness is a co-design project with Health, Community Services Directorate and community services partners. We are asking those partners to check in with members of the community about how they could best support families to engage with services that they need, to know whether their children are meeting the correct milestones and to move their children into the best possible outcomes. That could be the work that you are referring to, in terms of what we have done and what we continue to do to ensure that families are aware of the need for early assessment of their children and what kind of supports they can have in place, not just for autism but for any kind of developmental delays.

MRS KIKKERT: Thanks, Ms Evans, for clarifying that.

THE CHAIR: There being no further questions, Ms Berry and officials, thank you for your time today.

Hearing suspended from 4.10 to 4.44 pm.

Appearances:

Stephen-Smith, Ms Rachel, Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs,
Minister for Families and Community Services and Minister for Health

Community Services Directorate

Rule, Ms Catherine, Director-General

Wood, Ms Jo, Deputy Director-General; Programs and Operations

Charles, Ms Lisa, Executive Branch Manager, Office for Aboriginal and Torres
Strait Islander Affairs

Sabellico, Ms Anne-Maree, Deputy Director-General; Reform

THE CHAIR: The committee will begin questions relating to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs and the Community Services Directorate. Welcome, Minister Stephen-Smith and your officials. I will lead off with questions. I was wondering if you could inform the committee of the work that is ongoing in the ACT government to address systemic racism against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Ms Stephen-Smith: Thanks very much, Mr Petterson. I acknowledge the privilege statement. I will hand over to Ms Jo Wood to talk about this whole-of-government work under the agreement.

Ms Wood: Under the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander agreement there is a range of commitments across directorates to address the priorities established with the elected body and with community. Across all of that work there has also been identified a number of whole-of-government issues that can best be addressed if directorates work together and if we look at what we can learn from what is happening in one directorate and apply it in another.

One of those key questions is a question of systemic racism, which is, obviously, a very complex question. It encompasses the experiences of our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander public servants. It encompasses the experiences of clients across a full suite of government services, from transport through to people's experience in the child protection system and people's experience in social and public housing. Some of the experiences of systemic racism which may occur in services that we operate may not actually be experiences that are driven by our staff or our system; there are also interactions between members of the public and clients in a range of service settings.

A group has come together to look at this issue and look, in particular, at where we should start to build our understanding of experiences of systemic racism. Through CMTEDD, which has lead responsibility for supporting our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workforce, there has been some work to bring together Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff and run, over a period of time, a couple of surveys and follow-up discussions, to talk about where people have experienced racism in their role as public servants, and start to unpack, from the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff perspective, what it would look like to start to address that and create the right kind of cultural safety in the workplace.

The group that has come together is unpacking all of those issues and looking at where we may start. It is looking at what worked well where there have been efforts in

some directorates to look at where there are differential outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients. We are looking at how we bring that learning from some directorates back in to be shared and start to build out from those initiatives what we might do whole of service. The thing that we have found is that there is not a baseline dataset that tells us how much systemic racism there is, so one of the really key issues is looking at where we can collect the right kind of data that will be useful to inform change. Obviously, starting with the experiences of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff is really important, but we then need to start to look at where are the datasets that tell us about the experience of clients of our services.

THE CHAIR: A new question, Mr Davis.

MR DAVIS: I am interested in asking about the Yerrabi Yurwang Child and Family Aboriginal Corporation, and I note that they received \$25,000. What did they use that money for?

Ms Stephen-Smith: Thanks, Mr Davis. That was under the new and emerging organisations grant program, which was established after the 2016 election to support Aboriginal community-controlled organisations that were just getting off the ground, to get their governance in place, to maybe train people on their boards, to get those really fundamental things that are required for a new or emerging community-controlled organisation. I am not sure if Ms Charles can talk a little bit more about the Yerrabi Yurwang funding under that program.

Ms Charles: No, Minister, I think you have covered it.

Ms Stephen-Smith: Okay. Essentially it was to get their governance arrangements in place. You will be aware that it was in 2020, I think, that they formally launched, but they had been registered with ORIC prior to that. They have now, obviously, started undertaking activities.

MR DAVIS: Has the government had any conversations with them about what supports they might need to expand their service offering?

Ms Stephen-Smith: Yes. Anne-Maree, do you want to talk a bit about the broader work on Aboriginal community-controlled organisations?

Ms Sabellico: I have read and acknowledged the privilege statement. We are currently looking at how we build capacity and capability across the Aboriginal community-controlled organisation sector in the ACT, and looking at that from a number of different perspectives. A lot of work at the moment is looking in the child and family services space given that we are embarking on the development of a new strategy for A Step Up for Our Kids, going forward. We are looking at how we situate the community-controlled organisations sector to support the level of service we require for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people and families.

As you would appreciate, about 30 per cent of the services currently in place would be supported by Aboriginal community-controlled organisations, going forward. That is the plan that we are aiming to achieve through the next strategy; but we also know that we have to look at issues around community housing, disability services, mental

health services and early support services more broadly. As part of that, we are embarking on some conversations with the community sector, as well as with other community members who have an interest in looking at the development of community-controlled organisations, going forward. As part of that we will have some in-depth conversations with a range of organisations, including Yerrabi Yurwang, in terms of what role they would like to play and how we support them to position themselves to be able to undertake that work. That will look at anything from diversion from child protection through to the support of children and young people in out-of-home care and after care as well, in that child and family area, at this stage.

MS LAWDER: My question is about the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander procurement policy. Looking at some annual reports, it looks like some directorates did not meet the target of 1.5 per cent of the year's spend going to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander enterprises. One was only 0.85 per cent.

Ms Stephen-Smith: Yes.

MS LAWDER: The target has increased to two per cent this year. Minister, can you tell us what your directorate is doing to try and encourage all directorates to meet the targets and your reasons for not making it a mandatory target for each directorate or agency?

Ms Stephen-Smith: Ms Lawder, we can probably say a little bit about what CSD is doing, but this policy is not the responsibility of the Office for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs; it is the responsibility of Procurement ACT. I think that is an important distinction because there is a bit of a tendency to think that the Office for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs is in charge of a whole lot of cross-government stuff that they do not actually carry the responsibility for. I might hand over. Are one of you in a position to talk about what CSD is doing?

Ms Rule: I can talk broadly. We do not have our corporate people here at the moment, Ms Lawder, but I am happy to make some general comments. I have read and acknowledge the privilege statement.

CSD seeks to comply with the rules set by Procurement ACT, but my view as Director-General is that we should be a model citizen across the ACT Public Service in this regard because we have a particular interest in Indigenous affairs and in making sure that we are doing everything we can to support Indigenous organisations in the ACT. So certainly in my role I would be seeking to make sure that we have complied with those procurement rules and that we model best practice. In our role in promoting work through OATSIA, I would also be seeking to continue to point out to other directorates the procurement rules and help them to comply with them wherever we can.

MS LAWDER: I am trying to find the figure in the annual report. Were you a model citizen for this reporting year? Did you meet the target?

Ms Rule: Ms Lawder, I will have to take that question on notice. You will appreciate that I joined the—

MS LAWDER: Actually, it looks like 0.32 per cent, which is lower than the 1.5 per cent target.

Ms Stephen-Smith: I think, Ms Lawder, it is a bit of a reflection—and it goes back to some of the things that Ms Sabellico was talking about earlier—of the fact that there has not necessarily been a range of large procurements through CSD since the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander procurement policy came into effect. I am very confident that we will see that change over time, including through the work to develop and support Aboriginal community-controlled organisations. One of the things that we very deliberately did in the procurement policy—and I was both procurement minister and Minister of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs at the time it was being drafted—that was different from what most other governments had done, was to include human services procurement in the scope of the procurement policy.

That is quite different to the way most other jurisdictions have thought about it. I am not sure if Housing is here, but they can probably talk a little bit about the total facilities maintenance and what they have done through that to support Aboriginal businesses to participate. Ms Sabellico will have a bit more on that.

Ms Sabellico: Yes. With contracts like the TFM, the Total Facilities Management contract, the level of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander subcontracting was identified in the first year of awarding that contract, and it has not necessarily been counted each year because of the counting rules. But certainly if you look at the level of subcontracting that occurs within that particular contract, you would see an increase in the percentage for CSD. I am also happy to take that on notice to give you some more definitive detail about what that looks like.

MS LAWDER: Thanks. Does CSD have an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander procurement policy executive champion?

Ms Sabellico: Yes. That would be me, Ms Lawder, Anne-Maree Sabellico as the Deputy Director-General.

MS LAWDER: What work is done to ensure the staff in your directorate know that you are this executive champion, and what do you do in that role?

Ms Sabellico: We have put out an all-staff email to let them know that I am the champion, and to tell them if they have any questions or issues to please make contact. I have also distributed the resources that have been provided through the community of practice for the Indigenous procurement policy. Also, having a significant role as lead in the development of the next iteration of A Step Up for Our Kids, a large focus is on looking at how to embed the Indigenous procurement policy as part of that delivery of services, going forward. So we continue to have a look at it through our large contract and commissioning processes, of which I am very much a part, to ensure that we are including it in all aspects of our consideration.

MS LAWDER: Okay. Thank you.

THE CHAIR: Mrs Kikkert, a substantive question.

MRS KIKKERT: In recommendation 4 from the *Our Booris, Our Way* report, its universal access to family group conferencing. That is in the annual report, page 144. If one compares the last two implementation reports, only one family was involved in a family group conference over the six-month period. That is on page 15. Minister, how many referrals were made between January and June last year and, more importantly, why did only one of them result in a family group conference being convened?

Ms Stephen-Smith: Again, Mrs Kikkert, this is not the responsibility of the Office for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs. That would be my responsibility as Minister for Families and Community Services, and I am here in my role as Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, so we do not have the right officials here to respond to that question.

MRS KIKKERT: Sorry, I did not know that family group conferencing falls under your family department, not the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs group of people?

Ms Stephen-Smith: That is right, yes, although the whole policy and the response to *Our Booris, Our Way* sits with me as Minister for Families and Community Services.

MRS KIKKERT: All right; got you. I will probably put some questions on notice because there were heaps about family group conferencing. Good.

Ms Stephen-Smith: I will be back later in the week. On Wednesday between 4.30 and 5.30 we will have the right people to answer those questions, Mrs Kikkert.

MRS KIKKERT: Great; thanks.

THE CHAIR: The commonwealth government has announced a commitment to establish a national Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural precinct in the centre of Canberra. Has the ACT government been consulted in any way so far?

Ms Stephen-Smith: Yes; Ms Charles will take that.

Ms Charles: The Office was briefed informally about the new cultural precinct, as a courtesy. That is the extent to which the commonwealth has consulted with my office. However, that is not to say that the commonwealth has not approached Venues Canberra and the Chief Minister's department.

Ms Stephen-Smith: I would add that I have independently had a conversation with the CEO of AIATSIS, who pushed this work at the commonwealth level. The ACT government has supported the development of this type of institution in the parliamentary triangle in our submissions in the past about national institutions in the parliamentary triangle. The government's support for both the keeping place and an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander museum of some kind is on the record.

MR DAVIS: I want to talk about *Our Booris, Our Way* and, in particular, on page 142 where it says there has been \$1,709,000 provided to support the

development of a child and family community-controlled organisation. Does this mean that those funds have been granted to Yerrabi Yurwang or is this another organisation?

Ms Stephen-Smith: Again, Mr Davis, the response to *Our Booris, Our Way* sits with me and my responsibilities as Minister for Families and Community Services. But in terms of the work, it is the exact work that Ms Sabellico was talking about earlier—that foundational work to support Aboriginal community-controlled organisations. There is a clear intersection here, obviously, with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs portfolio in terms of our commitments under the National Agreement on Closing the Gap. One of the key priorities under that agreement is the development and strengthening of Aboriginal community-controlled organisations and the transfer of responsibility to community control, as well as improving mainstream organisations in the way that they support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

There is definitely a crossover with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs portfolio, but I just want to be clear that the work about child and family Aboriginal community-controlled organisations is primarily in the families and community services portfolio, in the same way that if, for example, you were talking about developing a community-controlled organisation for housing, the primary responsibility would sit with Minister Berry.

MR DAVIS: Okay, great. That clears it up.

Ms Stephen-Smith: I think the short answer to your question is that the money has not gone to Yerrabi Yurwang. It has supported the work that Ms Sabellico was talking about earlier in relation to developing the framework and the support that is required to develop, build and sustain an Aboriginal community-controlled organisation in the space of child and youth protection, and children and family services that support that space.

MR DAVIS: That perfectly answers my question. I was confused because it looked to me as if we gave \$25,000 to a new organisation to help it set up and then very quickly gave it almost \$2 million. I just thought: what?

Ms Stephen-Smith: No.

MR DAVIS: It certainly curled my eyebrows, but that makes sense. Thank you so much.

MS LAWDER: I was looking for an update on the Gugan Gulwan facilities and the government's promise to provide new purpose-built facilities. Can you give us a bit of an update?

Ms Stephen-Smith: Yes. Lisa, are you best placed to do that?

Ms Charles: Yes. Sorry, I think I forgot to mention before my last answer that I have read and acknowledge the privilege statement.

We have been working closely with Gugan Gulwan and Major Projects Canberra to finalise the design phase of the project. That is near completion and the next step will be to provide the final sketch drawings in a development application for approval. So the project is going forward. We have provided support to Gugan Gulwan Aboriginal Youth Corporation to participate. They have had their own project manager working alongside Major Projects and the consultant Cox Architecture, to deliver that concept design and cost plan.

In addition to that, to strengthen the project, we have also included, within that tender process, the elements of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander procurement policy. As part of that consultancy we have also included subcontractors who have vast experience working with other Aboriginal community-controlled organisations in terms of being able to deliver a facility that is fit for purpose in a cultural setting that supports the important work that Gugan Gulwan Youth Aboriginal Corporation does on a daily basis for our community and our children.

Ms Stephen-Smith: You will know that some of the \$15 million that was committed through the budget is a capital provision. That is really just part of the normal capital process, where we get to DA stage. Then we are able to release that provision for the next stage of the work.

MS LAWDER: Okay. I have a supplementary question. Do you have a particular time line for this? Because in my experience the government has been speaking since at least 2014 about finding facilities for Gugan Gulwan. I will quote from a debate in the assembly back in March 2014:

The notion of supporting Gugan to provide appropriate accommodation is absolutely supported ...

It was said that the government would continue to find ways to address this. Why has this taken so long and when might it be finished?

Ms Stephen-Smith: You are right, Ms Lawder. There were a number of years of conversation around trying to find an alternative site and alternative accommodation for Gugan Gulwan. I cannot remember exactly in which budget—it probably would have been the 2018-19 budget—we did feasibility work with Gugan Gulwan to see if we could identify an alternative site where it could be either a new build or a renovation of an existing facility, or whether the preferred option was to do a knockdown-rebuild on their current site. They determined through that process—and in partnership with us—that the preferred option was a knockdown-rebuild on their site. That went to the Gugan Gulwan board, and that was the option that they supported.

We committed to the new building in the election, and we have the \$15 million worth of funding which takes us through to 2023-24. The current expectation is that the building will be completed in 2023-24. We are probably a couple of months behind where we expected to be in terms of development application submission at this point in time, but not a long way behind where we expected to be. That is a result of having to make sure that we are doing this process in a really engaged and culturally appropriate way and ensuring that Gugan Gulwan has the opportunity to consult with

all of the people that they need to consult with before we take that step of lodging a development application.

MS LAWDER: Thanks. That is it from me, thank you.

THE CHAIR: The time being 5.10, I will call it a day. The committee's hearings for today are now adjourned. Thank you, Minister Stephen-Smith, as well Minister Berry, Minister Steel and Minister Davidson and all of their officials for their time today.

The secretary will provide you with a copy of the proof transcript of today's hearing when it is available. If witnesses have taken any questions on notice today, would you please get those answers to the committee secretary within five working days of the receipt of the uncorrected proof transcript of today's hearing. If members wish to lodge questions on notice, please get those to the committee secretary within five working days of today's hearing.

Have a good night, everybody.

The committee adjourned at 5.10 pm.