



**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL  
TERRITORY**

**STANDING COMMITTEE ON HEALTH  
AND COMMUNITY WELLBEING**

(Reference: [Inquiry into ACT Budget 2021-22](#))

**Members:**

**MR J DAVIS (Chair)  
MR J MILLIGAN (Deputy Chair)  
MR M PETERSSON**

**PROOF TRANSCRIPT OF EVIDENCE**

**CANBERRA**

**FRIDAY, 29 OCTOBER 2021**

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

**By authority of the Legislative Assembly for the Australian Capital Territory**

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

**APPEARANCES**

**Community Services Directorate..... 141**

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*Amended 20 May 2013*

**The committee met at 4.04 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

Community Services Directorate

Gilding, Ms Louise, Executive Group Manager, Housing ACT

Loft, Ms Catherine, Executive Branch Manager, Infrastructure and Contracts

Nielsen, Mr Shane, Executive Branch Manager, Policy and Business Transformation

Windeyer, Ms Kirsty, Coordinator-General for Family Safety

Wood, Ms Jo, Deputy Director-General, COVID Response

**THE CHAIR:** Good afternoon, guys, gals and non-binary pals. Welcome to the fifth and final virtual public hearing of the Standing Committee on Health and Community Wellbeing into budget estimates 2021-22. In this afternoon's proceedings we will examine expenditure proposals and revenue estimates for Minister Berry's responsibilities in her capacities as both the Minister for Housing and Suburban Development and the Minister for the Prevention of Domestic and Family Violence.

Before we begin, on behalf of the committee I would like to acknowledge that we meet today on the lands of the Ngunnawal people. We respect their continuing culture and the contribution they make to life in this city and in our region.

The first time they speak, witnesses should acknowledge that they have read and understood the privilege statement. Please be aware that the proceedings today are being recorded and transcribed by Hansard, and they will be published. Today's proceedings are also being broadcast and webstreamed live. Should a question be put to which you do not have the answer straightaway, and you wish to take the question on notice, please clearly articulate the words, "I will take this question on notice." That helps our secretary to confirm when those questions have been taken on notice and follow up with you after today's hearing.

In this first session, we will be hearing from Minister Berry in her capacity as the Minister for Housing and Suburban Development. In lieu of opening statements, we will go straight to questions.

Minister, in the parliamentary and governing agreement signed between ACT Labor and the ACT Greens, we commit to deliver an additional 400 brand-new public housing dwellings over the course of this term of government. Can you confirm what investments are being made in this budget to advance this?

**Ms Berry:** Yes. We have a significant growth and renewal project in the ACT coming out of the housing strategy that is in the parliamentary agreement, which confirms the work that the housing strategy has been doing with the sector and on advice and consultation with a range of support services and others about the housing needs in the ACT.

Of course, in building more new and better housing that meets the needs of our housing tenants everywhere across our city, including in our suburbs and in our city from the west to the south, we want to make sure that Housing ACT tenants have the same opportunities and choices to live wherever they choose in housing that meets their needs, whether that is close to a school or close to a medical centre or other service. I will ask Ms Gilding to provide a little bit more detail about the actual funding that is going towards the 400.

**Ms Gilding:** The funding is a six-year investment—\$171 million from the budget over the six years, and \$500 million equity investment from Housing ACT, the public trading entity. This year, there is a capital investment of approximately \$20 million, bringing the total investment for 2021-22 to \$171 million, made up of \$18.56 million in capital injections and \$152 million self-funding.

**THE CHAIR:** I have a couple of quick supplementary questions about specific numbers. Of the 400 that we plan to get through this term, how many are currently under construction, and how many have been assigned to a builder where a builder has won a tender and is waiting for construction to commence?

**Ms Loft:** I acknowledge that I have seen and understand the privilege statement. The question was about the growth and renewal numbers forecast currently with builders. At the moment we have approximately 750 works in progress, and by the end of this financial year it will be over 800. That is inclusive of those with our architects in the design phase right through to DA. Then we move to procurement, tender evaluation and award contracts for construction. At the moment we have 116 that will be delivered this year, there will be over 400 with our builders this financial year under contract, and 800 by the end of this financial year as a total of work in progress, including design phase, with the architects.

**THE CHAIR:** Thank you. I have a final supplementary question before I go to Mr Parton, because it has been raised with me by a few constituents. There is currently a development that has had those nice purple signs on it for a little while now, directly adjacent to the north Wanniasa shops. Are you able to provide a specific update on that development?

**Ms Berry:** I will take that one on notice, Mr Davis.

**MR PARTON:** Does the figure for new dwellings delivered against the 400 include new dwellings for the Common Ground in Dickson, or are they counted separately? Are they included in the 400?

**Ms Berry:** No. They are separate.

**MR PARTON:** To what extent does the additional \$80 million capital works figure mentioned in various documents help the achievement of the extra 400 dwellings? I am just asking if there is any crossover with that \$80 million capital works figure. That is in the budget outlook on page 79.

**Ms Berry:** No, Mr Parton. That is for maintenance and upgrades to existing properties.

**MR PARTON:** In the agreement with the Greens, it says the government will strive to deliver an additional 600 affordable housing dwellings by 2025-26. Is that target in addition to the 400 or is the 400 figure that we are discussing here within that figure of 600?

**Ms Berry:** No, they are separate numbers. The 400, Mr Parton, is for new public housing. The 600 is for more affordable options around housing for more affordable rentals across the ACT. The government has been looking at a range of different initiatives to deliver more affordable rentals in the ACT to deliver that 600, taking into account that there are some quite complex and challenging issues that need to be overcome to be able to deliver that 600. But we are definitely aspiring to meet that target. But the 400 is separate to that 600; that is 400 public housing properties.

**MR PARTON:** Are you indicating to me that there could be some problems in attaining the 600?

**Ms Berry:** I would very clearly put that there are challenges as far as meeting the 600 target, so that is no secret. But we are definitely aspiring to work really hard with our community partners, even working with developers who might be able to come forward with different proposals around affordable housing models, and the government delivering affordable rentals as well. So we have not taken anything off the plate, and we have not put anything on the plate that cannot be considered. That is why we are asking for and looking at different innovative ways to deliver affordable rentals across the ACT as part of our parliamentary agreement, understanding that it does provide some challenges for us.

**MR PARTON:** Thank you, Minister. I think we are working well together this afternoon.

**MR MILLIGAN:** Minister, earlier this year, the *Canberra Times* reported that the government will invest \$80 million in public housing, and within your budget papers it states that the money listed there will go to new works, growing and renewing public housing, and securing high-quality public housing. Can you explain the \$80 million increase in the budget for repairs when \$20 million of that was underspent in the budget for 2020-21?

**Ms Berry:** Thank you, Mr Milligan. I will ask Ms Loft to start with a response to that; then, if we need to get another official to follow up, we will.

**Ms Loft:** Mr Milligan, you are referring to past years. In 2019-20, we did spend \$52 million, which was a total of 77,000 work orders. That is also around 70,000 phone calls into the program. In 2021, we spent a total of \$41.7 million for 52,000 work orders. So that was around 140 kitchen upgrades, 195 bathrooms, over 400 domestic violence security upgrades, over 750 disability modifications, and over 500 internal and external paints. This year, with the injection of \$80 million over the three years, we will be addressing previous works from last year. During COVID we had a heightened number of work orders and vacants, plus substantial capital upgrades, more DV safety, and disability modifications as well.

**MR PARTON:** Why has it taken so long to address and provide funding for the ongoing years for the maintenance issues that have plagued ACT public housing? Why are we playing catch-up so badly?

**Ms Berry:** As Ms Loft has outlined in great detail, there is significant work in maintaining and upgrading public housing properties in the ACT. There has been an injection into that work to continue that really important work in making sure that our tenants have safe and secure properties wherever they live, and that is the \$80 million. So I reject the premise of your suggestion that there has been a delay on maintenance in our public housing properties, because we have definitely been doing that work.

**MR PARTON:** Mr Milligan alluded in his question to the fact that this \$80 million has been set aside for remedying the backlog of repair requirements for public housing, but it is listed under “New work, growing and renewing public housing—securing high quality public housing”. So I need to ask: if the \$80 million is not entirely for repair work, what is the expected net increase in the public housing stock from this \$80 million, because that is what is listed as part of the spend in the budget?

**Ms Berry:** Catherine, could you help Mr Parton to understand where that funding is going.

**Ms Loft:** Certainly. In the budget bid, Mr Parton, we did request that it was for a mix of both capital and repairs work, and it has been listed as capital. We are currently in the process, through the minister’s office, of providing the instrument to be able to change that so we have the 70-30 split. The majority, two-thirds of that \$80 million, will be going to capital upgrades, including major upgrades as well as the items that I have listed before. The rest of it will go to general repairs, including the backlog of repairs from last year.

**MR PARTON:** Please excuse my ignorance, but I do not understand the difference between the two. I am not sure why they have been separated.

**Ms Loft:** The funding?

**MR PARTON:** Yes, the funding. You talked about a 70-30 split in that \$80 million. But your explanation suggested to me that both of those funding streams were going towards maintenance. Is that correct?

**Ms Loft:** Yes. Capital upgrades we do consider as maintenance, Mr Parton, because it is to an existing asset. So that is captured under maintenance.

**MR PETTERSSON:** I was hoping to get an update on Common Ground Dickson. Is that close to being finalised?

**Ms Loft:** Would you like me to keep going, Minister?

**Ms Berry:** I thank Mr Pettersson for the question. Just before you start, Ms Loft, there was a small delay to that work, given the COVID restrictions, but fortunately it is still being able to operate under some of the easing of restrictions that the Chief Health Officer advised could occur on some of these kinds of projects. It is coming along, and

it is looking amazing. I might ask Ms Loft to give us a bit more detail about the time frames, if it is on track and our way forward.

**Ms Loft:** The 40 units at Common Ground, which is a \$26 million construction, as you know, started in October 2020. The actual structure was completed in August 2021. We are now doing the internal fit-out to that. As the minister just said, with the delays through COVID, we lost time on materials, particularly in the lifts, and also on staff—roofing contractors and painting contractors. So we have gone out to re-tender and we have a slight delay with the new subbies coming in. Through the Canberra shutdown, we did lose a lot of local staff to interstate work.

We are now estimating for the very beginning of Q4. Under contract, we are still pushing for Q3, but a realistic absolute completion date is very early Q4. The RFQ proposal, which Shane Nielsen can talk to more, if you like, was released in September 2021, and that closes on 11 November. That is for the properties and tenancy services and support services.

**Ms Berry:** Mr Nielsen, would it be possible to provide some information on that tender process?

**Mr Nielsen:** I acknowledge the privilege statement. Just to support what Ms Loft said in relation to the services tender, that went out through the tender website on 30 September. That will close on 11 November this year, in preparation for the delivery of Common Ground. To support that, there have been information sessions with the sector that were well attended, and we have also had some pricing workshops to provide the required information.

A number of questions have come back from the sector and potential respondents, and we have worked well with the different groups within ACT government, including Procurement ACT and the like. So that is on track to support the delivery component.

**MR PARTON:** This will be quite brief, I am sure, Chair. Minister, in a recent question on notice, we inquired about the number of work orders completed within each response code time frame. In answer it states that “94 per cent of repairs were completed within 20 calendar days”. However, in 2020, in answer to a question on notice, when we asked how many work orders were completed within 20 calendar days, the response was only 43 per cent. It was 6,829 out of the 12,000-odd. So we have gone from 43 per cent to 94 per cent. Are you able to explain why there is such an astronomical improvement? Has the methodology for calculating these figures changed?

**Ms Berry:** I will ask Ms Loft if she can provide some advice on that question. If we cannot answer it for you, we might have to take some of it on notice.

**Ms Loft:** To answer your question about the methodology, Mr Parton, no, it has not changed. The performance management system by which we score the PFM on the total health of the contract is the same. Our monthly reporting against those KPIs to which we report up to the minister’s office on a quarterly basis has not changed.

With regard to the previous years, I remember what you are talking about, because there was a great effort to go into all the detail that you requested; however, I will take that

specific question on notice.

**MR PARTON:** It just seems to me that that amazing increase in the response times does not line up with my email inbox. I am not suggesting that people are not doing a good job and doing their best. If you have taken it on notice, that is good. I will go back to the chair; I know time is short in this session.

**THE CHAIR:** My question is about the growth and renewal strategy. When I talk to anybody in the community about it, I struggle to find someone that is not on board. One of the things that I am worried about, though—it gives me a bit of anxiety—is when people email me with particular public housing property specific addresses that they have identified as being vacant for some time.

Estimates have put some questions to Minister Vassarotti around why that might be the case in terms of managing tenancies, but I am wondering what Housing ACT's policy is for when properties are intended to go on the market at some point as a part of the renewal; how long they can remain vacant for; or what the policy is around their vacancy before they go to market; and then, more broadly, what work we do to inform the community that that might be the intention, as I worry that if there is an empty house sitting in the street for a few months we might start to lose that community buy-in for the program.

**Ms Berry:** Thanks, Mr Davis. It is good to hear that there is support from your constituents for public housing in the ACT. We are keen to make sure that we continue to have an inclusive city for everybody to live in, regardless of the homes that they live in. I might ask Ms Gilding to talk about the work that goes into that, and identifying those properties and the sorts of time frames around turning those over.

**Ms Gilding:** Chair, I failed to acknowledge the privilege statement when I first spoke, so I acknowledge it now. There are multiple reasons why, on any given day, we might have vacant properties. Yes, they might be vacant because they are part of the growth and renewal program, but people move house; tenants move interstate; there is transferring between public housing properties for safety reasons, including relating to domestic and gender violence, or when a tenant passes away. So not all the public housing properties that are vacant are vacant because of growth and renewal. It is because people have lived their lives and they actually need to move house. We endeavour to have as many of our houses occupied as we possibly can. That is why you see the accountability indicator there; that gives us a target of having at least a 96 per cent occupancy rate.

You will see that occupancy rate change when we are in the midst of a renewal program. The previous task force had a rate of around 96 per cent. It then ticked up, in between programs, to 97 per cent. Now we are tracking at that 96 per cent, with some fluctuation because every day tenants move, and so stock goes through the various vacant processes, whether it is for routine upgrade, for routine maintenance or major upgrade, which is where we see that \$80 million funding come in or where there is some—

**THE CHAIR:** I am sorry to cut you off. I point to my specific question—and I tried to make this point in my preamble. A lot of the instances that you flagged, where a property might be vacant, I understand would be instances where the tenancy would be

managed under the AAO by Minister Vassarotti. I am asking very specifically, though, about the time frame when Housing says this property will go to market.

**Ms Gilding:** Yes.

**THE CHAIR:** Is there a policy around how long it can remain vacant between when the tenant moves out and when it goes to market? In those instances, that might be when neighbours are seeing an empty property and worry about what the government's plan is.

**Ms Gilding:** I might ask Ms Loft to detail those time frames. There are a couple of separate time frames within the growth and renewal—one is for sale, and one is for redevelopment. So there are two different pathways there, but Ms Loft can give you the detail.

**Ms Loft:** Thanks, Ms Gilding. I am just trying to work out how to tackle the question, first of all. We have properties that are vacant, which are under assessment. This also includes some insurance work and some longer-term vacants—for example, number 11 Lowanna. So you will be seeing some situations where there is not a lot we can do. In previous estimates we have talked about this specific issue of neighbours seeing vacant properties. That is when Housing changed their strategy to separate the demolition from the construction in one tender process. Now, if it is for a redevelopment, we will demolish that property separately from the construction, so there is not that time delay of seeing a vacant property which might be subject to uninvited tenants, for example. So we are seeing less of that. That is the redevelopment side.

We currently have 101 properties in preparation for either sale or redevelopment. We are noticing some delays in the redevelopment. That is where we are trying to consolidate blocks and also go through the DA process. With regard to the properties for sale, I am sure you will be aware of the hot market that we are in. It is a very short time frame from when the tenants move out. We send in our TFM provider, Programmed facility management, to do any works that are required for a sale. That happens incredibly quickly, and it is on the market. Our auction clearing rates are under 20 days. Obviously, we are achieving well above valuation at the moment as well. So, due to a hot market, it is under a four-week time frame for that whole process.

**THE CHAIR:** My last supplementary on that—and I am happy for you to take it on notice—is about that 110 figure of the properties currently on the list of either being sold or redeveloped. Do we have a split of how many are intended to be sold throughout the course of the next financial year and which are being redeveloped?

**Ms Loft:** The program targets forecast for 2021-22 is 116 constructions delivered out of that 809 works in progress; acquiring 69 properties from the market; selling 150 properties; relocating 156 tenants; and demolishing 91. So the sales are 150, and 91 demolitions for redevelopment.

**THE CHAIR:** A very comprehensive answer. I should not have assumed it needed to be taken on notice. I thank you very much. The time being 4.30 pm, this session has ended. I would like to thank all of the officials for appearing. We will have a brief, five-minute break before we hear from the minister again in her capacity as Minister for the

Prevention of Domestic and Family Violence.

**Short suspension.**

**THE CHAIR:** Welcome back to the second session of the Standing Committee on Health and Community Wellbeing inquiry into the budget estimates for 2021-22. This afternoon we will be hearing from Minister Yvette Berry in her capacity as the Minister for the Prevention of Domestic and Family Violence. A reminder to new officials who join us: the first time you speak, please acknowledge the privilege statement. In lieu of an opening statement, we will head straight to questions, and I will start.

Minister, I want to ask about strengthening our DV responses in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities specifically. I note that there have been funds set aside in this budget to scope and design this response. Can you tell me specifically how First Nations communities are involved in the development of the response?

**Ms Berry:** It has been really important to hear from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, and women in particular, about how they want the domestic and family violence response to work for their community. When we started and formed the Family Safety Hub and had conversations with our community, what we heard from women, and particularly Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, was that they did not necessarily just want a justice response—that they did not necessarily want their men just to be locked up.

In this conversation about how we manage domestic and family violence within our whole community, but more specifically within the Aboriginal community, it has been really important to hear from these women and the community about how they want the response to work for them. I will ask the Coordinator-General for Family Safety to provide a little more detail about those consultations.

**Ms Windeyer:** I acknowledge the privilege statement. In relation to the consultation that has taken place, the Domestic Violence Prevention Council has an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander reference group. That reference group is leading the community response in partnership with government, to respond to and seek further action on the issues facing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in relation to domestic and family violence.

The family safety team is partnering with that reference group in order to support their work. It has been delayed by COVID, which obviously has an impact on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people more than any of us, and, as a result, it has been delayed more than they had hoped—certainly, more than the community had hoped. The reference group has done an extraordinary job in continuing that in 2020 and this year. In about October 2020 there were community consultations held by the reference group, together with the community, in a couple of locations, including in AMC. They are writing up their report in relation to the outcomes of those consultations.

Government has been informed of the four priorities from the report that the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community has identified as wishing the government to look at first. However, they have asked that we wait until the consultation report is delivered to government. It was expected that it would have been delivered by now; however, the

recent lockdown has again delayed that report.

**MR MILLIGAN:** From my understanding, there is a \$30-a-year levy that each household pays. According to what I have here, it is going up \$5 each year over the next four years—\$50 per household by 2024-25. I have here that that equates to about \$30 million in revenue. How much of this money will be going to those crucial service providers, like Toora Women, Doris Women’s Refuge and EveryMan? How much of that money will actually go to them to deliver the crucial services that they offer for people experiencing domestic violence?

**Ms Berry:** Mr Milligan, thank you for your interest in the prevention of domestic and family violence in our community. I might ask one of my officials to go through some of the detail about where some of that funding goes. Of course, there is a fairly detailed summary of the family safety levy in the budget papers, which you can refer to, but we can provide a little bit more detail.

**Ms Windeyer:** In relation to the frontline services, there are a number of those who will be supported by the levy. The way that the levy works is that the increase in the levy is not exactly allocated against a specific item. I can respond to you by going through some of the items that will be funded out of the levy. There is increased funding for the Domestic Violence Crisis Service and the Canberra Rape Crisis Centre, in addition to the annual baseline funding that they already receive from ACT government.

There is money for the family safety action pilot, which is a collaborative response to those experiencing domestic and family violence. There is money for Room4Change, which is run out of the Domestic Violence Crisis Service, which is a response to perpetrators through a behaviour change program. There is funding for DVCS, the Domestic Violence Crisis Service, to embed two workers with children and young people in CYPS, and there is also money in the health justice partnership, which is to continue the partnerships, which puts lawyers into health and justice settings.

**MR MILLIGAN:** What modelling was done by the government to determine the increase in this levy at \$5 each year for the next four years? What model or what justification has brought that on? Is it extra programs, is it extra support, is it for extra funding for these service providers?

**Ms Berry:** Thank you, Mr Milligan, for that question. We did talk with the domestic and family violence support services sector and women’s sector about the kinds of supports that they might need to respond to the increasing need for women and children around domestic and family violence. But we also have another substantive issue that our community has been facing for decades, which is sexual assaults and rape. So part of the change to the levy is designed to respond to the issue that we are facing in our community around sexual assaults and rape.

When we asked our community partners in women’s safety and sexual health and crisis services about the levy and about whether they thought that that would be an appropriate place to ask the community to make that contribution to respond to domestic and family violence, sexual assaults and rapes in our community, they said that they thought that was a good idea. They supported the idea of there being an increase in the funding that we are asking the community to contribute.

It is really important that part of that response to domestic and family violence, sexual assault and rape in our community is seen on a ratepayer's rate sheet every year. It has two processes, I guess. One is that it is right there in front of them, and they see that they are making a contribution, as a community member, broadly to our community's response to domestic and family violence, sexual assault and rape. The other is that we have the funding for support services and others, and for research into the best way to respond to this, backed by women's support services in the ACT. That will make sure that our response is appropriate and meets the needs of a very complex issue, to which we have now added a very important response around sexual assaults and rapes. So that is pretty much where we came to around the levy process.

**MRS KIKKERT:** Minister, how much of the levy funding is going towards supporting children who are victims of domestic violence, particularly in women's refuges? We hear over and over again that Toora Women's Refuge has roughly 80 kids that they see on an annual basis who are victims of domestic violence. How much of that money is going towards supporting these kids who are victims of domestic violence? We all know kids who are victims of this violence. They are broken kids; they grow up to be broken adults. So how are we addressing that issue?

**Ms Berry:** Thanks, Mrs Kikkert. I acknowledge the hard work of Susan Clarke-Lindfield on her retirement as Chief Executive Officer of Toora and her continued advocacy for children and young people, and her work to support victim-survivors of domestic and family violence in the ACT. She has been an amazing and tireless advocate, and she will be well missed in the community. I pass on my acknowledgment and thanks to her for her hard work over decades.

The government is aware of Toora's submissions around support for young people, and these have been considered by the government. Government officials have met with Toora to understand the work that she is doing and the funding that she wants to receive to do the important work around supporting children and young people who have been impacted by domestic and family violence. There has been significant work done around understanding the needs of young people, including talking and listening to young people about their experiences living in households where they have been exposed to domestic and family violence, and violence towards themselves and other family members.

That project, along with the Commissioner for Children and Young People, worked with us to get those conversations with young people done in a really safe and supportive way, to make sure that we heard their voices about how we should respond to these really concerning circumstances, and respond not just in a way that adults might think is the right way to respond, but in a way that understands what their needs are and how we can do better as a community and as a government.

That work has progressed and there is some important feedback coming to the government about what we should do and what kinds of service responses we need—rather than just putting individuals within a service provider, looking at what is the more holistic approach needed to support these young people. I might ask the coordinator-general to provide a bit more detail on where that work is up to.

**Ms Windeyer:** I, too, acknowledge that, for the children and young people who live with domestic and family sexual violence, there are long-lasting impacts. With the listening and learning project that we did in the family safety team, the report *Now you have heard us, what will you do?* Is very significant in highlighting a lot of the insights that we learned from listening to young people. It is obviously vital that the responses are evidence based and are co-designed both with children and young people and with relevant services who have expertise.

Obviously, children and young people have different needs depending on their age and circumstances. In relation to children, we are in the early stages of designing a new response specifically for children affected by domestic and family violence. That work to design a response is happening this financial year, co-designing with relevant people from the children and young people's sector, with a pilot service expected to be delivered in 2022.

In relation to young people, we have been working with YouthCo to design and pilot new ways to improve the knowledge and capability of youth workers to respond to domestic and family violence. What we have been told is that, in order to have safe and appropriate conversations, youth workers, who are often the people who are actually communicating with our youth who are experiencing domestic and family violence, really need some training to build their capability to be able to respond.

Through the COVID-19 domestic violence national partnership agreement between the ACT government and the commonwealth, funding has been allocated to Relationships Australia, which is piloting a program called Watch Your Back, which provides group support to young people. It was face-to-face, but obviously in recent times where it is safe that has continued online. The family safety team will fund an evaluation of Watch Your Back in 2022.

**MRS KIKKERT:** In designing a response to Toora and other women's refuges in regard to supporting kids who are victims of domestic violence, does that include a trauma specialist that will support the kids rather than youth workers? These are highly traumatised kids who require a specialist to talk with them, to listen to them and to help them with their individual cases.

**Ms Windeyer:** That will be part of this; as I was talking about before, part of the design of that response will be about hearing from the various services. Obviously, refuges are one place where children and young people who experience domestic violence and family violence are placed and where they touch the services, but they are not the only place.

In recognition of that, we are designing it not just with the refuges but with others, and that will happen. It was hoped that that would happen in this part of the year, but the lockdown has slowed that. A lot of that work will happen, I am hoping, all going well, in the early part of next year.

**MR PETTERSSON:** I have seen some job listings from the Office of the Coordinator-General for Family Safety that are temporary positions, but also listed as four-year temporary positions. How does a position like this align with the government's commitment to provide secure employment?

**Ms Wood:** We have had a conversation in earlier sessions about CSD's approach to secure employment for staff. We certainly work within the government's secure employment policy for the ACT public service, which means that we do go through formal processes where we have had people in temporary roles for periods to look at whether those roles should become permanent.

But we also work quite flexibly around delivering on the government's priorities. We have people who take leave or move for other opportunities in a range of ways. People take maternity leave, and that creates a temporary vacancy, and people move across CSD and across directorates to take up development opportunities. Depending on the circumstances, some of those jobs may be filled on a temporary basis. It also depends on the priorities at the time and where the new budget resources come in.

Broadly, that is how CSD approaches ensuring that we have resources in the right places to deliver priorities, while also making sure we are taking due care in relation to ensuring that we are offering people secure employment. Ms Windeyer can talk specifically about family safety resourcing.

**Ms Windeyer:** There have been two recent positions in family safety which have been advertised for up to four years, with the possibility of extension or permanency. In relation to those positions, if there is the budget to make those people permanent, will take place. If it can happen throughout the wider ACT government system, we would obviously do that.

**MR PETTERSSON:** Those positions have only been funded for that time period?

**Ms Windeyer:** That is correct.

**MRS KIKKERT:** Minister, my question is about the Room4Change program. I noticed in the budget that adjustments have been made in relation to this program, with the ACT government stating that there is a cessation of extending the Room4Change program as part of the safer families package. What funding package has this program been moved to?

**Ms Berry:** I will ask the coordinator-general to provide some information for you on that, Mrs Kikkert.

**Ms Windeyer:** While the budget papers show that the Room4Change program is funded until 2023, that is because it is waiting until the evaluation is complete. The evaluation of Room4Change was published this week. It is intended that the program will be continued, subject, obviously, to that evaluation. If you look at appendix H in the future safer families levy part and where that might be used, it specifically says that it may be used to support the extension of the Room4Change program and other perpetrator programs.

**Ms Berry:** I do not think that the review has been published or released publicly yet, has it? This Monday; I just wanted to check.

**MRS KIKKERT:** You cannot answer whether the Room4Change program would be

expanded until you look at the review. Is that correct or were you thinking of expanding the program before the review happened?

**Ms Berry:** No, we will have a look at the review and see how the program has been evaluated.

**MRS KIKKERT:** Is there any crisis accommodation for men fleeing domestic violence? We are talking about men who are victims of domestic violence.

**Ms Berry:** Yes. Domestic and family violence provide service support to anyone who has experienced domestic and family violence, including men. Of course, it is predominantly a gendered issue that women and young women face, but those support services are provided to anybody who has experienced it.

**MRS KIKKERT:** I am specifically speaking about crisis accommodation, though. I am aware that there is crisis accommodation for women, but is there crisis accommodation for men?

**Ms Berry:** Yes. The Domestic Violence Crisis Service provide crisis accommodation for people who have experienced domestic and family violence.

**MRS KIKKERT:** Could you let us know how many men have been offered crisis accommodation?

**Ms Berry:** We might take that on notice and see what we can find out for you, Mrs Kikkert. It might not be easily available. We will be asking for information from the Domestic Violence Crisis Service about the accommodation that they have provided. It is about whether they have that information available or not. But we can take it on notice and have a crack at it.

**MRS KIKKERT:** Is that the only service available for men who experience—

**Ms Berry:** No.

**MRS KIKKERT:** domestic violence to receive crisis accommodation? Is that the only avenue for them?

**Ms Berry:** No. OneLink also provides funding for crisis accommodation for anyone who has experienced domestic and family violence.

**MRS KIKKERT:** I understand that EveryMan also has supported many victims of domestic violence. Has the ACT government been in contact with EveryMan to provide funding for them? I understand they have many men who are waiting on their list to be supported.

**Ms Berry:** EveryMan, if they have men who need support in crisis accommodation, can refer those people through the OneLink crisis accommodation.

**MRS KIKKERT:** Could you also take on notice how many men contact the DVCS for support—not only for crisis accommodation, but also for support because they are

victims of domestic violence?

**Ms Berry:** Again, Mrs Kikkert, we will see whether that information is available through the Domestic Violence Crisis Service.

**MRS KIKKERT:** Are you saying that they do not have the information or is it you do not know?

**Ms Berry:** I just do not know. It is not information that the ACT government holds, so we would have to ask the Domestic Violence Crisis Service how many—

**MRS KIKKERT:** If they have the data.

**Ms Berry:** Yes.

**MRS KIKKERT:** You might want to take this on notice: how many male victims of domestic violence have wanted access to OneLink to support them in their crisis?

**Ms Berry:** We could probably find that out. I suspect that it will be small numbers compared to the number of women and children who experience domestic and family violence.

**MRS KIKKERT:** Of course.

**Ms Berry:** Again, that points to the gendered nature of this issue. But we could definitely get that information, if there is any.

**MRS KIKKERT:** We just want to raise the awareness that men also suffer from domestic violence, and we want to be able to support them as well.

**Ms Berry:** And they are supported, Mrs Kikkert.

**MRS KIKKERT:** Sufficiently, I hope.

**Ms Berry:** They are supported in the same way as anybody else who is experiencing domestic and family violence. It is just that the numbers are much smaller than for women who experience domestic and family violence.

**MRS KIKKERT:** However, there is a waiting list for them to be supported at EveryMan, so it will be good if we can get that support out.

**Ms Berry:** I am not aware of that, Mrs Kikkert.

**THE CHAIR:** I will draw the hearing to a close. Can I remind all witnesses from today's hearing that have taken questions on notice to please provide those answers to the committee support office within five working days of the uncorrected proof transcript being made available. Could any member who wishes to lodge a question on notice get those to the committee secretary within five working days—close of business on Friday, 5 November?

## PROOF

Before we conclude, as the last chair to speak, in concluding budget estimates 2021-22, I would like to publicly thank, on behalf of all 25 members of the Assembly, the committee secretariat and support staff, who have done a quite tremendous effort in getting us all online and ensuring that these proceedings remain available to our community. It is no small feat—a mammoth effort indeed. We all most sincerely appreciate it.

Ministers and officials, thank you for appearing. Today's hearing and budget estimates 2021-22 are now adjourned.

**The committee adjourned at 5 pm.**