



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

**STANDING COMMITTEE ON PLANNING, TRANSPORT
AND CITY SERVICES**

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

Members:

MS J CLAY (Chair)
MS S ORR (Deputy Chair)
MR M PARTON

PROOF TRANSCRIPT OF EVIDENCE

CANBERRA

MONDAY, 18 OCTOBER 2021
(MORNING SESSION)

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Acting Secretary to the committee:
Ms J Rafferty (Ph: 620 50557)

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

Transport Canberra and City Services Directorate	20, 43
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Privilege statement

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Amended 20 May 2013

The committee met at 9.02 am.

Appearances:

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

Transport Canberra and City Services Directorate

Playford, Ms Alison, Director-General

Pedersen, Mr Andrew, Chief Financial Officer, Chief Operating Officer Group

Corrigan, Mr Jim, Deputy Director-General

Smith, Mr Jeremy, Executive Branch Manager, Infrastructure Delivery

Little, Ms Vanessa, Acting Chief Operating Officer, Chief Operating Officer Group

Alegria, Mr Stephen, Executive Branch Manager, City Presentation

Marshall, Mr Ken, Acting Executive Group Manager, City Operations

Trushell, Mr Michael, Executive Branch Manager, ACT NoWaste

Fitzgerald, Mr Bruce, Acting Executive Group Manager, Infrastructure Delivery and Waste

THE CHAIR: Good morning, everybody, and welcome to the 2021-22 budget inquiry of the Standing Committee on Planning, Transport and City Services. The committee wishes to acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land we are meeting on, the Ngunnawal people. We would like to acknowledge and respect their continuing culture and the contribution they have made to the life of this city and this region, and we would like to acknowledge that sovereignty was never ceded. We would also like to acknowledge and welcome any other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who might be attending today.

The proceedings this morning will examine the expenditure proposals and revenue estimates for the Transport Canberra and City Services Directorate, in relation to budget statements H, and Major Projects Canberra, in relation to budget statements I.

We are conducting this public hearing by video link, so technical issues might arise. If that occurs, please be patient. Our technical officers will attend to the matter as quickly as possible. Please be aware that the proceedings today are being recorded and will be transcribed and published by Hansard. The proceedings are also being broadcast and webstreamed live.

When you take a question on notice it would be helpful if you could state, "I will take that as a question on notice." That will help our secretariat to make sure that we log all those and chase them up.

Our first session will look at output 2.1, roads and infrastructure; 2.2, library services; 2.3, waste and recycling; 2.4, city maintenance and services; and 2.5, Capital Linen Service. We will be speaking to the Minister for Transport and City Services, Chris Steel, and to various officials.

Please be aware that today's proceedings are covered by parliamentary privilege,

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which provides protection to witnesses but also obliges them to tell the truth. The provision of false or misleading evidence is a serious matter and all participants today are reminded of this. Please confirm, the first time that you speak, that you have read and understood the privilege statement that the secretariat has sent you. Minister, did you manage to have a look at that privilege statement?

Mr Steel: Yes, I have read and understood the privilege statement.

THE CHAIR: Great. On behalf of the committee, I would like to thank you all for giving us your evidence today. The secretary will provide you with a copy of the proof transcript of today's hearings, as soon as it is available, so that you can check it for accuracy. And if you could liaise with the committee secretary to provide answers to any questions taken on notice that would be great too.

Minister, I will begin with roads and infrastructure. We have some government modelling in the budget and some analysis provided to us that shows that around \$1.2 billion is being spent on roads. Unfortunately, the analysis I saw combined the spending for active and public transport, so it was quite difficult to see how much money is being spent on active transport infrastructure. Are you able to tell me how much money is being spent on active travel infrastructure?

Mr Steel: I will hand over to Andrew Pedersen very shortly to provide some more detailed numbers, but there is around \$45 million extra investment in the budget in active travel infrastructure. This brings the total pipeline to \$77 million across the forward estimates. So it is quite a substantial pipeline of active travel infrastructure, as well as investing in strategic transport corridors.

When we are investing in these corridors we are investing not only in improved roads but also in public transport on those roads and in active travel, including off-road shared paths. The greatest example of that in the budget is probably the William Hovell Drive duplication, a duplication of around four kilometres of road, to provide increased capacity to connect with the growing region of Ginninderry and west Belconnen. There is also seven kilometres—I think it is 7.1 exactly—of off-road cycling shared path infrastructure, which will connect with the existing cyclepath network and provide a new means of getting into the city on a bike. That is an example of where we are investing in a whole range of different modes of travel in the one project.

There is also, of course, a big pipeline of dedicated active travel infrastructure. That goes to things like the Sulwood Drive four-kilometre shared path, including crossing intersection infrastructure to cross to the Mount Taylor Nature Reserve, which is being upgraded at the moment as well—the tracks and trails there—and getting work underway on major new trunk path infrastructure in the inner north of the garden city cyclepath. I will invite both Alison Playford and Andrew Pedersen to provide some further detail about the spend on active travel.

Ms Playford: I am happy to hand straight over to Andrew, who, I think, has the figures and can give us the breakdown of the ones that are dedicated active travel—there was a specific measure within the budget which included a number of the matters that the minister alluded to, the garden city, Sulwood Drive and a couple of

others—and then outline why we have apportioned active travel within a number of our other more strategic transport corridors.

Mr Pedersen: I confirm that I have read and acknowledge the privilege statement.

THE CHAIR: Thank you, Mr Pedersen. I would be quite happy if you wanted to take on notice the line-by-line details of active travel infrastructure rather than running us through them. It would help me to know the way in which you categorise what is active infrastructure versus what is roads infrastructure or incidental infrastructure.

Mr Steel: We will try and answer your question and then we can see what other information you require.

Mr Pedersen: We have done an analysis over the next four years of the budget and have had a look at what contributes to active travel. We have some dedicated active travel projects, which is a straight 100 per cent contribution to that \$70-odd million that the minister mentioned earlier. We have also looked at some of the bigger projects like William Hovell and so on that have an active travel component.

We have tried to analyse what the estimated spend on things like on-road cycling, off-road cycling, intersections and things like those contributes to the active travel spend. It is a project-by-project analysis of about 40 projects. Some of it is dedicated active travel and some of it is just a contribution percentage. I am not sure if Jeremy wants to add, from the capital perspective, any more detailed discussion about the projects themselves, or is the committee happy enough with that high-level answer?

THE CHAIR: That high level will do me. I will ask for a qualitative assessment of it from the minister. We have targets that seven per cent of journeys to work will be made by cycling and seven per cent by walking by 2026, and that 16 per cent will be made by public transport by 2026. Do you think we are spending enough on that active infrastructure to reach those targets?

Mr Steel: Obviously, the transport strategy sets out our objectives. Those are the objectives that we are following in terms of our investment in future-focused projects. We want to encourage a load shift, and that means that we need to invest in active travel infrastructure. It means that we need to rethink the way that we look at some of the projects. That is why we are approaching this with a view to delivering strategic transport corridors that can move people quickly and efficiently throughout our city across a range of modes.

When we come to business cases and so forth and look at each of these projects, we need to assess them not only on what they will deliver for the traffic network in terms of private motor vehicles but also in terms of freight, active travel and public transport as well. We need to look at how we can provide public transport benefits if it is in an area where there is a transport corridor for the future light rail and our bus network as well.

The very substantial investment in the budget has shown that we are committed to making sure that we are encouraging more people to use alternative and more sustainable means of transport, particularly in active travel. We recognise that not

everyone will be able to use active travel. That infrastructure is substantial, and it is important to encourage those that can use active travel to actually use it, whether it is a short trip or a connecting trip to public transport.

MR PARTON: I note in this space that there is a \$6.3 million investment over four years into what is described as active travel, age-friendly suburbs and cyclepath maintenance in the 2021-22 budget. Are you able to specify exactly how much of that \$6.3 million will be dedicated solely to the Age Friendly Suburbs Program and how much, for argument's sake, to cyclepath maintenance?

Mr Steel: Yes; \$1 million per year. So \$4 million over four years will be dedicated to cyclepath maintenance, shared path maintenance, throughout the city. That is responding to feedback from the community, the cycling community in particular, that we need to make sure that we are investing in maintenance of our 3,000 kilometres worth of paths, not just building new trunk path infrastructure and missing links and so forth. That is a key way, they think, to encourage people to actually get on a bike. This is a big extra boost in terms of cyclepath maintenance in the budget and delivers on Labor's election commitment.

On top of that, as you have mentioned, there is an investment in the Age Friendly Suburbs Program, again delivering on a commitment that Labor brought to the last election. Again, that is over four years. I think you are referring to the one year of BIF in the back end of the budget outlook. There is a full four-year program for the Age Friendly Suburbs Program, which will extend it to four additional suburbs.

THE CHAIR: You mentioned maintenance, Minister. I note that we have a target that 90 per cent of our roads be maintained in good condition, but we do not have an accountability indicator for shared paths and footpaths. We asked about this last estimates and we were told that the accountability indicators were being updated and that would be considered. Do you think next time we could have a target for maintenance levels for our paths and footpaths?

Mr Steel: I will hand over to Jim Corrigan and Ken Marshall to talk you through the work that is going on around path maintenance and the work that we have been doing to audit our paths to make sure that we are keeping up with maintenance of them.

Mr Corrigan: I have read and understand and acknowledge the privilege statement. The short answer is yes. That is what we are working on right now. It is going to take a little bit of time. There is a bit of complexity with the shared paths, of course, and monitoring the entire network of them. Obviously, we have a very clear method of approach for managing roads and road safety. We are working on the paths. Many of the path maintenance requests come through Fix My Street and those sorts of things. During the last year, through the COVID situation, we were able to employ some extra people who were able to do more monitoring of paths. That has led to quite a large work plan of approach. We are looking to formalise that and set appropriate indicators, as such.

THE CHAIR: I am delighted to hear it.

MS LAWDER: Could you just give me a quick rundown of how the suburbs are

prioritised for the age-friendly upgrades?

Mr Steel: These were commitments that Labor took to the last election. They are areas where, typically, there is an older population of people. We consult with those communities about what upgrades they want to see. Typically, they include accessibility and upgrades that not only benefit the older population of Canberrans in those suburbs but also the entire community. I am happy to hand over to the team to provide a bit more background about the age-friendly suburbs program.

Mr Smith: I acknowledge that I have read and recognise the privilege statement. Ms Lawder, picking up on your question about the identification, I think Minister Steel has answered that. It is through the election commitments and also through a number of sources of information with regard to the aged population around Canberra and where those suburbs are suitable for investment in the upgrades. As the minister has said, we use a number of sources of information to identify what those upgrades are and where they should be. They can consist of pram ramp installations, missing links in path networks, traffic islands on slightly wider roads where people may need a rest as they are crossing in between, raised zebra crossings et cetera.

MS ORR: Minister, I just wanted to have a bit of a chat about libraries. Can I get an update on the adoption and the uptake of Libraries ACT's digital resources and how that is going? What changes have there been in accessing libraries during COVID and, with the new budget measures, what are you planning to do to support these new behavioural changes?

Mr Steel: Firstly, I would like to thank all Libraries ACT staff and put on the record my appreciation for the work that they have been doing during the pandemic and the most recent lockdown. A number of them were redeployed as part of the ACT government's response to the pandemic in supporting our vaccination clinics, contact tracing and the like. They have been doing a fantastic job, often beyond and outside of the roles that they perform in Libraries ACT.

Obviously, during the lockdown, the libraries were closed to the public. We have had to adapt, similar to last year, and provide support for people to access online services. There have been phone lines to provide support to people in the community that want to access those, and we have seen a big take-up of those resources. Work was done to recommence the mystery box service to deliver books to community members and also a library in the home service to a dedicated part of the community that cannot otherwise get to a library service anyway.

MS ORR: What is the mystery box service?

Mr Steel: The mystery box service was started last year and recommenced during the lockdown this year, to provide a selection of books that are chosen by Libraries ACT, a genuine mystery. They provide those books to people in the community that have been unable to get into an ACT library physically. They are dropped off to people. Hopefully, there is a selection of books that they generally like, some of which they may have read but then others which they have not. I will hand over to Vanessa to talk further about the take-up of those services and share some numbers as well.

Ms Little: I have read and understood the privilege statement. Overall, between 2019 and 2020, there has been a 27 per cent increase in the use of digital resources, but of course that has ebbed and flowed. During this last lockdown, in week six, which was the peak of the use, our story box library service received 777 per cent more use than it ever had before. The story box library is authors and artists reading stories online—they are very professional—and with all the right approvals.

Overdrive ebooks are electronic books mainly for adults, but there are some for children. They received a 167 per cent increase on previous use. Kanopy, which is our online video streaming service, received a 94 per cent increase. People were very keen to access material while we were shut down. Kanopy is a fantastic streaming service. It has a lot of Australian material. If you are a lover of documentaries, it has a lot of documentaries. It does not compete with the commercial providers; it is very much focused at community level.

One of the things that we did not turn off during the shutdown was our reservation system. Now that we are planning our gentle reopening, we have to deal with 58½ thousand reservations. People have been at home and have found something they want to read and they have requested it for when we reopen. That is an awful lot of material for us to process.

Mystery box has been very popular, as the minister said. You get online or telephone us and you tell us what genre you like. If you like murder mysteries, you will get murder mysteries, but you do not know what those murder mysteries are. They are delivered to your home contactless and then they are picked up and a new lot are delivered. On the first day that we announced—I think it was 4 September—that we were reopening mystery box, we had over 400 requests to join. I believe there have been nearly 1,500 new registrations of people wanting to join that service.

We thought that it would be a service that was mainly picked up by older people who felt a bit nervous about going out during COVID and so on. But overwhelmingly it has been young families, clearly, who have been wanting to add the story box online service and mystery box. Clearly, young families have been wanting to get the stories and get their reading but they have not been able to get out. It has been a fantastic service, and it is very popular.

MS ORR: That is great with the online services. I am also interested in the bricks and mortar and how you are expanding the library services through that. Can I get an update on the Molonglo library?

Mr Steel: Libraries ACT has commenced a community-wide co-design process across libraries in the ACT. This will lead into some further co-design work with the Molonglo community on a future library service out there. At this stage, we are doing the whole of community and we hope that that will set some high level direction that the community would like to see libraries head towards in future. We are looking at a span of decades into the future. We are asking the community to really think about what libraries will look like in 10 years time and beyond.

Obviously, with COVID, there has been a change in how people use the libraries and a lot more online resources. We are really interested to hear what elements they would

like to keep, what elements they would like to expand in future in the online space—not just the bricks and mortar—and also what they value in terms of the bricks and mortar, because they have not been able to access those services during the lockdown. Vanessa can expand a bit further on what we are hoping to get out of that process.

Ms Little: It is a process that has had to cease just for now and will pick up again in the new year. I have to say that we have been very blessed with the person who has been working with us on this project. She has come up with some really fantastic ideas. We actually did a consultation with babies recently, before the shutdown, and we are doing puppet shows—

MS ORR: Sorry, Ms Little; what does a consultation with babies look like?

Ms Little: We put on music and activities and watched what they liked to do and noted down the things that they responded to best. We will be doing puppet shows with young children. That is our way of consulting with them. It is very deep and broad consultation across the whole community. We are targeting, obviously, vulnerable groups, talking to them and their representative agencies and actually going into those communities. It is a very exciting project. We really want to set that high level of strategic direction for libraries.

Whilst COVID has been awful and very painful for all of us, it has focused people's attention on how they might want to see their library services in future. It has given a really good sense, up until now, of how valuable people have found us. Like everything in communities, there is quite a diversity of what people want from their library service in future. That sense of identity and that sense of connection with community has come through very strongly.

The idea will be to finish that piece of work, to set the strategic, high level direction for libraries in future and then consult and co-design with the Molonglo community. It is almost like a menu of things that people want to see and then working with them more specifically on what it is that they would like to see in their library. Some fantastic ideas have already come up around a dementia-friendly library which, coincidentally, also makes it an autism-friendly library. The fact that the library at Molonglo will be co-located with a community centre gives us many opportunities that the co-design will be able to fulfil.

MS ORR: Thank you.

THE CHAIR: Mr Parton.

MR PARTON: I would like to ask about southern memorial park. In the 2021-22 budget there is a \$1.8 million investment over five years for the southern memorial park detailed design. Similarly, in the 2021 budget, there is \$804,000 committed to the southern memorial park design. How much of the allocated \$804,000 was spent on the design of southern memorial park in the 2021 financial year?

Mr Steel: That is a very specific question. I will ask Andrew Pedersen and Jeremy Smith whether they want to provide any comment.

MR PARTON: I guess what I am leading to, Minister, is whether the remaining amount has been redirected into the \$1.8 million. We are just trying to get our head around where the money flows here.

Mr Steel: Just at a higher level than that, work has been undertaken over the last few years in updating the master plan for southern memorial park, particularly with a view to looking at how we can stage the construction of the new cemetery and other end-of-life services. We have undertaken quite substantial consultation with the community and we are expecting that listening report to be available soon.

That work will then feed into the latest budget initiative, which is to start the detailed design work that is required to deliver the first stage of the southern memorial park. The work that we think this will include is establishing the basic road infrastructure into the site and also establishing the first burial plots. I will hand over to Jeremy Smith to provide further detail on that project and to Andrew Pedersen on the specific financial question. The two initiatives, I understand, were separate.

Mr Smith: Just to expand on Minister Steel's answer to the question, the two budget amounts that you have mentioned will be rolled together and they will deliver the design phases up to detailed design for southern memorial park. As the minister has already identified, there are a large number of requirements for the design of such a facility, including heritage, environmental and Indigenous studies of the area. There is also a large amount of infrastructure design which is required, both services above and under the ground, road infrastructure and buildings, as well as benching of areas to allow for burials et cetera.

MR PARTON: Mr Smith, I do not know if this is a question for you or a question for the minister. On a bigger picture scenario, when can Canberrans expect construction of southern memorial park to actually commence?

Mr Steel: Following the detailed design. We have to undertake that process. As Jeremy outlined, there are a range of processes that we need to go through around environmental studies and so forth. We will be able to provide a clearer picture once that planning and design work has been undertaken. Obviously, we are very keen to make sure that we have the availability of these types of services on the south side, because of the situation that we are in where Woden is closed for new burial plots. Some have already been reserved and may continue to be used over time. Obviously, there is sufficient capacity at Gungahlin in the meantime to provide those services for the community.

MR PARTON: You are telling me you do not know when you are expecting construction to commence? You must have some idea.

Mr Steel: We have to go through the detailed design process and the planning process before we set out a program of construction. That is just the process that we go through with infrastructure projects.

MS ORR: Minister, you have spoken about the master planning process and the design work that you will have to work through. You also mentioned that there is a fair bit of infrastructure that is needed around the area. Can you just run us through

what roadworks might be done and how the planning for that is being factored into the government's time lines?

Mr Steel: As part of the update to the master plan and consultation on the first stage of the southern memorial park, we need to establish the basic amenities that are required to be able to get onto the site. There is road infrastructure planned off Mugga Lane to be able to access the site. That is all subject, of course, to further environmental planning work that needs to be undertaken as part of the budget initiative. We are really pleased that in this budget we have been able to get on with the project. We have taken a significant step forward with the detailed design funding for the project and, following that, construction. Jeremy may want to provide some more detail about what is planned in stage 1—obviously subject to the work that needs to be undertaken.

THE CHAIR: We might just confirm whether Ms Orr wants that detail.

MS ORR: I am happy if you can be brief, Jeremy.

Mr Smith: To add to the minister's answer around the additional infrastructure to support the cemetery, as the minister mentioned, there will be the potential for the signalisation of Long Gully Road and Mugga Way, which will also provide the entranceway to the new facility. We are also looking, as part of the Monaro Highway upgrades, to improvements of the intersections on the Monaro Highway, which will add some better accessibility and traffic flow arrangements towards the new facility.

THE CHAIR: Minister, we have received a number of complaints about a private sector crematorium that is being proposed for Symonston. We are just wondering how the government has scoped what Canberra's needs are for cemeteries and a crematorium. What tools are we using in the planning box and with other government regulatory boxes to make sure that we do not build too many, that we build the right amount, public and private.

Mr Steel: I am not going to comment on a live development application, but what I can say is that the government has undertaken a very substantial conversation with the community in recent years as part of a review of the Cemeteries and Crematoria Act in the ACT that then led to legislative reform. What we heard from the community as part of that process was that they wanted to see publicly-operated crematoria facilities. We have been able to deliver that through a new crematorium which was established at Gungahlin Cemetery, the first public crematorium in the ACT. There has, of course, been one privately-operated crematorium at Norwood Park that has been operating for many decades to serve the community.

As part of the work that was undertaken for the new crematorium at Gungahlin, it was estimated that, based on our population size and comparative to other jurisdictions, we could accommodate around three to four crematoria in the ACT to meet the needs of the population. As part of the work that has been done on southern memorial park, the government may consider in future a crematorium at that site as well. That certainly has not been ruled out. In fact, it has been a formal part of the master plan planning process and consultation with the community.

When we have undertaken the work to build the Gungahlin crematorium, we have taken those decisions based on a competitive neutrality basis under our obligations under competitive neutrality that we have with the commonwealth. I would expect that that would be the approach that we would be taking forward. Of course, people can make their comments through the planning process in relation to the proposal that is not too far away from southern memorial park, just off Mugga Lane.

MS LAWDER: Minister, with the stage 2 planning for the southern memorial park, is the government considering a gas-fired crematorium? As part of that, do you know whether the DA for the private crematorium includes a gas-fired crematorium or are there other alternatives being investigated?

Mr Steel: I am not commenting on a private development that is in the planning process at the moment. What I can say is that at the Gungahlin Cemetery we provided a gas-fired facility. That was from an Australian manufacturer, Austeng. They provided that facility in a very short period. Quite frankly, it was during a period where we were concerned about the capacity that we would have for these types of services during a pandemic. It was provided in a very quick period. We have been able to get it up and running far beyond what we might have expected in other times.

We have policies around future facilities. We will certainly look at what technology is available at the time if a future crematorium is considered in the southern memorial park, if it is publicly operated, such as what electric facilities might be available to support those services efficiently. That is subject to future procurement processes and government decision-making.

MS LAWDER: But how does that fit, having a gas-fired crematorium at Gungahlin—and who knows at southern memorial park?—with the government's net zero emissions policies?

Mr Steel: Obviously, we will look at each particular project during that time. It is very difficult to have imported technology. There was obviously a time imperative in that particular circumstance. We thought it was necessary to have those systems operating to meet the potential needs of the community during a pandemic. It was pretty critical that we got those services available and that is why that decision was made. Of course, we will continue to look at what other technologies are available for future services.

MS LAWDER: It is a bit like picking and choosing, though, isn't it? When it suits you, you can go with gas but, in other cases, you want residents to go without gas.

Mr Steel: It is about what technology is available to deliver these types of services. The team may want to provide some further background. There may be a range of technologies in future that can deliver electric services, but those can be explored when they are available. We need to make sure that what technology we do employ is fit for purpose and can actually take delivery of caskets and so forth.

We have seen quite a substantial number of people using this facility. It is a facility that we think the community needed and we were pleased to deliver it in record time, during a pandemic, to meet the needs of the community. Thankfully, that has not, at

this stage, meant a significant extra number of people passing away during the period, because of the government's response to the pandemic. But it could have been a lot worse.

MS ORR: Minister, I appreciate that in getting to carbon neutral there is a bit of a trade-off. There are some places where we may still have some emissions but others where we are doing great stuff, such as planting trees to capture carbon into the atmosphere. Can you give us an update on how the government is going with its tree planting schedule and the targets and how we are tracking against those?

Mr Steel: The tree planting program has seen a significant increase in investment in recent years but in this budget as well. We have trebled the number of trees. It was at 17,000; it is now up to 54,000 funded in the budget up to 2023-24. It is a very substantial increase in tree planting that will set us on a path to reach our canopy cover target of 30 per cent.

We have been undertaking a substantial piece of work looking at room to plant. We have had the people employed under the Jobs for Canberrans fund out there on the streets auditing spaces on verges to make sure that we can identify the places to plant all of these new trees, as well as in our parks. In the budget we have also been able to fund a three-year extension to the adopt-a-park program to support local community groups to plant a lot more trees in a park setting and deliver substantial benefits to their neighbourhoods in terms of cooling their neighbourhood, as well as the biodiversity benefits and all of the other benefits that come from trees.

We are expecting that, as part of this project, we may be able to exceed 54,000 trees, because adopt-a-park is on top of the 54,000 that we will be planting under our own program, and we can get many more thousands of trees planted with the aid of the community. This flows from the urban forest strategy. A key part of that strategy was a partnership with the community to help us deliver the strategy, including the massive tree planting program, as well as caring for our existing trees in the community and the new ones that are planted.

We are hoping that, with the work that is being done across a huge range of communities, with building micro-forests, we will see a lot more of those around the community and new community groups forming and coming together, often with the aid of some of the other groups that have already been involved in projects, and that they will be able to deliver these types of tree planting projects right around Canberra, particularly in areas that have lower canopy cover. We will be identifying those areas through updated lidar analysis that is being undertaken for the ACT government to identify the areas where there is a bit more vulnerability in terms of the effect of climate change and the urban heat island effect.

MR BRADDOCK: I can see the capital line item in the budget for the planting of 54,000 trees, but I cannot see any increases in the recurrent expenditure. I also note the FTE for TCCS is going to be dropping. I want to make sure there are enough resources to ensure that these trees are planted and maintained. Can someone please explain that?

Mr Steel: There is a \$12.15 million increase in expenses over the forwards. That is

where your increase in expenses is. That is for planting those trees.

MR BRADDOCK: Is that recurrent? Will that actually lead to bodies on the ground or is that just the planting capital?

Mr Steel: That is for both. That is the full cost of planting the trees themselves. We cannot capitalise the trees. We have looked at that. It causes a whole range of other problems around depreciation and so forth. It is an expense line and it includes the cost of the tree, the cost of labour to plant it and the work that is done to water the plants up to five years after they are planted. The team and Stephen Alegria may want to provide some further detail about the work that goes into that, because it is substantial. It goes beyond \$15 a tree—I can tell you that—which was, I think, the Liberal Party's costing at the election. It is much higher than that.

Mr Alegria: I acknowledge the privilege statement. What you just said about the cost of trees is exactly right, Minister. Planting on streets, in particular, is a significant exercise both in the pre-planning to identify suitable sites and then making sure, on the ground, that those sites are appropriate. Generally, we plant a larger tree, a more advanced tree, on a street so that it is less vulnerable to damage. Obviously, that has a cost as well because the tree has to be grown from seed up to a certain state. Then there is the after-care, which is critical, in terms of making sure that the tree is watered, that it is mulched and that the stakes are maintained until it is able to stand alone.

Through that, we have to engage with the community. We engage pre-planting to make sure that residents accept the tree and then engage with them to ensure that, if they are able to play a role in maintaining that tree, they can do so. There is a lot of quite intensive effort put into doing that almost bespoke engagement with individual people, but it is essential for success, particularly in the street planting space where residents have that sense of ownership and responsibility for their verge or their nature strip.

In open space areas, there is probably a bit more freedom. We can plant smaller trees. Generally, we will plant native trees in open spaces. They are generally smaller, less expensive tube stock plants. As the minister mentioned, we have the opportunity to engage with the community in a hands-on way, which obviously can be quite cost-effective and also, importantly, gives the community that sense of, I guess, ownership and engagement with their local area.

MR BRADDOCK: To confirm, would this work be undertaken via contract or would it be done by public servants?

Mr Alegria: It is a mix of both. We have developed our own in-house planting crews, which has been a really great opportunity to upskill our existing staff and, indeed, the new staff that have been funded through the budget. Much of the work is done in-house, but there is always an element that will be done through specialised planting contractors, noting that the volume of trees that we are planting is significant and we need to use all available methods of planting those trees and, importantly, maintaining them—for example, watering. We have some in-house resources. We have some watering trucks built specifically for that purpose. We also engage contractors as well

to give us the capacity to maintain the watering across the city and we water those younger trees for several years after they are planted to ensure that they survive.

Mr Steel: Just to be clear on the additional FTE, it is 14.25 additional FTE. It is a significant increase in the number of people that we will have employed helping to grow our tree canopy.

MS LAWDER: Minister, I did want to ask about the play space strategy. It is listed in the priorities to finalise a play space strategy to inform future directions. I note you gave a bit of an update on the better suburbs strategy as well, the progress report. Can you outline the difference between what was identified in the better suburbs strategy and what may be in the play space strategy?

Mr Steel: When we undertook a deliberative democracy process with the better suburbs forum they obviously looked at a range of different city services, one of which was around the provision of play spaces in the community. There was a dedicated play spaces forum, as well, as part of that, which was undertaken, I understand, on a different weekend. They looked at a range of different things around play spaces, but recommended that a play space strategy be developed.

TCCS has been developing a draft strategy which will be released very soon. In the better suburbs progress update today I have outlined what some of the principles and key actions will be in that strategy, which will go out to the community for consultation very shortly. We will be seeking the community's views about what they would like to see for play spaces across the ACT.

Key actions that have been identified are delivering better quality play spaces equitably and sustainably across the play space network, which is, of course, around 515 play spaces currently; making underused play spaces available to the community for more play uses; strengthening the quality and diversity of play experiences for children; ensuring play spaces are accessible for all, so that sort of inclusive element; assessing play value and using this to improve delivery and maintenance of play spaces; and, finally, ensuring play spaces are sustainable and resilient to a changing climate. We will be going to the community with those actions and principles to seek their views about what they would like to see for the future of play spaces in the ACT.

Of course, the budget has delivered a substantial initiative to build new or upgraded play spaces across a range of different suburbs. I expect that in future there will be even more new and upgraded play spaces. This will inform work in new suburbs and greenfield developments, as we build those, and new play spaces there and a range of other play spaces across the community. We are really keen to hear from the community of all ages. I know that Vanessa has done some fantastic work in libraries in consulting with children. We want to consult with children on this one as well, given that the play spaces are for them. That is children of a variety of different ages, because we have heard from some members of the community that they would like to see some greater play space diversity for some of the older age groups.

MS LAWDER: Which playgrounds will be upgraded this year? You also had an election commitment about some play spaces to be upgraded. How did you decide in the election commitment which ones would be upgraded?

Mr Steel: Based on a range of factors and condition audits undertaken by TCCS and obviously community input about what play spaces they would like to see upgraded as well. In terms of the budget, in addition to the standalone initiative on upgrading play spaces, we are upgrading some others. We have to undertake some stormwater upgrades in Narrabundah. As part of that necessary stormwater work, we have to remove the existing playground. We will have to replace that with a new playground. It will provide a significant benefit for the community as well, not just from a stormwater point of view. In relation to the playgrounds themselves, a range of play spaces have been identified. I will hand over to the team to talk through those.

In addition to the play spaces, we have also committed to build new toilets, including at Farrer, which will support the existing play space there. It is also about looking at what other amenities are required to support play spaces. We know, particularly with families, that when they go down to a play space and those amenities are not there it can be quite challenging.

We then have the other initiatives that relate to the upgrading of parks more broadly. The Casey CRIP park is a substantial \$3 million investment to build a new community recreational irrigated park, a district level recreational space. We will be consulting with the community there about additional play equipment as part of that.

In relation to the Tuggeranong lake foreshore project, there is a \$4.8 million investment to upgrade the Tuggeranong foreshore. Again, we will be consulting with the community. Part of that will be looking at: do we need to upgrade the existing play spaces there? Do they want new play spaces as part of that piece of work?

Going to some of the amenities that you would expect to have around play spaces, at Yerrabi Pond there is a \$600,000 commitment in the budget to undertake design on improving infrastructure, new toilets, upgraded toilets, lighting and other facilities that will support the existing play experiences there. There is a lot of work in the budget. It is not just the dedicated play spaces but everything else that supports them in our major parks north to south. Jeremy, did you want to talk through the specific play spaces?

Mr Smith: To go directly to answer the question of the six play spaces which have been identified for investment in the 2021-22 budget, they are in the suburbs of Kaleen, Ngunnawal, Chisholm, Gordon, Lyons and Aranda.

MS LAWDER: How much is allocated in the budget to developing this new strategy?

Mr Steel: I think that has been done within existing resources. Obviously, we have got the funding there for the play spaces that we will be delivering over the next four years, including in the major parks. We do not know what the community will be asking of us. At the same time, as we go out to consultation on the broader strategy, we will be having a conversation with the community in the inner north about district level play space for that community. Again, it was a commitment brought by both the Greens and Labor at the election to establish a new district level play space to serve that community. They have a range of local neighbourhood play spaces, but they do not have a sort of large destination-type playground at the moment. We will be

consulting with them further about what types of experiences they would like to see for children.

MS LAWDER: You have the audits done by directorate staff and you have made some election promises.

Mr Steel: Yes.

MS LAWDER: That is without having a strategy in place, so obviously you have a feel for what the community want already. Why have you not planned ahead, based on all of the information that you currently have?

Mr Steel: We do. We have been upgrading a range of different play spaces over the last term and we will continue to do that over this term. From time to time we need to update our strategies going forward and in consultation with the community. That is the commitment we have given and we are keen to hear from them about what they would like to see in future. Of course, with each project we also undertake extensive consultation with the community about what they would like to see. There is so much in this budget for play spaces.

The other initiative is the shop upgrades, so the work that we have been undertaking in consulting with the community on upgrades at the various shops. Eleven have been funded in the budget. As part of those, the community may say that they want to see play space upgrades. In fact, that is what we have heard at three of the shops where we have been able to undertake that detailed consultation—Duffy, Kaleen Gwydir Square and Campbell. At Kaleen and Duffy there was certainly a lot of feedback around the play spaces there and some upgrades. We will be making further announcements about the final plans as things progress there.

MR PARTON: Minister, are you able to tell us what local shop upgrades will be prioritised in the next 12 months? You mentioned some in that statement. Are there any others that you can fill us in on this morning?

Mr Steel: Yes. Some are more progressed than others in the planning and feasibility and design process. Work was undertaken last term on feasibility work for Duffy, Campbell, Gwydir Square and Kaleen. At the beginning of this term, we undertook consultation with the community on some draft designs that were developed. Those will be the first cabs off the rank. We have already undertaken some consultation with the community for Cooleman Court and what they would like to see on upgrades to Brierly Street. I expect that one will be undertaken relatively early in the term.

Now that we have the funding in the budget, we will be looking at how we prioritise the others and consulting with the community. Obviously, we cannot deliver them all at once; we will be delivering them over the term. We will need to consult with the community and find out the extent and scope of works that they would like to see in each of those locations.

MR PARTON: Will that list include Monash?

Mr Steel: That is one of the local shops that have been identified, yes. There are 11

shop upgrades. There is Brierly Street at Cooleman Court; local shops at Narrabundah; Evatt; Macquarie; Monash; the group centres at Calwell, Lanyon and Kippax; and the new public toilets at Farrer and Florey.

MR PARTON: Why would you upgrade Monash with a supermarket that has been closed for years? If it is not economically viable for a supermarket in Monash, how will improving parking and paving help?

Mr Steel: It is a bit chicken and egg. We have seen it at Fraser shops. At the time that we undertook upgrades, there was not a huge amount of economic activity happening at those shops. We undertook those upgrades. As a result of those upgrades, we have seen new tenants move in and those shops revitalised. The two work hand in hand. If you do not invest in the local shops and the public areas surrounding them, you may not be able to attract tenants into the shops. We are hoping to see that breath of fresh air and revitalisation happen.

Duffy shops are another one. We have heard from the community there that they are concerned that some of the shops are not open at that location. There is a fantastic cafe and coffee roaster there, but not a huge amount else. We are hoping that, with the upgrades there, we will be able to attract new tenancy to those privately owned shops and that they will invest in their properties.

That is important as well. The government does not own a lot of the buildings in these shopping centres; we own the public spaces around them. We are hoping that if we invest in the public spaces, it will encourage the shop owners to invest in their buildings which are in need of repair and revitalisation.

THE CHAIR: Thank you, minister. I think a lot of us have questions on this, but I invite everyone to lodge them on notice because we are running out of time.

Minister, I am really pleased that you have put some money in the budget—\$5½ million—for the material recovery facility. I know that that facility is ageing, and I know that it does not take a lot of the standard packaging that is coming out of our households at the moment. We also have this new FOGO facility planned. Can you just run through what that \$5½ million will be spent on and how it will make sure that both the MRF and the FOGO facility will be able to recycle all of our standard packaging?

Mr Steel: Yes. The work we are doing on the MRF is designed to meet two major challenges. Firstly, the China sword policies—the import bans in jurisdictions like China, Indonesia and other jurisdictions—have meant we have had to rethink the way we undertake recycling. I think that has been a good thing, despite the challenges it presents. Then, also, there has been the agreement between the commonwealth and the states and territories to undertake a waste export ban.

We need to make sure that our MRF is modern and can recycle as much material as possible, and that we reduce contamination levels in our waste streams. As a result of the China sword, we are going to see high standards for our waste streams—for example, in the Tumut paper mill, where our paper and cardboard recycling goes. They have a certain contamination level that they will accept at the moment. That

level of acceptance is likely to become much more stringent in the future as a result of the export ban, so we need to make sure that the level of material we are providing is of higher quality and has lower contamination levels.

We also know that we are not going to be able to easily send stuff like mixed waste overseas to be recycled. The upgrades to the MRF facility are designed to effectively eliminate the mixed plastic stream through better optical sorting technologies and so forth, sorting the different polymers into waste streams that can go onto remanufacturing and so forth.

I will hand over to the team from NoWaste to talk further about what is being planned as part of that piece of work.

Mr Corrigan: I will kick off and then I will pass to Bruce Fitzgerald and Michael Trushell.

The other funding in the budget is for the gate fee. Until the recent China sword, the contract we have with the MRF operator was working well. As the minister mentioned, there has been a COAG agreement, an Australian government agreement.

When countries overseas stopped taking waste from all over the world, that put pressure on the commodity markets in Australia. As a result, we did some further investigation and research, looking at the gate fees around the country and what is plausible and feasible. We talked to the MRF operator. We realised that our gate fee was too low to be viable. So we have increased the gate fee, specifically for the yellow-lidded bin, our domestic kerbside collection. That is the gate fee for those products. The MRF operator is a commercial business and negotiates other gate fees with other councils around the ACT. Anyway, that was all part of the analysis we did. In short, as the minister has outlined, that is an important part of the budget, going forward.

And, as the minister has touched on, we are looking at the MRF upgrades. We are in the procurement design phase for going to market for what that looks like, for the MRF upgrade. We are a city growing towards half a million. The volumes will increase. The building down there was built, I think, around the late 1990s or 2000, around that time. The shed itself at Hume is 20 years old now. So we should be looking at all sorts of capacity issues. We are just now in the process of design procurement and an approach to market to see what the market can deliver for that. That follows from the research we have done.

THE CHAIR: Thank you. It sounds as though contamination rates are going to be the key things for both FOGO and the new MRF. Do you have enough funding and enough FTEs to deliver the education that goes with that? How is that being factored into the budget? Is that in the contract or is that in the budget itself?

Mr Steel: We already have quite a significant number of FTEs within ACT NoWaste that undertake educational activities. The first thing that they will be engaged with is the FOGO trial, which will be the pilot. It will be a production called a trial because we are going to be delivering this to the whole of Canberra, but it is a pilot that will be delivered in the lead-up to the whole-of-Canberra rollout. Education is critical as part

of that. Part of the pilot is making sure that we are really homing in on that education to make sure that people understand the nature of the service and that we get low contamination levels and low contamination rates during the pilot before we release it to the whole of Canberra.

The NoWaste team can talk further about that educational activity and the existing resources they have. I might pass to Bruce, because he is best placed to answer the question on the details.

Mr Fitzgerald: I have read and understood the privilege statement.

I might go to Michael Trushell, who has the background information on education. It is partly funded through the material recovery facility contract. As the minister mentioned, there is also a large portion within NoWaste that has that funding available. I will throw to Michael to provide some of that detail.

Mr Trushell: I have read and understood the privilege statement.

I can talk in a bit more detail about waste education related to yellow bins.

THE CHAIR: Just the line items and how much we have allocated in the budget—how much in the MRF contract, how much in the budget for FOGO, and how much in the FOGO contract. You may not know the FOGO contract yet because we probably do not have it.

Mr Trushell: I do not have those exact figures to hand. The best I could do is describe generally where those revenue sources come from. There is a range of mixing and matching out of different contracts, but we have sufficient flexibility to pivot across the range of government priorities to meet those.

THE CHAIR: We might get you to take that on notice, if that is okay.

Mr Trushell: Yes; no problem.

MS ORR: I want to go back to the FOGO trial and talk about how you are going to be putting that out. It will be rolled out across all of Canberra. There had been a bit of discussion about how it could work in apartment buildings, particularly apartment buildings that do not have green bins or multi-unit apartments. Can you give us an update on where that trial is up to and how it is going to respond to the challenge of multi-unit dwellings?

Mr Steel: Yes. The pilot will be rolled out from November. We have been engaging with multi-unit strata unit title properties about their involvement in the pilot. This is really important for the pilot because the purpose is to make sure that we can implement this successfully in those more complex developments.

These are properties that do not typically do the sort of composting that you might see in a single residential household. A lot of their food scraps are going straight into landfill. Having them participate is really important, but all the different developments have different waste collection areas. We need to engage with each one of them to

make sure that they can participate successfully and that we are doing the right number of collections, depending on the number of people that live there and so forth. I will hand over to the team about the engagement.

That work has already started ahead of the pilot, commencing in Belconnen, Bruce, Cook and Macquarie, where there are quite a lot of large multi-unit developments. That is the reason that area was chosen: it gives a really good mix. It has one of the largest multi-unit developments in Australia, Republic, as well as some single residential households and townhouses. So we can really get a good mix and make sure that this new service can be delivered successfully to a range of different dwellings ahead of us going out broadly across the ACT.

Do you want to add anything, Bruce or Michael?

Mr Trushell: Yes. We are actively engaging with building managers. It is absolutely the most complex part of the trial. We think that this is the area where we will generate the most amount of knowledge, which we can then use for a city-wide rollout. The complexity of waste enclosures and the need to make sure that there is enough space for trucks to have access are things that we are very conscious of.

To date, we have had great engagement from the building managers that we have approached. We have seen a keen interest from people to be involved. We hope that that will continue as we get closer to the trial date. As I said, the complexities around things like truck sizes, the locations of waste enclosures and access for residents are all issues; and each one is unique, because each one of the apartment buildings that we are dealing with is slightly different.

THE CHAIR: Mr Parton, do you have a question?

MR PARTON: I do. It might be silly of me to say this, but I note that Mr Braddock has been here for the whole hearing and has not had a substantive. However, I am happy to proceed with mine.

I want to talk about dog swimming areas. In particular, Minister, I would like to discuss water quality testing in public swimming areas. On the City Services website it lists Yerrabi Pond, Point Hut Pond, the north end of Lake Tuggeranong, Yarralumla Brown Street beach area, and Weston Park as dog swimming areas that are not tested. Can I ask why those locations are not tested?

Mr Steel: I might hand that question to Stephen Alegria to provide some further detail. As broader background, we do consult with the community around dog swimming areas. They change from time to time. We have heard some feedback from the Yarralumla community, for example, about the swimming area at Orana Bay. We will be thinking and talking with the community further about potential changes there. Some locations are well regarded and not necessarily near residential areas, and so are less problematic; but we can get some further detail about the water quality issues.

Mr Alegria: Broadly speaking, the management of water quality in our urban lakes is a shared responsibility across a number of directorates. At TCCS, we are generally responsible for physically removing the litter and foreign objects that get into the

water, as best we can. We are responsible for the signage around swimming areas, both for people and for dogs. Water quality testing itself is largely undertaken through EPSDD and the Health Protection Service, depending on the purpose of the testing—whether it is a safety purpose or an environmental purpose.

MR PARTON: Canberra has previously had dogs suffer from blue-green algae poisoning at listed dog beaches. Given that animals are classed as sentient beings in the ACT, I just wonder why we are failing to prioritise the health of Canberra dogs in this way.

Mr Alegria: We respond to advice about blue-green algae in swimming areas and we have signage that goes up to advise the community that blue-green algae has been detected. We are not necessarily the experts in detecting that; however, as I say, we respond to the advice and provide community information onsite and through various websites. We do our best to inform the community that there is a hazard there for their dogs.

MR PARTON: The website contains a dog owner hazard warning, as you sort of alluded to, noting that sampling conducted in designated swimming areas in the ACT is not applicable to domestic animals. Is any recreational area in the ACT safe for dogs to swim in?

Mr Alegria: There are two main types of testing, as I understand it—and I am not an expert. The human one is around faecal coliforms and bacteria in the water. Then there are the blue-green algae issues. Generally speaking, in a large body of water or in the Murrumbidgee, for example, where you have good flows, you are far less likely to have the blue-green algae-type impacts. Overall, I think that the community is pretty well served with dog swimming areas, and we do our best to inform the community if there are any issues out there.

MR PARTON: But I just hear a question mark hanging over those dog swimming areas where there is not fast-flowing water.

Mr Alegria: I would not say that, Mr Parton. I would just say that our lakes and ponds are subject to a whole range of influences, such as inflows of stormwater. Periodically there are blue-green algae outbreaks. As I say, we just have to do our best to manage them and inform the community.

Mr Steel: I think it is fair to say that if you are informed that there is a blue-green algae outbreak in Lake Burley Griffin, for example, you might want to rethink taking your dog for a swim at Orana Bay. There is a level of common sense that needs to be applied by responsible dog owners. When warnings go out to the community of humans, people might want to also take them into account for dogs, even though dogs have a very different physiological make-up and a different gut biome that probably could handle a bit more than humans can in some circumstances.

I would be taking a commonsense approach and not taking my dog for a swim if there was a blue-green algae outbreak. Responsible dog owners would be taking those things into account; it is not just the responsibility of the ACT government.

THE CHAIR: Mr Parton, does that cover it?

MR PARTON: Yes, it does.

THE CHAIR: Thank you, Minister. We have time for a question from Ms Orr and then we may have time for a question from Mr Braddock.

MS ORR: Here is hoping Mr Braddock gets one for his patience. What can you tell us about the city-wide rollout of the bulky waste service? How that has gone? I believe it is the first year of its commencement.

Mr Steel: Yes. We can provide some up-to-date data on how things have been going. I will hand over to Jim Corrigan and the team to talk through it. It is now available to all suburbs in Canberra. After starting in certain regions, it is now being progressively rolled out. We have seen a really high recovery rate of over 40 per cent, which was much higher than the target that was set in the contract. We are really pleased with what we have been seeing in terms of the recycling of materials.

Mr Corrigan: I might pass to Bruce Fitzgerald to talk about the detail there.

Mr Fitzgerald: As the minister said, the resource recovery rate has been excellent. We originally thought a resource recovery rate of around 30 per cent would be the expectation, but we are now seeing recovery rates of up to 41 per cent. That, for the ACT, has meant that 319 tonnes have been diverted from landfill. To date, we have had nearly 6,000 bulky waste collections. As we continue with the city-wide rollout, it is achieving the outcomes we had hoped for.

THE CHAIR: We have targets of 75 per cent recovery and 85 per cent recovery, leading to 90 per cent over the long term. How does that match up with our recovery rates on bulky waste?

Mr Steel: This is a portion of a waste stream that would otherwise have been going into landfill. People would just go straight to Mugga Lane and our resource management centre and drop it off to go straight into landfill rather than necessarily recycling some of it. Some of it might have been going through the Green Shed. I think people are still really supportive of the Green Shed works and still dropping their material there, at both Mitchell and Mugga.

I think it is fair to say that if this service did not exist, we would see a lot more of that material going straight into landfill and not being reused by the community. The partnerships that we have through this scheme have been really good. We have seen items provided to people who really need them and have identified that they would have that need through GIVIT. GIVIT has been a key partner as part of this process, and that is probably one of the reasons why we are seeing such a high recovery rate. Another reason is the work that is being done through the booking system to identify the items before they are picked up. We can look at what is being picked up and ask whether we can divert some of it to be recycled. We know that before the truck goes out. The new trucks that have been deployed to pick up the bulky waste materials have separated sections for the material that is likely to go into landfill, and then the material that can go for recycling can be stacked. Bruce and the team might have

some further detail there.

Mr Fitzgerald: That is right. It is the social aspect, the benefit that has passed onto the community, that is the real hero of the story. It is something that we continue to work through. The booking system continues to evolve so that we gather that information and make sure that we capture what is being collected and understand how better we can improve some of those recovery rates into the longer term.

THE CHAIR: Mr Braddock, do you have a substantive?

MR BRADDOCK: I do, thank you, Chair. The \$600,000 investment in Yerrabi Pond is well received. However, after talking to the Friends of Yerrabi Pond group, my concern is that their priority is to get a master plan which would direct not just public realm infrastructure investments but also environmental and other investments in the pond. Can the funds be utilised to help develop a master plan for Yerrabi Pond?

Mr Steel: That would see work and tangible improvements to Yerrabi Pond diverted into a document that we can already develop with the group. I am not sure that I would call it a master plan. That has a planning connotation about rezoning and land use, but I am not sure that we are talking about changes to land use here.

MR BRADDOCK: No.

Mr Steel: I think we are talking about identifying with the community what improvements can be made around the lake. The engagement has already been happening with the Friends of Yerrabi Pond. Andrew Forster in TCCS has been the key contact for the group. He has been working with them on, firstly, the allocation of the \$300,000 from the 2021 budget which will go into those immediate improvements, like maintenance and landscaping improvements.

This further \$600,000 came out of discussions with the Friends of Yerrabi Pond and also the broader community engagement in Gungahlin. The community really told us that they wanted to see improved car parking at Yerrabi Pond to be able to access the existing facilities and to see new toilet facilities. It was looking at an upgrade to the existing toilets to provide the full range of facilities and potential expansion, given the number of people we are seeing using the recreational facilities at Yerrabi Pond. Also, it was for a potential new toilet on the other side of the pond for those who are using facilities on that side. There was also work around lighting upgrades around Yerrabi Pond. These are things that have come out of that community consultation, and they are going to be funded in terms of feasibility and design before we head into getting construction funding.

It has come from the community. I think the community want to see tangible improvements right around the lake. We are happy to set those out in a map with the community, mapping what improvements need to be done. But I do not think it is an exercise in changing land use.

MR BRADDOCK: It is not an exercise in changing land use, but it is very much having a single vision, not just for TCCS but also for Environment and other parts of the government, as to what we want Yerrabi Pond to look like in the future and what

are the steps along the way to get there. You have made an announcement about public realm infrastructure as part of that story.

Mr Steel: People have told us that they want those tangible improvements. We are happy to engage in a longer form discussion around the future of the pond, more generally. That goes across directorates, with EPSDD also having a role in the water quality space. Of course, we will continue to undertake the broader work of government.

Stephen Alegria can talk a bit further about the maintenance of Yerrabi Pond and how that fits into our broader program across the territory and in relation to water improvement.

Mr Alegria: Yerrabi is a really important district park facility for the Gungahlin community. It is managed in a similar way to our other high-profile, high-use district parks, where we seek to provide a level of facilities that meets a whole range of community needs. These areas have toilets, barbecues, play spaces, natural open space et cetera. They cater for a whole range of recreational uses.

Earlier you referred to water quality and things like that. That is one of our key objectives: to ensure that water quality is maintained as best it can be. For example, we have buffering vegetation that we retain on the edge of the water to filter out any nutrients or waste that might otherwise enter the lake. We have a lake and pond cleaning program; all lakes and ponds are cleaned, in some cases several times a year. That may include using boats, for example. We really try and maintain the environmental health of the water body but also make sure that the adjacent land and recreational areas are safe and accessible and that it is a pleasant place to be.

We are very conscious, also, of changing community needs. The whole exercise with Yerrabi was a good example of how we are trying to understand the changing needs of the community and respond in an agile way.

THE CHAIR: That brings us to the conclusion of this session. The committee thanks you for your attendance and for your responses. The secretary will provide you with a copy of the transcript and will liaise with you about any questions that were taken on notice.

Short suspension.

Appearances:

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

Transport Canberra and City Services Directorate

Playford, Ms Alison, Director-General

Corrigan, Mr Jim, Deputy Director-General

Smith, Mr Jeremy, Executive Branch Manager, Infrastructure Delivery

Marshall, Mr Ken, Acting Executive Group Manager, City Operations

McHugh, Mr Ben, Deputy Director-General, Transport Canberra and Business Services

Edghill, Mr Duncan, Chief Projects Officer, Major Projects Canberra, Major Projects Canberra

Cahif, Mr Ashley, Project Director, Light Rail, Major Projects Canberra

Navarro, Ms Tania, Senior Director, Communications and Engagement, Major Projects Canberra

THE CHAIR: This is our session on Budget Output 1.1: Transport Canberra and Major Projects Canberra. I welcome everybody. Please state your name and the capacity in which you appear the first time you speak. Also state that you have read and understand the privilege statement. As you know, the privilege statement protects the witness, but also obliges the witness to tell the truth. The provision of false and misleading evidence is a serious matter. All participants are reminded of this today.

I will begin with a question about electric bus procurement. We understand that the New South Wales government is transitioning their fleet to be fully electric by 2030. We are keen to see this happening quite soon here, too. We are wondering if TCS has done a calculation about how much diesel they use and how much they are spending on that diesel, which might assist you in making some financial decisions to change to this position quicker. There are 10,500 million litres of diesel fuel going into that fleet, and it looks to us as if that might be a very good argument to transition a little faster than we currently have planned. What is your view on that?

Mr Steel: Thank you. Chris Steel, Minister for Transport and City Services. I acknowledge and have read the privilege statement. We are currently in the market to procure 90 electric buses and, in addition to that, 34 new buses which will be leased, to replace some of our ageing fleet, particularly DDA non-compliant diesel buses, which do not meet any Euro standards. That work is being undertaken at the moment. I will ask the team to give an update on where the procurement is up to, obviously taking into account the probity with those procurements.

This is part of the work that the government is undertaking under our zero-emissions plan for Transport Canberra. It is a very substantial plan that sees not only the purchasing of new electric buses but also the putting in place of the required infrastructure to support them. And that is critical. You cannot run electric buses unless you actually have the electric charging infrastructure, the network capacity, to support them. So that is the work that is underway. You would have seen in the budget initiatives that it is being supported through upgrades at the Woden depot, as

part of the establishment of a new depot there.

Work will also be undertaken to design a fourth bus depot for the north-side, which is envisaged to be a fully electric depot, and will be able to support the charging of more vehicles. So you need to carefully match the network capacity and infrastructure with the number of buses. I will hand over to Ben McHugh, to provide some further detail there about where the procurement is up to and the work that is being undertaken as part of the Zero Emissions Steering Group, which comprises experts from around the country and overseas to help inform a transition.

I will just make a point about New South Wales. They are looking at quite an ambitious transition as well. That is something that we have been working closely with them on, in terms of the lessons we can go through in both of our processes. But they have a very different transport system to ours; they have privatised their public transport system. So the work that they are doing to transition their fleet is with the private providers there, whereas we are undertaking to transition our public fleet. Ben can provide some further detail.

Mr McHugh: Ben McHugh, Deputy Director-General of Transport Canberra and Business Services. I acknowledge that I have read and understood the privilege statement.

Thanks for the question, Ms Clay. To expand on the minister's response, in 2021 Transport Canberra, through the establishment of a Zero Emissions Steering Committee, developed a zero-emissions transition plan for the public transport fleet. That took in advice and understanding from other jurisdictions around the world, using experts from both here in Australia and around the world, to inform what would be an appropriate transition plan for the Canberra context. It looked at a variety of transition scenarios. A lot of that was based on availability—where technology was at, the availability of energy supply and other things.

That transition plan was published late last year. If you have not read it, I would recommend it. It explains in a lot of detail all of the various steps that the government will need to take to achieve the zero emissions outcome for public transport that it has committed to. The first step of that process is to start to replace our ageing bus fleet, particularly the areas of the bus fleet that do not meet any emissions standards, and then move through the fleet and gradually replace the diesel buses that meet the current low emission standards that have been applied.

That includes the procurement of 34 replacement buses. The tenders for those were called on 3 June this year and closed in the middle of July. We are currently in the evaluation process of that particular tender and hope to have a decision made by the delegate, and for announcement, in the not-too-distant future. The second step that the minister mentioned is the procurement of 90 battery electric buses. In that procurement process, the market-sounding has been completed and we are in the final stages of documenting the requests for tender documentation, which will go out to those interested parties that have registered with the ACT government in the not-too-distant future as well. We expect buses from both of those tenders to arrive and be operating on our network in 2022.

The minister also mentioned the other key elements of the transition plan which are critical to the success of this plan—being our people, and making sure our people are appropriately trained, qualified and ready to operate this new technology within our existing facilities; but also having space to house these buses as they come into the fleet. Woden depot has been identified to house the bulk of the first round of procurement of electric buses. Then over time, as the transition plan sets out, we will start to retrofit the existing depots and build a new fourth all-electric depot, which is currently identified for West Belconnen.

In terms of the question around time frames, we will continually monitor, update and refresh the transition plan as we learn more about technology as the technology embeds itself in the fleet. Obviously, the government will keep monitoring its progress against the zero emissions future.

THE CHAIR: It is great to hear that you are continually updating. I am assuming that those continual updates will also factor in the rising cost of diesel and the new social cost of carbon here?

Mr McHugh: Absolutely. As part of the transition plan, all of the existing operation costs and environmental impacts are modelled. We are constantly monitoring that, and it would be fair to say that not just the environmental impacts but the economic impacts as the cost of diesel continues to rise, will inform our future decisions.

MS ORR: With the diesel buses switching to electric, what will be the difference for people and drivers using the buses?

Mr Steel: That is a good question. I think that the key difference for those customers who are using our bus network will be a much quieter, more comfortable ride. They really do not make much sound and they also do not release all of that PM2.5 particulate matter into the atmosphere and other noxious gases, which do have a health effect. It is estimated that just under 5,000 people a year die as a result of those emissions into the atmosphere from petrol and diesel vehicles right around Australia. The failure of the federal government in not implementing Euro 6 standards in Australia has certainly contributed to that level of disease and the public health impact.

It is critical that we transition, not just for the benefits of reducing our impact on greenhouse gas emissions from transport emissions—which is our largest source of emissions now in the ACT—but also for health reasons. We do not want people standing at a bus interchange breathing in the dirty black fumes coming out of diesel buses. This is going to provide a much better experience for people using our bus systems in the future, and it will provide a much quieter environment on our roads, particularly where buses are transiting around residential areas. So there are significant benefits. Were there any other things that you had in mind?

MS ORR: No, that answers my question. Sorry, Minister, did you answer my question in relation to drivers, and what we are doing to make sure drivers are comfortable?

Mr Steel: I will hand over to Ben to talk about that. A number of drivers had the opportunity to test some of the electric buses and hybrids that we have been running

over the last couple of years as part of trials, so they are somewhat familiar with them. I think they have generally transitioned quite well and been supportive.

Mr McHugh: Absolutely, the drivers will require some additional training, as driving an electric bus has some differences to driving a diesel bus, particularly in the way that you accelerate and brake, given the different way that the power is supplied to the bus. There is some training required there but the benefit of the new technology means that we will have a whole range of data analytics to monitor the way that the buses are operating on every one of their routes and services to optimise that energy use. And we can use that to provide feedback to the particular drivers on how they might get the best out of the bus.

As the minister mentioned, the reduction in noise is another key component that will provide us with opportunities to use buses, potentially in some of the denser, urbanised areas where the noise and fumes from the buses has become problematic over time as that densification has occurred. So reintroducing buses into more highly urbanised areas, where the people are and where they want access to public transport, should be an opportunity that we see in the planning context as we move forward.

THE CHAIR: Mr Parton, did you have a supplementary question?

MR PARTON: I just wanted to ask how much the delay to the completion of the upgrade of Woden bus depot has contributed to this time line in regard to securing electric buses over diesel? My understanding is that initially it was promised to be finished in 2019. So if it were completed, and if it were able to provide that infrastructure for the electric buses, would that necessarily mean that we would not then be securing any more diesel buses?

Mr Steel: No. What we have learned through this process and the work that has been undertaken by the steering committee is that it is actually quite challenging to retrofit electric charging infrastructure in the depots. That is the issue that we have at Tuggeranong and Belconnen at the moment, where capacity at the grid of those locations, and the retrofitting of infrastructure, is not going to enable us to have a large number of buses at those locations.

We have done some quite detailed energy analysis to support the level of buses that we can have at each of those depots. In relation to Woden, rather than just build something that was not going to be fit for purpose for electric infrastructure, we have been undertaking that analysis and we have since changed the scope of that project to enable the electric charging infrastructure as part of the design from stage 1. Once it is up and running, it will be able to support these 90 electric buses that come online.

At the first stage, 50 will be supported through that and then it will have the capacity, because of the design work that has now been done, to expand. If we had built it just for diesel buses, we would actually be in a much worse position in terms of being able to support the electrification of the fleet. The two pieces of work have been going hand in hand and now—with the further funding that we have in order to undertake the planning for a fourth depot—that is going to be critical in enabling us to transition to a much larger fleet of electric buses in the future. Ben and Jeremy Smith can expand on where Woden depot is up to in terms of work done and works underway.

Mr McHugh: Thanks, Minister. To answer the question, Mr Parton, the delay in the procurement of the electric buses was to allow us to complete the zero-emissions transition plan in 2021, which informed the time frames of our fleet replacement and our strategy, moving forward. The delay at Woden has not had an impact on that at this stage. At the Woden depot we are in a contract with a construction company, at the moment, which is finalising the designs to incorporate the electrification of that depot. We expect to sign the construction component of that contract in the very near future and then have that depot ready to house large volumes of the electric buses from the procurement of the 90 which I mentioned previously, as they come on board.

The other component to all of this is market capacity and the provision of electric buses in the time frames that we are looking at. We are also looking at how we compete for access to the best market providers, which are also providing for other, larger jurisdictions. New South Wales was mentioned earlier; it has large orders coming through, as well. We have to make sure that we manage that, but in terms of the infrastructure, Woden has not delayed the procurement of buses.

Mr Steel: Just to clarify, Ben, when you were talking about a delay, you were talking about Woden bus depot, not the delay in the procurement of electric buses. What we have seen during the development of the plan is that technology has matured over time, so we are now at a really good place compared to where we were when we ran the first trials of electric buses and hybrids, in terms of the availability of new models on the market from a variety of different manufacturers, including many which are building electric buses in Australia. I think that we are very well placed with the timing of the procurement to have a really good response. Obviously the details of that are subject to the procurement process, which is underway, and we are looking forward to updating the community when we can on the outcomes of that process.

THE CHAIR: Thank you, Minister. Thank you, Mr Parton. Mr Parton, do you have a substantive question?

MR PARTON: I do. Minister, I wonder if I can refer to the interim timetable for Action buses which is currently running. I understand it came into effect on 25 August and, of course, this involved some service cutbacks. My understanding is that that decision was made completely on the basis of driver shortages due to COVID. Is that a correct assessment of that or were there other factors affecting that cut-back decision?

Mr Steel: That is the major decision-making point. We have had a business continuity plan in place for COVID-19 that has been in existence now for a very long time—virtually since the start of the pandemic. It took into account that, as a result of requirements to quarantine under public health orders, there could be an impact on the level of driver availability, which could have an impact on the reliability of bus services on the network. Last year that did not actually transpire because the ACT—as a result of good management of the pandemic by our public health officials and elected officials, and also as a result of a bit of luck, no doubt—did not experience a huge number of cases. So we did not have to scale back any bus services last year, which was fantastic, and we were one of the few cities in the world that actually kept on our services. In fact, we increased them in a network change that happened in that

year as well. So we actually increased the number of services that we were delivering during the pandemic, especially light rail services. That helped people to spread out on buses and so forth, if they were taking them, with more bus services available.

As part of the business continuity plan, though, for Transport Canberra, we always envisaged that if necessary—because of drivers not being available because of quarantine requirements, if they were close contacts and so forth—we could step down the level of service being provided to a slightly lower level of frequency whilst still maintaining the service. This is a critical essential service for the community; there are essential workers in health care and so forth that need to use public transport to get to where they need to go, to deliver the critical services during the pandemic.

So when we experienced the very high case load in the ACT this year, we did start to see a number of drivers who were needing to quarantine, and the risk got to a level where we made the decision to transition to an interim timetable. This timetable is based on the holiday timetable, so it was one that was known and already established. That was done at a time when schools were not doing face-to-face learning. Now that they are coming back, face to face, we have had to factor in the provision of the school services in addition to that interim timetable. The number of services that we are delivering allows us a level of flexibility to ensure that we can deliver a reliable service according to the timetable whilst a portion of our workforce may be required to quarantine.

Now, as we move into opening up from the lockdown, we are expecting to see a higher case load; and whilst the public health approach from officials has changed in relation to casual contact sites and so forth—and I note that if you are catching public transport that will not be considered to be a casual contact—we may still see bus drivers, for just as many reasons as you can imagine in the community, becoming close contacts. Where they are part of a family, where the child has COVID-19, they may be a close contact and they will not be able to work. We are taking into account that potentially up to 10 per cent of the workforce could at some point be quarantining. This gives us a bit of flexibility whilst also maintaining a reliable timetable. Of course, under—

MR PARTON: Minister, can I just interrupt you briefly. In your April 2021 transport recovery plan you highlighted that full timetable running would allow for better social distancing and support for essential workers reliant on public transport. You have sort of covered that off a little in your answer.

Mr Steel: Yes.

MR PARTON: We officially came out of lockdown on Friday. We are officially out of lockdown, so I guess I am trying to understand why you have indicated that it would be safer in these circumstances for us to have full timetables, but on the Transport Canberra website today there is no indication as to when the interim timetable will cease. Is there another problem here? Is there a problem with driver numbers? I do not understand why we are still on an interim timetable.

Mr Steel: Because the pandemic is not over. Despite what Alistair Coe said last year, we expect that there will be—

MR PARTON: Are we out of lockdown or are we still in it?

Mr Steel: We are still in the pandemic and there are going to be people—

MR PARTON: Are we out of lockdown?

Mr Steel: In the community, there is going to be an increase in the number of cases, so we expect that our workforce, not only in Transport Canberra but in every other workforce across the ACT, will be affected by people who may be close contacts and therefore will not be able to come into work. Now, this is a service where the service has to be delivered; it cannot be delivered from home. You cannot drive a bus on a PC from home. You actually have to do it in a bus driving around Canberra. We expect that there will be some people who cannot do that because they will be quarantining.

MR PARTON: What is the current proportion of total driver workforce that is available for vehicle operation compared with the level three weeks prior to 25 August? That is what I would like to know. I understand that you may have to take that on notice, but that is a very clear question. What is the current proportion of the total driver workforce available for vehicle operation compared with the level three weeks prior to 25 August? I think that is an important question.

Mr Steel: We can certainly take that on notice. Ben and Alison might want to provide some further detail about our workforce planning here. It has been part of a business continuity plan that has been part of our planning for the pandemic response, which is not over; and the risk level of people needing to quarantine will increase now that the lockdown has ended. So we actually think, going forward, that there could be more significant impacts on our driver workforce and, indeed, our maintenance workforce as well.

THE CHAIR: Ms Orr?

MS ORR: Can I have a supplementary question, unless Ms Playford wants to finish.

Ms Playford: I am Alison Playford, Director-General, Transport Canberra and City Services, and I have read the privilege statement. I think I omitted to do that for the previous session, but you can take it as read. I just thought I would add that an additional pressure in relation to Transport Canberra has been providing some additional support to ACT Health, as the minister mentioned earlier, in relation to our library staff. Our Transport Canberra staff have provided a number of additional services; for example, the shuttle to the airport vaccination centre and moving people who have been infected by COVID—families et cetera—to alternative accommodation et cetera. So there has been, on top of our normal network, an additional service that Transport Canberra has been providing. I just thought I would add that.

Mr McHugh: I might just add a little bit, as well, to Mr Parton's question on the impacts on the workforce. We saw up to around 10 per cent of our driver workforce impacted by association with exposure sites and contact centres during the lockdown period, and that provided an operational risk on the reliability of our services. We do

not have that many available staff as spares waiting to be replaced, so that was one of the operational reasons why the interim timetable was brought in.

Just to be clear on the interim timetable, it is still a high-frequency timetable without school services provided. So Rapid services in the interim still operate at around the 10-minute frequency, which is very similar to the normal timetable; and the local services run at around 30-minute frequency, which is also very similar to the local. So there is not a significant impact on the number of services that are on the road for commuters without the school services in that network.

The other thing that we are very conscious of, and which we monitor, is the capacity and loadings of each of the buses that are on a route at any point in time. With such a significant drop in patronage levels, the social distancing ability for the people who do need to use transport was able to be accommodated on the interim network, which gave us a level of confidence that we were still meeting the public health objectives. But the primary reason for the interim network was also to ensure reliability. Opening up those driver slots and removing the school services primarily gave us the confidence that we would not be leaving people behind by a drop in services.

MS ORR: That is touching on what I was going to ask about—the frequency of the services that you have been running and the impact we have seen from that service provision. Can you also run through what you have been doing to make sure that the network is as safe as possible for people to use, and for them to have confidence in using the public transport system? I note that we are moving into a new phase of the COVID pandemic; how are you doing all of the planning? Do you have a task force? Are you working with ACT Health? How are you coordinating this so that, as the situation evolves and changes, you can best respond to make sure that our public transport system stays safe to use for those who need it?

Mr Steel: I will hand over to Alison and Ben to run through the variety of measures that we have.

Ms Playford: I will hand over to Ben for details about Transport Canberra. At a directorate level, we have an emergency management committee that has been meeting very regularly throughout this pandemic. We engage regularly, through forums of directors-general, with ACT Health and the Chief Health Officer, around the settings and to ensure that our business continuity plans have been regularly assessed. We are continually scenario planning what the future might hold for us and making adjustments right across to ensure both the safety of our workforce and the safety of our customers in a range of things. I will hand over to Ben to talk specifically about how Transport Canberra has fed into that broader process that has been operating across government, as we have considered the impacts on customers and our staff through the pandemic.

Mr McHugh: At various levels within government there are coordination groups that include representatives of ACT Health and Canberra Health Services, all of which are feeding information in to the decision-making working groups and steering committees, with different decision-makers. With respect to other key elements, there were contributions from the Education Directorate as well, on their planning around schooling.

All of this feeds in to our network planning team. We have a public transport network planning team who are constantly looking at ways to improve and optimise the public transport network. Obviously, there is testing of that network regarding the level of COVID-related risk and what the situation would be. How could we provide public transport if half of our workforce was affected by a massive outbreak, for example? They are constantly interrogating and designing solutions to make sure that we can continue to provide a service. All of that is fed, obviously, from the public health perspective. We take all of that advice on board and develop networks.

In terms of the customer confidence piece, Ms Orr, that is absolutely critical for us. As part of our recovery plan, we know customer confidence will be one of the most important things when it comes to encouraging people back onto public transport as the pandemic eases and as it is safer for people to travel a bit more frequently.

Cleaning is the obvious one. We ramped up our cleaning of buses to a daily cleaning regime back at the start of the pandemic, and we have been continuing to do that. Communication is the other key element—encouraging bus passengers and light rail passengers to travel, potentially, on shoulder peak services or outside the peak to avoid crowding on particular vehicles. As I said earlier, with the patronage numbers dropping so much, that was not such an issue for us, but, as we return to public transport and to workplaces, we know that will be something that needs to be managed.

To communicate that, we have been publishing the capacity numbers of our rapid services on our website for some time. People can see where the busy buses are likely to be. If they want to avoid a crowded bus, they can choose an alternative service. As I said earlier, the rapids have been continuing to run at a higher frequency, at around 10 minutes or shorter in some cases. Continuing to provide reminders about public health and safety on buses, making sure that if you are unwell you do not travel, and how to keep yourself hygienic are also key parts.

MS ORR: Is it fair to say that there has been a lot of work done, and it continues to be done, on responding to the health requirements, to keep our city safe while still providing a pretty close to normal frequency of service?

Mr McHugh: Yes; correct.

MS ORR: While we are talking about disruptions to things, I want to talk to you about all of the work you are doing to support light rail construction. What planning is going into that, and how can we expect to see the transport network supported as we go through that construction and that city-shaping project?

Mr Steel: I will hand over to Alison to lead off. The work that is being undertaken is part of the Disruption Taskforce. This is a piece of work across government agencies that is being undertaken to look at the variety of impacts associated with major construction projects. It is not just light rail; there is also the \$150 million augmentation of the Commonwealth Avenue bridge being undertaken by the NCA, and a range of other private projects around the city as well. It is about looking at what we need to do across network demand management and infrastructure upgrades

to mitigate that disruption as much as possible.

We have just made an announcement about some augmentation to improve traffic flow on Parkes Way, particularly by adding signals at the Coranderrk roundabout, which is already a major bottleneck in our traffic network during normal times. Certainly, during the disruption phase, we expect to have a much larger volume of traffic. The signals will ensure that, particularly for traffic eastbound in the morning, they will have greater priority at that intersection. Hopefully, it will improve traffic around the network.

There will be a range of announcements made about other measures that the government will be taking, working with partners around the community on how we can ensure that people feel supported during this process. We are, of course, working closely with business as well. I have met with many business groups already. I am also looking forward to meeting with several business roundtables over the next few months, in order to work closely with businesses that are directly on the light rail route itself, particularly on London Circuit, as well as businesses beyond that scope across Canberra who may be interested in or impacted by the disruption. It is about making sure that they have the information that they need, that we are listening to them and responding to the issues they are raising and implementing appropriate measures to support people.

Transport will be a big part of that. With public transport, there are a number of rapid routes that currently run over Commonwealth Avenue bridge. Planning for the construction work associated with raising London Circuit and light rail has certainly taken that into account, and the need to make sure that we continue to have good services running into the city across Commonwealth Avenue bridge.

We are also looking at a range of measures we can take to encourage people to use public transport, because it is a great way of moving large numbers of people efficiently through the network. We are hoping we will be able to encourage more people to take up that option, especially if they can get a clearer run into the city than they would otherwise do in a private vehicle.

I will hand over to Alison to talk a bit more about the Disruption Taskforce.

Ms Playford: I am currently steering that task force, which is a cross-government task force of not only traditional road engineers but also our comms people and project managers. It is about recognising that, over the next five years, as well as the light rail project, which was initially referred to, there is quite a lot of commonwealth and ACT government development, as well as private development, that we expect to be happening in the city. It is about making sure that we have a coordinated effort to ensure that we can, to the best of our ability, mitigate some of those impacts on people, and communicate well.

We are operating under a set of principles. We are looking to intervene as far upstream within the transport network as possible. We are looking at this as an opportunity also to drive lasting behaviour changes and a potential mode shift to both public transport and active travel that might come from this period.

We are also looking at how we can communicate clearly, frequently, effectively and early to ensure that people are aware of what to expect and what options there are. Most importantly, it is about making sure that we are working collaboratively across all of the different workstreams.

We have four working groups that are currently operating and developing options for government. The disruption and risk identification working group is doing a lot of traffic modelling and scenario planning to come up with options like the one the minister referred to. An early one that has been identified is the one at Coranderrk.

They might involve infrastructure, but they might also involve things like sequencing of traffic lights, putting in some more smart technology so that we have better information to inform people—the bluetooth technology that we use—and a whole range of things.

We have a behaviour change working group, which is looking at some of that broader research into modes of transport and what it might take to shift people's modes of transport. It is looking at developing customer plans, our park-and-ride strategy, active travel plans et cetera. We have a partnership development working group. The minister referred to that engagement with businesses who might be impacted by these projects and how we can engage with them effectively and communicate well. There is a community information and communications working group, because all of these will ultimately come together with good communication.

The working groups will be dynamic, and the membership will change. We have engaged with police and emergency services on a number of the working groups, as well as our colleagues in the Chief Minister's department, the planning department, the CRA, and within Transport Canberra and Major Projects Canberra—both policy officers and whole-of-government communications officers. That is, at the broad level, what the task force is doing. I am conscious of the time.

THE CHAIR: I have a very brief supplementary that you can take on notice. I want to know how much funding and how many FTEs are going into the active transport behaviour change programs and education as we have this disruption point, to shift people out of their cars.

Mr Steel: That is probably pre-empting the work that is underway at the moment to look at the measures. I suspect that there will be further announcements in the future about that, as that work continues. There is funding in the budget to do some of the disruption planning that will then lead on to a lot of those initiatives. Of course, the Coranderrk infrastructure upgrades have been funded in the budget as well. We will have further announcements to make under each of those streams as work progresses.

THE CHAIR: We will look forward to that.

MR PARTON: What will the impact be on travel times from the south side to the city during the various phases of light rail stage 2A construction? Additionally—and I am not sure whether I heard you alluding to this and I have missed some detail—what will the bus priority measures be to ensure that buses do not get stuck in traffic on Parkes Way, Constitution Avenue or Commonwealth Avenue?

Mr Steel: In relation to buses, the work of the Disruption Taskforce is ongoing and we will make further announcements, particularly about what we are doing with public transport. The initial planning that is underway—and MPC officials may wish to contribute to this answer—is to ensure that there continue to be those rapid bus services, particularly on Commonwealth Avenue. During the raising of London Circuit in particular, whilst the overpasses on Commonwealth Avenue over London Circuit are demolished, one at a time, there will be a period of contraflow. There will be some sort of contraflow arrangement whereby you will have vehicles running in both directions across the same bridge, rather than two. That will reduce capacity by up to 80 per cent on Commonwealth Avenue. We are looking at how we can make sure that buses can still operate under that contraflow arrangement to get access to the city.

We have also announced that we will be temporarily signalling Vernon Circle. That will enable buses in particular to make right-hand turn movements from Commonwealth Avenue onto Constitution Avenue, then onto London Circuit to do their usual run in to the city interchange. That work is already underway in planning. Once we have a delivery partner on board—the procurement process is currently underway for the raising of London Circuit and stage 2A—then we will be able to understand the delivery time frame in a lot more detail.

I will hand over to Ash from MPC to provide some further detail in relation to that. Ben and the team can then provide some detail about what is happening in relation to planning for buses.

MR PARTON: If there is a specific indication of impact on travel time, we would all like to hear it.

Mr Edghill: I might jump in first, before passing to Ash. In terms of buses, as the minister mentioned, we are definitely working very closely with TCCS to ensure that the buses can continue to run appropriately.

In terms of travel times, particularly associated with the raising of London Circuit, I do not have the figures in front of me, but it very much depends upon whether you are talking about am or pm, which direction, and your origin and destination. There are various permutations that we have looked at. That will form part of the works approval application information which has been provided to the NCA. That will be made public once the NCA has undertaken its completeness checks. That information will be forthcoming, publicly, shortly.

Mr Cahif: I acknowledge that I have read the privilege statement and accept it. Following on from Duncan's statement, the raising of London Circuit works approval application will contain the documentation, including traffic impact assessment, through the construction for the raising of London Circuit. The work in relation to stage 2A specifically will follow on as part of the works approval application and further traffic studies that are done. Part of it also depends on the staging and methodology used there. That is something that continues to be worked through as we go through the procurement for raising London Circuit.

THE CHAIR: Mr Parton, do you want to lodge that information on notice?

MR PARTON: Yes, if it is possible to take that on notice. Mr Edghill, I know, referred to some data that he said he did not have in front of him, and we certainly accept that that is the case. Is it possible, on notice, for us to ask for that data regarding traffic impact and travel time impact? If we could receive that on notice, that would be wonderful.

Mr Steel: We are not planning on making announcements during this time, but once that information can be made available publicly it will be, in relation to the works approval.

MR PARTON: So the answer is no?

Mr Steel: It will be made available as part of that works approval. I suspect the timing of that will be, hopefully, before the end of your inquiry.

MR PARTON: Are you saying it will be in coming days?

Mr Steel: For the works approval for raising London Circuit.

MR PARTON: Will that include the traffic impact data?

Mr Steel: For raising London Circuit, yes.

MR PARTON: But not for the entire project?

Mr Steel: No. There is further work that needs to happen in relation to planning for stage 2A. We expect that the raising of London Circuit will probably be the most disruptive element of the project in its entirety, because we are literally talking about demolishing bridges on a major arterial road. We expect that it will have a significant impact on traffic. That analysis will be made available as part of the works approval process which will go on public exhibition for the community to view.

MR PARTON: Minister, in closing, let me get this straight: you have the data regarding traffic impact, but you are not prepared to release it on notice as part of this hearing?

Mr Steel: No, we are prepared to release it and it will be provided publicly for everyone to have a look at; the committee can look at it as well.

MR PARTON: For the entire project or just for the raising of London Circuit?

Mr Steel: This is for the raising of London Circuit works approval.

MR PARTON: What about for the entire project?

Mr Steel: We are continuing to undertake analysis of the project as it goes forward. As I said, we will better understand the construction delivery program once we have the delivery partners on board. We will be able to provide further analysis once the

project gets to that point. Constant analysis is being done as part of the Disruption Taskforce's work, to plan for the bus network as well. We will have further announcements to make about the operation of the bus network in that regard.

MS LEE: I want to take up the line of questioning about the works at the bus interchange. In the budget papers the CIT Woden campus and the bus interchange are all part of one line item. Why is that the case, and what component of the budget belongs to, or can be attributed to, the CIT Woden campus and what component is attributed to the bus interchange?

Mr Steel: This is an integrated project. It is being delivered by Major Projects Canberra, which is closely communicating with TCCS as well. We wanted to make sure that, as we developed this major anchor project for the revitalisation of Woden town centre, we had really good connections between the new campus and the new transport interchange, which includes the new light rail stop that was also funded in the budget. We will be building that light rail stop in preparation for light rail stage 2B coming in there. In the interim it will be used as a rapid bus stop as well.

We have already procured a partner for what is known as package 1 and 2. Package 1 is the layover work, which is under construction as we speak. Package 2 will commence shortly, with the procurement partner there. The procurement is still underway for the CIT package. As part of this, we want to make sure that there is great integration between the two. We think that is critical to the project. I will hand over to Duncan Edghill and MPC to provide some further detail about the project.

MS LEE: Just before you do that, Minister, is it that you do not know what the components are, or that you have never asked? Why is it that there is no transparency about what figure is attached to the campus and what figure is attached to the interchange, whilst acknowledging that it might be an integrated project?

Mr Steel: The first important thing is that we have not gone through the procurement for package 3, which is the CIT itself, at this stage. Until we have gone through that procurement process, we will not have the actual cost of the project.

MS LEE: Does that mean the entire figure that is there can be attributed to the bus interchange?

Mr Steel: No. I will hand over to Duncan Edghill. Obviously, a lot of design work has been underway with the CIT for some time.

Mr Edghill: Without having it open in front of me, I understand that, in terms of the interchange, the layovers and the contracts associated with those, they go onto the contracts register, and it should be public, anyway. That does not include the amount that the ACT government holds for its own contingency and other associated costs with the project.

In terms of the overall breakdown of the budget, that was included in the business case. The minister and cabinet have visibility as to what our budget assessments are. The government has made a decision not to provide that detail ahead of, and while we are in the middle of, procurement processes. With the main facility, for example, we

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are in the middle of the procurement process now and we have received the two RFT responses. The next stage in that process—which will last from now until the end of the year; then early in the new year we go through our cabinet approval processes—will involve us assessing the tender bids that have come in. There may be a degree of negotiation associated with that.

In order to protect the commercial interests of the territory, the government has made a decision, on our recommendation, that now is not the right time to be showing the totality of each component, including our contingency, because that has the potential effect of conditioning the market, and they can see what our hand is.

Consistent with other procurement processes that we have run, government does have visibility of the breakdown. The contracts do go onto the public contracts register as they are signed. But in advance of completing the procurement process for the main CIT facility itself, and indeed in terms of the phase 2 negotiations that we are going through for the interchange project, we are not intending to signal to the market what our total budget is at this point in time.

MS LEE: Will that be released then, once the procurement process is finished? Is that the timing? I can see that the minister is nodding.

Mr Steel: That is correct.

MS LEE: In terms of the February budget, if I can take you to that, the estimated spending for the project was \$11.26 million. What was the final expenditure for that year?

Mr Edghill: Which document are you referring to, Ms Lee?

MS LEE: If you look at the February budget, it had an estimated \$11.26 million set aside. I want to know what was actually expended.

Mr Edghill: We are checking the documents now, Ms Lee.

MS LEE: If it helps at all, Mr Edghill, it is on page 9 of budget statements I from the February budget.

Mr Edghill: I might need to take that on notice, while we bring up the February—

MS LEE: Is that okay? I know you are coming back this afternoon. Will that be enough time for you?

Mr Edghill: I am not sure whether I am back this afternoon, Ms Lee. I am back on a number of occasions with other ministers. We will beaver away now and see what we can find.

MS LEE: Finally, in the February budget, the expenditure for this year was \$53.04 million, and now it is \$39 million. Can you give us the reasons for the difference and whether this project had any exemptions from the COVID restrictions at all?

Mr Edghill: Minister, are you happy for me to answer that?

Mr Steel: Yes, thank you.

Mr Edghill: What has moved between February and now, particularly with the layovers and the interchange contract, is that we have now run through the procurement process and we have the constructor's anticipated construction time line. That has helped to shape what has gone into the budget numbers for August this year. The project itself remains on track and work is well underway, but in terms of apportioning the cashflows between financial years, that is what has moved between February and now.

MS LEE: The total project figure has not moved; it has just been apportioned differently?

Mr Edghill: Yes.

MS LEE: What about the second part of the question, about whether there were any COVID exemptions?

Mr Edghill: For this particular project, there were no COVID exemptions that I am aware of in terms of the project continuing during lockdown. The CIT Woden project went on pause during the period of the broader construction lockdown. I think it was 3 September when ACT government projects generally, and other projects in the market, were able to come online, and this project came back online. If the question was around cross-border worker exemptions—I am not sure whether that was the question—I would not have the details to hand. The project definitely was in that two-week hiatus.

MS ORR: With this project, because it is quite a big one for the Woden area and quite a significant renewal driver for that area, what input has the community had into consultation so far? Given that we are still progressing through the project and there is still quite a bit to go, what input would we be looking to have from the community as we continue works?

Mr Steel: There has been substantial engagement on the project thus far. We are intending to undertake a significant period towards the end of the year, which will give the opportunity for the community to provide their views on package 3, which is the CIT campus itself, particularly some of the public spaces around that and how it integrates with the interchange project. I will hand over to MPC, and particularly Tania, to talk through the level of communication engagement that we have done to date and what we are planning.

Ms Navarro: To date, we have had quite a bit of engagement on the interchange—in particular, the pre-DA engagement that we did earlier this year. We did 11 pop-ups during that event, we did 21 in-depth stakeholder briefings, we conducted surveys and we had one-on-one conversations.

Moving forward, we have just completed an engagement on the Bowes-Bradley

connection that is planned. We have a report coming out on that in the next month or so. Later this month we will be starting another round of community engagement, mainly virtual, due to the lockdown. During that process we will be gathering surveys and we will be doing online polls to find out what the community wants to see in that public realm area of the project. Online we will have a series of about four polls and surveys, and we will be gathering that feedback during October and November.

Mr Steel: That work will feed into the detailed design that is undertaken by the successful tenderer for package 3.

MS ORR: I want to get more of an idea of how the two projects, the interchange and CIT, will be managed, because it is quite a big project overall. I think you said you are going out shortly for 1 and 2, but 3 is still in the works. With respect to the pipeline and the timing, how will that all be progressed?

Mr Steel: Package 1, which is the layovers, is underway. Construction is well underway on that project. Package 2 will get underway in a very short period of time. We are expecting that Callam Street will be closed before Christmas, to enable that work to start. The interchange in itself is a critical enabling project for CIT Woden because CIT Woden will be built on the current bus interchange. We need to build the new interchange first to enable CIT to be built; hence the staging with the different packages.

Once the interchange is complete, we will be able to get on and complete the CIT so that it is up and running at about the time we expect UNSW will start doing work on their site, where CIT Reid is, in the city. MPC can provide some further detail on the staging of works, particularly with package 2.

Mr Edghill: The way that we are approaching the procurement, as has been discussed, is in three different packages. Doing it in that way allows us to deliver the project in a timely manner and meet some of those time frames associated with the UNSW development in the city. Working backwards from that, a number of things need to happen in sequence to lead to that outcome. In order for the current CIT site in Reid to be vacated, the CIT facility in Woden needs to be up and running. Before that needs to happen, we need to have moved the bus interchange, which is where the CIT facility will be built, to its new location, which is adjacent, on Callam Street.

With respect to where we are in the process at the moment, physical works are quite visibly underway in terms of the layover space and associated works on Easty Street. The footprint of the project is a fair degree larger than just the site where the CIT facility itself will be built. As the minister mentioned, that will lead to the closure of part of Callam Street, to allow the change works to happen, starting this side of Christmas. This is all with a view to completing the layover and the interchange work substantially by the middle of next year. By the third quarter of next year, that is when the demolition of the existing bus interchange can begin properly. That will allow us to build the CIT facility itself.

It is being treated as one project. In Major Projects Canberra we do not have separate project teams looking after separate components; it is one project. Part of the reason for that is to ensure that there is integration between the various aspects. In particular,

a lot of attention is being paid to ensuring integration between the new light rail stop at Woden bus interchange and how the interchange integrates with the CIT facility itself. That design integration covers everything from ensuring that we have the levels right, so that we are building the interchange at the same level as we will be building the CIT facility, but there is also the opportunity to ensure that there is design cohesion and design integration between those two facilities.

The other component is what we call the east-west boulevard, which is the space between the development to the north of where the new facility will go and the CIT facility itself, which leads from the Woden town centre directly down into the interchange itself.

In terms of the sequencing, we are doing it in a particular way, with the endgame in sight, as I have mentioned. In doing so, we are paying particular attention to how we need to integrate various parts of the project. With that, and with the different packages which are being delivered, that means there has been a rolling program of public engagement. Members may recall that that has covered everything, including the potential shape and massing of the building, which has helped to inform reference designs and the procurement process, through to various development application approvals, as Tania mentioned, and all of the other activities that Tania spoke about before. It is not the largest single major project that we have, but it is certainly one with a lot of moving parts which we are paying close attention to.

THE CHAIR: Thank you very much for that comprehensive answer. We are rapidly running out of time. We have a major COVID recovery infrastructure budget here, with a lot of spending on big projects, and we also have this growing awareness of scope 3 emissions. I know we are expecting a report by the Commissioner for Sustainability and the Environment shortly about scope 3 emissions in the built environment. We also have a brand-new social cost of carbon, which is giving directorates a bit of an incentive to reduce other types of emissions.

With major projects such as light rail, CIT Woden and our roads, how are you factoring in some of these new things—the social cost of carbon and embedded emissions—going forward, to make sure that we are not accidentally increasing our emissions as we build these things?

Mr Steel: I will hand over to Duncan Edghill to talk a little bit about CIT and light rail, and the sustainability approach that we are taking. We are keen, with CIT in particular, to make sure that it demonstrates really good practice in relation to sustainability outcomes as part of the project. We are looking at the range of different outcomes there.

In projects more broadly, which MPC also supports, and TCCS and other directorates, we are very keen to see the re-use of materials, recycled materials and infrastructure. That is a way of bringing down the carbon footprint of projects as well. I will hand over to Duncan, and he can talk specifically about scope 3 emissions and how they are being considered.

Mr Edghill: Across all of our major projects, sustainability is a key feature that we are looking at and that we are emphasising through the procurement processes. In

terms of light rail, that builds off light rail stage 1, where it achieved a lead ISCA rating. It was the first light rail system in Australia that was effectively 100 per cent powered by renewable energy, and which included various sustainability and recycling initiatives throughout the project.

There are a few different ways that we tackle the problem. It is important to note that we do not try and tackle the problem ourselves by dictating solutions to the bidders. One of the neat things about major projects is that they are of a size which attracts both local and international construction partners. We have the benefit, through those projects, of being able to incorporate learnings and best practice from other parts of Australia.

In terms of the CIT project, for example, embedded scope 3 emissions are part of our thinking. We have high sustainability aspirations for the project. It will be at least five star, green star, with ambitions potentially to exceed that. I know I am probably travelling outside the bounds of the minister's portfolio, but in terms of the hospital expansion project, for example, that will be an all-electric facility which is the first of its kind in Australia.

In terms of the light rail project, we will build on the sustainability outcomes from stage 1. Part of that will include paying attention to scope 3 emissions. In terms of delivering projects, yes, we do that, but we are very conscious that we can deliver greater community outcomes and leverage off these large investments being made by the ACT government to deliver great community and workforce outcomes. Sustainability also features very prominently in that regard.

THE CHAIR: I might ask for a yes-no confirmation. I think you said that all of the major projects over \$10 million have an ISCA rating; is that correct?

Mr Edghill: All of them have a rating which is most relevant to the project. There may be instances where the green star makes sense, but there may be other projects where there is a different accreditation. Essentially, yes, everything over \$10 million has a green star or some other rating.

THE CHAIR: I will just reconfirm that, for light rail stage 1, you have already accounted for embedded emissions?

Mr Edghill: I would need to take that on notice. My understanding is that it was something that was looked at as part of the ISCA process that we went through.

MR PARTON: With respect to budget statements H, road safety improvements, Minister, the new 40-kilometre-hour zones around Civic were justified by their improvements to road safety, especially for vulnerable road users. I am sure parts of this will need to be taken on notice, but I am wondering whether you can provide a brief summary of the road accident situation historically in that specific zone in Civic. More specifically, in the 12 months prior to the activation of the new speed limits on 5 July, what was the number of accidents in each month involving vehicles and cyclists and what has been the number of accidents for each month since 5 July?

Mr Steel: We will have to take the detail on notice, but I will hand over very shortly

to Ken Marshall to talk a little bit about the road safety initiatives. There are a couple of policy reasons why 40-kilometre zones have been implemented, not only in the city but also in town and group centres. This has been going on since around 2013 and has been part of our road safety action plan for reasons of vision zero—wanting to have zero deaths and serious accidents on our roads, using the safe systems approach, which has a big focus on safer roads and lower speeds. There is a clear body of research around 40-kilometre zones being much safer for pedestrians and vulnerable road users. It dramatically decreases the risk of serious injury and death, and that is the reason why it has been rolled out.

We have also recognised, through the City and Gateway Urban Design Framework, which was a document consulted by both the NCA and the ACT government, that the function of streets in the ACT has changed over time to become more of a place function than just a movement function. That was recognised in the document, particularly in relation to Northbourne Avenue, but also in relation to other streets in the city. We are seeing thousands of people using the Alinga Street light rail stop. Also, more people are living in the city and dining in these streets. There are a lot more people moving between parts of the city in that particular east-west movement, which we see between city west and city east, which was recognised in the design framework as being one of the reasons why we need to take a people-first approach to the design of streets and, indeed, the implementation of slower streets.

Those documents, both the Road Safety Action Plan 2020-25 and the City and Gateway Urban Design Framework, were consulted on with the community and have been implemented since March through an extension of the 40-kilometre-an-hour zone in the city, Braddon and other parts of Canberra. There is a very good rationale for it, and I will hand over to Ken Marshall from TCCS to provide some further detail about what we have been seeing in the figures.

More broadly, though, I presented to a federal parliamentary inquiry over the last week. I made the point that, whilst we have seen road crashes and fatalities decline over a long period of time in Australia, we have not seen that decline for vulnerable road users. It has remained relatively static. We do need to take further measures to address pedestrian safety.

Mr Corrigan: Ken is not a witness for the Transport Canberra hearings today, Mr Parton, but we can certainly take on notice the details of your question with respect to prior to the 40 kilometres. As the minister touched on, it is about the vehicles and the vulnerable users as well—cyclists and the like. We can look at that.

With any change to speed signs like 40 kilometres, generally, you would want a fairly lengthy period of time to do the full assessment. You would want a good 12 to 24 months. That is when you really start to see changes and to get the objectives that we want, as the minister has outlined. Having said that, for the short period that it has been in, I think the statistics are that we have seen a 36 per cent reduction in vehicle crashes. That is mainly end on end, like rear enders. That is in that short period of time. I do not have details on vulnerable road users at the moment.

MR PARTON: Mr Corrigan, I would suggest that there has probably been a greater than 36 per cent decrease in traffic movement in that particular intersection during the

period as well, considering that it has pretty much all been in lockdown.

Mr Corrigan: This was prior to the lockdown. In a very short few weeks we saw a reduction. With any change to traffic conditions, you want to give it some time to settle in. As the minister outlined, the policy objective here is not just slowing traffic down and reducing accidents; it is slowing traffic down to make a more pedestrian-friendly environment in the city.

MR PARTON: If I can get any of that detail on notice, I would appreciate it.

THE CHAIR: Thank you very much. That concludes our hearing.

Mr Edghill: Chair, I have a quick answer to the question asked by Ms Lee before. The amount in the budget was \$11.26 million; actual expenditure was \$11.619 million.

MS LEE: So it actually went up; is that right?

Mr Edghill: It was slightly above budget. It was \$11.619 million, which was cash-managed within the organisation.

THE CHAIR: On behalf of the committee, thank you very much, Minister, and officials. We appreciate that you are all working extremely hard at the moment due to COVID, and we thank you for that. You are doing a good job. I appreciate that estimates is probably one extra burden at a difficult time, but that is how scrutiny of government works.

The secretary will be following up with a copy of the proof transcript of today's hearing. We will also be following up regarding any questions that were taken on notice. I believe there were a few, although we have had one answered already. That concludes this part of the hearing.

The committee adjourned at 11.46 am.