



**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL
TERRITORY**

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

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

Members:

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

TRANSCRIPT OF EVIDENCE

CANBERRA

FRIDAY, 25 FEBRUARY 2022

**Secretary to the committee:
Mr M Riordan (Ph: 620 50199)**

By authority of the Legislative Assembly for the Australian Capital Territory

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

APPEARANCES

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Amended 20 May 2013

The committee met at 4.15 pm.

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, City Services

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

Alegria, Mr Stephen, Executive Branch Manager, City Presentation

Smith, Mr Jeremy, Executive Branch Manager, Infrastructure Delivery

Oldfield, Ms Meghan, Acting Chief Operating Officer

Jordan, Mr Craig, Executive Group Manager, Territory and Business Services

Trushell, Mr Michael, Executive Branch Manager, ACT NoWaste

Steed, Ms Sarah, Director of Engagement, Library Support Office, Libraries ACT

THE CHAIR: Good afternoon. This is the third public hearing of the Standing Committee on Planning, Transport and City Services inquiry into annual reports. On behalf of the committee, I would like to acknowledge the traditional custodians of these lands and acknowledge that we may have lots of people dialling in from different countries. I would like to pay our respects to the continuing culture and the contribution of First Nations peoples to the life of our city. I would like to pay respects to any elders past, present or emerging who might be joining us today.

We are recording our hearings and they will be transcribed by Hansard. If you take a question on notice, if you could state clearly that you are taking that question on notice, that will help us in our record-keeping and chasing up those questions.

We welcome Minister Chris Steel, and we will be asking questions of the minister. I will not be segmenting this hearing; I am quite happy for members to ask whichever questions they would like to ask when it is their turn to ask a question. The areas that we are asking about are mowing and verge maintenance, municipal services, neighbourhood democracy project, public space amenity, recycling and waste policy, and stormwater.

This is always a busy session, and we have generously had the time extended, because we have found in previous sessions that we have had more questions than we have had time for. I would ask members to try and moderate their questions and their supplementaries. If officials could keep answers fairly concise, that will help us. I will try very hard not to step in on members, but if we are taking too long on a line of questioning, I may have to step in to move things along.

Can everybody in this room please confirm that they have read and received the privilege statement and that they agree with it? I am happy to see a thumbs-up virtually or visually. We will just make sure that we get an acknowledgment from everybody here. Excellent.

Ms Playford: It has been circulated.

THE CHAIR: Thank you very much. We are not, in the interests of time, having opening statements, so we will proceed straight to questions. I will open with the first question. Minister, I was really pleased to read in the annual report an update on the National Television and Computer Recycling Scheme. That is working well; it has recovered 365 tonnes in the last year. You tabled, on 10 February, a government response to a motion of mine that we passed in the Assembly last year about solar panels, electrical appliances and batteries. I was pleased to hear in that statement that the ACT government is keen to expand the National Television and Computer Recycling Scheme to include all electrical appliances. Can you run through an update on exactly when that might happen?

Mr Steel: This is a conversation with the product stewardship scheme, to talk with them about the current scope of their scheme and whether there is a possibility of them taking on additional electronic products and other types of technology as part of the scheme. This is an ongoing conversation around the development of new schemes as well. Currently, the commonwealth is working on the scheme for solar photovoltaic cells and an expansion of the battery product stewardship scheme, to encompass a range of batteries, including potentially household batteries as well.

I will hand over to Jim and the team from ACT NoWaste to provide a bit more information about the conversations that are happening nationally about that scheme and how we can work with them to take on some of the other products.

Mr Corrigan: In the interests of brevity, Ms Clay, I might go straight to Bruce to run through some of the details.

Mr Fitzgerald: The commonwealth have sought advice from industry as to a plan going forward, particularly for, in the first instance, solar PV. They are looking for an industry-led scheme to be finalised by 30 June 2022, with implementation by June 2023. Similarly, they have sought advice from industry on some of those bulkier waste items. Timetables have not been set at this point, but we are actively participating in the product stewardship discussion at the moment, at that national level.

THE CHAIR: The time frame on solar panels sounds quite promising to me, if we are likely to get implementation by June 2023, and that is likely to be delivered. With the electrical appliances, what is our time line on that?

Mr Fitzgerald: There has not been a specific time line set at this stage. They are still actively looking at opportunities for industry to respond. The current working paper suggests that, throughout 2023 in particular, we will have greater movement on opportunities for some of those bulkier goods.

THE CHAIR: We are talking about other appliances that are not computers and TVs—fridges, washing machines and bits of paraphernalia. Do they get processed in the same recovery facilities, the same factories, as televisions and computers? Do we already have the infrastructure to recycle them?

Mr Fitzgerald: No. They are generally different, particularly when it comes to some of the bulkier, older computer systems, the leaded glass and the like. There is specific recycling required for those products. When we look at fridges and the like, there is a higher amount of recyclable content in there, so we often find that scrap-metal dealers can get quite a large amount of recoverable product from there. Obviously, there are refrigerant gases that need to be monitored through that recovery process, so they are different streams. We are looking at multiple streams for some of these products, as to how you actually extract the most recoverable material from them that is possible.

THE CHAIR: With the batteries, I saw the update on B-cycle recently. What is the time line on product stewardship for our large batteries, our car batteries, our house batteries and our bus batteries?

Mr Fitzgerald: I might have to take that one on notice, unless Mr Trushell has that answer at hand.

THE CHAIR: I am very happy for you to take that on notice. Probably the thrust of my question is: how long do we wait for national product stewardship when we do not have clear time lines?

Mr Fitzgerald: We are looking at solutions locally where we can. Certainly, when it comes to the NTCRS, we are looking at ways in which we can supplement that. That is obviously a national scheme, but we are actively seeking to engage with the commonwealth around what can be taken, and certainly acting locally where we can.

MR PARTON: Minister, in a media release from 17 February, you said that upgrades to the Tuggeranong foreshore will get underway next month, with Canberrans encouraged to share ideas on how the Tuggeranong foreshore's amenity and facilities can be upgraded or improved. If upgrades are to get underway next month, why are you still seeking public consultation on this particular project?

Mr Steel: I will have a look at the media release while I speak, to clarify—

MR PARTON: That I am not making it up?

Mr Steel: Exactly. In terms of Tuggeranong foreshore, we will be going out for consultation very soon on that project to seek feedback and community input into quite substantial upgrades to the foreshore, not just in the immediate vicinity near the town centre but right around the lake. We have already undertaken quite significant upgrades to Anketell Street. There is still some work being finalised on new cycle lanes throughout the town centre; we have undertaken the works in the laneways and now we are moving around the lake.

There is a lot of street furniture that needs to be replaced. We will be consulting on landscaping; we will be consulting on play space upgrades, potential upgrades to the skate park, to trees—to a whole range of different things where we will be asking the community what their priorities are around the lake, to make sure that this continues to be a fantastic place to come for recreation, to dine, to go to the dog park and those sorts of things. We will be going out and seeking their views.

MR PARTON: My question is: in that media release you suggested that upgrades would get underway next month. Is that not the case?

Mr Steel: The first stage of getting underway on those upgrades is consultation with the community—

MR PARTON: So it is not getting underway next month; it is just the consultation?

Mr Steel: We will be consulting with the community on the ongoing upgrades to Tuggeranong foreshore, which have been in train now for some time in various stages, which I mentioned. As you know, there is a bit of construction work on the cycle paths that is happening at the moment. We will be getting on with the rest of the foreshore upgrades through community consultation.

MR PARTON: Minister, you mentioned the cycling upgrades, which I am looking forward to trying out firsthand, but I have certainly had some feedback—I am sure you have, too—about potential unintended consequences of traffic banking up in certain streets in that CBD area of Tuggeranong, as a consequence of those upgrades. I am sure you have had that feedback as well. What will be the government response to that?

Mr Steel: I do not think I have had that feedback. Certainly, when we undertake these projects, there is a post-implementation review to look at what the impact of these projects is and how they are being used. That usually occurs around six months after a project is completed, so we will get a sense of how it operates. Certainly, this is an opportunity to try and better connect the town centre for walking and cycling, with safe separation of cyclists in the town centre, to provide a better priority for vulnerable road users in the Tuggeranong town centre, and it connects with the existing infrastructure that we built as part of the Anketell Street works as well.

We are looking forward to expanding that, as part of the Tuggeranong foreshore upgrades. Certainly, we have heard that cyclists would like to participate, as part of those consultations, to provide their feedback on what their priorities are to enhance cycling and walking around the lake.

MS LAWDER: Just on the upgrades, I know that Ms Burch and Mr Davis ran surveys on their social media about suggestions for the upgrades after it was announced, and partly after we had a motion in the Assembly. Have you received the feedback from them that they have received from their constituents?

Mr Steel: Of course, it was a Labor election commitment; that is the reason we are getting on with this work. It is great that we have some good local members out there. Mr Davis and Ms Burch have been out there talking with their communities about what they would like to see as part of those upgrades. They have been really proactive, out in Brindabella. Of course—

MS LAWDER: Have you received their feedback?

Mr Steel: Not at this stage, but that will be fed into the process. We will be going out as a government to undertake consultation with the community as well. There will be

multiple layers of consultation with the community, and we are looking forward to that all coming together to help inform the work on this project. Of course, feasibility has been underway as well, to look at what is possible. We will match that up with the community's ideas before we move into the later stages of design.

This is really exciting. It is the jewel in the crown of Tuggeranong. It is already a fantastic place, but, as with any other town centre after a period of decades, some of the infrastructure is starting to age. It is an opportunity to enhance this really fantastic and vibrant space, particularly with the amount of development that has been happening around it, which has also seen some upgrades near the lake. It is about looking at how we can make sure that there is continuity of new infrastructure right around the space, not just on one corner of the lake.

MS LAWDER: I think you might have inadvertently forgotten Mr Parton, Mr Gentleman and me as fantastic local members there, but we already know that. When will the Tuggeranong foreshore upgrades be completed?

Mr Steel: That depends on what the scope of the project is and, moving into procurement, what the delivery program looks like. It is obviously something that we have committed to do in this term, and we will deliver it in this term.

MS ORR: Minister, I have some questions about footpaths and road verges, because we have seen a lot of challenges, particularly with the rain this year. Can you please explain to us how city services has responded to the increased need for mowing in 2020 and 2021? What is the plan to continue to meet that need, particularly given that the weather is proving quite unpredictable and somewhat unhelpful for mowing purposes?

Mr Steel: Yes, there has certainly been a lot of rain, and that has been a very good thing in many places around Canberra. I drive past the arboretum every day, thinking how fantastic it is that it is raining. But it does present a lot of challenges when it comes to city services and maintenance. That is why, during the reporting period last year and also during this financial year, extra resources have been put into mowing. We have put \$1.2 million in this financial year into extra mowing services, which has responded to the demand and the grass growth that we have seen across the ACT. We have been able to put on extra mowing contractors to help us to manage this seasonal growth. It is a big challenge. I will hand over to the team and Stephen Alegria to talk further about how we are responding to this.

Mr Alegria: As the minister said, it has certainly been another challenging wet season for mowing. Despite that, we are actually now into our fifth mowing pass across the city. To give you some perspective on that, in an average year, we might do six passes in total, in the entire season, so we are already up to five and we are only in February. We are expecting that the mowing season will be an extended season, right through into May, and into winter.

For that reason we are looking to the long term, in terms of managing our resources. As the minister said, we have put on an extra nine mowing machines and operators for those machines, which has been very helpful in keeping up with the demand, which is caused by the rapid growth of grass. Also, the wet weather does impact on it, not just

through the growth of grass but through the fact that mowing becomes slower when the grass is quite high, and we need sometimes to go across the same area more than once in order to get the grass to specification.

We have also used the additional resources to allow contract mowing personnel to do more mowing passes, particularly along arterial roads. The majority of our team is in-house; it helps those in-house teams to keep up with the mowing demand in the suburban areas and around local neighbourhoods.

We are expecting, as I said, the season to be extended into winter. We are also looking forward to having the COVID situation, which has impacted on our ability to deliver services to some degree, continue, hopefully, to ease, although we are still working very carefully to make sure that we have a safe workplace for our team. As things roll on, we are hoping that the COVID situation will gradually ease and we can return to a more normal pattern of work.

MS ORR: You mentioned that you are about to start on the fifth mowing pass across the city. How does that compare to what would be a normal pattern of work?

Mr Alegria: In what we call an average year—of course, an average year is quite hard to define, but in a year where we do not have a La Nina event and we do not have the very extensive and continuous rainfall that we have had this year—we generally look to be doing around six or so passes of the city. As I say, this year we are already well into pass 5. It just means that the demand for mowing in this sort of year is both extended and more intense. We need to manage our resources really efficiently and with an eye to hotspots, safety and all of those measures that we prioritise when we are delivering these programs.

The key thing for us in the current situation is that things like line of sight and accessibility to open space are really important. Safety concerns are the number one issue that we need to address. That means we sometimes need to change our mowing patterns in order to address those safety issues as the highest priority. We do that, and we respond to reports or observations about line of sight and those sorts of issues. Of course, that means we do not always necessarily get to particular locations that are not an immediate safety issue until a little bit outside the ideal program that we have.

MS ORR: You said you were looking to extend this season. When was that extended to?

Mr Alegria: It really depends on the conditions, Ms Orr. We keep mowing until the weather takes a turn that is colder and less wet, which means that the grass will basically slow down its growth or stop growing. When we get to that point, we then go into a winter mode, which means we just mow as required to keep that dormant grass looking good, but we will not be doing a regular cycle of mowing in a systematic fashion through winter. That is generally the way we do it, and that is when we redeploy our resources back to other forms of amenity maintenance through the city.

MS ORR: Given that the mowing task has been so significant this year, if constituents do have an area that is particularly impacting on a line of sight or is a bit

of a safety hazard, what is the best way to get that prioritised within the mowing schedule?

Mr Alegria: The best way is to report it through Access Canberra, through the Fix My Street portal. We do see all of those requests and we take them seriously. We have a mowing coordinator dedicated just to coordinating and oversighting the mowing program across the city. That position is able to triage those sorts of issues and work with the local teams who do not necessarily have the bigger picture to make sure that we can respond in a timely way to those sorts of issues.

THE CHAIR: I work with a lot of Landcare groups, and there is sometimes tension where they do not want something mown and they try and get it marked on the no-mow map; sometimes that works and sometimes it gets mown over. How does your team find the addition of Landcare areas to the no-mow map and how are you managing to enforce that so that we do not accidentally mow over things that have been planted?

Mr Alegria: As to the first part of your question, it is taken very seriously, because we have a pretty significant role in managing urban biodiversity across the city. We are always open to expert advice from other directorates, for example, and our own staff about areas that have high conservation value.

In terms of the controls, we do have bollards marking many of those areas, which are obvious physical markers telling operators and mowers, “Hey, this is a conservation area.” We have mowing maps, which are used to guide the operators in terms of showing them where they are expected to mow and where they are not. We also have an emerging capacity with our mowers, which we are still working through, in geofencing. We have satellite trackers on all of our machines which measure their location, their speed and whether their blades are up or down. They can potentially be used to provide a warning for the operators if they inadvertently stray into a conservation area.

THE CHAIR: What is the best contact for somebody in a Landcare group if they are worried about something being mown? Who should they speak to?

Mr Alegria: In my experience, most of those groups have really deep connections throughout government, be it with EPSDD or through our volunteer coordinator. That is probably the best port of call. We encourage organised groups to run through our volunteer coordination area within city presentation. They can then be the conduit to the technical officers and others on the ground, and make sure that that message gets through.

MR PARTON: I note that the mowing season experienced a delayed start. It was suggested that was because of the ACT’s lockdown. Minister, I wonder, are you able to explain the reasoning for this, given the relative low risk that mowing poses to COVID-19 as employees are separated and outside?

Mr Steel: I think we have seen COVID have an impact. We have had this conversation before in the bus context, where I think you were suggesting that we should put on all our regular route services at a time when we were actually

experiencing or we expected to experience employees being off as a result of being furloughed and so forth. If we had taken your advice we would have had a lot of unreliable bus services. Certainly we will not be taking your advice in relation to our city ops.

We know that where people are furloughed it does have an impact on all different sectors, and it does have an impact on City Services as much as it does on our bus system and other things. COVID has had an impact. That is one of the reasons why there was a slightly delayed start at the very beginning of the season. But as Mr Alegria mentioned, we have undertaken a significant amount of mowing during this season to reflect the fact that we have an unusual and heightened growing season as a result of the La Nina weather conditions.

MR PARTON: But minister, getting back to the question, there is one person on a mower at any given time; you do not have passengers. Given the relatively low risk that mowing poses to COVID-19 as employees are separated and outside, I just want to know what the reason was for the delay in the program; that is all.

Mr Steel: If you are furloughed, you are furloughed. But I will hand over to Stephen Alegria and the team to talk a bit further about those challenges.

Mr Alegria: The challenge really, even though the activity of mowing may be a solitary activity at some times, is that, when they are actually there, our teams work literally in a team. They come together in a depot, they interact, they travel in vehicles together, they work as a team in delivering those services, they take breaks together. They are the kinds of elements that we were very concerned about—

Subsequent to that lockdown period we put bubble arrangements in place so that, if there was a COVID case—certainly back in the past when it was the Delta strain and so forth it was the case—we would not end up with an entire depot becoming unavailable for work due to that reason.

MR PARTON: That is a much more sensible answer than the one from the minister. Can you confirm that TCCS employees from the Woden depot were going out and redoing areas that had already been mown by contractors because they were not up to standard? That is certainly the feedback that I got. Can I get a clarification that that was the case.

Mr Alegria: No, that is not the case, to my knowledge. However, I guess, as a principle, if a contractor had been engaged to undertake some mowing work and they did not perform as per the contract, they would be held to account and asked to go back and repeat that work at no extra cost.

MS LAWDER: Minister, are you able to tell me when your directorate first received notification or understood that you would be having a La Nina effect at the end of 2021, and how did they start preparing for it?

Mr Steel: As I mentioned, we have been in quite wet conditions now for two financial years, including the one that we are in. I do not think that La Nina was declared until quite late in the process. We have actually been [inaudible] than that in terms of

putting in resources.

The declaration is made by the Bureau of Meteorology. If you are looking for a formal declaration, it would be the BOM that makes that. The response by TCCS has been much more responsive than that. As I said, we have provided extra funding and resources in both those financial years to respond to the extra mowing that is required as a result of the grass growth because of the rain.

MS LAWDER: You are saying there was no discussion within your directorate before the formal BOM announcement about a forthcoming La Nina event?

Mr Steel: No. I am saying that we were well ahead of BOM in terms of actually responding to this. BOM, I think, formally declared La Nina well into the period that we are talking about. We were out there with extra resources and mowers well ahead of that, because it was raining. We could see the rain falling. We could see certain months were some of the wettest months on record. And that became obvious well ahead of the formal declaration by BOM. Stephen Alegria might have a bit more information to give context to that, as well.

Mr Alegria: What you said is correct, Minister. We liaise with the BOM throughout the year, particularly in the lead-up to a new season. We were very well aware by some observations, and from their forecast, that it would be a wetter than usual year. The calling of the formal La Nina has ticked over to a yes, on the scale that the BOM has, so it is a full La Nina.

But even before then we were well aware that it was going to be a wet year and we had put plans in place accordingly, with the preparation of a new fleet of mowing machines, procurement of consumables like blades, training of staff, recruitment of staff, planning of the program. We were literally well set well into early August. In fact, just as the lockdown hit was our preferred commencement date to begin the season or mowing program then.

Yes, preparation obviously is key in our business. We are at the mercy of the elements to some degree and we need to be able to be agile and plan around that and plan ahead as far as we can.

Mr Steel: And La Nina was not declared formally until 22 November 2021. A full year beforehand we had actually provided extra resources because we had seen that there was significant rain. At the time you were disputing it. You were saying, "This isn't unprecedented." In a hearing around two years ago you were actually disputing the fact that there was a significant amount of rainfall happening. So to now turn around and suggest that somehow we have not responded to this, when you were arguing that there was not significant rainfall is extraordinary!

THE CHAIR: I am just going to step in here as the Chair. If we could all remember to speak one at a time, just for the benefit of Hansard, and to make sure we can hear both questions and answers, that would be excellent.

MS LAWDER: Firstly, can you tell me how many times the online mowing map was visited?

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

MS LAWDER: I would like to ask about the Umbagog District Park bridges. There is some design work for \$250,000, I think, coming up. What will the funding result in? Will that be a final, completed design? Is that a consultation? What will we be getting for that amount of money?

Mr Steel: I will hand over to the team to provide some further detail about the work that is underway on the design.

Mr Smith: In relation to the question around the current design process for the Umbagog bridges, there are a number of studies that we are required to undertake before we can finalise the design for the bridges. That is in relation to both the sensitive environmental area of the park that the bridges are located in and also in relation to some Indigenous heritage sites located adjacent to the bridge, particularly some grinding stones that are located in the river near the bridges.

We have just gone through a process where we have wrapped up those environmental and heritage studies. Coming out of the back of those, we have been working on some concept designs for the bridges. They have been shown to the Belconnen Community Council as well at some of their meetings, to get some feedback from the community in relation to those bridges. They have also been shown to the Umbagog landcare or custodianship group called the Friends of Umbagog Park. As we move through that, the environmental reports will confirm for us the level of approvals that we will need to put through for the bridges themselves and then that will inform the final design of the bridges as well. We will move through that in the next couple of months before then putting in any required DAs or environmental applications.

MS LAWDER: Is there any time line on when residents might expect the bridges to be fixed?

Mr Smith: Yes, there is. Unfortunately it is not a quick process to go through those environmental and heritage studies and obviously put through our approvals. We will expedite it as quickly as we can. Once we lodge any required DA there is of course a public notification period for that DA. There is the potential for objections to a DA once they have been lodged as well. There is also the opportunity for an ACAT period if people are not happy with the outcomes of a DA or any objections. We have factored that into a time line, and we have also looked at a time line if we do not get any objections to that. We would expect to have the bridges constructed and in place in the next 12 months.

MS LAWDER: Constructed and in place in the next 12 months?

Mr Smith: Yes.

THE CHAIR: I want to have a chat about our food and organics recycling trial in Belconnen, our FOGO system. I am very excited. I am in Macquarie, so I get to be part of the trial, which is great. I have heard some feedback. The bags are not quite big enough for the bins. There is a lot of interest about what goes in and what does not

go into the bins, and there are a few people who are unhappy about their residual waste going to fortnightly. They do not seem to have twigged to the options to upgrade. What feedback have you heard from the collection trial and what will you be doing with that feedback?

Mr Steel: The whole purpose of this pilot is to test the proposed service delivery model prior to the full Canberra rollout of the food organics/garden organics collection service. We have had quite a bit of feedback, and there has been a very engaged team from Transport Canberra and City Services who have been directly engaging with residents, providing education materials throughout. I certainly encourage people in those Belconnen suburbs to get in touch with the team if they have any questions. There is information, of course, on the website, and that has been mailed out as part of this process as well. We are looking forward to taking that feedback on board throughout the trial and working out how we can improve the service. I am happy to take that piece of feedback on board in relation to the compostable bag sizes.

I have also heard it in relation to the kitchen caddies—that a squarer version of the caddy might also be a better approach, going forward. It is a round container at the moment, which can be difficult to get the bag over. Those sorts of pieces of feedback, I think, will help us to inform the process, going forward. It has, overall, been very positive. We have had very good support from local groups like Belconnen Community Council. To date, the operation of the trial has achieved a contamination rate of less than 0.1 per cent, which is really low and bodes really well for the wider rollout.

About 30 per cent of local councils have a FOGO service and I understand that Queanbeyan-Palerang is going to be joining us very soon—possibly with a similar model; like a number of other jurisdictions we have gone for a fortnightly collection of garbage bins, recognising that we are taking the organic material out of the garbage bin. The FOGO bin itself is collected weekly. We have been working with households, including those who have directly raised concerns with the team, on tips to help manage their waste within those changed settings. There will be a period of adjustment, we expect. The trial is only relatively young. We know that households are still getting used to this. That is obviously something that we are looking very closely at, as part of the trial.

We also have been speaking with some of the key stakeholders, like Carers ACT, for example, about how their members and the people that they advocate for have been finding the trial and what we need to be thinking about as things move forward to the city-wide rollout. I will hand over to the team at NoWaste to talk further about the trial.

THE CHAIR: With the further detail, I would love to know, in particular, how apartments are going and whether we are still getting that low contamination rate. Then I would love an update on the procurement of the processing facility. Thank you.

Mr Fitzgerald: We have had really good uptake with the multi-unit properties. We have exceeded what we expected when we first set up the trial. There is a huge demand, it would seem, for the service, so we are very pleased with that. We have

engaged with them closely to make sure that that contamination rate stays low. That is the experience to date, so we are very pleased with how it is going. Likewise, we have received feedback, both good and bad. We are making sure that we collate that and understand that as we evaluate the program, going forward.

THE CHAIR: How are we going with the procurement of the processing facility and our consultation with stakeholders on that procurement?

Mr Fitzgerald: The important first step for that piece is the EIS. We have notified and started down the processes of the EIS to make sure that we have got the right site and that we can process the volume of material that we expect to receive there. To date, that engagement has gone very well. We will see that ramp up in the coming months as we start to release for broader consultation some of the studies supporting the EIS.

THE CHAIR: Great; thank you.

MR PARTON: Let me just flag this one and see if I am in the wrong session or not. Am I able to ask about Fix My Street and how it plays into your operations? I note that Fix My Street underwent a major upgrade in May of last year. Why is it still the case that people are waiting multiple days or weeks to receive any sort of correspondence about the issue that they have lodged?

Mr Steel: We are undertaking a substantial review of Fix My Street. I will hand over to Meghan Oldfield and the team to talk further about that work. Obviously that is being done in close collaboration with Access Canberra as well. The team can also talk about some of the time frames.

When people contact the ACT government, particularly TCCS, about some of those city maintenance issues—and that goes for emails to me as well—often it results in someone going out, on the ground, and assessing that particular thing, such as a pothole, and trying to get it fixed. The process has been that sometimes people will get contacted after it has been assessed and fixed. That does take a little bit of time, so we are looking at how we improve the user experience, through a redesign of the Fix My Street portal, so that people have better information about what is happening in relation to the job that they have lodged with the ACT government, and so that they do not have that gap in understanding where it is up to.

There is also, I think, an issue at the other end. Whilst the job might have been completed to the satisfaction of TCCS, it may not have been necessarily completed in that sense for the person who lodged the job in the first place. Getting that feedback loop sorted out is part of the work that is going on, to make sure that we can most efficiently and appropriately get that work started for people, but also to make sure that the communication loop is really clear and that people have a good understanding about where a particular job is up to. Ms Oldfield can talk further to this.

Ms Oldfield: As the minister mentioned, Fix My Street is the customer interface that people use through Access Canberra, but it is also used by TCCS and DDTS, the Digital, Data and Technology Solutions group. The three directorates are working together on the program that the minister was just speaking to. It is about

understanding, from the customer and the staff perspective, where some of the bottlenecks might be, from a communications perspective and a technology perspective, and really defining what changes could have the most impact. For example, with the recent storms in Belconnen, it was about being able to push a message out to the customer saying, “A number of trees have just come down in Belconnen, so we do need to focus on that area at the moment.” Then it is about being able to change and target that message, as the work of the crews varies, so that we can make sure that the public is informed on where we are able to provide the most focus when we have things like a storm event.

MR PARTON: That is a wonderful summary, and I appreciate it. My understanding was that we had had a major upgrade last year. Is that not the case or is there an ongoing scenario regarding this?

Mr Steel: No. There has been small upgrade, but what we are talking about here is quite a substantial rethinking and redesign of the Fix My Street portal. This has been mapped out in a complete journey map that we want to test with user testing and input to completely redesign how people engage with the government to lodge these types of requests and bring these issues to attention. Whilst there have been some edits to the system over a period of time, we are actually looking at quite a significant improvement and redesign of the system. We will keep the Assembly updated, because I know that members use the system on a regular basis.

MR PARTON: The annual report barely touches on Fix My Street, despite it being such a key communication tool between government and residents. Why is there not more reporting in this particular annual report on Fix My Street?

Mr Steel: It is for that particular financial year. That is the reporting period, I suppose, and this is a piece of work that is being done over the next calendar year, this financial year and the next.

Ms Playford: The changes that you referred to that occurred in May last year were on Access Canberra’s side of the fence, so probably you will see more in their annual report and you could ask them more questions. That was, effectively, an upgrade from a very old, unsupported Oracle system that was at risk, to make it much more stable.

The work that TCCS is focusing on, in particular, is that integration piece and that feedback loop, but also on our back-end systems and how we can improve efficiencies for the inspectors out in the field so that they provide information back in a more timely way to inform customers. So you will hear more about it in future annual reports. There is a lot for us to talk about, as a very broad directorate. I am happy to include more in next year’s annual report.

MR PARTON: Thank you.

MS LAWDER: When there were some changes last year, from the anecdotal evidence from people who have written to me, there was a loss of the previous entries in Fix My Street. So if you had an unresolved issue in Fix My Street at the time of the changeover, that was lost; is that correct?

Mr Steel: Yes. I understand that that was the case. This sits with Access Canberra, but, yes, we were upfront about that at the time—that people would need to make sure that they logged in and downloaded what they had on the system, if they wanted to keep track of it, and that the new login would mean that you would not be able to see prior reports. We are in a period now where we have gone beyond that and we are looking at what a major overhaul of the Fix My Street system looks like, to redesign the user interface and the various workflows that come from someone logging a job.

MS LAWDER: How many jobs are there currently open on the Fix My Street portal?

Mr Steel: We probably have to take that one on notice, Ms Lawder.

MS LAWDER: And how many were there on the old system that were lost?

Mr Steel: I do not think they were lost per se. I understood that they were still being actioned by government. It is just that they were not able to be seen by someone who had logged a job.

MS LAWDER: Do you have any metrics on the average time it takes to fix particular issues after they have been lodged on Fix My Street? If it is a pothole or mowing of a particular area, or streetlights et cetera, do you keep those sorts of metrics?

Mr Steel: I think there would be those metrics kept. Certainly, with the streetlights, under the streetlight contract there are particular KPIs that have to be met by the contractor, which I think you are aware of. The usual streetlight outage is, I think, a two-day turnaround, but cable faults, obviously, are more significant and take a longer period of time. So, yes, there are metrics that are kept for these various jobs.

MS LAWDER: Street potholes as well and mowing requests and footpath maintenance?

Mr Steel: Does anyone want to comment, from the team, about those?

Mr Corrigan: Yes, we do. With the paths and the roads, urgent repair jobs, if there is a safety matter we look at 10 working days—longer if it is not as urgent. Mr Alegria was talking before about line of sight issues with mowing. Any reports of that are looked at within a matter of days as well, and then we determine how to respond to that. We do not have a metric on that, but we respond in a matter of days if the grass is quite long, particularly on roundabouts. The minister is correct on the streetlights. If it is just a simple outage: two days. If it is an outage that is caused by a cable fault, it can take longer; it can be 10 days plus.

MS ORR: The container deposit scheme is one of the more recently—but not the most recent—introduced waste and recycling initiatives we have here. Can you tell us how that program is going, now that it is out of its infancy and approaching its toddler years, for lack of a better way of putting it?

Mr Steel: Yes. I think it was June 2018 when it was first introduced. The latest figure that I have, although the team might be able to provide an even more recent number, is that 300 million containers have now been returned through the scheme. The

redemption rate has been going up over time, so the community, I think, is embracing it and getting used to using it. We are hoping that that trend will continue upwards, particularly with the introduction of different alternatives for returning the containers. Over time, there has been the opening of new return points—the Belconnen return point, for example—and the implementation of new technologies.

There is much faster sorting technology at some of the drop-off points, and also with the introduction this year of reverse vending machines, which have been used in New South Wales. Quite a number of residents came forward and said, “Oh, I would not mind using one of those in Canberra,” so we have been able to install one at Erindale. The team might have some updated figures on that, but it seems to have been quite well embraced. In fact, the CDS operator, Return-It, is consulting at the moment on another reverse vending machine point, which would be located at Coleman Court, in the Weston group centre. This does seem like a good way of encouraging a group that may not have been using the scheme to pop in while they are at the shops, to return their containers. The team might have some updated figures to provide.

Mr Fitzgerald: Thanks, Minister. I think you have covered it really well. The only thing I would say is that the proximity, the ability to access some of those reverse vending machines, has really increased uptake. In the first couple of weeks of the Erindale site being operational, we increased the number of participants with unique logins to the scheme by 500, which in itself is, for such a short period of time, a really great result. We have had representatives from Return-It on site taking feedback, helping people with the machines as they become operational, and the feedback to date has been terrific. Over the scheme itself, total redemptions have now exceeded the \$6 million mark. The scheme has been well accepted by the Canberra community, and we are seeing those redemption rates increase.

MS ORR: I was going to ask about that—the different options for returning them and which ones you are seeing as being more frequently used. Is it the case that the vending machines seem to be the ones that are embraced most by the community, or are you still seeing demand across all the options?

Mr Fitzgerald: Demand is very much still across all the options, and that is the beauty of having those multiple touchpoints. We still see some of the return options at local shopping centres being heavily utilised, and rightly so. They are close to where people are shopping. It is an easy, accessible way for people to redeem those containers. We will work with Return-It to continue to expand the opportunities for people to redeem and to make sure that the experience is as effortless as possible.

MS ORR: Okay; great.

MS LAWDER: Minister, I wanted to ask about the relocation of the RSPCA. Are you able to provide an update on the early design works for the relocation of the RSPCA?

Mr Steel: Yes. We are continuing to work with the RSPCA on Project Home. There is the election commitment, as well, to continue to work with them on a new site. They have undertaken a level of scoping of what they would like to see in a new facility, which I will hand over to Craig Jordan to talk a bit about. Really, it is to meet

their growing needs. They play a really important role, as a partner in animal welfare, in the various plans that we have, including the cat plan. They play a major role with cats, so we are hoping that this will enable them to not only have modern facilities that support animal welfare, kennels and places for cats, but also meet the growing need to rehome animals. We are continuing to work with them.

Quite a significant amount of due diligence has been happening on various potential sites in Canberra where they may be relocated, to provide them with a new facility. When we are looking at that, we need to make sure that there is appropriate zoning, particularly because of the noise that can come from these types of facilities, and that it is an appropriate distance away from residential development. We are looking at all of those things in determining the best position. We will be making some announcements over the coming months about that, once that due diligence work has been finalised and once the RSPCA is satisfied with the new site. Craig can talk a bit about the scope of the project.

Mr Jordan: Thank you, Minister. Ms Lawder, the minister gave a good summary of the need for the project from the RSPCA. I might add that the RSPCA are quite often at capacity for their needs. In addition, they have some very ageing facilities there that present work health and safety issues for operating on a day-to-day basis. We have been working together to work out how best, as a key partner for the government, they can provide services to the community for the future.

MS LAWDER: Thanks. Minister, you mentioned needing the correct zoning. Is it broad acre that is required or some other zoning?

Mr Steel: Animal welfare facilities are permitted in broad acre zoning, so that is certainly one that we are looking at. Generally, broad acre is situated where there tend to be more open space, not necessarily residential development, so we are looking at a couple of sites which are appropriately zoned. Also, we are taking into account a range of other factors. That includes access to the site for the employees and the volunteers that work with and support the RSPCA. They are just a few of the factors.

The size of the facility will depend on the final scope that we work with them on. Their current facilities are based in a couple of former residential buildings and are not necessarily fit for purpose. What they are proposing is something that would enable them to have expanded kennel facilities and so forth, but also fit-for-purpose accommodation where they can support their volunteers and where they can potentially have room to grow over time, as the city grows as well.

MS LAWDER: I think originally there was talk of Symonston, but now it has moved, perhaps to Pialligo. Can you confirm: will it be a direct land swap and will the ACT government provide the land and build the purpose-built facility for the RSPCA at no cost to the RSPCA?

Mr Steel: We will make some further announcements about the site. I am not planning on making an announcement today about that. What I can say is that we are continuing to work with the RSPCA on the site, the ownership arrangements and so forth, to make sure that they have a facility that is fit for purpose and that delivers on their objectives, going forward. Once that is finalised then that is something that we

will be announcing, but I cannot share that with you today because it is still an ongoing conversation with the RSPCA.

MS LAWDER: What will the land that the RSPCA are currently on be used for? Will that become residential, medium density?

Mr Steel: That is probably a question for the planning minister or the minister responsible for the SLA.

MS LAWDER: Do you have a date when you hope that the new facility will be finished and the RSPCA will be moved in? Do you have a completion date?

Mr Steel: No. We are early in the stage. We will have to go through design and understand the final scope of the project, and procurement, before any program delivery time frames are set.

MS LAWDER: Thank you.

THE CHAIR: Minister, national figures show that around 44 per cent of our waste stream is construction and demolition waste. That is around Australia. Is that about the same in the ACT, do you think?

Mr Steel: I will hand over to the team at NoWaste to provide some information but certainly CNI waste is something that we, I think, need to do some further thinking about. It is one of those waste streams that goes up and down depending on how much economic activity is happening in the construction sector. There is quite a lot of construction happening, and it is one of those areas where we will need to have further focus in the future.

At the moment the priority of course is on organic waste and trying to remove that from our landfill, and that is where all our attention is and where our investment is being made at the moment—and of course trying to meet the waste export bans—but it certainly has been identified as something that we need to continue to look at and work with the waste recyclers in that space, such as Canberra Concrete Recyclers and so forth, about what can be done with the waste. There were some opportunities identified through the waste feasibility study to do with some of this material.

Subsequently we undertook work on a waste energy policy where we ruled out a range of thermal treatment options in relation to some of this waste. That has narrowed down what is possible in terms of dealing with some of this material. I will hand over to Mr Fitzgerald and the team.

Mr Fitzgerald: I do not have the exact figure for construction and demolition waste, and I am happy to take that on notice. From our experience, it is lower than some of the other jurisdictions. As the minister pointed out, it does fluctuate. We went through a period of significant renewal through the last five years as we have gone into densification and intensification within the urban realm. I can pass to Michael Trushell who does have the specifics of some of the breakdowns of waste within the ACT.

Mr Trushell: The figure is about right, about 40 per cent for construction demolition waste, but the key point to note is the actual amount going to landfill in the ACT. Based on our reported figures, it is negligible. We are talking about 40,000 to 24,000 tonnes a year, out of about a million tonnes. It is the one-way stream where we are getting very high resource recovery in the ACT.

THE CHAIR: We have got great resource recovery, we have got some really good commercially viable facilities, and we have for some time, which is awesome. The reason I am interested in it is that our typical waste hierarchy has always had avoidance at the top. But governments, generally speaking, are not very good at that avoidance. We tend to spend most of our money and time on the recycle and dispose section. Now that we have this report about the scope 3 value of embedded emissions in the built environment, I am interested to know whether we are likely to shift our attention to C&D waste to avoid more of that waste and whether you think we have the right policy settings—rather than simply demolishing and recycling—or whether we need some different policy settings. They may or may not come from ACT NoWaste, they may come from other portfolios, to ensure that we are not generating that waste in the first place.

Mr Corrigan: This is a really complex area. In the ACT the policy settings, I think, are right at the moment. But in terms of better avoidance at the start, it really becomes a national issue. It should start to look at what materials are used in the construction sector and what is actually brought into the country, what is preferred, even what industry is used to and how they use those products, and look at avoidance and then follow that through. You almost have not quite a shoosh scheme but you need to follow the life of those products through what they are used for and how they are disposed of at the end, and recovered, and things like that.

It is a significant issue and a significant national issue, I would say. But having said that, it is not to say we are aware of it. I think the ACT settings are good. As Mr Trushell mentioned before, our resource recovery in that sector is good at the moment. But it is quite a huge area. We cannot cover it now with a narrow, specific answer, unfortunately.

Mr Steel: We have started work on developing a circular economy strategy for the ACT, which we are looking forward to consulting further on with the community. I think this is an opportunity to look at things around how we use resources right throughout the life cycle and, as you say, try and avoid those materials at the very beginning. This is likely to have strong links with procurement as well. How is it that when we are procuring an infrastructure project, for example, we can try and embed some of those measures that might reduce scope 3 emissions and ensure that we have got sustainable materials?

On some of our major projects, of course we do undertake those ISC ratings or green star ratings, depending on what is appropriate for the particular project, and looking at scope 3 emissions. That also includes some of the materials. But whilst there is an emissions lens often on that, it may not necessarily go to the sort of resource management side of things. I think that is probably where we need to have some focus. I think the strategy will help us to have that discussion across government, because it is not just TCCS, as you say, that is doing this work. It is in quite a few areas across

government, including potential building requirements and so forth that might be looked at in the future.

MR PARTON: I have a question in regard to the burglary that recently occurred at the Mugga Lane Domestic Animal Services facility. I certainly appreciate that you may not be able to comment on a number of details around that incident but are you able to advise what measures and precautions will be put in place to improve security at the facility?

Mr Steel: It is not our practice to comment on individual cases but I will hand over to Craig Jordan, who might be able to speak further about the security measures that are in place, understanding that, of course, it is distressing to everyone when a dog has to be impounded. And emotions can be high in those circumstances.

Unfortunately there have been instances where people have tried to retrieve their animals who have been impounded, often for very good reasons, including the safety of the community. And that has led to some measures needing to be installed to ensure it does not happen in the future and the safety of our staff at Domestic Animal Services there as well. Mr Jordan can speak further to that.

Mr Jordan: Probably the first or the main item we are undertaking at the moment is we are getting in some security experts to actually review the site. In the interim we will be upgrading our fencing to make it more difficult for people to get into the site. In addition, as part of that overall review, we will be looking at enhancing our CCTV as well.

MR PARTON: I do not know if I can ask this but I am just going to try. Were any of the four dogs involved in the burglary located in one of the new dangerous dog kennels? If not, why were they not being kept in that type of kennel?

Mr Jordan: Yes, I can confirm some of the dogs were located in the new dangerous dog kennels. They managed to get through a number of fences. Sorry, I should mention all the dogs were in the new dangerous dog kennel.

MR PARTON: Have other break-in attempts occurred at this facility, and how regularly do they occur?

Mr Jordan: I am aware of one, approximately three years ago. It is not very often that we have a break in. I might just mention that we do get trigger alerts and, as soon as we do, we engage the AFP immediately.

MS LAWDER: I know break-ins and burglaries can be really distressing for homeowners and business owners and their staff. I presume this may well have happened with DAS staff as well. What measures do you have in place to support staff if they are upset or concerned about incidents like this?

Mr Jordan: We have a number of measures in place for our staff. One is immediate debriefing, especially from the senior management and the operational managers involved. Also, the organisation overall has access to one provider now to provide support services that staff can contact on an anonymous basis. In addition, we have

regular check-ins with our staff to see how they are managing these issues. In this type of environment I have regular engagement with the staff to seek feedback from the staff to ensure that they are supported by the directorate.

MS ORR: Minister, we have had a bit of a discussion about waste and recycling and so forth focused on particular areas. Can you just give us an idea of how the ACT's overall waste recovery rates are tracking in terms of past performance and also compared to other jurisdictions?

Mr Steel: I will hand over to Mr Fitzgerald and ACT NoWaste to provide some further detail, in addition to the comments that we have been making around the waste feasibility study work and what is planned as part of looking forward with the removal of organics from landfill.

Mr Fitzgerald: Our waste recovery rate has been consistently above 70 per cent for a number of years now, taking into account that Mr Fluffy did have a detrimental impact on the recovery rates. As a jurisdiction, we are certainly well above the average. From memory, we are second in terms of jurisdiction and waste recovery. The only jurisdiction that is above us at the moment is South Australia.

MS ORR: That probably covers it, given we have had such a comprehensive discussion on all the individual ones.

Mr Fitzgerald: There are other initiatives that we are looking at to improve that waste recovery target. We have implemented the bulky waste scheme. We have spoken about FOGO. The long-term vision for FOGO is that it is another opportunity to increase that resource recovery. Bulky waste continues to do very well. It is a highly supported service that is getting good recovery rates through that process.

MS ORR: What has been the uptake of the bulky waste program? Again, it is one of the newer programs, I think, within the suite of waste recovery initiatives.

Mr Fitzgerald: In the first year of service, over 6,000 people used the bulky waste service. We are working closely with GIVIT to connect some of the resources that we are recovering through the bulky waste scheme to households that need those products. That has been a terrific success. To date, we have had around 319 tonnes diverted from landfill for the scheme. That continues to grow as the city-wide rollout has continued.

MS ORR: What are the items that you are seeing more frequently within that bulky waste program?

Mr Fitzgerald: It is a mix. We see quite a large amount of consumer electronics. There are TVs at end of life which are not necessarily diverted but they form part of the NTCRS scheme. We see quite a large amount of furniture. Furniture is certainly an item that is easily transferrable to other households through the GIVIT scheme. Things like bookcases and wardrobes are certainly part of what we are seeing, but you see a range of different items—kids toys and the like. There is a full gamut of products that are provided through the bulky waste scheme.

MS ORR: What is your interpretation of “bulky”?

Mr Fitzgerald: “Bulky waste”, as in things like prams and those types of items—kids toys and kids accessories, I should say.

MS ORR: We have had a bit of a discussion about some of the future priorities and areas that might be identified. Building and construction waste came up as one. Are there any others that we have not covered that we would add to the next areas for exploration?

Mr Fitzgerald: As the minister mentioned, the circular economy plays a big part in this space to look at not only waste generation but also waste avoidance. Key for us going forward is how best do we seek to make sure that the waste is not incurred in the first instance, rather than looking at waste recovery rates into the future.

MS LAWDER: There is a category that is called the funded upgrades program. Is there an average time that upgrades are listed in the funded upgrades program before consultation and then work commence?

Mr Steel: Do you have a particular page reference number?

MS LAWDER: Page 45.

Mr Steel: That might be a general indicator of some of the capital program.

MS LAWDER: I am specifically interested in the playground at Fadden Pond park, which has now been prioritised on the funded upgrades program. I am interested to know what the time line for that sort of community consultation or upgrade commencement might be.

Mr Steel: The government has just announced a suite of suburban infrastructure improvements—just under \$40 million—which includes upgrades and new playgrounds, upgrades to shopping centres in the public spaces, as well as new dog parks and the like. We have outlined a range of different playgrounds that we are planning on upgrading during this term. Those are being prioritised for the upgrades. Fadden is not on those lists. We appreciate that you have put that one forward as something that needs to be upgraded and that will be considered in the context of future priorities for playground upgrades, once we have got on with the works on those that have been committed to and funding announced for.

MR PARTON: Perhaps if one of the hardworking members had put it forward—

Mr Steel: We put those playgrounds forward as election commitments. They came out of a play spaces forum as well as through community input. I am not sure that your side of politics put forward any suburban upgrades at the election. We are committed to getting on with our commitments. You have not got any commitments.

MR PARTON: Your directorate might be a bit bigger than mine, Mr Steel.

Mr Steel: I think we were both vying to become the government before the election.

You decided not to commit to anything, so that is your decision.

MS LAWDER: That is actually not the case, and we have spoken about this before. But moving right along, you did talk about some of the upgrades in the media release of 17 February, including shopping centres and playgrounds. One that I hear a lot about, and I am sure you do too, is Kambah shops, which is surely one of the—

Mr Steel: Which one? There are many.

MS LAWDER: Kambah Village.

Mr Steel: Very good. We, of course, committed to upgrades there at the 2016 election and then got on with delivering upgrades to the public spaces. The works took place in two stages and have now been completed and concluded.

MS LAWDER: I am talking about the upgrades. The front part of that is very ugly—the access from the car park, the pigeon droppings and the uneven paving. Despite the nice work that occurred after the 2016 commitment, there are still a lot of community requests about upgrading the rest of the shopping village area.

Mr Steel: Absolutely. As a resident of Kambah, I am very attuned to the fact that a private development proposal has been put forward. The proposal is for the expansion of the Woolworths, which would be on the space that you have mentioned at the front, the northern entrance to Kambah Village. It would not make sense for the government to undertake and invest in millions of dollars' worth of upgrades to the public realm in that area if it is all going to be demolished whenever the private developer actually gets on with its development.

Certainly, we know that there are issues there. We hope that the developer, Mr Tzanetos, gets on with his development because that would address some of those concerns. Whilst that is going through the planning process, unfortunately there has not been any indication of timing. That is why the government is not going to be undertaking upgrades on a space that is subject to that ongoing process and proposal by that particular developer.

MS LAWDER: If we have the same conversation next year and the year after and the year after because the owner has not progressed, do you think that is a satisfactory outcome for Kambah residents and others who frequent those shops?

Mr Steel: I think the term for this is “abortive works”, where we try and avoid wasteful use of public resources in undertaking improvements to assets where they would then need to be ripped up again. I think the community would be really upset if that was the case. We were up-front with the community at the time we undertook the consultations on the government's upgrades to Kambah Village in the other spaces and we were concentrating on those areas because we knew something was happening. Since then, of course, we have had a development application lodged for that particular thing. That sent a very clear indication that something is going to be happening there, but ultimately it is up to the developer to get on with that work. We do not have direct control of when they intend to start the development. It is frustrating for the community. Everyone would like to see this particular space

improved.

MS LAWDER: I agree; you do not want to spend a lot of money if it is going to be ripped up but, on the other hand, what if it never happens?

Mr Steel: If the developer gives an indication that it is not going ahead with the development permanently then that raises a question about what the future is of that. Meanwhile, we are undertaking upgrades in shopping centres right around Canberra, including many in the Tuggeranong region in places like Lanyon, Calwell and Monash. We are continuing to upgrade them and, of course, Kambah Village has already been the subject of substantial upgrades.

THE CHAIR: We have some new waste contracts, kerbside collection contracts, coming up for renewal quite soon. I am wondering whether we will see those coming out with zero emissions garbage trucks, given that we are moving ahead with our zero emissions bus fleet.

Mr Steel: This is a commitment, of course, that we have made under our parliamentary and governing agreement—to look at how we can transition our garbage truck fleet. What we have found in the heavy vehicle space is that it has not moved quite as quickly as the light vehicle space in terms of the zero emissions. It has for buses. The buses are quite a mature technology now, which is great. We have made some announcements this week about the first 12 electric buses coming on board. When it comes to other heavy vehicles, like garbage trucks, the technology is not necessarily at the same level and the number of manufacturers that are available to supply those is not necessarily there.

When we are talking about a waste contract that goes over quite a long period, anywhere up to eight or 10 years, we expect that there will be quite a substantial change in terms of the transition to zero emissions over that period and also the maturation of the technology. We need to take account of that in preparing for this procurement and to make sure that there are appropriate milestones in place that are both ambitious and acknowledge the realities of where the technology is up to, particularly in the first few years of the contract before the technology gets to a point where we can have a full-scale rollout.

We are thinking about all of those issues at the moment ahead of the contract. There are certainly examples of some of these garbage trucks overseas in places like South Korea, where there are hydrogen garbage trucks. We need to make sure that we have garbage trucks that can undertake not only the range needed but also the other mechanical aspects, particularly for side-loader trucks that have a mechanical arm that needs to go up and down on hundreds of occasions every day. We need to make sure that the energy supply that drives these trucks can accommodate not only the distance but also that very energy-intensive activity. I will hand over to the team to talk a bit more about that transition and how we are preparing.

Mr Fitzgerald: That is right, Minister. Part of the main concern at the moment, when it comes to the industry responding to zero emissions in the waste fleet, is the hydraulics. The hydraulics, both in the lifting arm and the compaction, require quite a considerable charge, so that reduces the range. We have been looking at that in the

context of the Canberra community and how we best service waste services going forward. We recently went out to industry with an expression of interest to gain some of that information as to what is out there, what are those new emerging technologies and what do industry see as the proper level for transition, while making sure that we are showing that our preference is to be as ambitious as possible. We are currently in the process of evaluating those expressions of interest to understand the information that has been provided, which will inform our future tender process.

THE CHAIR: That is great. When you went out with an EOI, did you go to some of the stakeholders that are already doing zero emissions trucks? I know some other councils in Australia have trialled this.

Mr Fitzgerald: Yes. It was a broad EOI. We sought to get as many respondents as possible both from the existing waste industry and some of those emerging providers of equipment in that area. We received a range of responses back.

THE CHAIR: If the answer came back that it was not yet ready but it would be during the life of the contract, do you think it would be possible for the directorate to draft those contracts in such a way that it could transition during the contract?

Mr Fitzgerald: Yes. That provides opportunities. The level of ambition is obviously a decision for government as to what is built into those contracts. There are additional costs attributable there as infrastructure needs that need to be considered through depot upgrades and the like, but that would be something that can be considered through that process.

THE CHAIR: I imagine there would also be fairly significant fuel savings as well.

Mr Fitzgerald: Correct. There is the advice that the cost of the fuel is generally amortised across the value of the truck. So embedded within the truck value the initial truck purchase is, effectively, the amortised cost of the fuel. We look at that and how best that works its way through the life of the contract.

Mr Steel: Battery electric is one option, but it seems like a lot of the heavy vehicles tend to be moving towards the hydrogen space because of the work that these trucks do. The Australian Trucking Association have also put out a call and released a report just in the last month calling on the federal government to pull their finger out and get on with the Euro 6 standard, which will ensure that at least we have lower emissions vehicles if new heavy vehicles are being purchased. Of course, they are also keen to see how we can support this transition. It is good to see industry actually backing it. The only people holding it up are the federal government.

MR PARTON: Minister, are you able to advise why the library at Erindale is still closed to the public, and has been for over six months now, given that most libraries have since reopened post-lockdown?

Mr Steel: As a result of the ongoing impacts of the pandemic, this has had an impact on staff who may need to be furloughed as a result of contracting COVID-19 themselves or being a close contact. That has meant that, unfortunately, we have not been able to run all of the library services, and for a period of time we did have some

libraries closed. Erindale is the last one that is still to open. That is simply because of the staffing impacts. Those are being assessed as to whether we can reliably open the service for people to use. An even worse outcome would be if we opened and then did not have the staff to run the service.

This is why I am constantly saying—we have had this conversation now over a number of hearings, Mr Parton—that we have to make sure that, through the business continuity plans that we have in place, we actually manage a reliable service. That goes across city services, including libraries, but also transport. I think your advice is just to open up, but we actually have to have the staff to deliver these services.

MR PARTON: We are here at annual reports hearings; we are not giving a pitch to voters. Are you able to give us a reopening date for Erindale Library? Is that known?

Mr Steel: I will hand over to the team at Libraries ACT. The answer is that across all of our services we continue to monitor the impact of COVID on staffing levels. Through our business continuity plans that we put in place at the beginning of the pandemic we have been planning this for some time to make sure that we can continue to deliver these services. Unfortunately, it does lead to the disruption of some of our services. We want to be clear with the community about what we can deliver so that we are not delivering unreliable services if we do open up and then we do not have the staff to deliver those services. Sarah Steed from Libraries ACT might be able to give a bit more information about how we are going in staffing our libraries.

Mr Jordan: Chair, Erindale Library did reopen on 14 February.

MR PARTON: My information was obviously not quite up to date.

Ms Steed: I was just about to give that update. We did reopen on the 14th. Erindale was open pre-Christmas, but we did have to close for a few weeks across January. We have reopened, and people have been very happy to come back to the library.

MR PARTON: Excellent; good to hear.

MS ORR: I want to go back to the theme of waste and recycling and get an update on the single-use plastic legislation that has come into place in recent times. How is the implementation of that going? I am particularly interested in the feedback from industry and the community around things like plastic cutlery and stirrers and the bits and pieces that we are no longer using.

Mr Steel: The first tranche of the bans has been in place now for some time. I think that, partially due to the significant engagement that had been undertaken with business and industry in the lead-up to that ban and then after it with ongoing education and implementation, it has been quite a smooth transition. We have not had a huge amount of kickback either from the community about not being able to access these items through businesses or from the businesses themselves.

Having said that, we are now moving to and have been undertaking consultation on the tranche 2 products. It has obviously been a requirement under the legislation to do that within a certain time from the ban. We are just considering the feedback from

industry at the moment about those second tranche items. That includes the plastic straws as well. That has been of particular interest, particularly for people with disability and their advocates.

We are very excited that this weekend the Canberra Show is on—hopefully the weather will be good—because this will be one of the first declared plastic-free events under the legislation. It will be free of plastic straws, takeaway containers, plates and bowls. We have already announced the next suite of events which will be declared plastic-free. That is up on the legislation register. We will continue to work with event organisers on the current tranche of plastics that we have banned, which goes beyond the scope of the broader ban in the community, and how we can extend that going forward for events going into next year as well with further items. I will hand over to NoWaste to talk a little about the feedback that they are getting.

Mr Fitzgerald: Particularly when it comes to plastic-free events and dealing with event organisers, there has been a desire to get on board. They do not see this as being an impediment. There has been a real excitement at being able to be part of this process. The Canberra Show, as the minister mentioned, was one of the first to be part of it, and it really did embrace the opportunities that that provided.

More broadly with single-use plastics, we have had a huge engagement with the community and business sector. The feedback that we are receiving is overwhelmingly positive as to the need to progress down this path through the first tranche of the single-use plastics. We had over 2,800 people fill out the survey. We had a number of different community groups approach us with submissions predominantly in support of banning the first tranche. We are seeing that through the second tranche as well. We are seeing a similar pattern where people want to go well beyond what we are currently doing and look to the future in removing single-use plastics from the waste stream. We are really excited. We will look at what is possible, as part of tranche 2, and then obviously go through to future tranches as we try to remove single-use plastics.

THE CHAIR: That is really great news about the plastic-free Canberra Show going ahead. Regarding the substitutes that we use, are you tracking what the recycling rate will be on those?

Mr Fitzgerald: It is not something that we have actively tracked at the moment. It has certainly been part of what we are looking at from an evaluation perspective: how do we understand whether those alternatives are being used and, of course, where do they go? Are they being diverted to landfill or to other alternate uses into the future? We are looking at it. Our waste audits do not necessarily pick up those areas, because they are too small. It is certainly something that we will look at engaging with the business sector and the community as to how best to evaluate its success.

THE CHAIR: That is really good progress.

MS LAWDER: I have dozens more questions, but I will put them in on notice.

THE CHAIR: Excellent. On that basis, I thank the minister and his many officials for coming along today, late on a Friday night. Thank you very much for giving us your

time and providing us with some answers. Members, we can lodge questions on notice. I imagine a number are coming your way from one source in particular. I remind witnesses that if you have taken questions on notice, please provide those answers to the committee secretary within five working days. I think they will probably be chasing you up for that.

The committee adjourned at 5.58 pm.