

The Estimates Committee convened at 8.28 am.

MINISTER ANDERSON'S PORTFOLIOS
DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

Madam CHAIR: I welcome you, minister, and invite you to introduce the officials accompanying you this morning.

Ms ANDERSON: Thank you, Madam Chair, and committee members. I take this opportunity to introduce Jenni Collard, Acting Chief Executive Officer, Office of Children and Families; Cameron Wilson, Chief Financial Officer; Helen Nezeritis, Executive Director, Corporate Services; and, of course, the staff sitting behind me.

Madam CHAIR: Minister, I invite you to make an opening statement of no more than five minutes and then to call for questions relating to the statement. The committee will then consider any whole-of-government budget and fiscal strategy-related questions before moving onto output specific questions and, finally, non-output specific budget-related questions.

I invite the shadow minister to ask questions first, followed by the Independent member, then other committee members. Finally, other participating members may address electorate issues. The committee has agreed that other members may join in the line of questioning pursued by the shadow minister rather than waiting for the end of the shadow's questioning on the input.

Minister, do you wish to make an opening statement on the Department of Children and Families.

Ms ANDERSON: I do, Madam Chair. I wish all the talented and hard-working staff of the Office of Children and Families were here so we could congratulate them. In so many ways their task is as important as it is thankless.

We can never forget children are our future and every child deserves to have a future. The Office of Children and Families exists so children whose families fail receive the quality child protection, out-of-home care services they need, but this is not a task we can do on our own. Obviously, the first and most important assistance we need is from families themselves.

Families must be prepared to take responsibility for their children and adjust their lifestyles to accommodate the physical, emotional and psychological needs of those children. We also need the assistance of the population at large; reporting child abuse and neglect is compulsory by law for all of us, including journalists.

So often neglect or abuse is an unintended consequence of broken or bad policy. We need to work on alcohol policy, housing policy, employment, and almost all other social policies. Where we have strong communities, we have less child abuse. It is a case of fixing the cause and not waiting for the problem. Therefore, as a government, our priority is to introduce a practice framework to keep kids safe and engage with families in a more meaningful way. We need to concentrate on those children's needs, improving the out-of-home care system, including the delivery of strategies to increase our foster care pool and retention rates of carers.

In staffing the front line, a process started by minister Lambley, I am refocusing the department so 85% of resources are now targeted at the front line. Combined with a commitment to frontline supervision, learning and development, I am determined to help make the department better, stronger and more efficient.

I know the previous government was aware of changes needed in the *Care and Protection of Children Act*. Well, we are doing something. I know it is outside of the parameters, but I am pleased with the steps the department is taking and I look forward to their proposals in the face of an increasing need for child protection services. However, unlike the last government, we are not simply throwing more staff at the problem hoping it will go away.

I was horrified to see how many unfunded positions minister Lambley inherited when she took on this portfolio. To let the situation grow would be bad political management. I am not saying, for example, managing the 14% growth of the number of children in care is easy, but when we came to power there was

no plan. We had hard-working staff who were expected to simply work harder - so we have to work smarter.

In 2012-13, growth has continued at almost 20% per annum. This equates to just less than 100 additional children coming into care. At 31 March 2013, there were 779 children in out-of-home care. As a government, we have allocated an extra \$5m in 2013-14 to manage the cost pressures in child protection, personnel and out-of-home care services. This follows extra funding of \$10m provided this financial year.

The 2013-14 budget for the Office of Children and Families is \$169m. As part of working smarter, there have been a number of structural changes to the office, for example, the transfer of functions such as youth justice, homelessness and sexual assault services to other government agencies. This has resulted in a decrease in the number of outputs from five to three, being: out-of-home care, child protection, and family and parent support services. Let me emphasise, the reshaping of the agency has allowed it to concentrate solely on keeping kids safe and, in many ways, the office has been strengthened by the streamlining. Also, it may be the reason the members for Nightcliff and Karama struggle. Their announcements of a \$9m reduction in the OCF budget puzzled my office, until we concluded that it does not exist. There is no way we can add, subtract, divide or multiply figures to get that answer. The simple answer is: there has been no reduction to the office budget and there have been no cuts to frontline services.

The redirection of support to the frontline is the main reason OCF shows variations in the budget. If you look at the numbers, you will see there has been a real increase in the funding provided to support frontline children protection services. What I, and minister Lambley, asked the office to do is redirect \$14m in 2012-13 and \$25m in 2013-14 towards frontline service provisions.

The intention is to refocus on what matters: keeping kids safe. The opposition has stated there is fewer staff and, therefore, fewer investigations will take place. Once again, member for Nightcliff, I am truly amazed that someone with experience in this area misuses statistics to scare people. The 6000 reduction in investigations the member trumpeted is a misreading of basic statistical data. I can advise each and every notification is assessed by a qualified professional to determine if it meets the definition of harm under the *Care and Protection of Children Act*.

It is estimated in the budget papers that there will be in the order of 10 000 notifications this financial year. The budget papers clearly and transparently advise that all notifications are assessed but, obviously, not every notification requires the same amount of investigation. My department advises that 50% are excluded because of duplication, or they do not meet the criteria for investigation, and for many other reasons. Therefore, it is estimated that 4000 investigations will be completed next financial year.

In a nutshell, OCF is a government agency about delivering service to children in care and children at risk. I really want to make one thing clear: OCF is not about early childhood development, preschool, or youth services. These are good and valuable social policy areas, but they are not the responsibility of OCF.

This government has made very good decisions to refocus this agency on its core responsibilities. As a consequence, our budget and some funding decisions have been structured to reflect this, including in the NGO sector.

We are serious about protecting those who are the most vulnerable in our society - our children. I am determined to do whatever I can to give OCF the support it needs to focus on what is important here - to empower vulnerable families to keep kids safe.

Madam Chair, I welcome questions from the committee. Thank you.

Madam CHAIR: Thank you, minister. Are there any questions on the minister's statement? Member for Nightcliff.

Ms FYLES: Thank you, minister, for your statement, and I thank your staff for attending. Minister, do you agree with the Chief Minister that the Territory should consider reintroducing forced adoptions?

Ms ANDERSON: Madam Chair, estimates is scrutiny of the budget; it is not about what someone said, or what the media is saying. This is about scrutiny of OCF's budget, and I will not entertain any other questions.

Madam CHAIR: Member for Nightcliff, do you have a question relating to the statement?

Ms FYLES: Absolutely, it is relevant to the budget! Your plan to care for children shapes the whole department. It is a very important question, minister. Do you agree with the Chief Minister's view of forced adoptions?

Madam CHAIR: Member for Nightcliff, the minister has answered the question. You cannot restate the question. Do you have any further questions on the minister's statement?

Ms FYLES: It is disappointing that the minister will not speak in this forum.

Earlier this year, it was reported that 44 child protection positions in Alice Springs were vacant; I believe you admitted there were 36. Whatever the correct figure, there are positions vacant in Alice Springs. That must mean that child abuse cases are not being adequately investigated. Do you accept that?

Ms ANDERSON: Madam Chair, these are questions on opening statement. This is ...

Ms FYLES: Sorry, Madam Chair, these questions are all relevant to the opening statement; it is all about child protection.

Madam CHAIR: Would your question be better placed in a different output, or whole of agency, perhaps?

Ms FYLES: The outputs are all relevant; they all blend into child protection. Most questions could come under all four outputs.

Madam CHAIR: Perhaps that is an agency-related whole-of-government question.

Ms FYLES: Okay, I will ask it then. Minister, can you provide progress on implementation of the signed contracts with Territory communities within your ministerial responsibility?

Ms ANDERSON: Madam Chair, that is also a question that is not relevant to the opening statement. Maybe the member for Nightcliff can ask that in other outputs to agency-related issues.

Madam CHAIR: Member for Nightcliff.

Ms FYLES: Minister, you do not want to answer any questions on your opening statement?

Ms ANDERSON: I will answer any question, Madam Chair, on the opening statement. It is obvious the member for Nightcliff was either not listening to the opening statement, or is not interested in talking about the protection of children. This is not about the member for Nightcliff being in the media tonight or at lunchtime, this is about vulnerable children. I expect you, as my shadow, to ask me appropriate questions.

Ms FYLES: Minister, these questions are all about vulnerable children. The estimates process is your opportunity. It shut down last night. Are you trying to shut it down within 10 minutes this morning?

Madam CHAIR: Member for Nightcliff, I am not sure what imputation you are making. I suggest you withdraw that comment.

Ms FYLES: I withdraw that comment, but I would like some clarification of when the minister is going to answer questions.

Ms ANDERSON: Madam Chair, I will answer questions in the appropriate output areas.

Madam CHAIR: For clarification: questions, in essence, can be asked as operational and budget related questions to the outputs. At present we are going through the process of asking questions directly related to the statement, then we will go through general questions about the agency, and then we move specifically into outputs.

Ms FYLES: Perhaps I will ask some questions about funding which you spoke about that in your opening statement, minister. Would you be prepared to answer those questions?

Ms ANDERSON: Absolutely - \$25.5m. I am happy to talk about it.

Ms FYLES: You budget forecasts inflation to grow at 3.9% and wages to grow at 3.3%. What is the indexation Child Protection Services requires to provide the same level of services next year?

Ms ANDERSON: Madam Chair, I thank the opposition for the question. We have directed our support to frontline services. We believe vulnerable children have to have frontline services fully equipped and funded to ensure these children and their families are looked after and protected at the end. What we saw under Labor was top heavy. You grew management and neglected frontline services.

Ms FYLES: Minister, it is quite a specific question around indexation. Are you prepared to answer it?

Ms ANDERSON: Yes. Frontline services were expected to do the hard work with families with no resources – 90 unfunded positions we have to fund was your legacy.

Ms FYLES: Minister, what is the indexation of Child Protection?

Ms ANDERSON: \$5.5bn

Ms FYLES: The indexation is \$5.5bn?

Ms ANDERSON: I am not saying that. I am getting to the question. I need to ensure, as minister, that you understand how your government operated. Your government operated with the full intent of growing top-heavy management, so frontline services were neglected.

Ms FYLES: Minister, this is not the question. You are minister and in charge but, obviously, you, cannot answer the question about the indexation of Child Protection, so I will move on.

Do you accept with inflation forecast by your own government at 3.9% you will need to increase the budget by 3.9% just to provide the same services next year?

Ms ANDERSON: Madam Chair, as I said before, \$25.5m was redirected in 2013-14 - \$5m extra. What is it you are looking for?

Ms FYLES: Minister, I am looking for a breakdown. It is fantastic to talk about these big, high level figures and strategies, but the estimates process - I should not have to remind you, as an experienced parliamentarian – is the breakdown. I want some indexation. Your own government says inflation is due to rise to 3.9%, yet your budget papers show wages to rise to 3.3%. How can you provide the same services for Territory children?

Ms ANDERSON: Madam Chair, we have answered this question. We have quite clearly and openly said we will always be an open and transparent government. We have said we have \$25.5m in the 2013-14 budget - \$5m extra. What extra are you looking for?

Ms FYLES: Minister, your own budget figures show you are cutting Child Protection funding by \$2m, and \$9m in real terms. Why?

Madam CHAIR: Madam Chair, we said in the opening statement, the member for Nightcliff likes to get headlines by scaring people. This is not about scaring the population of the Northern Territory, member for Nightcliff. We are talking about vulnerable children and how better we can deliver the service to these children and their families.

Ms FYLES: Absolutely, and I am seeking some clarification for Territorians. Your Child Protection budget is cut by \$2m. In real terms that is \$9m. I have just asked you a series of questions on indexation that you have been unable to answer. Would you please give some clarification to your budget?

Ms ANDERSON: I believe you asked me that question in parliament, and we said we cannot find the \$9m anywhere. You are looking at programs that have moved out of OCF, but you still think those programs exist in the Office of Children and Families. We have quite clearly indicated to you in the opening statement, those programs have now moved to the areas of Justice, Health and Housing.

Ms FYLES: Minister, your budget on page 256 clearly states you are going to pay your employees less next year. This year you will pay your employees \$78m; to pay the same number of employees at the same level you would need to increase this by 3% or \$2.3m. Why are you are cutting it to \$77m; can you clarify those figures?

Ms ANDERSON: Madam Chair, why do we need to keep going back to answer questions from someone who obviously does not understand the budget papers. Member for Nightcliff, there was \$19.1m transferred to other agencies.

Ms FYLES: Minister, I will pull you up on that. One of the comments you made this morning was Youth Justice was moved out of the Office for Children and Families. Youth Justice has never been in the Office of Children and Families, so what is the excuse now?

Ms ANDERSON: Madam Chair, once again the member for Nightcliff does not understand. Youth Justice did sit in the Office of Children and Families, and it has now gone to Youth Justice.

Ms FYLES: But that is a separate agency; you said it sat within OCF?

Ms ANDERSON: Yes, absolutely.

Ms FYLES: So, what are the savings there?

Ms ANDERSON: Member for Nightcliff, \$5.5m, which was part of the \$19.1m that has been transferred across.

Ms FYLES: Okay, so the budget consideration always sat within the Department of Children and Families?

Ms ANDERSON: That is correct.

Ms FYLES: Thank you for that clarification. In your election commitments you promised \$8m for safe houses. Your costing document says it was \$2m per year for four years; where is this in the budget?

Ms ANDERSON: Can we get back to you on that?

Ms FYLES: Sure, no problem. You made an election commitment for a night safe strategy for children; where is it, and are you able to table it today?

Ms ANDERSON: Is that YSOS?

Ms FYLES: I am not sure. You made an election commitment for a night safe strategy.

Ms ANDERSON: We will get back to you on that as well, member for Nightcliff.

Madam CHAIR: Minister, will you be getting back during your session, or does that need to be a question on notice.

Ms ANDERSON: No, during the session.

Ms FYLES: How many positions are there currently in Alice Springs?

Ms NEZERITIS: Helen Nezeritis, Executive Director, Corporate Services. Could you repeat the question?

Ms FYLES: In Alice Springs how many positions are there currently?

Ms NEZERITIS: As an establishment?

Ms FYLES: Yes.

Ms NEZERITIS: The Alice Springs service has an establishment of 148 positions.

Ms FYLES: And how many are currently vacant?

Ms NEZERITIS: As of 30 March, I have a statistic of 17 vacant positions.

Ms FYLES: How many of those are at the professional level, or are they all at the professional level?

Ms NEZERITIS: I will need to get back to you on that.

Ms FYLES: Okay. Can I ask for the same figures for Katherine and Nhulunbuy for professional staff and vacancies?

Ms ANDERSON: Is that Katherine and Nhulunbuy, member for Nightcliff?

Ms FYLES: Yes. You are not able to get those figures?

Ms ANDERSON: We just said we will get back to you.

Ms FYLES: Okay. Could I also get the same categories for Darwin and Palmerston as well? If you could get those back during the session that would be most appreciated. I am surprised you do not have that information. It is quite basic data: how many positions in offices, vacancies and professional streams. I thought you would know it off the top of your head, but I look forward to getting that data this morning.

Ms ANDERSON: We will get back to you in a couple of minutes.

Ms FYLES: Moving on, in your opening statement you talked about the importance of children and that your department is all about the children, and you have brought on a new CE. You moved the Department of Children and Families in October last year, and I quote:

The establishment of the Office of Children and Families within the newly named Department of Education and Children's Services.

You said this move was justified because you needed the integration and there would be consistencies if childhood services would work together in the education system. I found that surprising. You have now moved the office out of the department of Education. Can you provide a breakdown of the costs associated with moving into Education and out again, changing letterhead and shuffling people around?

Ms ANDERSON: I am advised, member for Nightcliff, that the cost was very minimal for those changes.

Ms FYLES: Would I be able to get those figures, please?

Ms ANDERSON: Yes, we will get back to you on that.

Ms FYLES: Minister, we had a stand-alone Department of Children and Families. Your government, on a whim to suit a minister, sacked a CE and moved the department into the department of Education and then moved it out again, and you are telling me it is okay because the cost was minimal. That was a huge disruption and surely changing letterhead, the IT and Corporate Services would be quite extreme. I would like some more detail.

Ms ANDERSON: Madam Chair, as an incoming government you do want to see changes and we felt it necessary to have the changes. There is a similar model working in South Australia. We had the opportunity and we have to do as governments wish to do. By placing Children and Families in Education and taking it back out we saw the importance of a stand-alone agency focused on the protection of vulnerable children.

Ms FYLES: At what cost to Territory kids do we have governments of the day just trying things and moving in and out of departments? It is not unusual to ask for a detailed breakdown of the costs associated with moving into Education and out again.

Ms ANDERSON: Madam Chair, it is very inappropriate that you talk about things this government is doing when you governed for 10 years and filled the top end of the agency with professional staff and left frontline service to protect themselves and vulnerable children. We came into an agency where there were 90 unfunded positions.

Ms FYLES: Minister, are you unable to provide the Territory community with a breakdown of the cost of moving Children and Families into Education and out again?

Ms ANDERSON: We have already told you it was very minimal ...

Ms FYLES: Can we get a figure on that?

Ms ANDERSON: ... and if you want we can get that figure for you.

Ms FYLES: That would be fantastic.

Ms LEE: A point of order, Madam Chair! Standing Order 114 – the member for Nightcliff is repeating questions.

Ms FYLES: I think the minister and I are just clarifying in conversation.

Madam CHAIR: So that is a question on notice?

Ms ANDERSON: No, we will get back to them.

Madam CHAIR: You can find it?

Ms ANDERSON: Yes.

Ms FYLES: Okay, thanks. When you moved child protection into Education, the government said, on 11 October last year, that the chief executive of each department had been asked to develop a transition plan to present to the minister, and staff would be fully consulted in those processes. Can you table a copy of that transition plan, please?

Ms ANDERSON: That is the business of government, and you know that. They are operational ideas for moving the agency forward, and that is a government responsibility; I do not believe it is the responsibility of the Estimates Committee.

Ms FYLES: Minister, I ...

Ms ANDERSON: This is about scrutiny of the budget and you are going far beyond that and getting into the nitty gritty of departmental operations when questions are coming up straight after ...

Ms FYLES: Minister, it is very important; it is a transition plan. It is the shape of policy of the government in moving the department into the department of Education. The government said the transition plan would be open, and the minister at the time said staff would be fully consulted. I am just asking for an update. I believe that is appropriate during the estimates process.

Ms ANDERSON: In your discussion you said it is policy. Policy has nothing to do with estimates.

Ms FYLES: So, you are not willing to table a copy of that transition plan?

Ms ANDERSON: Policy is the business of government.

Ms FYLES: Minister, I take that you are unable to table a copy of that plan.

Ms ANDERSON: It is not that we do not want to table the report. It is a fact of estimates. You are here to scrutinise the budget, you are not here to talk about policy of government; that is our business. You had that opportunity for 10 years.

Ms FYLES: I guess, minister, in understanding the budget - and there are only five pages in the budget - we must understand the policies, the procedures, the budget plans behind that. That is why I am asking these questions. If you are not willing to table a copy of that transition plan, I will move on.

Ms ANDERSON: Policy is the business of government.

Ms FYLES: Moving the department in and out within six months seemed very strange. In fact, I am not sure your own Treasurer knows where the department is. He admitted to *Stateline* he thought it was still in the department of Education. We have taken off the budget books that it is a stand-alone department.

Child abuse is a huge problem - you have spoken to me numerous times about it - and it is a growing problem. Could you not have spent energy elsewhere instead of shuffling departments? Where did you priorities go so wrong?

Ms ANDERSON: Madam Chair, I do not believe this question has anything to do with scrutiny of the budget. It is irrelevant. You can ask those questions in agency specific output groups.

Ms FYLES: Okay, I will move on. One more question on the opening statement. In a ministerial statement in parliament last November, your government said that significant work had already been undertaken on a joint strategic plan between Child Protection and Education. That was six months ago. Are you able to table a copy of that strategic plan, please?

Ms ANDERSON: Madam Chair, again, this is not scrutiny of the budget process. If you want a debate about that in parliament, then we shall do so when we go back to the House.

Ms FYLES: Minister, I am not debating, I am asking for the strategic plan, the transition plan to be tabled. You are unable to table anything. You have been in government now nearly 10 months and you are unable to table any of these plans for us. But, you tell us it is okay, you have it under control. Are you able to clarify that?

Ms ANDERSON: Plans and policies are the job of the government of the day. As I said, you had your chance for 10 years. This is not a process for discussing government policy. If you want to debate policy you do so in the Chamber.

Ms FYLES: Six months ago, significant work had been undertaken to develop a joint strategic plan, but you are unable to table a copy of that today?

Ms ANDERSON: Madam Chair, I have answered the question.

Madam SPEAKER: Member for Nightcliff.

Ms FYLES: I have finished with the response to the statement.

Agency Related Whole-of-Government Questions on Budget and Fiscal Strategies

Madam CHAIR: The committee will now proceed to consider the estimates and proposed expenditure contained in the Appropriation Bill 2013-2014 as they relate to the Department of Children and Families. Are there any agency related whole-of-government questions on budget and fiscal strategies?

Ms ANDERSON: Madam Chair, I will read the questions and the answers.

Madam SPEAKER: Sorry, yes, that is my fault.

Ms FYLES: We are happy for them to be tabled if you want.

Ms ANDERSON: Madam Chair, I will read the questions and the answers, and table those at a later stage.

Ms FYLES: Madam Chair, in the interests of time, we have seen with other ministers it works quite effectively if they table those documents and we move on to questions.

Ms ANDERSON: Madam Chair, I choose to read and put it on *Hansard*.

Ms FYLES: A waste of time.

Madam SPEAKER: Minister.

Ms ANDERSON: Question No 1:

Details on progress of all CLP announcements made to Territorians in CLP election policy documents, summary snapshots, media releases, announcements, 100-Day Plan, costing and savings documents, media advertisements, and other printed material.

The answer to that is: OCF has provided a \$2m grant to Somerville Community Services Community Services in 2012-13 to expand its facility in Palmerston.

The government has committed funding of \$0.7m in 2013-14 and \$0.2m ongoing for a family support service in Tennant Creek. The service model has been approved and allocation of funds will be managed through an open expression of interest process that will commence in June 2013. Any questions?

Question No 2:

Explanations on all variations and discrepancies between CLP election commitments and the decisions and policies of government since 26 August 2012.

There are no variations or discrepancies from election commitments made by the government. Any questions?

Ms ANDERSON: Question No 3:

Progress on all commitments and policy announcements made within government press releases and media statements made since 26 August 2012.

- A funding grant of \$2m has been allocated to Somerville Community Services to expand its Palmerston facility. An expression of interest process has been prepared to progress the \$0.7m expansion of the Tennant Creek Family Support Service. Increased funding of \$10m was allocated to OCF for child protection and out-of-home care services in 2012-13. An amount of \$5m has been allocated in Budget 2013-14 towards child protection and out-of-home care services.
- Redirection of funding - OCF is on track to meet its target of reallocating \$14.2m in 2012-13 towards provision of frontline services. OCF is committed to redirecting \$25.1m in Budget 2013-14 towards the provision of frontline services.
- Administrative Arrangements Orders: the transfer of the Sexual Assault Referral Service to the Department of Health has occurred. The transfer of homelessness to the Department of Housing has occurred. The Office of Children and Families has not been integrated with the Department of Education and Children's Services as per Administrative Arrangements Order of 20 March 2013. The transfer of Early Years output from the Department of Education and Children's Services has not occurred as per Administrative Arrangements Order changes of 20 March 2013. Any questions?

Ms FYLES: The transfer of the department into Education, was that in there or not?

Ms ANDERSON: Yes, as I read out before.

Ms FYLES: What was that cost breakdown?

Ms ANDERSON: Yes, the Office of Children and Families has not been integrated with the Department of Education and Children's Services as per the Administrative Arrangements Order of 20 March 2013.

Ms FYLES: Again, there was no cost to that move?

Ms ANDERSON: Very minimal, as we have already advised you.

Ms FYLES: Thank you, minister.

Ms ANDERSON: Question No 4:

Progress on all variations and discrepancies between commitments and policy announcements made within government press releases and actual implementation of government policy and funding decisions.

The answer is there were no variations or discrepancies other than the decision not to establish the Office of Children and Families within the Department of Education and Children's Services and the subsequent decision not to transfer the Early Years budget and functions to the office.

Any questions, Madam Chair?

Ms FYLES: No.

Question No 5:

Progress on all commitments, targets and information contained within the December 2012 mini-budget?

- Somerville Community Services grant: the government has provided additional funding of \$2m in 2012-13 for a grant to Somerville Community Services to expand their facility in Palmerston. The service model has been approved and the \$2m has now been released to Somerville Community Services. Building plans are finalised with initial ground work to commence soon.
- Tennant Creek Family Support Service: the government has committed funding of \$0.7m in 2013-14 and \$0.2m ongoing for a family support service in Tennant Creek. On 22 May 2013, I approved the service model and specification. The allocation of funds will be managed through an open expression of interest process that will commence in June 2013. It is anticipated the funding agreement will be signed off by the end of July 2013.
- Additional funding for child protection and out-of-home care: additional funding of \$10m was allocated to child protection and out-of-home care in 2012-13. Additional funding of \$5m has been allocated to child protection and out-of-home care for 2013-14.
- Redirection of funding: OCF is on track to meet its target of redirecting \$14.2m towards the provision of frontline services.
- Integration of early years learning, family support and preventative child protection functions: Administrative Arrangements Order changes have stopped the integration of transferring Early Years functions with the Office of Children and Families.
- The mini-budget announced \$150 000 ongoing for 2012-13 to establish a toy and equipment grant program for long-day care services which occur in the Education portfolio.

Ms FYLES: Minister, those answers were around the mini-budget and variations?

Ms ANDERSON: Yes.

Ms FYLES: It might now be appropriate to ask a question. Your mini-budget estimated you would receive 8000 child protection notifications and finalise 5400, yet your figure in Budget 2013-14 has increased the notifications received yet declined the investigations finalised which will see 1400 less child protection notifications finalised. It was only six months ago we had the mini-budget. Can you clarify that?

Ms ANDERSON: Madam Chair, that question is appropriate in the agency specific outputs?

Ms FYLES: We are talking about a clarification between the mini-budget and the budget.

Ms ANDERSON: Madam Chair, comes into whole-of-agency and I am happy to answer the question in agency specific.

Ms FYLES: If you are happy to answer it, why not answer it now, minister?

Ms ANDERSON: Because there is a process you have requested and that process is the one we are following.

Ms FYLES: We are allowed a bit of latitude. We are discussing the mini-budget variations into the Territory Budget 2013-14 and these questions are quite appropriate here.

Ms ANDERSON: Madam Chair, I have answered the question.

Madam CHAIR: Member for Nightcliff, perhaps if you make a note to ask it at the next opportunity.

Ms ANDERSON:

Question No 6:

Explanation about all variations and discrepancies between details, data and policy contained within the December 2012 mini-budget and the May 2013 budget.

The answer is: \$150 000 allocated to establish a toy and equipment grant program for a long-day service is now the responsibility of department of Education. Children Service's is part of an agency Administrative Arrangements Order of 20 March 2013.

Question No 7:

Progress on implementation of all (inaudible) and contracts with Territory communities.

This question relates to my portfolio responsibility of Local Government and I will answer the question under that output group.

Question No 8:

Details on staff movement and all costs resulting from all administrative arrangement changes since 26 August 2012.

The Office of Children and Families has had its staff transferred out to the other agencies as a result of the following machinery of government changes: Office of Youth Affairs and Office of Women's Policy transferred to the Department of the Chief Minister. That was before we took it out of the Department of the Chief Minister and made it a stand-alone agency. Homelessness staff transferred to the Department of Housing and the Sexual Assault Referral Centre Service transferred to the Department of Health. In total 52 staff have been transferred from the Office of Children and Families to other agencies. Apart from minor internal administrative time, there has been no relocation costs associated with the transfer of these staff to other agencies.

Question No 9:

Details on staff movements and all costs, including ministerial office relocation, resulting from portfolio reshuffles since 26 August 2012, and details on payouts resulting from portfolio reshuffles since 26 August 2012.

An answer to this question has already been provided by the Chief Minister during his time before the Estimates Committee last week.

Question No 10:

Details on costs of all government advertising and communications since 26 August 2012.

The answer is: advertising in newspapers - \$14 412; radio designs- \$6109; radio placement - \$41 462; television placement - \$6000; magazines and journals design - \$1186; magazine and journal placement - \$9491; online placement – zero, and outdoor banners – zero. Total of - \$78 660.

Ms FYLES: Minister, what was that \$78 000 in those advertising materials related to?

Ms ANDERSON: I have just broken it all down; the total and the subtotal of all of those costs.

Ms FYLES: I understand TV, radio, web etcetera, but Children and Families, what would you be promoting by advertising?

Ms NEZERITIS: We will need to take that on notice.

Question on Notice No 9.1

Madam CHAIR: Member for Nightcliff, please restate the question.

Ms FYLES: Please provide a breakdown of the activities the expenditure on advertising was for?

Madam CHAIR: Minister, do you accept the question?

Ms ANDERSON: Yes.

Madam CHAIR: The question asked by the member for Nightcliff of the minister is question No 9.1.

Ms ANDERSON: Moving onto marketing: display production was \$33 911; display placement – zero; exhibitions - \$44 866; brochures, leaflets, design production - \$4075; brochures, leaflets printing \$72 (inaudible); brochures, leaflets distribution - \$155; promotional merchandise to sign production - \$10 145; promotional merchandise distribution - \$95; multi-media CDs and DVDs - \$16 164; photography photo shoots - \$3086; editorial writing - \$2750; consultation and planning, communications - \$18 399; consultation and planning, public consultation - \$9970. Sub-total - \$235 138. Total of both - \$313 798.

Ms FYLES: The amount of \$235 000 is a great deal of money; it is nearly quarter of a million dollars. Again, I ask if we could have a breakdown of that. If the Office of Children and Families is spending that amount on promotional materials then we should see a breakdown.

Ms ANDERSON: This is material the past government had for the boards of inquiry. It is promotional material the Labor government used for advertising the boards of inquiry, and the material the boards of inquiry put out to stakeholders to inform them the enquiries were happening. That is exactly what this is.

Ms FYLES: We would really like to see a breakdown of that, thank you.

Ms ANDERSON: Okay. I am happy to do that.

Question on Notice No 9.2

Ms FYLES: Would you like me to restate the question for the record, Madam Chair?

Madam CHAIR: Yes, thank you, member for Nightcliff.

Ms FYLES: Could we please have a breakdown, again, following from the previous question about \$235 000 worth of items. What, specifically, were the costs were associated with?

Madam CHAIR: Minister, do you accept the question?

Ms ANDERSON: I accept the question. It is a good question because it will expose the amount of money you, as a government, used to advertise. It is a legacy item we have inherited. It is a fantastic question for an open and transparent government - we can make sure ...

Ms FYLES: It is a shame you could not be more open and accountable ...

Madam CHAIR: Do not interrupt the minister, member for Nightcliff.

Ms ANDERSON: We can educate the public as to the amount of money you have spent, and you had 90 unfunded positions - you literally threw away money.

Madam CHAIR: The question asked by the member for Nightcliff of the minister is question No 9.2.

Ms ANDERSON: Question No 1:

Full details on all government advertising in breach of the Public Information Act identified by the Auditor-General since 26 August 2012.

As the Estimates Committee was advised last week by the Chief Minister, a response is being prepared by the Auditor-General.

Question No 2:

A full breakdown of all ministerial office expenditure since 26 August 2012.

The answer to this question has already been provided by the Chief Minister during his time before the Estimates Committee last week.

Question No 3:

A full list of all forced redundancies across all agencies; an explanation for each redundancy and why it was necessary to breach the CLP's election commitment that no public servant would be sacked.

A response is being prepared by the Office of the Commissioner for Public Employment.

Ms FYLES: So, you are unable to provide any details of the executive team staff who were sacked under your government?

Ms ANDERSON: It is a bureaucracy and it needs to be answered by the appropriate people. None of them were sacked.

Ms FYLES: The Chief Executive was not sacked?

Ms ANDERSON: None of them were sacked.

Ms FYLES: So you are saying the Chief Executive of Children and Families was not sacked?

Ms ANDERSON: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Question No 4:

A full list of all personnel who have left the Northern Territory public sector and then returned since 26 August 2012; including payout and settlement details.

The response is being prepared by the Office of the Commissioner for Public Employment.

Question No 5:

Details on government tenders, contracts and grants awarded or granted since 26 August 2012, including whether the recipient is a member of the Country Liberal Party and full location details for companies and organisations.

Tenders awarded in 2012-13 totalled around \$385 000. The main tenders awarded include:

- \$110 000 for pre-training assessment – PTA - and delivery of customised training for professional development in language, literacy and numeracy for Office of Children and Families' staff for a period of 12 months
- \$166 000 for the delivery and assessment of the Certificate III in Community Service for OCF employees in Darwin and Alice Springs:
- \$47 000 for the provision of practice leadership skills set training.

Main areas of increased tenders are related to the delivery of accredited training for the purposes of staff professional development.

Question No 6:

Details on the procurement process undertaken and employment contracts for the employment within the Northern Territory public sector since 26 August 2012 of all former CLP and Liberal Party candidates and members of parliament at Territory or federal level.

The response will be provided by the Office of the Commissioner for Public Employment.

Question No 7:

Full details and cost of all ministerial travel, including accommodation, hospitality and flight details, including flight travel class since 26 August 2012.

The answer to this question has already been provided by the Chief Minister during his time before the Estimates Committee last week.

Question No 8:

Full detailed costs and invitation lists for all ministerial hospitality since 26 August, including events hosted by Protocol and events hosted by ministerial offices.

The answer to this question has already been provided by the Chief Minister during his time before the Estimates Committee last week.

Question No 9:

Full detailed costs and invitation lists for all public service hospitality provided since 26 August 2012.

The Office of Children and Families expended \$24 219 for public service hospitality. This comprised Northern Territory government funding of \$18 000, and Australian government of \$5951. The main areas of hospitality costs related to professional development for Office of Children and Families' staff.

Question No 10:

Full details and costs of all interstate or international public service travel, accommodation, hospitality and flight details, including flight travel class since 26 August 2012.

Interstate travel expenditure for the period of September 2012 to March 2013 by the Office of Children and Families was \$54 494. Of this amount, \$30 651 was spent on fares, \$16 104 was spent on accommodation, and \$7739 was spent on travel allowance.

There was no international travel undertaken by staff as part of carrying out departmental duties.

Travel and financial reports do not provide the facility to see the flight travel class, but it is OCF policy that all travel is to be undertaken in economy class with the exception of the Chief Executive and, if required, the staff member accompanying the Chief Executive. Travel and financial reports do not provide the facility to determine accommodation type used by employees.

Question No 11:

A breakdown of all water and other natural asset allocations granted by the Northern Territory government since 26 August 2012, broken down by those granted to CLP members.

A response has been prepared by the Department of Land Resource Management.

Question No 12:

Details on all policy items, strategies, actual estimates, budget forecasts, agency outputs and funding decisions contained within the May 2012-13 budget.

This information is available in Budget Paper No 3.

Question No 13:

Is exactly the same:

Details on all financial and economic data contained within operating statements, balance sheets, cash flow statements in the May 2012-13 budget.

This information is available within Budget Paper No 3.

Question No 14:

Full details, including impact statements and implementation plans, on all agency savings identified within the December 2012 mini-budget and the May 2012-13 budget.

Funding redirected toward frontline. Board of inquiry - \$4.4m; NGO grants - \$4.9m; implementation of government recruitment freeze - \$1.8m; executive contracts – zero; overseas recruitment - \$0.6m; office administration - \$0.5m; secure care - \$2m. Total - \$14.2m.

Question No 15:

Details on all information and data contained within the fiscal strategy; updated fiscal outlook risk to the updated financial projections, expenses and capital investment, intergovernmental revenue, and Territory taxes and royalties.

This information is available in Budget Paper No 2.

Question No 16:

Full details on all information and data contained within the capital works program and estimated capital expenditure across all government agencies and corporations.

This information is available within Budget Paper No 4.

Question No 17:

Full details of all revenue measures, including new taxes and tax increases, including levies and charges. Details include risk impact statements, community and industry consultation plans, economic modelling and revenue projections.

There are no new revenue measures relating to the Office of Children and Families.

Question No 18:

Full details on the operational impact across all government entities as a result of the government's decision and policies.

Specific questions will be addressed through the estimates hearing process relating to the Office of Children and Families in output groups.

Question No 19:

Full details on the operational impacts across all government entities as a result of government saving measures.

Specific questions will be addressed through the estimates hearing process relating to the Office of Children and Families output groups.

Question No 20:

Details on the operational impacts across non-government agencies as a result of all government funding decisions and policies.

Non-government organisations – NGOs - are external to the budget. This question should be posed to relevant NGOs.

Question No 21:

Full details on the impacts across all government entities as a result of all increases in government and government corporation charges, prices and tariffs since 26 August 2012.

Any impacts have been managed within existing resources. Power consumption for Office of Children and Families July 2011 to March 2012 - \$271 858; full year 2012 - \$37 284; July 2012 to March 2013 - \$278 722. Total - \$271 858.

There are water charges as well. Water and sewerage consumption for the Office of Children and Families from July 2011 to March 2012 - \$7588; full year 2012 - \$9849; and July 2012 to March 2013 - \$56 631. Total - \$56 631.

Question No 22:

Full details on all information and data contained within the two most recent reports on government services.

Reports are publically available. We can address the questions through the output groups, member for Nightcliff.

Question No 23:

Full details on all information and data contained within all annual reports produced by all government entities across the last two financial years.

These reports are also publically available. Specific questions will be addressed through the estimates hearing process related to the Office of Children and Families' output groups.

Question No 24:

Full details on all information and data contained within any report produced by a statutory authority of the Northern Territory government within the last five years, and full details on any and all actions of all government entities in response to the report or related to the report.

Data requested is too broad in scope and too expensive to collate. Specific questions are invited and will be addressed through the estimates hearing process related to the Office of Children and Families' output groups.

Question No 25:

Full details on all information and data contained within any report commissioned by the Northern Territory government and produced within the last five years, and full details on any and all actions of all government entities in response to the report or related to the report.

The answer is the same as above.

Question No 26:

Full details on all information, data and forecasts contained with reports produced in the last two years in relation to the Northern Territory from Deloitte Access Economics, CommSec, Australian Property Monitors, Housing Industry Association, Property Council, Master Builders NT and ANZ, including the response from government entities to these reports.

Member for Nightcliff, the answer is exactly the same, the data requested is too broad in scope and too expensive to collate, but we are happy to answer questions in output groups.

Question No 27:

Full details and all information on data produced by the Australian Bureau of Statistics in relation to the Northern Territory in the last two years, including the response of government entities to these reports.

The answer is exactly the same as I provided for the last three questions; the data requested is too broad in scope and too expensive to collate.

Question No 27:

Details on the reports and data published on Northern Territory government websites.

The same answer again; it is too broad in scope and too expensive to collate, but we are happy to answer the questions in the specific output groups.

Question No 28:

Full details on the government's implementation of recommendations made in relation to child protection within all government commissioned reports within the last 10 years.

Over the last 10 years, and during the reign of the previous government, a number of reports about the child protection system were tabled in the Northern Territory parliament. The vast majority of the recommendations from these reports were subsumed into the latest one - the report of the Board of Inquiry into the Child Protection System. All of them highlighted a system that was not adequately protecting our children.

Since August 2012, the government has moved on from a single focus on the *Growing them strong, together* report and the board of inquiry recommendations. While the majority of the board of inquiry recommendations have been commenced or completed, the focus of this government is on improving the safety and wellbeing of children across the Territory, not on completing recommendations. We are tackling the whole business of child protection very differently from the former government; we are not defined by reports. Our primary driver of keeping children safe is our business and our goal.

Question No 29:

Full details on the impact of the government's decision to remove independent oversight of child protection services, including the removal of the Family and Children Service Advisory Council and a Coordinator-General for Remote Indigenous Services.

Previous reports were incorporated into the board of inquiry report into the child protection system. All reports highlighted a system that was not adequately protecting our children. Since August 2012, the government has moved from a single focus on the *Growing them strong, together* report and the board of inquiry recommendations. The majority of the board of inquiry recommendations have been commenced or completed. The Office of Children and Families is focused on keeping children safe, which is consistent with all the report recommendations.

Question No 30:

Full details on the impact of funding cuts to the Office of Children and Families and non-government organisations involved in the provision of child protection services.

Estimated expenditure to the NGO sector, including grants and subsidies, has been reduced by \$9.3m from \$65.6m in 2011-12 to \$56.3m in 2012-13. The major reason is due to machinery of government changes which resulted in \$12.5m in grants being transferred to other agencies. Once machinery of government changes are taken into account, the agency is estimated to spend an additional \$3.2m on payments to the NGO sector in 2012-13 compared with 2011-12.

The mini-budget grant funding of \$4.8m has been reallocated from the non-government sector to the provision of services to child protection and out-of-home care services. This redirected funding has been used to assist in providing a shortfall in budget for subsidy payments to other NGO's for children in care. This shortfall has been the result of significant demand increases over the last number of years which were not funded.

Madam Chair, I will go through those organisations. General services: Anglicare NT; DCIS NT; Salvation Army; Property Trust; National Association for Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect; Northern Territory Council of Social Services, NTCOSS; Strong Aboriginal Families Together Incorporated; Australian Red Cross; Central Australian Aboriginal Congress; Human Services Training; Mission Australia; Tangentyere Council Incorporated; Warlpiri Youth Development Aboriginal Corporation; Mt Theo Program; Mount Theo-Yuendumu Substance Misuse Aboriginal Corporation; Strong Aboriginal Families Together; Barkly Region Alcohol Drug and Abuse Advisory Group; Julalikari Council Aboriginal Corporation, Parenting Research Centre; Tennant Creek Women's Refuge; Anyinginyi Health Aboriginal Corporation; Catholic Care and Tangentyere Incorporated.

Question No 31:

Full details of the government's implementation of recommendations relating to child protection within reports from the Coroner, Ombudsman and Children's Commissioner.

Of the 16 recommendations from the NT Coroner, eight have been implemented, four have been addressed through other actions, and four remain in the process of implementation. Of the 28 formal and five additional recommendations made by the NT Ombudsman in the report *A Life Long Shadow - Report of a Partial Investigation of the Child Protection Authority*, 20 were not accepted by OCF under the previous government, 14 have been implemented, and one is in the process of implementation. The remaining five have been addressed through other actions. The Office of Children and Families has implemented all of the nine recommendations made by the Children's Commissioner as a result of a report in respect of Baby BM and the report into Northern Territory Children and Families' intake and response process.

The Office of Children and Families endeavours to implement all recommendations made by the Children's Commissioner resulting from his investigations of complaints about OCF service delivery to individual children. A number of the recommendations from the Ombudsman's and Coroner's reports correlated with the board of inquiry recommendations. Actioning of these recommendations was undertaken as part of the board of inquiry response within the internal budget.

Question No 32:

Provide full details on the current status of staff within the Office of Children and Families.

It is unclear as to what is meant by the current status of staffing. This is a very broad question. Specific questions can be addressed to the budget estimates hearing.

That is the end of whole-of-government, Madam Chair.

Madam CHAIR: Thank you. The committee will now proceed to consider the estimates of proposed expenditure contained in the Appropriation Bill 2013-14 as they relate to the Office of Children and Families. Are there any agency related whole-of-government questions on budget and fiscal strategies?

Ms FYLES: Can I clarify one thing, minister? Was the expenditure on advertising was that from 26 August 2012 or was that for 2012-13 and ...

Ms ANDERSON: Is that what I just read through?

Ms FYLES: Yes. I want to clarify that figure because some of the questions were from 26 August.

Ms NEZERITIS: The time period is July 2012 to March 2013.

Ms FYLES: So the \$235 000 was from 1 July 2012 to March 2013. So the previous government was there for six weeks. The majority of that spend was in your time frame.

Is there any funding for child abuse prevention awareness and some of the domestic violence campaigns?

Ms ANDERSON: Since this government has come in it has done so many things to ensure it has highlighted the plight of Territory children. We have been outspoken about the issue. I, as minister, have spoken language on CAAMA to constituents in Central Australia about how important it is to look after our families and children. The fact that this government is redirecting into frontline services means it is serious about frontline services and protecting our practitioners, while ensuring there is continuous development and learning with the communities, the families, and the parents.

Ms FYLES: Minister, it is everyone's role in society to raise children, but your role as the Minister for Children and Families is to protect vulnerable children. You have a role to lead your department.

You indicated that \$235 000 was the previous government's spend when only six weeks of it can be attributed to the previous government; the majority was spent by your government. I am glad we have clarified that, and I am happy to move on. Thank you, Madam Chair.

Ms ANDERSON: This is not about clarifying whether you own six weeks of it and we own the rest. I thought in the best interests of vulnerable children we should work together to ensure we protect the most vulnerable; who are our children in the Northern Territory. This is not about whether you had it for six weeks. We can hold it for the next 50 years. You have had it for the last 10 years. I am sure out of goodwill you saw policies you thought would do justice for children in the Northern Territory. Well, it is our time to lead Territorians, our time to make a difference. I am happy to have that debate and discussion in the Chamber with you anytime.

Ms FYLES: Absolutely, minister, it is your time to lead, that is why we are here today looking at your budget and your policies. I do remind you of Standing Order 3.4.2. We are able, in the budget outputs, to talk about policies. You are the minister, you are in charge of this department, and it would be appreciated if you could show us your direction and answer these questions.

Ms ANDERSON: If you look at the estimates process, whether it is the Northern Territory or the federal estimates process, it is about scrutiny of government's budget; it is not talking about government policy. That is our business. You have had 10 years of it, and this is our time. We have five strong Indigenous people in the Country Liberal Party who cover the whole of the Northern Territory. We have very outspoken members in two of your committee members sitting there – the members for Stuart and Arnhem, and also the member for Arafura, who is a man.

This is our time to ensure we develop the right policies for vulnerable children in the Northern Territory. As I said, you have had your time and I am sure you did many great things in the Office of Children and Families, but we are directing our focus not to top-heavy management, but to ensure we look after families, children, parents, and frontline services.

Ms FYLES: Absolutely, minister, it is your role. As shadow minister, it is my role to provide that scrutiny. In 10 months, apart from moving the Department of Children and Families in and out of Education and scrapping the board of inquiry, axing the professional, independent, external monitoring committee, we have not seen a great deal. So, I look forward to moving on and asking some questions. Thank you.

Ms ANDERSON: Madam Chair, we are back to basics, and the basics of the Office of Children and Families are to protect children. We are not here to have a fight over whether you or I have done well. I accept I am here to be scrutinised as a minister of this agency and this government. But, we are getting back to basics, and the basics are we will look after children.

Madam CHAIR: Are there any other agency related whole-of-government questions? No. This concludes consideration of agency related whole-of-government questions on Budget and Fiscal Strategies.

OUTPUT GROUP 1.0 – CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

Output 1.1 – Child Protection Services

Madam CHAIR: The committee will now proceed to Output Group 1.0 - Children and Families, Output 1.1 - Child Protection Services. Are there any questions?

Ms FYLES: In 2011-12, there were 1705 cases where an investigation found that a child had been harmed. What is it currently; for this year?

Ms ANDERSON: Madam Chair, I will ask Helen to answer that question.

Ms NEZERITIS: I will need you to repeat that question.

Ms FYLES: Last year, 2011-12, 1705 cases of investigations found that a child was harmed. What is the current figure, for this year? Obviously, it is 26 June. At what point did you collate all your data, on 1 June or 15 May? So I can keep asking that in my questions. That would be appreciated.

Minister, I thought this would probably be more a question for you.

Ms ANDERSON: Estimates process is about using your staff; you need to ensure you are fully informed and, as a minister, I can take the question, pass it on, and pick it back up when appropriate.

Ms FYLES: Okay. The Leader of Government Business indicated to us that ministers would try to answer questions, so I was following ...

Madam CHAIR: Member for Nightcliff, I am sure you would rather get an answer to your question than play games this morning.

A member: Exactly.

Ms NEZERITIS: As of 31 March the Office of Children and Families had received 7348 notifications through this financial year. All notifications were assessed, and 4470 did not proceed to a child protection

investigation as the concerns raised did not meet the definition of harm under the *Care and Protection of Children Act*.

OCF has completed 2302 child protection investigations in the financial year to date, 31 March 2013. 1027 investigations have now come of substantiated harm; 1100 were not substantiated; and 175 investigations had an outcome of no action possible.

As at 31 March, there are 576 child protection investigations in progress.

Ms FYLES: Of the 576 outstanding investigations, what categories are they?

Ms ANDERSON: The Chief Executive will answer that question.

Ms COLLARD: The 576 did you say?

Ms FYLES: Yes.

Ms COLLARD: Jenni Collard, Acting Chief Executive. The 576 are open cases and they are in the process of being investigated. Some of the cases are very complex. It is not easy to just investigate; you have to look for family etcetera. We have also signed an MOU for income management, and part of that process for families to be eligible for income management is for us to hold open cases for them. Many of our statistics on open cases are about our income management, plus the complexity of some cases which need to remain open.

Ms FYLES: Minister, are you able to give me a breakdown of those 576 outstanding child protection cases, and what categories they are - one, two or three?

Ms ANDERSON: That is internal.

Ms FYLES: It is quite a clear figure. In past years it has been easily accessible to ministers and shadow ministers.

Ms ANDERSON: It is easily accessible to you right now. The CE has just read out - as of 1 January 2013 to 31 March 2013, priority one - that is 24 hours - 185.

Ms FYLES: Was that 185 category one child protection cases outstanding?

Ms ANDERSON: Yes. Priority two - within three days - 185, and 175 were met of that 185.

Ms FYLES: Yes, I understand that minister.

Ms ANDERSON: That is 95%. Priority two - within three days - 233, and out of those, 207 were met, or 89%. Category three - within five days - 165, and 100% of those were met. Priority four - within ten days - 279, and 125 were met, or 45%. This gives a total of 672 with 80% met.

Ms FYLES: Thank you, minister. You raised the income management measure. I know your government has scrapped the alcohol tribunals which has scrapped the measure of income management being used. How many cases in the Territory are income management related - people put on income management through the child protection measure?

Ms ANDERSON: There are 105 active, member for Nightcliff.

Ms FYLES: Are you able to break that down over the year to give us an indication if it is going up or down? Minister, you speak strongly about that being a family responsibility - they need to care for their children and stop spending money on grog - the income management child protection measure is a tool for that. The figure of 105 seems fairly stagnant for the last year, are you able to break that down to give us an indication?

Ms ANDERSON: Member for Nightcliff, we do not have a time frame for it going up or down. We can give you figures of the referrals and the data from Alice Springs, Gove or Tennant Creek.

Ms FYLES: You do not have a quarter by quarter breakdown, or a month by month breakdown of how many child protection ...

Ms ANDERSON: No.

Ms FYLES: It would have been interesting to see whether the number is rising. I understand you can go on and off the measure, and it is an important tool you keep talking about. I am happy to move on from that question.

Ms ANDERSON: Can I have the CE clarify something?

Ms COLLARD: You mentioned alcohol, the main criteria for us to refer to income management is neglect. Alcohol is part of the contributor, but we do not necessarily determine whether it is alcohol - it is neglect, and there is a range of issues around that. If we feel it is a neglect case, which is the criteria for income management, then it becomes a family support issue. Not all families will stay on that because they might be a closed case and they do not, necessarily, have to be in the child protection system; instead they might refer to a family support system. So, our numbers do go up and down. While we might take notifications, we almost always close them as well. So that is another reason for those statistics.

Ms FYLES: What I was indicating was the Alcohol Tribunal Court was able to put people on income management. Your CLP government has scrapped that measure which means families are no longer able to be put on income management because of alcohol. Therefore, the child protection measure is the only measure left, so I am seeking some clarification about that.

Ms ANDERSON: I believe the CE was quite correct when she said the children we have under this process are children who are neglected. We need to be very careful and mindful that we do not play political games with the wellbeing of children and scrutiny of this agency. We must work together to ensure the appropriate processes of government are implemented, and the opposition's scrutiny is paramount for the safety of the children. That is very important. We can play this political game forever and a day to get a national headline, but that is not what we should be doing in the Office of Children and Families. We are here as community leaders, duly elected to ensure we actually get results for these children so they do not need to come into care. I do not believe we will ever do that, but I believe we can minimise it.

Ms FYLES: Minister, numerous expert reports have said alcohol is a huge factor in child neglect and child abuse in the Northern Territory. Your government has removed that measure to protect children by abolishing the alcohol courts which has resulted in the inability to income manage parents. Therefore, I am asking questions about that child protection measure because it is the only measure left in that area of child protection, because the alcohol measure is gone.

Ms ANDERSON: Income management is just one tool. I said at the very beginning in my speech, and I have said on many occasions, this government is about working together. OCF has ensured we are now working with families, we are working with parents, we are working with the community, we are working with NGOs, and we are going to support our frontline practitioners. This is a clear indication that we are serious about fixing the problems on the ground. If we do not get back to the basics of fixing up families and communities we will be here long after you and I are gone still talking about the increased number of children coming into care, and still talking about alcohol problems.

I have said quite openly, my people have a huge problem and, in the middle of the huge social problem, are children.

Ms FYLES: Your colleague put out a press release today which said the federal government is failing Territorians by refusing to allow welfare quarantining provisions. Yet, your own government has scrapped one mechanism to income manage and, as a result, I am asking questions about child protection measures because 105 out of however many children we have in care is a fairly low number if it is due to neglect. I wanted to see some statistics and how you are using that measure to protect Territory children.

Anyway, I am happy to move on from that measure because I am conscious of time ...

Ms ANDERSON: I can answer that. Since 31 March, 227 people are on income management.

Ms FYLES: But the question I asked was specifically around the child protection measure, the trigger used to income manage people. I understand in the Territory there are 227 people on income management, which is quite a low figure, and only 105 of those are because of the child protection measure. Is that correct?

Ms COLLARD: No, it has actually gone up to 227. You are talking about the 105 we related to open cases.

Ms FYLES: Okay.

Ms COLLARD: We have referred 227 to income management. Not all of those will be open cases.

Ms FYLES: Okay.

Ms COLLARD: 105 will be open cases.

Ms FYLES: I might seek some clarification. I might do a written question following up on that because I believe it is important to see some data.

How many case management plans are currently in place for children under the care of the department?

Ms ANDERSON: As of 20 April 2013, member for Nightcliff, there were 391.

Ms FYLES: How many children do we have in care across the whole department? I have forgotten the figure, sorry.

Ms ANDERSON: I think 169 was the figure I read to you. No, it is 779. Sorry.

Ms FYLES: So, we have 779 children in the care of the department, yet only 391 have a case plan. Are you able to explain that?

Ms ANDERSON: Absolutely. The CREATE Foundation, which holds us all accountable, nationally, has said, in your time in government, you had 40% of kids in the care of the department without a care plan. It is very important that case plans are brought up to scratch, and I have given the Acting Chief Executive Officer clear instructions to ensure care plans happen. As an agency, we do not want just care plans; we want cultural care plans. We want to see what is happening to these children on entry so it is easier for children to exit the agency if we have proper, cultural care plans in place.

Ms FYLES: Minister, I bring you back to a point. There are 779 children in the care of the department, yet only 391 currently have care plans. On 31 March 2012 we had 765 children on care and protection orders and 651 of them had a care plan implemented and recorded on the system. That is quite a sharp drop. I cannot do the maths off the top of my head, but half the children now have care plans.

Ms ANDERSON: Member for Nightcliff, we asked you where you got your data, because the agency struggles to get that type of data.

Ms FYLES: So you are not sure if your data is correct?

Ms ANDERSON: Coming in as a new government we found that your management held data, your middle management held data, and your regional directors held data which came into one area and did not match up. They were all holding different data which held incorrect information.

Ms FYLES: Minister, you and your chief executive are responsible for these children; are you sure you have 779 children in care, and only 391 have a case plans?

Ms ANDERSON: Yes, we know that, but your data was a mess when we took over; an absolute mess.

Ms FYLES: I have fairly accurate data from 31 March 2012 from the department which shows at that time 651 children had case plans. That has dropped to 391 case plans this year.

Ms ANDERSON: Case plans will always be an issue. You overloaded the top management of the department and you did not give frontline services any resources. CREATE told us before we came into government that 40% of Territory kids in care had no care plans. We knew that, and you knew that. Your data was a mess when we took it over, and it was all done manually, so you cannot blame this government for your mess. We are cleaning up your mess.

Ms FYLES: Minister, no matter how you got to the point of the data, it was printed in the process last year that 651 out of 765 children had a care plan. That is not quite 100%, but it is much closer than 391 out of 779 this year.

When was the last time you audited or reviewed the effectiveness of the case management arrangements?

Ms ANDERSON: December 2012.

Ms FYLES: Are you able to provide details of that audit? I am happy if you just give me a summary, minister, of what ...

Ms ANDERSON: I will give you a summary. In December 2012, there was a Northern Territory-wide audit of the case plan records for all children in care. The audit found that roughly half of the children did not have compliant case plans. That is on the public record. It has been publicly spoken about and it is a shame, not just for the department that was so under resourced, but you had 90 unfunded positions in the agency. I know you do not like to hear about that, but it is a fact. Labor boosted the top part of OCF and neglected frontline service. It is not the fault of these people when they are carrying caseloads to then weigh up whether a case plan is more important than looking after a child.

Ms FYLES: Minister, we all know that Child Protection has grown rapidly in the last decade. When the Labor Party came to government, it had a budget of approximately \$7m. They grew that hugely. What I am focusing on today is your budget and your policies.

Are you able to give me the caseload ratio for staff presently in the department, broken down into Darwin, regional and rural, please?

Ms ANDERSON: The average case load, member for Nightcliff, is 26.

Ms FYLES: Within the Darwin and Palmerston region?

Ms ANDERSON: I will give you Alice Springs, Tennant Creek, Katherine.

Ms FYLES: If I could just have two categories, in the interest of time. I would like Darwin and Palmerston, rural and regional.

Ms ANDERSON: It is only one sheet, so I can quickly read it to you.

Ms FYLES: Are you able to table that sheet, minister?

Ms ANDERSON: I can table it for you.

Ms FYLES: Perfect. What was the rural/regional figure?

Ms ANDERSON: I would like to put it on record. Northern Remote Service, that is East Arnhem Service Centre: 299 open cases on 31 March; number of actual P1, P2 staff - 11; average caseload based on actual staff - 27. So, the top figure was Northern Remote Service Centre. East Arnhem is 127 ...

Ms FYLES: So, the caseload ratio is 27 cases per worker?

Ms ANDERSON: Average caseload based on actual staff for the Northern Remote Service Centre is 27; East Arnhem Service Centre – 18; Katherine Service Centre – 31; Central Australia the average for Barkly Service Centre - 58; Alice Springs Service Centre - 31; Casuarina Service Centre - 21; Palmerston - 15.

Ms FYLES: The previous figures last year were 15 to 20 for Darwin and 7 to 14 for rural/regional. That Darwin figure had halved from 36 caseloads the year before. It seems to be going up quite drastically - 58 in Tennant Creek is huge. Are we on track with our child protection system? Are we racing back to the days when we had report after report and Coronial after Coronial? The question off that data has to be asked.

Ms ANDERSON: What do you expect; when we came in as a new government, member for Nightcliff, and found there were 90 unfunded positions in the Office of Children and Family, and 40% of children without case plans. The agency was in huge trouble - a huge problem. It was a mess ...

Ms FYLES: Minister, I just provided you with statistics that showed a huge ...

Madam CHAIR: Member for Nightcliff, please do not interrupt the minister.

Ms FYLES: So, the caseload ratios currently, compared to last year, are almost 50% more. They have gone backwards.

Ms ANDERSON: Member for Nightcliff, I have been advised your information is not correct. We have last year's figures here. For Hansard and for the public record, I will read the average caseload you had during your time. Northern Remote - 28 ...

Ms FYLES: The breakdown I had was Darwin and then rural and regional, just to keep it easy.

Ms ANDERSON: You are generalising and saying that it is actually become worse under our watch ...

Ms FYLES: On the statistics you just gave me it had.

Ms ANDERSON: ... when, in fact, it was bad under your watch. For the public record: Northern Remote - 28 was the average case load; DCF East Arnhem - 23; DCF Katherine - 26; DCF Barkly - 53; DCF Alice Springs - 15; DCF Casuarina - 29; and DCF Palmerston - 23.

Ms FYLES: Alice Springs 15 is currently at 31. Does that have any impact with 44 positions vacant in the Alice Springs office?

Ms ANDERSON: Member for Nightcliff, I am advised you are actually reading what we plan to have; what our aim is.

Ms FYLES: Minister, I am reading the statistics from the Department of Children and Families previously, and I am questioning them against yours.

Ms ANDERSON: That is a focus for the future; that is why it is called an aim. We are aiming to ensure our caseloads in the future are at that level.

Ms FYLES: I was reading actuals from last year where Alice Springs was – however, moving on. The regionalisation model has been implemented. Are you able to provide us with an update of that?

Ms ANDERSON: We cannot keep moving on every time you are caught out reading the wrong information.

Ms FYLES: I did not get caught out, minister. You explained the caseload ratios across the department, and they have gone backwards in the last 12 months.

Ms ANDERSON: If you are not prepared to ask the agency questions you have to take responsibility for your actions when you read out the wrong information. If you are looking at wrong information and wrong data ...

Ms FYLES: Minister, I am questioning you around caseloads.

Madam CHAIR: Member for Nightcliff, please do not interrupt the minister.

Ms ANDERSON: ... you have to ensure you are told, even if it is embarrassing for you.

Ms FYLES: Minister, you have just shown us your caseloads are significantly high. What actions and plans do you have in place to reduce these caseloads for staff?

Ms ANDERSON: We are looking at out-of-home care, kinship care, we are looking at boosting our frontline service to ensure our practitioners are well-resourced, our Indigenous workers in the Office of Children and Families - who are the interface between the community, the Aboriginal people, the language and the culture - and our practitioners, are working hand-in-hand so we can educate parents to look after their children properly.

Talking about drugs; the problem now in remote Aboriginal communities - I am not afraid to say this, and have always said it – is no longer have just a social problem with alcohol and remote Aboriginals; we are

now talking about ganja. We are now talking about our young parents, and the future of the Territory, not just having the occasional beer, the occasional wine, they are also involving themselves with ganja. We will always be picking up children and putting them into care if we do not start working with families.

The focus and aim of this government and this agency today is to ensure we fix up those broken people on communities; we work with parents, work with the community, work with the families, work with the NGOs, and work with foster carers. This is everyone protecting the vulnerable children.

Ms FYLES: One figure I forgot to ask, minister: of the 391 children who have case plans, how many of those are overdue for a case review?

Ms ANDERSON: We took a question on the case plans from you, member for Nightcliff. Last year's count was how many children had a care plan recorded on the system. This is not a reliable figure as it did not involve a check or cross-reference of the alleged care plans compliance with legal and policy requirements. The figures we have provided today are based on current and compliant care plans and reflect our improved system and focus on the quality of case care.

When we took over from government this agency was a complete mess, and not just the agency, the total function of the agency was a mess. You built the agency up to look after the managers. We are now taking the managers and putting them on the ground to ensure child protection is working in the Northern Territory and vulnerable children of the Northern Territory will be looked after. We will be boosting the resources into frontline service. We know frontline service is vital, and you did not do that.

Ms FYLES: Minister, where in your budget does it show you are boosting the frontline case plans?

Ms ANDERSON: Our aim and focus is to work with the kinship carers, foster carers, frontline service, communities, and parents to ensure the vulnerable child in the middle, who we continually talk about, is protected and looked after, not just for today, not for tomorrow, but for the future.

Ms FYLES: Minister, previously a care plan compliance and quality project had been initiated. Are you able to update the committee on that plan? I am happy to repeat the question. I have information that previously a care plan compliance and quality project had been initiated. I believe it was in reference to the board of inquiry. Are you able to update the committee on that?

Ms ANDERSON: There was a Northern Territory-wide audit of the case plan records for all children in care in December 2012. The audit found that roughly half of the children did not have compliant plans.

Ms FYLES: Okay, that was the compliance for that. Do you have the staff numbers yet for officers? I asked about it previously.

Ms NEZERITIS: You are asking about professional staff? We have total positions for professional staff by service centre.

Ms FYLES: Yes, that would be fantastic.

Ms ANDERSON: Member for Nightcliff, there are 258 professional positions. In the Alice Springs Service Centre – 40; Barkly Service Centre – 5; Casuarina – 32; Palmerston – 27; East Arnhem – 13; Katherine – 21; Northern Remote Services – 16; Remote Services – 58, and Territory Wide Services - 46. A total of 258.

Ms FYLES: Are the federally funded mobile teams accounted for in those figures?

Ms NEZERITIS: There are some federally funded positions in remote services.

Ms FYLES: I understand you have recently changed the structure of those mobile teams. My understanding is they were teams that would fly out to areas. If, for example, you had reports in Maningrida, you would fly these teams out. Do they still operate in that manner?

Ms ANDERSON: Yes.

Ms FYLES: That has not changed?

Ms ANDERSON: No. They still do that.

Ms FYLES: So they are based in an urban centre?

Ms NEZERITIS: The mobile child protection teams have been regionalised into the Katherine and Alice Springs regions.

Ms FYLES: The figures for last year, for example, had 29 professional staff in Katherine; that has dropped to 21. Does that include the mobile teams, which would push that figure up because they are now based in that centre?

Ms NEZERITIS: The mobile child protection teams have only recently been regionalised.

Ms ANDERSON: Six months.

Ms NEZERITIS: It might even be less than that. This data relates back to the 31 March, so I am not sure if that data captures the mobile child protection teams after they were regionalised.

Ms FYLES: But the mobile child protection teams are now regionalised and they are based in those regional centres. Currently, there are a few vacancies in the Alice Springs office and that figure also includes the mobile teams based there, so is the office down on staff numbers?

Ms ANDERSON: Yes, member for Nightcliff, for various reasons which we should not be talking about here. There are many reasons that has happened.

Ms FYLES: Minister, can I clarify some figures with you that your colleague provided to the committee about the Office of Children and Families staffing.

On the pay day of 30 August last year, which is the pay day immediately after the election, the Department of Children and Families had a staff FTE of 799. That dropped on 22 November to 759, and on 28 March 2013 had dropped to 628 staff. Are you able to clarify these figures given to us by OCPD.

Ms ANDERSON: Yes we can.

Ms FYLES: Are you able to let us know what happened to the 171 jobs that have gone in your department?

Ms NEZERITIS: The figures are correct. Part of the reason is 43 staff were transferred as part of machinery of government changes, and there have been staffing losses, but there are no barriers to recruitment on the front line, and every position is funded. The agency did implement the government's recruitment freeze in non-frontline related positions, and 15 temporary contracts were not renewed as part of that process. Is there anything further you need?

Ms FYLES: Minister, the government came to power and put a recruitment freeze in place. Did this impact on the department's staff?

Ms ANDERSON: Member for Nightcliff, you know we came into a \$5.5bn debt.

Ms FYLES: Absolutely, but I ...

Ms ANDERSON: There were 90 unfunded positions in the department.

Ms FYLES: So, minister, you do not want to answer the question about whether the recruitment freeze impacted on the department's staff? Did that not apply to the department? I should be clearer.

Ms ANDERSON: Not frontline, member for Nightcliff.

Ms FYLES: Okay, thank you. So, 171 jobs have gone within the Office of Children and Families; 43 of those were transferred out. That still leaves a significant number of positions vacant. Do you have any further comment on that, minister?

Ms ANDERSON: Member for Nightcliff, we are in the process, through the CE and the department, of a recruitment drive. We will not be going to Ireland, Canada and England; we will be growing our own. The media releases the former minister put out said, 'We will grow our own'. But you never grew your own. At a cost to Territory children and Territory taxpayers you went to New Zealand, Canada, England, and

Ireland to recruit people who had no idea what the Northern Territory was about. We appreciate they are in the system now, and we appreciate their input, but you did not grow your own. Aboriginal people are born here and they will die here. Is it not in the best interest of the future that we do grow our own and have people with cultural knowledge and language who can partner with practitioners to ensure language barriers are dealt with?

Ms FYLES: Minister, 128 jobs have gone under your watch. What plans do you have to recruit to those positions, and the effect that is having on children?

Ms NEZERITIS: Plans for recruitment ...

Ms FYLES: It was a two part question; apologies. The impact of 128 fewer staff - we have already seen the Alice Springs' office caseload ratios push out - what impact does so many vacancies in your department have on children?

Ms ANDERSON: I will give you a generic answer and I will ask Helen to answer the second half of your question. Any kind of vacancy has a huge impact on Territory children, no matter where they are. The 90 unfunded positions you had when we came to power had an impact on Territory children. Everything to do with having fewer staff, not supporting practitioners, and not having Indigenous engagement has an impact on one person - the child. You are guilty of it, as well. You are so guilty of it - 90 unfunded positions.

Ms FYLES: Minister, under your watch the department has 128 fewer staff as a direct result of your mini-budget cuts last year, and you are not able to tell us.

Ms ANDERSON: You are living in a little fantasy world again, member for Nightcliff, where you try to scare people. I believe you are reading the wrong documentation. I do not like to criticise you for picking up the wrong piece of paper or having the wrong information, because your heart is in the right place and you really want to help the situation. I am happy for you to hold me accountable as the minister, and I will hold you accountable as my shadow, to ensure you are reading the right documentation.

Ms FYLES: Minister, with all due respect, I am reading from the information provided by your colleague, the Minister for Public Employment. The Northern Territory Public Service FTE staffing ratios show the Office of Children and Families has 128 fewer positions. Those are the statistics I am reading. I am happy to provide them to you if you do not have them.

Mr WILSON: Cameron Wilson, Chief Finance Officer. Sorry, can I just clarify that?

Ms FYLES: Yes.

Mr WILSON: The vacant positions are funded positions, so that is not a result of the mini-budget cuts you mentioned. They do have a budget allocation; they are just not filled.

Ms FYLES: Yes, they have a budget allocation, but there are 128 unfilled positions in the office under your watch, minister.

Ms ANDERSON: That is correct, and we are recruiting.

Ms FYLES: Are you able to clarify your recruitment policy?

Ms ANDERSON: That is up to the CE to do ...

Ms FYLES: Adam might be upset ...

Madam CHAIR: Member for Nightcliff, please stop interrupting.

Ms ANDERSON: ... in her agency. It is absolutely fantastic to have Jenni on board, and I will allow her to answer that question.

Ms FYLES: Thank you.

Ms ANDERSON: Before the CE answers the question, we took a question from you, member for Nightcliff.

Ms FYLES: Thank you, minister.

Ms ANDERSON: Do you want me to table it, or read it out?

Ms FYLES: You can read it back; that would be great.

Ms ANDERSON: It was a generic whole-of-government; question No 9.1:

If the minister could please provide a breakdown of what types of activities and expenditure on TV and radio ...

That I just read out. The breakdown and expenditure for TV and radio is: radio - \$33 394, domestic violence *Be Someone* campaign that you had; radio - \$896, Working for Children; radio - \$13 281, Foster Care Awards. I do not believe you would deny that ...

Ms FYLES: Oh, no, absolutely, I was just interested to see the breakdown.

Ms ANDERSON: TV - \$6000, domestic violence *Be Someone* campaign, again.

Ms FYLES: Minister, those domestic violence campaigns impacted well. What are your plans for domestic violence campaigns? I know it is an issue you are very passionate about.

Ms ANDERSON: Member for Nightcliff, I continuously participate in radio interviews on CAAMA in Central Australia. When I go out to sports weekends I talk about protection of children and domestic violence. It is the first time ever, under a Country Liberal Party, we had a stall at the first community sporting event - it was a OCF stall - and we gave them all the education material to ensure if someone is a weekend drinker, they make sure they look after their children. We spoke about kinship care, asking the community to come forward and start being responsible for their children again. The weekend was absolutely fantastic.

Ms FYLES: I appreciate those efforts and that weekend but, obviously, it is a large department. We have 700 children in care, thousands of children in the Territory, and you cannot possibly reach out to every one of them. Where in your budget and policies does it reflect domestic violence campaigns?

Ms ANDERSON: Domestic violence policies are no longer with the Office of Children and Families, as I outlined to you in my speech earlier, but we will still take an interest in it. I, personally, take interest in that area.

Ms FYLES: Absolutely. Do you have plans for child abuse prevention awareness campaigns in the budget?

Ms ANDERSON: We are going to do a great number in language. You have a Kriol speaker and a Warlpiri speaker sitting there. I do not believe any government has ever had the capacity to do free marketing in most of the Territory's languages.

Ms FYLES: I do not know if your Chief Minister would be so happy if you were all out bush running your own personal child abuse prevention campaigns. What I am getting at is: what are the department's plans? What are your larger more structured plans for child abuse prevention, which is so important?

Ms ANDERSON: As I said, the prevention programs have already started. We had the first stall ever under a Country Liberal Party at Hermannsburg community. The CE has already started operating in that area. I have spoken to the members for Stuart, Arnhem and Arafura about doing the languages to ensure our people are educated in their first language, not in their third or fourth language. As I said at the very beginning, we fund NAPCAN to do that as well.

Ms FYLES: The Northern Territory government, apart from some market stalls run by ministers, the sole child abuse prevention campaign is run by NAPCAN?

Ms ANDERSON: In partnership with us, the department.

Mr WOOD: May I butt in here? Did your department not cut NAPCAN's funding quite severely?

Ms FYLES: We did see \$9.3m cut to the NGO sector in this budget.

Ms ANDERSON: What we are looking at is a good relationship with the NGOs. Yes, we have to hold some NGOs accountable because we are the statutory body under law to ensure we look after children in the Northern Territory. No longer will this agency allow NGOs just to tick the boxes ...

Ms FYLES: Did you feel that NGOs were not pulling their weight?

Ms ANDERSON: Absolutely, and I am not ashamed to say that.

Ms FYLES: So, NGOs were not using their government grants funding appropriately?

Ms ANDERSON: No, I am not saying that. We will now direct NGOs to ensure they fill the gap of the Office of Children and Families. No longer will NGOs duplicate our resources. I have said on many occasions in the House that we have our own agency in Alice Springs, and two NGOs in Alice Springs were racing around with three different allocations of money, all looking after the same 40 children. We are no longer going to do that

Ms FYLES: Minister, modern child protection practices speak of the dual pathway model, particularly around child neglect - which is what we see most in the Territory - where the statutory body works in association with an NGO. We all know if the child protection authority turns up at a person's door they will freeze and put up barriers, whereas an NGO has a much better way of working with families. Is that not why you would have two NGOs in Alice Springs working with the department as a modern child protection practice of the dual pathway model?

Ms ANDERSON: It is not a modern pathway system when two NGOs, along with a government agency, are all chasing the same group of kids. We are in a partnership with the NGOs, and we do not expect them to just tick the boxes. We will now be directing NGOs to work closer with the families, closer with the communities, closer with the town camps, closer with the children, and closer ...

Ms FYLES: Are you indicating that has not happened in the past?

Ms ANDERSON: Of course it did not. Under you it did not.

Mr WOOD: In the case of NAPCAN, was their funding cut? What were the reasons for the funding cut?

Ms ANDERSON: I will ask Helen to answer that question.

Ms FYLES: Can I interrupt, Gerry, to clarify that question? \$9.3m was cut from the NGO sector, which included NAPCAN. Could we get a breakdown of that figure, please?

Ms NEZERITIS: We can get that answer very quickly.

Mr WOOD: I will put my question singularly. You can put the bigger one through Madam Chair.

Madam CHAIR: Do you want that question on notice?

Ms ANDERSON: We can get the answer in this session.

Mr WOOD: That is all right, if you can get it in this session. There was also the question from the member for Nightcliff, which was broader.

Ms ANDERSON: What was your question, member for Nightcliff?

Ms FYLES: Could we please have a breakdown of the \$9.3m cut to the NGO sector? That was from your speech earlier.

Mr WILSON: Can I clarify that? It was not \$9.3m cut from the NGO sector, it was \$12.5m transferred to other agencies. There was an increase in funding to the NGO sector of \$3.2m.

Ms FYLES: I might review my notes at the break and clarify that question with you. Sorry.

Ms ANDERSON: That is exactly what I was saying, member for Nightcliff. You need to be very careful in your presentation because you are giving the wrong impression, and we do not want you getting a headline and misusing estimates to put out false messages through the media.

Ms FYLES: Gerry, did you want to clarify your question?

Mr WOOD: I have understood for some months that NAPCAN's funding was reduced. I need details of how much it was reduced, and why it was reduced. It concerns me when the minister says people were just ticking the boxes, I would agree if they were only ticking the boxes, but if it was the case that NAPCAN was just ticking the boxes, I would like to know.

Ms ANDERSON: One thing too, Madam Chair, a great deal of money was thrown by the previous government into the board of inquiry. At the end of the day, any review or inquiry is a guide to ensure you fix up your agency. But the previous government just kept throwing money, and that money was taken from vulnerable children.

Ms FYLES: Minister, I found my notes. The figures I wrote down - I could be wrong - was \$65.6m to \$56.3m for the NGO, is that correct?

Mr WILSON: That is correct.

Ms FYLES: That \$65.6m to \$56.3 is a cut or a loss?

Mr WILSON: Of the \$65m, \$12.5m has gone to other agencies.

Ms FYLES: All right. Thank you for that clarification.

Madam CHAIR: Are there any further questions on Output 1.1?

Ms FYLES: Yes. Your Chief Executive has spoken about the strong need to invest in the NGO sector. Why was SAF,T cut if that is your mantra? You have cut Indigenous-led organisations such as SAF,T.

Ms COLLARD: SAF,T was the peak body under the board of inquiry. A great deal of money was given to a number of organisations to build up their peak body which, at the time of the mini-budget, the government could obviously not afford. Also with SAF,T, despite the amount of money that was allocated as a new organisation, they were struggling to produce outcomes. So the peak body was cut, but we are negotiating with them to provide a service which they will be able to deliver.

Ms FYLES: So, SAF,T was designed as an Indigenous-led peak body, similar to AMSANT, for the child protection and child welfare section. You do not see any role for them even though it was a clear board of inquiry recommendation?

Ms COLLARD: We definitely need them to work. They are still functioning, but they were struggling to produce the outcome they were contracted to produce. We are now working alongside them to produce something for our kids, and it is great they have a peak body. They are separate from AMSANT; they were under AMSANT initially ...

Ms FYLES: I am not suggesting that they were to merge with AMSANT; they were to replicate AMSANT. AMSANT is the leader in the medical section, and this is for child protection.

Ms COLLARD: Yes, but we cannot compare child protection with the health industry either because we need a peak body for child protection which is consistent with some of the advocacy coming from SNAICC. We definitely need SAF,T in the Northern Territory because 80% of our kids are Aboriginal. SAF,T is a new organisation and we are working very closely with them. We do seek their advice; I have met with the board in the short time I have been here, and so has the minister, and we will continue to do that until they build a strong organisation.

Ms FYLES: Absolutely, with 70-80% of children in care being Indigenous, SAF,T was a peak body designed to represent them. It had barely been established when the government cut their funding in the mini-budget, which cut their direction, and left Indigenous children in care without a voice.

Ms ANDERSON: Madam Chair, we are still working with SAF,T. We are trying to make SAF,T better ...

Ms FYLES: They have lost their executive director, and I am not sure of their other structural arrangements recently ...

Ms LEE: A point of order, Madam Chair! Standing Order 69: interruption of a member while she is trying to answer a question. Member for Nightcliff, be mindful of the standing orders.

Ms ANDERSON: Eighty five per cent of our kids are Aboriginal, but it does not mean that 85% of those kids should be responsible to just an Aboriginal agency. It is good that we have SAF,T, it is good we have AMSANT and it is good we have many Indigenous organisations in the Northern Territory. But, the wellbeing and safety of a child belongs to every Territorian.

Ms FYLES: Absolutely, but what we have seen with AMSANT and the role they have played in the Territory over a long time is, finally, an improvement in child health outcomes for Indigenous children. We are seeing many outcomes increased, yet SAF,T was designed to replicate that model for children in care, but your government has cut funding to that group before they started.

Ms ANDERSON: SAF,T was struggling, member for Nightcliff. We came in and we are still working with SAF,T; we are putting SAF,T back on track.

Madam CHAIR: If I could just interrupt, the time is now 10:30 and out at the front of parliament house we have erected a very large red nose to commemorate and show our respect to SIDS and Kids and Red Nose Day on Friday. Therefore, I ask all parliamentary colleagues to come outside for a small media event to raise awareness for SIDS and Kids. We will resume this session at 10.45.

The committee suspended.

Madam CHAIR: Thank you. I apologise for the extra minutes we took at the break.

We are back with minister Anderson on the Office of Children and Families, and we are continuing with Output Group 1.1.

Ms ANDERSON: Madam Chair, I have an answer to one of the questions asked by the shadow.

Madam CHAIR: Was that taken on notice? Does it have a number or is it just one of the ...

Ms ANDERSON: It was one we said we would come back with: figures on the cost of moving OCF into DECS and out again. I said at the outset the cost was minimal. There were no signage or stationery changes, other than electronic, and no associated cost. The cost of transporting budget mostly involved human resource time. No staff was relocated on announcement that the two agencies would merge, and there was no associated cost.

Ms FYLES: Thank you, minister. While we are clarifying things, I did some research in the break on youth justice – is it okay, Madam Chair and minister, if I ask this question now? I understand that some elements of youth justice sat with the Office of Children and Families, but youth justice always sat within the Attorney-General's department previously. Can I clarify that? There was some confusion earlier.

Mr WILSON: I am happy to clarify. There were functions transferred back which were youth justice functions that resided in Children and Families. That was about the \$5m and there were a number of diversion programs.

Ms FYLES: So it was only the programs that sat with DCF and youth justice has always sat with the Department of Justice?

Mr WILSON: Yes.

Ms FYLES: Minister, I noted when you talked about some of the functions that were transferred out in your opening speech, you did not mention youth justice. Perhaps some of the responses to the questions I asked earlier were a little misleading because youth justice has always sat within the department of Justice. You read out a list of functions that have been transferred out of OCF, which you justified with financial changes. I want to clarify with you that youth justice has always sat within the department of Justice?

Ms ANDERSON: There are still youth justice functions under youth justice. It would have been appropriate to ask those questions of the Attorney-General last week.

Ms FYLES: Minister, are you using the transfer of youth justice from the Office of Children and families as an excuse for the cuts in funding, when youth justice has always sat within the department of Justice? I want to clarify that.

Ms ANDERSON: The clarification came from the Chief Financial Officer who said some of the programs were in OCF. Like I said, it is still youth justice and the question should have been asked last week.

Ms FYLES: Okay, thank you.

Madam CHAIR: Member for Nightcliff? Member for Nelson?

Ms FYLES: We are still on Output 1.1?

Madam CHAIR: Yes, unless you are finished.

Ms FYLES: No, I am not finished. Going back to something we were talking about earlier. NGO grants require indexation. We have seen grants to health NGOs cut and indexation has not occurred. Inflation is at 3.9%. What level of indexation are you providing to the grants of Office of Children and Families' NGOs?

Mr WILSON: I can take on notice what the percentage will be, but it is normally determined throughout the year. Which year are you talking about?

Ms FYLES: Going forward, all grants should have 3.9% added to them so they are in real dollar terms. What indexation are you applying, minister, to your NGOs?

Mr WILSON: I can get you an answer for that.

Ms FYLES: Okay, will that be within the session?

Ms ANDERSON: Within the session.

Ms FYLES: Okay, I will ask some further questions then.

On 11 October the government announced there would be no forced redundancies. Did you commit to this guarantee or have you broken it, minister? Have there been any forced redundancies since 11 October last year?

Ms NEZERITIS: The government has a position of no forced redundancies. Any non-frontline staff whose temporary contracts were not renewed as part of the government's recruitment freeze were lost simply through not renewing contracts. They were not finished early.

Ms FYLES: We have seen 170 staff leave the agency. We understand that 40 were transferred out, and 130 staff who are no longer with the department were not forcibly made redundant; their contracts were just not renewed.

Ms NEZERITIS: Executive contract officers do not form part of that process.

Ms FYLES: So, they are not part of the 170 less staff?

Ms NEZERITIS: No. Some contracts finished early in the executive contract officer area, but all public servants under the enterprise agreement have been committed to.

Ms FYLES: Gerry, did you have any questions on 1.1?

Madam CHAIR: That concludes consideration of Output 1.1

Output 1.2 – Out-of-Home Care Services

Madam CHAIR: The committee will now consider Output 1.2, Out-of-Home Care Services. Are there any questions?

Ms FYLES: Yes, thank you, Madam Chair. Previous minister Lambley issued a media release committing to a youth curfew in Alice Springs. She used the phrase 'youth curfew' six times in the release but, subsequently, said she did not like the phrase, and there would not be a youth curfew. What is the current position of the government in relation to youth curfews, particularly in Alice Springs where it was originally promised by the Country Liberal Party?

Ms ANDERSON: Promise of the CLP when we were in opposition has nothing to do with the relationship we have with out-of-home care. The office is reforming out-of-home care and we will be having a relationship with the NGOs. Family support programs are the major focus, with frontline practitioners, for OCF going into the future.

Ms FYLES: Okay, so you do not have a comment on the original promise of the CLP of youth curfews. I will ask it in the next output.

Ms ANDERSON: This process is not a process of what someone said six or eight months ago; this is the direction in which the government is going.

Ms FYLES: I understand you will be implementing a new child protection framework which draws on some of the recommendations of the board of inquiry. Are we able to go through what recommendations of the board of inquiry your government has accepted, and what recommendations you are not accepting, and why? I believe it is important. You have always maintained that the board of inquiry was a singular focus. I remind you that it was not; it was a report by three individual experts, which had an oversight committee. You often reference it as being a singular focus, yet it made 147 recommendations. If we could possibly go through those recommendations now, that would be most appreciated.

Ms ANDERSON: Madam Chair, I am happy to do that.

Ms FYLES: What recommendations? If you could give the ones you are not taking up by the BoR number, and why not.

Ms ANDERSON: Madam Chair, I will go through it. As I said earlier, an inquiry is a direction. You are given a focus as an agency to ensure certain things within the agency are fixed, and that is exactly what the board of inquiry did with the 147 recommendations in forming a child protection system.

It was just one of the many reports tabled in the Northern Territory parliament during the reign of the former government focusing on how child protection services could be improved. Since August 2012, the government has moved on from a single focus on the board of inquiry recommendations. We are focused on improving the safety and wellbeing of children across the Territory.

As I said, it is an indicator, a tool you use to ensure the recommendations are strengthening the agency. It is a direction to lift your game; it is saying this is the direction you must go. That is what we have done in this agency - we are putting the child at the front of everything we do in the Office of Children and Families. It is about strengthening the community, families, individual mums and dads, and working with foster carers, NGOs and Territory families ...

Ms FYLES: Absolutely, it is about ...

Ms ANDERSON: ... to ensure the focus of child protection and the measures we have put into place through our policy process, as a government going into the future, is focused on that one little person, the child.

Ms FYLES: Absolutely. It was the culmination of many reports; it was system in crisis ...

Ms ANDERSON: Under you.

Ms FYLES: ... and the board of inquiry was a plan. We have seen the statistics that child protection grew rapidly. You are saying is you are dismissing those experts. There was oversight, and you are dismissing their recommendations without giving the community, and the authors of those reports, any outcomes.

Ms ANDERSON: The former Minister for Children and Families, Hon Robyn Lambley delivered a ministerial statement in November 2012 outlining the government's position on the board of inquiry recommendations.

As of 5 June 2013, member for Nightcliff, 69 recommendations were completed and a further 14 have been addressed through alternative means; 53 recommendations have commenced, with almost half, 26, depending on legislative change; two further recommendations are at the discretion of the court; the remaining nine recommendations are no longer being actioned. The recommendations which will not be completed are:

- Recommendation 9 - Northern Territory government to explore community and therapeutic options for families.
- Recommendation 10 - significant investment in the therapeutic and preventative service for at-risk children and communities.
- Recommendation 11 - strategic review with the Commonwealth on child and family wellbeing services.
- Recommendation 109 - amendments to in-built care plans.
- Recommendation 111 - Northern Territory government create a single court to hear child protection and youth justice matters.
- Recommendation 117 - delivery of dual pathway approach, development and extension of community child safety wellbeing and the new CCSW sentence.
- Recommendation 141 - community visitor scheme to be implemented.
- Recommendation 144 - funding of advice and support program for vulnerable families.
- Recommendation 146 - develop and implement community education strategies.

Madam Chair, it is the ultimate goal and aim of this government to ensure we put out education material on child matters, the safety of children, educating families, educating not just Aboriginal communities, but the whole of the Northern Territory.

Ms FYLES: Minister, there are some pretty important recommendations that will now not be filled. It is fine to say you accept all of them apart from those few, but those few probably bind the whole report together. Considering the CLP government is moving away from the recommendations of experts, what are you putting in place for each of those measures?

Ms ANDERSON: Recommendations, like I said earlier, member for Nightcliff, are just a guide. Recommendations by professionals are to ensure problems are identified and give you a future direction of where you should be going. You threw all of the money into the board of inquiry recommendations and left frontline services and children vulnerable. We now are taking steps to ensure children are protected, families are supported, frontline practitioners are supported, and it is no longer just about ticking the boxes. You will not tick the boxes under a Country Liberal Party's Office of Children and Families. We are there to protect the vulnerable - that is Territory children.

Ms FYLES: Minister, recommendation 10 is one you are not working towards. Your Chief Minister has spoken about reintroducing forced adoptions. Recommendation 10 is about the therapeutic reunification services for vulnerable and at-risk children. What is your department doing to ensure these services and guidelines are met if you are not following that recommendation and service model?

Ms ANDERSON: Madam Chair, you have the ability in this area to question professional staff and their integrity. OCF workers are hard-working people. You under-resourced frontline practitioners - the people delivering the service to these children - and filled top management with enormous strength and absolutely neglected frontline practitioners and the children. This government is focused in very different way. It is focused on delivering the service to children by strengthening the community, strengthening families, strengthening frontline practitioners, and ensuring our Indigenous staff in the Office of Children and Families are at the coalface to work hand-in-hand with practitioners to ensure the cultural needs of the Office of Children and Families are met.

Ms FYLES: Absolutely, minister. It is your department which appears to be turning its back on in this important recommendation. This is therapeutic services based around kinship care. This is workforce

training in both statutory and the NGO sector, yet you cannot give me anything else your department is putting in place to fill this gap identified by the board of inquiry.

Ms ANDERSON: Yes, we have. One thing we did recently to fill the gap - it is something that comes out of Western Australia because the Northern Territory is very different to England, Ireland, New Zealand and Canada. I said in a speech in parliament; we are closer relatives to the Ngaanyatjarra and Yankunytjatjara people of Western Australia and the people in South Australia. We are looking at *The Signs of Safety*, a tool implemented in Western Australia which is getting great results. I believe the CE has already had *The Signs of Safety* course here in Darwin and brought in all the regional directors from around the Northern Territory to ensure they understand this tool that will lead them forward in their ability to recognise harm with children.

Ms FYLES: Absolutely minister, but what I am pointing out is you have chosen the best bits from the board of inquiry, the bits that are easy. The recommendations you said you are not following, for example, recommendation 109 which talks about the system we use to get data modified to enable care plans to have mandatory functions in them. We are seeing data come out that children do not have care plans, which were part of the recommendations which tied the report together. You have chosen the best bits and left the rest. So, minister, recommendation 109 - that the kicker system be modified to enable care plans to be included in the content - what is your department doing to fill that gap?

Ms ANDERSON: Madam Chair, the former Labor government members were entrenched in guidance; they always needed professionals to hold their hand and walk them through the identified failures of government policies about moving children to a safety zone. So, the former Labor government should have been leading children but, in fact, were being led themselves. They needed someone to continually guide them because they did not know what to do.

As I said, any kind of review or report is a guide. It is a tool you use to provide better service delivery. The government will not carry on living in the past, looking back at the board of inquiry reports. We have the report, we have implemented certain parts of it and we have moved on. It is only a guide, we are not a government that is about to be led; we are leading the Territory to ensure we are focused on child protection.

Ms FYLES: Minister, I question you because I am yet to see this leadership. The board of inquiry report is a document from experts. It was a pathway to change a generation of child neglect and child abuse in the Territory and you are cutting key recommendations. For example, recommendation 117 is about the dual pathway model. We have just heard you have cut funding to NGO's, 117 is about working with hospital-based child safety wellbeing teams, yet these are aspects you are cutting from the board of inquiry, and I believe the community needs to understand that, and know what you will replace it with.

Ms ANDERSON: You have gone back to making allegations that certain areas of the department have been cut so you can get a headline. The Northern Territory has had many reports written about all manner of issues ...

Ms FYLES: Absolutely, and the Board of Inquiry was a culmination ...

Ms ANDERSON: ... and not all of them have been implemented. As I have said, they are a guide to tell you that you have made mistakes, a guide to say something is wrong. But let us move forward and start looking at how we can make the system better, how can we protect children. My government is sorting out your mess; the former government left this agency in an absolute mess.

Ms FYLES: Minister you talk about it being a guide, if you follow a tour guide book and miss a left-hand turn, you will never get to you destination. What you are doing is missing key recommendations. You are not even giving me a response to what you are doing in those areas.

Ms ANDERSON: Out of all of the recommendations, you are focusing on nine; that is all you are doing. What we have seen, Madam Chair ...

Ms FYLES: Just from getting these statistics and nine important ones

Ms ANDERSON: Madam Chair, I would like to give you the answer without any interruptions.

Ms FYLES: Sorry, minister.

Ms ANDERSON: You have made allegations through this process and you have been caught out reading the wrong documents and giving out wrong information. Member for Nightcliff, when you talk, specifically in reference to this agency which looks after the most vulnerable children, you need to be very careful about what you say and how you say it. We are a government that will focus on the child. We will work with NGO's, we will work with the communities, work with the families and we will work with parents. We will strengthen the families to ensure they understand that the child they bring into the world has to be loved.

Ms FYLES: Minister, further to some of these points, can you update the committee on the establishment of the interagency hospital-based child safety and wellbeing teams in urban areas?

Ms ANDERSON: Madam Chair, we have already done the Child Protection output. That should have come under ...

Ms FYLES: So, minister, you are not prepared to update the committee on the interagency hospital-based child safety and wellbeing teams?

Ms ANDERSON: Member for Nightcliff, we have given you ample time, and it is very important that we answer your questions, but we are not responsible for you missing questions when you should have asked them in another output.

Madam CHAIR: We have closed Output Group 1.0 ...

Ms FYLES: Child protection it is a grey area. I thought hospital-based care fell under out-of-home care services - child protection services. They all blend in with each other. If the minister would answer the question I would most appreciate, but if she does not wish to answer the question we will move on.

Ms ANDERSON: As I said, that should have been asked under Output Group 1.0, and I am not responsible for your mistakes.

Ms FYLES: Okay, well ...

Madam CHAIR: Are there any further questions on Output 1.2?

Ms FYLES: Yes. Another recommendation you appear to have met was to do with the Chief Executive Child Protection Network. Could you give us an update on that, please?

Minister, would you like me to give you some further clarification?

Ms ANDERSON: Member for Nightcliff, I am advised this group has been disbanded because our focus is no longer on continuously holding hands with the board of inquiry. It is something that has happened in the past, they have given us the recommendations and the direction, and we have changed our focus to protection of the child.

Ms FYLES: Minister, are you saying that whole-of-government Northern Territory government chief executives - or people that report to them - coming together is not in the interests of children?

Ms ANDERSON: You have never been a minister so you would not know there is a cohort of CEs who talk at this level, anyway. That was just duplication, and this government has moved the focus to ensure we protect the vulnerable - the children.

Ms FYLES: What we have seen over many years, and many coronial reports, is there is no communication between health agencies, Child Protection and Housing, which causes children to be neglected. One of the key recommendations, and a general recommendation for any executive public service, would be to have a regular meeting or forum for the chief executives to speak on such an important issue.

Ms ANDERSON: I have already outlined to you we have a group of CEs who, through the Chief Minister, talk about these issues.

Ms FYLES: Are you able to provide an update of their meeting times and agendas - obviously respecting confidentiality - to give us an idea if this recommendation and this important part of government is still being adhered to?

Ms ANDERSON: I believe it is a group the Chief Minister put together, which consists of DCM, the Office of Children and Families, Education, Health and Housing, because we have to ensure these agencies stop working in silos and start to work consistently with each other and notify each other. Sometimes OCF workers are not at certain communities, but Housing goes into those communities and they can notify OCF or the police. So, we have a cohort of CEs who are already meeting. It is government business and policy direction we are talking about. I would rather leave it ...

Ms FYLES: We have already established it is within the scope of the Estimates Committee to ask questions relating to policy.

Ms ANDERSON: Not what they talk about. I just explained to you that this group meets. The CE has already gone to two meetings. Your question was answered.

Ms FYLES: Are you able to give us the policies of OCF that outline the relationships and how child safety is followed between interagency at a Chief Executive level?

Ms ANDERSON: As I said, Jenni has already met with this group twice. It is protocol support, so it is all agency CEs talking about how better they can service OCF.

Ms FYLES: And child safety/child protection is a standing agenda item?

Ms ANDERSON: Absolutely. As I said, there are not many OCF workers in some communities, so Housing goes out all the time, Education is always on the ground, and Health is always on the ground. We are getting all these agencies together to better coordinate and deliver services for the safety of children.

Ms FYLES: The board of inquiry established this is an important recommendation that needs to be at high level. We are hearing that message is not getting through. Are you able to assure me child safety is a standing agenda item for the Chief Executives at regular meetings?

Ms ANDERSON: Jenni.

Ms COLLARD: I can assure you that is the case. Whilst there was a previous group and there was also a strategy, it ended being a tick-off box. What we tried [inaudible] in the short time I have been here is, I have met with other CEOs and we will meet on a regular basis to establish what practical things we can do in recruitment. For example, we will look at our remote services and how we - Education, Health and Justice - can work together to ensure children are safe. Additionally, the Chief Minister has a number of across-government groups, which consist of all CEOs. This portfolio of child safety is amongst (inaudible) and we have a key focus.

Ms FYLES: You are saying in the past it was a tick-the-box measure for child safety at Chief Executive meetings?

Ms COLLARD: At a CEO level, there was a tick-box strategy. The meetings came together and generally ticked off a number of strategies. I am not sure how successful that was.

Ms FYLES: Thank you for that update. The Northern Territory government was funding advice and support for vulnerable families who came into contact with statutory services. What are the budget outputs for funding those family services or legal agencies going forward?

A member: That is family support output.

Ms FYLES: Okay, I will come back to that, sorry. I read the board of inquiry recommendation. That is probably a different output too.

You spoke a little while ago, minister, about the new child protection framework you are introducing, drawing on some recommendations of the board of inquiry and elements of *The Signs of Safety* framework from Western Australia, of which I have a copy. How will this new approach impact on operational procedures and case management practices?

Ms COLLARD: Sorry, can I have that question again?

Ms FYLES: Yes. I am asking the minister: in this new approach, taking elements of the board of inquiry and the new *The Signs of Safety* framework, how will this impact on operational procedures and case management practices? It has been talked about lately, but we have not really seen anything from it.

Ms ANDERSON: We have repeatedly given you the same answer, but I will ask the CE to answer your question again.

Ms COLLARD: Thank you. *The Signs of Safety* is a practice framework. Basically, it brings together all good practice of social work. The current system, the way we practice, is a culmination of different practices. From individuals there is no consistent practice. To ensure all children are getting a particular quality of standard service from us, as a department, we need to have a consistent practice approach which is *The Signs of Safety*.

The Signs of Safety will work with and empower families to ensure they take responsibility for their children. In a nutshell, it will be a Territory approach; it will not necessarily be copying another framework. We will be adapting it to the needs of the Territory. However, in WA it has been implemented and has reduced the number of children in care. It is better for reunification. It has worked with families and put the resources into families so they take responsibility.

In WA, the statistics are showing a reduction of kids in care and an increase in family support cases, which is where we want to be in the Territory.

Ms FYLES: The report I just held up quotes the framework based on *The Signs of Safety* risk assessment approach promotes case practice which demands more engagement with families where there are safety concerns and provides families with more opportunity to work with the department, and other community services to build and demonstrate safety measures around the children. Can you explain further the meaning of this and how it relates to meeting community expectations and delivering within the Territory framework?

Ms ANDERSON: Can I answer broadly. Earlier I spoke about the difference of Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory and that we are the closest relatives to the bottom end of Western Australia (inaudible), all those places, Ernabella (inaudible) Pitjantjatjara, Ngaanyatjarra people, Yankunytjatjara people across borders to the Luritja, Pintupi, Warlpiri and so on. It is about giving families and communities intensive support. It is building the capacity of communities, families and parents again to understand children are important, and highlighting to them the safety issues.

Is it okay for a child to live in a house at Papunya with 37 people? No, it is not. It is giving them all the tools to identify who, through kinship care, could better look after a child if the parent or the whole family structure is broken down because of drugs and alcohol. I said at the beginning, this is a major issue for child protection now we have so many social issues of drugs and alcohol in remote Aboriginal communities.

We have to ensure agencies are working together and focused on the protection of children. If we do not deal with overcrowding, the alcohol and drug issues, poor health and poor education, in 20 years' time there will be other people sitting through this estimates process talking about higher statistics than we are talking about today.

Madam CHAIR: Member for Nightcliff, if I could interrupt. Minister, you pronounced the names of your communities very well. I am sure Hansard might not have caught that. A note to your office, perhaps someone could send them through to Hansard. I am sure it would be much appreciated.

Ms ANDERSON: There is a map in my office so we will get the spelling.

Madam CHAIR: Great, thank you very much.

I will also take the opportunity to note the change of membership of the committee. We have Nicole Manison, member for Wanguri; Natasha Fyles, member for Nightcliff; myself; Francis Xavier Kurrupuwu, member for Arafura; Bess Price, member for Stuart; and Gerry Wood, member for Nelson.

Ms FYLES: Thank you, Madam Chair. With the implementation of this framework change reporting and data collection practices or procedures?

Ms COLLARD: We have a data system - we have spoken about a couple times – we have to clean up to get good data. *The Signs of Safety* framework - my experience in WA is we do not have the funding to fix

up the data, but there are ways to adjust the data or do some documentation to support it. *The Signs of Safety* will lessen the workload for workers trying to capture and put the data in, which makes it difficult for us to collect the data.

We want a framework that is a simple process that works with families, because if the case worker is working behind a computer inputting data, they are not communicating with the family, which is the situation we have currently. My worry is many of our case workers have not sighted families or children in our care. That is the reality of today. Many families do not trust our system.

This framework, hopefully - as shown in other jurisdictions – allows us, as a system, to engage back with families, as we should be. We are doing simpler work and simplifying our processes. Basically, from a child to a politician, they will be able to understand our business. That is where we need to get. However, it is not a magic tool. It will rely on a number of things including a good workforce and leadership.

Ms FYLES: Have other jurisdictions in Australia introduced a similar framework or used *The Signs of Safety*?

Ms COLLARD: WA has, and various countries overseas. WA has very similar remote communities and many issues, particularly in the north, the Kimberley, and in the lands the minister mentioned about crossover of families, particularly on our border with WA, as the Territory. Many Western Australian families transition from Northern Territory and WA. We may start with some of those locations so some of our families are getting consistent models. It has been quite successful in WA but, as I have said before, it is not the magic tool, it does rely on the workforce and on the leadership, and that is where we are heading.

Ms ANDERSON: Member for Nightcliff, I will use a scenario. Kintore, which is in my electorate, is 9km from the Western Australian border, but there is a family community across the border in Western Australia called Kiwipgrwa. So you might have a child going from Kintore, Mount Liebig or Papunya, straight into Kiwipgrwa; so it is about making people familiar with the same tool.

Ms FYLES: Have you undertaken modelling to determine appropriate aspects of the framework that would be effective in the Territory, especially in relation to our remote communities? I know WA is similar, but it is also a far bigger jurisdiction with far stronger networks than the Territory.

Ms COLLARD: I have been in the Northern Territory for eight weeks and I have started the process. Part of the process is workshopping with our leadership group and getting them involved in development of the model that fits the Territory. I do not believe in developing a model without utilising my staff, that is the first stage and could take us 12 months. We have staff using different models, and we need to get them involved and get them excited. The first meeting we had raised positive expectations in staff, and contributed to sorting out some of the relevant issues.

Ms ANDERSON: To give you another scenario, a child protection officer who worked in the Northern Territory and went across to Kalgoorlie in Western Australia, she called me and said that *The Signs of Safety* framework in Western Australia meant she could actually go home and go to sleep. It is a tool that encourages her to work closely to mend the hurt, the pain of families, and build the families up to realise they have these precious things called children in their lives and communities. In the middle of all the dysfunction in communities there is one little person, the child, who gets hurt in this whole process, and this tool enables families to recognise the pressures not outside, but inside, their own families. That way they can work from inside their families out to recognise the pressures on individual mums and dads and grandparents, and then the whole community structure.

Ms FYLES: What is the level of training envisaged for the implementation of this program?

Ms COLLARD: This model is one of continuous learning. There are two parts to it; first, there is formal training, where the experts train us; and second, there will be an ongoing training component. We have a resource in the department that I feel is under-utilised called practice leaders and practice advisors; and they are critical to good practice within the system. I believe their role, together with our own learning development, will provide continuous improvement with this program. As an organisation we cannot believe we know it all – we have done one training course and we know all about families. This is the most difficult area in government to work, and we are working with the most vulnerable kids and very challenging families; no one has the answer. So part of it is building a workforce that recognises that and continually asks the questions.

The other key ingredient is family involvement. We must ask them what the answer is, because sometimes the answer is within the family. The other part of this framework that must be addressed is: some families, who have a history of working with child protection, absolutely hate us. And I do not blame them. But for once in their lives, through this framework, those families in WA are starting to feel respected in our approach to them, and that is where I hope to get us in the Territory.

Ms FYLES: You mention those practice leaders, what are they currently doing in the agency? You gave the impression there is something they are not doing.

Ms ANDERSON: They use the Aboriginal Child Placement Principle as the tool.

Ms FYLES: So, they are currently performing a role?

Ms ANDERSON: Yes, it is an ongoing role, it is ongoing learning. Just because you work in Office of Children and Families does not mean you know everything. If you look at the workforce; does it reflect the amount of Indigenous kids in care? No, it does not. Aboriginal issues are complicated. I will give you a scenario where a young niece of mine, I will not say where she comes from, had a child very early and both she and the child came to OCF. She has grown out of it, and the child is still living with beautiful carers, whom I know. But no one understands the pain and hurt she has gone through. Two of her brothers have committed suicide. People need to look at all of that. Does a practitioner who comes from Ireland, not Alice Springs, understand that? A person from Ireland was the case worker for that family where the mother is an alcoholic, the father died, and two brothers committed suicide. There are huge internal family problems that need to be identified and worked with. That is what *The Signs of Safety* does. It makes people talk about their problems and identify them in order to grow as parents, families and a community to accept that vulnerable children are special children and we all have to look after them.

Ms FYLES: With the implementation of this program - I am still trying to get my head around the detail - will there be additional child protection workers? We have already been told this morning the office is under staffed by 130 people. Will additional child protection workers or allied professionals be required to implement the delivery of these arrangements?

Ms COLLARD: This framework needs us to change the way we operate. We still need all our other strategies in place to improve and increase our workforce. I am not sure if we will need extra child protection workers, because this is a different way of working. As the minister said, there are a number of frameworks in our system and a framework was implemented a couple of years ago which brings more kids into care but does not work with families. That is the STN model. It has been shown in some areas our staff does not use it. We have some inexperienced staff who do not know what practice frameworks they are to use, or who pick up one framework and will not use another framework. This is the beginning of *The Signs of Safety*, and I have many hopes for it, but it is not the magic key.

Ms ANDERSON: The magic is that we all work together, build the community, give the tool to the parents, ensure child neglect and child abuse are understood, and ensure we, as leaders, look after the vulnerable.

Ms FYLES: Minister, I am not feeling the magic. I feel we are getting another system that will shortchange the children of the Territory. The structured decision-making tool is an important child protection tool and you are telling me this mechanism will bring fewer kids into care so we can all feel good and our data and statistics will look good, but it does not add up, to me, that we are truly protecting the children of the Territory through this scheme. How will you determine the effectiveness of your new framework?

Ms ANDERSON: It is a good case practice, and if you understand what the CE has just told you, it is about building the capacity of the individual mum and dad, the extended family, and recognising the community in this as well.

Ms FYLES: I see that, and I have looked at reports on the program. Child protection is not a like a new system of education like saying we will use the Montessori method where it comes back onto the children. This is child protection; it is serious; it is about parents who are not looking after their children. It is our role, as a department, a government and a society to ensure that is implemented. It is not about turning our back on modern child protection practices to implement - to use your words - some 'magic system'. I question how you know this program and framework will be effective.

Ms ANDERSON: *The Signs of Safety* will bring us back to the very basics, which is the child. In everything it is the child. This will take us back to ensuring we look after the vulnerable: the children

Ms FYLES: Your chief executive has just spoken about staff spending less time in front of computers entering information - we do not do that just to create work for people - it is an important part of reporting and researching. So, how will you research the effectiveness of this program?

Ms ANDERSON: Frontline practitioners should not be sitting in front of computers; they have a cohort of people who can enter data for them. Their job is to ensure they look after the child and have a relationship and interaction with the families and parents to ensure that child can go home one day. Their job is to talk about the safety of the child and what the problems are. I use the scenario of my niece. Has anyone spoken to her about the fact that her father died early? Maybe as a young child she did not understand he died through alcoholism. Her mother is an alcoholic; both she and her daughter came into care. Has anyone spoken to her to find out how she feels about her two brothers suiciding? All those issues are very complex issues that we all have to take into consideration. Right in the middle of that are children. This is going back to the basics of looking after the child.

Ms FYLES: Minister, what I am getting at is we have had experts tell us we need to have strong systems to ensure our workers are supported. Absolutely, child protection workers need to spend minimal time preparing reports, but data collection is an important part. We have 140 fewer staff, our caseloads are rising, and you are trying to tell me this magic framework – of which you cannot tell us any details - is going to fix everything. It is not. We need you, as a government, to support the child protection department, to fund more positions. If we are moving away from the structured, decision-making tool, which is a modern child protection tool for recording data, we need to know the tool we are moving to is not wishy-washy.

One of the key recommendations of the board of inquiry, Coroner after Coroner said that staff on the ground realise the issues, but the information does not get through, and I cannot see this flow from *The Signs of Safety*.

Ms ANDERSON: I cannot believe you will sit there and literally wait for the recommendations of the board of inquiry for years and years to come. I can bet in 10 years' time in estimates, when I am dead and gone, but because you are the youngest you will still be sitting here saying, 'Oh, but 10 years ago the board of inquiry said this'. Move on.

The board of inquiry has told you something. Move on and start doing this. There is not one simple tool to use, so we are looking at *The Signs of Safety* because it has worked in Aboriginal communities similar to ours in Western Australia.

As I said at the beginning, this tool is a mechanism to build the capacity of the individual parents and families; to build out from the two people - the one person right in the middle, the child - to the mum and dad, to the extended family, to the community, to understand the safety and importance of that child.

I cannot believe you. I bet my bottom dollar, you will be sitting here in estimates in 10 or 20 years' time saying, 'But 20 years ago the board of inquiry said this'. Move on from it! It is a recommendation, something you should use. As I said at the beginning, there have been recommendations and reports galore in the Northern Territory about all this.

Ms FYLES: I guess minister ...

Ms ANDERSON: We have to work towards a better system and we have to try everything. Not one system on its own can do it. If there is something working in a small way in a similar community like Warburton in Western Australia, which is just across the border from my electorate of Docker River - and there is interaction between Northern Territory, Western Australia, and South Australia all the time through ceremonies and business - we have to try something that is different, but similar to us in the Northern Territory. It is better than trying something that comes from Canada, Ireland, or New Zealand where the people are totally different.

Ms FYLES: It just does not fit with me. Our child protection system is so precious. We had it on track, and in 10 months of government you have run it backwards. There are 140 fewer positions. You are now telling me we have this massive ...

Madam CHAIR: Member for Nightcliff, that is not correct. You have already been told the positions are there and fully funded.

Ms FYLES: Sorry, Madam Chair, we have the statistics here from OCPE. There are 140 fewer FTEs in child protection. We have the documents. We agreed on that earlier with the minister.

Madam CHAIR: Are you coming to a question, because this is very repetitive and the minister has answered it?

Ms FYLES: I am asking: what are the time frame, the budget, and the effectiveness of this new framework? I just do not feel the 'magic' is going to solve everything. Child protection is hard work; it needs people on the ground, people following structured, decision-making mechanisms, and a dual pathway model, not this system and 'magic' you keep speaking of, minister.

Ms ANDERSON: I did not say this was magic. There are many magics we can use. We have taken the opportunity of a different way of focusing on the front line, strengthening the families with the one common goal of looking after the child. We have to use something that is similar and related to the people that we interact with across jurisdictions. As I said, even during school hours some of the children are hard to find through our department because they cross the road. They might be a Kintore child that goes across to (inaudible) or a Mutitjulu child who goes into (inaudible) or Ernabella. We have to look at best practice related to the people we are delivering the service to.

Ms FYLES: We need to look at best practice related to the Northern Territory, not what suits people who are crossing borders. In the interests of time, what is the budget and time frame for *The Signs of Safety* implementation? Can I have an answer on that?

Ms COLLARD: We have only just begun this conversation. We have not determined the budget or the time frame. We are hoping to have all the staff in OCF trained by the end of the year. However, it will depend on the time frame of receiving support from WA. We can provide that, and I am happy to inform you as we go on. We have only just commenced this process.

Ms FYLES: People are telling us you have openly said you are going to implement this program within three months. Is that correct, minister?

Ms ANDERSON: Absolutely, and we are not ...

Ms FYLES: The Chief Executive just said she was not sure, but within the year. The three month figure we have been given is correct?

Ms ANDERSON: Jenni and I have spoken on this and, yes, we have to implement it in the next couple of months. It is a tool that has practitioners focused on the child and gives strength and encouragement to parents, families and communities.

Ms FYLES: We do not have a framework, we do not have a budget, but will be rolling this program out in three months' time is what you said?

Ms COLLARD: We have started it. We have to start by introducing and developing the framework. I mentioned bringing the whole leadership of OCF together. Part of that process is getting the OCF leadership together and developing the framework in an ordered manner. We are lucky in the Territory, to have many staff from different jurisdictions and a few from WA who have been in the Territory for a while and are trained in *The Signs of Safety*. But we want to do it in an ordered way. We have to look at the frameworks, the systems and the staff capacity we have, and then we roll it out.

When we talked about commencing in three months, we have already started that process by bringing the group together, getting a taste of it, and getting our staff involved in it. Any part of changing a system or a way of working is bringing your staff along. That is part of the process before you even start. I have seen processes or practice frameworks introduced in the past where the staff have not been brought along and it has not been sustainable. It depends on what your definition of implementation is. I have already started the process. We need to do much more work before we hit the ground.

Ms FYLES: We have been told this program will start within three months so ...

Ms ANDERSON: Madam Chair, can I interrupt there. We cannot help what people tell you. We have to deal with the facts.

Ms FYLES: The facts seem very wishy-washy. Do you have operational procedures around this new implementation?

Ms COLLARD: Again, as I mentioned before, we need to bring a group together to develop a framework; we need to develop all that and then we can roll it out. We have begun implementation, but we need to look at the systems we have and ensure it works within that system.

Answer to Question on Notice 9.2

Ms ANDERSON: Madam Chair, I have an answer to a question I took on notice.

Madam CHAIR: Do you have a number, minister?

Ms ANDERSON: Question No 9.2:

If the minister could please provide a breakdown of the \$235 000, especially of what the items are associated with in marketing.

Foster care show circuit 2012 - \$79 027; vulnerable infants flipbook - \$4075; strategic investment framework - \$19 500; child protection editorial - \$2750; tender applications - \$4762; photography, pamphlets, annual report - \$3123; workforce mapping - \$13 600; DVD Women's Safe House - \$16 164; foster care awards - \$72 022; media monitoring - \$9970; and promotional items - \$10 145.

Ms FYLES: Thank you, minister.

Ms FYLES: Have the Office of Children and Families had any children in the care of the department who have, sadly, passed away? Are there currently any cases before the Coroner?

Ms ANDERSON: Member for Nightcliff, in the period 1 July 2012 to 31 March 2013, eight children who had involvement with OCF passed away. Four of these children have current involvement with OCF, three were in the care of the Chief Executive, and one was involved with OCF in their child protection capacity. Four children had prior involvement with OCF, two of these children's prior involvement related to their adoption through the Northern Territory Adoptions Unit.

There was one Coronial inquest in this period regarding the death of a child in the care of the Chief Executive from the previous financial year; there were no recommendations resulting from the inquest and the Coroner commended the standard of care provided to the child while in care.

Ms FYLES: Thank you, minister. You have answered my next question, too, regarding recommendations. I have finished with that output. Thank you,

Madam CHAIR: That concludes consideration of Output 1.2.

Output 1.3 – Family and Parent Support Services

Madam CHAIR: Are there any questions?

Ms FYLES: .The government has removed the BDR putting 2500 drunks back into the community. Do you believe this has contributed to the neglect or abuse of children?

Ms ANDERSON: Madam Chair, I am not going to entertain this type of nonsense.

Madam CHAIR: Member for Nightcliff, do you have another question?

Ms FYLES: According to your own government's statistics, domestic violence is up 24% since the election. In the first three months of this year, 1214 women were victims of domestic violence; this is the highest figure ever. Is that correct?

Ms ANDERSON: Member for Nightcliff, in 2012-13 the Office of Children and Families allocated funding totalling more than \$9.8m to non-government organisations for domestic and family violence services. Of this, over \$8.18m of Northern Territory government funding was used for a range of services supporting vulnerable children and families, including crisis accommodation, counselling, outreach, community education and training. Over \$0.12m was allocated to the Office of Children and Families for sexual assault services; over \$1.7m was allocated through the *Stronger Futures* and NT National Partnership

Agreement for women's safe houses run by non-government organisations; and almost \$0.5m was allocated to the Alice Springs Transformation Plan for their family violence services.

In September 2012, KPMG provided its final report which evaluated the impact of domestic violence and family violence mandatory reporting to the Office of Children and Families.

Ms FYLES: Are you able to table a copy of that report?

Ms ANDERSON: Yes, we can.

Ms FYLES: Thank you.

Minister, I am sure you will agree domestic violence has been reported at unacceptably high levels under your government which has had an adverse effect on children. What are the impacts of domestic violence, and why are they so high since the CLP came to government?

Ms ANDERSON: Domestic violence, member for Nightcliff, is a real issue. It is about education, it is about a strategy that empowers women to speak out, and it is about us, as women leaders in parliament, speaking out against it. There are not many people across the Northern Territory who see us shed tears when we talk about domestic violence and abuse against women when we stand up in parliament.

I believe it takes a courageous person to go out and talk to women about empowering them to speak out against any form of violence. This agency and the government are taking this very seriously, and we will be talking about the issues. No doubt, you did it when you were in government. You were at the forefront of talking about issues of domestic violence. We had emotional debates in the House about domestic violence, and we continue to talk about the struggles of women.

It is about strengthening our men as well, because they are part of the family. It is about empowering them to understand their wives are not punching bags and they have to love the person they spend their time with. Many issues to do with domestic violence, child neglect and child abuse are a whole-of-government responsibility because they are about poor housing, health, and education, and the most vulnerable in all of the data we see are children and women. It is up to us, as leaders, to stand up and give strength back to those people.

Ms FYLES: Absolutely, and I appreciate your comments. Are you able to detail what programs the department is running to support these words with actions?

Ms ANDERSON: The domestic and family programs we support are:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Healing Foundation
- Alice Springs Women's Shelter
- Barkly Shire Council
- Catholic Care NT
- Children's Services Support Unit
- Crisis Accommodation Gove
- Darwin Aboriginal and Islander Women's Shelter
- Dawn House
- Mabunji Aboriginal Resource Association
- Melaleuca Refugee Centre
- Relationships Australia
- Roper Gulf Shire

- Tennant Creek Women's Refuge
- Katherine Women's Crisis Centre
- Salvation Army
- Young Women's Christian Association
- Yuendumu Women's Centre Aboriginal Corporation.

Ms FYLES: Have any of those organisations had a reduction in funding this year, under your government?

Ms ANDERSON: You do not at any stage hold yourself accountable for leaving the Territory with a debt of \$5.5bn or consider that might have had an impact on the resources and finances of these agencies? So, you take no responsibility for leaving the Territory with a debt of \$5.5bn? That is the impression you are giving me with these continuous questions about whether we have defunded organisations. It gives me the impression that you are saying, 'You are to blame now. We have nothing to do with it.' And you will not take responsibility for leaving a \$5.5bn debt.

When you come into government and see the purse is empty, you have to do some cost cutting. That is what we have found. You have to take some responsibility for drying up the finances of the Northern Territory. Did you care about the vulnerable children when you knew, at the end of your term, you were going to leave the kitty dry? I do not think so.

Ms FYLES: Minister, I am asking you if any organisations that provide support to women suffering from domestic violence have had their funding cut this year.

Ms ANDERSON: We do not have the individual costs but we can give you the overall costs, which you might not like because there are increases.

Ms FYLES: I thought you would have that data to hand. Domestic violence organisations get government grants; surely you know how much you are giving them from year to year. Have there been any cuts?

Ms ANDERSON: We can get that for you in a couple of minutes, but if you look at the total there has been an increase. You might not want to see that because you want to blame us for everything you have done - the \$5.5bn debt you left Territory. You are not responsible for any of this now; you have moved on. Ten months in opposition you are washing your hands and saying, 'These are not our problems; they are your problems now.' It is a great big black hole, member for Nightcliff. It has effect on so many agencies, and the most vulnerable have also been affected by this \$5.5bn debt.

Ms FYLES: The latest statistics from the Department of Justice show us that domestic violent assaults have risen from 12 June 2012 with 977, to March 2013 with 1214. You are the minister. You sit in Budget Cabinet. You need to tell your colleagues this is an important area; we cannot let the women and children of the Territory down. That is what I am asking you. I would appreciate those breakdown figures.

Ms ANDERSON: I certainly will not be letting women down. I am a victim of domestic violence, so I know exactly what I am talking about. I do not believe you have ever been in that situation to say whether ...

Ms FYLES: I ask through the Chair that comment is withdrawn, please. Madam Chair, reference was made to me and that is not appropriate.

Madam CHAIR: Perhaps, minister, you could withdraw.

Ms ANDERSON: I will rephrase ...

Ms FYLES: Not rephrase, withdraw, please.

Ms ANDERSON: I will rephrase it and say that people ...

Ms FYLES: No. Sorry, Madam Chair, I have a huge problem with this. The minister has made a reference to me and she needs to withdraw it. Thank you.

Madam CHAIR: Just withdraw the component relating to the member for Nightcliff.

Ms ANDERSON: I will withdraw it, and rephrase it. If you are not a victim of domestic violence, you will never understand the pain it causes. As I said, I was a victim of domestic violence and I knew it had an impact on my family as well. It is about getting the strength from the people you work with. The strength I got was that I had the capacity, when I was Chair of section 13 committee at a Commonwealth level, to identify and talk about these issues. I realised then that I could not talk about the issues of domestic violence with other people unless I sorted out my own ...

Ms FYLES: Minister, that is not an accurate comment. We are here to discuss ...

Ms ANDERSON: This is about growing individuals, people, and the community. It is about getting people to understand that we will not tolerate this. This government is absolutely focused on preventing women from being bashed; women will not die. We have the member for Stuart here who is absolutely outspoken in this area, and she will continue to speak out in this area. We have the member for Arafura who will speak out in his area against domestic violence. We have the member for Arnhem who will speak out. The Chief Minister has already spoken out.

Ms FYLES: Minister, this is not about our personal recognitions. We do not have to experience it ourselves to feel empathy with someone. The comments you made were inappropriate and I took offence to them. But, I have moved on.

I look to those statistics of any cuts which have been made to domestic violence NGOs. I agree, as a government, you should be leading on that issue, which means when you are in Budget Cabinet you need to be arguing for it so we can see the results in the budget papers.

Ms ANDERSON: You would not know what it is like because you have never been in Cabinet. I am the most outspoken Cabinet member; my colleagues will tell you that. I will continue to fight for all my portfolio areas. You are inexperienced and do not have the capacity to sit in Cabinet. So, I do not believe you should make that kind of comment, because you do not know. You have not had the ability to stick up for anyone. You have only sat on the backbench, and now you are in opposition.

Ms FYLES: I ask you to withdraw the person references. We are not here for that, Madam Chair.

Ms ANDERSON: That was not personal; it was generally saying you would not understand because you have never sat in Cabinet. It is not personal towards you. You have always sat as a backbencher, so you would not know. That is not personal towards you. The fact that you are in opposition is a fact.

Ms FYLES: Madam Chair, I ask that the minister withdraw her comments, please.

Madam CHAIR: I am unsure of the grounds.

Ms FYLES: The references of personal nature in attacking my intelligence. It is quite relevant.

Madam CHAIR: If you have taken offence to it; minister, could you please withdraw. I do not know that they were offensive comments.

Ms ANDERSON: I withdraw.

Madam CHAIR: Do you have any further questions on Output 1.3?

Mr WOOD: Minister, the previous government had a series of alcohol or domestic violence advertisements running for quite some time. Had those advertisements finished by the time your government took over from the previous government?

Ms ANDERSON: We can get back to you at the end of this session, member for Nelson.

Mr WOOD: All right. I might just add more to it. Was there was any assessment of the value of having those advertisements on television? I do not know if you remember the ones where the kids were screaming and one of the parents came home and was fighting with their spouse. Were those advertisements in relation to domestic violence finished by the time you came to government?

Ms ANDERSON: Yes, they were.

Mr WOOD: Did anyone investigate if there were any positive outcomes from those advertisements? If not, is the government considering a similar proactive campaign?

Ms ANDERSON: We will look at it, member for Nelson. I have spoken personally to the CE on these issues and we are putting some material together for Cabinet. You have to understand we have to use different mediums and many mediums. Television ads are one thing, but not many people have televisions - you might, member for Nelson - or they congregate at someone's place and see it occasionally. It is good to have that medium, but also to have the talking books at school and the talking corflutes they have outside shops where you press the button and see a familiar face - like the member for Arafura - that people recognise and the voice says, 'Do not hit your wives', or something like that.

We have already spoken about those issues, and it is just putting the cost together and taking it to my Cabinet colleagues.

Mr WOOD: That is true, but domestic violence does not affect just Indigenous people, it certainly affects non-Indigenous people as well. With non-Indigenous, there is a lack of emphasis on the fact that a reasonable percentage of males are subject to domestic violence and figures from the police show that. I hope if we have a program perhaps it is more focused on family violence and violence in general. Even though someone in your organisation decided estimates should sit during the State of Origin - look at the support given to someone belting the daylights out of someone else in a football match. That sends the wrong message. People might say it is only on the football field, but we have programs - in Alice Springs - where the football teams are lined up, and I have been part of that with the umpires. Will those programs continue? Do you have a program to continue them?

Ms ANDERSON: We have a Men's Health Wellbeing program as well but, as you said, we want to focus more on the family so everyone across the Northern Territory is educated, because we have to stamp out any form of violence. Occasionally, yes, we do have a punch up at the rugby or the footy, but it is about us, as leaders, speaking out about it. So, we will look at it across government as a whole-of-family support rather than just identifying areas.

Mr WOOD: Yes, because sometimes the emphasis, whilst it is important - I know from the figures that domestic violence against Aboriginal women is terrible - is on women, when there are men, even Aboriginal men, who suffer. But when you get the percentages, a reasonable number of non-Indigenous men are subject to domestic violence themselves. I thank you for looking at a program which addresses family violence in general. It is a much more positive approach and does not alienate some groups, as you know it can. Thank you, minister. I do not have any other questions.

Ms FYLES: The BoysTown Parentline, is that still a policy of the department?

Ms ANDERSON: We will take that question on notice.

Ms FYLES: We saw in the past Indigenous callers to that service had increased. That would be interesting to know.

Question on Notice No 9.3

Madam CHAIR: For the purposes of Hansard, will you please restate your question.

Ms FYLES: Does the department still provide funding to the BoysTown Parentline service?

Madam CHAIR: Minister, do you accept the question?

Ms ANDERSON: Yes.

Madam CHAIR: For the purposes of Hansard, I allocate that question No 9.3.

Ms FYLES: Minister, regarding men's and women's safety; are you able to update the committee on the men's and women's safe places within the communities?

Ms ANDERSON: I went to the one at Ti Tree and it was absolutely fantastic to see a safety centre so well equipped. It has a playgroup for the children, and the Remote Aboriginal Family and Community Workers

(RAFCW) is on specific communities, such as Ti Tree, where they are doing a wonderful job. It is about educating the community that those centres exist and they need to make use of them.

One of the things that I have said is we need more educational courses or advice services available to people so they are up-to-date on what the agency is doing. It is all well and good to have centres with beautiful washing machines, TVs, kid's toys and somewhere safe for the mums and bubs to camp, but there are no posters. It is about the department giving them all the resources they need to be informed, so when people are in there they can identify their own huge problems and domestic violence issues which affect the children. We must provide the tools for them to talk to the police and, I can tell you, the Territory police at Ti Tree are fantastic.

Ms FYLES: I am familiar with the concept. I was asking how many are there, and how many are funded for the upcoming year. Also, a breakdown of men's and women's safe places, please.

Ms ANDERSON: It is estimated that adult intakes at the 12 remote women's safe houses will be 420 in 2012-13; the actual number from 1 July 2012 to 31 March 2013 was 373, which projects out to 497 for the full year. If the current trend continues, the increase in numbers will reflect the increased confidence of women accessing the services to proactively avoid violent incidents when they recognise danger signals, as well as better working relationships with police and night patrol.

Ms FYLES: Thank you minister. In regard to secure care facilities; health experts say it is not right to send children so far away from their families. Are you able to give us some information about why you are sending children from the south up to the Darwin facility?

Ms ANDERSON: I am advised that you have missed that output group, but I am prepared to answer.

Ms FYLES: Thank you minister, I was talking about family and parent support services, and my question was about providing support to families.

Ms COLLARD: Currently, there are no Alice Springs families going up to Yirra House. Many families, and children taken into care in Alice Springs, are in other residential facilities in Alice Springs. That is not to say it will not happen in the future, but we hope to prevent that at all costs.

Ms FYLES: Do you have children in the Darwin facility from the Darwin area?

Ms COLLARD: Yes, we have.

Ms FYLES: How does it affect them being co-located with people being rehabilitated from a drinking problem?

Ms COLLARD: They are no longer co-located.

Ms FYLES: Okay, so the 16 beds in Darwin will no longer be used for alcohol treatment?

Ms COLLARD: That is correct.

Mr WOOD: They have not been used for alcohol rehabilitation, have they? It is only a mental health unit at the moment.

Ms FYLES: Yes, but remember we asked the questions of the Health minister but we were ...

Mr WOOD: It is the one in Alice Springs that is going to be shared, not the one in Holtze. When did you take over that facility?

Ms ANDERSON: It originated from the National Partnership Agreement under *Stronger Futures*. The two secure facilities were built, but we actually need legislation to legally hold children, and that legislation was not forthcoming under Labor, so the two secure facilities were built with no legislation. The minister for Health and myself have worked together to use the secure facility in Alice Springs for alcohol rehabilitation, and we will continue to use Yirra House.

Ms FYLES: So no adults requiring secure care will be housed in the facilities built for them and funded by the federal government?

Ms ANDERSON: Not in Darwin.

Ms FYLES: Or Alice Springs, because it is being used for alcohol rehabilitation.

Ms ANDERSON: That is right, yes.

Mr WOOD: So the secure care centre in Alice Springs is still a Health department unit? Is there not one mental health patient in that facility? Is that correct?

Ms ANDERSON: The previous government spent \$13.9m building two secure care facilities, each with one eight-bed youth wing and one eight-bed adult wing: Yirra House in Darwin, and Kwiyrnpe House in Alice Springs.

Ms FYLES: Yes, we have both been to the facilities.

Mr WOOD: The facility in Alice Springs still belongs to the Health department and the facility in Darwin now comes under your portfolio, minister? Do you own the facility, or do you just have responsibility for it?

Ms COLLARD: Previously, the Health department and OCF shared the facility. We had one side and they had the other. Recognising that having adults and children in the same facility is not good, a decision was made by the two ministers that it was practical for us to have the Darwin facility because we had children in there already, and we had no children in Alice Spring - it was practical, based on the needs of the children we already had in care - and the Alice Springs facility to be used by Health as a facility for adults. So, we take over the facility in Darwin to use only for children, which gives us an opportunity to do something differently.

As you are aware, we do not have secure care legislation, so we do not lock children up. We are trying to make that facility a home, a residence, for very difficult kids who we have problems placing. We will make use of that facility, whether it is for males or females.

Ms FYLES: So you are using it as out-of-home care.

Ms COLLARD: It is a short-term out-of-home care residential facility at this point.

Ms FYLES: What is the cost of that? Would it have been budgeted for under out-of-home care?

Ms COLLARD: Yes.

Mr WOOD: They were built as secure care centres and there is a history to these secure care centres, as you would realise; they were moved because of public concern. One of the public concerns was that people might get out. So, are they children who will be a risk if they leave that premises, either to themselves or the community, because that is what those facilities were built for?

Ms COLLARD: At this point we do not have any legislation to restrain children, even if we wanted to, in any facility. It is illegal for us to do that.

Mr WOOD: So, they stay there voluntarily?

Ms COLLARD: They stay there and our staff do everything they can to keep the children safe, but we do not have any legislation to keep the children there.

Ms FYLES: Even by a court tribunal under the *Mental Health Act*?

Ms COLLARD: No.

Mr WOOD: We might be moving off the subject, but it is important to know where these children fit. If they came under the *Mental Health Act*, not the cognitive impairment section, there is a section of the act that provides the ability to put adults in these facilities, which was passed last year. The issue of children now raises question: what happens to these children? If they walk out and they are a danger to themselves and others, whose responsibility is it if something harmful happens to the public or themselves?

Ms ANDERSON: The carers look after them, member for Nelson.

Ms FYLES: The doors are not locked?

Ms ANDERSON: The doors are not locked, but they have 24-hour care. You forgot to write the legislation when the secure facilities were built.

Ms FYLES: I do not think the department forgot write the legislation. There were clear plans and the usage has changed.

Ms ANDERSON: You, as a government, did not have the legislation to back up the two secure care facilities.

Ms COLLARD: We do not come under the *Mental Health Act*; we come under the *Child Protection Act*. It is a residential facility like our other residential facilities and we are bound under our act. The adults who were on the other side were there under the *Mental Health Act*.

Our act does not enable us to restrain children, even if we wanted to. It is like any other residential facility.

Mr WOOD: Yes, why I am confused because I have always been told it was a mental health facility for people with cognitive impairment - whether they were adults or children. I presumed everyone who was in there was there for that reason. They are not; that clarified it.

Madam CHAIR: Member for Nelson, this is very repetitive. The Health Minister covered this extensively when she was in the chair, so ...

Ms FYLES: Actually, the Health minister referred us to the Minister for Children and Families.

Mr WOOD: That is right, yes.

Madam CHAIR: They covered the transaction and use of those two facilities and the changes.

Mr WOOD: No, she told us to talk to the Minister for Children and Families about this because it is an important issue.

Madam CHAIR: What I am saying is the questions have become repetitive. Both this minister and the Minister for Health, combined, have thoroughly answered this question. Are there any further questions on Output 1.3?

Ms FYLES: Yes.

Madam CHAIR: Member for Nightcliff.

Ms FYLES: Your government's power price hikes have hit families hard. What support have you provided to Territory families to cope with this added burden?

Ms ANDERSON: On the whole of agencies, we gave you all the information on Power and Water and the price increases to the agency. Families are affected by it - every single one of us. That is your legacy and I do not think it is appropriate in this area.

Ms FYLES: Absolutely, it is appropriate ...

Ms ANDERSON: ... you have Power and Water tomorrow ...

Ms FYLES: ... you put power up by 20% and families come to my office regularly, distraught. I have contacted your service providers to provide support for them. It is quite a fair question under the output Family and Parent Support Services: what your agency is doing to support Territory families from the harsh power price rises your government has put in place.

Ms ANDERSON: Madam Chair, I will continue to say that is inappropriate in this area.

Ms FYLES: Family support is not an appropriate question?

Madam CHAIR: Member for Nightcliff, do you have another question on Output 1.3?

Ms FYLES: I am finished on 1.3.

Madam CHAIR: Member for Nelson?

Madam CHAIR: That concludes consideration of Output 1.3 and Output Group 1.0.

Are there any non-output specific budget related questions? That concludes consideration of outputs relating to the Department of Children and Families.

On behalf of the committee, I thank the departmental staff who have attended today. The committee will ...

Ms FYLES: Can I just clarify that we will have the Children's Commissioner?

OFFICE OF CHILDREN'S COMMISSIONER

Madam CHAIR: Yes, the committee will now consider the Office of the Children's Commissioner.

Ms ANDERSON: She should be here.

Madam CHAIR: Perhaps we will have a quick three-minute break in the transition.

Mr WOOD: Make it five, it sounds better.

Madam CHAIR: Thank you.

Ms ANDERSON: Three minutes or five minutes?

Madam CHAIR: Five is fine. However long it takes for her to get here, I suppose, will be the length of the break.

Ms ANDERSON: Thank you, Madam Chair.

The committee suspended.

Output 2.1 – Children's Commissioner

Madam CHAIR: Thank you, minister, we will now consider office of the Children's Commissioner. I know Output 2.1 Office of the Children's Commissioner sits within the Department of Attorney-General and Justice; however, as the Minister for Children and Families, questions regarding the Office of the Children's Commissioner will be answered today.

I invite the minister to introduce any officials accompanying you and, if you wish to, make an opening statement.

Ms ANDERSON: Thank you, Madam Chair; I introduce Hilary Berry, the Acting Children's Commissioner.

Madam CHAIR: Minister, are you making a statement?

Ms ANDERSON: No.

Madam CHAIR: Do you have any answers to written questions?

Ms ANDERSON: No, I have not.

Madam CHAIR: Are there any questions on the office of the Children's Commissioner.

Ms FYLES: Are you able to give us a brief overview of the office's activities this year; how many cases have been referred to your office and things like that, please?

Ms BERRY: Up until 31 March this year we have had 73 approaches, 13 referrals, 34 complaints investigated, and we have conducted 14 public awareness programs.

Ms FYLES: Sorry, I misheard your words. The public awareness campaigns, how many were there?

Ms BERRY: Fourteen.

Ms FYLES: If you are not able to give us specifics, what types of activities were they?

Ms BERRY: They would occasions where Dr Bath, the Children's Commissioner, actually spoke to organisations about the role of the Children's Commissioner.

Ms FYLES: Are you able to give us any indication, generalisations, of course, if those complaints related to the Department of Children and Families?

Ms BERRY: We investigated complaints related to vulnerable children from a range of areas, including children on Youth Justice Orders and within the child protection system.

Ms FYLES: And were there any correlations or any common threads we should be aware of?

Ms BERRY: Many of those details will be covered in our annual reports. One of the areas we have looked at was where there had been no identified guardianship, people taking guardianship care of children; that is just one area.

Ms FYLES: Were the guardianship issues instances where children are living with families and there is no legal role for them to live there?

Ms BERRY: No, it is where children were wandering in communities with no apparent guardian; we have looked into a number of issues about that. Some of the other areas we have looked at include the intake system, and complaints that have not been accepted and therefore no outcome has been achieved as a result of investigations.

Ms FYLES: Are you able to give us a percentage of complaints that have come to you that should possibly have been taken; - 40%, 50%, that detail?

Ms BERRY: I would not have any idea.

Ms FYLES: Do you have anything to do with children who present to you and do not have case plans and those types of issues?

Ms BERRY: Yes, as part of our annual reporting, monitoring and administration of the act as it relates to Chapter 2, which is the Child Protection part of the *Care and Protection of Children Act*, we conduct regular or yearly case reviews..

Ms FYLES: Okay. The government stated they are consulting with you on options for increasing capacity to monitor the performance of the Child Protection system. Are you able to outline what you have provided to the government?

Ms BERRY: I know there are going to be some reviews to increase our powers and functions, including resolution powers, as part of the amendments to the *Care and Protection of Children Act*.

Ms FYLES: So, in terms of increasing the capacity to monitor the performance of the Child Protection system, is that what you outlined to the government, just around resolution?

Ms BERRY: No, in terms of monitoring the Child Protection Act?

Ms FYLES: Yes.

Ms BERRY: That is now part of our current function. As part of the reporting we are required to do, we are going to do another case plan audit review.

Ms FYLES: Is that something you have identified as an issue?

Ms BERRY: We do that every year. This will be our fifth year, and we will be identifying any trends or changes in that time. That is part of our annual reporting. We are also going to review the administrative arrangements, which we have also done previously, as part of our annual reporting. We also look at the

number of notifications and substantiations as part of our annual reporting every year, and we shall be doing that again. We have just requested the data from the department and we expect to get it soon.

Ms FYLES: The government has flagged legislative changes to your office. It was not so long ago we had an intense rework of the *Care and Protection Act* which included changes granting more powers to the Children's Commissioners' office. Did you need these changes – your own separate act? It seems like a great deal of process for an act that was recently reviewed.

Ms BERRY: We are very supportive of having our own act; it makes the Children's Commissioner stand out as an independent agent, which it is, and having our own act re-emphasises that independence, which is very positive.

Ms FYLES: Apart from the fact it has its own independent act, were any changes caused by that which would result in different actions from the office.

Ms BERRY: We see resolution powers as a very positive move. It will, hopefully, reduce the number of investigations that can be managed and dealt with immediately, so you do not have to go into the investigation process of advising agencies, which involves a whole process. This will be much more expedient and a quicker outcome for the complainants, which we see as very positive.

Ms FYLES: So, if a family comes into contact with the child protection system and arrangements are made for their children which they are not happy about, you could step in at that point rather than let it go to a full-blown child protection case?

Ms BERRY: It depends on the issue. We investigate services to children. But the answer is, yes, depending on the issue. We do not get involved in statutory child protection investigations; we are not delegated to do that. We look at services.

Ms FYLES: One of the recommendations of the board of inquiry was that a community visitor model be implemented to involve a sampling of children in out-of-home care with a view to informing your office. Has that been done?

Ms BERRY: No, it has not.

Ms FYLES: That was from a care perspective, children having their own type of community visitor program. Is that something the Children's Commissioner feels would be beneficial to Territory children?

Ms BERRY: I was the Acting Children's Commissioner at the time that recommendation was made and, obviously, yes.

Ms FYLES: We have a community visitor program for adults, which is a voice for them. Would it be beneficial for Territory children to have the same?

Ms BERRY: I believe so.

Ms FYLES: That, minister, is recommendation 141, which you feel there is no need to meet.

The government has suggested in a ministerial statement, Commissioner, that amendments to the act could be used to allow you to report regularly on performance data, such as child protection notifications, investigations and substantiations, and out-of-home care. Do you believe there is a need for this change to the act?

Ms BERRY: We report on that now as part of chapter 2 on monitoring the administration of how the child protection system might administer its part of the act.

Ms FYLES: It is presented in the annual report?

Ms BERRY: Yes.

Ms FYLES: I do not have any more questions.

Mr WOOD: Commissioner, we were just talking about children in secure care centres. In your annual report you made a comment that you were investigating the status of children in secure care centres. Are you saying you have not?

Ms BERRY: The secure care centres were not established.

Mr WOOD: But there was a note in your annual report that you had investigated or, at least looked at, the possibility of children in secure care centres. I did not know whether you had done a report on it or ...

Ms BERRY: Not in terms of the secure care you are talking about that has been established. There is no legislation so, no, it would not have been that secure care unit.

Mr WOOD: In relation to your recommendations, there was Recommendation 95, in the *Little Children are Sacred* report, which was:

That the government promote a vigorous campaign to educate and alert the general public to the tragedies and traumas experienced by victims of sexual assault, particularly children, the means of identifying such cases, and the necessity to report such cases, particularly children, the means of identifying such cases and the necessity to report such cases.

I do not know whether that has changed, but I am working off the annual report, and your summary says:

Although the BOI recommendation 146 might incorporate some elements relevant to the sexual abuse in the education strategy it is clear that it would not be the focus. The main focus for this strategy will be to highlight the NGO and service delivery enhancements which were some of the fundamental improvements the BOI identified.

Then in bold print:

This is particularly concerning given that it is now five years since the release of Little Children are Sacred report, and there has been no specific campaign regarding the issue of sexual abuse and the impact it has on the victims, families and communities.

Is that still the case?

Ms BERRY: We feel very strongly that there needs to be education in the Northern Territory about all forms of child abuse, and child sexual abuse is part of that. So, yes, we feel very strongly that there should be education services to educate the community about child abuse.

Mr WOOD: I realise that a fair amount of that last five years was the previous government. Have you had any positive feedback from the new government in relation to that recommendation being put into action?

Ms BERRY: I understand the new government has different plans of doing that. We are not actually involved in it, we just were monitoring the recommendations from the *Little Children are Sacred* report. But, it needs to be done and is certainly something we strongly support.

Mr WOOD: Can I ask the minister whether the government has looked at that particular recommendation and does it have an opinion on whether there needs to be focus on that area?

Ms ANDERSON: Member for Nelson, thank you. We have a very good relationship with the Children's Commissioner and there are regular talks between me and Howard Bath. We are looking at those areas and there is going to be an education strategy. I said very early in the piece about the Office of Children and Families, it is about educating the community and individuals and ensuring Territorians are aware of any form of child harm.

Mr WOOD: This particular recommendation was fairly specific in regard to sexual abuse. Of course, that was part of the reason the report process started in the first place. It looks, on the surface, there is a fair amount of emphasis placed on having a program that targets this very serious issue. I understand the general topic you are talking about, but this was one of the very reasons this report was initiated.

Ms ANDERSON: There are certainly many projects that have happened. There was a lady who actually did *The Signs of Safety*. This is not *The Signs of Safety* the Chief Executive was talking about; it is actually the hands signs of safety in schools. They had that form of signs of safety at Yuendumu, and I have seen pictures of 99% men at those forums at Yuendumu, Papunya, Kintore, Mt Liebig, Haasts Bluff and

Areyonga. It is teaching children in classrooms how to identify child abuse. One of the questions they ask children through the forums is who they trust - it is about putting the trust in their hands. They indicated to the person showing the children there is something drastically wrong if the mum and dad do not appear there as people the child trusts. All that education material is already being distributed in the communities.

It happened in Western Australia, I have met the lady, and this is not duplicating what has happened in Western Australia; it is a form of school child protection measure already happening in some remote Aboriginal communities regarding child sexual abuse. One of the things the Acting Children's Commissioner might want to talk about is your indicators that child abuse has gone down and child neglect is going up.

Ms BERRY: Yes, that is what we found when we were compiling last year's annual report. Would you like a copy?

Mr WOOD: I have seen it. There is a graph.

Ms ANDERSON: Member for Nelson, we are launching something today. It is a cartoon called *The Bikkies* and explains the work of the Child Protection Task Force on the Tiwi Islands talking about child abuse. This was developed by the community itself and it is ...

Ms FYLES: Was that not launched a few months ago?

Ms ANDERSON: We are relaunching it with the task force today. It becomes a focus of this government ...

Ms FYLES: I remember seeing it.

Ms ANDERSON: ... and where it is going and initiating friendships between the agency and the community.

Ms FYLES: It is a good program; I have seen it.

Mr WOOD: I believe there was going to be an answer. Sorry, Commissioner.

Ms BERRY: As I said, we collected that data and reported on it in last year's annual report. The figures suggest neglect is going up and sexual abuse is going down.

Mr WOOD: Yes, that is right.

Ms ANDERSON: It is through good education programs initiated by communities themselves and awareness programs that have been flagged in schools and communities that we are seeing a trend going down; however, child neglect, which is failure to thrive and general child neglect, is going up. We, as a government, as agencies, have responded to the opposition's question by having Education and Health more involved with OCF so we are picking up kids who are failing to thrive and putting that at the top of the slippery dip rather than at the bottom and ensuring children failing to thrive are identified by the Health department or the hospitals in remote Aboriginal communities. We now have so many feeding programs on communities - schools and childcare centres provide breakfast and lunch - we can start incorporating the young mums and the children into these feeding programs.

We are starting to have inter-agency links with Education and Health on that.

Mr WOOD: Yesterday, we discussed attendance rates of children at school. There are some schools where - especially Indigenous kids in primary schools - attendance is down and, say, only 28% to 35% of children are attending more than 80% of the time. This means around 75% of kids are not attending school full-time.

Is there any correlation between the increase in neglect and lack of attendance at schools? Is that a reasonable correlation, or has nothing been done to look at that?

Ms BERRY: We have not looked at that, Mr Wood, so I could not comment. If I am allowed to guess, I would say so, but we have not looked at that, so I cannot speak with any authority on it.

Mr WOOD: A general question on your role, Commissioner. How much opportunity do you have to go out to communities to explain your role? Not going out just for business; but to tell people what your role is?

Ms BERRY: Last year we joined with a couple other independent officers and went to communities in the Top End and the Barkly area to talk about our role. It was over a two-week period and we visited a group of different communities. We have done nothing this year, but it is something Dr Bath would like to do much more. When we do our investigations, our reviews and audits, we go to the locations where the offices are, such as Alice Springs, Tennant Creek, Katherine or Nhulunbuy. The commissioner is committed to the office being a Territory-wide children's commission rather than just a Darwin-based one.

Mr WOOD: Have you been out to more remote communities like Yuendumu or Yirrkala?

Ms BERRY: I have been to Hermannsburg and Ali Curung. Yes, we have.

Mr WOOD: Do people have an understanding of what your role is? Is it easy to explain how you fit into the big picture?

Ms BERRY: We have tried different types of promotional measures to get our name known out there. But the answer is - probably not - because many of our referrals and our complaints come from professionals or foster carers. We would love to get more complaints from young people, and certainly from Indigenous families. That is certainly something I know the commissioner would very much like to happen.

Mr WOOD: Thank you.

Ms FYLES: Commissioner, you obviously have a very busy office and obviously with the axing of the external monitoring and reporting committee there would be additional oversight pressures on your office. Are you able to update us to how many staff are located in the commissioner's office?

Ms ANDERSON: Madam Chair, I do not believe the Acting Commissioner should be politicised. I believe there should be straightforward questions to the Acting Commissioner. Out of respect, we need be courteous.

Ms FYLES: Absolutely. How many staff are in your office commissioner?

Ms BERRY: Eight point five.

Ms FYLES: Thank you.

Madam CHAIR: That concludes consideration of the Office of the Children's Commissioner. On behalf of the committee, I would like to thank Hilary Berry for attending today. Thank you.

The committee will now proceed to the Department of Regional Development and Women's Policy. I just ask, there is 10 minutes until lunch, do you want to break early?

Mr WOOD: Can I just get a clarification before I ask questions of the wrong person? Indigenous Essential Services, which we are coming up to, are they a separate body from Power and Water? I have quite a few questions for Indigenous Essential Services.

Ms ANDERSON: You can ask them in the agency-specific questions of Regional Development, member for Nelson.

Mr WOOD: Yes, that is right, but I was told they should be asked in Power and Water tomorrow. I have a feeling I was stopped from doing that a few years ago.

Ms ANDERSON: We might just come to that area and say you have to ask that question to Power and Water.

Mr WOOD: I do have a few questions. Do you cover the new policy on major remote towns? Is that your section? And if so, where does it fit?

Ms ANDERSON: In Regional Development.

Mr WOOD: Thank you, minister.

Madam CHAIR: Thank you. We will return at two o'clock with the Department of Regional Development and Women's Policy.

The committee suspended.

DEPARTMENT OF REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND WOMEN'S POLICY

Madam CHAIR: Thank you very much, minister, for returning after the break. I welcome you and invite you to introduce the officials accompanying you today. If you wish, you can make an opening statement regarding the Department of Regional Development and Women's Policy.

Ms ANDERSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. Can I introduce officers of the Department of Regional Development? At the table with me are Chief Executive, Rob Kendrick, and Chief Financial Officer, Ken Tinkham.

Since coming to government, my department has introduced several major initiatives, including homelands policies and regional development frameworks. In addition, my department is leading the negotiation and ongoing coordination of the *Stronger Futures* in the Northern Territory national partnership agreement. The significance of these partnership agreements cannot be understated. The money flowing to the Northern Territory under this agreement is over \$3.4bn over 10 years.

Included in those partnership agreements is the \$200m funding agreement with the Commonwealth government for municipal and essential services. My department has completely reviewed the delivery mechanisms for this money to ensure it is delivered in the most effective and transparent way possible. Part of this renewal and redevelopment is the new homelands policy. I officially launched the new homelands policy on 2 May 2013. This policy provides for greater accountability and transparency, and is supported by a clear funding model. For the first time Territory money is going into homelands and outstations. This money, called Homelands Extra, is targeted and seeks to reinforce that people need to participate in the economy so they can reap the benefits.

Similarly, in January, my department established the Darwin Town Camps Task Force. This focuses on the town camp communities of Knuckey Lagoon, One Mile Dam, Palmerston Indigenous Village, Bagot, Kulaluk and Minmarama. The task force will provide regular open and honest communication and engagement with stakeholders. It will work with all other stakeholders, government and private, to resolve longstanding issues around these neglected so-called camps.

In regional Northern Territory the launch, on 2 May 2013, of the Regional Development Framework represented a significant advance over what existed previously. The framework increases engagement between community organisations, local government, non-government organisations, business, industry and the Northern Territory government. As a member of the Council of Australian Governments Regional Australia Standing Council, I represent the interests of the Northern Territory's regions at the national level. I work with my ministerial counterparts from Queensland, Western Australia and the Commonwealth to advance the sustainable development of northern Australian.

My department also continues to coordinate all government and private sector infrastructure programs in remote communities. It is facilitating and monitoring approximately 375 remote infrastructure projects valued at over \$406m of which 142, valued at \$53m, are complete.

My department also coordinates funding and provides strategic planning and policy advice for the delivery of electricity, water and sewerage services to 72 identified remote Indigenous communities. Therefore, on 24 April, I was pleased to officially open the new \$2.9m Ali Curung advanced water treatment plant, the first of three such plants.

Ownership of land is universally recognised as the precursor to economic participation and wealth generation. However, this cannot be rushed. For the first time, we are close to having the land administration and management initiatives in place to provide a solid base for economic development, home ownership and strategic land development.

In order to advance the economic and social standing of Territory women I established an independent office for Territory women and provided additional funding to expand the capacity and reach of the office.

The independent Office of Women's Advancement's key functional responsibilities with respect to my Women's Policy portfolio is underpinned by women's safety, gender equity, and leadership and participation of women in the Northern Territory.

This government is aligning its policies and activities to encourage all Territorians to participate in the economy and increase opportunities to grow wealth, and it is doing it responsibly by working together. We will build the capacity of regional and remote communities to generate economic growth, create jobs and create more wealth for all Territorians.

I thank the committee for its written questions and look forward to providing you with my responses. In the first instance, I would like to answer the broader questions relating to whole-of-department business, but where answers refer to specific programs and outputs I will provide a full answer under relevant specific output areas. For instance, I will be able to answer all your questions relating to homelands under Output 3.3 and Interpreter and Translator Services under 5.2.

I thank you, Madam Chair. I am happy to take questions.

Mr WOOD: Minister, did you say \$200m from the Commonwealth or \$20m? It is \$20m in the book. I thought you said \$200m. I just wanted to be clear.

Ms ANDERSON: \$200m over 10 years.

Mr WOOD: That makes sense.

Madam CHAIR: Are there any questions on the minister's statement?

Ms WALKER: Thank you, Madam Chair. Good afternoon, minister, it is nice to see you here.

I missed something you said in your statement with regard to the number of projects on communities at the moment. I believe you said 375 projects, or was it \$375m attached to projects?

Ms ANDERSON: It was: facilitating and monitoring approximately 375 remote infrastructure projects valued at over \$406m, of which 142, valued at \$53m are complete.

Ms WALKER: Thanks, minister I just missed that. I have no other questions about your statement. Thank you very much it was very comprehensive.

Madam CHAIR: Minister, do you have answers to written questions you have received?

Ms ANDERSON: Yes, Madam Chair. I would like to take the opportunity for Hansard and those listening to go through the full details of the questions and provide comprehensive answers to them.

Ms WALKER: So I just be clear, Madam Chair. Minister, can I ask questions at the end of each question?

Ms ANDERSON: Yes.

Question No 1:

Details on progress of all CLP announcements made to Territorians in CLP election policy documents, summary snapshots, media releases and announcements, 100-Day Plan costings and savings documents, media, advertisements and other printed material.

Homelands Outstation Regional Development: the new homelands policy with shared responsibility has been developed and was launched at Gangan homeland on the 2 May 2013. The development of the new Northern Territory government homelands policy has allowed the introduction of a new funding model that will provide a more equitable allocation, support homelands that are currently unfunded, cease to fund service providers for uninhabited homelands, and allow an improvement to the way funding is provided to service providers.

Some service providers will receive a reduction in funding, and some will receive an increase. Homelands Extra allowance of \$5200 is part of a new homelands policy. Shared responsibility applications for eligible service providers are currently being finalised.

Many of the fees for homeland resource agencies are to be reviewed. The review of the homeland service provider management fee is scheduled to commence in September 2014. The aim of the review will be to ensure service providers charge similar management fees and, where higher fees may be required, the provider will be able to adjust the amount of the fees.

So homelands and outstations in the mini-budget ...

Ms WALKER: Sorry to interrupt, minister. There are obviously some quite long answers to come. Can I step in and ask questions as they arise?

Ms ANDERSON: Yes, of course you can.

Ms WALKER: You said some providers will receive an increase in their funding, others will receive a decrease. How is that review process being conducted to ascertain who the service providers are whose fees will increase or decrease? Can you table a list, or is this a work in progress?

Mr KENDRICK: Rob Kendrick, Chief Executive, Regional Development. Thank you, member for Nhulunbuy. It is a work in progress. The Homelands Unit is working with the service providers on the homelands they presently service; for example, there are some homelands unoccupied, and this will give service providers equity and provide them the opportunity to have funding commensurate with homelands that are occupied. During the process we need to consider a range of issues such as remoteness of the homeland and the degree of accessibility to it. So, it is a project being worked on now by the department with the service providers.

Ms WALKER: This would be a project, however, that has been under way for a couple of years and there would be a certain body of work around all of that data.

Mr KENDRICK: Yes, it has been going on for quite some time.

Ms ANDERSON: Member for Nhulunbuy, you would remember that there was actually a group within Regional Development Local Government previously which was mapping where the outstations were and the trends of people moving in and out of communities. I believe that was headed up by Mathew Fagan at the time, and this is a continuation of that - looking at where people are moving and whether they are going back to their communities. At the end of the day, we have to support those people living on their homelands full-time and are really committed to their homelands, rather than those who just use it as a holiday camp to go back to at weekends.

Ms WALKER: Sure. Has the eligibility criteria around those homelands changed in anyway? I believe you had to be a resident on your homeland or outstation for eight months of the year. Is that still a qualifier?

Mr KENDRICK: The previous eligibility criteria were historical criteria going back many years. To the best of my knowledge there is not much science applied to the eligibility criteria, so the intent of the new policy is to be quite strong, but also objective in respect to the eligibility criteria, which will be about, as you said, whether it is the primary place of residence, the degree of accessibility, and a number of issues around that. It is not going to homelands which are vacant.

Ms WALKER: No, I understand that. You mention there is a review of management fees. Did you say that is to commence in September 2014?

Mr KENDRICK: Yes.

Ms WALKER: Why would you wait until then?

Mr KENDRICK: The review of those fees will be done in consultation with all of the other work going on in the Homelands Unit - the introduction of the Homelands Extra lands, and, in particular, the funding agreements with the service providers. It is all work done in conjunction with each other.

Ms WALKER: A total of how many service providers are we talking about, currently?

Mr KENDRICK: There are approximately 34 service providers, member for Nhulunbuy. That includes shire councils and standalone organisations

Ms WALKER: Thanks very much. Is it possible to receive a copy of who the current service providers are?

Ms ANDERSON: Yes, we can give that to you.

Ms WALKER: Thanks, minister.

Mr WOOD: Member for Nhulunbuy, can I ask questions on the outstations or did you want to concentrate on the others?

Ms WALKER: It is a big area to talk about. The minister is at question No 1 responding to election commitments. We can do it here.

Madam CHAIR: If it is a comprehensive area it is probably best dealt with in Output 3.3.

Mr WOOD: I will leave it up to the member.

Ms WALKER: I will let the minister continue with her answer on that question and see what other questions arise as to whether we deal with it here or in the output group.

Ms ANDERSON: Thank you, member for Nhulunbuy.

Question No 2:

Explanations of all variations and discrepancies between CLP election commitments and the decisions and policies of government since 26 August 2012.

Please refer to Written Question No 1 for a detailed response. That was exactly the same as question one.

Question No 3:

Progress on all commitments and policy announcements made with government, press releases, and media statements made since 26 August 2012.

That is the same answer; please refer to Written Question No 1 for a detailed response.

Question No 4:

Explanation of all variations and discrepancies between commitments and policy announcements made within government media releases and actual implementation of government policy and funding decisions.

Please refer to Written Question No 1 for a detailed response.

Question No 5:

Progress on all commitments, targets and information contained within the December 2012 mini-budget.

Please refer to Written Question No 1 for a response to this question.

Question No 6:

Explanation on all variations and discrepancies between detailed (inaudible) and policy contained within the December 2012 mini-budget and the May 2013 budget.

Please refer to Written Question No 1 for a response to this question.

Question No 7:

This response is a really long one, member for Nhulunbuy, because the question asked for:

Details on staff movements, and all costs resulting from all administrative arrangement changes since 26 August 2011.

Ms WALKER: Would you rather table that answer?

Ms ANDERSON: I do not mind tabling it, member for Nhulunbuy. I am happy to.

Ms WALKER: Check that the member for Nelson is happy.

Mr WOOD: I am a pragmatic person these days, member for Nhulunbuy.

Ms WALKER: Thanks, minister, if you do not mind tabling that.

Ms ANDERSON: Question No 8:

Full detailed costs and invitation lists for all public service hospitality provided since 26 August 2012.

A very small answer, member for Nhulunbuy. The summary of hospitality expenditure paid and purpose for the period 26 August 2012 to 31 March was \$3433. It was COAG catering, so it was a welcoming event.

Question No 9:

Full details and cost of all interstate or international public service travel, accommodation, hospitality, flight details including flight travel classes since 26 August.

As summarised in the tax table produced with the Travel Requisition Information System, TRIPS, for the period 26 August there was no international travel undertaken. Total interstate travel and associated expenditure was \$35 785, GST exclusive; economy class was \$24 050; and road travel \$11 000. It was very small. If you want me to table it, member for Nhulunbuy, I am more than happy to.

Ms WALKER: That would be helpful. Where was the air travel to and from?

Ms ANDERSON: Canberra, Canberra, Sydney, Canberra, Kununurra, Kununurra, Perth, Sydney, Sydney, Sydney, Canberra, Brisbane, Brisbane, Canberra, Melbourne, Darwin, Sydney, Melbourne, Sydney.

Ms WALKER: Thank you, minister. What were the Kununurra visits?

Ms ANDERSON: That was the Northern Ministerial Council I went to earlier.

Ms WALKER: Sure.

Madam CHAIR: Minister, do you have the document to table? Thank you.

Ms ANDERSON: Question No 10:

Details on all policy items, strategies, actual estimates, overheads forecast, agency outputs and funding decisions contained within May 2013 Budget.

Details can be found in the 2013-14 Budget Paper No 3, and specific questions will be addressed in the estimates hearing process in the right output groups.

Question No 11:

Details on all financial and economic data contained within the operating statements, balance sheets, cash flow statements in May 2013 budget.

Exactly the same answer. Details can be found in 2013-14 Budget Paper No 3, and specific questions will be addressed in estimates hearing process through the output groups.

Question No 12:

Full details of all revenue measures including new taxes and tax increase including levies and charges, detail include risk impact statements, community and industry consultation plans, economic modelling and revenue projections.

The department does not have any revenue measures as part of the mini-budget 2012-13.

Ms WALKER: I am sorry, minister?

Ms ANDERSON: The answer is: the department does not have any revenue measures as part of the mini-budget 2012-13.

Ms WALKER: I am not sure what that means.

Ms ANDERSON: Maybe I can get the Chief Finance Officer to elaborate on it.

Mr TINKHAM: Certainly. Ken Tinkham, Chief Finance Officer. Basically, there are no revenue measures in the mini-budget.

Ms WALKER: You mean no changes?

Mr TINKHAM: That is right. Yes.

Ms WALKER: So, unchanged from last year's 2012-13 Budget.

Mr TINKHAM: That is correct, as I understand it. Yes.

Ms WALKER: Except I thought there was additional money put in for Homelands Extra.

Mr TINKHAM: That is not a revenue measure, that is an expenditure measure, surely.

Ms WALKER: Okay. Thank you.

Ms ANDERSON: Question No 13:

Full details on the impacts across all government entities as a result of all increases in government and government corporation charges, prices and tariffs since 26 August 2012.

The department has only incurred an increase in power charges as the result of increases in government and government corporation charges, prices and tariffs since 26 August 2012.

Comparison and estimates of future power charges for the department.

I can either table this for you, member for Nhulunbuy, or I can read it.

It is the financial year 2011-12 actual based on the department's outputs - \$49 760; 2012-13 actual expenditure and estimate for June 2013 adjusted for tariff revision - \$47 451; 2013-14 estimate - \$50 244. There is an estimated \$2800 increase in power charges for the department between 2012-13 and 2013-14.

The department says it is difficult to compare the increase from 2011-12 as the base due to the department being created as part of an Administrative Arrangements Order dated 4 September 2012 where the former Department of Housing, Local Government and Regional Services created three separate departments: the Department of Housing, the Department of Regional Development and Women's Policy, and the Department of Local Government.

The above estimated consumptions are actual 2011-12 based on outputs within the former Department of Housing, Local Government and Regional Services and transferred to the Department of Regional Development and Women's Policy. Movements between 2011-12 and 2012-13 may also be due to changes in usage. Changes in tariff increase in electricity from 30% to 20% effective 1 January 2013 as announced on 14 March 2013, adjustment of actual charges within 2012-13 to credit the adjustment tariff as announced 14 March 2013 pending. Additional 5% increase in 2013-14 for electricity.

That is all the written questions.

Ms WALKER: Thank you very much, minister. I will deal with those questions when we get to output groups. I do not know if the member for Nelson has questions.

Mr WOOD: No, I will wait for the specific areas.

Agency-Related Whole-of-Government Questions

Madam CHAIR: The committee will now proceed to consider the estimates and proposed expenditure contained in the Appropriation Bill 2013-14 as they relate to the Department of Regional Development and Women's Policy. Are there any agency-related whole-of-government questions on budget and fiscal strategies?

Ms WALKER: I have a couple, Madam Chair, and when we get to the budget output group of Regional Development my colleague, the member for Barkly, will have questions as shadow for that area.

Minister, I wanted to ask about the government's intention and, under your stewardship as minister for Regional Development, about the commitments made by the former Chief Minister in written contracts he had signed with communities such as Wadeye, Borroloola and Maningrida. As minister for Regional Development, what is your commitment to seeing this and the other contracts delivered?

Ms ANDERSON: Member for Nhulunbuy, we are quite aware of the contracts the former Chief Minister had with those communities. In Regional Development the focus of this government is looking after the whole of the Northern Territory and connecting the regions, our communities and towns to the hub communities of Alice Springs, Tennant Creek, Katherine, Darwin and, your own place, Gove. It is fantastic to see the focus change. With the former Chief Minister and those communities, that was a conversation they needed to have.

However, we very aware of what people have told us. Some areas will be looked at through the processes of Regional Development. We cannot take something like that as gospel and ensure the government is driven by that. We will continue to have that conversation with those communities. You heard the Chief Minister talk about Wadeye and the Tiwi Islands and, of course, Borroloola and Gove, in very different ways. We are asking the people what they want to do. There is opportunity in the Northern Territory for them to come on board. We need to give that opportunity to people who come on the road with us. This is a difficult journey we will have with many of our people.

As both your and the member for Barkly know, welfare is the root of all evil and our job, as leaders – on both sides of government – is to encourage our people to move forward with some hope and economic opportunities. I guess the contract was one of those. We see so much potential in remote Aboriginal communities to do this. People said these are the things we want to do, and we are looking at some of them.

Ms WALKER: Minister, with all due respect, I understand the vision that you government has for regions and commitments and promises you have made. However, these contracts are very specific and people have signed these contracts and, I dare say in many instances, provided the Country Liberal Party government with their vote, therefore there would be an expectation to see exactly what is going to be delivered. For example, in the Wadeye contract there is this reference: we will support the TRACS program with a commitment of \$50 000 to help with transport for people to homelands and ceremonies. That is a very specific commitment. What will I tell people in Wadeye, when I next visit, about that commitment?

Ms ANDERSON: These contracts go across all agencies and I heard it got picked up in Health and is definitely with the Chief Minister. In this contract there is only one reference to outstations, in my portfolio. However, after talking to the Chief Minister this morning I can assure you he is adamant that he is going back the Wadeye community to investigate any economic opportunities and talk to the people about how they can move forward with those opportunities. He has said he will move heaven and earth to have Aboriginal people come on this journey of economic hope, because he wants to change the face of the Northern Territory.

Asia is our closest neighbour, and this government will take the Northern Territory forward and ensure that Aboriginal people are not left on the sidelines unable to enjoy the wealth of the Northern Territory. As I said, I am looking at the Wadeye contract in regard to helping transport people to homelands and ceremonies because that comes under my portfolio. And the Chief Minister is travelling to Wadeye to have a discussion with them about those contracts.

Ms WALKER: Thanks for that minister, but there are some very specific commitments in this particular contract which was passed to me after the election, and I cannot see how in your response these commitments are going to be delivered. I am not sure the people in Wadeye are particularly interested in the economic prospects in Asia and that relationship with the Northern Territory. They want to see what has been promised on the ground in their community.

Ms ANDERSON: Certainly, member for Nhulunbuy, as I said the discussion that I had with the Chief Minister this morning confirmed he will be talking to the people of Wadeye about the opportunities they have with the Northern Territory government.

Ms WALKER: Minister, will you be talking to the people of Wadeye specifically about this contract and what you are responsible for?

Ms ANDERSON: I will do a trip after I visit Tennant Creek next week. I will go to Wadeye as well. As you know, I have been in your community of Gove a few times visiting my agencies and specifically paying great attention to Office of Children and Families. I have visited every OCF office except Tennant Creek, so I want to visit Tennant Creek.

Ms WALKER: Within the next couple of years minister, I should be able to come back into the estimates process and show you this contract and be able to put a tick alongside each of these commitments to say the County Liberal Party has done this, this and this?

Ms ANDERSON: Member for Nhulunbuy, I am happy to have my agency brief you on a quarter-by-quarter basis about what the government is doing in these regions. I am happy to do that.

Ms WALKER: Thanks minister, I appreciate that offer. Under whole-of-agency, I want to ask you about the name change of the agency. Post-election it was Regional Development and Indigenous Advancement, but the words 'Indigenous Advancement' were dropped from the department's title on the ascension of the current Chief Minister, the member for Braiiling. I am not the only one asking the question why it is. Indigenous Advancement, having a special portfolio coordinating the work associated with 30% of some of the most disadvantaged Territorians - many people read that as no longer being important under the new Giles government.

Ms ANDERSON: The programs of Indigenous Advancement are still within Regional Development, and they are still doing a fantastic job. We have Indigenous tourism in there. Like the Chief Minister said, it should be everybody's business to be focused and concentrating on advancing Indigenous people. We are only 36% of the Territory's population, and the level of health, education, overcrowding and lack of economic opportunity is appalling in Indigenous communities. Taking away the title of Indigenous Advancement makes every agency in the Northern Territory responsible for focusing on advancing Indigenous people and considering the effects of policies on Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory.

Ms WALKER: Minister, 36% of the population – the Northern Territory is the jurisdiction with the highest number of Indigenous people, amongst which are some of the most disadvantaged. It does seem to be at odds with you federal counterparts. As recently as yesterday the federal Leader of the Opposition reaffirmed that should he be Prime Minister, he will be Prime Minister for Indigenous Affairs. That view seems very inconsistent with his Territory counterparts.

Ms ANDERSON: Member for Nhulunbuy, the federal government has opinions of its own, but it is not an expert on how Aboriginal people should be treated in the Northern Territory. We have seen so much dysfunction through too much intervention in Aboriginal people's lives. The fact that Aboriginal Advancement, or Aboriginality, has been taken out of one section of a department and allowed to move across all agencies to ensure they all focus on Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory is a good thing. It is saying to the Health department it has to make sure it looks at Aboriginal affairs, housing, education, regional development, and OCF. That is why the Office of Children and Families has gone back to grassroots to empower Aboriginal mums, dads, families and the whole community. That is exactly what the cross agencies are doing: making sure it is all of the government's business to look after Aboriginal advancement and Aboriginal people.

Ms WALKER: I will not harp on about it, minister, but Mr Abbott, Leader of the Opposition, said he will elevate Indigenous Affairs into the Office of the Prime Minister so he can oversee the delivery of important government programs in this area, given the significance, importance, priority, and the fact there is a \$3.4bn package from the federal government - a 10-year funding package. I am still struggling to see why that recognition and importance from your counterpart in Canberra does not translate to the Northern Territory.

Ms LEE: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Repeating questions – Standing Order 114.

Madam CHAIR: Minister, have you answered the member's question?

Ms ANDERSON: I will take the opportunity to answer the member for Nhulunbuy's question.

It is fantastic to see, not just Tony Abbott saying it will be primary in his thoughts and policy to look after Indigenous people in the Northern Territory - your own colleagues, federally, have injected a great deal of money through *Stronger Futures* into the Northern Territory. So, they see a real need to bring us up to capacity to enjoy the wealth and opportunities we have in a smaller jurisdiction like the Northern Territory. I support the federal government talking about Aboriginal affairs at that level because it puts it back on the federal agenda. As I said, your colleagues have done the same thing and it is good to see the opposition has the same idea.

Ms WALKER: Minister, was dropping Indigenous Advancement from the agency title a decision agreed upon by all members of your party wing, or was it a Cabinet decision?

Ms ANDERSON: We agreed on it as party. Just a name tag on Regional Development and Aboriginal Advancement does not make any difference because all the programs still exist under Regional Development. As I said, member for Nhulunbuy, they do a fantastic job there.

There is actually one young fellow from Papunya, now living in Darwin, who has just been employed and is working in that section. Kim does a fantastic job in advocating in all areas and all aspects of Indigenous disadvantage, even with business by getting Indigenous people to participate in business opportunities, giving them the hand they need to ensure they are catered for and the public is made aware. There is that support through Regional Development, which gives them all a hand in advertising Indigenous business - absolutely fantastic.

Ms WALKER: Thank you, minister. I wanted to ask you next about your Chair of a subcommittee of Cabinet that is reviewing Indigenous service delivery and expenditure out in the bush communities. I understand your bush colleagues are part of that subcommittee. I wanted to ask if you could provide us with details about the travels of that subcommittee, where you have been, who you have met with, and what was the cost to taxpayers of those visits.

Ms ANDERSON: The subcommittee was formed by the former Chief Minister. We met once and went out to Lajamanu and met with the Lajamanu community. However, it has now been disbanded and there are now parliamentary secretaries to certain portfolios. I have the member for Arnhem as Parliamentary Secretary to all my portfolios; the member for Stuart is Parliamentary Secretary of Education; and the member for Arafura is Parliamentary Secretary to Health. We only ever did that one trip to Lajamanu.

Ms WALKER: Can you advise the cost was of that particular visit, and how many people went?

Ms ANDERSON: Can I take that question on notice, member for Nhulunbuy?

Question on Notice No 9.4

Madam CHAIR: For the purposes of Hansard, will you please restate your question.

Ms WALKER: Can you please provide details of the one subcommittee meeting of Cabinet that visited Lajamanu. Who attended that meeting between media, MLAs and public servants, and the total cost of that visit?

Madam CHAIR: Do you accept the question, minister.

Ms ANDERSON: Yes.

Madam CHAIR: I allocate that question No 9.4.

Ms WALKER: Minister, when was that subcommittee disbanded?

Ms ANDERSON: That subcommittee was disbanded just after the changeover of Chief Ministers.

Ms WALKER: From August through to the middle of March, which is a reasonable period of time, why was there only one visit? Why was there only one subcommittee meeting of Cabinet?

Ms ANDERSON: Member for Nhulunbuy, we did have internal documentation gathered and we had a group on the 5th floor putting it together. We had another trip organised, but we had to cancel it, at no cost - no planes were booked or anything - because there was a big sorry business happening. So, we would have had two trips if we had not had to cancel the one where the community had large sorry business.

Ms WALKER: Given the short time you were together as a subcommittee with the purpose, I understand, of reviewing Indigenous expenditure, are you able to table reports arising from the work of that subcommittee?

Ms ANDERSON: I do not believe we ever did work on it, member for Nhulunbuy. I was just informed by my staff it was DCM that had all the costs of travel of the subcommittee.

Ms WALKER: Given that you were a subcommittee, you had one regional visit to Lajamanu, but the work was still going on within the agency in Darwin.

Ms ANDERSON: When we went to Lajamanu, member for Nhulunbuy, we heard the airstrip had not been bitumenised, about the bad road between the community and Top Spring, with accidents continually happening. The school was operating okay and children were attending school, but they had problems with Youth, Sport and Recreation because it was really slow recruiting people to that position, and therefore there was hardly anything happening. They had been inundated with people from other communities who were feuding coming into the community, and the community just had far too many things going on. However, the problems we saw was no linkage between what I believe are called 'geckos' now - they were called government business managers before - and the government agencies to get a real focus on the community needs.

Ms WALKER: I asked whether you could table all reports arising from the work of that subcommittee. You were in existence for seven months, so there must be some reports associated with the work you did and recommendations you made.

Ms ANDERSON: Member for Nhulunbuy, it only existed for four months, not seven months. I am told they are Cabinet-in-confidence documents.

Ms WALKER: I made the assumption the subcommittee was formed straight after the election. Obviously it was not.

Minister how many communities in your electorate - I know you have a sizeable electorate - have been subject to a detailed review of Indigenous expenditure, and how has that work informed the development of this budget?

Ms ANDERSON: Member for Nhulunbuy, I am advised the Department of the Chief Minister has undertaken that review. I believe there is only one community in my electorate that is part of it, and that is Hermannsburg.

Ms WALKER: That review would extend right across the remote communities?

Mr KENDRICK: Yes, member for Nhulunbuy, the review is focusing on five communities across the Territory, but is being led by the Department of the Chief Minister.

Ms WALKER: Can you remind me of the five communities?

Mr KENDRICK: We will take that one on notice. Hermannsburg ...

Ms ANDERSON: We will take it on notice, member for Nhulunbuy.

Question on Notice No 9.5

Madam CHAIR: Member for Nhulunbuy, please restate the question clearly for the record.

Ms WALKER: Can you please list the five communities that are part of the review of Indigenous expenditure?

Madam CHAIR: Minister, do you accept the question?

Ms ANDERSON: Yes.

Madam CHAIR: The question asked by the member for Nhulunbuy to the minister is question No 9.5.

Ms WALKER: Minister, you said some of your colleagues have been elevated to Parliamentary Secretary roles to support ministers in their duties. Is that why the Chief Minister scrapped the subcommittee when he became Chief Minister in March? Was it a cost saving measure? Did he see the subcommittee as ineffective? Can you shed any light on that?

Ms ANDERSON: Member for Nhulunbuy, I do not believe it was about cost saving. He wanted to see these first-time politicians linked to a minister so they would have interaction and closeness with the minister and see what a minister does. I am grateful the member for Arnhem is my Parliamentary Secretary because whether she is in Darwin, or not in Darwin, we call her to briefings on matters of urgency and she is privy to things she would not normally be if she was not my Parliamentary Secretary. It is a good educational tool to link them to a minister, and they grow with the minister and get all that experience.

Ms WALKER: You were Chair of that subcommittee, minister. They had access to you routinely.

Ms ANDERSON: The whole-of-government now, member for Nhulunbuy, supports the members for Arafura, Arnhem and Stuart. The member for Arafura enjoys being Parliamentary Secretary for Health and is very close to the minister; they have a good relationship, they build each other and support each other. Francis is a knowledgeable man who takes the Minister for Health out and about and, because of the language barriers, I believe it is fantastic to have that partnership between a minister and a Parliamentary Secretary.

Ms WALKER: Thanks, minister. In how many locations are there staff of the Department of Regional Services and Women's Policy located, and can you detail the number of staff at each location?

Ms ANDERSON: We have Regional Development in Alice Springs, Tennant Creek, Katherine, Darwin and Gove. We have Women's Policy in Darwin and a new office in Alice Springs with one staff member. We can give you the number of staff at each of the offices.

Ms WALKER: Thanks, minister.

Mr KENDRICK: Before I start to answer this can you clarify, was it just locations, member for Nhulunbuy?

Ms WALKER: Locations which the minister has just detailed, but also the number of staff at each location.

Mr KENDRICK: The numbers are quite varied in different locations based on interpreter services and people in the field. We have 27 in Alice Springs; one in Alyangula; four at Angurugu; one in Borroloola ...

Ms WALKER: Sorry, how many at Angurugu?

Mr KENDRICK: Four. They are interpreting staff there.

Ms WALKER: Is that the same for Alyangula?

Mr KENDRICK: The primary centres Alice Springs, Darwin, Katherine, Tennant Creek, and Nhulunbuy will vary with Regional Development staff. The other centres will be interpreters, and I will highlight if there is any differentiation to that: Borroloola – one; Daly River - one, Darwin – 120; Elcho Island – one; Galiwinku – two.

Ms WALKER: Elcho and Galiwinku are the same.

Mr KENDRICK: Sorry! That may be three in total.

Ms WALKER: I can do the maths.

Mr KENDRICK: I can get clarification, but for some reason they are separate. Nataria – one; Jabiru – one; Katherine – five; Maningrida – two; Mutitjulu - one, Nhulunbuy – six; Tennant Creek – two; Wadeye – three; and Waruwi - one.

Ms WALKER: So, there are 176 all up. How many of those are AIS?

Mr KENDRICK: The periods for which this data has been provided are up to different points time. The figures I have read out are up to the 31 March. Going back from 31 March we have 47 in the interpreter service in the AIS. We also have casual interpreters who are called in if there is a job such as court interpreting on a casual basis. For that period we had 48 casuals. Primary AIS interpreters were 46.83 - 47.

Ms ANDERSON: Member for Nhulunbuy, you can see by this graph at certain times - it might be sorry business or ceremonies – there is a sharp drop, and then it picks up again.

Ms WALKER: Minister, have you been to all of those regional offices?

Ms ANDERSON: I have visited your beautiful offices at Nhulunbuy quite often. I have also been to the Alice Springs and Katherine offices, and I will visit the agencies in Tennant Creek next week.

Ms WALKER: This will be your first chance to get Tennant Creek to meet these regional staff?

Ms ANDERSON: Yes, it is, because I have paid too much attention to Nhulunbuy.

Ms WALKER: Minister, how many positions are currently vacant within the Department of Regional Development and Women's Policy?

Ms ANDERSON: Eleven, member for Nhulunbuy.

Ms WALKER: Where do those vacancies exist?

Ms ANDERSON: In the Aboriginal Interpreter and Translator Service - seven; in Regional Development – two; and in the departmental Coordination Unit – one.

Ms WALKER: Amongst staff currently within your ...

Ms ANDERSON: We have just received an answer to a question you asked about service providers, member for Nhulunbuy.

Ms WALKER: Thanks, minister, that is great.

Madam CHAIR: Do you have the Question on Notice number?

Ms ANDERSON: No, it was not a Question on Notice.

Madam CHAIR: No worries.

Ms WALKER: Thank you for those figures on current vacant positions. How many staff in the Department of Regional Development and Women's Policy, outside of AIS, identify as being Indigenous? I know you mentioned a young man from Papunya who has recently joined.

Ms ANDERSON: Yes.

Madam CHAIR: While you are finding that, minister, are you tabling that answer?

Ms ANDERSON: Yes.

Madam CHAIR: Thank you.

Mr KENDRICK: Member for Nhulunbuy, we only have the across-agency numbers for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander breakdown. We do not have them separated into business divisions.

Ms WALKER: Okay. So that means ...

Mr KENDRICK: We could take it on notice.

Ms WALKER: Obviously the vast majority of your AIS employees are Indigenous, but I am interested to know how many other employees identify as being Indigenous.

Mr KENDRICK: Yes.

Question on Notice No 9.6

Madam CHAIR: Member for Nhulunbuy, could you please restate the question clearly for the record?

Ms WALKER: Minister, how many staff in the Department of Regional Development and Women's Policy, outside of the AIS, identify as being Indigenous.

Madam CHAIR: Minister, do you accept the question?

Ms ANDERSON: Yes.

Madam CHAIR: The member for Nhulunbuy has asked a question of the minister and that is question No 9.6.

Mr WOOD: Can I follow on from that, member for Nhulunbuy?

Ms WALKER: Sure.

Mr WOOD: Minister, do you believe it is important that we identify how many Aboriginal people we are employing in departments?

Ms ANDERSON: I believe it is good to have the data of how many people are coming into the bureaucracy and identifying as Aboriginal. It is fantastic to have a record so we can use it in the processes of government moving forward to show that Aboriginal people are being employed in the bureaucracy. One of the things we see is Aboriginal people - and I have spoken about this many times - get stuck in middle management, or the bottom end of the bureaucracy. We want to see Aboriginal people getting higher in the bureaucracy, as well.

I believe it is fantastic that they identify as Aboriginal because it gives us, as a government, a focus to move forward in engaging with Aboriginal people in the bureaucracy.

Mr WOOD: Do you believe it is the role of the department to not only encourage Aboriginal people to put their hand up, but to assist Aboriginal people to get jobs in the department?

Ms ANDERSON: Absolutely. OCF also encourages Aboriginal people to identify as Aboriginal people when they get these jobs. For Regional Development and Local Government it has been fantastic. The employment of Indigenous people in OCF does not reflect the number of Indigenous kids we have in care, and I believe we need to increase that. Now we have Jenni, being Aboriginal herself, I believe we will see a greater role of interaction occurring.

When I go to the member for Nhulunbuy's area into the OCF office in Nhulunbuy, it is fantastic to see people like Sophie who have taken the lead role there and are the interface between agencies to introduce them to the community.

I believe, in the Northern Territory - as I said, we are a young jurisdiction - we need to encourage that move.

Mr WOOD: Thank you, minister, for that answer because it is in stark contrast to what I heard last night when I asked the minister why only three Aboriginal people are employed in the department of Tourism. Basically, the minister said, 'We do not distinguish between who is employed based on their race'. I would have thought, knowing the low levels of employment of Aboriginal people; the government has a duty to encourage people. I thank you for your statement; it is in contrast to what I heard last night.

Madam CHAIR: Member for Nelson, in fairness to minister Conlan, he said part of the issue is that people have to record if they are of Aboriginal descent. That can, obviously, impact the statistics.

Mr WOOD: He can tell me if I am wrong. It is his job.

Madam CHAIR: I beg your pardon! I am just saying, in fairness to the minister, what you just recounted is not necessarily an accurate reflection of what he said last night.

Mr WOOD: I am just saying the minister ...

Madam CHAIR: Member for Nelson, I am not interested in what you have to say at all ...

Mr WOOD: I am not interested in your opinion of what he thought. It is up to him to rebuke me.

Madam CHAIR: Member for Nelson, I consider your comments to be disorderly. I warn you if you persist I will order you to withdraw from the hearings under paragraph 31 of the Assembly's resolution establishing this committee. You are right; I probably will have that memorised by the time I am done with you.

Member for Nhulunbuy, do you have any further questions?

Ms WALKER: Madam Chair, I did. Minister, given the recognition you have made today about the importance of Indigenous employment in this particular area, outside of the AIS employees, does your agency have a target for Indigenous employment? Is there a benchmark you want to reach to achieve x percentage of your workforce is Indigenous?

Mr KENDRICK: Member for Nhulunbuy, the government's target is 10%. Obviously, our agency with the Interpreter Service exceeds that. What we do to promote the employment of Indigenous people in the workplace is strongly advocate programs for trainees coming to the workplace, and also our strategies and our policies within the department have strategic plans to promote the employment of Indigenous people. We do not have a specific target, per se, other than the generic government target.

Ms WALKER: Which is?

Mr KENDRICK: 10%.

Ms WALKER: Forgive me, minister; you might have addressed this during the written questions. Could you table a list of all consultants engaged by your agency since September last year which details the value of the consultancy, the name of the consultants engaged on a project, the duration of the consultancy, and the key project deliverables if you have engaged consultants?

Ms ANDERSON: I will check, member for Nhulunbuy.

Ms WALKER: It was written question No 15, I believe.

Ms ANDERSON: I have been advised, member for Nhulunbuy, that we do not have that detail, but I can take it as a question on notice.

Question on Notice 9.7

Madam CHAIR: For the purposes of Hansard, will you please restate your question, member for Nhulunbuy?

Ms WALKER: Minister, can you table a list of all consultants engaged by your department since September 2012, detailing the value of the consultancy, the name of all consultants engaged on the project, the duration of the consultancy, and the key project deliverables?

Madam CHAIR: Minister, do you accept the question?

Ms ANDERSON: Yes.

Madam CHAIR: For the purposes of Hansard, I allocate that question No 9.7.

Ms WALKER: That is all I have on whole-of-agency questions.

Madam CHAIR: Member for Nelson?

Mr WOOD: No, I will stick to the specific areas.

Madam CHAIR: That concludes consideration of agency-related whole-of-government questions on budget and fiscal strategies.

OUTPUT GROUP 3.0 – REGIONAL SERVICES

Output 3.1 – Indigenous Essential Services

Madam CHAIR: We now move on to Output Group 3.0 Regional Services, Output 3.1 Indigenous Essential Services. Are there any questions?

Ms WALKER: Madam Chair, I want to ask the minister what discussions she was able to have with the Minister for Essential Services, perhaps even the former Chief Minister, regarding the roll-out of new and increased power charges for Territorians living in remote towns across the Territory, knowing those increases went up 30% across the board. I am interested to know if you were able to offer advice to the Minister for Essential Services on the impact on communities and families of that roll-out. Obviously, in parliament I have spoken about some of the impacts I have seen.

Ms ANDERSON: Member for Nhulunbuy, we had great discussions. The Minister for Essential Services did not need me to encourage him to give that extra \$50 power cut the government gave out after we decreased it. He well knows, by living in Katherine and associating himself with Aboriginal people in that region, it was necessary. The discussion he had with his Aboriginal colleagues in the wing was to ask advice as to how he could do it. A discussion took place.

Ms WALKER: There are two things here, minister. (1) the initial tariff increases by 30% on power, 40% on water, and (2) the government's realisation that was hurting people and needed to be revised. I am asking you two things. What initial advice did you give to the Essential Services minister about hiking up prices 30%, and the impact on disadvantaged people in the bush?

Ms ANDERSON: I do not want to get into any kind of disagreement or argument with you, member for Nhulunbuy, because I know you work hard for the constituents in your electorate, like the member for Barkly does. It is a concern to all of us, but we came into government with a \$5.5bn debt and we had to look at things very differently. Of course, the former Chief Minister made some changes around Power and Water, and our current Chief Minister alleviated the pressures after we received intense publicity about the concerns people had - struggling families. We gave the information to the former Chief Minister and the current Chief Minister about the struggle Aboriginal people were having in remote Aboriginal communities, but the uniform tariff policy applies across the Northern Territory for all domestic customers, and the majority of commercial customers. What we have seen now after the \$50 voucher, the power cut, I have certainly been out in my electorate of Santa Teresa, Titjikala, Papunya and a few others, including your electorate as well, and even though it was not enough, it was something to alleviate the pressure. As we know, there are not just two family members living in a house, and this is what I said to my own family out at Papunya; if you have 27 people living in the house put in money to get more power cuts. My brother certainly did that straightaway.

Ms WALKER: Minister, as part of the discussion about the increase of power prices by 30% across the Northern Territory and the impact that was going to have on remote communities, especially those households that are overcrowded and with the prepaid tokens, did you ask the Minister for Essential Services what I would have thought a fairly obvious question, 'Minister, if you have got to do that, have you got a good communication plan in place to ensure everybody knows this is coming'? Was that part of the discussion and the planning?

Ms ANDERSON: Absolutely. I can vouch that I went on CAAMA in Central Australia and spoke in the multiple languages I have to get the message out to people. The member for Arnhem also did it, and the member for Arafura, and the member for Stuart. In visiting our communities we also spoke to people and we went out to Milingimbi, Ramingining, Gapuwiyak as part of our trip. We did not just talk about one specific issue to do with government, but spoke about the cost of living, the impacts certain things government might implement will have on people. We had a huge discussion even at Groote about those issues.

Ms WALKER: Then somehow, minister, some of the communities in my electorate must have been overlooked, because I can assure you, many people who are not English speakers thought the material like

this was about a football carnival. Those who could read took 'use less power' to mean 'useless power', which is how this brochure became branded. I can assure you, the Minister for Essential Services accused me in a press release of lying and scaremongering. The reality, however, is that people at Galiwinku, Yirrkala, and communities in my electorate did not know power prices were going up. As a result, people were left, literally, in the dark wondering why their power cards were not lasting as long and this type of promotional material did not arrive until well after the event. So, it has been an incredibly difficult journey for people to understand why they were running out of power.

Ms ANDERSON: I completely agree with you. We did undertake that slow process of informing communities very quickly and there was that gap. We needed a marketing campaign and should have gone to the communities earlier and advised them of the changes quickly. I take that on board, member for Nhulunbuy.

Ms WALKER: It is probably a case of the horse has bolted, minister - the power prices have gone up. But, most definitely, there needs to be continued effort to teach people how to reduce their power consumption because there are many people still struggling with it.

Minister, I still take issue with when the price hikes were reduced, because the CLP government realised they were hurting people and it was not sustainable for many families; that the amount of \$50 credited back to those households who rely upon prepaid power tokens, was quite arbitrary. Whilst you and I, and I definitely know the Chief Minister is struggling to understand his power bill and how it is he has been credited some money with the adjustment, these people out in remote communities have absolutely no recourse. It does not matter whether you live with two people or 10 people in a house; you just got a stock standard \$50. The calculations we did with my constituents indicate a reimbursement should really have been in the order of around \$100 – \$50 was not accurate by a long shot.

Ms ANDERSON: Member for Nhulunbuy, we take that on board. As I said, we should have done more marketing in that area, we should have been on the front foot and gone out earlier advising people of the increases and then the decreases, and trying to get people to adjust to the difference. It is hard to communicate to our constituents in remote Aboriginal communities but, as I said, I have taken the opportunity to talk to people through CAAMA radio and during our travels out bush. But, like you said, it is too late; the horse has bolted. I believe we learn from this type of thing.

Ms WALKER: Thanks, minister. As the minister who is formally tasked with coordination improvement to regional services this does sit with you, and your Cabinet colleagues need to come on board and understand the realities of what it is like for families living in remote areas where English is not the first, second or even third language, and where channels of communications are challenged.

I want to add, this advertisement was in the *NT News* on 19 March, advising anyone who read the *NT News* that power prices would come down and what the new deal was. I did not see that advertisement placed in any regional newspaper; certainly not in the *Arafura Times*. Galiwinku has a small newspaper that comes out monthly which carries some government advertising, but in terms of communicating with people how these changes occur, there has to be a greater use of media channels, not just newspapers, but radio stations as well.

Ms ANDERSON: We will take all that on board. When I was in Nhulunbuy I spoke to the *Arafura Times* about the good things happening at Gove. We take that on board, as an agency, and will ensure those things are done, not just through the *Arafura Times*, but - is it the Barkly Times, member for Barkly?

Mr McCARTHY: *Tennant Creek and District Times*.

Ms ANDERSON: Yes, *Tennant Creek and District Times*.

Mr McCARTHY: The last independent press left in the country.

Ms ANDERSON: We will also do more radio so we can get all that material and information out to our people. Like I said, member for Nhulunbuy, you know English is to most of those people either foreign or a third or fourth language; so we have to take all initiatives to ensure they are fully informed.

Ms WALKER: Absolutely. Thanks, minister. Whilst Power and Water Corporation may have been well intentioned in developing this brochure, there is a tendency for people to think: there we go; we have done something, but they do not road test it to see if the intended outcome is achieved. This went right over people's heads, apart from the fact it came very late.

Gerry, I am going to move on to another part of Indigenous Essential Services. Do you want to say anything about power prices?

Mr WOOD: I want to talk about power.

Ms WALKER: Gerry, my next question to the minister was to ask if she could table a list of all Indigenous Essential Services' capital projects planned for this year.

Ms ANDERSON: Madam Chair, can I clarify something I said in one of my answers to the member for Nhulunbuy?

Madam CHAIR: Yes.

Ms ANDERSON: You asked me about the Cabinet subcommittee and I said we had the Parliamentary Secretaries. I have been advised, and I need to read it to clarify my answer to the question of the member for Nhulunbuy about what we did after abolishing a Cabinet subcommittee on Regional Development.

The answer is: for a short period of time the former Chief Minister appointed bush members as Parliamentary Secretaries, and the new Chief Minister developed his future by appointing full-time Community Engagement Officers to assist the bush members. These officers are funded through the Office of the Chief Minister.

Ms WALKER: Sorry, minister, so you do not have Parliamentary Secretaries?

Ms ANDERSON: I have been informed that we do not have Parliamentary Secretaries; we have Community Engagement Officers to assist the bush members.

Ms WALKER: That is very different to a Parliamentary Secretary role. A Parliamentary Secretary assists the minister and learns from the minister. How long were those Parliamentary Secretary roles in place?

Ms ANDERSON: A month.

Ms WALKER: So, there are no longer Parliamentary Secretaries within the CLP government, but there are Community Engagement Officers?

Ms ANDERSON: Officers to assist the bush members.

Ms WALKER: How many in those roles, minister?

Ms ANDERSON: Three.

Ms WALKER: They are called Community Engagement Officers?

Ms ANDERSON: Yes.

Ms WALKER: Were those positions advertised?

Ms ANDERSON: That comes into the area of the Chief Minister.

Ms WALKER: We would see them on the payroll of DCM?

Ms ANDERSON: I am not sure.

Madam CHAIR: Perhaps was not that exact question, but I remember the Chief Minister did have to answer it because the correct title came down from the fifth floor. I am pretty sure about that.

Ms ANDERSON: Yes, that is in the Chief Minister's area.

Ms WALKER: Okay. Maybe you cannot answer the question if I said an AO5, AO6?

Ms ANDERSON: I do not know, member for Nhulunbuy.

Ms WALKER: Could you take it on notice?

Ms ANDERSON: I cannot because it is in the area of the Chief Minister.

Ms WALKER: All right. What is the role of these Community Engagement Officers? Where are they located?

Ms ANDERSON: That is a question for the Chief Minister, who has already come and gone, member for Nhulunbuy.

Ms WALKER: I do not see three Community Engagement Officers somehow replacing Parliamentary Secretaries. All right, that is interesting. Thanks, minister.

Indigenous Essential Services - can you table a list of all Indigenous Essential Services' capital projects planned for this budget year?

Ms ANDERSON: We can table that, member for Nhulunbuy.

Ms WALKER: Thanks, minister, that is very helpful. I am going to skip over a couple of questions because I am conscious how time is progressing. What progress has been made about the CLP government's commitment to fulfil a promise to fix the problems with overflowing sewerage works at Maningrida?

Ms ANDERSON: Where, member for Nhulunbuy?

Ms WALKER: At Maningrida. There is an overflowing sewerage treatment works issue.

Ms ANDERSON: The briefing I have, member for Nhulunbuy, is that consultations have been held with the community and traditional owners on improving Maningrida's sewerage system. Aboriginal Essential Services Pty Ltd consulted with the Maningrida community on 9 October 2012 regarding health risks associated with the treated sewage outfall.

On 7 December 2012 Indigenous Essential Services further consulted with the community regarding long-term plans to improve the sewerage treatment system including the outfall. The preferred option for future works includes constructing an additional pond adjacent to the current pond system, extending the existing outfall beyond the low water mark, and increasing sewer pumping capacity. A lease for the additional sewage ponds is in place and the sewage pond design has been completed. A sewer pump station and rising main work has been scoped. Estimated cost of future sewerage upgrade work is \$3m. A submission is currently being prepared for consideration by Cabinet.

Ms WALKER: Great, sounds like it is on the way to being fixed. Thanks, minister. That is all the questions I had about Indigenous Essential Services. I know the member for Barkly has a local member question after Gerry.

Madam CHAIR: Yes. Member for Nelson.

Mr WOOD: Minister, we just had a debate about whether you should be called Minister for Indigenous Advancement. Why do you call this Indigenous Essential Services? Why is it not Remote Essential Services so everyone in the bush has an opportunity to hook into the system?

I will give you an example - Lake Nash. I asked the question last year. They are just up the road. Alpururulam has a power supply, obviously funded by Indigenous Essential Services, but they have not been allowed - unless there has been an agreement of late - to hook in. When I was at Mount Riddock they wanted to hook in as well and were asked for some enormous amount of money to hook in.

The Chief Minister said a third of the Territory's population is Indigenous and we do not want to run a secular separatism model; we want a service for every person in the Territory. We are not running separatism here, we stand up for everyone. That was in reply to a question in parliament. Is the idea of Indigenous Essential Services out-dated?

Ms ANDERSON: It is a policy and has to be determined by us as a government. You cannot, all of a sudden, because the title 'Indigenous Advancement' is abolished...Indigenous Essential Services is a proprietary limited company and we cannot change it because the Chief Minister has said we are no longer

talking about Indigenous Advancement. That is a process we will undertake during policy discussions in the future.

Mr WOOD: I am confused as to where we are going with this debate. It seems to be okay in one spot; we can have an Indigenous policy discussion. So it is worthy of debate, not in this forum, but it does seem to be all over the place.

Minister, this agreement of provision of essential services to nominated Indigenous communities, according to this expires on 30 June 2013. Will the lights be turned off in a couple of days, or has a new agreement already been signed? This is the agreement.

Mr KENDRICK: Member for Nelson, in respect to the agreement, the short answer is no, the lights will not be turned off. The services will be continuing as is, and we are working with Indigenous Essential Services Proprietary Limited in respect of that agreement.

Mr WOOD: Technically, what happens if you do not have that agreement up and running by 1 July? What is the process then?

Mr KENDRICK: The Indigenous Essential Services Proprietary Limited will continue to deliver the services.

Mr WOOD: Is there some verbal or written arrangement for that to happen until there is a more permanent agreement?

Mr KENDRICK: The state of the agreement is Indigenous Essential Services will continue to provide the services. A new agreement is in train, but Indigenous Essential Services will continue to provide the services.

Mr WOOD: How long do you expect before the agreement is signed?

Mr KENDRICK: I do not have the answer to that, but I can get you an update on the status.

Mr WOOD: Okay, thanks for that.

Minister, I mentioned before lunch that I was going to ask some technical questions. I am unsure if you have those ... All right, I will ask my questions. If I have to ask them tomorrow, I will, but I do not want to miss out. This happens, minister, in estimates.

One of the highlights in the Indigenous Essential Services Annual Report was the major construction of the integrated wind solar diesel system at Alpururulam. Is it up and running, is it operating, what was the cost, and did it come in on budget? I want to go out and have a look at it.

Ms ANDERSON: Can I take that question on notice, member for Nelson?

Mr WOOD: Yes.

Question on Notice No 9.8

Madam CHAIR: Member for Nelson, can you please restate the question clearly for the record.

Mr WOOD: Madam Chair, could the minister provide information regarding the wind solar diesel facility at Alpururulam? Could you say if it has been completed, how much was budgeted for it, did it come in on budget, and who funded it?

Madam CHAIR: Minister do you accept the question?

Ms ANDERSON: Yes.

Madam CHAIR: The question asked by the member for Nelson of the minister is 9.8.

Mr WOOD: Minister, in the annual report there are 95 000 water quality tests. That is a lot of water tests. Who does those tests, and what is the annual cost of that water testing?

Ms ANDERSON: Member for Nelson, you will have to wait for Power and Water tomorrow.

Mr WOOD: But this is in the annual report of Indigenous Essential Services. This is the problem I have, I am supposed to stick to the ...

Ms ANDERSON: It is a wholly owned subsidiary of Power and Water, so you will have to ask that question tomorrow.

Mr WOOD: Minister, this is your agreement. It is a company that comes under this section, and the objectives of this agreement are the provision of reliable and equitable services to Territory-funded Indigenous communities and townships. Some of the guiding principles are: the ownership of water supplies, sewerage and electricity assets. This is the company, this is the place in the estimates committee, because I am fairly sure I have been told it is not Power and Water, it is an independent body.

Ms ANDERSON: Well, I am being advised, member for Nelson, that Aboriginal Essential Services Proprietary Limited is a wholly owned subsidiary of Power and Water for the provision, under contract of the Northern Territory government, of power, water and sewerage to 72 nominated remote Territory communities.

Mr WOOD: Then why is it in this part of the estimates committee?

Mr KENDRICK: Member for Nelson, the IES unit is within the outputs of the department because we are the purchaser and contract manager for the services. The department receives the funding, and we provide a grant to IES Proprietary Limited to deliver the services; as the minister stated, IES Proprietary Limited is a wholly owned subsidiary of Power and Water Corporation. The compilation of the IES annual report is done solely within the Power and Water Corporation.

Mr WOOD: So, how do I distinguish between what I ask and what I do not ask? Do I go through every question here, and you just tell me? I will run through my questions, and you can tell me quickly tomorrow or today. If I ask tomorrow and I am told I should have asked yesterday, it is too late. So, I will do a quick run through and you can tell me.

Has the construction of the three solar systems at Ti Tree and Kalkarindji been completed, at what cost, were they on budget, and what savings has there been in diesel consumption? Tell me if it is Power and Water.

Ms ANDERSON: We can take that one on notice.

Question on Notice No 9.9

Madam CHAIR: Member for Nelson please restate the question clearly for the record.

Mr WOOD: Thank you, Madam Chair. Minister, could you tell us whether the construction of the solar systems at Ti Tree and Kalkarindji have been completed, at what cost, were they on budget, where did the money come from, are they working, and are there any savings in diesel consumption yet?

Mr McCARTHY: Gerry, they are hybrid as well - solar wind.

Mr WOOD: Minister, what was the cost to replace the solar mirrors at Hermannsburg, Yuendumu and Lajamanu?

Madam CHAIR: Sorry. The question just asked by the member for Nelson to the minister is 9.9. Not that question, the one before.

Mr WOOD: Thank you, Madam Chair. You know it is wellbeing and happy day today?

Madam CHAIR: Well, you should be nice to me.

Mr WOOD: Oh, I am nice to you. You just hit me with a ton of bricks every now and then.

Madam CHAIR: Yes, well, there is more.

Ms ANDERSON: So that is Indigenous Essential Services Proprietary Limited, tomorrow.

Mr WOOD: That is tomorrow, PWC? Okay. What was the cost of the new power line from Alice Springs to Hermannsburg? Is it completed, and is it on budget?

Ms ANDERSON: We will take that one on notice.

Madam CHAIR: Member for Nelson, please restate the question for the record.

Mr WOOD: Minister, could you tell us what the cost of ...

Ms ANDERSON: Can I pull you up for a minute? I have been advised that is purely Power and Water tomorrow.

Mr WOOD: Okay. Minister, how many essential service officers do you employ, and do you have a partnership arrangement with the shires? I believe you do, but I would like to clarify that arrangement.

Ms ANDERSON: We will get the numbers for you, member for Nelson.

So an update on Indigenous Essential Service operators employed under contractual arrangements to operate and maintain onsite utility services in the communities: as of 1 March 2013, a total of 127 essential service operators were employed, with 37 of them being Indigenous employees. In addition, 22 Indigenous trainees were employed.

Mr WOOD: Do you have partnership agreements with the shires on that?

Ms ANDERSON: We would.

Mr KENDRICK: The Indigenous Central Service officers are employed through IES Pty Ltd, and I understand there are partnerships in respect of those.

Ms ANDERSON: For years, even under local governments, Power and Water had contracts with the local councils. I believe that has been maintained because local councils know which people have the capacity in communities and they advise Power and Water of people who have the capacity to do the job.

Mr WOOD: Minister, what was the total usage of diesel last financial year and the cost compared to the previous year?

Ms ANDERSON: That is IES, Power and Water, tomorrow.

Mr WOOD: How many new generators have come online, or how many upgrades of existing ones have there been in the last 12 months?

Ms ANDERSON: Member for Nelson, I have been advised that is all Power and Water.

Mr WOOD: That is all right, if I do not ask them ...

Ms ANDERSON: It is a provision under contract to the Northern Territory government.

Mr WOOD: I believe my next one will be for you. What is the latest on the proposed gas power station at Wadeye? The annual report said it had been started.

Ms ANDERSON: Member for Nelson, the Wadeye gas fired power station project, valued at \$17.8m over three financial years, was recently scheduled for completion in 2014. The construction tender was issued on 21 February 2013. A determination to cease this project was made by the Treasurer on Friday 10 May 2013. Indigenous Essential Services provide (inaudible), undertake an assessment of the current contractual commitments and address any legal and financial impacts of terminating the project.

Indigenous Essential Services Pty Ltd is currently identifying options for the Treasurer's consideration regarding a way forward. The existing power station will require further investment, currently estimated at a minimum of \$1.5m, to extend its capacity in an attempt to meet current demand. However, the ability to

meet any new demand through developments such as subdivisions for government employee housing and commercial activities will be placed at-risk. The Department of Regional Development and Women's Policy will continue to liaise with Power and Water.

Mr WOOD: What has happened to the contractors who put in tenders for it?

Mr KENDRICK: Member for Nelson, in respect to the contract, that is presently being worked through with IES Pty Ltd – they were managing the contract.

Mr WOOD: So, that is a question for tomorrow? It leads to a lot of other questions. The annual report said the proposed gas fired power station would save two million litres of fuel a year. I am interested in finding out who has done this turnaround on what appeared to be savings to the government in the amount of fuel needed, plus savings in carbon emissions. Someone has made a decision to scrap this power station, and there does not seem to be much detail about why. Where would I find that detail?

Mr KENDRICK: That would have to be a question for IES Pty Ltd, member for Nelson.

Mr WOOD: Okay. I imagine questions about water would be all PWC, about the cost of supplying water and water meters?

Mr KENDRICK: Yes.

Mr WOOD: I was interested in the member for Nhulunbuy's question about the footballers. I read that in the annual report so I have written here: do you still use Thunder AFL footballers to promote work conservation? Are they still on the payroll? I do not know whether they are being paid for it, but are they still being used?

Mr KENDRICK: I am not aware, member for Nelson. If they were part of the program which was conducted by IES Pty Ltd, they are certainly not with our department.

Mr WOOD: Try this one. At Galiwinku there are residents employed to promote water conservation. Are they still being employed? Who is funding the program? Since they have been employed, has there been a measurable decrease in water wastage?

Mr KENDRICK: I am not aware of that funding program, member for Nelson, whether it is the shires or IES Pty Ltd but ...

Mr WOOD: Ask them?

Mr KENDRICK: Yes.

Mr WOOD: Chlorination will be PWC. I will try this one. Have the water treatment plants at Ali Curung, Kintore and Yuelamu been completed, and what was the cost of that project?

Ms ANDERSON: I opened the one at Ali Curung, and the member for Barkly was also there. We were both given the opportunity to taste before and after. It is absolutely amazing the results the new filtration system has made and the difference between what people in remote Aboriginal communities now have to what they had – a complete difference. I tasted before the filtration was put in and after - totally different. I am glad, as a government, we are moving forward to make water more palatable and better for people because, as we know, bad water encourages bad health as well.

In Kintore, in the advanced water treatment project rollover into 2010-11, the Territory provided \$6.7m for a water treatment project to improve water quality at Kintore, Ali Curung and Yuelamu. Ali Curung water treatment plant has been completed and officially opened on 24 April 2013. Kintore water treatment has been completed and is in service. Yuelamu water treatment is currently under construction.

Mr WOOD: Where these water treatment plants put in because of the high total dissolved salts? I noticed when I was looking through the water information, there are analyses of nearly every community's water supply and a number of communities certainly had very high salt content. Is this water treatment plant designed to remove salts, or at least lower them, or is it just filtering other matter out of the water?

Mr KENDRICK: I do not have the details on the scientific processes that are occurring within the water treatment plants, but I am confident that IES Pty Ltd would be able to answer that, member for Nelson.

Ms ANDERSON: You see, member for Nelson, going round - and we as bush members - know the high calcium in the bush; you see it through the taps. I know for a fact at Kintore it is so hard to consume the water there, you wonder if there are health impacts on people. It is so bad at Yuelamu, which just has a dam, that 10 years ago when ASTIC was still in the system, they had water delivered to Yuelamu. We have taken the opportunity and had the foresight, as a government, to help people have better water treatment plants to make the consumption and the health of Aboriginal people in those areas better, instead of harder and harsher.

Mr WOOD: I used to drink Daly River water and, when I had hair it would stand on end after a shower. Obviously it had bad effects because now I do not have any hair. You are right about the amount of calcium in the water supply; it makes it hard for people to wash, so these improvements are good.

Thanks, minister, I will do my best to ask all these questions again tomorrow.

Ms ANDERSON: Member for Barkly, can I answer something the member for Nelson asked?

Member for Nelson, you asked about signatories and what it requires on the contract. The answer we have received is it was completed last night, agreed by both parties, and only requires signatures now. The previous contract expires on 30 June, and the new contract commences 1 July and is on track.

Madam CHAIR: Was that on notice?

Ms ANDERSON: No.

Mr WOOD: No, she is just being nice to me.

Mr McCARTHY: Minister, I need some help. In the budget appropriation for Indigenous Essential Services, there is quite a variation between 2012-13 and 2013-14 of \$19.576m. The budget book talks about the key variation in Budget Paper No 3, but can you explain that large figure? What are the variations? I am assessing this as Indigenous Essential Services. I know the population is growing, the housing programs are rolling out, and we are getting much more sophisticated housing through the Commonwealth initiative. How can you explain those variations?

Ms ANDERSON: I will get Ken to answer your question.

Mr TINKHAM: In 2012-13, the current financial year, we had some one-off funding for priority projects in Lajamanu, Maningrida and Hermannsburg valued at \$7m; so they are not there for 2013-14. We also had a \$14m decrease between the two financial years due to Commonwealth funding in 2012-13 for critical infrastructure projects in remote service delivery communities. There is also a decrease of \$300 000 for another one-off Commonwealth funding program in relation to the Gunbalanya Water and Energy Efficiency Program. That is pretty much it.

Mr McCARTHY: Can you explain a decrease of \$13m? How does that work?

Mr TINKHAM: Basically, the funding was in the current financial year for one-off projects, but it is not there next year.

Mr McCARTHY: So, in other words it is not revoted?

Mr TINKHAM: No. My understanding is a good part of it would be spent by now, but there may be some revoted when we get into the new financial year.

Mr McCARTHY: That would reflect a variation in the following budget?

Mr TINKHAM: Yes, that will be reflected when we do the mid-year review, basically.

Mr McCARTHY: It is always great to be able to talk to the experts. It is great to have the departmental people participating in the estimates process.

I would like to briefly talk about what is happening in the bush, particularly with the improved infrastructure and what that relates to. If I can give an example in the Barkly, a family can go into town and buy a 10 amp air-conditioner for a couple of hundred dollars, take it home and fit it into their house themselves, and

suddenly you have an increase in power. Then you talk about associated whitegoods and flat screen televisions and all the other add-ons, and then we talk about the garden and all those essential services that are increasing and increasing substantially, and I can give you the chronology over 30 years.

I am seeing a lack of awareness about this in the bush. When a 10 amp air-conditioner appears - the member for Nhulunbuy really championed this in our Caucus and did much work in her electorate - you have to raise the awareness of power usage. You then see the extension cords appear and the lack of awareness of occupational health and safety around the use of power. It is not just occurring in the tin sheds hooked up to the neighbour next door or the caravan out the back, it is starting to appear now quite considerably around the Barkly. Does your department deal with that in terms of education programs and awareness programs, and some type of intervention to make the tenants aware of these issues?

Ms ANDERSON: Thank you, member for Barkly. I believe between the Department of Housing and Regional Development there are discussions about that. As the Department of Housing goes around, because through the leasing programs they own the houses now, they see that happening. They have not seen it in houses yet, unless it is just happening in the Barkly area, but certainly tin houses are still struggling.

As we know, some of the communities received a big payout in community leasing money, and just recently in some of my communities I suggested to people they invest some of that money for the future, and if they are having problems they can take some money out; start taking \$10 from the 17 people who are living in the house, instead of just one or two tenants who Territory Housing have on a list continuously paying for everything, including rent and power tickets. Charge everyone who is living there \$5 or \$10, and through that type of education people will be made aware. I believe you two are great champions of the bush to go around and give them that type of information, and I believe it is up to all of us who have bush electorates with non-English speaking people that we champion that cause to educate our people. It is our primary responsibility as a government, and me as a minister.

I will certainly take that up, member for Barkly.

Mr McCARTHY: Thank you, minister. Just to touch on water; it was great to be at the opening of the water treatment plant in Ali Curung, and I can tell you later, member for Nelson, all the things it does, because it does much more than just removing the salt. The tour was fantastic. The technicians pulled up a graph on a computer screen, which represented water usage. One of the things that came to mind, when we were identifying issues around water usage at Ali Curung, was at midnight the water usage was still way above the normal. This suggests leaks.

So, now we have a system there which is costing a great deal of money to produce very good water, but if we do not go down the road of looking at the infrastructure improvements - and in Ali Curung the old men told me exactly where their water leaks, they identified them through their local knowledge - then we will be paying much more for essential services, with reduced efficiency at the output end. Thank you for listening, minister.

Ms ANDERSON: Thank you, member for Barkly.

Madam Chair, we have received answers to two questions we took on notice for the member for Nelson.

Madam CHAIR: Do you have the numbers, minister?

Ms ANDERSON: Yes, 9.8 and 9.9, and both of them have to go to Power and Water.

Mr WOOD: I will ask them all again; that is all right.

Madam CHAIR: That concludes consideration of Output 3.1.

Output 3.2 – Remote Infrastructure Coordination

Ms WALKER: Thank you, Madam Chair. I just have one question in this section. I am keen to get on to Output 3.3 about homelands.

Minister, this may be a question you need to take on notice because there is quite a bit of detail in it. Can you table a list of all infrastructure projects which are being overseen by your department, including the

status of land leasing or licensing agreements for the use of land, the value of individual lease or license agreements, and the date of lease and license payments to the relevant land councils?

Ms ANDERSON: Member for Nhulunbuy, we can take that question on notice and provide that information to you.

Ms WALKER: Thank you, minister

Question on Notice No 9.10

Madam CHAIR: Member for Nhulunbuy can you please restate the question for the record?

Ms WALKER: Can you table a list of all infrastructure projects being overseen by your department, including the status of land leasing, or licensing agreements for the use of land, the value of individual lease or licence agreements, and the date of lease and licence payments to the relevant land councils?

Madam CHAIR: Minister, do you accept the question?

Ms ANDERSON: Yes.

Madam CHAIR: For the purposes of Hansard, the question asked by the member for Nhulunbuy of the minister is number 9.10.

Ms WALKER: That is all I have.

Madam CHAIR: Member for Nelson, did you have any further questions on Output 3.2?

Mr WOOD: No, I think I need a briefing on this section, but we will not do it today.

Madam CHAIR: I am sure you can arrange that with the minister's office.

Mr WOOD: I will. Thank you.

Madam CHAIR: Member for Barkly, are you good with this output?

Mr McCARTHY: Yes.

Output 3.3 – Homelands, Outstations and Town Camps

Madam CHAIR: That concludes consideration of Output 3.2. I now call for questions on Output 3.3.

Ms WALKER: Minister, I remember the launch at the homeland of Gan Gan on 2 May. You and the Chief Minister were there to talk to homelands people about what was involved with your new policy. Of great interest to people there was accessing the Homelands Extra Allowance of \$5200 per eligible house.

On that day you said, 'This money is available from today'. I recall you saying that and there were many television cameras and journalists there. How many applications have been received to date, how many have been approved, and how many have been declined?

Ms ANDERSON: Member for Nhulunbuy, I thank you for the question. Apart from that day, the department of Regional Development has been busy going around to Laynhapuy Homelands and all the resource centres to get all the information needed for people to access that money. It is a great opportunity, as you, the member for Barkly and any bush member know, this is about encouraging people to be on their land. It is about saying land, culture and language is important - getting people connected back to staying on country rather than accessing growth towns or hub towns. I will ask the CE to answer the other part of your question.

Mr KENDRICK: Thanks, member for Nhulunbuy. The parameters for the allowance have been set and the departmental officers are working with the service providers for the Homelands Extra allowance. Within the program guidelines, it will be, primarily, up to the service providers to work through it with the communities, homelands, outstations to identify their eligibility in respect to those criteria.

Ms WALKER: I was not asking about eligibility. The question was, how many applications - this is the form. It must of appeared on your website in the last week or two, because have been looking for it for ages. Given that the application form has finally appeared on the department website, how many applications have been received, how many have been approved, how many have been declined or are pending?

Mr KENDRICK: We will take that question on notice.

Ms WALKER: If you could, that would be great thank you.

Question on Notice No 9.11

Madam CHAIR: For the purposes of Hansard, will you please restate your question?

Ms WALKER: Minister, how many applications for Homelands Extra Allowance have been received, how many have been approved, and how many have been declined or are pending?

Madam CHAIR: Minister, do you accept the question?

Ms ANDERSON: Yes.

Madam CHAIR: The question asked by the member for Nhulunbuy of the minister is question 9.11.

Ms WALKER: Madam Chair, my next question is about how eligibility will be monitored? How will children's attendance at school regularly be monitored? The critical question is: what is the level for means testing income? If I earn \$60 000, does that mean there is no point in me applying for Homelands Extra; however, if I am earning \$35 000, am I eligible? There is nothing on the form or the website that addresses eligibility and the benchmark for income.

Ms ANDERSON: The eligibility criteria are designed to encourage homeland residents to be involved in economic development opportunities, which might be gardening or keeping the homelands beautiful, putting parks and gardens around there, and ensuring that children living on homelands are receiving an education. As soon as I had been to Gan Gan, member for Nhulunbuy, I came back and had a talk to the department because I heard the concerns at that meeting that the school is only a two-day-a-week school.

Ms WALKER: I know. The department will tell you it is five days a week - three days a week with visiting teachers, and Mondays and Fridays looked after by local teachers.

Ms ANDERSON: Yes. I had a discussion with the department on that because the department needs to be informed when we hear that, because we might just be saying the kids are not going to school five days a week in certain places. We, and the department, need to understand the children might only go to school in Gan Gan on Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, but it is operated by Aboriginal teacher assistants on Mondays and Fridays. That is the information the department needs.

Ms WALKER: I can assure you the children at that school have excellent attendance and they were, prior to the election, awaiting an application for small school status.

Ms ANDERSON: They looked absolutely beautiful that day.

Eligibility criteria are:

- Ensure the only residents who have their homeland as their principle place of residence are eligible for ATA.
- Ensure that homeland residents are making contributions to their homeland through residential service fees.

- Ensure that payments are only made to those who need it most, and it is means tested.

Ms WALKER: What I am asking you, minister, is: this form requires quite a bit of detail and it is going to be an effort to complete this form. I understand you want to capture, accurately, details like people's income. What is the benchmark for income? At what point ...

Ms ANDERSON: \$44 752.

Ms WALKER: Is that the total combined income of the household?

Mr KENDRICK: It is for the individual, the person applying for the benefit. There can only be one benefit for the household.

Ms WALKER: Okay. There could be three or four adults in that house. One person is on, let us say, \$45 000, so that person is just above the limit; the other three earn, because they are the assistant teacher at the school or a Yirralka ranger, are earning less than that - is it based upon the combined incomes of the adults in that house, or just one adult?

Ms ANDERSON: It is the individual applicant.

Ms WALKER: It is the applicant. How are claims for eligibility going to be verified? You are asking for certain paperwork to be supplied, but who is actually going to be verifying it - auditing it, for want of a better word?

Mr KENDRICK: Primarily, it will be the service providers working with the residents to prepare and submit the criteria, and it will be verified by staff in our agency in the Homelands Unit, working with other departments.

Ms WALKER: How many staff will be employed by your agency, because I can see a tsunami of these forms coming into your agency with details that need to be verified? How many staff will be employed to deal with this?

Mr KENDRICK: At this stage we have six staff.

Ms WALKER: What about the eligibility associated with children attending school; how is that going to be verified?

Mr KENDRICK: Our members in the Outstations Unit are working with the Education department, and the processes are still being worked through in respect to that.

Ms WALKER: How does someone applying for this Homelands Extra money - what is going to be the hold-up in approving this form and saying, 'There you go, Mr Munnubuy, you are eligible out at Gan Gan or Wandawuy for this money', if the education agency has not yet ticked off on eligibility criteria for school attendance?

Mr KENDRICK: The process in place will be the service providers will collect the information. It will come to our department for final verification, and the money will then go out to the service providers. It does not go to the resident; it goes to the service providers. We are hoping there will not be too many difficulties. Obviously, with a new initiative, there will be teething issues, but the intent is to streamline it and have a program where the money goes out to the service providers to provide the funding or the program with as minimal disruption as possible.

Ms ANDERSON: The outstation or Homeland Resource Centre will know, from being on the ground and assessing their homeland centre, whether the kids are going to school. They will have pay slips attached to the application form that will be sent to the office.

Madam CHAIR: It is 4 pm. We should adjourn for a 10 minute break. We have been going for a couple of hours, so we will come back at 4.10 pm.

The committee suspended.

Madam CHAIR: Thank you, minister. Member for Nhulunbuy, we are on Output 3.3.

Ms WALKER: We are. We were talking about Homelands Extra allowance: \$5200 for every eligible homelands dwelling across the Territory. Will access to this grant apply to improvised dwellings on homelands?

Mr KENDRICK: No, member for Nhulunbuy.

Ms WALKER: What defines improvised? How will you know that one building is eligible while another is not?

Mr KENDRICK: The term improvised is quite a subjective term. It will have to be a primary dwelling. It will be a dwelling that is eligible for housing maintenance, so we are talking about the connection of power, water and sewerage. Not a tin shed or two bits of corrugated iron.

Ms WALKER: So it is has been identified as an eligible dwelling.

Mr KENDRICK: Yes.

Ms WALKER: What service standards and administrative arrangements will be in place to ensure taxpayer funds are used for their intended purpose?

Mr KENDRICK: Member for Nhulunbuy, with the new agreements being worked through with the service providers, there will be strong accountability to detail the provision of their services. By having agreements with the service providers and the residents, it will be the first time there has been accountability. They will have to report on what is provided.

Ms ANDERSON: Can I just elaborate on what the CE said, member for Nhulunbuy? As we all know, in the past we tended to give out grants and they were acquitted the way people wanted. Through this process there is continuous training for the homelands resource agencies and the outstation centres, and the department will be looking into how they provide the service. It was a shock, I think to all of us, including you, the member for Barkly, and any representative of a bush electorate that certain media outlets were running the line that the \$5200 was a Christmas bonus for Aboriginal people voting for the Country Liberal Party. That type of ugliness and nastiness has no place in any kind of debate. I believe we have moved on from there, and we are promoting Aboriginal people being part of this society and that is why the Chief Minister has said he will move Aboriginal people forward with the rest of the Territory. That is why we are looking at economic opportunities and development in remote Aboriginal communities and regional hubs.

This government is focused on building the whole of the Territory, not just Darwin, but your home community of Gove, Tennant Creek, Katherine and Alice Springs, connecting our major communities to those hub towns so Aboriginal people have access and freedom to be involved in economic opportunities to move themselves and their children forward.

Ms WALKER: I have asked you the question on notice and you are getting back to me about how many applications have been received ...

Ms ANDERSON: That is the discussion we were having at the door when you arrived. The agency is getting that for you now.

Ms WALKER: That is great. I wanted to know, given the application form has only recently become available, and I do not believe it has been actively promoted anywhere, or how many people know about it, have any homeland resource centres been provided with funding in advance?

Mr KENDRICK: Not in respect to the Homelands Extra allowance, member for Nhulunbuy.

As part of the development of this, staff in the Homelands and Outstations Unit went around the Territory and conducted meetings with the service providers and shires and briefed them on the policy, the development of the policy, the allowance, and the forms etcetera, so it was part of the consultation process.

Ms WALKER: Far from the minister saying on 2 May that 'this money is available from today', it is not available yet and the application form has only just come out. As well, is there a deadline for applications?

Is there a particular time period when people can apply for this per financial year? If there is a deadline, when is it?

Ms ANDERSON: Member for Nhulunbuy, part of the answer is coming with the question we took on notice for you; when it opened and when it closes is part of that question.

Ms WALKER: Okay. I did not actually ask that, at that time, but if you anticipated that, that is fine.

Ms ANDERSON: No, but that is part of the whole.

Ms WALKER: You are reading my mind. That was the last question I had on Homelands Extra.

Madam CHAIR: Member for Nelson, do you have a question in Output 3.3?

Mr WOOD: I do. I know when you open up this book, there are approximately 1000 outstations. In your budget, you put down 500 outstations. Is 500 the limit? What are we talking about here? Are we talking about \$5200 per house? Do we have some idea what 500 outstations means in terms of houses, and how does that fit into the amount of money you have allocated this year? In other words, will there be enough money to go around?

Ms ANDERSON: Thank you for the question, member for Nelson. The agency has done an audit with the homeland resource centres and the outstation resource centres of communities people are living in, and the stock on those communities.

As you know, I live on an outstation so I know there are many empty outstations in my electorate. You can drive through some of the electorates and not see a human being. You can tell by the soil or the infrastructure there that people have not been living there for a while.

The agency and the resource centres actually did intensive research and analysis of which outstations were empty and how much infrastructure these homelands and outstations have.

Mr WOOD: Will people miss out this year? If there are more applications than you expect, will you be able to fund that? The amount of money is what? - \$20m for this year? Theoretically, if I divided \$5000 in \$20m what does that give me? 400? Hopefully, someone will tell me. Anyway, what happens if there are 450 people apply or 450 houses apply? The Chief Financial Officer will work it out for me; thank you very much.

Mr KENDRICK: Member for Nelson, in respect to your question, the \$20m you referred to is the funding for overall municipal essential services across the Territory. The Homelands Extra allowance is \$2m worth of funding for this year.

Mr WOOD: \$2m?

Mr KENDRICK: Yes. I will just clarify that.

Mr WOOD: I was looking for it in the budget and could not see it. \$2.5m is for town camps.

It is \$2m, and I do 5000 to make it easier for my maths - that is 400 houses. Do you have any indication of how many houses will be required? Not many? There will be lots because they have not had an upgrade for a long time. If there is not enough money to cover all the applications, who works out the priority of houses to be upgraded?

Ms ANDERSON: Member for Nelson, the priorities will be worked out by government. We will get feedback from the government through a process of informing the minister. It is coming from the grass roots, it is coming from the outstation resource centres and the homeland service centres, and we will determine from that discussion whether we need more money in the future.

When you consider \$5200 per house and the requirements for that money, it encourages people to ensure their children are going to school, to work on parks and gardens or, contribute to a major community by being a part-time teacher or working at the shop. That is all part of taking people off entrenched welfare and moving them forward to an opportunity for involvement in their own homelands and their own future direction for economic opportunities.

Mr WOOD: I will give an example and you can tell me how these people fit into it. I have some relations who live on an outstation and two of the ladies will be eligible for the aged pension. So, you have some old people living on a community who are not really involved in economic activity; they are retired and want to live the rest of their life on their outstation; they pay their service fees, but are not worried about children going to school. I am unsure how they fit in.

Ms ANDERSON: Member for Nelson, they might be painting, they might be used as a cultural advisor at the school, they may participate in a neighbouring community, or they may go to meetings and speak about the direction the community is going. That is participating in some kind of future. I know the people you are talking about, and they are very active and protective on child protection issues. These are the measures we take into account for elderly people.

Mr WOOD: If there are three or four people in a house, two are pensioners, and one is on \$50 000 a year, are they still eligible for help with that house? In other words, are the people who are not well off penalised because someone is better off?

Mr KENDRICK: Member for Nelson, each application will be looked at on its merits and all the circumstances around the individual, including whose primary place of residence it is - because the principle of this is it is not money for the person, it is money for housing maintenance.

Mr WOOD: Yes, okay, I am just not sure. I will hand them this form and have a test run on it and see if they can do it without ringing me up. I believe some of these issues need more explanation.

Ms ANDERSON: We can take your call, member for Nelson, and do a test run on it.

Mr WOOD: Minister, you have been around long enough to know all the fights over SIHIP. One of the issues you raised was the amount of money that disappears into administration. How much of that \$5200 will disappear into administration before it hits the house?

Mr KENDRICK: Member for Nelson, the \$5200 is provided to the service providers. One of the critical things we are working through with the service providers are the administration fees so there is equity across the board. That does not just go to the homelands extra allowance, it goes to the municipal and essential services funding as well. It is work we are still doing because, as you quite rightly pointed out, there have been inequities in the administration fees by service providers. It is an issue we are working through and not just this allowance, but the whole municipal and essential services funding over Stronger Futures for the 10 years.

Mr WOOD: Will the department be doing an audit, which is something the CTC tried to do, to see whether that money was spent on those houses and it showed there was \$5200 worth of improvements? This is the same reason we would go to Maningrida and all sorts of places to see whether \$75 000 had been spent. The government has this similar program for a smaller amount of money. Will you be auditing to see if it is being used properly?

Ms ANDERSON: We said at the very beginning, when the member for Nhulunbuy asked a question, member for Nelson, that we would audit it and keep tabs on it. You know and quite rightly said that in the past money was put in and Aboriginal resource centres would think it was a capacity for them to employ another person to deliver a service rather than deliver the service to those homelands and outstations. That will not be happening.

Mr WOOD: It says members of the households should not have other government supported accommodation. What happens if a person either rents or owns private accommodation elsewhere? Does that leave them out?

Mr KENDRICK: Member for Nelson, the basis of this is premised on the fact a number of people in government supported accommodation, particularly in the larger communities, also have outstations. The target is for us to have persons who use the outstation as their primary residence as the recipients of the allowance. During this phase of the application - it is a declaration - the reasoning behind government accommodation is we can cross check because we own the housing. If people are in private housing and do not declare it as their primary source of accommodation or residency they may get the allowance, but they will certainly be chopped off if it is discovered. Again, it is part of the integrity with the application form. If they have a private house they will not be eligible for the allowance.

Mr WOOD: It probably leads to another question. Some other areas need to be looked at with outstations and I thought one of the rules, when ATSIC built the houses, was if you owned a house in town you could not have an outstation houses. That seems to have been just hearsay. I do not know whether the government would be looking at that. Also, where does the government get its power to do what it is doing with Aboriginal Land Trust land? My understanding - I keep using this example because it is best one I know - a number of ATSIC houses were built on that community which do not have leases. They are, technically, private, and the government is saying it will give a private householder \$5200 to do up their house. I know those houses need repairs, but there are some underlying philosophies that need to be sorted out. We are spending municipal money on roads on Aboriginal land. I do not know how the government interprets their policy in relation to who owns the house and who owns the land.

Ms ANDERSON: I think I know which place you are talking about, and that outstation is vacant and the residents live in Darwin. It is not their primary place of residence. One of the criteria is that it has to be their primary place of residence. They will not be getting anything. Even if they move back thinking they will get the money, they will not get it unless they show us it is their primary place of residence. We know they live in Darwin and the homeland has been empty for years.

Mr WOOD: I was going a little deeper than that by saying the government, with town camps, SIHIP housing or whatever, provides and does up those houses with a lease under them and they are run by NT Housing. We do not have leases on most outstations; we are providing services to private houses. Has the government worked through this philosophical issue? It is an important issue because the government will not come to my house in Howard Springs and say, 'Your house needs painting; here is \$5200' - it does need painting. You have a conundrum. We will provide help for people on private land. I am not saying that should not happen or the houses do not need fixing, but I am not sure how it works in the government's logic. How do we maintain houses on private land which do not have leases?

Mr KENDRICK: Member for Nelson, this is more of a policy issue. What the agency does, in partnership with the Commonwealth with the Stronger Futures funding, is provide funding to the service providers in line with the agreements for the municipal essential services and the present policy for the Homelands Extra Allowance.

Ms ANDERSON: The land issues, member for Nelson, are something we will have to deal with, with both big land councils. There is an issue. If you go back to when these homelands first started under the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission, and long before that in my area under the Aboriginal Development Commission, ADC, the people who first went to those homelands thought the infrastructure was for them personally rather than the land trust. Even though that is clarity within the Land Rights Act that any fixed asset belongs to the land trust, there are still people who take the liberty of saying it is their property. This refers to the incident you and I know about at the outstation in Darwin. It is a job for us, as government, to work with the land council to make sure the people we are talking about understand it is a fixed asset of the land trust. People who want to go home - those removed from an outstation because of their abusive ownership of the land are the ones we have to deal with. We know they all live in Darwin and they have to give it away. Nothing will happen on that until something is done about it.

Mr WOOD: You are right, minister, that raises the question of your service providers. If they are providing a service to a house which has no lease arrangement, what is the legality of them servicing a house which technically belongs to an Aboriginal land trust? That outstation is serviced by Yilli Rreung - not often, but it is servicing a house and this is what you will be doing through your HEA. You will be servicing houses the service provider does not have ownership or control over. There is a gap where we are providing funds and getting a service provider to put money into a house where no one has the right to do it because it is owned by the Aboriginal land trust.

Ms ANDERSON: One of the things we require of them, member for Nelson, is they participate in economic opportunities. As I said earlier, just having parks and gardens, going to the school meetings - they may be an Aboriginal teacher assistant or working part-time at the health service or as ambulance driver - there are many ambulance drivers. There is criteria they have to meet ...

Mr WOOD: I understand that but I am going slightly deeper. The house is owned by the Aboriginal land trust. The service provider has no lease over the land and no agreement to provide for that house. There seems to be a gap on the legal side of what you are doing.

It is the same as if someone came to my house and said, 'The government gave us some money, we will paint your house'. It is not his job to paint the house and I do not know anything about it. There are gaps which need to be sorted out.

Ms ANDERSON: I believe we have been participating in that space for a long time. It has not just happened in the last eight or nine months. We have been operating in the space of that legal question since the early 1970s. It is something we have to work with the two big land councils on, as a government. It is not to say we are forcing people off their country and their law and culture, but getting people to understand it is private land and they have to be part of contributing to that private land like other private landholders do.

Mr WOOD: This question may only apply to a few people, but I need to ask it. The municipal services are normally provided by the council, would that be right? Are they provided by the service provider if you work in a shire or a ...

Mr KENDRICK: Member for Nelson, there are different contracts for different areas.

Mr WOOD: The reason is because there are some areas in the Territory still not incorporated so they fall outside assistance from a shire.

Ms ANDERSON: Member for Nelson, we get into a situation of all these legal ramifications of private land and who delivers the service. As the CE said, there are contracts with different participants to deliver the service, whether it be MES or operational funding to homelands and outstations. Do you leave these people out of that service? We have been operating since the early 1970s in this area, and it is well-known we have that doubt.

Mr WOOD: I am not saying do not do it; however, somewhere along the line ownership of these buildings has to be clarified.

Ms ANDERSON: The fact the Chief Minister has a good relationship with the two big land councils clearly indicates he is moving all Territorians forward and looking into all areas where people can participate and achieve the economic outcomes and opportunities we all enjoy as Territorians.

Mr WOOD: I have been to Gan Gan and some of the Arnhem Land outstations. It is great people go back to their country; they are away from some of the other problems we have in our towns. Thank you, minister. They are all my questions on that.

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: Any more questions? That is a no?

Ms WALKER: That is a no.

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: That concludes consideration of Output 3.3 in Output Group 3.0.

OUTPUT GROUP 4.0 – REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Output 4.1 – Regional Development

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: The committee will now proceed to Output Group 4.0, Regional Development, Output 4.1, Regional Development. Are there any questions?

Mr McCARTHY: Yes, thank you, Madam Deputy Chair.

My question is around the Indigenous Economic Development plans you have put out. In relation to the new strategy you announced, the Draft Indigenous Economic Development Strategy 2013-2020 was launched in Alice Springs. Is there a budget appropriation around that strategy?

Mr KENDRICK: Member for Barkly, in respect to that strategy the budget is from within departmental resources.

Mr McCARTHY: Can you tell me a bit about the strategy other than the media release? There was not much detail in the media release.

Ms ANDERSON: Member for Barkly, I told the member for Nhulunbuy when we were talking about Indigenous employment that we have - one of the sections we have in Regional Development is Indigenous tourism. Regional Development takes its job of connecting the regions into our hub towns seriously to ensure we are there as a support mechanism, as a foundation for Indigenous businesses coming up, getting people involved in being part of a regional strategy, and putting forward ideas of what they want in

their region. For far too long - I believe you will agree with this - it has been top down of what we always wanted for regions and people.

Through this framework we are asking people to feed the information to us as a government so it comes from what people need in their regions. We can then better operate with those communities and regional towns to put better services and connect a place like Hermannsburg to Alice Springs. How do we do that? How do we help those people go to Darwin? How do we help a community outside your area link into Tennant Creek? How do we get the people working closely together? What spaces do you need to be in?

That is where the framework comes from and having the opportunities to economically move forward everybody in your region so there is a flow –on effect of economic opportunities for everybody there.

Mr McCARTHY: Is there a draft plan you could table for me to take home? Would you be prepared to ...

Ms ANDERSON: We can table that for you, member for Barkly.

Mr McCARTHY: Has it been published?

Mr KENDRICK: Yes, member for Barkly, it is on our website. We will get you a plan today.

Mr McCARTHY: That plan, no doubt, has targets and settings around key performance indicators?

Mr KENDRICK: Member for Barkly, the draft plan is out for consultation. It is a pretty strategic broad plan at the moment - a consultation phase. It is not the final IED strategy.

Ms ANDERSON: Member for Barkly, I am rapt with enthusiasm for what I have seen in the regions, especially in Gove and Alice Springs. I visited Gove and believe I will get that same enthusiasm in Tennant Creek when I go.

Alice Springs people are moved by the fact the ball is in their court to determine what they want and then they can feed it up. We are taking their concerns seriously because committees, in the past, have just had a shopping list. They say they want this and this and nothing really happens. This really puts autonomy and a focus back on people to feed up to government what they want and how they see their region moving forward. That is the main focus of the consultation - we want feedback from people on the ground, how they can move their regions forward, how they can connect with their neighbouring Aboriginal communities - the larger ones - and what can they do in hub towns like Alice Springs, Tennant Creek, Katherine and Darwin to ensure everybody is moving forward.

Mr McCARTHY: Thank you, minister. As a part of this you have rebadged the economic development committees. What is the new name?

Ms ANDERSON: Regional Development committees.

Mr McCARTHY: How many people have responded to calls for nominations for the new Regional Economic Development committees?

Mr KENDRICK: Member for Barkly, the Regional Development Committees up and running at the moment are in Nhulunbuy, Tennant Creek and Alice Springs, and all positions on those committees are filled. The next committee we are hoping to establish will be in Katherine.

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: Excuse me, Rob, before you say anything could you state your name and title for the record so Hansard knows who is talking.

Mr KENDRICK: Sorry Madam Deputy Chair, Rob Kendrick CE Regional Development.

Mr McCARTHY: Thank you, Mr Kendrick. Minister, how did that happen because I have had constituents ask how they can get on that rebadged committee, particularly some who were on the old committee?

Ms ANDERSON: I do not think it is a rebadged committee at all. We found with the other committees that people - this is specifically from Alice Springs because I went to their first meeting, member for Barkly. They said, 'Minister, we hope we are not just a committee which does nothing and gives you nothing. Previous ministers did not attend our meetings. We were just formed as an excuse to exist.' There was no real input, and this was said at the meeting. I think the power is what we have given to people. I

guarantee, as a minister, I will attend every meeting I can. If it is twice a year in communities like Alice Springs, Tennant Creek, Katherine, Gove and Darwin I will do that because we need to initiate excitement for these people to participate in moving their regions forward. We had interest put up through the department for people to be on those committees, and I think I signed off on Tennant Creek a couple of weeks ago.

Mr McCARTHY: How were they nominated? I have had constituents express an interest and I said I would ask you today. How did that nomination period happen?

Mr KENDRICK: Member for Barkly, the process for nomination was basically a list compiled by the department looking at various business people, groups, Chambers of Commerce, representation of persons on previous committees. In the first round these lists were compiled and provided to the minister and the nominations occurred in that regard to get the committees up and running in the initial stages. At the same time there have been public advertisements for the long term to get people nominating for when terms expire or if positions are not filled. We did it that way in the first instance to, from our perspective, get a good mix of people on the committee.

No doubt there are disappointments, but the future and long-term will be done by way of public advertising and nominations.

Mr McCARTHY: Thank you, Mr Kendrick. Minister, you saved me from a flogging because people asked why I did not know about it. Was it advertised in regional newspapers?

Mr KENDRICK: Member for Barkly, I need to take that on notice, but from my recollection where the committees were to be established was advertised in all the local media.

Mr McCARTHY: That is okay, but was nomination for a committee part of that advertising? You said you established a list and handed it to the minister who signed off on it?

Ms ANDERSON: Of business people, Chamber of Commerce, Aboriginal organisations ...

Mr McCARTHY: So I will not cop the flogging at home. They are lining me up for because I did not know how the nomination process happened, minister?

Ms ANDERSON: I do not think so.

Mr McCARTHY: Thank you, minister.

Ms ANDERSON: I will go to the meeting for you and say we have gone down the path of nominating people from industry and Aboriginal organisations, and people who are outspoken and have ideas about how to move the electorate forward. How do you have that relationship with your communities and neighbours? How do you bring them into town? How do you sort out your antisocial problem areas? It needs to come from the people. These are great opportunities for moving economic development forward and it is good to have business on side.

On that note, Madam Deputy Chair, I guaranteed the member for Barkly I would get the report and I want to take this opportunity to table it.

Mr McCARTHY: The report?

Ms ANDERSON: The strategy.

Mr McCARTHY: Thank you, minister.

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: Is that the one you asked for?

Mr McCARTHY: Yes.

Minister, would you be able to table a list of the Tennant Creek members on the committee so I can contact them and make sure I square this up.

Ms ANDERSON: Member for Barkly, I am happy to.

Mr McCARTHY: Madam Deputy Chair, do you want that on the running sheet?

Ms ANDERSON: I can get that for you straight away.

Mr McCARTHY: All right.

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: That is okay?

Mr McCARTHY: Yes, thank you minister and Madam Deputy Chair.

No doubt, minister, there has been a budget to support these committees. Are you happy to table that figure as well?

Ms ANDERSON: The Chief Executive already said it is within the department. He has answered it two questions ago.

Mr McCARTHY: A figure, minister?

Mr KENDRICK: It is within departmental resources. The running of the committees, member for Barkly, is not envisaged to be a significant expense for the department. We will take care of the secretariat and our local people on the ground will provide the secretariat and attend committee meetings.

Mr McCARTHY: Thank you, Mr Kendrick. Minister, nobody is travelling in? There are no people from the regions?

Mr KENDRICK: The committees, to the best of my knowledge, are fairly well geographically located within the central areas. However, if there was a need for people to travel in from the regions we would need to consider, going forward, how the department could support them.

Ms ANDERSON: Member for Barkly, it might be only once in a year that we bring them together as a group to meet each other and share ideas. At the moment, as the CE said, they are based regionally. It is an opportunity they give us as a government to see where communities like Tennant Creek, Alice Springs, Katherine and Gove want to go. How do they move? How do they connect to Darwin? How do we take down the Berrimah Line everybody south talks about? 'They do everything in Darwin'. How do we get that perception out of the mind of people? It is about growth and making sure the regions are looked after. Only two or three days ago the Chief Minister said this government is about growing and moving the whole of the Territory and helping every person in the Territory.

Mr McCARTHY: Yes, I asked that question because when you talk about the Barkly you talk about an interesting composite of people with different backgrounds, especially in the business industry. When you look at the miners and pastoralists, the Indigenous communities and the town, you would expect there to be people travelling. If they only meet once a year will you provide that travel? I am sure, minister, you would be encouraging ...

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: Member for Barkly, are you coming to a question?

Mr McCARTHY: Yes, thank you, Madam Deputy Chair. Would they be travelling more than once in a year?

Ms ANDERSON: I expect my agency to travel to them. The CE has advised me, member for Barkly, they are looking at quarterly meetings in the regions with the committees. That gives a great opportunity for interaction with these committees, because the agency brings the aims and aspirations of moving the communities and the regions forward to the government of the day. We are very interested to move Territorians forward.

Mr McCARTHY: Minister, moving along because of time, can you detail or table the list of grants provided under the Indigenous Business Development Grants Scheme? That should name the recipient, the amount of the grant and the purpose of the grant.

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: Do you have the information?

Ms ANDERSON: I am happy to table it, Madam Deputy Chair.

Mr McCARTHY: Madam Deputy Chair, if I may ask another question. Can you detail or table the list of grants provided under the Regional Development Grant Scheme. That would include the name of the recipient, the amount of the grant and the purpose of the grant?

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: Minister, did you want to take the question on notice?

Ms ANDERSON: Member for Barkly, can I take that question on notice? We do not have the full composite of what you have requested. We would like to give you the full detail.

Question on Notice No 9.12

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: Member for Barkly could you please restate the question for the minister.

Mr McCARTHY: Both or just the last one?

Ms ANDERSON: Just the last one. We have just given you the other one you asked for.

Mr McCARTHY: Can you please detail or table the list of grants provided under the Regional Development Grants Scheme including name of recipient, the amount of the grant and the purpose of the grant?

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: Minister, do you accept the question?

Ms ANDERSON: Yes.

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: The question asked by the member for Barkly of the minister is No 9.12.

Mr McCARTHY: Minister, have any Commonwealth contributions to our Regional Development or Indigenous Business Development Grants Scheme been returned unused in the past 12 months?

Mr KENDRICK: Member for Barkly, the Indigenous Business Development program and the Regional Economic Development Fund are both Territory-funded programs.

Mr McCARTHY: Minister, last week the Minister for Business told the Estimates Committee that the 2011 Sensus data showed NT Indigenous workforce participation rates of 43.8%. In other words, more than half the NT Indigenous labour force is not participating in the labour market. They survive outside CDEP and Newstart on handouts from family. I was interested in your budget responsible action plan which talked about regional development. In that section on creating employment opportunities, minister, there are significant appropriations in the Indigenous workforce participation program - the apprenticeship and trainee support package and the marine ranger program, which I commend you on. Minister, are you aware of the Australian Ilmenite Resources mine in the Roper gulf area?

Ms ANDERSON: Member for Barkly, my colleague, the member for Katherine, is the relevant minister.

Mr McCARTHY: Minister, are you aware of that mine?

Ms ANDERSON: I am, but the question should be asked in that area.

Mr McCARTHY: No, this was a question of awareness because the regional development potential around that area when we talk about Sherwin Iron, Western Desert Resources and Australian Ilmenite – minister, are you aware 50 Chinese workers represent the workforce of the Australian Ilmenite mine?

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: Member for Barkly, the question has to be directly relevant to the minister and the portfolio.

Mr WOOD: A point of order, Madam Deputy Chair! It is because she is working on jobs.

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: The question should be directed to the Minister for Mines and Energy.

Mr McCARTHY: No, it is on jobs and regional development, Madam Deputy Chair. I am quoting from the Budget 2013 Responsible Action Handout, Creating Employment Opportunities in regard to budget output - \$1m for the Indigenous workforce participation program Territory-wide, and, minister, we have 50 Chinese

workers running that brand new mine the Minister for mines talks about. I have to get my constituents from Minyerri jobs there. These are real jobs, what we dream about and what you talk about. Minister, I need your help with this.

Ms ANDERSON: Absolutely, member for Barkly, you will get the help of this government because it is focused on getting people off entrenched welfare. You have heard the Chief Minister say the root of all evil is welfare. To give people jobs you have to get them off welfare, educate them and have them healthy. I know the Minister for Mines and Energy, the member for Katherine, has already spoken to the member for Arnhem. The government is in discussions with Barunga, Minyerri, Bulman and Beswick. That is the planning the government is doing with the members for Arnhem and Stuart because it is in both their electorates.

Mr McCARTHY: Thank you minister, because these are real jobs. As you know, construction of the haul road between the port of Bing Bong and Western Desert Resources is under way. I am so proud - you talk about the young person from Papunya - I am so proud a five-year old I enrolled in school is now in the leadership team recruiting Indigenous workers, and there are quite a number of workers.

Just up the road, minister, we have a mine which seems to have taken the easy way out by using a skilled migration workforce, which needs to be checked out anyway, instead of employing local people. We have to question the Indigenous employment targets and when we have significant budget appropriations towards supporting this, I thank you for your involvement and look forward to your response.

You are committing to talk to Cabinet about this, and the respective ministers, and I thank you for that. I recommend that you visit Minyerri and talk to the traditional owners who signed off to allow this mine.

Ms ANDERSON: Member for Barkly, I have already been Beswick and Barunga. We know the jurisdiction of the Northern Territory is large and you would know, as a former minister, how hard it is with three different portfolio's to get around and, at the same time, keep in touch with constituents in your electorate as well.

However, the discussion has taken place and you can see from the speeches and comments the Chief Minister made on TV and radio, and the media releases from the Chief Minister's office, it is all about economic growth. It is about moving the Territory forward and getting Indigenous people off welfare and into real jobs. It is not a problem for this government. We are moving Territorians forward and want them to enjoy the same things we enjoy. We want them to have jobs, a good education, be healthy and make sure they participate in the economic opportunities we all enjoy.

Mr McCARTHY: Minister, I thank you for your support and look forward to working with you on that.

The member for Nhulunbuy alluded to the contracts saying I would mention them. A contract was signed in Borroloola - these contracts represent significant economic development opportunities. Would you lobby your Cabinet to make sure if Motor Vehicle Registry can be initiated in Borroloola - the Mabunji Aboriginal Resource Centre is already building office infrastructure and I spoke to the Chief Minister about this. Once again it is a great opportunity for jobs in the regions, and that infrastructure is being built privately. There is no need to sign off on the contract to build a retail business centre. We can skip around that, but it would be good to see government services located in a building being built by an Aboriginal resource centre.

Ms ANDERSON: Absolutely, and the Chief Minister is in full support of growing places like the Tiwi Islands, Wadeye, Borroloola, Gove and Maningrida. I do not need to lobby my Cabinet colleagues. We need to hold the Chief Minister back because he has already gone into those areas. He is running. He is talking to people, talking to business and talking to Aboriginal people. It is a matter of you and me chasing the Chief Minister trying to catch him because he is too far forward in getting people to be part of the economic opportunities they can benefit from.

Mr McCARTHY: I am running out of time, but the last point I would like to make is about the transport networks and regional development. You know how important transport is in the bush, and being the member for Namatjira you have seen those networks develop in the bush. I am getting good feedback from people in the regional and remote areas, particularly nurses and health professionals who refer outpatients to these bus services and also families on the show circuit. I have had extensive discussions and am disappointed there is no budget appropriation this year.

The Chief Minister and Treasurer tell us people have to suffer. They tell us about the tough times ...

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: Member for Barkly, are you coming to the question?

Mr McCARTHY: Yes, Madam Deputy Chair. I am asking that the department looks at those services and ensures we do not see them lost. Will you direct some energy into the regional integrated transport services to make sure they continue, their business models are safe and they continue to service regional and remote residents?

Ms ANDERSON: I thank the member for Barkly for his question. I reiterate, when you look at the regional economic strategies we put out for consultation and hear the Chief Minister talk about growing the Territory and moving the Territory forward, it is a matter of you and me chasing the Chief Minister. He is already talking to people. He is excited to get people on board, to start dreaming of a future for themselves and start having the hope their grandfathers had. It is good we are working in that space.

Mr McCARTHY: My last question is a plea to catch the Chief Minister because the family of young Stephen Gillard, who passed away tragically about seven weeks ago, is raising funds to get - I am steering them into regional air links within the Territory. We can then refine it to a specific aeromedical evacuation plane for Tennant Creek, but at the moment it has highlighted our isolation and the need, in regional economic development, for air links throughout the Territory. We have a great company, Hardy Aviation, which has put on a service between Darwin and Tennant Creek, and now Chartair has started out of Alice Springs to Tennant Creek.

We can see the potential - the mining and resource sector in the middle of the Territory coming online will support that, but I am putting out a plea for you to join with us to lobby the Chief Minister. I have written, the family has written and I will continue to lobby. We will get together as a community to design ways to show our integrity and determination to solve this because the family is determined this will never happen to another family.

Ms ANDERSON: Thank you, member for Barkly. I read it in the paper and it was moving and touching to see that lack of service can result in the death of a child. It happens far too often. This government is interested in bringing the region together and looking at opportunities for the regions. That is why we have been forced, as an agency, to look at regional development properly so people decide for themselves. That is one of the things you can get the committee in Tennant Creek to talk about.

On that, I have a list of the people I signed off on, member for Barkly.

Mr McCARTHY: Thank you, minister. I hand back to the member for Nhulunbuy.

Ms ANDERSON: The RDC was advertised in the Tennant Creek newspaper, member for Barkly.

Mr McCARTHY: Thank you, minister.

Answer to Question of Notice No 9.12

Ms ANDERSON: I have an answer to question on notice 9.12 - Regional Economic Development Fund Grants. This grant program facilitates opportunities for organisations to pursue economic and regional development across the Northern Territory up to the value of \$25 000. Three organisations have received the grant which tallies \$48 515. If you like, I can table it for you.

Mr McCARTHY: Thank you, minister.

Ms ANDERSON: We will type it for you.

Mr WOOD: Minister, how far do these regional business areas cover? Do they cover Darwin or are they just for remote areas?

Ms ANDERSON: There are four: Alice Springs, Tennant Creek, Katherine and Gove and Tiwi in the future. Tiwi needs to be the next Bali.

Mr WOOD: Yes, crocodiles, jellyfish, sharks - Francis told me too, so that would be good.

Ms ANDERSON: It will be a great opportunity for the Tiwi people; they have always had economic aspirations. We need to afford the Tiwi people the rights, and reward them for the dreams they have had in the past. We can make that dream possible and easier in the future.

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: The first Liberal MP came from Tiwi, Mr Tungutalum.

Mr WOOD: I knew him well. We had some economic development on the Tiwi Islands which does not exist now but did 30 years ago, but I digress.

Minister, you know there is the possibility of an abattoir south of Darwin. What has your department been doing - perhaps advertising through the regions - to look at the opportunities that abattoir might give to Aboriginal people out bush?

Mr KENDRICK: Member for Nelson, with respect to the abattoir and other developments and, obviously, with AACo for the abattoir, I can use the example of Hess mining for the programs in the Barkly. Our department works across government. There is a regional development subcommittee of Co-Ord which I chair. A number of CEs with a key focus on regional development, including the CEs for the Department of Primary Industry and Fisheries, and Mines and Energy, for example, are on this committee. We have met once.

It is very much in the early stages, but its intention is to really kick up and share the coordination of government agencies across these development opportunities so if an opportunity such as the abattoir comes along we, as CEs for our respective government departments, can work holistically and provide advice to our ministers on how we can place the agencies to exploit these opportunities. Indigenous employment and economic development is a key there. It is really improving the lines of communication. We have had meetings around the abattoir and also with officials from AACo.

Mr WOOD: I was concerned when I heard about the large number of Chinese workers. I am not being xenophobic, but it is always disappointing when you compare say ERA, which has the highest participation of Indigenous workers on that mine. I do not know how many they have there. If the locals are not getting opportunities I would be fairly concerned.

The abattoir has many opportunities. You said the regions go outside Darwin, but the classic one is Larrakia Development Corporation talking to the 15 Mile and a few Aboriginal communities about job opportunities at INPEX. Someone is going out there doing something, and someone in government is also talking to these businesses and getting a foot in the door early so we do not have ...

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: Excuse me, member for Nelson, can I announce there is a change on the committee, for your information and Hansard? The member for Nightcliff has come on. When you have finished could we have a five-minute break?

Mr WOOD: I will not hold you up too much longer. I forgot to ask about town camps, so if I could talk to you later about that ...

Ms ANDERSON: Certainly.

The other question is a general one because the member for Nightcliff wants to get going. What is the difference between the previous government's growth town policies and the major remote towns? Is it more than just a new badge because you do not want to be associated with the old government, or are there some real changes which can make a difference? If there is, is there any documentation that compares one with the other?

Mr KENDRICK: Member for Nelson, going forward for the Territory in respect to the major towns - the major towns are what they are - major, regional and remote towns across the Territory.

In the funding and coordination in respect to services to those towns - there were previously local implementation plans with priorities determined through that. Going forward this starts to link into an area which is not my expertise, the review of local governments and shires. It is about providing a cohesive model going forward and very much empowering these local regions and communities to take lead of their own destiny, for want of better words. It is all inextricably linked with the review of local government, what the priorities were under the previous local implementation plans, but we still have the overarching remote service delivery sites with the Commonwealth with the 15 towns across the Territory.

Mr WOOD: The previous model was also about trying to get these towns to be economically viable or at least get some economy moving. They also had the 50 km hub where, if you were inside the hub you got further, if you were outside the hub you were not serviced. Has that disappeared? There were issues about leasing, road access and permits. Are all those issues still to be worked through? In other words, has this rebadging made any difference to those basic issues?

Ms ANDERSON: Member for Nelson, when you look at the implementation plans, the Indigenous Advisory Group was put in charge of advising government on aspects of understanding Aboriginal economic opportunities or how to move Aboriginal people forward. The two were in isolation. The member for Stuart raised this in the House a couple of sittings ago, where they did not see the minister and there was no real attention brought to any of the recommendations.

We found exactly the same with these implementation plans. It was a wish list people were allowed to have and they really did nothing, but because we have the national partnership agreements - we have signed off as a new government on a few of them - but we have had to talk to the communities about getting serious because people were not, through the IPs, looking at any major regional structure and opportunities to move forward. It was localised and it was unfair people were allowed to sit around and were being asked, 'What do you want?' If I asked you what you wanted you would put up a wish list. I would do the same and that is exactly what happened.

Mr WOOD: That is all the questions I have, thank you.

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: We will break for 10 minutes.

The committee suspended

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: Welcome back.

Ms WALKER: There is a couple of other outputs we need to go through procedurally to see if there are any questions before we get to ...

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: We are still at 4.1, Regional Development. Are there any more questions in regard to Regional Development otherwise we can start on the next one?

Ms WALKER: No more questions.

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: That concludes consideration of Output Group 4.0.

**OUTPUT GROUP 5.0 – INDIGENOUS POLICY and
REMOTE SERVICES COORDINATION
Output 5.1 - Indigenous Policy**

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: The committee will now proceed to Output Group 5.0, Indigenous Policy and Remote Services Coordination and Output 5.1, Indigenous Policy. Are there any questions?

Ms WALKER: No, Madam Deputy Chair.

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: That concludes consideration of Output 5.1.

Output 5.2 – Interpreter and Translator Services

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: The committee will now move to Output Group 5.2, Interpreter and Translator Services. Are there any questions?

Ms WALKER: Madam Deputy Chair, we are trying to skip through this section because we want to get to the Office of Women's Advancement. However, I note under Output 5.2 the fantastic work the Aboriginal Interpreter Service provides in the Northern Territory. I am fearful we will need even more people in that role given what we are facing with the current law reforms in the Northern Territory. We will see more people locked up and taken into custody requiring the Interpreter Service, particularly in the courts. I have no further questions.

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: Is that it. That concludes consideration of Output 5.2.

Ms WALKER: I have no questions for 5.3. We can go to Output 6.

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: That includes consideration of Output 5.3 and Output Group 5.0.

OUTPUT GROUP 6.0 – OFFICE OF WOMEN'S ADVANCEMENT
Output 6.1 – Office of Women's Advancement.

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: The committee will now proceed to Output 6.0, Office of Women's Advancement, Output 6.1, Office of Women's Advancement. Are there any questions?

Ms ANDERSON: I would like to say Jo Sangster has joined me at the table.

Ms FYLES: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Minister, could you please give me an update on the FTE for the Office of Women's Policy? I note in the written answers it is to 31 March. How many of those positions are currently filled?

Ms SANGSTER: Member for Nightcliff, five. All positions are filled.

Ms FYLES: Minister, can you provide an explanation for the dismissal of the former director and outline the separation costs?

Ms ANDERSON: The former director of Women's Policy? I do not think the former director was dismissed.

Ms FYLES: Are you able to outline any costs involved in her separation from the agency?

Ms ANDERSON: No costs I am told, member for Nightcliff. No costs.

Ms FYLES: What was the recruitment process and were the PSEMA requirements met in recruitment of the director?

Ms ANDERSON: The current director was appointed by me for six months and her contract is due in September.

Ms FYLES: Were the PSEMA requirements met around that?

Ms ANDERSON: Yes, all guidelines.

Ms FYLES: What initiatives has your agency put in place since scrapping the 2030 plan implemented to improve women's representation and measure outcomes for women?

Ms ANDERSON: We have had a fantastic result in the – you were at the Parliament House launch of the stand-alone agency. Jo has done so many things in the last few weeks, for example, going to Alice Springs and making sure Alice Springs is serviced. In the next few months there is a forum either in Tennant Creek or Katherine. Things the Office of Women's Policy has brought together and done in Darwin are meeting with multicultural women, talking about gender equity; talking about women in business and making sure the drivers of economic opportunities within women's policy are what women want. We have had keynote speakers address women because that gives strength to women.

As a victim of domestic violence, it was not until I went to a national level - I suffered for 35 years - so if it is hard enough for someone in my capacity to not talk about those issues for 35 years. We have to give people the strength and opportunity, through other women and other forums, to talk about these issues and make sure we make a difference in that space.

Ms WALKER: Minister, I read the media release about the keynote speaker in Alice Springs; sounded excellent. Are there plans to bring these events to the regions, to places like Nhulunbuy, Galiwinku or Gapuwiyak?

Ms ANDERSON: Absolutely. If we use a community like Gove we can bring our women in and get people to enter the space where Aboriginal people are suffering. It is largely in domestic violence. We could get a

keynote speaker to discuss those areas and maybe sit around through dinner and coffee and talk about the safety of children as well. We can give people strength not just through having keynote speakers, but ourselves as leaders, getting together and having a cup of tea and showing younger women we can help them. It takes a lot of guts for someone to start talking about domestic violence issues in a relationship. It takes years and years for - we think it is easy and we encourage it, but it is very hard for someone to talk about issues like that.

Ms WALKER: Excellent. In future budgets and announcements we can expect to hear about regional centres outside of the known urban centres off the Stuart Highway having an opportunity to participate?

Ms ANDERSON: The instruction I have given Women's Policy strictly states we need to engage with Indigenous women. When Jo came back from Alice Springs I immediately asked her about the Alice Springs event and how many Aboriginal women attended. It is fantastic to see the pool of Aboriginal women starting to talk about the issues. You can have fun, talk about problems and we give them the drivers to move forward and build their capacity to have the courage to speak about these issues.

Ms WALKER: I can think of a number of non-indigenous women who would like to participate in those events as well, minister. That sounds great. Thank you.

Ms ANDERSON: Thank you.

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: No more questions for that one? That concludes consideration of Output 6.0. Are there any non-output specific budget related questions? No. That concludes consideration of the output relating to the department of Regional Development and Women's Policy. On behalf of the committee, I thank the departmental officers who attended today.

Ms ANDERSON: Madam Deputy Chair, I thank my department CE, Ken Tinkham, Jo, the staff sitting behind me and all those bureaucrats in the agency watching. Thank you very much to Bridgette and Michelle, and all the good people who keep the information flowing.

Ms WALKER: Madam Deputy Chair, I pass on my thanks to the minister and her hard-working staff for giving evidence to these hearings. I have spoken with the member for Nelson, and it is not our intention to go to Output 7, Aboriginal Areas Protection Authority, but to progress to Output 8, Local Government, to save people hanging around.

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: Okay, you want to skip the whole thing?

I take this opportunity to remind the committee we will break for dinner at 6.30 pm so you are on a strict timeline.

DEPARTMENT OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: I welcome you back, minister, this time as Minister for Local Government. I invite you to introduce the officials accompanying you and, if you wish, to make an opening statement.

Ms ANDERSON: Thank you, Madam Deputy Chair. I will make an opening speech and would like to acknowledge Allan McGill, the Acting Chief Officer; Ken Tinkham, again, the Chief Financial Officer, and the staff sitting behind me.

The key responsibilities of my local government portfolio are looking after the local government sector and administering the *Animal Welfare Act*. The local government area is undergoing a much-needed review. It had to. The last government solved one problem with its amalgamation and left us with a local government was disconnected from its people, but I will talk about this later.

Animal welfare is an area where the last government made some changes following the disaster at Mataranka, but left it under-resourced so we had work to do there too.

Local government and the *Local Government Act* provide a legislative framework for local government in the Northern Territory. There are five municipal councils which have a combined estimated expenditure of \$175m in 2012-13, and eight large shire councils which have a combined expenditure of \$277m. Three small shire councils of Coomalie, Wagait and Belyuen have an estimated expenditure of \$3.4m. In total, local government councils represent a \$450m sector. The local government sector is a substantial employer, employing some 2500 people 70% of whom are Indigenous.

This government sees transparency and efficiency as two separate, but related, goals. One of the key programs of the department is the compliance review program. The program formally reviews council policies and procedures and provides support to councils to prevent breaches of legislation. The councils reviewed in 2012-13 were Litchfield Council, Barkly Shire Council, Roper Gulf Shire Council, East Arnhem Shire Council, West Arnhem Shire Council, and Katherine Town Council. These are not punishment reviews; they are there to help shires address shortcomings and deficiencies. These councils are now working to fix areas that were not effective.

The local government support unit is focused on providing governance support and advice. One of the department's major projects is addressing the 2012 Deloitte report titled *Review of Councils' Financial Sustainability*. Using the report, the department is developing policies, frameworks and toolkits to assist shires with their asset and financial management practices.

Another project is the establishment of the Family Safe Environment Fund. I am pleased to advise this election commitment has been funded. Our aim is to improve the safe environment of parks and to reduce antisocial behaviour.

Another election commitment was to look at options for a new dump service for Darwin, Palmerston and the rural area. This work has commenced.

The major task we undertook on coming into government was to honour the election commitment relating to reviewing the shire local government system. The aim is to improve local voice and participation as well as improving service delivery to remote communities. A regional governance working group was established consisting of 21 members including community leaders, industry representatives, land councils, elected councillors and Desert Knowledge Australia. The group is chaired by Mayor Damien Ryan, who is also the President of the Local Government Association Northern Territory. The options paper prepared by this group was publicly released on 12 March 2012. The paper formed the basis for public consultation.

A Regional Governance Unit has been established within the department and has just completed the consultation process. The consultation included 302 meetings across 106 community visits. I was pleased to welcome the group back to Parliament House last week and discuss the impressions of consultation feedback.

The future of local government will resolve around ensuring local government is connected with the people it governs, that services are being delivered to a good standard and local government is accountable for its use of public money.

We are also working with the local government sector and stakeholders to improve animal welfare in the Northern Territory. The Animal Welfare Branch is responsible for the administration and enforcement of the *Animal Welfare Act* and its regulations. The objects of the act are to ensure animals are treated humanely to prevent cruelty to animals and promote community awareness. The Animal Welfare Branch also appoints Animal Welfare Inspectors to investigate and take action against persons who inflict cruelty or neglect their animals.

A total of 622 complaints were received by the Animal Welfare Branch in 2012-13, 391 investigations were conducted with five successful prosecutions to date. To explain these numbers, we received several complaints about the one incident, and some complaints were resolved without formal investigation.

The Animal Welfare Branch is not just about prosecuting wrongdoers. Education sessions have been initiated with communities such as Bagot. The Central Land Council helped the Animal Welfare Branch deliver workshops about the law and improving animal health.

I look forward to the committee's questioning related to the 2013-14 appropriation for my ministerial portfolio.

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: Are there any questions?

Ms WALKER: Not in relation to the statement, minister.

OUTPUT GROUP 8.0 – LOCAL GOVERNMENT
Output 8.1 – Local Government

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: The committee will now proceed to consider the estimates of reported expenditure contained in the Appropriation Bill 2013-14 as they relate to the Department of Local Government.

Ms ANDERSON: Madam Deputy Speaker, there are only two output groups in Local Government and we have written questions from the opposition. We will go through those.

Ms WALKER: For expediency, you could table them, minister?

Ms ANDERSON: For the *Hansard* I need to read it out so we have it on record. These are the things you requested and we are getting back to you with proper answers.

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: Minister, it is your call whether you want to read them out or table them.

Ms ANDERSON: Question 1:

Details on progress of all CLP election commitments, including all commitments and policy announcements made to Territorians in CLP election policy documents, summary snapshots, media releases and announcements, 100 day plan, costings and savings documents, media advertisements and other printed material.

The answer is the revenue measures increase in rates based on the *Darwin Rates Act*, \$150 000 in 2012-13 and \$250 000 in 2013-14. All the proposed revenue under the *Darwin Rates Act* for 2012-13 has been collected.

The election commitment to establish the Family Safe Environment Fund: additional funding of \$0.25m ongoing from 2012-13 to establish the Family Safe Environment Fund. The program aims to provide a safer environment for park users and nearby residents through the reduction of incidents of antisocial behaviour, wilful vandalism and graffiti. This will be achieved by providing funding for initiatives such as improved park layout, installation of CCTV cameras and installation of entrances, exits and signage.

This program is open to all councils and is applicable with one round of funding per annum. Letters inviting applications for the first year of this program were sent to all councils on 3 January 2013. Letters of offer were sent to the successful councils in late April. If all offers are accepted then the grant program will be fully expended in 2012-13.

Election commitments local government reform: additional funding of \$6.2m over four years to support the reform of local government in the Territory. There is \$1m in 2012-13, \$2.1m in 2013-14 and 2014-15 and \$1m in 2015-16. Note, an administrative variation request has been made to bring forward \$700 000 of the 2013-14 budget in order to employ regional staff in February 2013. A regional governance unit has been established within the department's head office and additional staff are being recruited to the regions. The former Minister for Local Government established a 21-person Regional Governance Working Group. The working group's consultation paper, *Options for Regional Governance in the Northern Territory* was released on 12 March 2013. Public stakeholder consultation has commenced. Departmental staff plan to visit some 70 communities twice between March and mid-June. The working group is meeting in late June to consider the outcomes of consultations undertaken by the department.

Election commitment report to City of Darwin on options for a new dump service for Darwin, Palmerston and the rural area: the Minister for Local Government has provided a special purpose grant of \$120 000 to the Top End Regional Organisation of Councils to engage a consultant to work on plans for the development of a new regional waste facility. Top Roc is currently in the process of engaging a consultant to undertake the work.

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: Any questions?

Ms WALKER: Minister, you covered a lot of things in your opening statement. Of course, there is just one output for local government. Can you detail what has been the cost of bringing the Regional Governance Working Group and its members together - to five meetings - and detail their travel costs, accommodation and catering?

Ms ANDERSON: We will get the information before this finishes, member for Nhulunbuy.

Ms WALKER: You do not need the question on notice?

Ms ANDERSON: The interesting thing about bringing this group together, the former Local Government minister now Chief Minister, put this group of people together. They are a fantastic group of people from all aspects of life - very prominent people in their communities representing the whole of the Northern Territory. I met with them last week and they are very enthusiastic to move forward to the next stage. I am very happy to report back to this committee, as I did to my Cabinet colleagues, of the enthusiasm they see in the reform process moving forward and the fact this government has taken the opportunity to consult with the people.

We have that for you now, member for Nhulunbuy. This will not include the meeting happened last week.

Ms WALKER: We are talking about four meetings to date?

Ms ANDERSON: Yes, if I could ...

Ms WALKER: Could you table that, minister?

Ms ANDERSON: Yes.

Ms WALKER: Minister, I have no doubt the Regional Governance Working Group is a hard-working group representative of communities across the Territory in exactly the same way the task force appointed by your predecessor, pre-election, also had a group of people working together for similar goals.

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: Member for Nhulunbuy, can you please keep your questions directly relevant to the minister instead of what happened in the past.

Ms WALKER: This is my fifth year in estimates, Madam Deputy Chair. This conversation ...

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: It is my first and I am going by the standing orders.

Ms WALKER: I can see you are stickler for the rules. The minister has been good enough to engage with me in the conversational nature of estimates so ...

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: Was that comment directed at me?

Ms WALKER: ... I thought we were simply exchanging comments.

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: Member for Nhulunbuy, was that comment for me? Either withdraw it or ...

Ms WALKER: I am not making a comment to you, I am simply explaining to the minister.

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: Was that comment made to me?

Ms WALKER: I am not making a comment to you. I am making commentary, Madam Deputy Chair.

Minister, the Regional Governance Working Group had 22 members. There was one resignation from a member from Canteen Creek. Were there any other resignations or did the group remain at 21.

Ms ANDERSON: The group remained at 21.

Ms WALKER: I believe that person resigned before Christmas. Minister, could you table attendance at the five meetings, including the once last week. That would be fantastic, thank you.

Ms ANDERSON: We do not have it here. Can we get that to you?

Ms WALKER: Yes, if you could that would be most helpful, thank you. Are there any plans for the Regional Governance Working Group to reconvene or is its work finished?

Ms ANDERSON: I suggested to the working group that when I finished meeting and talking to my Cabinet colleagues about the future participation or engagement they can have I will either call them back or talk to them personally. We need to focus on different areas of implementation now, and either the terms of reference have to be drawn up or we continue with them as advisors to local government.

Ms WALKER: Minister, your media release of 3 June was about consultations that were nearing completion. You mentioned, at the end of that media release, you were attending two public consultations

in your electorate, one at Santa Teresa and one at Tijikala. Can you advise exactly how many of these consultation meetings you were able to attend other than the two you mentioned in your media release?

Ms ANDERSON: I and the member for Arnhem spoke to people at Milingimbi, Ramingining and Gapuwiyak, and on Groote at Angurugu, and also Santa Teresa and Hermannsburg.

Ms WALKER: Thanks, minister.

Ms ANDERSON: I take this opportunity, member for Nhulunbuy, to interpret to my people, in language, what these reform processes mean. It is obvious you are not a Facebook follower of Alison Anderson. I suggest you do because you can see the interpretation of local government reform.

Ms WALKER: I saw a video you posted on your Facebook page, minister.

Ms ANDERSON: Thank you.

Ms WALKER: I know you intended to get to Yirrkala but the rescheduled ...

Ms ANDERSON: The plane broke down, yes.

Ms WALKER: ... Qantas flights made that impossible. Thanks for that, minister.

Can you provide a list of the dates of all consultations which proceeded - I realise some changed - the number of people present at those consultation meetings and where a community managed to get its promised second consultation visit?

Ms ANDERSON: Yes, member for Nhulunbuy, we can get that for you.

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: Do you want to take that on notice?

Ms ANDERSON: Yes, we will take it on notice.

Question on Notice 9.13

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: Member for Nhulunbuy, can you please restate the question for the record?

Ms WALKER: Minister, can you provide a list of the dates of all consultations which were held, the number of people present, and where a community had its promised second consultation visit?

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: Minister, do you accept.

Ms ANDERSON: Thank you, yes.

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: The question asked by the member for Nhulunbuy of the minister has been allocated No 9.13.

Ms WALKER: Forgive me, minister, perhaps this should have been part of the same question or maybe you want to answer it. Can you provide a report on the main issues raised across these meetings?

Ms ANDERSON: Definitely, member for Nhulunbuy. What we heard, what the department has reported and what I got from the committee last week when I met with them is this reform process will give them the ability to get their voice back. You heard it too. The shires took away that voice, they lost the interaction and interface they had with the girl at the front desk where they could say, 'Can you ring up to check my granny in hospital is okay?' All of that was lost. It was professionalised even though it was on remote communities.

The opportunity we have given through this process is – in opposition we always said the shires were toxic. You heard that in the many debates we had. Aboriginal people want to move to a system where they are in control. They need their voices heard. They have been taken away. People are starting to come back.

On the question you asked about which community has had the second consultation, I went to Santa Teresa and saw the first consultation process. I was not happy, as the minister, because they had less

than 20 people there. I reported back to the agency and said it was not good enough and they need to consult with more people. If you cannot get more than 20 people at the office, you need to go to the school and talk to the teacher assistants or sit outside the shop and talk to people there - people congregate outside the shop – go to the clinic and talk to people or just interact with people in general. There are young fellows who kick a footy around - 20 or 30 - at the football oval, engage with them. That was instigated at Santa Teresa and the department went back there three times.

Ms WALKER: I went to a couple in my electorate, both second consultation meetings. As it was explained to me by the officers conducting it, the first consultation was apparently about listening to people, taking on board their issues, and discussing the options paper as to what options were on the table. The purpose of the second visit was to say, 'Right, you have had time to think about it. This is what we talked about last time. Where do you think we are at now? Provide more feedback.' The difficulty was, if you did not have the same group of people that connection from the first consultation to the second consultation back to you in capturing those views somehow was lost along the way.

I know consultation can be a challenging thing to do across our remote communities for all sorts of reasons, but I guess we will wait to see what the report is. People told me they were a little confused with what the consultations were about. Many people wanted to know, 'Where's the option saying we are getting rid of the shires. We were told pre-election by so many CLP people they were getting rid of the shires.'

We look forward to seeing what the outcome of the report is. There will be a formal report from the Regional Governance Working Group?

Ms ANDERSON: I am advised, member for Nhulunbuy, there is.

Ms WALKER: A time frame as to when that is expected, if you have one?

Ms ANDERSON: It is a preliminary draft and will be completed in mid-July.

Ms WALKER: I have a question regarding the cost associated with consultations. You might need to take this on notice as there are a few elements to it. Can you provide the cost of department charters and/or commercial flights, including passengers lists, the total cost of catering at consultations, the cost of materials associated including the consultation paper itself, advertising, the blue uniform shirts for staff, things like pop-up banners, and any of those communication materials associated - the cost of interpreters and any other costs you can think of that have been part and parcel of this exercise?

Ms ANDERSON: We will take that on notice for you, member for Nhulunbuy. We pre-empted that and gave Local Government extra money. We knew this would come at a cost to government and allocated money. We are not ashamed to give you the full cost of the consultation.

Question on Notice No 9.14

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: Member for Nhulunbuy, can you please re-state the question for the record.

Ms WALKER: Minister, I have no doubt you were anticipating the question. The key issue will be has the cost represented value for money at the end of the day.

The question was can you provide a breakdown of the total cost of consultations including department charters and/or commercial flights, including passenger lists, the total cost of catering at consultations, the cost of printing and distribution of the consultation paper, any advertising, the blue uniform shirts for staff, associated materials such as pop-up banners as well as the cost of interpreters?

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: Minister, do you accept?

Ms ANDERSON: Thank you, yes.

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: The question asked by the member for Nhulunbuy to the minister has been allocated No 9.14.

Ms WALKER: My next question. Given people around the Northern Territory, especially those in shire communities, are awaiting the outcome of the reform process, is it the case that people on Groote Eylandt have been promised a new regional authority to replace the East Arnhem Shire in delivering local government services on Groote Eylandt?

Ms ANDERSON: That is one of the discussions, member for Nhulunbuy, we are having with Groote. As you know, Cabinet, a couple of weeks ago, met on Groote Eylandt, which was part and parcel of the consultation. They thought they would bring their aspirations to Cabinet that was meeting there. The department has since collated all the information of the consultation process and in mid-June the report will be finalised.

Ms WALKER: Minister, there has been no promise made to the communities on Groote Eylandt that they can move to their own regional authority separate to the East Arnhem Shire?

Ms ANDERSON: No.

Ms WALKER: Thanks, minister. Within the Victoria Daly Shire, given pre-election promises were made for a new regional authority for Wadeye and its surrounding areas - has that scenario been promised to people at Wadeye?

Ms ANDERSON: These people have possibilities of wanting whatever they want. The department, at this stage, is bringing the information together. I always said, in my interviews and media opportunities, never to pre-empt the decision of the consultation but speak openly and freely about what I might think is right. We have quite clearly heard, through economic opportunities and business opportunities, that there is scope for places like Wadeye and Borroloola, and Groote and Tiwi, to be different. That is not saying any kind of agreement has been reached with the government and those people.

We are at the process where the whole report is being put together. It is time for us to allow the department to go through the process of listening to the voices of people and put the information together for government to look at.

Mr WOOD: Can I piggyback off that, please? Minister, you talking about those ideas - different boundaries is interesting. That concerned me in the review - that you had two options. I did not attend those meetings. I do not know if they were in the Darwin region, but when those meetings were being held was it made clear to people these were two options but if you had other ideas you were allowed to develop them?

Ms ANDERSON: The department spoke positively and said, 'These are the two options, but if you have your own ideas of what you want, you are welcome to talk to us about that as well'.

Mr WOOD: That is good. When I read the document it did not encourage you to work outside the square. I am glad because I was concerned when I read it that would not give you the reforms people were hoping for. It was just a revamped model of the last model with nice fancy names and all that sort of thing. I am pleased. I have been interested in the draft. Will the draft allow us to comment on it for a period of time?

Mr McGILL: The draft?

Ms ANDERSON: Allow them to comment on the draft.

Mr McGILL: Allan McGill, CE, Department of Local Government. The submissions that have come in cover quite a range of things. There are suggestions on boundary changes and a whole range of things. It is being collated and proposal will be put together to go back to government and the working group for comment. That is being developed at the moment. There will be a further round of consultation over the next couple of months.

Mr WOOD: If a member of parliament has an interest in local government, is there any way someone can get a summary of what has been put forward to these meetings? It would be nice to be kept up to date instead of having a fait accompli and say, 'This is what we have decided'. I would love to read what people are thinking.

Mr McGILL: I think that is the report they asked for. The summary of the comments and the consultations so far will cover that.

Mr WOOD: Do you have any more questions? I piggybacked on that one item.

Ms WALKER: On the Regional Governance Working Group and the reforms, no.

Mr WOOD: In the review, was any work done on the unincorporated land and has the government been brave enough to have a policy on the unincorporated land yet?

Mr MCGILL: The whole question of unincorporated areas and other outcomes from the previous reform - creation of the shires - is being looked at as part of the review. For example, the future of unincorporated areas outside shires, but also the smaller shires that exist at the moment - what is the longer term best option for all those areas - are all part of what will be considered.

Mr WOOD: A number of workshops were conducted by the previous government in Coomalie and, bravely, at Marrakai and other areas – Dundee. Will the material gained from that be used in the discussions?

Mr McGILL: Yes.

Mr WOOD: It has not gone to waste.

Ms ANDERSON: No.

Mr WOOD: Do you want me to keep going, member for Nhulunbuy?

Ms WALKER: Yes, I will jump in when I need to.

Mr WOOD: This is a question that came out of Deloitte – was the issue of rates brought up at these meetings? No matter what people might think about changing boundaries and having more say - that is really important - the previous model was no good because people lost their ability to have some decision-making over their own community, but we are living on an increase in operational funding this year - \$20m extra you are putting in – which means you have sorted out rates. Deloitte show the Tiwi Shire gets 2% or 4% of total revenue from rates. Is that issue being looked at within this review?

Mr McGILL: Yes, it will be. The whole question of longer term financial sustainability will be part of the considerations over the next couple of months. The Deloitte report concluded the shires were viable but not sustainable in the longer term. That longer-term sustainability will be part of the review. That includes the question of rates, of course.

Mr WOOD: In the review did people raise the issue of whether core functions were being delivered satisfactorily? The Deloitte report raises that. It has always been a concern that councils have done other things but there are still potholes in the road. Have those issues been discussed in the review?

Mr McGILL: The question of core services has been raised a number of times. A decision on the future of that system will be part of the review. Core services flow from the regional plans and comments have been received on those. It is all part of the consideration.

Mr WOOD: One of the other big things used to sweeten people to move with the reforms under the previous government was extra money for roads. Will we have the same model the Pitjantjatjara people in northern South Australia received? They get funding outside normal road funding. There was also, theoretically, an agreement which would say all the government roads were to be given over to local government as well. Allan, you would know about that better than anyone. Is any of that touched on in the review because it is a big issue for the councils? First they have to get the roads from the government, if they are to be handed over, then where do they get the funds to maintain them?

Mr McGILL: It has been raised but there is no answer. The working group discussed it. It is certainly is on the agenda for discussion. I am not sure of the longer-term funding for roads. It is a very big question; it has been raised and will be part of the discussions.

Mr WOOD: The topic of pastoral properties has been tossed around a fair bit. Will that also be part of the review?

Mr McGILL: It has been raised. The whole question of longer-term sustainability involves the future of council-generated revenue, which is largely rates, so there are no outcomes.

Mr WOOD: On the other side of the equation, as far as pastoral properties are concerned - being the cash cow for the council - Aboriginal land trust cannot be rated. Is that included in the discussions in the review? If most of the shire is under Aboriginal land trust you are to some extent ...

Ms ANDERSON: The working group has been quite interesting. We have Luke Bowen from the Cattlemen's Association, we have industry; we have the mayor of Alice Springs as the chair and both the big land councils. Through this process of moving things forward there have been discussions around that area. It has been quite fiery in some cases when they have been talking about rates on pastoral land and Aboriginal land - the two come together. I think that gives the working group the ability to communicate and talk about these issues, highlight it to government and bring it to the attention of the agency.

Mr WOOD: Was there any Commonwealth involvement or input into this review? If you are changing issues relating to Aboriginal land the Commonwealth would have to participate?

Ms ANDERSON: The Commonwealth government is an observer at the working group.

Mr WOOD: What department do they come from?

Ms ANDERSON: FaHCSIA.

Mr WOOD: I have a question not in relation to the review.

Ms WALKER: Can I ask a couple of questions?

Mr WOOD: You are the shadow; I am just an Independent. I am still here too.

Ms WALKER: Minister, I appreciate you picked up the Local Government portfolio in mid-March so you have not had the whole time since the election in that portfolio. I have attended both LGANT meetings - one in Alice Springs and the other earlier this year in Darwin. I know you attended the one in Darwin so you will recall an elected member from the Tiwi Shire Council asked the now Chief Minister, 'Why is it every time you come to the Tiwi Islands you meet with the Tiwi Land Council? You don't meet with the Tiwi Shire Council. You are favouring one stakeholder over another.' Clearly, this gentleman was insulted by the lack of engagement. Minister, have you met with the Tiwi Shire Council since you ...

Ms ANDERSON: Not yet but that is planned to happen in the next couple of weeks. I will be going to the Tiwis in the next couple of weeks, after Tennant Creek. It will be after the Alice Springs Show or the Tennant Show.

Mr WOOD: I support that as well. I was given that information and thought the council felt it had been left out because everyone wants to be sweet with the Tiwi Land Council but then they do not want to be sweet with the shire, which has to do a lot of the hard work.

Ms ANDERSON: I take my job very seriously, as does the Chief Minister. During all my visits to communities I look at all the agencies. I will continue to do that in my home town of Alice Springs, and will do the same when I go to the Tiwi Islands.

Ms WALKER: Minister, I have a question about special purpose grants. You made reference to one in your opening statement around the regional waste management facility. I understand there was a grant of \$125 000 for that consultancy?

Ms ANDERSON: Yes.

Ms WALKER: That is good to hear. What is progressing with the regional waste management facility because it is important, but my question was about - I have not seen any media releases around special purposes grants. They are normally released once or twice a year. Can you advise us what special purpose grants have been approved for local government, or perhaps you could take it on notice or table it if you have the document there.

Ms ANDERSON: Member for Nhulunbuy, we have a list of all the grants we have approved. I can table that for you.

Ms WALKER: Thanks, minister, that would be helpful. Why have no media releases gone out with those?

Ms ANDERSON: Maybe I forgot, member for Nhulunbuy.

Ms WALKER: People like to know where their money is going.

Ms ANDERSON: Yes, exactly. Thank you.

Ms WALKER: Thanks, minister.

Going back to the regional waste management facility, we talked about the special purpose grant to enable a consultancy to take place, perhaps you are waiting on the outcome of that feedback to understand what costs you are looking at for this facility. Would that be the case? We might save that for Question Time, unless you have a time frame of when you are expecting to get a report back from the consultancy?

Mr McGill: I am not sure we have a timetable. They are assessing a couple of sites they have in mind to make sure those sites are, first of all, suitable - there are no hidden reasons why you cannot use them for waste, that is the first step, and then trying to have that site set aside for the future use and establishment of it. The report will tell us that and the estimated costs of developing the site.

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: Mr McGill, could you just state your name and position when you are speaking?

Mr McGill: I will.

Ms WALKER: Or you will be in big trouble.

Mr McGill: Yes.

Mr WOOD: How could you not identify that voice?

Ms WALKER: Minister, in the Local Government output I have one more question. The Chief Minister at the LGANT conference, when he was Local Government minister, was asked a question from the floor. I believe it was from one of the elected Darwin city councillors about the government's position on constitutional recognition for local government, which will go to a referendum on 14 September. At that time he said Cabinet was yet to arrive at a position. Now you are Local Government minister and this referendum is proceeding, will you be personally lobbying for a 'yes' vote?

Ms ANDERSON: Member for Nhulunbuy, the reference to the Territory was taken out of the constitutional referendum.

Ms WALKER: As Minister for Local Government in the Northern Territory, what is the government's position on this important referendum regarding local government come September?

Ms ANDERSON: Mr McGill.

Mr McGill: Allan McGill, CEO of the Department of Local Government.

Mr WOOD: Are you stating policy? I do not think you are allowed to do that.

Ms ANDERSON: I think I answered that.

Mr McGill: I understand the government's position is because it will not apply to the Northern Territory or any territory, the government does not have a position on the referendum.

Mr WOOD: It will give a philosophical opinion. That sounds like a

Ms ANDERSON: I do not think Territorians need - if the Territory has been taken out of it, why would you then say, 'We will stick up for you' if you know the outcomes will not be what people want. I do not think we should lead people up a garden path or spread that perception. We need to be honest and transparent and tell Territorians the truth.

Mr WOOD: Solidarity for local government.

Ms WALKER: Given federal Opposition Leader Mr Abbott has given his bipartisan support and, given we hope one day we will be a state not a territory, that is a fairly cautious answer you have delivered, minister. You have answered it, I guess. That is all I had on local government.

Mr WOOD: I have questions outside the review.

Mr McCARTHY: Minister, the Budget 2013-14 Overview lists an additional \$30m over three years for routine specific maintenance works to roads within the Central Desert, MacDonnell, Victoria Daly, Roper Gulf and Barkly Shires under the regional roads maintenance program. I am interested to know why the West Arnhem Shire, the Tiwi Shire, the East Arnhem Shire and the Coomalie Shire do not feature in that appropriation.

Ms ANDERSON: Member for Barkly, is that on infrastructure?

Mr McCARTHY: No, this is in relation to an announcement by the Chief Minister and by the Minister for Infrastructure in the House regarding the budget appropriation in the budget papers.

Ms ANDERSON: Yes, the Department of Infrastructure is coming on shortly.

Mr McCARTHY: I am asking why those shires are missing, minister?

Ms ANDERSON: We cannot give you an answer. It is appropriate that you bring it up with the Minister for Infrastructure in less than 15 minutes.

Mr McCARTHY: Thank you, minister. I have a question around shire roads because I have many constituents asking questions. In this appropriation, it is good news for the Roper Gulf and the Barkly Shires, but the other shires are not listed. That is in *Hansard* a number of times. It will be interesting to find out why.

The point is about mobilisation costs. While there are major projects going on in the regions, why do we not capitalise on that opportunity when there is heavy earthmoving equipment and expertise? A good example is I have just come from Borrooloola - a very experienced councillor has been on the council many times over many years ...

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: Member for Barkly, are you coming to a question?

Mr McCARTHY: Yes, Madam Deputy Chair. This councillor spoke about mobilisation costs. For instance, a \$17m Power and Water project which has been going on for 18 months there – a major sewerage project - why can we not tap into that level of capacity in civil construction while they are on site? I would like to raise that with you, minister, and ask for your comment or ideas around that.

Ms ANDERSON: I heard the Chief Minister, when he was the Infrastructure and Local Government minister, talk about how we can connect Western Australia to Queensland. He was talking about our bush roads. How can we get the road from Alice Springs off the bitumen - off Ayers Rock through to Western Australia and connected to Western Australia? How can we get the Tanami Highway to connect from the east to the west? These are all the ideas we have of connecting regions. We need the Commonwealth as a partner. We have good relationships at our MINCOs with our federal counterparts. We have to engage with the Commonwealth to look at our infrastructure in the Northern Territory. We do not have the money, as a small jurisdiction in the Northern Territory, to look at huge infrastructure - roads are huge infrastructure. The more we can have this relationship, get national partnership money through the feds, talk at our ministerial councils and get our Commonwealth partners to engage in the Territory the better we will do.

Mr McCARTHY: Thank you, minister, for that comment. That is a good vision. What I am outlining and asking your support in is shire roads, local government roads and delivering efficiencies. It is all about saving existing money. How can we move forward so a town like Borrooloola - and I have just received another letter from the Roper Gulf Shire talking about shire roads to Seven Emu, Manangoora and Spring Creek - capitalise on the opportunity while there is major civil construction capacity in the area not for a week, but for 18 months? Surely, while they are there we can get those shire roads worked on in the LGANT budget.

Ms ANDERSON: I will be working with the Minister for Infrastructure. We travel down those roads all the time, as you do. It is a priority for future generations of Territorians. It is not just economic opportunity, but

health reasons as well. We need to see an upgrade and the roads maintained. I have a huge concern with renal dialysis patients continuously travelling from Santa Teresa to Alice Springs on bad dirt roads.

I have just been advised, member for Barkly, that the procurement processes need to be amended to deal with the coordination of government and shire works to get better value for money.

Mr McCARTHY: Thank you, minister, for the opportunity to discuss this.

Ms ANDERSON: Thank you.

Mr WOOD: Is your department doing anything to normalise local government roads? Local government should only be spending money on either gazetted roads or roads leased from Aboriginal traditional land. Is there any move - I think the previous government did some work on it - to formalise roads such as the Central Arnhem Road? I do not believe local government can spend public money on roads that are not public.

Ms ANDERSON: We are getting into the same area and same argument you had with land tenure earlier. It is something we have to do for the way people live. They live in dispersed places. We have small remote communities around the Northern Territory. Just because there are issues with land tenure or roads, does that mean we do not upgrade or build a road to that specific area in the Northern Territory?

This government is very focused on bringing all that into our regional hubs. It is about giving people economic opportunities to move forward rather than have Aboriginal people on the side of economic growth. While our hubs and towns like Alice Springs, Tennant Creek, Katherine and Darwin are growing our small regional towns on the side sit idle. It is about bringing everybody together so we can move forward as a Territory and have better opportunities and better hope.

Mr WOOD: Yes, I am not disagreeing with any of that, minister. However, your Chief Minister talked about not having separatism. You will not be allowed to spend local government money on a road that goes through a pastoral property - that would be private. I imagine you would therefore not be allowed to build a road on Aboriginal land - that is private. This needs to be sorted out. If Aboriginal people want roads funded by local government there has to be some negotiation which means the roads are public roads. The previous government was saying, 'How do we open up growth towns', how do we open up major remote towns if you do not have public access?' If you need public access you need a public road. I am putting to you that this needs sorting out.

Ms ANDERSON: We will take that on board, member for Nelson.

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: Are there any more questions relating to the whole-of-government budget and fiscal strategies? That concludes consideration of Output No. 8.1.

Output 8.2 – Animal Welfare

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: The committee will now consider Output 8.2, Animal Welfare. Are there any questions?

Ms WALKER: Minister, I have one question around the promised review of the *Animal Welfare Act*. Can you provide an update on that review? How many submissions have been received and where will it go to next?

Ms ANDERSON: Member for Nhulunbuy, I have been informed by the department that 622 complaints were received by the Animal Welfare Branch in 2012-13. Three hundred and ninety-one investigations were conducted ranging in severity from minor to more serious animal welfare matters. During the same period the Animal Welfare Branch successfully prosecuted five animal welfare matters in the Darwin Court of Summary Jurisdiction. As at the end of May 2013, the Animal Welfare Branch had 41 investigations under way, six matters are before JSJ and six briefs for the Solicitor for the Northern Territory for legal opinion. The *Animal Welfare Act* has not had a full review since it was enacted in 2000. As such, it is outdated and needs modernisation. A review was commenced on 6 February 2013.

Ms WALKER: Has a discussion paper around the review gone out to stakeholders for consideration?

Mr McGILL: Allan McGill, CEO, Department of Local Government. I do not believe it has gone out yet but one is being prepared.

Ms WALKER: I refute there has been no review of the *Animal Welfare Act* given the CTC's investigation into the deaths of cattle at Mataranka initiated some reviews and some changes took place, hence the number of complaints you are actively dealing with as a result of that.

Those are my questions on animal welfare.

Mr WOOD: Running off that question about Mataranka, has the department been down to look at Mataranka to review how the station is going? Considering it was the centre of a lot of criticism, has someone checked?

Ms ANDERSON: The department conducts regular reviews.

Mr WOOD: Can someone tell us what?

Ms ANDERSON: We will find out for you.

Can I ask they take the question on notice?

Question on Notice No 9.15

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: Can you restate the question please.

Mr WOOD: Minister, can you give us a broad update on the state of animal welfare at Mataranka Station?

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: Do you accept that question, minister?

Ms ANDERSON: Yes.

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: The question asked by the member for Nelson to the minister is No 9.15.

Ms WALKER: Minister, I hope the review of the *Animal Welfare Act* will take into account the 21 recommendations in the CTC report. The last four recommendations pertain to companion animals and the area of animal welfare - not just dog control, but animal welfare on our remote communities, which is a difficult area.

Ms ANDERSON: Thank you, member for Nhulunbuy.

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: Are there any more questions?

After this we have NT Electoral Commission. Are there any questions for that?

Ms ANDERSON: My time is to 6.30 p.m.

Mr WOOD: We can go over, we are not held to that time.

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: If you do not have any more questions we can just finish it off now.

Mr WOOD: I do not have any questions.

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: We can finish it now and go to dinner.

Ms WALKER: Madam Deputy Chair, given the Electoral Commissioner appeared with the Chief Minister the Output Group schedule tells me is outputs in blue - electoral services - are the responsibility of the minister but in another minister's agency.

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: Do you want me to finish them off now or do you want to continue after dinner?

Ms WALKER: No, I am fine thanks.

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: That concludes consideration of outputs relating to the Department of Local Government. On behalf of the committee I thank you, minister, for attending today and all officers who have provided assistance to the minister. Minister, do you want to say anything?

Ms ANDERSON: Thank you to my acting Chief Executive, Allan McGill, also Ken Tinkham, all those sitting at the back and all the wonderful people in the department who do good work. Of course, Nick and Shane in my office, and I thank Sam, Anna, Anthony, Calvin, Ralph and Darren.

NORTHERN TERRITORY ELECTORAL COMMISSION

OUTPUT GROUP 9.0 – NT ELECTORAL COMMISSION

Output 9.1 - Electoral Services

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: The committee will now consider the Minister for Local Government responsibilities in relation to the NT Electoral Commission.

I note responsibilities for Output Group 9.0 Electoral Commission is shared by the Chief Minister and the Minister for Local Government. Whilst the Chief Minister answered questions regarding the Electoral Commission responsibilities under the *Electoral Act* on Wednesday 19 June 2013, questions regarding the Commission's responsibilities in relation to chapter 8 of the *Local Government Act* will be answered by the Minister for Local Government today. Are there any questions? No.

That concludes consideration of the NT Electoral Commission's responsibility under Chapter 8 of the *Local Government Act*. On behalf of the committee I would like to thank you again, minister.

The committee will now adjourn for dinner.

The committee suspended

MINISTER STYLES' PORTFOLIOS

DEPARTMENT OF INFRASTRUCTURE

Madam CHAIR: Thank you very much, minister, and your officials for coming this evening. I welcome you and invite you to introduce the officials accompanying you.

Mr STYLES: Thank you, Madam Chair. I take this opportunity to introduce officials from the Department of Infrastructure: Mr Al Wagner, Chief Executive; on my right, Ms Anne Bradford, Deputy Chief Executive; Ms Leah Atkinson, Chief Financial Officer; and Mr Robert Pemble, Executive Director of Civil Services.

Madam CHAIR: Thank you, minister. I will invite you to make an opening statement of no more than five minutes then call for questions relating to the statement. The committee will then consider any whole-of-government budget and fiscal strategy-related questions before moving on to output specific questions and, finally, non-output specific budget-related questions. I will invite the shadow minister to ask questions first, followed by the Independent member then other committee members. Finally, participating members may address electorate issues.

The committee has agreed other members may join in on the line of questioning pursued by a shadow minister rather than waiting for the end of the shadow's questioning on the output.

Minister, do you wish to make an opening statement regarding the Department of Infrastructure?

Mr STYLES: I do.

Madam Chair, 2012-13 has been a very productive year for the Department of Infrastructure. The department continues to play a lead role in delivering tangible assets for Territorians. In 2012-13, the Construction Division, which is the Government Business Division, has successfully managed some 3400 projects and awarded 582 contracts valued at around \$329m. Approximately 95% of this work has been awarded to local companies. Significant projects over the last year include: commencement of the Howard Springs intersection upgrade catering for increased traffic due to residential and industrial growth in the rural area; the Rapid Creek fishing platform, providing the disabled community with a long-awaited

recreation facility; commencement of work on a number of remote trade training centres on behalf of the Department of Education and Children's Services, including facilities at Umbakumba and Jabiru amongst others; and construction of the Annie Creek Bridge over the Fog Bay Road, providing improved all-weather access for Dundee residents, fishos and holidaymakers.

The Department of Infrastructure is responsible for the management and delivery of this year's \$1.035bn infrastructure program. In 2012-13, the department managed \$177m worth of repairs and maintenance, with \$84.8m going towards Territory roads.

Looking at the 2013-14 year, the Department of Infrastructure will work on a range of infrastructure projects across all regions. To mention just a few: continued delivery of new houses and housing upgrades under the National Partnership Agreement on Remote Indigenous Housing Program across 26 remote Territory communities; commencement of the duplication of the \$9m Tiger Brennan Drive between Dinah Beach and Woolner Road improving traffic flow; commissioning of the \$3.7m Tennant Creek Hospital emergency department upgrade; continuing the \$110m Marine Supply Base; and completion of the \$495m Northern Territory Secure Facility.

The Department of Infrastructure works proactively to forge strong relationships with local industry. Various activities throughout the year provide opportunities for information sharing and collaboration. These include: two annual industry forums held in Darwin and Alice Springs respectively; quarterly joint industry information sessions with the Civil Contractors Federation Northern Territory; and an annual sponsorship program which sees the Department of Infrastructure provide funding towards industry association events and award programs.

I take this opportunity to acknowledge our local construction and consultancy industries. Collaboration between industry and government is critical to delivering the infrastructure program which, ultimately, benefits all Territorians. I also thank the hard-working departmental staff whose expertise and experience is invaluable.

The Department of Infrastructure is well placed to successfully manage the upcoming infrastructure program. Madam Chair, I look forward to any questions the Estimates Committee may have for me in relation to next year's financial funding.

Madam CHAIR: Thank you very much, minister. Are there any questions on the minister's statement?

Mr McCARTHY: Yes, Madam Chair.

Mr STYLES: Madam Chair, are we going to written questions first?

Madam CHAIR: We are asking questions on the statement and then we will go to the written questions.

Mr McCARTHY: Minister, my first question is in relation to the NT Infrastructure budget. Budget Paper No 4 lists total infrastructure payments are expected to be \$64m less than 2012-13 and will continue to decrease over forward estimates. The construction industry, both civil and civic, the middle-level contractors and the small contractors all had a very strong opinion around this and advised the previous government the stimulus strategy needed to continue for about 12 months. They told government it was so important. This budget shows a complete turnaround from that advice. Minister, why?

Mr STYLES: Member for Barkly, the situation is the private investment now flowing into the Territory is increasing and, shortly, will really start to flow. We have the Marine Supply Base, the new Darwin prison and, with INPEX coming online, there will be a lot of investment and a lot of money flowing through the community.

Given the \$5.5bn debt we inherited government has to rein in spending. It is this area where we expect private enterprise will fill the gap. We have also brought forward some road maintenance from the out years to stimulate the small- and medium-sized enterprises you refer to.

Mr McCARTHY: Minister, it is interesting you did mention that private sector kick-in. That is exactly what my point was. The industry told the previous government this 12-month period was critical, and the contractors are now telling me, particularly in the regions, that it has slowed down prematurely. This is all about timing, minister. I question your timing and want to know what advice you were given to assume the take-up would fill that gap.

Mr STYLES: We brought forward roads funding - there is another \$10m this year. The Territory's roads repairs and maintenance budget has increased and regional roads receive \$10m, rural roads \$48.250m and urban roads \$15.695m. We have increased the repairs and maintenance. Projected out is where the gap will be filled by INPEX. General repairs and maintenance is up by \$29m and roads by \$10m.

Mr McCARTHY: Minister, in relation to this questioning line, let us talk about the Marine Supply Base and the Doug Owston multiclassification correctional services precinct - incredible private investment. That is what you are talking about in the take-up. However, in the 2011-12 year the new government was carrying a debt of \$1.6bn not \$5.5bn as your members have been alluding to. The figure in 2012-13 is around \$3bn, minister.

This is getting back to the fiscal stimulus strategy, and probably the definition of the difference between the two governments. Industry was telling us that. Industry is now telling me that in the regions. I think you have the timing wrong and want to know why you did not consult wider.

Mr STYLES: We have consulted. I have spoken to people in Alice Springs, Tennant Creek, Darwin and a number of other places. I have met with the Civil Construction Federation NT and we have responded to their requests.

Mr McCARTHY: Minister, have you been talking to that middle level contractor in the regions? I know your organisation has had some serious internal issues to deal with but you are in the saddle now. Have you spoken to that middle level contractor, the contractor who depends on government work? I agree with what we had planned as the countercyclical strategy, but you need to listen to industry in the regions because they are telling me ...

Madam CHAIR: Minister for Barkly, is that a question?

Mr McCARTHY: Yes, Madam Chair. Will you listen, minister, and will you join us in the regions and hear the story?

Mr STYLES: Yes, I will continue to speak to people in the regions and also in our urban areas.

Mr McCARTHY: Minister, there were interesting points in your opening statement about growth in the department and planning in the department. What is the story with job losses, minister? How many job losses have we seen in the Department of Infrastructure since it was created?

Mr STYLES: We have had mini-budget savings. We made a conscious decision to outsource some areas. We have full-time staff reduction of 25 in budget year 2012-13. That was budgeted, the actual is 42.

Mr McCARTHY: Forty two minister, is that correct?

Mr STYLES: Yes, 42 FTEs as of 31 March.

Mr McCARTHY: Minister Elferink tabled a document in this process which outlines the difference in pays 2012 - 05, 11 to 20 - and the number is 34. You say there have been 42 separations in the department.

Mr STYLES: That was not in my opening statement, member for Barkly.

Mr McCARTHY: No, we are talking about the department and operations and growth and ...

Madam CHAIR: Perhaps it is better asked in agency whole-of-government rather than an opening statement question, member for Barkly?

Mr McCARTHY: Yes, Madam Chair.

Ms LAWRIE: Minister, in your opening statement you spoke about the importance of the infrastructure program, and in response to the member for Barkly you spoke about an increase in the roads budget. Is that not capturing a lot of revote? Is there an increase above revote?

Mr STYLES: No, there is extra money - new money in the 2012 mini-budget.

Ms LAWRIE: There is always new money from budget to budget period, but there is also revote underpinning. You can confidently say the roads budget, revote aside, is significantly above the previous roads budget?

Mr STYLES: In 2012-13, in relation to the infrastructure revote program, there was revote in of \$219.6m, revote out in 2012-13 was \$256m and the estimated revote in for 2013-14 is \$256m. A total of \$30m over three years has been brought in for rural roads.

Ms LAWRIE: Was that Commonwealth or Territory funding?

Mr STYLES: Territory funding.

Ms LAWRIE: Are you sure of that?

Mr STYLES: That is my understanding. Are you referring to the total revote or the \$10m for roads funds?

Ms LAWRIE: The \$10m, and then how much of the revote is Commonwealth? I could not easily identify the Commonwealth/Territory split as I have been able to in the previous years.

Mr STYLES: I cannot give you that breakdown. That will come out of roads – the Minister for Transport.

Ms LAWRIE: You carry the infrastructure portfolio which carries the roads funding within it. Have you lost all the roads infrastructure funding out of your capital program?

Mr STYLES: That is under Roads Network Division and I do not have control of that.

Ms LAWRIE: It is not sitting in your capital program at all? I know it is a client, just like Education is a client, but the infrastructure funding sits within the Department of Infrastructure - you guys let the contracts do you not?

Mr STYLES: Yes, and we ...

Ms LAWRIE: It is, therefore, within your purview.

Mr STYLES: Cash and programs is under Transport.

Ms LAWRIE: It is your client sitting within in the capital programs.

Madam CHAIR: Member for Karama, the minister is answering your question.

Ms LAWRIE: I am seeking clarification.

Mr STYLES: Under the Department of Transport, the national network revote in is \$51.2m.

Ms LAWRIE: With the section of the capital program, excluding roads, that you have a direct relationship with, what is the Commonwealth/Territory spend? You mentioned a couple of programs in your opening statement you are delivering on behalf of the Commonwealth. Looking at the budget highlights, the bulk of the new initiatives were Commonwealth programs that had been on the program for some time. We are both acquainted with that. They have been awaiting lease agreements with traditional owners and obviously a separate department has carriage of that - Regional Development. In program delivery, two of the items you mentioned in your opening statement were Commonwealth funded coming through the program. It is important for us to understand the split between the Commonwealth and the Territory.

Mr STYLES: I am happy to take that on notice and will try to get that back to you before this evening is concluded. I have some people who can give us those exact figures.

Madam CHAIR: Should we take it on notice or are you happy to just receive it ...

Ms LAWRIE: On notice.

Madam CHAIR: Member for Karama, please restate the question for the record.

Ms LAWRIE: What is the Commonwealth/Northern Territory funding split within the infrastructure program?

Madam CHAIR: Minister, do you accept the question?

Mr STYLES: I do.

Madam CHAIR: The question asked by the member for Karama of the Minister of Infrastructure is 10.1.

Mr STYLES: That is the revote you are talking about?

Ms LAWRIE: No, the entire program. You have 2012-13 programs. I am not talking about the revote, I am talking about the 2012-13 program and the split with the revote is part of it. There are two sets of figures. There are the program figures for 2012-13 which will tell you what is Commonwealth funded and what is Territory funded, and there is the split within that in the revote and what is sitting there as Commonwealth and Territory. For example, normally we are able to deliver Territory programs more quickly than Commonwealth because of their locality.

Ms LAWRIE: In relation to your opening statement and the importance of the infrastructure program to the domestic economy, I note you highlighted the major projects that will start to see that upswing in private sector investment. Ichthys is a private project, but the Marine Supply Base and the correctional centre are publically-funded programs, albeit the correctional centre is a PPP, but you can describe those as public stimulus packages.

The thing I have been hearing consistently, and what the member for Barkly touched on, is many small- and medium-sized businesses within the contracting scenario rely on the public program. Civil Contractors, Master Builders, HIA and the Chamber of Commerce will all have a view on what size they want that program to sit at. Did they tell you the sharp drop they have seen in this program is okay for them, or did they express the view it is perhaps too sharp and should have had some more meat on it for another year?

We are hearing 2012-13 was not the year to cut it so dramatically, but 2013-14, with the bigger kick up in private, was where you could have a bigger drop.

Mr STYLES: That is probably a question for a bit further on, but I am happy to answer it now or give you a part answer. Client agencies are all aware this situation has arisen and people are talking to us. We are listening to people in various parts of the private sector. Where we have been able to, we have stimulated it. We are constrained in relation to the debt levels and deficit we inherited. Having stimulus packages is very difficult. We have asked our client agencies to see what they can do about filling that gap and bringing anything forward they can.

Ms LAWRIE: There will still be some movement within this 2012-13 year in bringing items forward that have not already been raised through the budget process?

Mr STYLES: All the client agencies have been asked to look at what they can bring forward.

Ms LAWRIE: Minor new works particularly, or R&M?

Mr STYLES: R&M, minor new works - basically look at what they can bring forward. When they ...

Ms LAWRIE: Bring forward from 2013-14 into 2012-13 because we are clocking away; it is only a couple of days. What are we talking here? Are we talking about bringing forward from 2014-15 into 2013-14?

Mr STYLES: This is what occurred in 2012-13.

Ms LAWRIE: It is the last six months of 2012-13 that you have been trying to bring forward out of 2013-14?

Mr STYLES: We have looked at what we can do. We have been through a mini-budget and the budget process. We have looked at what we bring forward. We have encouraged client agencies to do what they can. When client agencies ask us to do something we do it as soon as we can.

Ms LAWRIE: Does the Department of Infrastructure hold that central list of what you have brought forward from the mini-budget to now?

Mr STYLES: Not necessarily. The client agencies will be doing what they can.

Ms LAWRIE: They would have to then come to you to initiate the work?

Mr STYLES: In the tied agencies, yes. In the untied agencies, not necessarily.

Ms LAWRIE: Tied agencies?

Mr STYLES: Tied agencies would, 'Can you do this now?' or 'Can you bring this forward?' or 'How are you situated to do this?'

Ms LAWRIE: Is there a chance of getting a list of what has been brought forward?

Mr STYLES: We can try to get that list to you if you like.

Ms LAWRIE: Yes, that would be great.

Question on Notice No 10.2

Madam CHAIR: Member for Karama, can you please restate the question for the record?

Ms LAWRIE: Please identify which projects in repairs and maintenance, minor new works and capital have been brought forward from 1 January to 30 June. Is that the six-month period you were talking about?

Mr STYLES: We are talking about 31 March.

Ms LAWRIE: Okay, 31 March to 30 June.

Madam CHAIR: Minister, do you accept the question?

Mr STYLES: Yes, we will take that question.

Madam CHAIR: The question asked by the member for Karama to the Minister for Infrastructure is No 10.2.

Ms LAWRIE: Supporting what my colleague was saying, the feedback is it has been increasingly lean in the regions. It is increasingly lean for the small- and medium-sized businesses in the work they can compete for because they cannot compete successfully for the major project contracts the Ichthys project will deliver.

Anecdotally, we are hearing, for example, engineering firms are rostering down from five days a week to four days, and civil contractors are laying off 15 to 20 staff. Are you hearing anything like that at all, minister?

Mr STYLES: I have not heard 15 to 20 staff, but I know things are tight for them. The board has expressed that. I met with the board and they expressed those concerns. We have responded by trying to get more work out quicker than it might usually go out.

Ms LAWRIE: Do you have the capacity within your department, or do you rely on the Department of Business, to keep a track of the pulse of local businesses and what is occurring? Are they downsizing, rostering down, laying off staff or closing businesses in the construction sector? I am not asking you about other sectors, retail and the like - no way! I am discussing construction.

Mr STYLES: The department keeps in regular contact with people. I will ask the CE to report on the activities involved in that liaison.

Mr WAGNER: Yes, member for Karama, we talk to industry people periodically and get broad, anecdotal feedback. Certainly things are tightening up, numbers of tenders are increasing and the dollars coming of it indicate there is downturn.

Ms LAWRIE: Is there any way you would try to quantify that downturn or would you wait for ABS data to come through? The last ABS data I saw showed a pretty sharp decline in state final demand and to prosecute that down to what it means is not an easy exercise, but construction is such a heartbeat of the economy here.

Mr WAGNER: Yes, there are various indices as you are probably aware, including Rider's on the building side of the fence. I am aware the civil construction industry has several leading indicators as well. I note the last version from Rider's had the NT at the top of Australia in buoyancy of the market.

Ms LAWRIE: I think it will sit at the top for a long time, given the big projects. He is trying to slice it down.

Mr WAGNER: It is relative to the base.

Ms LAWRIE: How often, minister, do you meet with the peaks within your sector? Would you identify which peaks you meet with on a regular basis and the frequency?

Mr STYLES: I have spoken to lots of building groups right down to property builders and people who engage in building houses for us. I have met with the Civil Construction Federation NT as a peak body for those. I have been around the Territory on a variety of missions. We have contacted people on Groote Eylandt who are providing services there. I have been to Alice Springs and spoken to contractors there and contractors in Tennant Creek to get their feedback on how we can help them and how we can better serve their needs.

Ms LAWRIE: Would you meet with the residential construction peaks like HIA and Master Builders?

Mr STYLES: Not with the bodies but I have met with sub-groups.

Ms LAWRIE: Their members but not the industry organisations?

Mr STYLES: The department meets with them quarterly - the Master Builders Association, engineers, civil contractors and architects. They are quarterly meetings with the CE, and I have been in the community generally talking to people. I also have people contact my office and we speak to individuals about vital issues they want to raise. I am out on a fairly regular basis.

Ms LAWRIE: Would you envisage getting into the routine the department is in of meetings with all those peaks?

Mr STYLES: Absolutely. I have spoken to them. It would probably be quarterly.

Ms LAWRIE: The feedback I have been getting back is they are keen to have a genuine engagement with the government on a regular basis. They have had a proactive relationship with the department for quite some time. They are keen to get to the minister and talk on peak level initiatives and know what is going on.

Mr STYLES: I am keen to talk to them. We have been talking. Given we have been here just short of three months, we have had a lot of meetings and they are ongoing. Commitments have been made to those groups that we have ongoing meetings on regular basis. I agree it is important to be in touch with the community.

Ms LAWRIE: That is it.

Mr WOOD: If I want to ask questions about various projects what section will it come under? I get confused with this section.

Madam CHAIR: Would you prefer them in an output or...

Mr STYLES: Probably in Output 2, member for Nelson.

Madam CHAIR: In Program Management and Delivery?

Mr WOOD: I do not mind, as long as I do not reach that point and you tell me I have missed my chance. I missed my chance before. My questions deal with certain projects and whether they are ongoing or completed.

Mr STYLES: I believe that is under Output 2, Program Management and Delivery.

Mr WOOD: My faith is with you.

Madam CHAIR: Minister, that concludes questions to your statement. Do you have answers to written questions?

Mr STYLES: Yes, we will start at question 1.

Ms LAWRIE: Minister, are you happy to table that?

Mr STYLES: We would like to go through them. We can provide you with a number of bits and pieces in relation to the questions. Question 1:

Details on progress of all CLP election commitments, including all commitments and policy announcements made to Territorians in CLP election policy documents, summary snapshots, media releases and announcements, 100 day plan, costings and savings documents, media advertisements and other printed material.

Progress of current election commitments – BMX Jingili upgrade, there was \$300 000 from DoI. The client advised DoI funding was given directly as a grant from the department of Sport and Recreation to the organisation. The client has indicated they do not need DoI to have any input. There is no further action on that.

The boat ramp at Dundee Beach, investigate secondary ramp at Shady Camp and location of suburban ramps in Darwin: allocated \$130 000 for 2012-13 and the capital costs are to be confirmed. Dundee boat ramp is on the 2013 design list. The 2012 mini-budget included \$130 000 for the Department of Primary Industry and Fisheries to undertake a comprehensive study of potential new areas able to support a new boat ramp. The Department of Primary Industry and Fisheries is determining the funding split. Consultation is expected to commence in April 2013.

Development of asset management plans: plans and templates are continuing to be upgraded and updated.

Future Indigenous housing works under the national partnership agreement are to be administered through local organisations or councils and facilitated by Housing and the Department of Infrastructure. The Department of Infrastructure has established panels for the refurbishments and new builds. A total of 125 upgrades have been completed for stage one. Detailed priority report is being provided weekly to the minister. Work is being released to panel contractors, shires and Indigenous business enterprises for stage two with new build contracts in place in two communities and upgrade contracts in place for four communities.

In relation to improved roads and to ensure transport of cattle is effective and efficient: the Department of Infrastructure will undertake work once engaged by the Department of Transport.

The new cardiac unit at Royal Darwin Hospital: there is capital of \$12m with \$1.5m for recurrent. Current indications are this is a service delivery initiative not requiring new public infrastructure. It is understood there is no new government construction project proposed to deliver this service.

Palmerston hospital - enable 24-hour emergency service: the first stage of the public tender closed in 2012 with 11 responses received. That project is under review.

Rapid Creek flood mitigation works: \$1.5m recurrent, \$750 000 was allocated to the Department of Land Resource Management in the mini-budget to undertake further studies and modelling. An addendum to the initial report was finalised at the end of February 2013, and also release of maps subject to approval of the Department of Lands, Planning and the Environment and Northern Territory Emergency Services.

Satellite City BMX minor works at Palmerston - \$300 000. No action is required by the Department of Infrastructure. The clients advised the department of Sport and Recreation gave a grant directly to that organisation.

Tiger Brennan Drive - \$33m. There is \$13m of Northern Territory government funds for the Woolner to Dinah Beach section. The Department of Transport has reviewed cash requirements and will see a contract in place by May/June. The target advertising date was 2011. My understanding is this has gone out again for tender.

Transport to improve roads, expand the public network and more airline competition: the scope of those works is unknown as yet. The Alice Springs go kart track lights - \$30 000. We expect funding would go as a direct grant to the Go Kart Association. We will continue to seek direction on Department of Infrastructure involvement from the project director.

Alice Springs Golf Club minor works - \$250 000. It is anticipated a direct grant to the Alice Springs Golf Club will be arranged. Direction is being sought on the Department of Infrastructure involvement from the project director.

The Anzac Oval upgrade in Alice Springs - \$2m. We are seeking additional funding for that. There is funding provided under a grant directly to the organisation, and it is now \$2.8m because of the increased scope of the works. The design consultancy was awarded to Hames Sharley design and is due to be completed on 4 July 2013. Additional funding through the Minister for Infrastructure of \$800 000 to accommodate the design changes has been approved.

Improvement to Alice Springs courtrooms - options and estimates provided to the Department of Attorney-General and Justice - currently experiencing certification issues. The current layout of the court house does not allow for any proposed changes without client interaction or significant structural changes. We are meeting with the client to determine the project direction.

Transform the Alice Springs Youth Centre into a Police and Citizens Youth Club - \$2.5m. The detailed design was completed on 18 April 2013. Tender documents have been completed and released - closing on 22 May 2013.

Katherine and Alice Springs rehabilitation centres - \$35m to construct new centres. Additional accommodation will be delivered by the Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education - using Correctional Services labour. The two centres are cashed at \$1.6m total. Scope documents are to be finalised and the tender award program was in early June. Further funding was announced in the 4 December 2012 mini-budget and the certificate of exemption for the Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education to be the select tenderer was approved by PRB on 11 April 2013.

Katherine CCTV - an allocation of \$1m. The Department of Infrastructure is seeking direction on the scope from the client via the project director. The Katherine region has no involvement to date.

The Katherine police call centre - \$1.85m recurrent. The Department of Infrastructure is seeking direction on the scope from the client via the project director, and the Katherine region has no involvement to date.

Katherine prison farm - \$30m. The Department of Infrastructure is seeking direction on the scope from the client via the project director and is in consultation with the Department of Attorney-General and Justice on an early works brief from the previous government's Department of Infrastructure. AGD has discussed a location and delivery strategy.

In Tennant Creek the establishment of a family support centre is in progress. The Department of Infrastructure is seeking direction on the scope from the client via the project director. The Tennant Creek youth centre is to be confirmed - if this is the Tennant Creek youth accommodation facility with client the Department of the Chief Minister or a project from the department of Sport and Recreation.

The Youth Accommodation Project Funding Agreement with the Northern Territory government and Julalikari has been finalised. Julalikari and the Department of Infrastructure are currently developing a design brief for consultancy engagement.

The Borroloola contract to grow regional centres: part of the site development plan shows a Northern Territory government business centre, but there has been no further development on this. In Borroloola, establish a retail centre and recreation cultural centre. The site - discussion on 18 September 2012 for a multipurpose community centre funded by Xstrata for \$3.5m and the NT government for \$450 000.

Upgrade of roads, including the Savannah Way - \$270 000. Meeting with road network on October 2012, as advised by Mr Bob Pemble, the only 2012-13 upgrade works will be on the Wollogorang Road - the construction of concrete floodway and culvert at Little Fletcher Creek crossing is complete.

Those are the answers to that question, Madam Chair.

Mr McCARTHY: Madam Chair, could we ask questions as we go along?

Madam CHAIR: Yes, as long as the minister is happy with that.

Mr STYLES: Yes.

Mr McCARTHY: There are some interesting projects shaping up there and I am interested in the details around those. However, I may have missed it - the contract with Wadeye. That was, 'We will invest in the upgrade of roads in the Wadeye region, including the road from Daly to Wadeye to ensure year round access'. Where are you at with that election commitment?

Mr STYLES: Obviously the first part is the bridge - the Bulbul bridge over the Daly River ...

Mr McCARTHY: Minister, come on!

Ms LAWRIE: We did that.

Mr STYLES: I did not say we did ...

Mr McCARTHY: You cannot claim the bridge!

Mr STYLES: No, no ...

Mr McCARTHY: We are talking about election commitments, minister - the first written question.

Mr STYLES: I would like to ...

Madam CHAIR: Let the minister answer the question.

Mr STYLES: ... answer the question. The first part was the bridge. We have lost a serious amount of federal funding. I am getting information on that. I am happy to answer this but it is under the Department of Transport.

Direct funding to local government stimulus packaging and carry over funding in the Nation Building 1 road and infrastructure programs from 2008-09 to 2013-14 was about \$474m. The total allocated so far to the NT in Nation Building 2 road and infrastructure programs in 2014-15 to 2018-19 is \$244m. At this stage, there is a difference of \$230m of federal funding we will not receive.

Mr McCARTHY: Are you saying the CLP election commitments were guaranteed by the Commonwealth government before the August 2012 election?

Mr STYLES: Member for Barkly, this is a Department of Transport issue. They are simply our client. They will tell us when they want to do that road. I have given you some information from information the Department of Transport has - at this stage we are \$230m down. I suspect the Department of Transport will ask us to do something when they sort out what they want to do.

Mr McCARTHY: While we are on the subject of roads and budget appropriations, I asked the Minister for Local Government, who referred me to you, about the \$30m commitment for local government roads.

Mr STYLES: My understanding is that is \$10m a year. It has already started to roll-out. Some money will go to shires and various other people in rural areas.

Mr McCARTHY: Minister, I remember both the Chief Minister and yourself talking about this in the House, and the budget appropriation has also recorded that \$30m over three years is for routine and specific maintenance works to roads within the Central Desert, MacDonnell, Victoria Daly, Roper Gulf and Barkley Shires under the regional roads maintenance program. Minister, what happened to the West Arnhem

Shire, the Tiwi Shire, the East Arm Shire and the Coomalie Shire? Can you confirm they are not on the list for the scope of works you are conducting?

Mr STYLES: We do not have the breakup by shire or area, but we are very happy to take that on notice and give you that breakup by shire.

Question on Notice No 10.3

Madam CHAIR: Member for Barkly, can you please restate the question for the record.

Mr McCARTHY: Can the minister supply the scope of works relating to the \$30m commitment over three years for routine and specific maintenance works to roads within the Central Desert, MacDonnell, Victoria Daly, Roper Gulf and Barkly Shires under the regional roads maintenance program and any works planned for the West Arnhem, Tiwi, East Arnhem and Coomalie Shires.

Madam CHAIR: Minister, do you accept the question?

Mr STYLES: We accept the question, thank you.

Madam CHAIR: The question asked by the member for Barkly of the Minister for Infrastructure is 10.3.

Mr McCARTHY: Minister, this one is a little closer to home and might have been a personal commitment, but can you inform the committee about the election commitment for a new air conditioner at the Portuguese Timorese club in Marrara.

Mr STYLES: About the commitment?

Mr McCARTHY: Yes, what is the status of that project, minister? I did not hear it listed and hope, for the Portuguese Timorese club's sake, it is on your list.

Mr STYLES: Many clubs have been encouraged to put in applications for capital works under the multicultural facilities grants.

Mr McCARTHY: Can you give us the grant program? An election commitment says they go in a competitive round in the grant program, is that what you are saying?

Mr STYLES: No, that is not an election commitment – we will give them an air conditioner?

Mr McCARTHY: I have been advised to ask you on behalf of the patrons. That was an election commitment from the CLP and I hope it is on the list to deliver.

Mr STYLES: No, it is not an election commitment.

Mr McCARTHY: If that is your answer, minister, I will leave you to deal with the Portuguese Timorese club.

Minister, in regard to the Borroloola contract you mentioned some innovative work, particularly in partnership with Xstrata by the sound of it. Also in the contract there is mention of a school boarding facility in the gulf region and support for outstations, but let us just go for the boarding facility. I did not hear any scope of work for that in your list. It would be a great thing by the way, minister.

Mr STYLES: We do not have that on our program.

Mr McCARTHY: Minister, I alert you to the fact that was the signed Borroloola contract fly-in, fly-out - Channel 9. The timing was amazing on that deal and we will be holding the government to account.

Mr STYLES: It is not in this year's program, it may be in next year's program, member for Barkly.

Madam Chair, can I correct something said a little while ago in relation to the contract for the Woolner/Dinah Beach section of the Tiger Brennan Drive extension. The contract has been awarded to Ostojic.

Madam CHAIR: Member for Barkly, any further questions?

Mr McCARTHY: Not on the first question.

Mr WOOD: What was the section of Tiger Brennan Drive?

Mr STYLES: Tiger Brennan Drive from Dinah Beach to Woolner Road.

Mr WOOD: Is that the bit needing to be done now?

Mr STYLES: Yes, where the sand is.

Mr WOOD: Minister, in parliament I was asking about the Tiger Brennan Drive extension. Will there be enough room if we ever need a rail corridor, even a bicycle path? Every time you build a freeway you kick all the poor cyclists off and tell them to go the long way around. It may happen in 20 years' time, but will there be enough room for a rail corridor?

Mr STYLES: Yes, the transport corridor is part of the plan.

Mr WOOD: Another interesting one you raised is the prison farm in Katherine. Is there a timetable or is that just a future project?

Mr STYLES: The Department of Infrastructure is seeking direction on the scope from the client via the project director. We do not have the timing at this point. We are looking for the scope of works and, no doubt, at some stage the client will give us the go ahead.

Mr WOOD: It is at the early stage. Thanks, minister.

Madam CHAIR: Minister, did you have any further written questions?

Mr STYLES: Yes. Question 3:

Progress on all commitments and policy announcements made within government press releases and media statements made since 26 August 2012.

We simply go back to question 1 where we gave a breakdown of what is happening.

Question 4 refers back to question 1. Question 5 refers back to question 1. Question 6 is the same answer as Question 1.

Question 7:

Progress on the implementation of all signed written contracts with Territory communities.

This question relates to the Department of Local Government not the Department of Infrastructure.

Question 8:

Details on staff movements and all costs resulting from all Administrative Arrangements changes since 26 August 2012.

In the Department of Infrastructure the cost was \$230, and in the Construction Division it was nil. The Chief Executive's business cards were rebranded to reflect the change in the agency name. Any questions on that?

Question 9:

Details on staff movements and payouts and all costs including ministerial office relocation costs resulting from portfolio reshuffles since 26 August 2012.

The Department of Infrastructure and the Construction Division incurred no costs resulting from portfolio reshuffles.

Question 10:

Details and costs of all government advertising and communications since 26 August 2012.

The Department of Infrastructure manages all communications, marketing, media and web for two orgs: Department of Infrastructure, Org 60; and the Construction Division, Org 61. A breakdown of expenditure is as follows in line with the requested reporting areas.

Advertising: Org 60, Department of Infrastructure, the advertising total was \$1324. Magazines, journals, nothing in newspapers, online, outdoors, radio, television is none. Org 61, Construction Division, advertising \$61 075; magazines and journals, \$245; newspapers, \$49 112; online, \$0; outdoor banners, \$301; radio, \$5657; television, none. The gap in costs above was for production and layout of advertisements. Advertising costs for Org 61 was supporting capital works projects, that is, advising the public of INPEX projects. Examples of bigger expenditure are the Howard Springs intersection, the Cullen Bay sea wall, the ferry terminal and car park upgrades. Advertising costs for Org 60 were promoting industry meetings being held in Tennant Creek.

Marketing: brand development, zero; displays under Org 60, zero; Org 61, \$282; events and exhibitions, Org 60, \$1475; Org 61, \$2870; newsletters, zero; consultation and planning, zero; editorials, written services, zero; market research, zero; marketing websites, zero; photography, zero; brochures and leaflets under Org 60, \$11 217; Org 61, zero; multimedia, zero; promotional merchandise Org 60, \$450; Org 61, zero; media monitoring Org 60, zero; Org 61, \$251. That gives a grand total of \$78 944.

The events and exhibitions expenditure against both Orgs is 100%. Department of Infrastructure staff attendance at industry awards nights, for example, the Master Builders Engineering Excellence Awards; brochures and leaflets against Org 61 is layout design of the 2011-12 Department of Infrastructure Annual Report and production of construction snapshot, design layout and printing; promotional merchandise against Org 60 is stickers for the My DP HR program, and media monitoring against Org 61 is transcripts in relation to capital works projects.

Mr McCARTHY: Thank you, minister.

Mr STYLES: Question 11:

Full details on all government advertising in breach of the Public Information Act as identified by the Auditor-General since 26 August 2012.

This question has been addressed by the Chief Minister.

Question 12:

Full breakdown of all ministerial office expenditure since 26 August 2012.

Again, that has dealt with by the Chief Minister.

Question 13:

A full list of all forced redundancies across all agencies including an explanation for each redundancy on why it was necessary to breach the CLP's election commitment that no public servant would be sacked.

The Office of the Commissioner for Public Employment has prepared a whole-of-service response to this question. It has been addressed by the Minister for Public Employment.

Question 14:

A full list of all personnel who have left the Northern Territory Public Sector and then returned since 26 August 2012 including pay out and settlement details.

The Office of the Commissioner for Public Employment has prepared a whole-of-service response to this question. It has been addressed by the Minister for Public Employment.

Question 15:

Details on all government tenders, contract and grants awarded or granted since 26 August 2012 ...

I am happy to table it but there is quite a substantial list.

Mr McCARTHY: Sure, thank you for that.

Ms LAWRIE: To assist the flow of estimates, if you could table relevant documents that would suit tabling, that would be appreciated.

Mr STYLES: We will table, Madam Chair, a list of all the grants awarded or granted since 26 August 2012. I will table that.

Madam CHAIR: Thank you, minister.

Mr STYLES: That is in response to Question 15.

Question 16:

Details on the procurement processes undertaken and the employment contracts for the employment within the Northern Territory public sector since 26 August 2012 of all former CLP and Liberal party candidates and members of parliament at Territory or federal level.

This question does not relate to the Department of Infrastructure.

Question 17:

Full details and costs of all ministerial travel including accommodation, hospitality and flight details including flight travel class since 26 August 2012.

Madam Chair, that question has been addressed by the Chief Minister.

Question 18:

Full details, costs and invitation lists for all ministerial hospitality since 26 August 2012.

Again, that has been addressed by the Chief Minister.

Question 19:

Full details, costs and invitation lists for all public service hospitality provided since 26 August 2012.

For the Department of Infrastructure the amount is \$550, and the Construction Division it is \$605. For the Department of Infrastructure it consisted of five tickets for Department of Education employees to attend the Smart Schools Awards on Saturday 20 October 2012 as guests of the Chief Executive - \$550.

The Construction Division consisted of five tickets for client services employees to attend the Smart Schools Awards on Saturday, 20 August 2012 as guests of the Chief Executive of \$550, and the Consult Australia December member breakfast held on Wednesday 12 December 2012 at Crowne Plaza Darwin for \$55.

Question 20:

Full details and costs of all interstate or international public service travel including accommodation, hospitality and flight details including flight travel class since 26 August 2012.

The Department of Infrastructure interstate travel amounted to \$26 788 of accommodation \$2651; airfares, \$22 652 and travel allowance, \$1485. To 31 March this year, that was down 15% on the previous year.

For the Construction Division interstate travel amounted to \$29 657 - accommodation \$7701 and airfares \$16 965. Travel allowance was \$4991, and that was down 67% on the previous year. That figure is only to 31 March this year.

No international travel has occurred within the department since 26 August 2012. Attachment A details all interstate travel. I am happy to table that document, Madam Chair.

Madam CHAIR: Thank you, minister.

Mr STYLES: That document is tabled in relation to Question 20.

Question 21:

A breakdown of all water and other natural asset allocation granted by the Northern Territory Government since 26 August 2012 broken down by those granted to CLP members and others.

This question does not relate to the Department of Infrastructure.

Question 22:

Details on all policy items, strategies, actual, estimates, budgets, forecasts, agency outputs and funding decisions contained within the May 2013 budget.

Madam Chair, these details can be found in the 2013-14 Budget Paper No 3 and specific questions will be addressed through the estimates hearing process.

Question 23:

Details on all financial and economic data contained within Operating Statements, Balance Sheets, Cash Flow Statements in the May 2013 budget.

Again, Madam Chair, these details can be found in 2013-14 Budget Paper No 3 and specific questions will be addressed through the estimates hearing process.

Question 24:

Full details including impact statement and implementation plans on all agency savings identified within the December 2012 mini budget and the May 2013 budget.

Madam Chair, the Department of Infrastructure established a future directions project team to manage the savings strategy of a reduction in full-time equivalent employees, tightening the operational expenditure across the organisation and a 30% reduction in fleet costs over four years as presented in the mini-budget 2012-13. The Department of Infrastructure in 2012-13 - in relation to operating savings there were savings of \$800 000 and operating savings in the Construction Division of \$1.9m. In the 2013-14 financial year, operating savings of \$2.5m have been achieved, whole-of-government – this is budgeted – marketing and communication review, \$700 000; whole-of-government NT fleet savings in relation to what the Department of Infrastructure is required to do is \$8000; the Construction Division, under operating savings, it has budgeted for \$6m and whole-of-government NT fleet savings of \$500 000. The operating savings includes reduction in full-time equivalent staffing numbers, a target of 10% savings in operational expenditure and a 30% reduction in fleet vehicles. In relation to fleet vehicles, in 2013 we budgeted for 10 and have achieved 15 so are ahead of target.

The future directions project team approved the implementation plan in February 2013, which includes the following strategies to address agency savings: the organisational restructure - completed; establish a resource management committee – completed; implement the procurement reform action plan – completed; implement new procedures for minor new works allocation and delivery – completed; establish a union consultative committee – completed; implement the fleet management strategy – completed; review of the procurement evaluation team – progressing; implement a pricing policy - progressing; and implement new service level agreements with all clients - progressing.

Question 25:

Details on all information and data contained within the fiscal strategy, updated fiscal outlook, risks to the updated financial projections, expenses and capital investment, intergovernmental revenue and Territory taxes and royalties.

All that information is contained in Budget Paper No 2.

Question 26:

Full details on all information and data contained within the capital works program and estimated capital expenditure across all Government agencies and corporations.

Madam Chair, these details can also be found in 2013-14 Budget Paper No 4, and specific questions will be addressed throughout the estimates hearing process.

Question 27:

Full details of all revenue measures including new taxes and tax increases including levies and charges. Details to include risk impact statements, community and industry consultation plans, economic modelling and revenue projections.

In relation to this, the rental income from the Chan Building in Darwin. The Department of Infrastructure owns the Chan Building, which has approximately 2060 m² of floor space on levels 1 and 2. The 2013 budget revenue is \$381 000 and is based on a Northern Territory government agency occupying this space.

Mr McCARTHY: A question about Contemporary Art Space. Are there any projected works for that area?

Mr STYLES: There are ongoing discussions in relation to the use of the building, and ongoing discussions in relation to maintenance that has to be done on that building.

Mr McCARTHY: Minister, I get a good look at the roof of that building when I visit the lovely city of Darwin. I have a few concerns around the roof and water leaking out of the cooling plants. It might be worth mentioning that now.

Mr STYLES: We are discussing future use of the building. At this point in time the Contemporary Art Space has use of the building until the end of the year, free of charge, but we are looking at the maintenance requirements of the building.

Mr McCARTHY: Thank you, minister.

Mr STYLES: Question 28:

Full details on the operational impacts across all Government entities as a result of all Government decisions and policies:

Details can be found in Budget Paper No 3, 2013-14, and specific questions will be addressed through the estimates hearing process.

Question 29:

Full details on the operational impacts across all Government entities as a result of the Government's savings measures:

Information relating to the Department of Infrastructure can be provided in response to more specific questions on this issue.

Question 30:

Details on the operational impacts across Non-Government agencies as a result of all Government funding, decisions and policies:

Non-government organisations are external to the budget.

Questions 31:

Full details on the impacts across all Government entities as a result of all increases in Government and Government corporation charges, prices and tariffs since 26 August 2012:

Increases affecting the Department of Infrastructure are in utilities expenditure effective 1 January 2013. They are: electricity 18.84%, water 29.79% and sewerage 14.92%.

Ms LAWRIE: You are talking percentage. Do you have those in dollar terms?

Mr STYLES: Not at this time. We are still working out the bills, but I hope you will take it on notice if you want a dollar impact.

Question on Notice 10.4

Madam CHAIR: Member for Karama, could you please restate the question for the record.

Ms LAWRIE: Please provide the Power and Water tariff increase impacts on the Department of Infrastructure in dollar terms.

Madam CHAIR: Minister, do you accept the question?

Mr STYLES: We do, Madam Chair.

Madam CHAIR: The question asked by the member for Karama to the Minister for Infrastructure is 10.4.

Mr STYLES: Question 32:

Full details on all information and data contained within the two most recent Reports on Government Services:

The two most recent reports on government services do not contain sections relating to the Department of Infrastructure.

Question 33:

Full details on all information and data contained within all Annual Reports produced by all Government entities across the last two financial years.

Those reports are publically available and refer online to www.nt.gov.au/infrastructure. Of course, specific questions can be addressed through the estimates process.

Questions 34:

Full details on all information and data contained within any report produced by a Statutory Authority of the Northern Territory Government within the last five years and full details on any and all actions of all Government entities in response to the report or related to the report:

The Department of Infrastructure has been referred to in the following annual reports: Commissioner of Public Interest Disclosure 2010-11 and 2011-12, and the Ombudsman for the Northern Territory 2007-08, 2010-11 and 2011-12. Details can be found on www.blowthewhistle.nt.gov.au/publications and the second one can be found at www.ombudsman.nt.gov.au/publications-reports/annual-reports.

Question 35:

Full details on all information and data contained within any report commissioned by the Northern Territory Government and produced within the last five years and full details on any and all actions of all Government entities in response to the report or related to the report.

The nature of this question is very board. Specific questions are invited in relation to the Department of Infrastructure.

Question 36:

Full details on all information, data and forecasts contained within reports produced in the last two years in relation to the Northern Territory by Deloitte Access Economics, CommSec, Sensis, Australian Property Monitors, Housing Industry Association, Property Council, Master Builders Association and ANZ including the response from Government entities to these reports.

Again, the nature of this question is very broad. Specific questions relating to the Department of Infrastructure are invited.

Question 37:

Full details and all information and data produced by the Australian Bureau of Statistics in relation to the Northern Territory in the last two years, including the response of Government entities to these reports.

The nature of this question is very broad. Specific questions are invited in relation to the Department of Infrastructure.

Question 38:

Details on all reports and data published on Northern Territory Government websites.

The nature of this question is very broad. Specific questions are invited in relation to the Department of Infrastructure.

Madam Chair, those are all the written questions we have.

Madam CHAIR: Thank you very much, minister.

Mr McCARTHY: Madam Chair, I thank the minister for reading that on to the public record. Minister, that is what you get when you ask for written questions. Thank you for the information you provided.

Mr STYLES: It was a pleasure.

Madam CHAIR: Thank you, member for Barkly.

Agency-Related Whole-of-Government Questions

Madam CHAIR: The committee will now consider the estimates of proposed expenditure contained in the Appropriation Bill 2013-14 as they relate to the Department of Infrastructure. Are there any agency-related whole-of-government questions on budget and fiscal strategies? No.

That concludes consideration of agency-related whole-of-government questions on budget and fiscal strategies.

OUPTPUT GROUP 1.0 – INFRASTRUCTURE SERVICES **Output Group 1.1 – Infrastructure Development**

Madam CHAIR: The committee will now proceed to Output Group 1.0 Infrastructure Services, Output 1.1 Infrastructure Development. Are there any questions? All is quiet. Member for Nelson, do you have a question in Output 1.1?

Mr WOOD: No, mine are in the construction section.

Madam CHAIR: That concludes Output Group 1.1.

Output Group 1.2 – Asset Management Services

Madam CHAIR: The committee will now consider Output Group 1.2, Asset Management Services. Are there any questions?

Mr McCARTHY: Minister, Budget Paper No 3, page 318, describes the Asset Management System as a key deliverable and 95% complete in 2012-13. Could you advise the committee of further progress on implementing that major system?

Mr STYLES: We inherited a system which was not an end-to-end system; IT was silo system. It started off at a tender price of \$7.4m, but when we inherited the program \$28.2m had been expended and we still did not have a system that was working effectively. In fact, a lot happened in this area, member for Barkly. We looked at what needed to happen. We formed what is known as the Tiger Team to analyse where we were at, what we needed to do and how to fix it. A number of things came out of that.

First, when we took over the system there was no conceptual framework, no governance framework and no plan. We had many people talking about what had to happen, but nothing had really been put down and no one had any guidance so everyone was going in different directions. What we have now, as a result of the Tiger Team, is an asset management system conceptual framework. I will talk about this and am happy to give you a copy of this if you want.

Madam Chair, I will table these documents for the information of members.

Madam CHAIR: Thank you very much, minister. Nice colourful ones.

Mr STYLES: For assistance in reading.

Mr WOOD: We will get them in black and white.

Madam CHAIR: To help the member for Nelson.

Mr STYLES: There are enough copies for all members. We gave you a colour one, member for Nelson.

We have a conceptual framework. It is quite a complex problem we have inherited and it requires a reasonably complex fix. I will ask the custodian of the AMS remediation program to explain what this is all about.

Ms BRADFORD: Thank you, minister. Anne Bradford. If you look at the conceptual framework you will see down the left-hand side of the page a series of blue boxes. If you start at the base of that you will see a thing called 'Business as Usual'. Above that is the 'End of Financial Year Urgent Remediation Program', 'Recovery Program', 'Business Ownership', and 'Strategy and Governance'.

The conceptual framework we put together separates the 'Business as Usual' from the project itself. Earlier this year we had a team of people running the AMS system as a live system in a production environment.

The Tiger Team, when it got together in March - the Tiger Team consisted of a group of IT recovery specialists from Deloitte as well as representatives from a number of NT agencies - came up with a number of high priority projects. They were to assist the whole-of-government strategy to close the books this financial year.

We embarked on a project which remediated the tool so we had 10 high priority projects. We have now completed four of those in accordance with the plan we put together. We have another six we intend to complete to allow us full functionality of what we originally built.

You can see in the end of the financial year remediation program, if you go across to the right, the end of financial year gap assessment conducted in March and April. We then had a stage gate where we confirmed we had adequate funding to remediate those 10 items.

On each of those projects we have system tested, integrated tested and had user acceptance testing. If any one of those failed we went back to the start. As I said, we have now deployed four of those so four things - those four things are GST, depreciation, agency transformation, and CD billing. The issues to do with the billing of the Construction Division have now been resolved. We have now deployed those into the steady safe structure of 'Business as Usual'.

Once we complete all 10 projects we will go to program closure and do a formal closure.

I will move to recovery. Once we have completed the end of financial year urgent remediation our intent is to review what we have built then confirm, based on the vision of the government then the vision of each of the 33 agencies, what the true scope should be of the asset management system. Then we will explain the difference between what we have built and what we need to build to then recover.

At that point in time, which will be some time in the first half of the next financial year, we will embark on a recovery program and, using the same methodology, will look at remediating it, system testing, integration testing, user acceptance testing and then deploy into the live environment. There is a difference between the recovery program data. In the recovery program it is about data management. Whilst we are remediating it is all about data cleansing and reconciliation.

The next line I wish to talk to is business ownership. That is all about each of the agencies owning their end-to-end process and owning their data. At the moment, many of the problems you would have heard earlier in the week were regarding data and data quality. Whilst the AMS team, whose whole purpose in being is to get a functioning IT tool together - whilst we own and inherited the problems of the data, it will give bad data. At the moment the tool is functioning so we can produce reports. What is not functioning correctly is the content within that tool. Once business takes back the ownership of their end-to-end process and their data, the integrity of the tool will be better.

The other thing that has changed markedly is the strategy in governance. As I mentioned earlier, we have been focusing on the vision. From that we need the solution architecture that conforms with the whole-of-government IT policy. We then need some change controls which the minister alluded to before, and that is in reference to our governance framework and our whole-of-government policy for asset management - information governance to ensure all information captured is in a standard format.

We then have to identify what success looks like at the end of the delivery phase. Once we have ascertained what we are trying to build, we then need to ensure and evaluate that we have built what we have said we would. The final part is to ensure the 'Business as Usual' has a series of policies and standards that conform across government.

Mr STYLES: Madam Chair, also for the information of members of the Estimates Committee, I would like to give you an AMS governance framework that we will refer to. It may assist. I would like to table that if I may.

Madam CHAIR: Thank you, minister.

Mr STYLES: We did them in colour for you too, member for Nelson.

Mr WOOD: Thank you, minister.

Madam CHAIR: You have set a new standard, minister.

Mr WOOD: I will expect it to stay that way.

Mr STYLES: I would also like to table the end of financial year urgent remediation prioritised list of the 10 items we spoke about. While we are waiting for that, Madam Chair, the other aspect of this is we found there was no vision statement and no mission statement. We have created a vision statement and a mission statement so all players in this are on the same sheet. The vision statement for the asset management system now is that the asset management system will enable greater coordination of strategic government expenditure and capital investment. That is why we need the vision statement.

What will we do to achieve that? The mission statement is that the asset management system will do this through first enabling government to accurately determine the financial and social through-life costs of significant and competing strategic infrastructure investments to the Northern Territory community. Also, it will enable optimised whole-of-government investment management and decision-making, providing an accurate single point for asset-related reporting and budgeting, ensuring transparency of commitments, avoid over/under spends and provide a standard platform for managing end-to-end asset management life cycle, that is: procurement, build, operate and maintain, plan and decommission.

Given we did not have any of these documents before we now have them. It has been very successful in pulling the team on to having the same vision.

Mr McCARTHY: Minister, Budget Paper No 3 says the key deliverable of 95% is complete, and there is a budget appropriation of \$6.495m. Do you feel that is adequate to finish the task?

Mr STYLES: In relation to page 218, that is Asset Management Services not the system, if I am correct. Under Asset Management Services it says to provide help desk training and stakeholder engagement services across government. That is not remediation.

Mr McCARTHY: The system comes into that budget output area, minister?

Mr STYLES: Yes, it does. That is what the 95% refers to – that line.

Mr McCARTHY: The budget appropriation in that is for continued work on the asset management system?

Mr STYLES: That is correct.

Mr McCARTHY: Thank you, minister.

Minister, was any liability put on the original contractors? Has there been any compensation back to government?

Mr STYLES: That matter is being discussed. There are ongoing negotiations with Fujitsu, being the integrator of this, in relation to what they may or may not be responsible for.

Mr McCARTHY: At some stage there would be a figure around that when negotiations are complete?

Mr STYLES: Yes, that is my expectation.

Mr McCARTHY: Minister, I would like to thank you and all your staff for the continued work on delivering that important system for the Northern Territory.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: Are there any more questions?

That concludes consideration of Output 1.2.

Output 1.3 – Technical Specifications

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: The committee will now move to Output 1.3 Technical Specifications. Are there any questions?

Mr McCARTHY: Madam Deputy Chair, if I could just clarify as the member for Nelson did. Questions around projects would be better in the Construction Division output, is that correct?

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: We can skip that if you all agree.

Mr McCARTHY: Thank you, Madam Deputy Chair. My question was confirmed and I do not have any questions in Output 1.3.

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: Member for Nelson?

Mr WOOD: No.

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: We can skip that and go to the next one if that is all right with you, minister?

Mr STYLES: Yes.

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: That concludes consideration of Output 1.3.

Output 1.4 - Program Management.

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: The committee will now consider Output 1.4 Program Management. Are there any questions?

Mr McCARTHY: No, Madam Chair.

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: Member for Nelson?

Mr WOOD: No.

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: That concludes consideration of Output 1.4 and Output Group 1.0.

Non-Output Specific Budget-Related Questions

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: Are there any non-output specific budget related questions?

Mr McCARTHY: In Output 1 no, Madam Chair.

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: That concludes consideration of outputs relating to the Department of Infrastructure. On behalf of the committee I thank the officers who provided assistance to the minister today.

OUTPUT GROUP 2.0 – CONSTRUCTION DIVISION

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: The committee will now consider the Construction Division. I welcome you again, minister and invite you to introduce the officials accompanying you, if you wish to, and to make an opening statement.

Mr STYLES: Madam Deputy Chair, the Chief Executive, Alan Wagner is on my left; the Deputy CE Anne Bradford is on my right; and Leah Atkinson is the CFO of the Department of Infrastructure. Mr Bob Pemble is also present.

I do not have an opening statement; I made it at the beginning.

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: Are there any questions on the Construction Division?

Mr McCARTHY: Minister, I am interested in a number of projects. The first project in Budget Paper No 3 is the Katherine High Level Bridge over the King River. While you are looking for that, minister the budget appropriation is \$3.829m. It would be good to hear the scope of that as a new capital works project.

Mr STYLES: I will ask Mr Bob Pemble to answer that question, member for Barkly.

Mr PEMBLE: Bob Pemble, Executive Director, Civil Services. Member for Barkly, the project was originally upgrading the King River Bridge on the Stuart Highway. We found another solution to that problem, which was raising a section immediately north of the bridge so the bridge was not duplicated.

Mr McCARTHY: Thank you, Mr Pemble. Minister, that is a great piece of work. Is that project complete?

Mr PEMBLE: Yes, the project is complete. It was part of the federal program of flood immunity so the savings on that project were redirected to other priorities.

Mr McCARTHY: That was my question. The Territory got two bangs for the buck.

Mr PEMBLE: Correct.

Mr McCARTHY: Minister, is it okay to ...

Mr STYLES: Those priorities are directed by the Minister for Transport. We were following the directions of the client. Whatever is ordered as a priority is with the Minister for Transport.

Mr McCARTHY: That is great, minister. Not only do we get that flood immunity work - which is a great job, well done - we get a new bridge as well. Is that correct, minister?

Mr STYLES: We are very innovative people in the Construction Division.

Mr McCARTHY: You drive the engine room of the government. You are a lucky man.

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: Member for Barkly, please stick to the point.

Mr McCARTHY: Mr Pemble, the detour on the flood immunity project, which is complete, has been covered in hardwood. It is an interesting reclamation project. I have never seen it before. Can you give me any details around that?

Mr PEMBLE: Sorry, I have not seen it myself. We are responsible for rehabilitating detours, which involves ripping up the gravel end or sealing and reinstating with topsoil and/or vegetation that was stripped previously.

Mr McCARTHY: Minister, it is very interesting, you should see it. It was a significant detour of about 1.7 km and when it was rehabilitated it was covered in large ...

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: Member for Barkly, is that a question?

Mr McCARTHY: Yes, Madam Chair, of course it is. I have lots of questions.

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: Can you get to them, please.

Mr McCARTHY: It was covered in dead trees and it created an interesting road reserve. Has that ever been done before in the Northern Territory?

Mr WOOD: Absolutely.

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: Member for Nelson, please stop interjecting. No one is asking you a question.

Mr WOOD: No one is interjecting.

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: Member for Nelson, I do not want to put you on a warning.

Mr WOOD: You can put me on a warning. We have a certain amount of informality in estimates. It is not ...

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: Member for Nelson, Standing Order 69, interruption of a member when they are trying to answer a question. Can you stop interjecting?

Mr WOOD: I am asking me a question

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: I will not ask you again.

Mr McCARTHY: Madam Chair, can I ask another question about rock netting and the budget appropriation of \$500 000? I have been watching those projects unravel as well. There are five sites and I presume this \$500 000 delivers more rock netting. Can you tell me where?

Mr STYLES: I will hand this to Mr Pemble.

Mr PEMBLE: Member for Barkly, the concentration has been through the Hayes Creek area, but we have a list of priorities and, progressively, as funds are available, will continue that program.

Mr McCARTHY: Thank you, Mr Pemble. Minister, I am interested in the budget appropriation of \$500 000 because - if you are familiar with the original projects and existing work there, the excavation is done first then rock netting secured. How much will we get for \$500 000?

Mr PEMBLE: Member for Barkly, I cannot give you an exact square metre area. I am happy to table that at a later date.

Mr McCARTHY: Thank you, Mr Pemble. Minister, I am asking this in relation to your government's ultimate objective around efficiency because, once again, this issue around mobilisation costs - there were significant works in that area and they have done a great job. They definitely delivered improved road safety and secured that area. It seems inefficient to deliver a major project on five sites, leave the site, and then remobilise the \$500 000 worth of work.

Mr STYLES: I received some information from Mr Pemble earlier in relation to utilising existing contractors, moving contracts around and bringing things forward to achieve efficiencies in the system and a bigger bang for our buck.

Mr McCARTHY: That is great, minister.

Mr STYLES: We do that. We are happy to explain that because it was a question I put to the department some time ago and, more recently, had another briefing on some of the issues you are talking about.

Mr McCARTHY: Thank you, minister. You might want to adopt me as a roads inspector; I could be a seconded roads inspector.

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: You know the rules, member for Barkly.

Mr McCARTHY: Madam Deputy Chair.

Mr STYLES: Is that an honorary inspector?

Mr McCARTHY: Yes, you bet. The reason I raise this at estimates in a public hearing is because I raised it with the Minister for Local Government as well - about shire roads projects. Another good example is having a significant project going on in Borroloola - \$17m in civil construction around the sewerage – stage two – and having civil construction located in that area for over 18 months and being able to maximise the opportunity to have our shires road done. It is not only me who thinks like this, it is a councillor of many years in Borroloola who has also reinforced that recently.

Thank you for that discussion.

Mr STYLES: I might ask the CE to give us some information on that.

Mr WAGNER: Thanks you for the question, member for Barkly. As you know, we are required to get the best value for money in capital works procurement. That includes requirement for knowledge of the supply chain, particularly in the bush and the regions. We will know who is in town and capable of doing that work.

As you would know from your previous history, we have some period contracts where we offer that work to existing people, or bundles of work to achieve the best value for money possible. What you are suggesting is that we, perhaps, offer the unspecified items, so-called, to others and have competitive quotes on that.

On top of all that, we offer work to the shires, as you would know as well. That has been successful to varying degrees. I guarantee we drive as best we can the value for money for the funds available and, in fact, talk to our clients about making funds available start of year, end of year, so we can do it in the Dry Season etcetera.

Mr McCARTHY: Thanks, Mr Wagner. Another project, minister, is the Utopia airstrip, which is listed in the budget. I was there recently and, as far as I am aware, the project is complete. Is that correct - the upgrade and sealing of Utopia airstrip? I was not flying either, minister.

Mr STYLES: Right.

Mr McCARTHY: Unfortunately.

Mr STYLES: Not low level or high level?

Mr McCARTHY: Still in the Toyota.

Mr STYLES: Member for Barkly, I can inform you that was deleted from the program in the mini-budget.

Mr McCARTHY: So, it is complete, minister?

Mr STYLES: No, the project was deleted from the program in the mini-budget in December 2012.

Mr McCARTHY: Okay. It is not on the program?

Mr STYLES: That is my information, member for Barkly.

Mr McCARTHY: We had better have that checked out. The budget announcements cut Canteen Creek's airstrip in the Barkly electorate, but continued with Utopia and Yarralin, I believe, in the electorates of Namatjira and Stuart.

Mr STYLES: We can get back to you on that because there are some land tenure issues there. Would you like us to get back to you on that?

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: Do you want to take the question on notice?

Mr McCARTHY: No, this is a good example, Madam Deputy Chair, of where we can ...

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: The question cannot be debated in the committee; you can leave that for the House, member for Barkly. Go to the next question.

Mr McCARTHY: Thank you, minister, for your advice. I would like further advice on that because if there is money for an upgraded airstrip I would be keen to talk to you.

You also talked about the work on the Woollogorang Road, and Fletcher Creek has investment. Did you complete the scope of works on the big Calvert River crossing? I am referring to the design works, minister.

Mr STYLES: No, we have not, member for Barkly. That is still with the Department of Transport and we are awaiting advice.

Mr McCARTHY: Minister, last night the Minister for Parks and Wildlife revealed the extent of asbestos in our Territory parks and outlined a number of parks. My original questioning was around the George Brown Botanical Gardens. Minister, I am keen to hear about the processes around removal of asbestos. Is your department undergoing works for Parks and Wildlife?

Mr STYLES: Yes, member for Barkly, there is a quite a bit of work going on. Given the CE is on the asbestos task force, I might ask him to give you some more detail on that.

Mr WAGNER: Thank you, minister. In fact, I chair the task force that is building a risk management strategy across NT government agencies. The strategy is being developed to meet the Work, Health and Safety Act and the National Codes of Practice and the National Uniform Legislation, which is just changing. The strategy involves risk management approach.

Step one is to identify and record asbestos-containing material in the asbestos registers - a national park or parks client agency would be required to do that; assess the risk posed by asbestos-containing material identified; remove the asbestos-containing material based on assessed level of risk – the loose friable asbestos, the high risk stuff, has largely been removed from NT government assets.

The fourth step is to manage in situ the asbestos-containing material based on its assessed level of risk. If bonded, it is notionally safe unless disturbed. Step five is to develop and maintain effective consultation frameworks and awareness and training programs. That is a key part - working with our friends in Workplace Health and Safety, particularly some of the larger agencies. We will have a uniform base for each NT government agency to manage asbestos-containing material. We play a lead role and, as you know, contractors engaged by this department will be required to carry out the work in accordance with the strategy.

Mr McCARTHY: Minister, is Parks and Wildlife a client in relation to these sites?

Mr STYLES: Yes, they are. Also, as the CE said, he chairs the body of government agencies. We are part of that to make sure it is done in accordance with the strategy.

Mr McCARTHY: Sticking to road reserves, minister, I am becoming a regular correspondent and always like to finish off and do so in good faith. I do a lot of kilometres across a lot of roads in the Northern Territory and your responses have been good. Thank you, minister, because you have been alerted to these issues and you respond.

Tonight I would like to reinforce the policy. Could you outline the policy of removal of a dumped, wrecked motor vehicle on a Northern Territory road reserve?

Mr STYLES: Member for Barkly, the policy comes under the Department of Transport, under Traffic Regulations but, under Part 5 it says abandoned vehicles. Can I give you a definition?

In this Part, abandoned vehicle means a vehicle that is:

(a) registered under the Motor Vehicles Act (or a corresponding Act of another jurisdiction) and is left:

(i) for more than 24 hours at a place where it is prohibited by these Regulations to be stopped or parked;

(ii) for more than 24 hours in a parking area where the time a vehicle may remain parked is limited; or

(b) not registered under the Motor Vehicles Act (or a corresponding Act of another jurisdiction) and is left on a road.

64 Removal of parked vehicles

(1) If a vehicle is stopped or parked:

(a) at a place where it is prohibited by these Regulations to be left stopped or parked; or

(b) in a manner or position that causes danger, obstruction or inconvenience to drivers, a member of the Police Force or an officer of the competent authority may move the vehicle or cause it to be moved.

(2) the vehicle may be moved:

(a) to the nearest convenient place where parking is not prohibited or where the vehicle may be left without causing or being likely to cause a danger, obstruction or inconvenience; or

(b) to any other place (including a police station) for safe keeping that the member or officer thinks fit.

The cost of dealing with abandoned vehicles is estimated to exceed \$100 000 per year. The total number of vehicles abandoned in the Territory was 310 from 1 July 2012 to 30 April 2013. There were 66 in Darwin, 40 in Katherine, 72 in Tennant Creek, 131 in Alice Springs and one in Nhulunbuy.

Mr McCARTHY: Minister, I am talking about vehicles well and truly outside those regional centres. When does the department engage, on behalf of their client, to remove a vehicle?

Mr STYLES: First we have to know the vehicle is there, so we rely on people. If you are out the back of the Carpentaria Highway it would probably take someone to advise us, and vehicles may be removed from a Territory government road seven days after they have been abandoned. We have to know when the vehicle was abandoned and, of course, if no one bothers to report it, it could stay there for some time until either road maintenance comes along - I expect contractors would notify the relevant authority or the competent body a vehicle was on the side of the road. I would assume it was a danger. Most people I know who live in a remote area are concerned about safety and would report that to someone in their local town or community.

Mr McCARTHY: My latest correspondence highlights the fact that, with a drought year and a lot of pressure on pastures, these vehicles are being wrecked at an alarming rate then burnt. This is my real concern now we are getting a number of vehicles abandoned, and I am reporting them across six different highways this year. The real risk now is fire, and constituents are telling me this as well. I wanted to make you aware I am doing this in good faith, and if there is any way of addressing this issue through local solutions we should be looking at it.

Mr STYLES: I agree. I have received correspondence from you. To my knowledge all the vehicles you reported have been removed.

Mr McCARTHY: The Sandover would be a tricky one, but I will tell you that story another day.

Minister, the heavy vehicle bypass through Katherine, what is the current status of the project?

Mr STYLES: My understanding is the scope of that has been discussed and issues are being discussed with Katherine Town Council. That sits with the Department of Transport and we have not been advised of the final outcome.

Mr McCARTHY: You do not have a scope of works?

Mr STYLES: No, not yet. We are awaiting instructions from the Department of Transport as to what options they want to use.

Mr McCARTHY: Minister, the work for your clients in Housing, the breakdown of packages and the ambition of government to get local people employed and working, can you give me details around that work progressing, particularly the new Commonwealth package in Indigenous remote housing?

Mr STYLES: Are you referring to the NPARIH package?

Mr McCARTHY: Yes.

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: We will take a 10 minute break now.

The committee suspended

Madam CHAIR: We are resuming with the Construction Division. Are there any questions?

Mr McCARTHY: Madam Chair, just a briefing about the great innovative work the department has done.

Madam CHAIR: Is that a side briefing?

Mr McCARTHY: No, the minister is prepared to give me a short briefing, Madam Chair.

Mr STYLES: In answer to your question, member for Barkly, in relation to the department of Construction and NPARIH delivery, tenders issued as at 24 June 2013 are: new builds, 130; awarded as at 24 June 2013, 56; target for 30 June 2013 is 59; expected 30 June 2013 complete is three.

Upgrades: tenders issued as at 30 June 2013 was 407; awarded as at 24 June 2013, 275; the 30 June target of 119 - expected complete at 30 June 2013 is 110; and 59 are untouched.

Mr McCARTHY: Would it be possible to have the awarded tenders tabled to see who is doing the work?

Mr STYLES: Yes, member for Barkly, we are happy to table that.

Question on Notice No 10.5

Madam CHAIR: Member for Barkly, can you please restate the question for the record.

Mr McCARTHY: Would the minister table the list of awarded contracts for the Commonwealth Indigenous remote housing program – it has a new name.

Mr STYLES: National Partnership Agreement Remote Indigenous Housing.

Mr McCARTHY: For the new and the refurbishments.

Madam CHAIR: Minister, do you accept the question?

Mr STYLES: I accept the question, Madam Chair. Can we make that new builds and upgrades, to get the terminology correct? That is what the charts say.

Madam CHAIR: I am sure Hansard can do that.

The question asked by the member for Barkly of the Minister for Infrastructure is 10.5.

Mr McCARTHY: Minister, is there positive progress in the settlement with John Holland over the Alice Springs Hospital remediation work?

Mr STYLES: Yes, there is. There were ongoing negotiations in relation to that. I will ask the CE to give you a more detailed answer.

Mr WAGNER: The pleasing news, member for Barkly, is I was able to negotiate a successful outcome through a mediation process with John Holland. Both parties are happy, but I cannot give you the figure because it is commercial-in-confidence. The remediation will continue.

Madam CHAIR: It has not settled?

Mr WAGNER: Yes it has settled and we are formalising that agreement.

Madam CHAIR: I was the lawyer on the file; I was interested.

Mr VATSKALIS: I am pleased to hear this has finally been settled. However, will the settlement be enough to cover the cost of remediating all the malpractices at Alice Springs Hospital? What is the cost to the taxpayer if the settlement is not big enough to satisfy your department, and every building certifier and surveyor, about rectifying all the things not done properly at Alice Springs Hospital?

Mr WAGNER: Member for Casuarina, you might be working me backwards to find the figure for the settlement.

Mr VATSKALIS: Will there be a cost to the taxpayer, on top of the settlement, to rectify all the things which were done wrong?

Mr WAGNER: It is a very good outcome for the Northern Territory and goes a significant way to covering the cost for remediation.

Mr VATSKALIS: Which means the taxpayer still has to contribute.

Mr WAGNER: It goes a significant way to covering the cost.

Mr VATSKALIS: That means we have to contribute.

Mr McCARTHY: Thank you, Madam Chair. That concludes my questions. I know the member for Nelson has some questions. Thank you, minister for the opportunity to discuss these issues with the experts from your department.

Mr STYLES: Thank you, member for Barkly.

Mr WOOD: I will start with a small one first. Under Civil Construction in the annual report - I gather you deal with road reserve management, is that correct, minister?

Mr STYLES: That is my understanding. In relation to what aspect?

Mr WOOD: Landscaping maintenance, which I follow from time to time and wonder if contractors sometimes wish to show off their pruning skills for no good reason. In other words, they want to make sure the department is impressed by all the hard work they do. I will give you an example. The landscaping at Coolalinga, which you might remember, half was taken on the Easter long weekend then replanted by volunteers – it is coming up beautifully. They have the hibiscus they plant regularly - the Queensland hibiscus ...

Mr STYLES: Is this a statement or a question?

Mr WOOD: Well, I thought I would explain the fellows come along and basically ...

Madam CHAIR: He likes to build the picture.

Mr WOOD: Without it you do not have the question. They prune it back; it used to cover the water pipe. The landscaping at Coolalinga is excellent although it is mainly on one side. Do you have guidelines, or do people use a chainsaw to impress the department it has the best contract? Is some horticultural science involved?

Mr STYLES: I might ask Bob Pemble to address that issue, member for Nelson.

Mr PEMBLE: Member for Nelson, landscaping contracts are done on a performance schedule so they are not paid more for pruning more. I leave it up to the experts; they are required to have arborists as part of their team in the decision-making around pruning.

Mr WOOD: Is the arborist the manager of the team or the one with a certificate in chainsaw management? That is the problem. Minister, also quite a bit of weed spraying is done. I have had complaints from people that the arborists know which plant is a good one and which is not, but generally, out the side of the door goes a big drum of Roundup and everything underneath the plants is killed instead of being replaced, especially native plants. Does anyone audit those contracts?

Mr PEMBLE: As I said, it is performance based so they are paid on performance. There are adjustments to payments based on not achieving certain criteria under the contracts.

Mr WOOD: Does performance mean, 'Look at me, look at me' type performance or people who know the plants to say, 'They don't need pruning, these ones do'?

Mr PEMBLE: It relates to a range of aspects: whether the grass has been mowed; whether the litter has been collected; whether the irrigation is working correctly - all those aspects.

Mr WOOD: All right.

Mr STYLES: I suppose if you killed everything you might not get paid?

Mr WOOD: I do not know if anyone worries. You might think this is minor, but in the long term it saves money. On the Stuart Highway there are quite a few areas of direct-seeded clumps of native plants. They are mainly wattles and plants that do not live a long time and replace themselves - new growth will come up. If there is grass there along comes the man with the big drum of Roundup who goes whoosh. That ruins trying to keep the highways looking beautiful. Those plantings act as barriers to headlights and also, believe it or not, can help prevent head-on collisions because cars can stop instead of going across the road. It is part of my background, and I sometimes scratch my head as to whether there is any control.

Mr PEMBLE: The intent under the contracts is to allow revegetation to occur naturally. It is not in the contracts to poison or whipper snip regrowth.

Mr WOOD: Minister, was the new fire station at Berrimah a design and construct?

Mr STYLES: Yes, it was.

Mr WOOD: How many variations were included in the design and construct?

Mr STYLES: We do not have that information with us. We can take that on notice.

Question on Notice No 10.6

Mr WOOD: Minister, the new Berrimah fire station was built as a design and construct. What was the total number of variations approved in that construction?

Madam CHAIR: Member for Nelson, your question to the minister is question 10.6.

Mr STYLES: We accept that, Madam Chair.

Madam CHAIR: Good because I have already put it in. Sorry.

Mr WOOD: We are at the bottom of the pile of importance tonight, I tell you. Minister, were there any problems with water access and emergency entrance and exit lanes on that contract?

Mr STYLES: I will ask the CE to give you some details on that, member for Nelson.

Mr WAGNER: Yes, there was an issue with the contractor and a variation to amend the entrance to the four lane road at the front – the dual carriageway - and lights, etcetera. There was a negotiation and there was a successful resolution, including a Road Network Division permit being issued. It was finalised okay.

Mr WOOD: Any problems with water access?

Mr WAGNER: Not to my knowledge.

Mr WOOD: I am not sure if this is the same question the minister was asked about Alice Springs Hospital. Was it finished in February, and, if so, why did it take so long to open?

Mr WAGNER: Is that the emergency department as opposed to the broader dispute with John Holland?

Mr WOOD: Yes.

Mr WAGNER: The emergency department was completed and handed over earlier this year. The client agency then takes over the project and fits it out with their complex equipment. I think they had particular X-ray equipment they had to procure and install. It was officially opened in the last couple of weeks and I understand it was operational as of about a week ago.

Mr WOOD: Did they say why it took so long and why they could not get the equipment for the finish?

Mr WAGNER: My understanding is it was to fit it out with the X-ray equipment.

Mr WOOD: I thought they might have ordered the X-ray equipment earlier.

Mr STYLES: My understanding is the equipment was delayed but I do not know why. On one of my trips to Alice Springs we inspected the facility. It is an excellent facility. The machines had not arrived at that stage, but they had to be installed by people who know what they were doing.

Mr WOOD: Was Howard Springs Road a design and construct contract? Who designed it?

Mr PEMBLE: No, it was consult and design.

Mr WOOD: I will not ask you who it was. Can I table some documents? I gave these to Ernie Wanka the other day. This is the new road – if I pass them to you it will be easier.

Madam CHAIR: Are you tabling them?

Mr WOOD: I will give them to the minister. He needs to see them, unless you want to look at them. They are not in colour.

Madam CHAIR: If you do not want to table them it is fine. Surely the minister will allow you to approach the table.

Mr WOOD: It is a very long contract and I understand why it not an easy contract, but in the original design you will see a road is duplicated then comes into one lane. I have had a number of people speak to me about it. Have you the coloured shots, minister? That is the same camera, is it? You did not give him the coloured shots I gave to Ernie the other day?

You spent all that money on the road and now cars are banking up. So far, the passing traffic has to drive on dirt. Is it was possible to extend the double lane past the intersection of Howard Springs at Whitewood Road while you have the contractors there? If there are problems now we will have problems in the future.

Mr STYLES: Member for Nelson, one of the major issues is there have been delays in completing it. We accept there are some major issues in relation to relocating Power and Water assets underground, also Telstra assets. Nearly 1000 people work on the Correctional Services facility further down the road. We are informed over three-quarters of those people drive to the site. Over the recent long weekend everyone knocked off at 4 pm and vehicles were banked up there. Obviously, everyone wanted to get away.

Mr WOOD: I am not so much worried about the traffic coming from there, this is traffic going home. I am getting reports from people going home that ...

Mr STYLES: It is banking up because there are so many cars banked up at the traffic lights. This is an in-traffic project which does not allow for detours etcetera. I was down there about two weeks ago to look at the site. My understanding is much work has happened since then. The latest report is they started putting asphalt down today and are looking forward to getting more asphalt down.

Obviously, the amount of traffic coming from the prison is adding to that banking up at the traffic lights, and for people coming home and turning right into Whitewood Road it is an issue.

Mr WOOD: That is the issue people are raising, turning right. They come back so far in the lane that the traffic cannot go past without going into the dirt. I know the traffic will ease off once these projects are finished.

Mr STYLES: The Department of Transport has been advised this is a problem at the moment, and we are looking for dollars to see if we can get the second lane. Do you want to add to that, Bob?

Mr PEMBLE: We are working with the Department of Transport. Yes, if there are changes to be made the intent would be to make them at the same time as the contractors are there. There were some traffic counts done over the last number of days to identify the issues. Adding to the issues is the Stuart Highway, where there is only a very short left turn lane and a single right turn lane - there are two right turn lanes there at the moment, very short, and that will improve when that work is completed. That will also assist in traffic getting through the cycle of the traffic lights.

Mr WOOD: People are finding it unusual to have two lanes. You move into one lane then you split it into a right hand turn. A lot of people commented on it when it was first designed. At least we know it is in the pipeline.

Mr STYLES: Also, member for Nelson, the department has been negotiating with people at the Correctional facility to see if they can stagger their working hours to reduce the frustration of those people who need to access Whitewood Road in the afternoon.

Mr WOOD: It is a pity we did not have some form of bus travel for those people. When I come into Parliament House, the line of traffic from the CBD out there is continuous at 6.30 am.

Minister, I appreciate the hard work your contractor has had to do. That was not an easy contract by a long way. We hope the department of Construction will pay for the barbecue when it is finished because we could just about do with one.

Minister stage 3 of Tiger Brennan Drive is the overpass over the railway line. My understanding is there were some faults in stage 3, is that true? Have those faults been rectified? The new work had to be ...

Mr STYLES: I will ask the CE to address that issue.

Mr WAGNER: Member for Nelson, I visited with my Executive Director of Major Projects. There was a little slippage on the northern side treated as a defect. I understand it was rectified and the project was handed over at the end of the day.

Mr WOOD: It was not major?

Mr WAGNER: Not to my knowledge.

Mr WOOD: The \$3m for the classrooms, is that \$3m for Girraween Primary School. You mentioned some classrooms. It might be in here but I am not sure I was here when you mentioned it in your opening statement.

Mr STYLES: I did not mention Girraween.

Mr WOOD: I did not say Girraween; I am presuming it is Girraween. It was \$3m for classrooms. I was hoping it was Girraween because it is full. It could be in your Budget overview - \$3m for transportable classrooms in the greater Darwin region. It is on page 8 of the Budget Overview.

Mr STYLES: I do not have the Budget Overview here. Can you read out those questions, member for Nelson?

Mr WOOD: This says \$3m for transportable classrooms in the greater Darwin region. It does not say where they are going but I was hoping it was Girraween Primary School.

Mr STYLES: I cannot answer that at the moment, member for Nelson. We will try to get you an answer before the end of this evening. Someone listening might be able to answer it otherwise we will take it on notice.

Mr WOOD: I will not worry. In relation to the proposed Palmerston hospital, which is on hold, there was \$300 000 in the budget for early infrastructure. It might have been for sewerage or water connections. Was that money spent?

Mr STYLES: It was for some sewerage works, and my understanding it has been done.

Mr WOOD: All right.

Mr STYLES: The contract was awarded to JN Mousellis Civil Contractors on 28 March 2012. The contract amount was \$204 002. The scope of works was an early works contract for upgrading water and sewer services to site and installation of construction site fencing. My understanding is, member for Nelson, that work has been completed.

Mr VATSKALIS: Is the fence still on site?

Mr WAGNER: No.

Mr VATSKALIS: Has it been removed?

Mr STYLES: Yes.

Mr VATSKALIS: Has it been donated somewhere else?

Mr STYLES: Has it been donated somewhere else - the fencing?

Mr VATSKALIS: Yes.

Mr STYLES: I am not aware it has been donated to anyone. It was supplied by a contractor and it is the contractor's property.

Mr WOOD: The Vanderlin Drive duplication, did that finish on budget?

Mr PEMBLE: There was an increase in budget when the contract was awarded, but it was completed on the revised budget.

Mr WOOD: Was the revised budget much above the original budget?

Mr PEMBLE: I cannot recall the original numbers, but I think the estimate at the time was fairly close to the tender prices we reserved.

Mr WOOD: In the overview you mention \$3.9m for development of industrial land in the vicinity of Wishart Road. The minister for Lands and Planning announced tenders are going out for some industrial land to be developed at Humpty Doo. Are you involved in that or is Lands and Planning putting out a private contract?

Mr STYLES: My understanding is that is with Lands and Planning at the moment. If client agencies wish to engage us they will, but to my knowledge they have not done to date.

Mr WOOD: That is all the questions I have.

Madam CHAIR: That concludes consideration of the Construction Division Business line. On behalf of the committee I thank the officials who assisted.

Mr STYLES: Can I add a couple of things before we close, Madam Chair? On the question not taken on notice in relation to the Utopia airstrip referred to by the member for Barkly, I am pleased to inform you

\$2.5m is still in the program to upgrade and seal the existing airstrip at Utopia. It is in Budget Paper No 4, page 23, Department of Transport, Budget 2013-14. It is still there.

Answer to Question on Notice No 10.1

Mr STYLES: In relation to a question on notice from the member for Karama in relation to the Commonwealth funding split within infrastructure - the entire program - and the split for roads, I now have that answer and would like to submit it.

Madam CHAIR: The minister will be tabling his answer to the member for Karama's question, which was 10.1.

Mr STYLES: Yes, I would like to table that thank you, Madam Chair.

Mr STYLES: Madam Chair, I would like to thank the members from the Department of Infrastructure, in particular those members who are upstairs, and those out at Highway House, who have willingly given their time, worked extremely hard and provided an enormous amount of valuable information that can not only be used here but will be ongoing. Thank you very much to those staff members who have been around all night. Thank you.

Madam CHAIR: We will take a short break to enable staff to settle at the table.

The committee suspended

MULTICULTURAL AFFAIRS, SENIOR TERRITORIANS, YOUNG TERRITORIANS

Output 3.1 – Social Policy Coordination

Madam CHAIR: The committee will now consider the outputs relating to the Minister for Multicultural Affairs, Senior Territorians and Young Territorians.

I note Output 3.1, Social Policy Coordination, sits within the Department of the Chief Minister. While the Chief Minister answered questions regarding Social Policy Coordination as a whole on Wednesday 19 June, I note Multicultural Affairs, and Senior and Young Territorians are subsets of Social Policy Coordination. As the responsible minister, questions relating to Multicultural Affairs, Senior Territorians and Young Territorians will be answered this evening.

Minister, I invite you introduce the officials accompanying you and, if you wish, to make an opening statement.

Mr STYLES: Madam Chair, I would like to introduce Janet Buhagiar, Executive Director of Social Policy and Coordination, and Adrian Curry, Manager of the Office of Multicultural Affairs and Seniors.

Madam Chair, I do not have an opening statement. Most of the opening statement was handled by the Chief Minister, and all the whole-of-government questions were handled by the Chief Minister.

Madam CHAIR: Thank you very much. Are there any questions on this portfolio area?

Mr VOWLES: Minister, with the power and sewerage price increases, have you been approached by any of the multicultural groups for assistance, especially given most of the buildings have toilets? With the increases, are you providing any assistance?

Mr STYLES: We have not had any applications for specific assistance in relation to the power and water price increases.

Mr VOWLES: If multicultural groups come to you - a couple have come to me saying they do not know where they will find the money. They have to increase membership fees, hold more fundraisers and things

like that. Would you provide a discount, exemption or dedicated grant to these groups to help if they approached you? Is there an avenue to do that?

Mr STYLES: There is always an avenue for any multicultural group to approach the minister for assistance. That would be considered and taken on its merit. There are a number of grants which could help with that situation. I have not had any inquiries yet. I probably get to multicultural events, clubs and meetings more than anyone else in our community. I am very active in that area. We have had no correspondence yet, but that is not to say we will not. I encourage people to contact the Office of Multicultural affairs or my office and we will see what we can do.

Mr VOWLES: Are you happy to provide information on the multicultural events and meetings you have attended since becoming minister.

Mr STYLES: I cannot give you that information offhand. We can take that on notice and let you know what we have been to.

Question on Notice 10.7

Madam CHAIR: Member for Johnston, would you clearly restate the question for the record?

Mr VOWLES: Minister, can you please inform me of the multicultural events and meetings you have attended since becoming minister?

Madam CHAIR: Minister, do you accept the question.

Mr STYLES: I accept the question.

Madam CHAIR: The question asked by the member for Johnston of the minister is question 10.7.

Mr VOWLES: Do grants sit under the Chief Minister's bucket of money, or do you have a bucket of money as Minister for Multicultural Affairs? Can you give me a list of recipients or community events that have received those grants, or groups such as India @ Mindil ...

Mr STYLES: Member for Johnston, many grants are given out. There is an application process. There is a process we go through to work out who gets the grants. There is a panel and it is recorded. I can table the document of the grants given, which I have in front of me, which goes from 1 July 2012 to 31 March 2013. It is a list of who got what and I am very happy to table this document.

Mr VOWLES: That has a total amount? Is there a bucket of money, say \$800 000 every year?

Mr STYLES: No, the total amount of Multicultural Affairs grants is \$1.405m.

Madam CHAIR: Member for Nelson.

Mr WOOD: Those grants were for what?

Mr STYLES: This is the entire list of Multicultural Affairs, Youth, and Seniors Advancement, and then there is just general sponsorship, community facilities development, Harmony Day and Cultural Linguistics Awards. If we table this document, perhaps ...

Mr WOOD: The total of those grants was how much?

Mr STYLES: \$1.405m.

Mr WOOD: You have in the budget for next year \$2.9m. What is the difference? It says 'value of grants paid'. Are there other grants?

Mr STYLES: There are other grants, member for Nelson. The figure I gave you is Multicultural.

Mr WOOD: That is what I thought.

Mr STYLES: This list I am about to table pertains to Multicultural. There are payments across Multicultural, Youth, and Seniors which next year is budgeted for \$2.9m.

Mr WOOD: That makes sense.

Mr VATSKALIS: Minister, when you provide grants to these organisations, what criteria do they have to fulfil in order to receive a grant?

Mr STYLES: The criteria is on the application form. Do you want the details of what is on that application form?

Mr VATSKALIS: In brief; I do not need detail.

Mr STYLES: I might cross to the person who processes the grants and is probably more familiar with the details on that. Jenny?

Ms BUHAGIAR: It depends on which grant program you are referring to.

Mr VATSKALIS: Multicultural and Ethnic Affairs.

Ms BUHAGIAR: Adrian.

Mr CURRY: The broad Multicultural Affairs Sponsorship Program is very flexible in that we are looking for a range of innovative solutions that will assist people in their settlement within our community and become a broader part of the community or advance, promote, or embed the concept of Multiculturalism as a positive force within our community. The guidelines are there and we can provide the guidelines, but they are deliberately kept quite broad so we can allow for innovation.

Mr VATSKALIS: When an organisation applies for a grant for community development or maintenance of their infrastructure, do the same criteria apply? Are they flexible? Are they well defined?

Mr CURRY: I can go down to a lower level. There are two sections, one is Multicultural Facilities and one is the Multicultural Sponsorship Program. Within the Multicultural Sponsorship Program, there is the broad flexible range which includes the events and whatnot. We also have the Cultural Linguistic Awards, which is more about bringing some expertise in from overseas to share language and culture. We have the Harmony Grants, which can conduct activities related to harmony all year round, and there is the Quick Response Grants.

Mr VATSKALIS: On the grant provided to an organisation, let us say for maintenance of infrastructure, do we require the previous grant to have been acquitted before they apply for another grant?

Mr CURRY: We require that at the point of payment of the next grant. Yes, the guidelines say you must have acquitted. With facilities it is simpler, but sometimes we are dealing with small organisations - volunteer organisations may be struggling with a new country, the language and the system. We try to work with the organisation to help them through that rather than just say, 'Bang, you are cut off'. There is flexibility but, as we work through the system we do not have anything that is outstanding were we go, 'No, we cannot work with that community any longer'.

Mr VATSKALIS: If an organisation applied for a grant and had already received one they have not acquitted ...

Mr CURRY: We accept the application, we go through to the point of payment of the next grant and that is when we consider the best course of action. Sometimes, if it is a well-established community group that has the ability to do better, we need to say, 'You need to do better', but sometimes it is a matter of helping the smaller organisations and new emerging communities.

Mr VATSKALIS: Let go to the well-established groups. Do you look, first of all, if they have acquitted the previous grant if they have received one? Do you look at whether they are properly constituted? Do they fulfil the requirements of the current legislation for associations? Do they have AGMs? Are the AGMs constituted properly? The new legislation places an onus on the associations. Who is looking after that?

Do you look after that? Does the business department look after that? How do you get this information? Some of the grants can be \$5000 and some can be \$200 000.

Mr CURRY: The *Associations Act* is managed by the Department of Business. It is the organisation's responsibility to comply with the *Associations Act* and, therefore, submit their annual financial statements etcetera to the - we do not police that.

Mr VATSKALIS: Do you get information from the Department of Business about it?

Mr CURRY: When we see a reason for concern we investigate further. In my time, there is only one organisation where we said - because they were continuing to not comply with that, we had the conversation with that section and we no longer consider their applications until such time as they comply again. However, we do not take the approach of, 'We will pull the shutters down'. We try to work with them and assist them. Often the adaptation can be very difficult, if you have just arrived through a humanitarian program from Africa, to know how the system works.

Mr VATSKALIS: I do not have a problem with that, but at the moment the minister handles a significant amount of taxpayers' money which he disburses as grants to organisations. I can understand the difficulty of small groups, but there are well-established groups and sometimes these large established groups can become a little club run by a family of two or three, do not fulfil a purpose and we hand them the money. How do we check to see if it is legally constituted and fulfils the requirements of the *Associations Act* before we hand them \$0.25m?

Mr CURRY: They need to be registered with an ABN. We have a series of requirements. I do not check with the Department of Business every time we get a grant. We check more on a needs basis.

Mr VATSKALIS: Do you look at membership and how many people they represent?

Mr CURRY: On their application form, from memory, they nominate their number of members, yes.

Mr VATSKALIS: If somebody says, 'This is an ethnic organisation with 40 members and we want \$0.25m', will you give it to them?

Mr CURRY: I will not count the 40 members. They will put it on the application form and, if there is a reason for us to look at that because we are not sure, we will investigate some more. Generally, there is only a finite number of groups and we have a pretty good relationship with most of them. We have a history of working with the groups and do not have a need for approach.

Mr VATSKALIS: We have emerging organisations and ones that have been around for a long time and, of course, the pie does not get any bigger. The slice is thinner if you allocate all this money. That is my concern.

Mr CURRY: If I could make one point on the emerging organisations because you touched on it, we also provide funding to the Multicultural Council of the Northern Territory in order to auspice the new emerging groups. We can help a community that is not ready to fully comply with the *Associations Act* as an organisation.

Mr STYLES: Member for Casuarina, there are also moves to encourage established ethnic communities with facilities to share them. For instance, the Portuguese Timorese Social Club has been provided with a \$10 000 per year grant to share the premises with the African Australian Friendship Association. That has been renegotiated for the 2013-14 financial year.

The Greek Orthodox Community of North Australia is considering sharing with the Alliance Française de Darwin, which is the French community. These are initiatives we have put in place to get people to share facilities and, obviously, share costs as opposed to building new premises.

Mr VATSKALIS: First, the cost of building - usually the government provides the cost to build the premises then is asked to provide money to maintain the premises. I will give you an example of my own community. We have about four different Greek organisations and every one of them has a facility. They have to be maintained. The community does not get any bigger; the demand on repair and maintenance is getting bigger.

I introduced Alliance Française to the Greek community. I introduced the Pakistani community to Nakara school to provide them the facilities of that school. That is the way it should go in the future.

Mr STYLES: I agree.

Mr VOWLES: Thanks very much, Adrian and minister. On the Quick Response Grant, is that bucket of money solely the responsibility of the minister? Is that included in this \$1.4m or is that a separate bucket of money?

Mr STYLES: It is included in the spreadsheet just tabled.

Mr VOWLES: Can you inform me how many grants have been approved and paid since 26 August 2012?

Mr STYLES: I can give you 1 July 2012 to 31 March 2013. In the grant category, which is MASP Round 1, there were 44 applications, 35 approved, and the amount approved was \$749 480. Payments of \$726 480 have been paid ...

Mr VOWLES: Sorry, minister, from 26 August 2012.

Mr STYLES: To 31 March 2013.

Madam CHAIR: Do you want that question on notice?

Mr STYLES: We will take that on notice.

Mr VOWLES: That is all right.

Question on Notice No 10.8

Madam CHAIR: Member for Johnston, please restate the question for the record.

Mr VOWLES: Could the minister please provide any grants awarded since 26 August 2012?

Madam CHAIR: Minister, do you accept the question?

Mr STYLES: We do.

Madam CHAIR: The question asked by the member for Johnston to the minister is 10.8.

Mr VOWLES: Where are the election commitments to the Multicultural Affairs groups - all the different groups?

Mr STYLES: I do not have a list of election commitments made to multicultural groups.

Mr VOWLES: Were there any?

Mr STYLES: We would have to take that on notice and get back to you.

Question on Notice No 10.9

Madam CHAIR: Member for Johnston, will you restate the question?

Mr VOWLES: Could you please provide any election commitments made to multicultural groups?

Madam CHAIR: Minister, you obviously accept that question?

Mr STYLES: Yes, I accept that.

Madam CHAIR: The question asked by member for Johnston to the minister is 10.9.

Mr VOWLES: In regard to the Portuguese Timorese Club, was any promise made about air conditioning the premises or did they approach you about air conditioning the premises?

Mr STYLES: They did. They were encouraged to submit an application. My understanding is that application is not far off. Anyone who speaks to us about additions is encouraged to apply under the Multicultural Facilities Grants.

Mr VOWLES: Excellent. When did those grants open and close?

Mr STYLES: Round 1 opened in March 2013 and round 2 will open in September. The Cultural and Linguistics Awards are in August, Harmony grants are in October, Quick Response grants are out of rounds and are ongoing. They are taken on merit and assessed. The multicultural facilities grants open in April.

Mr VOWLES: Thank you, minister. Have you allocated any money to Seniors Month and what organisations have received it?

Mr STYLES: Seniors Month is allocated a budget of \$85 000. Within that budget is the Seniors Month Grants Program of \$50 000. The Seniors Month calendar and advertising is all in within that \$85 000 budget.

Mr VOWLES: When will the seniors calendar be out?

Mr STYLES: My understanding is it is almost due to go out. The Council of the Ageing has an insert to go into that calendar which is a survey for all seniors who receive the calendar.

Mr VOWLES: In regard to the power, water and sewerage price increases, most Territorians, the most vulnerable being seniors - I am sure you have people coming into your electorate office and calling, as they do mine and every other member. Are you considering increasing the rebate to seniors or pensioners around power?

Mr STYLES: That aspect comes under the Department of Health and the Pensioner and Carer Concession Scheme administered by the Minister for Health.

Mr VOWLES: You will not answer questions on that?

Mr STYLES: All Pensioner and Carer Concession Scheme issues are directed through the Department of Health.

Mr VOWLES: Will you have any say in that with the seniors coming to you? Normally they come into my office, ring the hotline, or however they can get hold of me. I know from the briefing that they are contacting you directly. Would you consider, in the future, having carriage of those areas? The previous government had a seniors minister who was looking after the travel side of things so there was a one-stop place to go to streamline this process.

Mr STYLES: There is one-stop place for Pensioner and Carer Concession Scheme inquiries: the Health department. If you are asking me if, in a future seniors portfolio, I would take on the Pensioner and Carer Concession Scheme - that is an option the government has. If that is put forward government would consider whether that could move from Health to seniors or remain where it is.

Mr VOWLES: Just to have carriage of it. It is still under - who is your Health minister, minister Lambley?

Mr STYLES: Yes.

Mr VOWLES: Yes, but it sits within your office. You are saying a one-stop shop. I am saying people are calling your office then being transferred on. They then ring me saying they have been on the phone 25 to 30 minutes. It is a simple process to get that going. As we know, our seniors are very important and they have a lot of time.

Mr STYLES: I have not heard anyone being on the phone for 25 minutes. If you are able to pass that information on to my office, please do so.

Mr VOWLES: Yes, I am happy to, because we are also getting many senior Territorians, specifically in my electorate, complaining they are leaving messages and have not had a call back in a week-and-a-half. I will pass those on.

Mr STYLES: Yes, please do. We would be very interested to hear that.

Mr VOWLES: I will go the Pensioner and Carer Concession travel scheme. Will you answer questions on cutting the travel scheme?

Mr STYLES: Ask your question and I can give you some idea.

Mr VOWLES: How much are you saving? You must have some idea of how much you are saving on the scheme by cutting it to \$500 every two years and not letting it accumulate.

Mr STYLES: We do not have that information here. That comes under the Minister for Health, who would have those figures available.

Madam CHAIR: There was a question on that. I cannot recall if it was on notice or not.

Mr VOWLES: No, I have it here. I did not get an amount though, that is all.

Madam CHAIR: Okay.

Mr VOWLES: As Minister for Senior Territorians, did anybody consult with seniors around the massive changes that were happening?

Mr STYLES: Yes. My understanding is there was consultation with the Council of the Ageing and a number of other people. I do not know who the Minister for Health spoke to, but I know they consulted me. I can assure the public I fought very hard to keep any cuts in relation to seniors to a bare minimum. The only thing that has really changed – people can still get down, even in Australia, to see relatives; you have to book at the right time. They can still get it.

Given the \$5.5bn debt we inherited, there had to be some cuts. Fortunately, I successfully ensured we did not have any cuts in the areas of Seniors, Youth and Multicultural Affairs.

Mr VATSKALIS: You keep referring to a \$5.5bn deficit inherited. Even your own budget book does not show that figure. Where do you find this figure? Can you table anything to say you inherited \$5.5bn? Can you show us anything, either in our books or your books, which shows the \$5.5bn you have been referring in the past - you and your colleagues? Our own book does not show \$5.5bn.

Mr STYLES: That is a question you have to put to the Treasurer.

Mr VATSKALIS: You are referring to it. You made the reference. I ask you to show me your books where it says ...

Mr STYLES: I am quoting the Treasurer.

Mr VATSKALIS: If you do not know, do not refer to an imaginary figure.

Madam CHAIR: Are there any further questions?

Mr VOWLES: Yes. Thank you, minister, for that answer. I will pick up on a point around making savings. An amount of \$500, especially at Christmas time, gets you nowhere and that is an issue. The Health minister, who has carriage of this, said only 2315 seniors take this travel concession scheme up yet you cut it from \$1666 every four years down to \$500 every two years and they are not allowed to accumulate it. Do you think that is a good thing for seniors?

Madam CHAIR: Member for Johnston, you know as well as I do that you cannot ask the minister matters of opinion.

Mr STYLES: That is right.

Mr VOWLES: Was there any consultation around the \$1 fare for seniors, knowing it fits under the Minister for Transport, but as minister for seniors?

Mr STYLES: That decision and consultation occurred before I entered Cabinet.

Mr VATSKALIS: Consultation with whom? Ministers? Members of the public? With seniors? From the reaction we have seen from seniors groups, I do not think anybody knew about the \$1 bus fare.

Mr STYLES: I have been to a number of meetings where people in the community have not liked it, but generally, it has been accepted. People have accepted the premise of why it went up to \$1. That is my understanding, but when you ask me about consultation, I was not in the ministry when all that was done so I cannot say what was done or what was reported on.

Mr VOWLES: With the changes to the travel scheme - everybody has been a bit confused about it over the last few months, especially the people it affects most. Are you releasing any information around this to 26 000-odd seniors? I know there is a website to go to.

Mr STYLES: It is not in my portfolio area. It sits under the Minister for Health, but I know information has gone out to all seniors.

Mr VOWLES: In what format?

Mr STYLES: I think as a letter to everyone identified as a senior in the Territory.

Mr VOWLES: I am fine then.

Madam CHAIR: Member for Nelson, any questions on seniors?

Mr WOOD: Yes, about the Pensioner Concession Scheme. Did you get many calls suggesting confusion as to how it would be applied?

Mr STYLES: In my office, no. In my electorate office I have had a number of calls where people are not quite sure. We have explained it to them and they have accepted the premise of why it has come down. Obviously, a number of people are unhappy, but with the debt and deficit situation we face a lot of people have had to accept reduction. We have to make the dollars go further. As the member for Casuarina pointed out, the pie does not get any bigger, in fact it has shrunk.

Mr WOOD: Yes, I did not know whether, in part of your social policy - when the government makes a decision to cut back on the Pensioner and Carer Concession Scheme, does it involve you up-front because you ...

Mr STYLES: There have been no cuts anywhere else in the Pensioner and Carer Concession Scheme. The only thing that has been changed is airfares. There are no other cuts to it.

Mr WOOD: That is all the questions I have.

Mr VATSKALIS: Minister, a point of clarification: What does your government define as seniors? What is the age bracket?

Mr STYLES: It is 60 for women, 65 for men and a lower age for Aboriginal people.

Mr VATSKALIS: What is the definition of seniors? Is it 50, 60, 55 or 65? Is it a uniform approach, or do different organisations have different yardsticks?

Mr STYLES: Member for Casuarina, those figures are owned by the Department of Health. They have their own guidelines as to what constitutes a senior.

Madam CHAIR: Minister, the member for Stuart, happens to have hers.

Mrs PRICE: Women aged 60 years and men aged 65.

Mr STYLES: Those figures are from the Department of Health and that is where they apply.

Mr VOWLES: Thank you very much for answering those questions. I know you do not have carriage of some of the portfolios, but I really appreciate it.

I will go on to youth. You scrapped funding for the Youth Action Network. What was the reason behind that and how much was it?

Mr STYLES: That comes under the Office of Children and Family Services not my office.

Mr VOWLES: Being Minister for Young Territorians it could fit under you as well. Would you like to comment on that? I do not think you were a minister at that time.

Mr STYLES: No, and it does not sit under my responsibilities.

Mr VOWLES: Yes, but I thought in the general goodwill ...

Mr STYLES: I accept what you are trying to do.

Mr VOWLES: What facilities currently exist in the Northern Territory for students who have been expelled?

Mr STYLES: I suspect that comes under the Minister for Education, who is responsible for schools that expel students. I do not know; I cannot remember. As a general observation, I cannot remember the last person who was expelled from a Northern Territory school.

Mr WOOD: They are moved from one school to another. Sometimes, they end up at Taminmin College.

Mr STYLES: That is a matter for the Minister for Education.

Mr VOWLES: Can you break down expenditure on family planning and sexual health services for Young Territorians? I know it probably does not fit under you, but it is a major area for young Territorians.

Mr STYLES: It is, but my understanding is the Minister for Health has carriage of that.

Mr VOWLES: You do not want to comment on that?

Mr STYLES: Under National Youth Week there are a number of grants. We promote those issues during National Health Week. We, at any time, try to promote that at any event or opportunity we get to speak to young people or address groups of young people. If it is appropriate, you absolutely push it. That is not just the minister; that is everyone. It is something all in this room actively do.

Mr VOWLES: I know it is the Chief Minister's Round Table of Young Territorians. Do you know how many meetings they have had, as Minister for Young Territorians, and have you been involved in any?

Mr STYLES: No, the Chief Minister speaks to those young Territorians. There have been two meetings and I believe another one is scheduled for August. I am attending that one. The last one I was unavailable; I think I was interstate. The youth advisor in my office attended and conveyed the sentiments of the meeting.

Mr VOWLES: Are there any new programs on the horizon, anything for young Territorians - new programs to engage young Territorians?

Mr STYLES: A number of initiatives are being developed at the moment, but they will come out for public comment at some stage in the future. The concepts are still being worked on. It is not at a point where we can announce it.

Mr VOWLES: Thank you, minister. That is all the questions I have.

Madam CHAIR: Member for Nelson.

Mr WOOD: Minister, I am not sure what your Youth Section and Social Policy does, but I know it helps with the Youth Round Table and things like that. Do you also help fund the diversionary programs for youth?

Mr STYLES: No, we do not have a budget for that. I tend to have an input, with my colleagues, to bring in new initiatives and ideas from the community. I talk to many young people. I was very fortunate in a former life where I taught the DARE program to almost 40 000 students in this town. Most of those people know how to contact me, and I am contacted on a regular basis by people who would like to offer ideas.

They are passed on to my colleagues, because a lot of them relate to portfolio areas and issues that have to be dealt with by those portfolios. I am a conduit for a lot of information that goes to other portfolios.

Mr WOOD: Do you give any assistance to Wongabilla Pony Club, which also has diversionary programs? Do you give grants to them?

Mr STYLES: It can apply for grants in various rounds of youth grants. There are a number of grants at the moment - the Youth Vibe Holiday Grant – that round of grants funds activities during the June/July and December/January school holiday programs, National Youth Week and also Quick Response mini-grants. Those mini-grants can enable the office to respond to urgent requests for funding within the specified criteria. They include \$500 mini-grants to individuals and \$2000 major grants to organisations. If people find they need to do various things or have particular issues, those organisations can apply for those grants.

Mr WOOD: The annual report mentions social policy. What does social policy mean? We have spoken about multiculturalism, seniors and youth. It sounds like something Mao would have brought out as a Little Red Book. It is a nothing. Is there a chance it could be rebadged to explain what it is because social policy is ...

Mr VATSKALIS: You want the green book?

Mr WOOD: The red book was what I was thinking of.

Mr STYLES: Member for Nelson, social policy sits within the Department of the Chief Minister. I might ask Janet Buhagiar to expand on that.

Ms BUHAGIAR: Member for Nelson, as the minister said social policy coordination sits as an output of the Chief Minister. Included in that is the Office of Youth Affairs, Multicultural Affairs, and Senior Territorians. The role is to look at, in a whole-of-government view, the various interplays of policy output. I will not get into the detail because it does not sit with the Department of the Chief Minister, but the primary function is to facilitate social outcomes that are positive and benefit Territorians.

Mr WOOD: I think the budget says \$6.8m and you have \$2.9m in grants. There is a fair bit of money and it does not say it goes anywhere. Is it an administrative amount of money?

Ms BUHAGIAR: That is the Chief Minister's output area. Obviously, what is relevant to tonight's outputs are other grants paid.

Mr WOOD: We talk about seniors grants, youth grants, multicultural grants, but there are other grants as well?

Ms BUHAGIAR: Not specific grant rounds, no.

Mr WOOD: Where is that \$3m spent, just on wages or ...

Ms BUHAGIAR: There is a range of expense lines which would need to have been raised with the Chief Minister, who has carriage of the division.

Mr WOOD: You own one third of it, would that be a nice way to say it?

Ms BUHAGIAR: No, I have a dual role. I am accountable to minister Styles for the Office of Youth Affairs, Multicultural Affairs and Senior Territorians and I also have a responsibility to the Chief Minister for the broader social policy coordination.

Mr WOOD: The minister has one third of the social policy portfolio?

Ms BUHAGIAR: The minister has carriage for the Office of Youth Affairs, Multicultural Affairs and Senior Territorians.

Mr WOOD: If I was to send a young bloke to say, 'Check out how much you spent on youth', you would not send them to the budget paper.

Ms BUHAGIAR: No, but we could certainly, as the minister indicated, let you know exactly what the grant rounds and the amounts paid in the areas of Youth, Seniors and Multicultural Affairs are.

Mr WOOD: Do you think perhaps a slightly more expanded page of what you do would be worthwhile in an annual report, because it does not really say anything? I know it says something, but it is not really very specific.

Ms BUHAGIAR: Your comments are noted.

Mr STYLES: In which form do you want the annual report? Do you want it bound or do you want it ...

Mr WOOD: See this one here? This is the most sensible annual report.

Mr STYLES: I thought you might say that.

Mr WOOD: It goes like that, and I do not have to put a brick on one side and an elbow on the other.

Mr VOWLES: I am aware of a few seniors who previously had their gardening done. They contacted the Senior Territorians minister to help people unable to do that. Are you still getting them?

Mr STYLES: We still have a very active program. People are asked to contact their local member, and the local member contacts a person in Correctional Services. They have a team of people who look after seniors. The applications are put in by electorate offices then assessed. Those people will determine whether or not the person has their lawn mowed. There are, I think, about 600 people on that list, from memory. It comes under Correctional Services, but in relation to seniors who struggle to mow the lawn or need help with maintenance, it is a fantastic program.

Mr VOWLES: Yes, it is.

Mr STYLES: In relation to seniors, I believe - I stand corrected - the Minister for Correctional Services increased the budget to get more crews to help seniors who struggle. I believe that is correct, and it is a great initiative and something all of us would be very happy to support.

Mr VOWLES: Thank you very much, minister. I thank Janet, Adrian and the minister for candid responses to questions outside his portfolio. I respect that, minister. Thanks very much.

Mr WOOD: Can I thank the minister for his coloured charts? Thank you.

Mr STYLES: It was a pleasure, member for Nelson.

Madam CHAIR: That concludes consideration of Output 3.1. On behalf of the committee, I thank the minister for attending today. I also thank the officers who assisted the minister.

That concludes the Estimates Committee public hearings.

The Government Owned Corporations Committee will be holding hearings on Power and Water's Statement of Corporate Intent at 8.30 am tomorrow. All answers to questions taken on notice must be given to the Clerk Assistant Committees by 11 July 2013. Late answers cannot be accepted.

I take this opportunity to thank the members of the Estimates Committee for the overall manner in which these public hearings have been conducted, especially the member for Nelson.

Mr WOOD: Thank you.

Madam CHAIR: I also place on record a vote of appreciation from the committee to all members who participated in the public hearings.

Thank you also to the Legislative Assembly staff who have worked tirelessly behind the scenes to ensure the whole process ran smoothly over the five days. With the finalisation of the scrutiny of ministerial portfolios, I thank both the ministers who appeared before the committee and the officials who attended the hearings. I also take this opportunity to place on the public record my appreciation of the assistance provided to ministers by agency officers.

I now formally close the public hearings of the Estimates Committee for 2013. Thank you.

Mr STYLES: Madam Chair, can I put on record what a fantastic job you have done as Chair of this committee. Having watched it over the last two weeks, it has run very smoothly. It is, obviously, a credit to you and your team of people, and also to Mr Russell Keith. Well done to Russell and those other members. Congratulations.

Madam CHAIR: Thank you.

The committee suspended
