

The Estimates Committee convened at 8 am.

CHIEF MINISTER GUNNER'S PORTFOLIOS

AUDITOR-GENERAL'S OFFICE

Madam CHAIR: Good morning, everybody. Welcome to today's Estimates Committee hearing. I acknowledge that we gather this morning on the land of the Larrakia people and I pay my respects to the elders past, present and emerging.

I welcome you, Chief Minister, and I invite you to introduce the officers accompanying you today.

Mr GUNNER: Madam Chair, for the first session I am with the Auditor-General, Julie Crisp. It is my practice, as it is the practice of previous Chief Ministers, that with the independent officer I am happy for questions to be asked directly to her and for—I do not know if Julie has an opening statement—Julie be available to the committee.

Madam CHAIR: Thank you, Chief Minister. We will invite you to make a brief opening statement if you choose. I will 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 their questions first, followed by the committee members. Finally, other participating members may ask their questions. The committee has agreed that other members may join in a line of questioning pursued by a shadow minister rather than waiting for the end of the shadow minister's questioning of that output.

Chief Minister, do you wish to make an opening statement regarding the Auditor-General's office?

Mr GUNNER: Thank you for the offer, Chair, but I am happy for us to proceed directly to questions to the Auditor-General.

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

Madam CHAIR: Thank you, Chief Minister. The committee will consider the estimates of proposed expenditure contained in the Appropriation Bill 2018–19 as they relate to the Auditor-General's Office. Are there any agency-related whole-of-government questions on budget and fiscal strategy?

Mr HIGGINS: I only have a couple of simple questions. What are the major challenges that you see facing your office at the moment?

Ms CRISP: It would be fair to say that the challenges are always with setting and prioritising the audit program. There is a fixed amount of work that we have to do in order to address the financial statement's audits. Beyond that, we rely heavily on compliance audits and controls audits to give us confidence across government—those are automatic priorities.

Following that, we prioritise the performance management system audit. We have looked at KPIs in agencies, how they manage their performance against the key deliverables in the budget papers. Prioritising which KPI out of the 700-odd within Budget Paper No 3 is always a challenge.

Procurement, particularly for major projects, is always key interests—anything that is financial in material. Taking in to consideration that we rely on almost a fully outsourced model, the capacity of the local firms to deliver for us is always a challenge as well.

Mr HIGGINS: So you feel you are appropriately resourced at this point?

Ms CRISP: Yes.

Mr HIGGINS: Can you outline any matters that have been referred to you under the *Public Information Act* and your decision in this regard?

Ms CRISP: Sure. In relation to the *Public Information Act* for this year, there have not been any matters referred. We normally budget, provide for three referrals when we do the estimates of the deliverables. There has not been any matter referred since 1 July 2017.

Mr HIGGINS: Thank you. I recently wrote to you in relation to a matter in regard to the Chief Minister. Have you received that letter? I wrote that letter last Thursday.

Ms CRISP: I have not received yet. It is on its way.

Mr HIGGINS: I will leave it at that. Those are the only questions I have.

Madam CHAIR: Thank you. Are there any other questions?

Mr WOOD: Thank you, Madam Chair. Auditor-General, how do you see your role with the new ICAC Commissioner?

Ms CRISP: In relation to the ICAC, my role remains the same. The *Audit Act* does not change as a result. There are referral powers, obviously. Should the commissioner choose to refer a matter to me, a financial matter for investigation, then that is within the commissioner's capacity. Obviously, as an integrity body it is open for me to refer matters to the ICAC.

Mr WOOD: It can work both ways. On a couple of specific budget questions, on page 11 of Budget Paper No 2, it has the output group audits and reviews. The 2017–18 budget was \$4 178 000, the budget for this year will be \$4 527 000. The note says the variation in 2017–18 reflects an increase in recoverable audit costs. What do you mean by recoverable audit costs?

Ms CRISP: The office has a cost-recovery approach for the audits of statutory entities. There is an appropriation received which is applied to the audit of the public accounts, the Treasurer's Annual Financial Statements, the compliance audits at agencies and the end of financial year reviews that we undertake.

For the statutory entities, such as the utilities companies, Charles Darwin University group and the health services—those statutory entities—we recover the costs of auditing them directly. What it costs us to pay to the authorised auditors is what we charge directly back.

The change from the 2017–18 budget to the estimate which then flows on represents a change in recoverable costs. Not a change in appropriation, but a change in what we anticipate to recover. It has really come about because of an increase in the number of statutory entities. This year Charles Darwin University has an additional four subsidiaries which it has not had previously, and we see the cost of that come in at the expenditure line and we recover that directly in income.

Mr WOOD: How do your charges work with those bodies? Is it an hourly rate or a contract?

Ms CRISP: We have a three-year contract with the firms. That goes out to public tender and under a tier 5 contract. The most recent one was awarded in October 2017 and it came into effect on 2 January this year. It runs for a three-year period. How that tender operates is that the firms are required to provide us with rates for each level of staffing and those are taken into assessment using a consistent model across all, and then obviously local capacity and capability comes into consideration. A rate for an authorised audit partner is significantly higher than what you would see for an authorised audit assistant and then managers and senior analysts in the middle. We charge those rates directly back to the statutory entities.

Mr WOOD: This probably relates, to some extent, to the last year's annual report. Were there any other audits you could not sign off on? I think last year Power and Water was an issue.

Ms CRISP: I did sign off on Power and Water. There were no other audits that stood out as particularly challenging.

Mr WOOD: Was the Power and Water episode the reason there was a higher audit bill over the last two financial years of over \$1m?

Ms CRISP: We did see a significant increase in the fees associated with Power and Water and more generally the utilities entities from the time that they were split into the three. Power and Water had some ongoing issues around its asset register and asset valuations. That was the cause of the challenges in forming an opinion in prior years. There has been a flow-on effect. We are pretty comfortable now, all things

being equal, that those matters have been addressed. The information is there; it is auditable and reconcilable, so we should see a decline in that but, yes, two years ago that was responsible for a considerable increase in recoverable charges.

Mr WOOD: Yesterday, with the Treasurer sitting there, we discussed where Jacana, Power and Water and Territory Generation operated as GOCs that have separate boards. Your predecessor once said that the way to split was through accountancy methods rather than a physical break-up of the three GOCs.

When you have looked at the audits and seen the problems they have with the audit, have you looked at it from the point of view of whether it should have stayed as it was? In other words, the accounting side should have been split but the actual instrumentality should have stayed the same—would that be the sort of advice, if you thought that was more appropriate, for the more efficient running of those GOCs that you would give the Treasurer?

Ms CRISP: The decision to separate Power and Water into three separate entities is obviously a policy decision. I would not make comment on a policy decision, but in terms of what Mr McGuinness was referring to, previously what we had seen within Power and Water was an accounting ring-fencing model.

What is meant to happen under a ring-fencing model is, if you took generation networks and retail they would basically be ring-fenced within an organisation. It should be an efficient way to do things, but it also depends on what systems you have in place that permit that. What we have seen is the remains of reliance on the systems within Power and Water from all entities. They run the networks and are in charge of the metering, and there will be reliance on those systems at a high level.

I think you refer to the conversation yesterday about three boards, three lots of human resources, three lots of finance functions—and executive officers will always add increased costs. I think, as far as efficiency goes, there are probably things that each of those three entities could put in place to make their own practices more efficient. Likewise, as a stand-alone entity, there were things that Power and Water could put in place some years ago to make their processes more efficient.

It is not as simple as adding the three together and comparing it to one, but I think that might give you an indication.

Mr WOOD: Thank you.

Madam CHAIR: That concludes consideration of agency-related whole-of-government questions on budget and fiscal strategy.

OUTPUT GROUP 1.0 – AUDITS AND REVIEW

Output 1.1 – Audits and Review

Madam CHAIR: We will now move on to consider Output Group 1.0, Audits and Reviews, Output 1.1, Audits and Reviews. Are there any questions?

Mrs WORDEN: One of the issues identified in Budget Paper No 3:

Continuing to engage with agencies' internal audit functions through attendance at audit committee meetings in order to minimise duplication of audit tasks.

Can you advise us what this process actually involves and are agencies' internal audits referred to you for consideration of wider issues. Or can you request them in the context of your whole-of-government auditing mandate?

Ms CRISP: Thank you, Member for Sanderson. I do not have a mandate to conduct internal audits on behalf of the agencies. We do attend almost all agencies' internal audits committee meetings, as observers, not as members. We are aware the internal audits that they have scheduled on their internal audit program.

Where we can use that to make our processes more efficient, we would choose to do so. As an example, we often conduct data analytic exercises into fuel card purchases—you are probably aware of that. There are a number of agencies that have chosen to undertake that themselves and complete an audit that is equally robust to what we carry out in-house. We would choose to invest our resources elsewhere if we were comfortable that it was being done robustly.

There are also times when an agency has undertaken an internal audit of its own internal controls and how they are operating. If their controls that we would rely on to give us assurance over an audit and we tested the internal audit findings and found those to hold true, we would be comfortable with the work that was done there. That helps.

We have, in the past, had one entity that actually conducted its own financial statements audit through an internal audit process and enabled the office to place reliance on a considerable amount of work that was done with that.

We do try to keep a watching brief. Some have stronger internal audits than others.

Madam CHAIR: Are there any further questions for this output?

That concludes consideration of Output Group 1.0.

OUTPUT GROUP 2.0 – CORPORATE AND GOVERNANCE

Output 2.1 – Corporate and Governance

Madam CHAIR: The committee will now consider Output Group 2.0, Corporate and Governance, Output 2.1, Corporate and Governance. Are there any questions?

That concludes consideration of Output 2.1.

Output 2.2 – Shared Services Received

Madam CHAIR: The committee will now consider Output 2.2, Shared Services Received. Are there any questions?

That concludes consideration of Output 2.2 and Output Group 2.0.

Non-Output Specific Budget-Related Questions

Madam CHAIR: Are there any non-output specific budget-related questions for the Auditor-General?

On behalf of the committee, I thank the Auditor-General for attending today. The committee will now move on to consider the Northern Territory Electoral Commission.

Mr GUNNER: In conclusion, I thank Julie for attending today and for her work during the year. The Territory depends on a strong Auditor-General, and we thank her and her team for that.

NT ELECTORAL COMMISSION

Madam CHAIR: I invite you, Chief Minister, to introduce the official accompanying you today and, if you wish, to make an open statement regarding the Northern Territory Electoral Commission.

Mr GUNNER: Thank you, Madam Chair. To my right is Iain Loganathan, the NT Electoral Commissioner. As with the Auditor-General, I am happy to not make an opening statement but for the committee to go straight to asking questions of the NT Electoral Commission.

Madam CHAIR: Commissioner, would you like to make an opening statement?

Mr LOGANATHAN: No, thank you.

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

Madam CHAIR: The committee will now proceed to consider the estimates of proposed expenditure contained in the Appropriation Bill 2018–19 as they relate to the Northern Territory Electoral Commission. Are there any agency-related whole-of-government questions on budget and fiscal strategy?

Mr WOOD: In the budget under 'strategic issue', one of them is implementing changes in relation to the political donations inquiry. The political donations inquiry has not been completed yet, so how is the commission implementing changes?

Mr LOGANATHAN: That is just a prediction for the Electoral Commission. We did not know when the report was going to be tabled.

Mr WOOD: So it is what will happen? It confused me.

The other one was, 'the conducting of remote electoral programs to improve the accuracy of the electoral roll and voter turnout throughout remote communities'. Is that an ongoing thing? Are you specifically starting to boost your effort in trying to change things around?

Mr LOGANATHAN: We have a joint roll in the Northern Territory, and the roll is maintained by the Australian Electoral Commission. In the lead-up to elections and redistributions we count out specific works that will improve the accuracy of the roll. So it is an ongoing activity, but it is more targeted when we have elections to improve roll accuracy.

Mr GUNNER: I flag for the Member for Nelson—and the Electoral Commissioner will probably comment on this—the decision the Australian Electoral Commission to move so many staff down to Brisbane and essentially operate the Northern Territory from the Queensland capital, including maintenance of the roll—which the Australian Electoral Commission does—was an extremely bad decision by the Australian Government that showed a lack of respect or understanding for the difficult circumstances we have in the Northern Territory for roll maintenance, particularly for those in remote regions.

I thank the Electoral Commission for the work it is doing, but that is a decision from the Australian Government that should be reversed as soon as possible.

Mr WOOD: Chief Minister, have you done any lobbying to try to get that changed, because that was some time ago since that happened.

Mr GUNNER: I have spoken directly to the Prime Minister.

Mr WOOD: Did you get any feedback from the Prime Minister, or did he just say, 'noted'?

Mr GUNNER: Noted. I also raised it with the then Deputy Prime Minister, who was running a very strong decentralisation campaign, and I made the point that it is not just about taking things out of Canberra and placing them back in the regions—which we supported—but it was also about understanding death by a thousand cuts. They had made a series of decisions that were small to them but to us in the Territory were huge—like the Electoral Commission, the Australian Tax Office and a range of other agencies which they reduced or shifted to other jurisdictions.

I said, 'That would be a good beginning to your campaign. It would not just be about moving agencies to remote towns—but also looking at the series of cuts you have made.'

Mr WOOD: Yesterday I mentioned the loss of the Abram tanks and ASLAVS from Defence, and now you mention the loss of electoral staff as well as some other staff. I do not know whether using the bipartisanship the Opposition Leader spoke about yesterday—whether we really have to push for some of those things to be returned, especially in times of low economic activity ...

Mr GUNNER: On Defence—there is a whole section during DTBI where we will have this conversation. When you look at the considerable investment they will be making strategically in the Northern Territory over the next 20 years—that will support the decision to have more people based here from the Australian Defence Forces.

We are also doing a degree of work on Defence, their families, moving here, how we can support them and prepare them for moving to the Territory—basically, provide more support to Defence personnel and their families. There were some practical reasons that the Australian Defence Force moved people from the Territory to other places, such as 12 months' worth of training cycles. Looking at the investment they are making here, over the next 20 years there will naturally flow a series of practical decisions that come as a consequence of that investment.

Mr WOOD: In regard to the Electoral Commission, my concern is with people being sent south—we have a problem with people turning up to vote, especially in remote communities. As Sister Anne would say, if we are trying to build a bridge and not close the gap, to get people participating in our democratic processes you would think there would be more emphasis on trying to overcome that by having people on the ground here. I am interested to see if more effort is made to return those people to the Northern Territory.

Ms NELSON: That decision to close the federal Electoral Commission—that part of the office—was made last year? I remember talking about it in estimates last year.

Can you tell us what efforts you have made in the 12 months to fill in those gaps?

Mr LOGANATHAN: I think there are two parts to answering your question. How the roll is maintained in urban areas is very different to how it is maintained in remote areas. In urban areas they now have what is called automatic enrolment. The AEC gets data from the tax office, Motor Vehicle Registry and the Department of Human Services, and they use that data-matching to update the roll.

If you are an 18-year-old living in Darwin, Alice Springs or Katherine and you get a driver's licence or fill in a tax return, you automatically get added to the electoral roll. They will write to you. It is like an opt-out system. It is quite an innovative way of maintaining the roll and gets people on it. The automatic system does not apply in areas where there is no reliable mail delivery. All the remote divisions do not have that program applying to them.

I can give you a stat to demonstrate that. Since the last Territory election until 31 May, in an urban division where we have about 5000 electors, there were on average about 4000 enrolment transactions during that period. For a remote division it was 1400. I do not believe that urban divisions are three times more transient than a remote division. I think what we are seeing is that the roll in urban areas is up to date, but the gap between remote divisions is significantly worse.

Your question is, what have we done to address that? I spoke about this at estimates late last year. We wrote to the Australian Electoral Commission and proposed that we joint fund a remote program. Basically what we said to the Australian Electoral Commission was that you continue maintaining the role in urban areas and we will joint fund and jointly manage a program in remote areas to try to bridge that gap. The Australian Electoral Commission is not supportive of that. It will still run some remote programs and those programs will be in the lead-up to federal elections to maintain the roll for its purposes more so than what we would require.

We believe that this is a long-term problem. The issue of participation in remote areas is getting worse. In terms of the last local government elections, we saw turnout at record low levels in regional councils, so a proposal will soon go before Cabinet to talk about the NTEC possibly having an ongoing education and enrolment program to try to address these issues to improve participation in voter participation and enrolment participation in remote divisions.

Ms NELSON: Thank you for that update. It is incredibly disappointing to hear the response from the Australian Electoral Commission. To me that is just another level of apathy from a federal agency towards the NT. It is a lack of understanding.

Madam CHAIR: Are there any further questions?

Ms WORDEN: If I might just follow on from the Member for Katherine, following that thread a little bit more. There has been a reduced number of people voting, and you have had lots of new ideas. We have seen several reports with lots of new ideas and changes, but nothing seems to change.

Now we are talking about another education campaign—we have seen lots of advertising on the television. What do you see in the future? Do you think one big education campaign can turn that around or do you think we need to make some fundamental changes?

Mr LOGANATHAN: I think part of the way of the future is in terms of convenience. What we have seen at the last two major elections here is a massive increase in early voting. There is no more criteria for early voting and we are having close to 40% of people vote early. The reality is that the people who are voting early were people who were going to vote on Saturday anyway. It has not resulted in an increase in participation.

In the long run—and I know there are different views about this—that Internet voting will have a role to play in terms of the future of democracy because people are calling out for convenience. I think if you look at the last Territory election in terms of overseas voters, only 20% of people who applied for an overseas postal vote actually had their vote admitted and added to the count because of delay of getting the vote and getting the vote back. It is just not an effective system.

New South Wales has had Internet voting for overseas, interstate and electors with a disability for the last two state elections. Western Australia have just had theirs for voters with an incapacity at their last state election.

In the future, Internet voting has a role to play, particularly in a jurisdiction this size. We do not offer the same level of service and convenience in remote areas as we do in urban areas. We need to make voting more convenient for voters.

Mr WOOD: We do not have to watch out for the Russians.

Mr GUNNER: I can add to that, Member for Nelson. This was actually a COAG discussion about electronic voting and it was agreed for New South Wales to essentially take the lead because of the work they have already done rather than having a duplication of systems across jurisdictions—to make sure we get it right with one, with security and other sensible concerns in mind. At COAG all the first ministers plus the Prime Minister and the President of the Local Government Association agreed to that. I think that had also been discussed at the Electoral Commissioner level.

Mr HIGGINS: The response we have just heard is make everything more convenient. I find it interesting that we look at Internet voting. I agree that it should be introduced, but I fail to see how that addresses our problem in remote areas. Access to that sort of facility in remote areas is limited.

One of your proposals, the education one—what do you really think about why people are not voting? Do you think it is inconvenience or do you think it is lack of education or not seeing anything for their effort? In other words, they vote but never see a change.

I am not asking you to comment on that, I am presuming that is their perception.

Mr LOGANATHAN: I will provide a comment on that. There was a recent study by the University of Tasmania and Larrakia Nation. I am not quite sure how those two teamed up. They did a study on governance. Part of the findings of the study was that Aboriginal people feel that voting is a waste of time because nothing changes. I think there is an issue of disengagement and that is growing as well as a lack of education and understanding.

The federal election was only eight weeks before the Territory election, so people could not understand—'I have already voted; why do I have to vote again?' There is an issue there.

There is no magic bullet to solve this. I think the way to do it is with face-to-face interaction with Aboriginal electors, in language, and explain to them what the core democratic principles are and what their role is so they can make an informed vote. This is not something that will change overnight but needs to be an ongoing program.

We believe that education is the only real option. I accept what you are saying in relation to Internet voting and there are parts of remote communities that would engage and use those services but there are large parts that will not and do not have the capacity to do so. It is the responsibility of the Electoral Commission to educate the electors and provide them a service that they will make themselves available to.

Mr HIGGINS: When you talk about education—the role of the Electoral Commission is to get people to vote—do you think it should be tied more with parliament itself? The Assembly has an education unit that explains what parliament does and there seems to be a disconnection between those two roles. You are saying to people that they need to vote because they need a politician to represent them. They say, 'What will they do for us?'

The parliament needs to educate and explain what parliament does and what its people represent. You see that, by combining the two—not the departments, do not get me wrong—and having some coordination between those education roles we might be able to achieve something extra. In other words, looking at a joint—and has that been looked at before?

Mr LOGANATHAN: We currently partner with Education Services. I have the numbers here. When the kids come here for a session, we partner with Education Services. We pay for the buses as our contribution and have an hour of the time with those kids.

Mr HIGGINS: I am thinking more of the adults. I know it is a bit harder.

Mr LOGANATHAN: We do things with the migrant association with ESL groups. I totally agree with you. What I am saying is that we partner at the moment, but could we partner more? We could. The difficulty is when you go to remote communities and then partnering, aligning and making it work. We have a focus on redistribution and elections, while parliamentary services may have a different agenda.

Where we could work together, we have. We have gone on remote trips with them in the past and will continue to do so when it is practical.

Madam CHAIR: Commissioner, you mentioned Aboriginal languages as part of resourcing more participation, particularly in remote areas of the Northern Territory. What is the relationship with the commission and the Aboriginal Interpreter Service?

Mr LOGANATHAN: The relationship is good and Aboriginal Interpreter Services have said to us that at elections they do not want their staff to play a role, because the communities are small and ...

Madam CHAIR: Could be conflicts of interest.

Mr LOGANATHAN: ... there are conflicts. We understand that. They have played a role in translating how-to-vote videos into 13 Indigenous languages that we used for the LA and local government elections.

Madam CHAIR: Are there any further questions in general?

Ms NELSON: Commissioner, has there been an increase in your staff since estimates of last year?

Mr LOGANATHAN: No.

Madam CHAIR: That concludes consideration of agency-related whole-of government questions on budget and fiscal strategy.

OUTPUT GROUP 3.0 – ELECTORAL SERVICES

Output 3.1 – Electoral Services

Madam CHAIR: The committee will now proceed to Output Group 3.0, Electoral Services, Output 3.1, Electoral Services.

I note that while the Chief Minister is responsible for the Northern Territory Electoral Commission's responsibilities under the *Electoral Act*, the Minister for Housing and Community Development is responsible for the NT Electoral Commission's responsibilities under Chapter 8 of the *Local Government Act*.

The Electoral Commissioner has asked that any questions for him regarding local government be asked during his appearance here with the Chief Minister, and the committee has agreed to the Electoral Commissioner not reappearing before the committee with the Minister for Housing and Community Development.

Are there any questions for Output 3.1?

Mr HIGGINS: Yes, I have a simple one. Can you give us advice on what was learned by the Deputy Electoral Commissioner during his visit to New Zealand to attend the New Zealand Election Visitor Program?

Mr LOGANATHAN: Absolutely, the main reason for attending that program is that New Zealand has an Internet voting system—a system that is done via the Internet for overseas postal votes. It is a system that basically allows the vote to be emailed to the elector and then to be separated in terms of the vote and the certificate so the secrecy of the ballot is maintained.

We are certainly interested in pursuing that as an option for providing overseas voters in the future. The ACT Electoral Commission in a similar view point in regard to that system—so one option that we are talking about is potentially developing a system between both electoral commissions that could meet that purpose.

The New Zealand Electoral Commission does an excellent job in providing electoral communication in Maori languages and dealing with electors as part of the education program. We are certainly keen to learn how they did it and how beneficial it was.

Mr HIGGINS: Do we have any follow up to that? When you talk about electronic voting and emails, and splitting them—have you done any work on that since then? I probably should not be asking this question, but would that form any part of any proposal that might go to Cabinet in regard to electronic voting?

Mr LOGANATHAN: Absolutely, as the Chief Minister has said, we have looked at that in relation to the New South Wales system and whether we could use that system here as well as the cost associated with that. That is a much larger system which could provide a service to a larger class of electors.

The New Zealand system is specifically designed for overseas votes and we are looking at that jointly with the ACT Electoral Commission.

Mr HIGGINS: How many overseas votes would we have, roughly?

Mr LOGANATHAN: Two hundred and fifty-two.

Mr GUNNER: That is why it makes sense to pursue something like what the Electoral Commissioner is looking at, such as the New Zealand model. Whereas the New South Wales model is for obviously voting and brings the much more inherent risk, as the Member for Nelson commented. When we are talking about 252 votes, it focuses much more on convenience, making sure those votes count.

Mr HIGGINS: I had no problem with the Deputy Electoral Commissioner going over there. It was more to get the information on what we got out of it.

Mr WOOD: I have a few questions. Commissioner, in relation to the report you tabled—your 2016 report—have you got any response back from the government in relation to that report?

Mr LOGANATHAN: The process is continuing. The Chief Minister's department held public consultation in relation to the recommendations in our report and the NTEC put forward a submission in that regard. My understanding is that the government will split this into two parts. They will look at issues in relation to the redistribution and the recommendations there. That is currently being considered, and the other recommendations will be considered as part of—once the inquiry into political donations has been released and the government's response to that report.

Mr GUNNER: There are two practical things there, Member for Nelson. One is Parliamentary Counsel and making sure we use their time wisely, and the other is to get some recommendations and reforms through and in place on the time lines needed for things like redistribution—and then the second set of reforms post the Mansfield inquiry being handed down and knowing what is in that, taking them more practical for Parliamentary Counsel in a time line that is sensible based on what is needed to be done between now and 2020. So it is a practical breakdown.

Mr WOOD: Just from the point of view of the next election, I am just wondering with early voting for instance, has there been a review to see if it is too long or just right? One of the issues with the early voting system is that candidates do not have the time to actually get their publicity going—I am not saying they should not get it done longer—but before you had a certain time where you could put your posters and paraphernalia out. Once the early voting came in, two weeks of that was cut out. Has there been any consideration to maybe extending the time that people have to lodge that they wish to stand at the next election so there is that gap that used to be there before?

Mr LOGANATHAN: In the election report, we have a section in regard to the election timetable and some options to extend that timetable. There are a number of reasons for it, one is just the logistics of being able to get the materials around to support early voting services, particularly in places like Katherine and Tennant Creek, and others in relation to giving more time to candidates in bush electorates to nominate.

In regard to early voting, the position of the Electoral Commission is that we provide this service as a convenience to electors. It is a fixed-term election, people are well aware of the timetable well in advance.

Mr WOOD: But they are not aware who the other candidates are. It may be that you have to work out where your preferences will go. You need some time that you would have had previously that you have lost under that system.

Mr GUNNER: While early voting has now commenced for all Territorians, the date that the first vote is cast has not actually changed. There were Territorians, who have, for quite a few elections, cast a vote from that day, so it applies to all. I think it is worth noting that it is now a difference between some and all, but everyone

is now being treated on an equal basis. There have been quite a number of votes cast on the day for quite a few Territory elections.

Mr WOOD: It was looking at the practical application—the change came, but the mechanics of how candidates would operate has been changed as well but there has been no allowance for that to occur in the system.

Mr GUNNER: For the urban areas.

Mr WOOD: As I said, if you are expecting the election date to be on a particular day and you bring that forward two weeks, which you actually have, then candidates—because there is not that much of a gap between when you nominate and when the election starts. That gap is narrow because of the early voting. All I am saying is that really should be longer just so people have a bit of time to organise some of the technical work that a candidate has to do.

Mr LOGANATHAN: What we are proposing in our changes to the timetable is to have the nomination draw on the Thursday in the afternoon, so that we will know who the candidates are, then for all the printing and things like that to occur on the Friday and for early voting to start on the Monday. There is an additional day that is being proposed if the changes to the timetable are accepted.

Mr WOOD: That is okay, but you are not standing for election; you are just putting out the ballot paper. The person who is actually standing needs some idea what that ballot paper will look like simply because we work on a preferential system. If they wish to work out some sort of agreement with others, they need a bit of time to do that. It is shortened now, that is all. Let us talk about the practical mechanics of what is changing.

I have another question in relation to that. It is a bit over two years until the next election. Do you think the government needs to make a decision on optional preferential voting now so the changes can be advertised well before the next elections and to remove an inconsistent voting system with local and federal elections?

Mr LOGANATHAN: In relation to the timing of the decision, that is a matter for the government. Our position would be that we want a decision well in advance of the election so we can inform the public in our information campaign.

In regard to your second point, that is our view. We believe it is in the interest of electors in the Northern Territory to have a common vote making system for all three levels of government. It means our formality campaign is consistent; we have the same message being delivered at all three levels of government. We think that is in the interest of Territory electors.

Mr WOOD: I agree with you. We know the reasons why it was changed.

You have said that the outreach programs in schools will be expanded. Has this happened?

Mr LOGANATHAN: To a degree, yes. But we are hoping to expand it further to do more with remote schools. This year we will have close to 7000 students, which was a significant increase from the previous years. They are more Darwin-based schools and the remote schools that are coming to Darwin as part of their school trips. We are hoping to get out to more remote schools and do more work in Alice Springs.

Mr WOOD: By having the Palmerston election held later than the other councils, how much did this add to the cost of running a separate election compared to having it at the same time when local government elections are normally held?

Mr LOGANATHAN: We gave Palmerston a quote to run the election. The decision was made. Whilst there was some additional costs for the delay, there was no additional cost to the council. The original quote was what we kept to. Where there were some additional costs was in relation to the additional week delay because of Cyclone Marcus. The election was deferred by a week. The additional costs in terms of running early voting services for a few more days, advertising, and SMSing and emailing electors was \$16 500.

Mr WOOD: Did you send that bill to Mr Marcus?

Mr GUNNER: Mr Marcus gave them an extra week of campaigning.

Mr HIGGINS: In regard to the last local election, (inaudible – mic off) were there any complaints in regard to that?

Mr LOGANATHAN: The answer is yes. We had some complaints in regard to queuing, particularly at Nightcliff. What we found is that whilst we increased the number of ballot boxes, voting screens for people to vote—I actually went to Nightcliff and saw what was occurring. Because you had to number all the squares and there were 17 candidates for mayor, people were taking their time to vote. It was a much longer voting time than on average.

We had a couple of complaints from candidates in regard to two matters that were referred to NTCAT. Both of those matters were dismissed. One of those matters, I understand, will be appealed to the Supreme Court.

Mr MILLS: This might be an unusual question and perhaps it is for both the wise men up front to answer or respond to it—that is, Bitcoin. Is there any consideration going forward regarding the donation of Bitcoin to political parties? If that does occur, how would it be tracked?

Mr GUNNER: Mansfield may have looked at this. It is not something I have actually considered. I will confess that cryptocurrency is not something I am across. It is a reasonable point though. It is a growing thing, I cannot speak for Mansfield and whether he has looked at it. Electoral Commissioner, I do not think it would be something within your ...

Mr MILLS: Any of your conversations with colleagues interstate and in the Commonwealth, has this been a matter that has been raised?

Mr LOGANATHAN: No, it has not. In saying that, all the electoral commissions will be in Darwin for a meeting next month. I will raise it then. I will let you know if that is something that has been canvassed in another jurisdiction.

Mr MILLS: I think we need to be prepared.

Mr GUNNER: It has not been raised in COAG yet and we get regular security briefings as well. I will note that, Terry, and I will pin it. Like the Electoral Commissioner, I will raise it at a later date in the right setting.

Madam CHAIR: Are there any further questions relating to Output 3.1, Electoral Services

That concludes consideration of Output Group 3.0.

OUTPUT GROUP 4.0—CORPORATE AND GOVERNANCE **Output 4.1—Corporate and Governance**

Madam CHAIR: The committee will now consider Output Group 4.0, Corporate and Governance, Output 4.1, Corporate and Governance. Are there any questions?

Mr HIGGINS: I suppose you have partially answered the question in regard to the federal issue, but do you think you have sufficient resources to undertake the work of your agency? I am also interested to hear what services might try to address some of the shortfall that you are feeling with the move of the AEC.

Mr LOGANATHAN: I think the issue that we face is the Territory's participation, particularly participation in the bush. At the moment, we have 84% of eligible electors on the electoral roll. The national average is 96%, so there are 26 000 Territorians who should be on the electoral roll and are not. The automatic systems are not catching those electors.

The intelligence tells us that most of those electors are in the rural divisions and the bush seats. We need to be interacting with those organisations, promoting the enrolment message and educating electors. With the AEC's departure to Brisbane, it means they do not have an ongoing field program. If the commission did have additional sources, it would certainly be targeted towards providing that service and particularly targeted towards the bush seats. We believe that is the area where there is the biggest issue in terms of roll accuracy and enrolment participation.

Mr HIGGINS: What sort of costs would you put to that roughly? You must have looked at it?

Mr LOGANATHAN: We would look to run a field program we think would cost about \$0.5m annually. The last big enrolment activity that was undertaken prior to the 2015 redistribution was a one-off exercise that went on for about four to five months. That was quite intensive; it cost about \$620 000.

Mr HIGGINS: With your ICT stuff, your estimate expenditure on corporate and governance is \$180 000 and shared services received is \$610 000. How much was ICT expenditure and how much is allocated next year, specifically ICT?

Mr LOGANATHAN: I do not have the breakdown in relation to what was ICT. I can take that question on notice, I will get that breakdown and provide it to you.

Question on Notice No 3.1

Madam CHAIR: Member for Daly, can you please repeat your question for the record.

Mr HIGGINS: How much was your ICT expenditure and how much is allocated in the 2018–19 budget?

Madam CHAIR: Chief Minister, on behalf of the Commissioner, do you accept the question?

Mr GUNNER: Yes.

Madam CHAIR: The question from the Member for Daly has been allocated the number 3.1.

Mr HIGGINS: Subsequent to that, you may want to take these on notice as well. Do you have any of the contractors engaged to provide ICT services using fly-in fly-out employees to work in your agency. You may have never asked that question, but are you aware of any?

Mr LOGANATHAN: What we have is the system that we use for elections, where there are now laptops in every polling place. It is called Electronic Certified List. The company that has that contract is based in Canberra, F1 Solutions. It developed the software for the ACT Electoral Commission. The deal was that any other commission can use that software at no cost, except any marginal cost to make changes to the system to suit that jurisdiction.

As part of the procurement process, we used the services of that company. While there is no fly-in fly-out service, during major elections they are on call. At the Territory election that company came up here twice to ensure the system would work according to specifications and to troubleshoot on election weekend.

Mr HIGGINSS: How many fly-in fly-out people are employed by the contractors who work in your agency? That is, not just ICT.

Mr LOGANATHAN: We would not have any fly-in fly-out workers.

Ms NELSON: The AEC left the NT.

Madam CHAIR: That concludes consideration of Output 4.1.

Output 4.2 – Shared Services Received

Madam CHAIR: The committee will now consider Output 4.2, Shared Services Received. Are there any questions?

That concludes consideration of Output 4.2 and Output Group 4.0.

Non-Output Specific Budget-Related Questions

Madam CHAIR: Are there any non-output specific budget-related questions?

On behalf of the committee, I thank the Electoral Commissioner for attending today.

The committee will now move on to consideration of the Ombudsman's Office.

Mr GUNNER: I thank the Electoral Commissioner for his attendance today. We very much appreciate the work he does. We are all very grateful recipients of his services from election to election. We would not be here without him.

OMBUDSMAN'S OFFICE

Madam CHAIR: Chief Minister, I invite you to introduce the officials accompanying you and, if you wish, to make an opening statement regarding the Ombudsman's Office.

Mr GUNNER: Madam Chair, I am very pleased to welcome Peter Shoyer, the Ombudsman for the Northern Territory. As with the Auditor-General and the Electoral Commissioner, I am happy not to make an opening statement and instead proceed to questions for the Ombudsman.

Madam CHAIR: Ombudsman, would you like to make an opening statement?

Mr SHOYER: No, thank you.

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

Madam CHAIR: The committee will now proceed to consider the estimates of proposed expenditure contained in Appropriation Bill 2018–19 as they relate to the Ombudsman's Office.

Are there any agency-related whole-of-government questions on budget and fiscal strategy?

Mr HIGGINS: My only question is, do you have sufficient resources to undertake the roles of your office?

Mr SHOYER: Times are tough. They get tougher each year. It is true to say we have sufficient resources to carry on. Obviously, if we receive additional resources we could undertake additional functions, but we can certainly undertake our core functions with the resources we have at the moment.

Mr HIGGINS: What other sorts of functions might you undertake?

Mr SHOYER: There are some things coming up. One of them is the potential transfer of FOI and privacy, which will no doubt, if it occurs, come with a level of funding. Another one is the potential introduction of the optional protocol to the convention against torture and other forms of ill treatment. No decision has been made yet by government as to who may take on that role, but if we were to take on a role the additional resources would allow us to undertake regular visits to different centres of detention, in our case probably correctional centres, and to monitor what is going on there to a greater level.

We receive a number of complaints each year from prisoners, and we act on those. From time to time we undertake specific investigations. I finalised an investigation last year, which resulted in the tabling of a report on women in prison. I think that was tabled—it may have been tabled this year. It was finalised just in the last financial year. We undertake inspections on an ad hoc basis, but that would allow us to do that on a regular basis if there were additional resources. We could also conduct additional community engagement to get the message out there.

One of the concerns I have at the moment is that in terms of Indigenous complainants, we actually have 16% of identified complainants who are Indigenous. Although, of the people who identify one way or the other, it is about 43%. We have a large number of Indigenous complainants, but I still think in the regions there is scope to get the message out that we are there, and to do some more work in that area. We are working in that area at the moment, but obviously more funding would equate to an ability to carry out more community engagement.

Mr HIGGINS: I think I would have seen that education role as a key role and core function. Would that be an area that should be given priority in future funding?

Mr SHOYER: We certainly see it as a priority and we do carry out that work at the moment, but there are limits there. I think this year we will have about 2300 complaints, and our primary focus is on dealing with those complaints. A lot of those are resolved informally and some of those are resolved by major investigations. But that is the fundamental work, dealing with the people who come to our office. We conduct community engagement at the moment, but there is always scope to do more in that area.

Mr HIGGINS: When you do community engagement, does that give you an increase in the number of cases you might have referred to you?

Mr SHOYER: We occasionally get one, particularly when we go to small communities. It is about getting people to know you, I suppose. We get the odd complaint in, but we are the sort of organisation where you do not need us until you need us. It may be two or three years down the track before someone thinks, 'Oh, the Ombudsman came here. I have a problem. Maybe I will go to them.'

It is about building up that knowledge and the ability of people to think, 'Okay, I remember that a couple of years ago when they came here,' or, 'Last week they came here'. It is not necessarily building up numbers straight away. It is more of a long-term effort.

Mr HIGGINS: Do you have much collateral in the Territory itself? I do not have anything in my electoral office about the Ombudsman. I treat that as education as well, getting that message out through all the members of parliament. I say this to a lot of people; it is a great avenue to get information out to people. It is not a political party but a good source.

Mr GUNNER: Initially, Member for Daly, I know that referral to the Ombudsman is a great service—depending on who comes to the front door and what the issue is. We have some collateral in our office that we use. I know from personal experience that there is some. I have never actually asked if other offices have it or not or how we even came to acquire it. It just exists.

Mr HIGGINS: I raised this with a lot of different people and said I do not think our local members' offices are used enough by government agencies. I do not know what the fear is of getting information out. A classic example is the water TVs ...

Mr WOOD: I have no room left in my office now.

Mr GUNNER: We are a massive referral point. That is my experience.

Mr HIGGINS: I think water TVs—televisions that are in my office, the Member for Nelson's ...

Mr GUNNER: Oh, in your windows.

Mr HIGGINS: They are supplied by government and are a connection directly into government ...

Madam CHAIR: Can we please have a bit of order so we can hear the Member for Daly. Thank you.

Mr HIGGINS: In getting a message out, government can actually transmit it themselves. They have control of that. It seems to me that we do not use that facility enough across government. We had the Electoral Commissioner talking about electronic voting and using the Internet, and here is a thing in some of our offices that I do not think we use enough.

Mr SHOYER: We do use other avenues to get our voice heard, I suppose, or our existence known. One of those is different legal aid agencies going out to communities. But in terms of electorate offices, we have actually made a number of efforts. I have given two presentations to different groups of electorate officers this financial year. We have handed them a variety of information, including Indigenous language introductions to the office—they are audio introductions. We have also provided a complaints and inquiries guide for electorate offices so there should be one in each office.

I think I covered everyone in that set of sessions, or very close to everyone anyway. That complaints and inquiries guide helps people to locate who they should be complaining to. Also, in the previous financial year, my staff and I have been around to every office in the Darwin and Palmerston area—where we could—and when we go to various communities we make an effort to go to the electorate offices there.

We do make an effort to get that out—the message I have given to electorate officers is that we are one of the options, but we are not the sole option for following up on complaints. If in doubt, talk to us and we might be able to help you. If we cannot help, we can help you find who to talk to.

Definitely, disseminating information through electorate offices, legal aid agencies, anyone else who is going to communities is important to us because we are a small office and we have limited resources to do that, but we can rely on other people to at least know about our existence and be able to say when someone raises an issue with them, 'Hey, maybe talk to the Ombudsman'.

Mr HIGGINS: My office exists at Berry Springs, so it is not actually treated as part of Palmerston or the rural area. It is out there in no man's land.

Mr GUNNER: In Gary land.

Mr HIGGINS: In Gary land—that is it. It is even further out than the Member for Nelson.

Madam CHAIR: Are there any other agency-related whole-of-government questions for the Ombudsman?

Mr WOOD: Ombudsman, you mentioned the report on women in the Alice Springs prison. Do you know whether those report recommendations have been actioned and do you intend to follow that up?

Mr SHOYER: Yes I have been following that up. We have been keeping a close eye on that. There are a number of recommendations that are government-wide and a number that are quite specific to corrections. I have met with the Attorney-General, the Chief Executive of the Department of the Attorney-General and Justice and also the Commissioner for Corrections in relation to that. I have been receiving regular updates and have been meeting with the commissioner on a monthly basis.

One of the issues at the forefront has definitely been the implementation of those recommendations. I went to Alice Springs in February to check on progress. There are quite immediate recommendations for dealing with facilities there and there are much broader, long-term recommendations, so we have been keeping track of what has been going on there. They have made good progress in some of the immediate recommendations. At the time that I went down at least the number of women had fallen off a bit, so that was putting less pressure on the facilities.

Ms NELSON: That is a good thing.

Mr SHOYER: Absolutely, it is a good thing. One of the driving points behind the report was that alternatives to imprisonment should be investigated wherever possible. A lot of work has been done in planning for the future. As always, resources are an issue. There is a great proposal for a through-care model being developed. I am not sure whether that has been signed off yet, but that is exactly the sort of thing that can lead to these women having a future outside the prison.

That was not limited to women; it was for both men and women. There is a lot of planning in place it is just a matter of keeping an eye on things to make sure they are followed up, that they do not slip through the cracks—after two or three years the pressure of resources gets too great. That is something I will be continuing to push for.

Mr WOOD: Because you have put those recommendations forward, if the government does not agree with those recommendations, and you being an independent body, can you then say, 'Why are you not taking my recommendations seriously?' Can you still put forward a fairly vigorous case that that recommendation be carried forward?

Mr SHOYER: Absolutely, and that is something we will certainly be doing in this case and the case of every report where we put forward recommendations. We continue to report on progress in our annual report.

Take, for example, the remote morgues case, which was actually the report that was produced by my predecessor many years ago. That is something where we have continually followed up either in annual reports or in the media to try to get progress—and we got progress there in the resources available, the facilities available, an organisation taking responsibility for it, and the services that are offered. That has taken a number of years and I would expect a full implementation of this report to take many years. That is something I will continue to monitor and it may well be that in the future, a number of years down the track, if necessary we look at doing a further investigation and a further follow-up.

In fact, the Women in Prison report was a follow-up on a report that was presented in 2008. I think this is fundamental to our society and I will be keeping a track on it for the rest of my term and recommending to whoever may be the future Ombudsman that they do so.

Mr WOOD: Who did the previous report?

Mr SHOYER: Carolyn Richards.

Ms NELSON: That is the Women in Prison report?

Mr SHOYER: Yes.

Mr WOOD: In relation to the Crime Victims Services Unit, you reported that there had been a lot of complaints about the Crime Victims Services Unit, has there been any improvement in reducing those complaints?

Mr SHOYER: That is another thing we have been monitoring. I have been having quarterly updates with the head of that unit. We made a number of internal recommendations in relation to that. They have a large backlog of cases. This is the unit that awards financial assistance to victims of crime.

What they have done over a number of years have built up a backlog. We have been working with them. The backlog is being addressed, it is a very major job and I imagine it will take time to actually work through that but the department is certainly taking that very seriously. They have provided additional resources. It also requires cooperation from organisations like Police and Health in terms of getting information to process these things and they have both provided additional resources.

I understand that there has recently been an internal audit conducted of the operations to consider what improvements they may make there. I think they are heading in the right direction. I think it is a scheme that is quite involved and quite complex in some cases, particularly if you are looking at people who have developed psychological issues or mental health issues as a result of a crime.

There are also problems with getting reports done by health specialists and health professionals simply because of the limited availability of health professionals in the Northern Territory. It is always going to take more time than victims would like—and certainly more than I would like—but I think there are improvements being made. Again, it is something we will continue to monitor and if necessary we will investigate and report to parliament.

Mr WOOD: I am not sure is relevant, but in relation to the Office of the Information Commissioner—it comes under you, is that correct?

Mr SHOYER: That is a recommendation that has come out of the Martin report in to the development of the new ICAC. It is something that we have done a fair amount of work on this financial year in anticipation that that will take place. That still needs to be finalised and confirmed.

Mr WOOD: It is not going to be overtaken by ICAC?

Mr SHOYER: The recommendation was that it would be taken over by our office. That is something that still needs to be confirmed by government, but we have been making preparations along those lines.

Mr WOOD: Thank you.

Madam CHAIR: Are there any further questions considering agency and whole-of-government?

That concludes consideration of agency-related whole-of-government questions on budget and fiscal strategy.

OUTPUT GROUP 5.0 – OMBUDSMAN'S OFFICE **Output 5.1 – Ombudsman Operations**

Madam CHAIR: The committee will now consider Output Group 5.0, Ombudsman's Office, Output 5.1, Ombudsman's Operations. Are there any questions?

That concludes consideration of Output Group 5.0.

OUTPUT GROUP 6.0 – CORPORATE AND GOVERNANCE **Output 6.1 – Corporate and Governance**

Madam CHAIR: The committee will now consider Output Group 6.0, Corporate and Governance, Output 6.1, Corporate and Governance. Are there any questions?

That concludes consideration of Output 6.1.

Output 6.2 – Shared Services Received

Madam CHAIR: The committee will now consider Output 6.2, Shared Services Received. Are there any questions?

That concludes consideration of Output 6.2, and Output Group 6.0.

Non-Output Specific Budget-Related Questions

Madam CHAIR: Are there any non-output specific budget-related questions?

Ms NELSON: Picking up on the Member for Nelson's questioning about the report in regard to women in prison—you mentioned the remote morgues report. I refer to that report quite a bit through research to do with the Katherine electorate. It was written in 2009, is that right?

Mr SHOYER: Yes.

Ms NELSON: Has a review been conducted since then?

Mr SHOYER: We have been reporting in our annual report on progress. We have also done that where there have been media inquiries responding to those. I do not remember the exact year, but a few years ago there was a joint announcement by the Commonwealth and Territory governments to spend a considerable amount of money on capital facilities. There has, more recently, been a decision where it has been made clear by the Department of Health that they will take over all responsibility for morgues. They will not necessarily run every remote morgue, but they are responsible for policy.

The major problem was that initially there was no one agency that would take responsibility, so that was a positive step. Since then, the Department of Health has been responsible. There are still issues that will arise from time to time. It is always sensitive when you are dealing with the death of a loved one and how that is treated. But a lot of progress has been made.

This financial year I do not think we have had any complaints in that regard. There have been issues with the facilities in one community—I cannot remember which one—about the building of the structure.

Madam CHAIR: Several communities.

Mr SHOYER: That is obviously a problem, but it has not been raised with our office. We did get a complaint a couple of years ago, which we followed up and passed on to the Department of Health to deal with, and they addressed that with the community.

Ms NELSON: Are there plans to conduct another formal review? It is a significant issue in remote and regional Northern Territory. I am trying to word this so it does not sound like I am being overly critical, but it is a huge issue. You would have thought there would be a bit more effort into conducting a formal review two or three years out to make sure we are on track to fix it.

Mr SHOYER: We followed that up for many years. Once the Department of Health took over—as I said, we have not received a complaint this year. If there are still serious issues and someone were to make a complaint to our office, that is something we would look at.

Madam CHAIR: I asked this question last year as well. How many Aboriginal staff do you have working in your office, considering you said roughly 40% of complaints come from Aboriginal identified Territorians?

Mr SHOYER: At the moment we have two Indigenous staff. We have had up to three in the past—given we have a full-time employee level of 11. I think that meets roughly the government guidelines that are in place. We have had other Indigenous staff and it is very hard to hang onto them because they are very much in demand. We find that true not just with Indigenous staff but with all our staff.

Ms NELSON: It is good news to hear that.

Mr SHOYER: It is. It is very hard to hold onto them.

Madam CHAIR: And what is the overall staffing number for you currently?

Mr SHOYER: Eleven FTE at the moment.

Madam CHAIR: Any further questions? Thank you Ombudsman. On behalf of the committee I would like to thank you for attending today and the committee will now proceed to consideration of outputs relating to the Department of the Chief Minister.

Mr GUNNER: I thank Peter and his whole team for the work that they have done, and obviously Peter for appearing today. We thank the Ombudsman for keeping us honest.

Madam CHAIR: The committee will take a short recess and recommence at 9:30 am.

The committee suspended.

DEPARTMENT OF THE CHIEF MINISTER

Madam CHAIR: Thank you, everyone. Chief Minister, I welcome you back and invite you to introduce the officials accompanying you and, if you wish, to make an opening statement regarding the Department of the Chief Minister.

Mr GUNNER: Thank you, Madam Chair. Today I have with me, to my left, Jodie Ryan, DCM Chief Executive Officer. Next to her is Ms Maria Mohr, the Deputy Chief Executive Officer; and to my right is Andy Cowan, the other Deputy Chief Executive Officer.

Madam CHAIR: Chief Minister, do you wish to make an opening statement?

Mr GUNNER: I will make very brief one. Budget 2018–19 is about more jobs, more people and a brighter future. The Department of the Chief Minister plays a crucial role in these key priorities. That includes delivering generational change with the early childhood development plan with the Minister for Children; attracting more people to call the Territory home through a fully-funded population strategy; creating more jobs through revitalising our towns and cities; and investing the bush and local decision-making.

We are a government for all Territorians. Every Territorian, no matter where they live, has the right to high-quality health, education and community safety. They also have the right to access decent housing and employment opportunities. These are priorities for our government. That is why we have to work tirelessly across the Territory, listening to Territorians and acting on their concerns.

In the last 12 months I have visited Alice Springs 12 times; Barunga; Batchelor; Birany Birany; Borroloola; Bickerton Island; Daly River; Groote Eylandt twice; Jabiru; Katherine five times; Maningrida; Newcastle Waters; Ngukurr; Nhulunbuy five times, and that includes Yirrkala; Tennant Creek five times; Tiwi Islands four times; and Wadeye. I am exhausted reading it.

I thank all Territorians who have welcomed me into their communities, towns and suburbs and I look forward to listening to many more Territorians over the coming 12 months. I believe it is critical, as Chief Minister, to get across the Territory as much as possible.

I thank everyone within the department for supporter these priorities and continuing their hard work as public servants. We recognise we have an ambitious agenda as government and it cannot happen without DCM coordinating and leading.

Madam CHAIR: Thank you, Chief Minister. Committee members, are there any questions on the opening statement by the Chief Minister?

Mr HIGGINS: No, I do not have any specific questions, but thank you, Chief Minister, for that. I thank all the staff for all the global questions we asked that have been answered. I may have some follow-up questions to those questions today, but I will save it until we get to those outputs.

Mr GUNNER: Thank you, Leader of the Opposition.

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

Madam CHAIR: The committee will now proceed to consider the estimates of proposed expenditure contained in the Appropriation Bill 2018–19 as they relate to the Department of the Chief Minister. Are there any agency-related whole-of-government questions on budget and fiscal strategy?

Mr HIGGINS: Yes, I have a fair few in this area, so if we work through those that would be good.

In the context of responding to the Royal Commission recommendations—I quote Recommendation 6.1:

The Productivity Commission undertake a review and audit of Commonwealth expenditure in the Northern Territory in the area of family and children's services relevant to the prevention of harm to children. The review should address coordination of programs, funding agreements and selection of service providers, service outputs and evaluations.

On 8 February you said at COAG that you had instructed your public servants not to cooperate with that inquiry and not provide a single document. Subsequent to this, the government's formal response to the Royal Commission recommendation stated, 'Noted for action by others'.

Can you please clarify your government's current position on this Royal Commission recommendation given your rhetoric at COAG, and the fact the Treasurer opposes it but your Territory Families minister supports the inquiry. I am basically saying, will you participate in the inquiry or not? If so, what progress has been made to date in achieving its recommendations?

Mr GUNNER: Recommendation 6.1 goes to a Productivity Commission inquiry into the Australian Government. Obviously, we do not support recommendation 6.1 applying to the Territory because that was not the recommendation from the Royal Commission. It only applies to the Australian Government because while the Royal Commission was sitting, the Australian Government could not identify all their money and where it went in the Northern Territory and what outcome it produced. That is obviously critical to know. That is going towards the Australian Government.

What we support, and it is identified in other recommendations through the Royal Commission, is a study around what input should go in towards a tripartite-type funding model. That is where community, the Territory government, the Australian Government, and the non-government sector sit to work out the allocation of funding. That is a study into what input should be provided into that. That is actually quite logical and we support that.

Recommendation 6.1 clearly applies to the Australian Government.

Mr HIGGINS: You and I have a differing opinion on that.

Mr GUNNER: It is black and white. I met with the Royal Commissioners and they were very blunt in their assessment that this applied to the Australian Government. There was no room for doubt or grey areas.

Mr HIGGINS: The Australian Government funding—and as a Territory we spend a lot of that funding. I think that inquiry is asking, 'How do we spend that?'

Mr GUNNER: No, they were very specific on that. They were not talking about Australian Government funding that came to the Territory government. They were talking about Australian Government funding spent directly in the NT by the Australian Government, which was essentially ...

Mr HIGGINS: We have a differing opinion on that.

Mr GUNNER: You may have an opinion but that is not what the Royal Commission has said. So it is fact from the Royal Commissioners in the report, and as verbally briefed to me, that they were talking specifically about Australian Government money spent directly in the NT—not one single dollar from AG to NT.

We could provide all the answers to every question they asked about our spending, which includes allocations from GST, for example. What could not be explained by the Australian Government was their direct spending into the Territory of a considerable amount of money—not through us. We could answer all those questions and cooperated fully at the Royal Commission. But, consistently, the Australian Government could not explain where they spent their money. That is why the Royal Commission made that recommendation.

I asked them specifically about it because I wanted to get absolute clarity on it. Both Royal Commissioners said it was about the Australian Government's direct spending, not in any way, shape or form about the Territory spending Australian dollars—absolute clarity there. There is no doubt, no grey areas.

Mr HIGGINS: Do you feel that recommendation is a bit ambiguous?

Mr GUNNER: No. I thought it was absolutely clear how it read and what it said—6.1, Australian Government spending in the Territory. If you read the report they go to it as well.

Mr HIGGINS: I pre-empted that question by saying that you and I have a completely different opinion on that. It is the way I interpret that recommendation.

Mr GUNNER: I can give you the Royal Commissioners' interpretation of it then. They wrote it. It applies to the Australian Government spending in the NT directly, not through the NT.

Mr HIGGINS: Do you have any documentation from those commissioners stating that?

Mr GUNNER: It is the Royal Commission report. They produced it. It is publically available. It is out there. I asked them questions on it so there is absolutely no doubt around that one.

Mr HIGGINS: I will move onto the next question if I can, Chief Minister.

Mr GUNNER: No, I am still answering the question. I really appreciate the opportunity to further clarify that point in case there is any doubt out there by anybody that that recommendation from the Royal Commission related directly to the Australian Government spending in the NT directly. I appreciate the opportunity to clarify that.

Mr HIGGINS: I think it is a different view from the federal government. The next question ...

Mr GUNNER: Again, responding to that—I feel for the Australian Government because it is a very damning finding by the Royal Commission. I can see why the Australian Government, particularly the Senator for the Northern Territory, the Minister for Indigenous Affairs, will do everything possible to try to muddy the waters or kick up dust. It is a very damning finding into the Australian Government that it could not identify where its money went and why, or what outcomes it produced. That is not good use of taxpayer funding. I can see why the Australian Government wants to muddy the waters on this.

But let us be crystal clear; the NT Government fully cooperated with the Royal Commission. We kept all our books open. The Royal Commission could see exactly where our money went and why, and what outcome we were seeking to achieve. We accept the recommendation of the Royal Commission that we can do better, but we know we can accept that recommendation because the Royal Commission can make recommendations specifically about what we were doing and why.

The great tragedy is the Australian Government does not actually know what it is doing in the Territory. It spent a fortune here and does not know what it is doing with the money. It is an awful situation. If it does not know what it is doing here then it does not know what it is doing in other state of Australia either. So that shows that there are significant concerns about where the Australian Government is spending its money, what it is doing with it and what outcomes it is getting, not just in the Territory. That is a great concern for the whole of this nation that it does not know what it is doing with its money.

Mr HIGGINS: Okay. Have we paid our contribution to the Commonwealth? If so, when?

Mr GUNNER: We have paid a significant percentage of our contribution. Apparently there is still some negotiation around some final payments. That will be done by October this year, but I will pass on to CEO Jodie Ryan.

Ms RYAN: Yes, we have had two bills from the Commonwealth, which we have paid. They are about \$20m in total. We have had advice from the Commonwealth that they will not finalise their bills until October.

Mr GUNNER: Upon presentation of invoices, we will pay. We are good for it, Leader of the Opposition.

Mr HIGGINS: I hope so!

Mr GUNNER: We will pay our money.

Mr HIGGINS: You pay me every fortnight. In your address in reply to the Appropriation Bill, you stated that funding has been allocated for the implementation of a number of the recommendations of the Royal Commission into the Protection and Detention of Children in the NT. What allocation has been made available in your department, and for what specific purposes?

Mr GUNNER: Most of that sits with RMO, which is not in our agency. What we recognised—this came through the recommendations of the Royal Commission—is our local decision-making agenda. We have funded that. That came out of the recommendations of the Royal Commission.

While it was on our agenda initially, the Royal Commission has identified what we were doing and they like it and encourage us to keep doing it. The biggest impact out of the Royal Commission for the Department of the Chief Minister will be the implementation of our local decision-making agenda. That is \$1.767m.

Mr HIGGINS: What part of the local decision-making policy did they highlight? I use the word, 'highlight' rather than, 'recommend'.

Mr GUNNER: The Royal Commission recommendation were quite broad, obviously.

Mr HIGGINS: Yes, we discussed that before.

Mr GUNNER: One of the things they saw as crucial to reform in this area is greater empowerment and local decision-making. They supported our drive to make these decision local. Jodie Ryan will add to that.

Ms RYAN: As the Chief Minister said, there was a range of recommendations that talked about local decision-making. The funding we got was for additional resources in some specific communities across the Territory, so two extra for next year and then further in the following year in 2019–20.

Mr HIGGINS: So these are community ...

Ms RYAN: Resources that will be in the regions.

Mr GUNNER: In communities. I should say that this would have been a priority of government anyway, if that makes sense. The two agendas align. That is expanding the regional director network.

Mr HIGGINS: I have an interest in that.

Mr GUNNER: Yes, and you have seen the impact of that on the ground—that it can make a significant difference to a local community and the region around it.

Ms RYAN: We also got funding under that for a grant program for capacity building in regional and remote areas.

Mr GUNNER: That grant program started prior to the Royal Commission handing down its final report. It all goes to the same area that the Royal Commission was talking about—essentially, empowerment of locals and increasing the capacity in governance out there.

Mr HIGGINS: The estimated cost of the Scientific Inquiry into Hydraulic Fracturing of Onshore Unconventional Reservoirs one year ago was \$3m. What was the final cost? Can you outline additional costs and why they were necessary if there were any over that \$3m?

Mr GUNNER: I thank Justice Pepper for her work. I genuinely believe this is money well-spent on what was a difficult issue for the Territory.

I had a Year 9 student come to my electorate office on Saturday. She said she had to research this issue for school—she chose the topic. She said she had incredible difficulty finding resources she could trust online for either side of the argument. She said that the scientific panel's work—what the Territory commissioned—was very impartial, fair and easy to read. It was a great endorsement from one of our very intelligent and articulate students in the NT.

This was a crucial body of work. In the 2016–17 actuals, it was \$2.05m. In the 2017–18 actuals, it was \$3.56m to 31 March. We have expended \$3.56m to date.

Mr HIGGINS: I was going to say—it has not gone from \$3m to \$5m, has it?

Mr GUNNER: No.

Mr HIGGINS: What is the breakdown of the \$1.7m for the establishment of the implementation unit? In answering that, why is it just a one-off budget allocation? Will that just be for one year?

Mr GUNNER: It is obviously for the implementation, so once it is implemented you do not need that team anymore. That is the initial budget for it.

Ms RYAN: The amount allocated for 2018–19 is \$1.7m. We actually have funding for three years because we think that is how long implementation will go. Specifically for the Department of the Chief Minister, that funding is for the implementation team, so we have a team of about four people who will be coordinating implementation across government so we can meet all 135 recommendations. We also have some funding in that \$1.7m for the start of the scientific baseline assessment work that needs to be done.

Ms NELSON: The role that Dr Ritchie has been appointed, how long is that ongoing funding, has that been included in the forward estimate?

Ms RYAN: Yes.

Mr WOOD: On the fracking inquiry, Chief Minister, one of the recommendations into hydraulic fracturing was to charge gas companies for water. Are you able to say whether that principle would apply to other users of water—for example other mining companies, pastoralists, horticulturalists, the sandalwood industry, forestry producers—so that everyone is on a level playing field? If not, why not?

Mr GUNNER: There are two things here. That question is for the Department of Environment and Natural Resources minister—it would sit within their portfolio. The recommendation was specific to hydraulic fracturing. I think we need to be careful of unintended consequences of that.

Mr WOOD: That is what I am interested in.

Mr GUNNER: We accept that one in principle and are working it through, but it sets with DENR for the policy work. They are the ones, from this point forward, doing that work on how it would actually work.

Mr WOOD: In April you recommended that Dr David Ritchie would be appointed as the independent officer to oversee implementation of the 135 recommendations for the scientific inquiry into hydraulic fracturing. Could you please explain the role there for the EPA and the Department of Environment and Natural Resources in this process? How do they all fit together?

Mr GUNNER: David's role is to make sure that we implement our recommendations. That will include DENR implementing the recommendations as an independent implementation officer. That is a separate role to what DENR will be doing, which is actually doing the implementation work, as with the EPA. Does that make sense, how you will see the three working together?

David is not implementing them; he is making sure we implement them, and that will include oversight of DCM, DENR, DIPL and the EPA, and anyone else involved.

Mr WOOD: So he is an overarching person?

Mr GUNNER: It is not an independent statutory officer; it is an honest set of eyes over our shoulder to make sure we are implementing the recommendations. The Pepper report was really good at identifying risk and how you mitigate it. It had quite significant recommendations around that. I felt the greatest risk, which was not addressed in the report, was government actually implementing it.

Recommendation 135 was to implement all of them, which we have taken on board. For me, reading the report, what I wanted comfort in—and I think the public wanted comfort in—was knowing that we were doing that work. I discussed that with Pepper; I said this is not a missing recommendation—that would be the wrong way of putting it—but this is almost a recommendation that we should take on board ourselves, so we added it. You can call it silent recommendation 136—that we have an implementation officer that oversees us to make sure we are doing the work.

Mr WOOD: I totally agree. It is funny that when I did my report from America I did not get that same feeling from the public that they distrusted the regulators. Perhaps they had been around a lot longer and had a lot

more history in relation to onshore gas than we did. I think our history in mining, unfortunately, has caused some problems.

We only have to look at the Redbank mine. Mount Todd, which has an open day this weekend—unfortunately the Orchid Spectacular gets in the road. I will give that a plug too.

But I think that you are right. The main concern that I have heard from people—and some people have said to me they do not agree with it at all, but the one concern that has been raised by people who would be supporters is that they do not trust the government to do it correctly. I hope David Ritchie, who is a pretty good fella, will be able to overcome those fears.

Mr GUNNER: For me, Dr David Ritchie comes with his own reputation in the Northern Territory, a long-term Territorian. He has the added benefit of having being on the independent panel—understanding why they made their recommendations and what the intention is—and can quite genuinely look at whether we have not just done it, but done it against the spirit of the report.

Mr HIGGINS: The Member for Nelson was talking about the departments. Do you have details on what departments will be responsible for what specifics in actioning these recommendations? We have the Department of the Chief Minister, Primary Industry and Resources, and Environment and Natural Resources. There could be others. Have we outlined all that? We have David Ritchie heading it up, which I am happy about, and monitoring all of those, but which ones have been given what responsibilities?

Mr GUNNER: The recommendation from the panel was that we provide an implementation plan within three months of the report being handed down and that is coming up soon. That implementation plan will go to that level of detail. That information we can provide to you soon, exactly which department has lead on what and how we will tackle that over the coming months and years.

Mr HIGGINS: That will become available soon?

Mr GUNNER: On 17 July.

Mr HIGGINS: That will be made public?

Mr GUNNER: Yes.

Mr HIGGINS: How long do you think it will take to recommence and finalise the regulations or the redrafting of the regulations? It was something I started as the Environment minister and it was stopped when the moratorium came into place. How long will it take us to start that process again?

Mr GUNNER: There are a series of recommendations that roll out on a time basis and some things will be done sooner than others. There are two essential phases. There is the work that needs to be done before an exploration can recommence, and there is the work that needs to be done between exploration recommencing and production, possibly commencing depending on approval. There are three different time lines.

If you look at the recommendations that need to be put in place before exploration can recommence, you will see that only one of those actually has a time line, that is, the methane gas emissions monitoring. When I have answered this question before publicly, I have always said the most likely time for exploration recommencing, if people choose to do so, will be after all the recommendations are in place. Around Dry Season next year would be a practical target date around exploration.

There are some recommendations that are crucial to be put in place prior to exploration and that will also impact on production. One of them goes to well integrity, that is, the regulations around category nine well and above and those sorts of things, because an exploration well has potential to also be used as a production well. There is some overlap there.

The other significant time line that there has to be a minimum of three years of work done around the social, cultural and environmental baseline. That is a minimum period of time that has to occur prior to any production decisions, either by a company requesting production or a government approving production. That three-year time line is crucial, but also they the six-month methane and the three-year baseline studies are probably the two time lines within the report that are most informative to when the work needs to be done.

Mr HIGGINS: A question I would like to ask, and I asked of the Treasurer yesterday—people have spoken to me, and this is in regard to people involved in civil contracting, building roads, putting up fences. Some of the mining companies have negotiated with the land owners to get access, and part of that deal is they will build roads and put up fences. They are after permission to commence that work. They are being told no, they cannot until all the regulations are in place.

Mr GUNNER: I would like some clarification. I have had this question too. Let us go back to the principle we applied to the moratorium. We applied the moratorium to activities that were specific to hydraulic fracturing—or even a de-fit. The companies would argue that a de-fit was not fracturing, but we felt that it was close enough to an activity of hydraulic fracturing that was included as part of the moratorium. For any activity we have done that would have been approved through any other exploration—we did not put a moratorium on all exploration. If it was the same level of activity as you would have done for exploring for gold, for example, we were allowing that. It was only those things specific to hydraulic fracturing.

We allow roads and fences to be built in the Northern Territory. That is something we allow every day. That is not specific to hydraulic fracturing. Any of those things included in the report that are specific to the activity of fracturing, we need recommendations in place that impact on those. If someone wants to put up a fence—we put up fences every day. That is the principle we would be applying. We have not done the implementation plan yet, so we are still in the early days of this report being accepted and worked through. That is the principle we applied to the moratorium. It is a practical principle.

The department is still working towards that, getting the implementation plan under way, so clear direction probably has not been provided around some of these things yet. People are still asking questions about what is in and what is out. But, that is the principle we applied to the moratorium and to what you can do prior to and post exploration. That is logic.

Mr HIGGINS: It sounds that way. The underlying query is the link with fracking. In other words, is this an activity that is linked to fracking? If they build a road, the interpretation being given by the public service is that the road cannot be built because it is linked to fracking. That issue has come up.

Mr GUNNER: I am not aware of a hard decision on that. There may have been some general inquiries. It is likely to go through one of the other line agencies. We coordinate here, but the decision-making would sit in a different agency.

I think I have been clear in how we would interpret it—the spirit of what we would do.

Mr HIGGINS: I am happy with the answer. I will make the transcript available to people who have spoken to me. I will say, 'Here, take this with you; it is the Chief Minister's interpretation'. And hopefully it will be solved at that point. If I have any feedback I will come back and speak to you.

Mr GUNNER: There are always people asking questions in the early days. In the early days of the moratorium people were asking, 'Is this one in, is this one out? Can we sort this out?'

We made the moratorium work, and I think the same will be true here. There is a degree of civil work that is just civil work.

Mr HIGGINS: No problem. With the City Deal, what specific projects have been submitted to the federal government under that deal?

Mr GUNNER: Submit is not the right word; it is not a grant application. Essentially, we sit at the table with the Australian Government and there are a range of projects on the table. If it were a grant application process it would be much simpler. We could just submit it and be away with it. Or, if we were doing it in our own right we could just go ahead.

We are in negotiation with the Australian Government. We have talked with them about some of the things on the table. Some of it is moving pieces—one project might come off, another might come on, depending on how negotiations are going. They have always been positive. While I would like to have the money provided from the Australian Government and just get on with it—that money is still missing—all our conversations have been extremely positive about the projects on the table and what we want to do.

Jodie has been directly involved in negotiations with the public service. I might pass to her in a moment to talk a bit more.

You could call it a shopping list—there are a range of projects that we support. The Australian Government just has not quite settled on what they want in or out, or the timing of those being delivered. I think you appreciate how negotiations work. There is a smorgasbord of things that would be great for our city, and we are just waiting for a final allocation.

Ms RYAN: That is right. We are in almost weekly negotiations at this point. The minister came up a couple of weeks ago. From that time we have been in a negotiation strategy, meeting with the Commonwealth about what is in and what is out. Hopefully we will have a decision in the next few months.

The Western Sydney MOU was signed 18 months before the agreement was actually finalised. These deals take a long time because you are negotiating between state government, Commonwealth Government and local governments as well. In our case, we have Charles Darwin University, so you have four partners working closely together.

Mr HIGGINS: Right. When we dropped the Myilly Point museum, did we substitute that in that list, or has it just been dropped off?

Mr GUNNER: Because it is more like a shopping list, that did not have any impact on the City Deal conversations or negotiations.

Mr HIGGINS: So we have not had anything subsequent to that?

Mr GUNNER: I would not say added, I would say there has always been a range of projects in front of the Australian Government that have grown and shrunk, depending on the conversation with the Australian Government. That growing and shrinking has not been as a consequence of Myilly being on or off. That has just been the consequence of negotiations with the Australian Government. The list has both grown and shrunk in our conversations with them, but that has not been the trigger for it.

Mr HIGGINS: The projects that are on that shopping list ...

Mr GUNNER: Yes.

Mr HIGGINS: Do they form part of the MOU? Are they an attachment to it or ...

Mr GUNNER: The MOU all goes to the spirit of ...

Ms RYAN: Yes, the MOU was just the spirit of how we work together.

Mr GUNNER: The kind of projects that should fit within. Rather than detailing projects, it all goes to the kind of things they want to be included.

Ms RYAN: The negotiations phase actually goes through the details of the project. I believe we are preparing something for you now for when you go to Canberra in a couple of weeks.

Mr HIGGINS: That is good. I will be in Canberra in two weeks.

Mr GUNNER: What we have been cautious about—obviously, there is a range of projects we have discussed publicly, which I would like to discuss more. The Australian Government also wants to have an answer when we follow this on from the City Deal, obviously. I do not want to compromise the conclusion of a deal by talking too much about some of the stuff that we are negotiating.

The Australian Government, obviously, wants to be able to announce some of those things with us post signing of the City Deal, so it is a delicate dance. But we have talked about most of the things that are before the Australian Government that we are negotiating. Obviously, knowing where the Territory economy has been for a while, we have pushed forward with a range of projects and tried to get some motion going, so when the City Deal is delivered we have momentum.

The Australian Government has not complained about that, but it would also like to have a series of things that, when it is finally signed off on, are announcements ...

Mr HIGGINS: I will be there in a couple of weeks. You can trust me with all that confidential information, if it will help with negotiations ...

Mr GUNNER: As a fellow member of parliament, Gary, you understand where the Australian Government is coming from.

Mr HIGGINS: Yes. I know we spent \$800 000 on the Myilly Point project. Where was that spent?

Mr GUNNER: That is not within this agency, so it is not a figure I can comment on the accuracy of or where it fits or what ...

Mr HIGGINS: That should have been to infrastructure?

Mr GUNNER: It might be DTC.

Mr HIGGINS: Right.

Mr GUNNER: We can clarify which output that would sit in and provide you the information around that so you can ask the question then.

Mr HIGGINS: That would be good. How much money has been allocated in the budget for the CDU hub and how many students are we planning on using that, or have used it?

Mr GUNNER: You are talking about the one in the mall?

Mr HIGGINS: Yes.

Mr GUNNER: That sits with DTBI. That is part of our international education work. While Charles Darwin is responsible for a large number of international education students—it has probably taken on the profile on that hub. It is actually available for all international education students, not just Charles Darwin University.

Mr HIGGINS: Okay. What contribution is Darwin City Council making to the City Deal?

Mr GUNNER: That is part of the negotiations. They are at the table, which is fantastic. There are a number of things they are looking at. Kon and the aldermen might get upset if I reveal what and how they are contributing outside when they might want to reveal that. But they are making contributions. There are a number of ways in which you can make contributions besides financial, and they are obviously looking at those options.

Mr HIGGINS: He has not committed to giving us any money for the new civic centre that he has spoken about?

Mr GUNNER: It is all part of that mix. There is a timetable for council making its formal decisions and announcements. I will not be stealing their thunder.

Mr HIGGINS: The other thing is, we have \$100m allocated to the City Deal, but where about in the budget is that \$100m or have we not allocated that yet? Or is it spread everywhere?

Mr GUNNER: It is in the capital works budget.

Mr HIGGINS: So it is spread across?

Mr GUNNER: It would have been for the previous person who was before you, the previous minister for planning and infrastructure—\$100m sitting there.

Mr HIGGINS: Okay. When we look at the car park, there is currently 235 public servants parking in this area—how many of those will continue to get free parking in the proposed underground car park?

Mr GUNNER: That is not a decision I make.

Mr HIGGINS: Who will make that decision?

Mr GUNNER: I can get you clarity on who makes those decisions.

Mr HIGGINS: We asked the Speaker this question, and we have asked the Treasurer yesterday—our query around this is that we have 235 car parks currently in the precinct that will be replaced with that. The issue here is, will they be charged for those car parks or will they continue to get them free?

Mr GUNNER: To my understanding, the current car parking arrangements are essentially Department of the Legislative Assembly, Supreme Court related, jury related and so on. We can get you clarity around that if you want, Leader of the Opposition.

I do not think I can officially take it on notice but I can get back to you. We have made a little note that we will get back to you around that.

Mr HIGGINS: Do we know who will operate the car park?

Mr GUNNER: That is not a decision that has been made yet.

Mr HIGGINS: When will that be made?

Mr GUNNER: Prior to completion.

Mr HIGGINS: When is completion due?

Mr GUNNER: Around the 18 month mark. Again, the actual construction project does not sit with DCM.

Mr HIGGINS: As long as we do not get any advertising stuff put up along those fences that we have to look at every—day that would be good.

What heat mitigation projects are included in the budget other than the vine canopy in Cavenagh Street? Do we have any other projects?

Mr GUNNER: That is the trial, and depending on how that trial goes—I feel comfortable talking about this—we would like to increase the amount of shaded walk all areas through the CBD. There is a number of ways we can do that. The heat study found that the shade structures in the mall actually added heat, so you have to be careful about what you build and how you do it.

There are three types of vine being trialled at the Cavenagh Street site. Depending on how that goes I would like to see quite a broad expansion of shade through the CBD to increase the distance people living in the CBD, or tourists, feel comfortable walking through the CBD.

Obviously it is a trial, but then we would be looking at expanding that, depending on the results.

Mr HIGGINS: Do we know what the cost of all of that will be at this point—that project? I know the tender is closed.

Mr GUNNER: There is our contribution, but there is also work that the council is doing as well around reflective paint and trees. There is a number of trials that we are doing in addition to the canopy. The shade structure formally sits with DIPL, but we can get you the amount associated with it. I do not have the paper in front of me.

Mr HIGGINS: That would be good.

Alice Springs—the revote of \$19.8m for the Alice Springs CBD. What will that give them?

Mr GUNNER: This is the \$20m ...

Mr HIGGINS: It was \$20m originally in the budget papers, and now it is \$19.8m, but anyway ...

Mr GUNNER: It is similar to the work that is happening in the Darwin CBD. There is a CPTED audit being conducted through the Alice Springs CBD ...

Mr HIGGINS: Sorry?

Mr GUNNER: There is a Crime Prevention through Environmental Design audit being done through the Alice Springs CBD and a heat and cooling study. Alice Springs obviously gets colder than it does in Darwin. Here

it is just pure heat, but down there the temperature range is a bit more complicated—but there is a CPTED audit and a heat audit being done.

We have allocated \$5m against both of those through the Inland Capital Committee meeting. That is the meeting I had with the mayor of Alice Springs and there are subcommittees that support that Inland Capital Committee meeting. We established that for the first time. It is very similar to the arrangement that has existed for a while with the Lord Mayor of Darwin. We have now established a replica of that governance structure in Alice Springs.

Essentially, there is \$5m against confirmation through the Crime Prevention through Environmental Design audit and the results that will come out of that, and \$5m against the heat audit and the results that will come out of that. So that research is being done. Our decisions in Darwin have been informed by that heat study. Cavenagh Street was not picked by accident—the four lanes of highway there and the impact of the heat coming off the State Square area being pushed through the CBD. We are making these decisions based on the evidence.

Similarly in Alice Springs, there has not been a formal audit done of the Alice Springs CBD previously and comprehensively around how to make it safer. Those CPTED audits are excellent and very informative. They will guide decision-making. You want those results coming in at a similar time to the heat study. That will help direct our investment. We want to make sure the two investments provide mutual wins so you get a far greater result.

Mr HIGGINS: The studies will not use \$19.8m, will they? So that will be money left over for something else?

Mr GUNNER: We have allocated \$5m to heat study, \$5m to the CPTED audit and \$5m to the water play area. The location of that water play area will be informed by the heat results coming back in. That leaves \$5m unallocated.

Mr HIGGINS: The question came up in talking with the Treasurer yesterday about the Have Your Say website, and the Darwin City Deal has its own website. What is the plan to get that information out to the Alice Springs public? Will they have a similar website or Have Your Say?

Mr GUNNER: We went through a Have Your Say process to get to where we are now. The waterpark came out of the Have Your Say process. That included people standing physically in the mall at Yeperenye and someone actually engaging directly with people living in Alice Springs with a map and all that sort of work, similar to what we have been doing in Darwin. There has been a Have Your Say process already.

Mr HIGGINS: We will not set up a specific website? We have the Darwin City Deal website specifically.

Mr GUNNER: There is a formal Darwin City Deal, I guess—that might be the point of difference. I am not opposed to there being one for Alice Springs but the Australian Government is not involved in that Alice Springs work. I would like for them to be. They have indicated they might ...

Mr HIGGINS: Did they pay for the Darwin City Deal website?

Mr GUNNER: They have indicated the potential for the City Deal to expand beyond capitals. I think Alice Springs would be a perfect place for one. But that is obviously in the Australian Government's hands. That would be a point of difference between—we formally have a City Deal in Darwin. We have taken a similar approach to Alice Springs, but that is not a formal City Deal.

Mr HIGGINS: When will the report of Justice Mansfield be released? Do we have a date for that?

Mr GUNNER: There is a due date of 29 June. When I last ran into him—we were over on the Tiwi Islands for land handback that was unrelated—he thought he would be handing in his report early. I think writing reports takes time and perhaps the Justice did not quite anticipate how long it would take to physically draft the report.

I think the Member for Daly just realised Justice Mansfield is the Land Commissioner—that is why he was at the land handback.

I am expecting it by 29 June. There was an indication it might come in earlier, but I anticipate 29 June.

Mr HIGGINS: How long after that is given to you will you release that? Will it be released straight away?

Mr GUNNER: It must be tabled in parliament.

Mr HIGGINS: So it will be tabled the first sittings after parliament?

Mr GUNNER: There are requirements. I will just double check this. There are requirements under the *Inquiries Act* as to how you receive and handle a report. Apparently, it is formally required to be tabled in parliament, and that is the first time it can be released. I will double check that, but apparently that is the process.

Mr HIGGINS: There are no sittings until August.

Mr GUNNER: We will double check that again, but our current advice is that under the *Inquiries Act* we are required to table it in parliament and that would be the first release of the document.

Mr HIGGINS: I may be wrong. Maybe Russell can get an answer later for us, but I have a feeling that if there is a period when sittings are not happening it can be tabled outside of sittings?

Mr GUNNER: We will double check that. It has to be tabled within six sitting days of receiving it and it has to be tabled in parliament. I will double check whether I can release that earlier or not.

Mr HIGGINS: If you can just let me know that would be good. We might need to have a special sitting day. What was the total cost of the Riley review?

Mr GUNNER: The Department of the Attorney-General and Justice paid for the Riley review so it would be sitting in their output.

Mr HIGGINS: We also have \$1.16m for implementation in this year's budget. Can you tell us what that covers?

Mr GUNNER: That goes towards the coordination. While most of it will probably occur in the Department of the Attorney-General and Justice, there is a range of things required in implementing the Riley review and DCM has a coordination and implementation role. That also covers the coordination of talking with stakeholders as well, so that money is the staff allocation.

Mr HIGGINS: Do we have an implementation plan for those recommendations?

Ms RYAN: That is what they are working on.

Mr GUNNER: It is online if you want it.

Mr HIGGINS: With the ICAC, what is the level of remuneration for the commissioner?

Mr GUNNER: It is the equivalent of a judge. I cannot release his exact remuneration details, but it is the equivalent of a judge.

Mr HIGGINS: When I spoke to him he did mention that he would be talking to you about staff, so when will his staff commence and how many of them will there be?

Mr GUNNER: He is being officially sworn in today and there is a budget allocation for him. Obviously, the degree of the implementation has always been incumbent upon having a commissioner and them commencing work and being informed by the reality of it. What does the commissioner want? There is \$3m there and these are the conversations that will now occur between the commissioner and our public service.

Mr HIGGINS: So that \$3m will primarily be for staffing, I would presume, and depending on the ...

Mr GUNNER: And operational.

Mr HIGGINS: Okay. Just for clarity, were you involved in the selection of the commissioner other than through Cabinet?

Mr GUNNER: No. There is a judicial appointments process that is the same applied to selection of a judge.

Mr HIGGINS: When will ICAC get separated out from DCM itself, or will it always stay there?

Mr GUNNER: It is an independent office so once it is established it will have an independent office. I will ask Jodie to talk a little bit more to the detail of that.

Ms RYAN: While we have the commissioner appointed, there is a range of things he has to do before he can actually commence. Once that has happened we will have a change to the Administrative Arrangements Order and it will become an office in its own right, of which he is effectively the CEO.

Mr HIGGINS: So at next year's estimates he will appear the same as the others.

Ms RYAN: He commences from 1 July. Yes, that is right.

Mr HIGGINS: Renewable energy and the 50% target. I say 'target' as opposed to the Treasurer yesterday who said it was more like a—I have forgotten her exact words—it was more like a wish list, I have probably used the wrong word there but it was more like a dream for them.

Mr GUNNER: I think it will be a reality and it will come up on us quite rapidly as technology improves. It has probably already improved to a certain level.

Mr HIGGINS: Have we done any studies of the impact of that target on electricity prices and on Jacana customers and can we get a copy of that analysis? One of the problems that you have with renewable energies adding into your grid is that you still need the capacity to backup from Power and Water anyway.

Mr GUNNER: There are two things to understand here. The work that is currently being done is around dynamic system modelling and how the impact of renewables into the system impacts power. The infrastructure is actually the easy bit, it is sitting out there and you can whack solar cells on roofs or build solar farms; that is the easy bit. It is about understanding how it all works together in the grid. That is dynamic system modelling.

There has been a massive uptake on solar at the residential and industrial levels. People are willingly going out—because of the cheap cost—and using solar. Behind the Meter—before it impacts the system—it does impact the system, but not us in putting it into the grid—people actively choosing to install solar. Solar is the renewable of choice in the Territory. You are looking at significant mega wattage just there. That decision is made by people other than us.

Roadmap to Renewables puts in place a plan to manage this. The impacts on our system will be significantly higher, including the cost to the taxpayer—or us—if there were no plan. This is just a reality. It will happen. What having a plan does—and dynamic system modelling—is that we can actually start mapping what is occurring to our infrastructure costs.

Obviously, there are some costs in thermal around the power that is generated at Channel Island that goes into the system. How you manage that infrastructure coming in and out of the system—by having that plan we can actually manage it to those costs. Whereas without a plan, you are having people put on solar. We would have to fumble around in the dark for what that impact would be.

There is no way to avoid costs around old and outdated technology, which thermal is. Renewables are now incredibly cheap and getting cheaper. The issue is obviously around reliability. That is probably still the expensive bit in the system around batteries or other things, to create reliability—gas generators and how you manage that.

The cost of renewables directly is much cheaper and you are getting lots of end users, whether it is industrial or residential, whacking them on their roofs or creating farms and using them outside our control. That is just going to happen because of the cost of the product—separate to the cost of us in providing the backup power.

Does that make sense? There will be a cost; we are reducing it as far as possible—about the exposure to the taxpayer by having the Roadmap to Renewables.

Mr HIGGINS: The problem for people to understand is that if you put solar panels on your roof and generate power, when you send it to the grid you are not paying anything for that because you are sending it out for the same cost you will bring it back for. Effectively, Power and Water—if I bundle them all together—is covering that cost.

There are two alternatives. I will ask you if we have considered either of those, or if government has. That is, have you considered the rate to which we pay for the solar power, the excess power that is generated? That is the first issue, whether we have done any consideration or modelling around that, because using the network for storage with no return to Power and Water costs money.

The other side of it is that at the moment we subsidise the installation of solar panels on roofs, but have we contemplated the issue of being able to subsidise batteries on existing solar installation? In other words, for houses that currently have solar on their roofs, have we considered promoting the fact that if you put a battery on—or a combination of those two? I hope I have explained that.

Mr GUNNER: That is alright, I get it. The biggest question for us that we are working through at the moment is the cost of the system and how we manage that—the financial modelling and market modelling of allowing renewables or extra competition in. That is the modelling we are doing at the moment.

The pick-up rate of renewables—solar in households—is at such an extent that while we have the \$1000 Smart Energy Grants at the moment, we are rapidly getting to a point where either you have solar on the roof, or the cost of putting solar on the roof is coming down to such a point where you do not need the active incentive. We have moved on from the early adoption model quite rapidly.

Mr HIGGINS: One thing I would ask for confirmation on is that yesterday the Treasurer said that under this government, and I presume going forward, they will not increase electricity charges by more than CPI.

Mr GUNNER: That was our commitment for this term in response to the 30% increase from the CLP last term. We thought there needed to be absolute certainty about how we handle the pricing of power this term.

Mr HIGGINS: That is specifically just this term? It is not going to extend into next term?

Mr GUNNER: Well, it could be a very exciting election promise, Gary. Watch this space. I have not worked out my 2020 campaign yet. Are you making a suggestion for us?

Mr HIGGINS: No, it is all right. I am working on mine, it is half way through. The other question then extends from that, when we are looking at renewables—can you guarantee that we will not have some sort of surcharge or anything along those lines to cover the cost of going to this. In other words, there has been a lot of rhetoric around the fact that it will push up prices or whatever. I do not want to get into that debate.

Can you give us a guarantee that we are not going to be hit in some other way, shape or form for going to this target.

Mr GUNNER: It is not something we are considering at all. It has not come forward in any way, shape or form.

The cost renewables is rapidly decreasing. Speaking to people in the industry, they say that when they go to tender they actually put their tender in at less than what it will cost them, knowing the prices are dropping rapidly. By the time they get to the project, if they received it, the cost will have come down. They know their competitors are doing something similar.

The cost of renewables is rapidly reducing. The big cost that confronts the taxpayer over the next 10 or so years, and is unavoidable, is as renewables increase. While this increase is happening, whether we had a roadmap or not, because of the cost of the product people are buying into it whether it is residential or industrial. Thermal generation and how we manage our assets and the changeover—the biggest question for us is how we handle the creation of a market to reduce the exposure to the taxpayer.

Mr HIGGINS: Do you have solar on your roof?

Mr GUNNER: Not yet.

Mr HIGGINS: Have you applied for the \$1000 yet?

Mr GUNNER: No, I have not applied for the \$1000 yet. Gary, you remind me of a constituent who drops in every two weeks to say, 'Come and get a quote'. I have to get around to it, but I am busy at the moment.

Mr HIGGINS: What is the breakdown of the \$5.6m allocated for implementation of the early childhood development plan?

Mr GUNNER: The Minister for Children was yesterday, but I have these people with me today. I will pass over to Jodie.

Ms RYAN: Of the \$5.5m, \$2.3m is with the Department of the Chief Minister. That is for the setup and establishment of early childhood and families centres.

Mr HIGGINS: How many Indigenous members will the advisory committee have?

Ms RYAN: The Ministerial Advisory Committee?

Mr HIGGINS: Yes.

Ms RYAN: We are still in the process of going out to market for those but we are targeting 50%.

Mr HIGGINS: Why the 50%?

Ms RYAN: I think that was one of the recommendations of the expert reference panel.

Mr HIGGINS: When will that advisory committee be selected?

Ms RYAN: We have to go through some processes first before we go out to the market, but it will be this year.

Mr HIGGINS: How will they get paid? Will that just be the normal sitting fee?

Ms RYAN: Yes, just normal sitting fees.

Mr GUNNER: This might be where the Member for Blain jumps in with a cryptocurrency question. No one formally has asked to be paid in cryptocurrency.

Mr HIGGINS: The population strategy—what does the allocation of \$1.8m for a Territory migration strategy comprise?

Mr GUNNER: That is about attracting more international skilled migrants and students from key source markets. The Charles Darwin Northern Institute research identified the countries we are targeting, as in, the people who stick. I think you have had access to that research. We want to try to make that available as publicly as possible, so please spread the word.

Off the top of my head it was India, New Zealand, the Philippines and Nepal. Those are the types of countries where they come and they stay. We have had some experience with the humanitarian refugees we took from Somalia, where they do not stay; they move on after arriving. That is still true. The great tragedy there is that we spend money preparing for them. The Commonwealth only reimburses us if they stay, so we are not getting the reimbursement.

That allocation is essentially targeting skilled migrants and students from those countries who we know will stick.

Mr HIGGINS: Have we been to the federal government—I ask this because I will be down there in a couple of weeks again. Have we asked them for anything that might help in this regard, like tax relief? I said on radio one of the things is to look at HECS. I know the previous Under Treasurer sitting next to you will not like it when I say I look at HECS as revenue foregone to the Commonwealth—it is not giving us money—but possibly looking at the benefit to people who might come to the Territory who are carrying a HECS debt?

Mr GUNNER: I appreciate any support around this. I met with Mr Dutton, for example, and there was a positive conversation about the Territory. But the bells kept dragging him out of the room—one of the problems of going to Canberra is the best time to go is a sittings day, but bells ring and meeting are interrupted.

We have had a degree of conversation with the minister. In fact—and this sits with Territory Families minister rather than with me—we were able to get the whole of the Territory classified as—I forgot the classification. It is like a humanitarian designated area. The whole Territory is actually classified as that. Minister Wakefield will tell you more about that as that sits with her.

This funding we are talking about now, the \$1.8m, sits with DTBI, but the conversations I have had with the Australian Government about tax with various ministers has fallen to a Liberal-National divide, which the CLP can potentially heal. You are united here, a little like the LNP in Queensland. The Nats are pro-positive tax reform that incentivises the regions and the north.

The Libs very much believe—and they believe the Constitution supports this—that you cannot have a taxation system that is geared to one area over the other. Obviously there is a defence there, which is that the current tax system allows for that discrimination. There is an argument that if that was ever challenged in the High Court it would get knocked off according to the Constitution, but that has never occurred, and it has been around for decades now.

I have had good conversations with basically every National. My conversations with Liberal ministers have not been so positive towards that.

Mr HIGGINS: The HECS I do not treat as a tax; it is a reimbursement of your higher education.

Mr GUNNER: That is an original point. They probably treat that more as a loan. I am not sure how the Commonwealth Treasurer would view it.

We also have the DAMA, the Designated Area Migration Agreement, and the change to Territory Families. We have been working with them on a range of things that we think would be positive. Taxation, unfortunately, has not gotten there. I am happy to explore any possibility around HECS.

Some of this has actually come up through the City Deal in conversations with officials. We probably cannot talk about that at this stage because it is in negotiation.

Anything that can incentivise or differentiate the north would be extremely positive—5% of the nation and half the nation's exports. We just have to get more people living here. I believe this should be an important policy area for any Australian government—Labor or Liberal—when you look at the concentration on the east coast and the pressure on Sydney and Melbourne. We should be trying to expand as many regional cities as we can.

Mr HIGGINS: When will we see a final copy of the population plan?

Mr GUNNER: Very soon.

Mr HIGGINS: Can you be a bit more specific—like in two months?

Mr GUNNER: There are two things I can say. Very soon—and I believe in the August sittings we should have a population conversation as a parliament as well. There are two things there—the next sittings when we should talk population, but we will release the final strategy before then.

The budget has outlined where we are intending to invest our money against that research. But we also have the master brand work that is happening at the moment. There are a number of things that are happening within that. There will be a suitable time shortly when we will make the formal announcement of the whole plan.

Mr HIGGINS: Okay. On the master brand, I note there is no allocation in 2018–19 for the development of a master brand.

Mr GUNNER: Essentially, the work towards developing it should be completed this financial year. If it goes over to next financial year the money will just carry over. But, essentially, the target date for them is end of June.

Mr HIGGINS: Yes, so if the \$2.1m-odd has not been spent by the end of this year they will not have finished?

Mr GUNNER: It will carry over.

Mr HIGGINS: So it is actually on budget?

Mr GUNNER: Yes, and on time. Have you had a briefing from the master brand people?

Mr HIGGINS: No. I had a briefing from the population people. Master brand may have been a fair while ago.

Mr GUNNER: We should get you an up-to-date briefing on the work they are doing. It is very good.

Mr HIGGINS: I would like to see the link between the two of them. Has any of the marketing around the master brand and population plan been done by Team NT?

Mr GUNNER: No, Team NT are being informed by the master brand work rather than—all will be informed by the master brand work. In some respects, because it is rebadging us as a Territory, everything will be informed by what master brand does. They have done extensive research on the Territory and what is real, and how perceive us interstate and abroad.

How do I put this? It is not a logo or a tagline, but most people know of it as a logo or tagline. It goes to a narrative about who we are. It is extremely good work and we will get you briefed on it. They will be announced shortly and that informs all the work we do.

But very specifically, the population strategy—because it goes to the kind of people we want to attract to the Northern Territory, as in, that they are genuinely interested in moving here and staying. You will have had experience as a minister, Gary. Everyone in the Territory has had experience with this, when you have had to pay overs to get someone here or keep someone here because they do not actually want to come. The master branding has done research into the kind of people you want to target and attract, who will come here for a fair salary—who we should target and why, and the best way of reaching them. It is very informative work and that has informed our population plan.

Mr HIGGINS: On an aside, I was actually recruited with about 20 other people to come up here, and within two years 19 of the others had gone. I am still here 35 years later.

Mr GUNNER: You are the kind of person we want, and the research goes to that.

Mr HIGGINS: I am a perfect Territorian.

Mr GUNNER: People want the adventure of coming to the Territory. Simply moving to Darwin can be an adventure for some. It is how you target those people and get them. They will be important not just for government but for every private sector employee, NGO employee up here—about making sure we are targeting the right people to come here, knowing they will come for a fair pay and stay.

Mr HIGGINS: Statehood—the Prime Minister has advised me that he sees that statehood is a significant issue for Territorians and that the government should be pursuing it. I am a very strong supporter of statehood. I was very much involved in the last round of that. When do you think we might see that starting to progress a bit more? The thing that always hangs over heads, of course, is that the Commonwealth can override us at any point in time. But I see it as critical.

Mr GUNNER: The significant thing that is missing from the statehood debate is what the republican movement currently has, that is, community activation. The republican movement actually has branches. They meet; they gather; they organise. There is a people-driven movement around the Australian republic, and they will drive the future referendum debate around a republic. In the Territory, a lot of us support it. I want to become a state. A lot of us support statehood but there are no community groups or organisations that have formed, like the Australian Republic Movement.

In the late 1990s we had a failed referendum around statehood. They were seen as politician-led. We then had a movement under Martin and Henderson around, essentially, a stakeholder-led parliamentary—it was almost a quasi-community stakeholder parliamentary committee movement that had bipartisan support for a significant period of time. Then the CLP withdrew that support. There are various theories about why that occurred under the leadership of Terry Mills. That, unfortunately, ended that move.

I will not get into the politics of it, but the then Chief Minister announce a 1 July 2018 date, but with no practical things that underpin that to get us there. At my first COAG and CAF meeting, it was part of the communique. I raised it—and I know you probably do not want to hear this, Leader of the Opposition—but our reputation at that point in time was at a low. It was very—I would say disheartening, but that is a conservative word, to have every leader genuinely belly laugh at the Territory becoming a state. It reflected where we were at that point in time.

One of the big things we need to do as well as have a community-driven statehood moment is restore the reputation of the Northern Territory on the national stage. Things like the master brand go to that as well—

how we restore that reputation and prepare ourselves to be in a place where other Australian states genuinely see us as properly sitting at that table as a state. That has to be part of it. So there is internally a statehood movement and then externally, restoring of the Northern Territory's reputation to manage itself.

Mr HIGGINS: Do we seek government's role to try and get that community-led movement started. A lot of people out there are in favour of statehood but really do not know where to start or how to go. I know that as politicians we get involved in a lot of that stuff, and I think it is up to us to lead that. Is there any plan, or will you take on board that maybe we do actually start something? I am not saying government should drive it but government facilitate it in some way. At the moment it seems to be stagnant, with nothing happening.

Mr GUNNER: My absolute priority is restoring the Northern Territory's reputation. That is something within our control.

Mr HIGGINS: We are all trying to do that.

Mr GUNNER: I appreciate that, Leader of the Opposition. Then separately, around a statehood community-based movement, as Chief Minister I would absolutely support that. It is the degree to which we as community leaders help spark that—or splitting hairs, the degree to which we as community leaders are seen as distorting that or controlling or having it politician-led. That is a nuance that is very important to manage.

The Australian Republican Movement recently started their first ever Territory branch, so while it has been big in other places it has not been big here. It does not take much to get something like that going. In the Territory we have seen a number of organisations start from scratch.

I think statehood is just begging for someone somewhere to put an ad in the paper and have a founding meeting and then write to the Chief Minister to ask for some ongoing support. I would absolutely say yes. I think if I were to put that ad in the paper—maybe I could, but I think this needs to come from the community. We need to see that. We have tried the other ways, the politician-led, we have tried that quasi-stakeholder Territory community model, and we have tried just setting an arbitrary date without consultation. We need those two things to occur: the community-led movement and the restoration of the Territory's reputation.

Mr HIGGINS: Strategic partnership agreements—how much money have we spent on the agreement with South Australia to date and how much do we have budgeted for next year?

Mr GUNNER: It is done from within the federal policy area that picks up that work. It is not a separate budget allocation; it is done within a unit within DCM. So it is managed from within.

Mr HIGGINS: Have you managed to get a meeting with Steve Marshall yet? I know I gave you his phone number.

Mr GUNNER: I rang and left a voicemail, and he has not returned my call. I wrote and he has now written back, which is fantastic. We are arranging a leader-to-leader meeting, which I am looking forward to.

Mr HIGGINS: You know I visited him and we were talking about some of the stuff with the national Indigenous cultural centre. I have been asked about that and my response has been that I will not talk about it until I have spoken to the Chief Minister and discussed what occurred there. At some point we do need to catch up on that one.

What sort of outcomes have we achieved in the past in regard to trade, transport, tourism, health? Do we have anything we can tout?

Mr GUNNER: A lot of it has been spread across departments, so we have coordinated it in DCM. There was Yorkeys Crossing, for example. You might be familiar with that. It is the cross-loading of cattle in South Australia where we have to go from three to two on the cattle trucks. We negotiated that resolution successfully with the South Australian Government.

We have seen additional police resources based in Alice Springs as a result of this agreement. South Australia has a relationship with province that Rizhao sits in, so we have joined in some of their trade delegations. That sits with DTBI. Some of this sits with various agencies. We have coordinated it in our area. Ken can talk at length about Yorkeys Crossing.

The trade delegation has been positive—us joining in with that, including DTBI officials. Education is working closely as well. The additional police resourcing is fantastic. This is building on previous results. It is not a unique, exclusive thing. There have been some positive results from that strategic partnership.

Mr HIGGINS: I met with the Premier and the deputy, and I had a tour of their Northern Territory exhibition at the museum. It is worthwhile looking at.

Mr GUNNER: Is that a pre-1911 exhibition—before we were separate?

Mr HIGGINS: That is all I have, Madam Chair.

Mr GUNNER: That is for the Advice and Coordination output?

Madam CHAIR: No, this is still whole-of-government.

Mr GUNNER: Every question went to advice and coordination. I thought we had moved on to that?

Madam CHAIR: We have not officially gotten to that section. Did you have a question, Member for Nelson?

Mr WOOD: The government had a policy when in opposition, but I assume it carried it forward in to government, to have 50% renewables for electricity supply by 2030. Was an independent cost-benefit analysis done by government to back up this commitment?

Mr GUNNER: I think you missed, earlier, a fantastic answer I gave about renewables. It went to the spirit of your question.

Mr WOOD: Unfortunately, I had to leave.

Mr GUNNER: That was not a crack. I will give it again.

Mr WOOD: No, do not. Otherwise you will sound like another Chief Minister who repeated when he did not need to.

Mr GUNNER: There is a slight difference in the question. The Roadmap to Renewables considered these things—I would not call it an independent cost-benefit analysis, but it considered these issues.

What we have at the moment is technology—renewables—that is rapidly decreasing in costs to the point where people behind the meter, residential and industrial that is separate to the Power and Water network, are investing in this. There is significant mega wattage that is being produced separate to Power and Water simply by individuals and clubs putting it on their roof—major enterprises throwing some solar on their property. This is significant mega wattage, not small amounts. That is happening without Roadmap to Renewables.

The big cost we will face over the next 10 years is the thermal assets we hold that provide the reliability for the system. Whether we have a plan or not, there will be a massive cost to us as people move over to this renewable model because it is so cheap. The road map provides us the capacity to have greater control over the timing of those events on us and how we manage our thermal assets.

One of the things we are doing through Roadmap to Renewables is significantly reducing the exposure of the taxpayer and the costs we would face of thermal generation. People are making active decisions based on cost, separate to us, about putting renewables on their roof or their place of business.

This is a practical attempt to get control over what is occurring in the Territory already.

Mr WOOD: I understand we will still need a power base that is reliable. When this three weeks is over—your battery will not last that long—you will need some backup supply. You will also need the gas to run those thermal units. We have an excess of gas at the moment, so by putting more onto renewables, we will have less gas used up and we will still have the same bill. We are having to pay for that gas because of the contract price.

Mr GUNNER: This gets very complicated now. Essentially, there is a whole pipeline being built.

Mr WOOD: There is a real pipeline, not one of those bureaucratic names?

Mr GUNNER: No, this is not a pipeline of stuff, but an actual pipeline that involves take-or-pay gas. The other thing to bear in mind is that as users come online in Darwin, the amount of excess gas we have is now less than you think.

Mr WOOD: How are we able to find out? Do we have to ask Territory Generation how much gas is used, how much it costs and how much we pay for that is not being used?

Mr GUNNER: Through the GOC scrutiny committee we should get some of those answers. There is a degree to which they might want to keep it commercial-in-confidence because it affects their negotiations.

Mr WOOD: We only have one power gen.

Mr GUNNER: ... but people who purchase ...

Mr WOOD: I am scared I might repeat some of the questions.

Mr GUNNER: Member for Nelson, ask the questions.

Mr WOOD: Was the policy designed for the whole of the Territory, or was it mainly aimed at remote communities that have diesel generations?

Mr GUNNER: I say the whole of the Territory, but you could view our remote communities as a potential for early, easy gains for the conversion from diesel to hybrid. One of the significant benefits of this, as we have discovered, is the roads.

We are finding that there are fewer trucks on the roads, particularly during the Wet Season. There have been significant gains in road maintenance and quality of roads by having less trucks with diesel going across them by greater certainty of power during the Wet Season—the diesel essentially lasts longer.

It has had a big impact beyond the obvious one around reducing costs. There has been a really good result around roads.

Mr WOOD: I do not believe you will get rid of the need for some reliable power, even in remote communities.

Mr GUNNER: It is fifty-fifty. We have factored that into the 2030.

Mr WOOD: As I tell you, you still have to cook—unless you want to chop all your trees down—and if you are in a colder climate, you still heat your house somehow. That is why you are still dependent on gas. Has there been any consideration for trying to, as the Member for Blain once tried to do, spreading the gas pipelines elsewhere in the Northern Territory so that communities could still use a diesel generator and switch to gas? You still have your renewables, but you start to take that dependence on any diesel off the budget bill.

Mr GUNNER: I think that is something that will be constantly looked at. The hybrid of diesel renewable keeps coming in at the ...

Mr WOOD: ... the cheaper one.

Mr GUNNER: Yes. It is something that will be permanently investigated. We do not know yet the size and shape of an onshore industry, or if would even occur. Obviously, there are lots of private sector decisions to be made around that and government approvals. That could have a big impact on the proximity and availability of gas to remote communities.

Mr WOOD: This might be outside the field of the budget, but I will ask anyway while I have you here. Have you done any consideration into the production of hydrogen for renewables in the Northern Territory? I gave a paper to parliament on what I have seen. The Member for Barkly once mentioned it as an option as well.

Mr GUNNER: It is something that Territory Generation are looking at. At the moment there is no—in renewables, there are lots of players, or people who are prepared or interested in doing solar and are actively exploring that. At the moment, we do not have that same list of private sector aspirants around hydrogen. I believe it is reasonable work for Territory Generation to pick up and look at.

Mr WOOD: I say that is because there is the possibility of renewables, which are an unreliable source of energy because it can be cloudy or whatever, to produce a reliable for of energy locally—that is why I

proposed the hydrogen. You then run your power stations from hydrogen, or have fuel cells to do the same thing.

Minister, the other questions are not in relation to that, and you can tell me, Leader of the Opposition, if I have asked this one. There was a little of it noted yesterday, what review has the government carried out about the effect of and the lessons learned from Cyclone Marcus? What plans are in place to reduce the effects of another cyclone, especially in relation to power; and if there will be a review, will it be made public?

Mr GUNNER: The review is not completed yet, and Power and Water are also doing a review. We have also committed to a rolling program around undergrounding—that was an obvious thing out of Marcus—you do not need a report to recognise the difference between suburbs or undergrounding and suburbs without undergrounding—around the maintenance and reliability of power. The Leader of the Opposition and I have something in common, we both were without power for quite a significant period of time—is that a conflict we have to declare to the committee?

Mr HIGGINS: My solar power does not cover it. No electricity, your solar does not work.

Mr GUNNER: Mine did come on sooner than the Leader of the Opposition's, but I think it is fair to say that it is obvious no favourites were played in the restoration of power, which is a good thing. They attended the jobs on a triage order as was completely appropriate, but that was an important lesson.

What we have asked for advice on, that we have not received formally from Power and Water yet, is essentially the history of outages over the last five years and the report. What we have allocated money to in regard to how, where and when it gets spent in what order will be reliant on the information of Power and Water. We are recognising it is not just Marcus that we should be basing this decision on—and then also the effect and impacts of Marcus and then having a plan to address that.

Mr WOOD: Leader of the Opposition, I only had a few twigs but Howard Springs across to Virginia was just as bad as in town. The issue I have with rural is that I was quoted—and I will say this is not a firm quote—by a Power and Water person that it would cost at least \$55 000 to underground power to a five acre to a hectare block.

That is probably getting in to the realms of being unsustainable, but the issue then has arisen as people are concerned about the number of trees that are close to the power lines. That is the main reason the rural area was out—and other places—and we had severe damage. It was where poles were bent and twisted.

Would some consideration be given to how the power supply could be improved in the rural area as distinct from the urban area, which is easier to put underground than out our way?

Mr GUNNER: There are different models. For example, in the rural area what you might countenance, and this is not a decision that we have made—but a model could be that you have an external line still from the house to a pole but there is undergrounding between poles. That is a different form of model, but that would then significantly reduce the impact on the household of the power line and it is obviously much easier for Power and Water to fix that.

You are reducing the risk of power outage and if the power outage occurs the simplicity of direct fixing it—we have on the committee a better expert than I in some of these works and how some of this rolls, former linesman Paul Kirby. But that is a potential option you could consider in the rural area—significantly reduce costs, and it is practical to what you would be facing.

Mr WOOD: One of the big hold-ups—that is not a criticism of Power and Water; they do fantastic work and were working on the weekend. I was getting phone calls from people asking, 'When is my road coming up?'

Mr HIGGINS: You had phones?

Mr WOOD: Yes, some of keep out landline. We are a bit antiquated but the landline still works sometimes. The issue for a lot of people was getting the connection from the meter box pole to the house, which had to be done by an electrician. I think in the review there should be some way that in an urgent situation, like what we had, that the Power and Water people are able to do that connection. I know it is good for private industry, but they were struggling.

Mr GUNNER: There are a couple of points that need to be made here, to understand the issue. I went out with Power and Water to get my head around exactly what was being done to make sure I had complete clarity.

Power and Water were stringing from the street to the house, but what Power and Water do not know—where it makes sense to have a private electrician do it—is the state of the power within the house. If you were to put that on to Power and Water to do, you would significantly slow down any recovery efforts because you are getting the linesman who is essentially repairing all the work now doing internal house work as well. It would actually have a massive impact on our ability to recover.

Essentially, we are spreading the work out. Power and Water are doing quite a bit of work to get the lines up and to the house, but to connect it to that house they are simply asking you to get a certificate to show that the house is up to receiving that power. Putting that on Power and Water would significantly slow down the recovery. I think it is a reasonable request and, from going out with Power and Water, I could see exactly where they are coming from and why they are asking for that.

Mr WOOD: I understand that, but I think there were a couple of cases where the issue was so minor that it could have been done there and then by the person. But, as you say, they need that tick of approval. It is something that maybe needs to be looked at.

Mr KIRBY: Actually, it is a licensing issue. A Power and Water electrician will not hold contractor's licence that you need to legally sign on that certificate of compliance. But it is something that could be looked at.

Mr WOOD: I am only saying it should be used in times of natural disaster. I do not want to be putting contractors out of business, but there was so much work that Power and Water could not have kept up with all the work putting up power poles.

I want to say on record—not only Power and Water, but the people who came in and did the power poles, because we had many power poles down in the rural area—they did a fantastic job. I thank the Chief Minister for getting generators to the 15 Mile. Those people actually did not have a clue as to what was going on, because they had power underground and all of a sudden they did not have power. There was a big power pole laying nearly onto the highway that went past their property, which did not help.

In the end, hopefully the review will look at what happened and we can learn some lessons from that and how to reduce the amount of time power goes off.

Mr GUNNER: I think some things will come out of the review that will be important for us. There was a level of preparedness. A majority of people, either householders or businesses, thought they were prepared for a cyclonic event and then, in hindsight, they went, 'Actually, we could have done more'. Whether that was bringing your A Frame in—there were a few A Frames left out—tidying up a building site or having your cyclone kit.

People had kits and shelter plans, but we saw with the number of people who were not at shelters that they felt comfortable with their plans and kits. Maybe post-cyclone they thought, 'I should have probably gone to a shelter and I probably did not have everything I needed in my kit'. I think it was a wake-up call having 48 hours, or a period of time, without water. As a safety precaution, having to boil water and a period of time without power—some people had forgotten that there is a requirement to have that 72 hours' worth of kit available. I think there are a few lessons that will come out of it.

Trees were the obvious one—pretty much every single bit of damage that occurred anywhere was a consequence of a tree falling on something. I think the damage I saw that was not tree related—I cannot even really recall one—was incredibly minor. It was basically all related to trees. We have asked for an African mahogany replacement program, an aggressive one to replace mahoganies with trees that are not mahoganies. They were not the only culprit but they were by far the main culprit of tree damage and have a replacement tree planting program. If you cut down a mahogany replace it with something. This is something we should have done a while back.

It is not a new lesson. Mahoganies fall.

Mr WOOD: After Cyclone Tracy blew—I have books which tell you what to plant. But life goes on. George Brown, former Mayor of Darwin, loved African mahoganies. That is another issue that should be looked at. I know a gentleman called Mike Clark, who runs Australian Vegetation Management Services. I think he is

doing work for Darwin City Council, I am trying to get people information. Greening Australia is a great place—also, identifying the height of the tree versus the proximity to the building.

My neighbour who was a member of this parliament, his old house had a tree planted so close to the house that when it fell over, it did not fall on the house, but the roots lifted up the whole floor of the house. It was obviously a nice idea at the time, but no one took into account that an African mahogany might be 25 or 30 metres high. You need to plant it at least 30 metres away from your house.

Mr GUNNER: For the purposes of historical accuracy, I will ask Jodie Ryan a comment on George Brown. There are certain nuances to what he actually said about mahoganies. I think he gets a lot more blame than he deserves.

Ms RYAN: The Chief Minister wants me to relay that I recall as a child listening to George Brown saying to plant Mahoganies in a 44 gallon drum because the roots go down and out.

Mr GUNNER: He recognised the problems with mahoganies. He made several recommendations about mahoganies that were not followed. It was not just plant a mahogany; it was plant a mahogany in a certain way. I think he gets blamed now for the spread of—not that you were blaming him, Member for Nelson. He gets credited with the spread of mahoganies but he actually had more detail to his recommendation than has been acted on.

Mr WOOD: Forestry were the people who promoted them because they were using them as a forest tree. But can I say, do not plant them in a 44 gallon drum because you narrow the trunk and that means it is a weak point. I know why he said that, though.

Madam CHAIR: It is very interesting to hear about mahoganies, but I would like to make sure we are directing our questions to the budget. Member for Nelson, do you have any more questions about agency or whole-of-government?

Mr GUNNER: There may be significant money made from the mahoganies. I think there is a whole industry that will come up with mahoganies. Unfortunately, I do not think the Territory government will be getting its cut but there will be a lot of mahogany product coming out of the Territory in the next few years.

Mr WOOD: I know we drifted there, Madam Chair, but I think is important that we focus on replanting the right trees and getting people the education to plant them the right distance not only from the house, but in our case, in the rural area, from the power poles. As you said, that is where the damage occurred.

Mr HIGGINS: I think the watering is also critical and a lot of native trees came down around Palmerston. The reason they came down was because the council—and I am not criticising them—was watering all the lawns around them, so they have shallow roots, whereas if a native tree is not given water it will ...

Madam CHAIR: Committee members, are there any more agency-related whole-of-government questions that you would like to ask the Chief Minister before we move on to the outputs?

Mr GUNNER: I am happy to keep talking mahoganies.

Mr WOOD: Yes.

Madam CHAIR: Surely there is much more than mahoganies that people want to ask you about, Chief.

Mr GUNNER: I think it was officially 400 trees over lines—if you put that into perspective.

Mr WOOD: Try Robbie Robins Reserve. There were 120 ...

Madam CHAIR: All right. That concludes consideration of agency-related whole-of-government questions on budget and fiscal strategy.

I will call a five-minute recess before we move on to the outputs. We will recommence at 11.15 am. Thank you.

The committee suspended.

OUTPUT GROUP 7.0 – ADVICE AND COORDINATION
Output 7.1 – Strategic Policy Coordination and Engagement

Madam CHAIR: The committee will now proceed to Output Group 7.0, Advice and Coordination, Output 7.1, Strategic Policy Coordination and Engagement.

Mr GUNNER: I have an answer to a question that was not taken on notice because it sat elsewhere, but I have the information already, Leader of the Opposition.

The contract to construct the Cavenagh Street shade structure was awarded on 8 May to the PTM Group for \$2.748m including GST.

Mr HIGGINS: Thank you.

Madam CHAIR: Are there any questions for output 7.1? Although, the Chief Minister answered some in the previous section. We will proceed if there are no further questions. That concludes consideration of Output 7.1.

Output 7.2 – Regional Coordination and Aboriginal Affairs

Madam CHAIR: We will now move onto Output 7.2, Regional Coordination and Aboriginal Affairs. Are there any questions?

Mr HIGGINS: Has the local decision-making policy framework been approved by Cabinet?

Mr GUNNER: We have been briefing communities and LGANT and parties like that on local decision-making policy and framework. There has been active work around that. I have personally signed an agreement with Yugul Mangi at Ngukurr, essentially a local decision-making implementation plan and we are very close to being able to do something similar with Anindilyakwa Land Council.

The framework is basically done; there is just some final consultation around it before public release. There is a document which I am sure we can provide for you. We have been consulting on it very widely about it, so we can get a copy of that. In fact, it is a very good briefing session if you want it, but the document itself is pretty self-explanatory too.

Mr HIGGINS: It would be good if we could get a copy of the document. Are we allowed to get a copy of those agreements that have been signed?

Mr GUNNER: We would just have to double check with Yugul Mangi but I am pretty sure we could provide that.

Mr HIGGINS: On local decision-making—I know we have spoken about health, managing their own health centres as part of the treaty stuff we were talking about. Education is a tricky one, and I will not mention it but you will know exactly what I am talking about. When it comes to policing in communities—and this instance has raised itself on several occasions—how do we plan on getting communities involved in that process and it would be a similar process to when we are looking at education.

When we devolved education to the schools many years ago the school councils took it on, but they were still employed by the Department of Education and the community around the school got a say in who was there.

My question then is about police; how will they get a say in this?

Mr GUNNER: It depends on what communities negotiate or put on the table. Everywhere will be different. What Anindilyakwa is looking at is different to what Yugul Mangi has signed up to already. It is different again to the conversation I had the other day at Wadeye with Tobias and the group—they have the Kardu Alliance but they are actually now looking at a regional. They want to take a more regional focus. They had the council involved. For example, at Yugul Mangi the Australian Government was involved; at Anindilyakwa the regional council was not involved; and at Wadeye the regional council is involved.

Everyone has taken slightly different approaches to what they want on the table—what is in or out, which we are fine with. We prefer that and we want that. That reflects what the local communities want to take up.

Law and order, in the sense that you are putting it, was not actually raised in that way. At Wadeye they have asked for a copy of what Anindilyakwa is working towards. That seems to fit more what they want to look at. The points that have been raised around law and order to date go more to the Aboriginal Justice Agreement—and you would probably be able to discuss in more detail with the Attorney-General and Minister for Justice when she appears. It goes to how you sentence and get court meetings happening more regularly with quicker local decisions and involvement, which is doable. Courts have done that before, it is slightly outside my area now so I might leave my comments at that.

The other thing to bear in mind is that some places will want to go down that approach where the health clinic and the school are community-controlled but, in and of themselves, not necessarily linked. Whereas Anindilyakwa is looking at how to pull it all together into one linked package, rather than independently community-controlled.

There are all sorts of ways we can approach this. The framework, in some respect, goes to 182—is that what the name of that graph is? I always forget the name of the bar graph. It goes to ‘inform, consult’ et cetera, where you are on that framework. Do you have a copy of it here?

I find this one of the best ways to discuss local decision-making. You have ‘inform,’ where we tell you what we are doing; ‘consultation,’ where we ask you and then do it; ‘involve,’ where you go back a step and are genuinely involved in the policy work that leads up to a decision being made; ‘collaboration’ is a stronger version of that; and then ‘empowerment,’ where they actually make the decision.

On a whole range of things, communities want to be at different places on that list. There is a degree of importance to the enforcement of law that is separate. Even I, as minister for Police and the involvement I have in how it works—there is a degree of separation. It is not the doctrine of the separation of powers as a separate thing, but there is an extent of separation.

Some people are really uncomfortable getting up to the ‘empower’ bit straight up because of the governance that is required in taking over. We have found in our conversations—Bridgette Bellenger has had these directly and will be able to provide you more detail than me. They initially go in wanting it here, and then, as they get briefed on what is involved in the decision-making process, they actually start coming back down more towards ‘involve’ and ‘collaborate’ and work up to ‘empower’.

For example, at Anindilyakwa they are saying, ‘We want to start an independent boarding school model ...’—they want to be like Picka, and it would not be the first time that has happened—‘... get comfortable running and managing that, knowing we can deliver that product that works for the people on Groote Eylandt, and then discuss the three government schools.’ Essentially, doing what has happened in Gunbalanya. There are different ways people want to handle the pathway and process.

I believe this is the best way and the only way to genuinely do it, but that is a degree of complexity that is extremely difficult for the public service. I have given them a very hard task in doing that because there is not a one-size-fits-all approach that says in every community this is how we will approach law and order, schools or health clinics. It is the most difficult way through it, but the way that best reflects what locals want to do and have control of.

We look at our remote communities—I know you would have a great deal of experience with this—and they are all of completely different sizes. So, to have an expectation of a community in Central Australia and to pick up and run with a small community with a similar plan—such as Wadeye, which is a big community, or Groote Eylandt, which is quite large—we have to tailor it to what the community wants.

Mr HIGGINS: Yes. One of the questions there is how to get staff to want input. Some of the examples in some of the communities has been that they have a police station within the community, whereas others are very specific and have it out of the community and only really want them there if they are invited.

Mr GUNNER: We can discuss that in more detail during the police section. Or are you not here for the police section?

Mr HIGGINS: No.

There are two additional staff in this area. I presume they are to go out to these regional areas. What areas are they going out to? Have we allocated them to any ...

Mr COWAN: Andrew Cowan, Chief Minister's department. We have not allocated those. They are going into this current budget, the 2018–19 budget. We will be walking through that. They will be based in our regions and supporting the regional areas.

Mr HIGGINS: Yes, so which regions, or you have not decided?

Mr COWAN: No, we have not finalised that yet.

Mr HIGGINS: Okay.

Ms NELSON: Member for Daly, just clarify for me that you were asking about the two regional ...

Mr HIGGINS: Yes.

Ms NELSON: Cool. That was my question. Thank you.

Mr HIGGINS: When we talk about allowing a community to do its own education and health—but education was one I was specifically asked about—and leaving it up to them, my worry there is—are we putting in place mechanisms that ensure our education standard is not going backwards, that we are still going forward? Then in the health sense we are still closing the gap. If someone is running the health centre—and I am not saying it will happen, but it is a bit like handing it to a private company to manage—how will we monitor that? Have we finalised some of that?

Mr GUNNER: I can provide some comfort here, because it has been raised. We have a private sector for the education system, so there are private schools. Essentially, what we are proposing is no different to that. There are schools right now that the government does not run. So, fears that an Aboriginal community might take over a school and how that works—we already know the answers to how these things work because we have private schools in the Northern Territory.

We also have the Gunbalanya model that we are working through now. There is a transition plan that you go through. There is a great deal of flexibility to the curriculum. The Education minister can talk more about this and how you teach, what you can teach, how the national curriculum works and what you record against. She can provide more answers around how that works.

Again, there is flexibility. Each teacher does not get a rote course outline for every term. I am sitting next to a former teacher and principal. I might get Andy, whom this area sits under, to talk about this—maybe even using his previous experience.

Mr COWAN: Member for Daly, it is a good question. Similar to remote health clinics, there is a set structure in place. There are a couple of levels that the Chief Minister talked about, moving to community control. The Education minister will be able to talk more to this, but at the moment they are working through a three-year plan around 34 engagement and decision-making committees, which is giving local communities a greater voice around how education is delivered. Then, as the Chief Minister indicated, you move to the example in Gunbalanya where it is a community-led school.

Then, in a full 'empower' model, it is where it is a private school. This example of Indigenous schools in that space—as the Chief Minister mentioned, I spent six years in the Kimberley running an Aboriginal community-controlled school which was a private school. That gives the ability to have a greater role in selecting staff and running your show. But you still have a national curriculum and teacher registration. So there are significant checks and balances, but it gives a stronger voice for community to ensure the school is meeting their needs.

Mr HIGGINS: There is still reporting back on the education of the kids.

Mr COWAN: They are still doing NAPLAN testing and the like.

Mr HIGGINS: There would be an agreement in place that says, 'If you are not meeting this we will cut funding,' or whatever?

Mr GUNNER: Anindilyakwa was asking for the plan that we signed with them to be contractual and binding. Governments enter contracts all the time. I think that is a very reasonable proposition. For me, it is about transferring across the resource to run a school, as you would normally do. But then they are picking up responsibility around attendance, meeting standards—crucially—Growing Our Own.

We have not been the best at this. This is not an attack on anyone; this has just been across governments because we have an education system for the whole Territory about how you take someone in Grade 2, 3 or 4 and actually make it really clear that there is a teaching job available in this community—do you want it? Grow your own for the local school. These are examples of the things that, if you are running that institution locally, you can think about, prepare for, and the principal who is there sees it occurring.

These are all important things and I am happy for that to be in a contract. Then we are genuinely walking side by side in a contract. It is not just rhetoric; we have this contractually binding agreement between two of us about how we manage that relationship, the resource and the responsibility.

Mr HIGGINS: Has there been any discussion with the Batchelor Institute? On my way down to Barunga on Thursday I stopped at the Batchelor Institute and they had their graduation. A lot of those were different certificates in education et cetera. They are pushing a lot of people out into this—when I say 'pushing out' I mean they are accrediting people in this area. We had some discussions with them on how it might fit into this education part of local decision-making. I know it came up as part of the treaty stuff as well.

Mr GUNNER: At a ministerial level that is being led by Minister Lawler. The conversations with Batchelor—I am not sure if you want me to comment further around that. Essentially, most of the conversation with Batchelor has been done by the Minister for Education.

Mr HIGGINS: Has she had discussions with Batchelor over it, do you know?

Mr GUNNER: I would not be able to say specifically regarding training local teachers in local schools, but she is the one who has led the conversation. I have not been present in those conversations, so she would know.

Mr HIGGINS: With Barunga, you actually mentioned the appointment of a treaty commissioner to oversee the process for treaty. What specifically is the role of that person, and do we have any provision for that in the budget? How and when do we propose to put that person on?

Mr GUNNER: Through the MOU that we signed up to, there is some detail around what that treaty commissioner will do. We are going to go through a formal EOI process with names coming up for me to look at, but there is a process—EOI, treaty working group, which involves all the land councils, and me.

Obviously, it has to be an Aboriginal person with profound connections to the Territory and understanding of it. It will most likely be an Aboriginal Territorian, but there may be significant people of stature who have profound understanding of the Territory, living here, who might also fit that criteria. There are two main jobs within the MOU. The first is up to 12 months' worth of research and preparation around what we will be negotiating towards, how other treaties work and what is in the ball park.

There will also be roughly 18 months' worth of work around what will be the principles of the treaty between the Territory government and others. There are different ways of looking at the framework, founding principles and what that would be between all entities.

There are a numbers of ways that could then transpire to a result, depending on what comes through, whether it is a bill of parliament or other things to establish that. That is essentially the work that will be undertaken by the treaty commissioner. On that time line, you are probably looking at those principles being established in the Dry Season of 2020. The first bit is definitely in stone; the second bit is not as firm as that, from memory, around the preparing of the principles.

The treaty commissioner might get involved and find there is a lot more work needed around establishing those foundation or baseline principles that are involved in treaty. We are saying treaty or treaties at the moment, but I think it will most likely be treaties. There is not one Aboriginal united voice; there are lots of different people in tribes, nations and places. Wadeye is a great example, where 22 clans are in one spot. I think it will end up being treaties.

There will be some places where the treaty they want is with the Australian Government, which I respect. It is not something we can deliver, and they may not want to involve formal negotiations until that is on the table. Others will want to engage in a treaty with us, then there will be a stepping stone or starting point for any future conversations with the Australian Government. Others may want to wait for the Australian Government.

Mr HIGGINS: When do you hope to get this person appointed?

Mr GUNNER: Soon. It depends on the responses to the EOI.

Mr COWAN: There will be a public EOI process that is being committed to and we will be progressing that as a priority.

Mr HIGGINS: When might we see that start? Early July—I mean, you have to get the budget approved first.

Mr GUNNER: I can comment on that. We think it will cost us around \$1m a year across three years. We will allow for three years. We will manage that from within DCM. We will find that money internally; it will not be a new appropriation. It will be money independently for that treaty commissioner and their office.

Obviously, we need to know who it is and where they want to be based. I am happy for the treaty commissioner to be based where they choose; it could be in Alice Springs, Tennant Creek, Katherine, Yirrkala, Darwin or Palmerston. It could be anywhere, depending on the treaty commissioner. That will impact some of our decisions. It will cost us up to \$1m a year for the treaty commissioner, staff, travel and consultation.

Mr HIGGINS: I know we have some legal advice from Graham Nicholson, which is a name from the past, about a cost of \$8000. What was that in regard to? Can we get that tabled or is it confidential?

Mr GUNNER: I can provide advice on what his advice was, but I cannot provide his advice.

Mr HIGGINS: Okay.

Mr GUNNER: External legal advice from Mr Graham Nicholson, an expert in this area of law, has advised that while there are limitations of a treaty rather than the state of the Commonwealth, the Northern Territory can implement a treaty. For this treaty to be valid, it must have a sufficient link to the Northern Territory, not be inconsistent with any Commonwealth legislation—so we do not have the power to differ with them—not purport to confer executive authority on Northern Territory ministers and other Northern Territory officials outside the scope of the Northern Territory executive authority on the *Northern Territory (Self-Government) Act* and regulations thereto, and provide for just terms in any acquisition of property by or under Northern Territory legislation.

Essentially, we have to comply with our own powers as defined by the *Northern Territory (Self-Government) Act* to be a reasonable interpretation of that.

Mr HIGGINS: The MOU that was signed—I know a document was passed around at Barunga. Are you able to table a copy of that document?

Mr GUNNER: I am checking it is not the one I signed. Is this the original copy?

Mr COWAN: It is not the original.

Mr GUNNER: Is this a photocopy of that? Oh, okay. I am happy to table it and it has our signatures on it.

Mr HIGGINS: It is tabled. That will be very good.

Mr GUNNER: I think it is online, too.

Mr COWAN: Yes. I understand that it is on the land council's website and also been uploaded on the DCM website.

Mr GUNNER: If you ask about who made it so attractive, looking at the document, I would say it was the Northern Land Council did the graphic design work. Give them the credit for the attractive look.

Madam CHAIR: Local Aboriginal graphic designer here in Darwin, which was auspiced through the Northern Land Council, yes.

Mr HIGGINS: Have we finalised any development proposals following the Kenbi land claim? Will any of those impact on—I know the Member for Nelson is interested. Some of that is related to the development of residential-type land on the Cox Peninsula. Will that have any impact then on plans for Weddell?

Mr GUNNER: There have been five objections to the ILUA.

Mr HIGGINS: Do they have to be dealt with first?

Mr GUNNER: They have to be dealt with first.

Mr HIGGINS: Well, that will take another 30 years.

Mr GUNNER: Hopefully not. We were able to sort out the Wagait tip issue with the Minister for Finance, Mathias Cormann. I thank him. I had a really good conversation with him about the issues, and he basically addressed it straightaway after I discussed it with him. My understanding is that the objections to the ILUA need to be dealt with first.

Mr HIGGINS: Right. With the treaty—if I can come back to that for a minute. How will we measure the success of that, or not?

Mr GUNNER: All right. I think at some stage signing one will be the measure of success.

Ms NELSON: The first step would be to sign one.

Mr HIGGINS: How will we measure whether it is giving people what they want—both Territorians as a whole and then the Indigenous people?

Mr GUNNER: I guess there are a couple of things first. The first two stages of the treaty commission will simply establish some of that. When you look at founding principles or whatever should be in a treaty, then what you are discussing more is the ongoing monitoring of whether the treaty is actually effective or not.

I want it to be a living treaty and involve an ability to be updated and evolve. My worry is if it is just a fixed point in time treaty—signed document, everyone moves on—you will not get that profound change we are searching for in the Territory. For me, it is about a living treaty. That is essentially where the local decision-making works that we are doing parallel to this slots quite nicely into treaty and provide that ongoing work between each other.

But the measure of success, in some respects, will be first of all signing it, and then you need ongoing monitoring of the document to make sure it is actually delivering. My worry is that there are treaties out there that are not binding. The New Zealand treaty is genuinely followed—as far as I am aware. I am not from New Zealand. The spirit of it is followed but it is not a binding treaty. In Canada there has recently been some reporting around the fact that they have signed treaties that are not binding and are not being followed.

Mr HIGGINS: That is the basis of why I asked the question.

Mr GUNNER: For me, it is critical that it is a binding treaty. That is where the local decision-making, based on the Anindilyakwa process anyway, can quite genuinely slot in nicely to the treaty process and involve binding treaties and living treaties.

Mr HIGGINS: How much consultation was given with AFANT over that open areas gazettal of the declared areas out on Cox Peninsula?

Mr GUNNER: We have to be careful. You cannot negotiate what is a sacred site, so my understanding is the information was provided to them as it was available—if that makes sense—as it was made available to us. We were informed on a similar time line to AFANT because you cannot negotiate what is a sacred site.

There has been some degree of confusion about that. The cyclone impacted on some of the information processes too.

Mr COWAN: Member for Daly, as the Chief indicated, the timing was not great. We have undertaken to meet regularly with AFANT to ensure that when we have the ability to provide information that we can and that there is an open channel there. But as the Chief Minister indicated, it is a sacred site, which is law under the Territory government.

Mr HIGGINS: This relates a bit to the subcommittee of Cabinet that has been established to look as an advisory on Indigenous matters. At the beginning of your speech you said you are a government for all Territorians. The issue I have is that it is one of your own members who said they do not want to be on that committee—Scott McConnell.

Mr GUNNER: No, that is not the case.

Mr HIGGINS: Whether he did or did not is fine, but he is not on it.

Mr GUNNER: We made a decision as a committee to change the membership.

Mr HIGGINS: My question is about the membership. Why is it a subcommittee of Cabinet and not a committee of the parliament? There are members of parliament who are elected by the Indigenous members of their community. I refer to me and to Mark—I will leave Scott McConnell as a question mark. We represent those Indigenous people and have been elected by those members of our electorates. Why are they not being given input to that process?

Mr GUNNER: That is very easy to answer as a committee of Cabinet—you receive Cabinet documents and get a Cabinet iPad ...

Mr HIGGINS: Why is it a committee of Cabinet?

Mr GUNNER: Because it is not an advisory body to a decision-making body. The parliament could consider establishing an advisory body; I would not be opposed to that. I do not decide that. This is a decision-making body.

Mr HIGGINS: If the committee is a decision-making one, why are we advertising for advisers from the general public for the committee? Why are we not getting the members of an elected parliament to put those positions forward?

Mr GUNNER: You could encourage nominations of people. You could put people forward through the EOJ process.

Mr HIGGINS: Why do we go through that process if you already have elected people like Mark and me, who are representing—I do not know Mark's percentage, but mine is over 50% Indigenous. Why is there no input coming from us, as elected members who represent our constituents, if this government is representing all Territorians?

Mr GUNNER: I think you are confusing processes. This is a Cabinet of government members.

Mr HIGGINS: So, why are we advertising for advisers? We have advertised for advisers to that committee.

Mr GUNNER: We are going through a process. It is a bit like the Territory 2030 committee, which had people external to government on a subcommittee of Cabinet. They are independent. If parliament wants to have a process I would not be opposed to that, but it is different to government and Cabinet process.

Mr HIGGINS: Why have the elected members not been considered as the appropriate people to give that advice? That is why we have a parliament in the Northern Territory. That is why we elect members to represent the constituents of our electorates. What we have now is a process by which a government is advertising and selecting people to represent those same constituents through a process that is not a democratically elected one.

Mr GUNNER: I think you are confusing parliament with Cabinet.

Mr HIGGINS: No, I am not confusing parliament with Cabinet. You are advertising for advisers of the public to advise your subcommittee. Why are we doing that? We are you not going to people like Mark, me and Scott—if he has been put off the committee?

Mr GUNNER: As members of parliament you have the ability to have a voice. On the subcommittee of Cabinet we made a decision to have independent people come in, a bit like the Territory 2030 approach, so this is not a new approach to a subcommittee of Cabinet.

We made a decision as the subcommittee of Cabinet with those independent advisers about evolving the subcommittee. The decision was to reduce the membership of external advisers to match with the regional director network. We found with nine members it was extraordinarily difficult to arrange meeting times they could attend. We are finding, since reducing the number, that we can meet more regularly and they can attend those meetings. They will have more direct support from the regional network mentor.

The decision was made at the same time to reduce the membership of Aboriginal Affairs subcommittee to Aboriginal members of our government and me as Minister for Aboriginal Affairs. That was a decision made unanimously by the committee, so there are no shenanigans.

Mr HIGGINS: So, how much extra will this cost for these advisers when you already have paid members of parliament?

Mr GUNNER: It will cost less than what it is already costing us, because we are reducing from nine to five.

Mr HIGGINS: No, you were already paying those other members who were on that committee. You have now advertised for external people who will be paid some sitting fee.

Mr GUNNER: No, you have mixed this up. There were nine, reduced to five. We are advertising for two positions that are currently vacant, but we have reduced from nine to five. So, it is actually costing us less, not more.

Mr HIGGINS: Why would you even have any cost when you already have elected members of parliament?

Mr GUNNER: When we first established this committee we had nine external advisers on it. We are reducing that number down to five and advertising for two ...

Mr HIGGINS: It is still a valid question. Why are we using that when we have elected members of parliament?

Mr GUNNER: You serve parliament and I thank you for it. I think you are confusing it with Cabinet.

Mr HIGGINS: The people in my electorate, therefore, will not have the equal say of those members because they are members of government. The words that you said ...

Mr GUNNER: You are going to a fundamental debate between government and opposition.

Mr HIGGINS: The words you said at the beginning were that you are a government for all Territorians equally. That, to me, is not equal. That is all I have to say.

Mr GUNNER: This goes to the fundamental philosophical difference between government and opposition. I was in opposition for the last four years and not in the Cabinet. That is just what happens. We are a government for all Territorians ...

Mr HIGGINS: These are not members of Cabinet.

Mr GUNNER: ... not a parliament for all Territorians. That occurs separately. So, you are confusing opposition, government, Cabinet ...

Mr HIGGINS: We are talking about your government, Chief Minister—your comments at the beginning.

Mr GUNNER: ... and parliament. Obviously, my comments stand as true and accurate.

Madam CHAIR: Thank you, Chief Minister. You have answered the question in several different ways. Are there any other questions? Member for Nhulunbuy? Member for Daly?

Mr HIGGINS: Not from me, no.

Madam CHAIR: Member for Nhulunbuy, I believe you have some questions for this output.

Mr GUYULA: Thank you very much, Chief Minister and staff who are here today. As part of local decision-making, what is the strategy to allocate resources so that elders and leaders of communities can prioritise areas for community development?

Mr GUNNER: That is probably determined by locals in terms of the conversations we have had. We have been trying very carefully not to pick winners—not to elevate communities above communities. We are trying to go at their manner and pace. It goes to the extent to which locals identify themselves as being ready to be involved in the process. It is community-led; that is the original way of putting it.

We also have our regional director network out there, so those communities identify themselves as having those conversations. We coordinate that through the regional network and our local decision-making team. I will ask Andy to comment further.

Mr COWAN: Member for Nhulunbuy, that is correct, as the Chief Minister indicated. The implementation of local decision-making will not happen from our Darwin office; that will happen from our regions. I use the Big Rivers region as an example. Through their regional coordination, they have some sub-working groups with government agencies that are prioritising across a number of communities and areas that have come to government, who want to have a conversation about local decision-making. They work closely with those communities to progress communities' aspirations.

Within the regional offices as well, we have identified through the 2017–18 budget resource—to support communities that are progressing and want to progress the conversation about local decision-making. That is a grant bucket that has supported leadership and governance.

In addition to that, we have the Remote Aboriginal Development Fund which has been used across the Territory to support building leadership and governance capability across the Territory.

Mr GUYULA: Thank you. One more?

I notice that both in Output 7.1 and 7.2, the budget shows a large decrease in funding due to one-off funding to support remote Aboriginal economic initiatives, but in reality we need ongoing sustained support over the next 10 years to be able to build strong, sustainable businesses and communities. With the one-off funding, how many remote Aboriginal-owned and Aboriginal-run businesses were supported? What now replaces this one-off funding that will help remote Aboriginal initiatives?

Mr GUNNER: The variations in 7.1 and 7.2 go to one-off funding for the Hydraulic Fracturing Taskforce, NT master brand issue, alcohol review implementation and City Deals. It does go to the regional network; it goes to those other policy areas. I will get Jodie to touch on that a little further. It does not go to the things you are worried it might have gone to.

Ms RYAN: Member for Nhulunbuy, we did have a grant fund in 2017–18—which Andy has already alluded to—for \$1m. That grant bucket is continuing next year, which is one of the amounts of money allocated to us as part of the Royal Commission response. We have not reduced our grant funding for those Aboriginal community organisations where they want. That is specific for governance and capacity training for those organisations.

Mr COWAN: Member for Nhulunbuy, it might be a question for the Department of Trade, Business and Innovation in regard to support for economic development that sits within their portfolio. As Jodie indicated, that \$1m to support leadership and governance is continuing in the next financial year. There has not been a decrease in resourcing in those locations.

Mr GUYULA: What monitoring and evaluation mechanisms does each of the NT Government's agencies have in place to identify and measure the effectiveness of government engagement with each Aboriginal community; and secondly, the value to government, community and taxpayers that results from the financial expenditure being exercised by governments in each Aboriginal community?

Mr GUNNER: I do not believe there is a standard measurement of the effectiveness of consultation beyond outcome—depending on what you are consulting on, achieving a successful resolution of it. It is a reasonable question, but I do not know how you measure consultation on its own, separate to outcomes.

If you are talking to a local community about something, you are probably measuring the outcomes from the agreement rather than the specific consultation itself. I am happy to talk further about that, whether you can measure the quality of the consultation in itself, separately from the agreement that is being negotiated. It is a reasonable question—it is not something we do.

What we have done is recognise the importance of negotiation or consultation in language and put additional resources into the Aboriginal Interpreter Service to make sure we are consulting people in their first language. I think this is crucial. To that extent, I believe the quality of the consultation has improved, but how you measure the quality of consultation ...

Mr COWAN: Member for Nhulunbuy, just to add to that, there is also a policy document, the Remote Engagement and Coordination Strategy, which has been developed by the Department of Housing and

Community Development, which we definitely use as part of our engagement to make sure we have a consistent engagement process across the Territory.

Going to the second question in regard to how we are progressing and monitoring, we are currently in the process of our Aboriginal Affairs strategy. We are engaging across the Territory. This will be a 10-year plan. As part of that process, we have engaged an external consultant to work alongside our Office of Aboriginal Affairs. We have a very strong commitment for getting a grassroots voice from Aboriginal communities—a bottom-up approach around priorities. That is really important to government and will be used to monitor across our government agencies.

As part of this work, you would be aware that there is a conversation happening nationally around a refresh of Closing the Gap. We have had our department staff involved in those conversations as well as independent Aboriginal members from the community, to look at how well we have travelled and the areas we definitely need to improve around Closing the Gap. We will ensure that we are cognisant of that national conversation and, from a reporting and monitoring perspective, ensure that we are not asking agencies to duplicate around their reporting and that we have a mechanism within that to report back to communities.

Mr WOOD: Madam Chair, you can tell me if the questions have been asked so I will not be repeating them. Have questions been asked on the memorandum of understanding for the treaty at Barunga.

Ms RYAN: Yes.

Mr WOOD: Will the parliament be included in the discussion or will it just be the executive being the only ones signing this agreement? I, as a member of parliament, and others—will we also be included in some of these discussions?

Mr GUNNER: One of the quite likely outcomes is that it will become a bill before parliament so there will absolutely be parliamentary involvement. Depends a little bit on what the treaty commissioner's work is and what he or she does. The independent treaty commissioner will be available for anyone to talk with, but the extent to which parliament involves itself formally through a committee will be up to the parliament.

The treaties as far as I can tell—the most likely scenario, if you look at how it has been done elsewhere, would involve a minimum of a bill of parliament enabling it. That is still to be determined, so the first 12 months is around that research, preparation process and at least 18 months' worth of conversations around what would be the basic founding principles, which take you up to—at the earliest—Dry Season 2020. The most likely outcome is that treaty or treaties will be formally something to consider a signatory of in the next term of government.

Mr WOOD: Just on the principle of a treaty, a treaty is normally a two-way street between two groups, so obviously it is between Indigenous people and others. How will you inform others so that they can have some input into this treaty so it is not just a one-way street? If we are to have reconciliation then it needs to be on both sides. Is the other side going to participate in a treaty discussion?

Mr GUNNER: I see that as occurring through two ways. One, the work of the independent treaty commissioner will encompass all Territorians. Two, this will most likely be a signatory with either the Territory parliament or Territory government depending on how things shake out, but the Territory government obviously represents all Territorians, has a degree of things that are under our remit that will likely be negotiated through the local decision-making framework anyway.

Those sorts of things are likely to be dealt with through local decision-making as an issue to deal with as opposed to prior to any treaties. The decision between a local decision-making agreement and a treaty will be, I believe, recognition, respect, and truth-telling elements—the formal things that go around a treaty. It is quite likely that the guts of a treaty may be that a local decision-making agreement has already been signed, say with Anindilyakwa Land Council, to be a binding contract to make sure we both walk together.

Mr WOOD: Just from a practical point of side, because I have another side of my life. Just say, for argument's sake, a group of people belonging to a tribe of Territorians, do not want to participate in the treaty, do they have the ability to say, 'We do not agree with that treaty and we do not want to be in it'? I am not saying they will ...

Mr GUNNER: Yes, essentially. This would be worked on over the next two-and-a-half years, but there is a consultation mechanism in the Territory already, whether they are government or land council, that go to this question. It is one reason why the MOU with the land councils is important. The land councils recognise, from

my conversations with them—and they made these comments as well—that not all Aboriginal Territorians work through the land council, identify the land council or recognise the land councils as their conduit.

They obviously have consultation mechanisms in communities, understanding who you need to talk with formally and all of that that—they are making available to the independent treaty commissioner, so we can work through a lot of those issues. Then maybe in a certain place or places that concessions need to be made or something needs to be worked through—depending on people maybe saying no—but my hope is that once we get these standing principles established and the treaty is negotiated, people will not want to say no to it.

My understanding at the moment—the grievances I have heard have been directed more towards land councils. Land councils are negotiating on behalf of them and they do not want that—which is not actually what the MOU says. It is about establishing an independent treaty commissioner to do negotiations and the MOU goes to how we coordinate and share our resources to make that actually happen.

There has been a fundamental misunderstanding by some of the objectors to what this MOU does or how the treaty process essentially would work.

Mr WOOD: From a legal perspective, normally when we have been talking about treaties it has been with the Commonwealth Government and Aboriginal people, because Commonwealth obviously has control over Aboriginal land. How does a treaty that may be formed by this parliament legally fit in with the concept of a treaty that the federal government may introduce in relation to Aboriginal land and rights et cetera?

Mr GUNNER: The commonality would be in recognition and respect and truth-telling, essentially. Ours is more likely to be a service oriented treaty, when you get in to the reparations. That is the bit that will make this real—practical reconciliation will go to living reparations or a living treaty, and local decision-making and how we manage our schools. We are responsible for services by and large.

The Australian Government and the treaty it can sign up to is different to ours and goes more to sovereignty and the things that I know (inaudible) has been discussing more with the Australian Government. We cannot offer that. That is not within our ability to do; ours is more around service delivery. The commonality is recognising the people who we are signing the treaty with—formal recognition of a group or a tribe or a place—proper respect and through truth-telling in that area. That is a whole lot of work that we can do and makes any future Australian Government treaty easier.

My understanding is there is no current national policy for the Australian Government around treaty versus treaties. If you go back to what Bob Hawke said 30 years ago, they very much used the word 'treaty'. I think we have all learned a lesson here that it would be impossible to sign off on one treaty. You might have a bill that establishes the basic principles of a treaty, but you will not ever be able to achieve this if you think you can just do one. That is a lesson for them to learn themselves, but I see it as most likely being treaties.

Madam CHAIR: Thank you, Chief Minister. The time being 12 pm, the committee will now go to lunch for 30 minutes and we will recommence our questioning for this output at 12.30 pm.

The committee suspended.

Madam CHAIR: Thank you Chief Minister, we might recommence .We are still considering Output 7.2.

Mr GUNNER: I have a couple of points of advice. I do not know if we took it on notice, but I have an answer to a previous question. We have double checked the *Inquiries Act* and we are compelled to table on that first sitting day in August.

Previously, when the former Justice had advised he might have been tabling early, it would have been handy. It could have been done in the May Sittings, but now we are required to wait until the August Sittings, which is a timing issue with the *Inquiries Act*.

I am also happy to table the multiagency partnership that we signed off with Yugul Mangi.

In my conversations I have been advising other communities of that agreement and making it available to them. It is often easier when you see what someone else has done, for them to think about how they can do

it the same or differently, or work from that document. So, we want to make that document more broadly available, recognising it was good for the Australian Government to sign us to that one. At the moment, it has not been involved in, says, the Anindilyakwa conversations. It has been broader and different. It obviously depends from place to place to be involved.

I thank the Australian Government for being involved in that one.

Madam CHAIR: Thank you. Committee members, are there any other questions?

Mr WOOD: Chief Minister, this is in relation to the MOU. I have a question in relation to what I call the dreadful attendance rates at school and the subsequent poor literacy and numeracy, especially of children in remote communities. Is that something you could put within a memorandum of understanding? If you say, 'We will give people the power to run their schools'—I put the word 'run' in inverted commas there. At the same time, if they want that responsibility, then do they have to give us an equivalent responsibility their children will attend school?

Mr GUNNER: Absolutely. I touched upon this in my article in the *Land Rights News*. The word count for the *NT News* was less. I cannot remember if I made that example fully in the *NT News* article as well. But I have also talked about this.

The Anindilyakwa Land Council, for example, has said they want their local decision-making group to be contractual binding. This is not MOU related; this is more contractually binding. Examples I have given are about housing and education, but it could apply to other things.

In housing, if we transfer money and responsibility across towards housing, R&M, tenancy management and so on, then it is a reasonable expectation that we make this contractual, that they do not fly people in from Sydney or Brisbane to do the work but use locals and have a plan for locals. You can have a contractual agree about that.

It is the same for schools, where I see responsibility for enrolment, Growing Our Own teachers—all of that capacity would sit with the local entities to pick up that work. This is with Anindilyakwa Land Council. You negotiate that out through the contract.

I believe that if you look at our attendance rate issue—this is something the Minister for Education could talk about in more detail than me. We believe that if schools are locally run and are seen as more relevant and community-owned, we will see an increase in enrolment. There is the Galtha Rom program at Yirrkala, and there have been other results where we have seen attendance rates in remote schools well above the 80% levels.

We celebrated Dr M's life very recently in the song *Treaty* at Birany Birany. That was the point that was made out there at the time.

These are the things we want to get back to. Community control is essential to it, but we can also build it into our contracts. These has been a desire—in fact, it has been requested from the other end—for this to be contractually binding. It is an excellent idea. It guarantees that we walk side by side.

Mr WOOD: In relation to the Aboriginal Affairs Subcommittee of Cabinet, does that have an involvement in the formation of this MOU?

Mr GUNNER: Yes.

Mr WOOD: Okay. Quickly, on a different subject altogether. There is no mention in the budget of the government's role in the future of Jabiru. Is there a reason for this, or is the government not getting involved?

Mr GUNNER: No, we are.

Mr WOOD: I heard you on the radio, but I could not see anything in here.

Mr GUNNER: It is essentially involved in negotiations. One reason why it might not appear—I will pass over to Andy. Andy is taking the lead for us in a public service sense. A lot of it is coming from within, I guess, because existing officers are doing the work. We are in negotiations with the Gundjehmi Aboriginal Corporation, the OA, the Australian Government and Parks Australia about the future of Jabiru.

I formally wrote to the Northern Land Council and the Australia government when we were elected, reversing the decision of the previous CLP government not to be involved. They have formally written to the Northern Land Council and the Australian Government advising that they did not want to be part of any conversations about the future of Jabiru, which I find mind-boggling.

We are back at the table on those negotiations. I will pass to Andy, but I suggest that one reason is it is physically within the existing roles of people. We have an Aboriginal network person in Jabiru we have appointed. That is part of our budget. There is a series of things we have done in and around Jabiru.

Mr COWAN: With the work on Jabiru, we are currently funding a number of consultancies from within and across some other government departments. As the Chief Minister alluded to, government has made a strong commitment to Jabiru for it to be a centre for tourism and services for the broader West Arnhem region.

We have a steering committee that is made up of the Northern Territory Government, the Commonwealth Government, the Northern Land Council, GAC and ERA. We have been working through a number of priority areas for the future in regard to infrastructure and assessments to look forward at what the town looks like. We are in the process of finalising a study of the future of Jabiru, which Gundjeihmi Aboriginal Corporation has undertaken with another organisation. That is providing a blueprint to how we can reimagine the town, post-mining, as a centre for tourism. That is a very exciting piece of work.

There are some significant proposals within that regarding reorientating the entrance to Jabiru and having a signature development on the lake as part of some new offerings there. That will be tied into a number of negotiations going forward. There is a process in place around a section 19A lease, which is a 99-year lease, over the town.

There is significant momentum and a lot of opportunity in regard to how we can bring that to fruition. We are currently progressing conversations with the Commonwealth Government on significant investment into Kakadu National Park.

Mr GUNNER: I want to make a statement which I think is important, because I do not think the people of Jabiru hear this often enough. We are making a guarantee around service delivery that we believe is—it is a guarantee, for starters, so it will happen. We think we can maintain our existing service levels based on conversations with Gundjeihmi Aboriginal Corporation and others about having Jabiru as a service centre for the region. At the moment we are confined or constrained by the current deal to only servicing the town.

We are giving a guarantee of service delivery that we think is crucial to the existing population. We do not want people making decisions now to leave Jabiru because they are worried about their kid being able to go to school in two or three years. We want to provide that guarantee of service delivery so people do not make decisions on the wrong grounds out of concern for our service delivery. We are making that guarantee to the people of Jabiru.

Mr WOOD: Who will be the lessee?

Mr COWAN: The traditional owners will take out the lease.

Mr WOOD: When you said it would be a 99-year lease—normally someone takes it from Aboriginal land and someone else takes control.

Mr COWAN: There are a couple of models there, but we are not directly involved in the negotiations. They are with the Commonwealth Government, the Northern Land Council and GAC. One of the models that may be chosen is to do with the Executive Director of Township Leasing, who holds that lease on behalf of the traditional owners.

Mr GUNNER: This will be the first non-remote Aboriginal township. There is massive potential—it is quite exciting.

Mr WOOD: I go there once a year for footy, where they have the wind festival. What about people who are private citizens, who own a house there—I say own, but they probably lease it from the mine. Would they be allowed to stay?

Mr GUNNER: This will be managed through the town plan, so yes. I could give a more complicated answer, but the simple answer is yes.

Mr WOOD: With you wanting people to stay, they have to know they have a future. They may want to retire there.

Mr GUNNER: That is all front of mind for Gundjeihmi. They think all those things are genuinely on the table. We are quite excited about the future of Jabiru.

Mr WOOD: Well, there is a boarding school there still. It has been funded through the royalty program; it is a good place. There is no mention of the space base at Arnhem Land. What is the government's role and what financial input is the government contributing?

Mr GUNNER: That is probably more relevant to DTBI in terms of that work—the regional network person in Nhulunbuy, the regional director.

Mr WOOD: I have to get the acronym. I know you knock acronyms over all the time.

Mr GUNNER: There is too many.

Mr WOOD: Trade?

Mr GUNNER: Sorry, the Department of Trade, Business and Innovation will be on later. So you can ask that question then.

Mr WOOD: I just get lost with the acronyms.

Mr GUNNER: Our regional director has been involved in that work but it really falls within the DTBI remit.

Mr WOOD: There is one other question. In relation to Aboriginal affairs, and I have a conflict of interest here but. In my family they have a language that is just about dead. It has been partly written, partly through ethnobotany or botany books, and there has been a small dictionary written. There is no grammar written. That language will probably die out as soon as some of the older people pass away.

Is there any program that the NT Government puts forward to helping finance either the protection of those languages or the conservation of those languages, especially those smaller languages that will not survive? I know that just from a practical point of view. It is important that we retain those languages in some form.

Mr GUNNER: I know there are some language preservation centres that are federally funded and the Aboriginal Interpreter Service does some work. I will have to follow this up for you. I was briefed the other day about someone who has literally driven around the Territory, rescuing every bilingual education resource to make sure it is saved, kept, scanned and maintained. I just cannot remember who was doing it. Might have been NT Libraries. That is being done; there are efforts. Perhaps more relevant to the question you ask is that they are not in many ways coordinated efforts and the Aboriginal affairs strategy that we are revisiting at the moment will look at that.

One of the briefings we had remotely was that if you look at the Aboriginal language centres that exist for the preservation of original languages, they are not doing any work around Kriol and rapidly evolving Kriol, which is a lot of people's first language. We have to do preservation—I am not disputing that at all—but there is an extent of work that we need to do in recognising that for a lot of people, the first language they actually talk is Kriol.

Mr WOOD: I have had many an argument with a linguist over the use of Kriol. My wife used to call it bad English and she would refuse to actually speak it. I know it is used. I have a bible that is all in Kriol.

Mr GUNNER: As I was briefed the other day, pidgin English is bad English, Kriol is actually a genuine language with its own grammatical structure and everything. There is also an extent to which government just has to be practical with how you work with people. If that is the language that they speak, we have to learn how to speak it.

Mr WOOD: I can speak it just by getting slack in my way of speaking.

Mr GUNNER: That is pidgin; this is Kriol.

Mr WOOD: These languages—I know there are other people doing work but ...

Mr GUNNER: We have a fluent Kriol speaker with us.

Mr WOOD: Very good, she can speak English, too. I just went to a church service at the Anglican Church—the Christ Church Cathedral—which was nearly all in Kriol, by the way.

Is there support for preservation especially of those smaller languages that will no doubt die out because of the pressures of English and people not learning the language anymore?

Mr GUNNER: Short answer, yes. I think we can do more, and better coordinated, between our various agencies, local government and the Australian Government. We will be touching upon it in our Aboriginal affairs strategy and maybe we can have more conversations offline about that.

Madam CHAIR: Chief Minister, in the budget papers, the government is aiming to look at land and sea ownership across the Northern Territory. How do you propose to do that within your department and the Office of Aboriginal Affairs?

Mr GUNNER: This is a significant policy area for us that is critical for the future of the Northern Territory. If you look at 50% of the land, 30% of the population, 85% of the coastline—we have some areas that we still need to resolve. People often confuse Blue Mud Bay and Beds and Banks, but they are two separate issues. Obviously the Commonwealth is considering the detriment issue around Beds and Banks at the moment.

We have a policy in place around Blue Mud Bay and the High Court decision and resolution of that. The Northern Land Council is consulting at the moment. Normally the Land Council has said it thinks a deal can be done by the end of the year. We are rapidly approaching the end of the year—I always get nervous about that—so we are still talking with them.

Mr WOOD: I do not accept that, personally. I do not think it is right.

Mr GUNNER: That they will have a deal done by the end of the year? No. The Northern Land Council is saying that it will have a deal done by the end of the year. We are obviously hopeful. We have said to the Northern Land Council we really want to sell this issue and we have an offer on the table.

The High Court decision is clear around the title zone and what is there. We have said that if people do not want to take up the compensation package around ranges and free access—first of all, talk to us about it if they want to vary it slightly, as we are open to conversation—and if they want to force their rights as awarded by the High Court, they can. That is the High Court decision.

Simply provide that advice early so that we, as a government, can plan for it with the fishing industry, the crabbing industry and the rec fishers. We just need early advice around that. You need to take the steps necessary for a permit system to actually exist. We are essentially in the Northern Land Council's hands here, our policy is quite clear around approaching this and there is a High Court decision that is quite clear.

That is why I think there is absolute certainty that we can work to around Blue Mud Bay and we are happy to work with it. We are in traditional owners' hands. Negotiate with us on the compensation package for rangers and access, or make a decision about the intertidal zone, as awarded to you by the High Court, and allow us to plan towards that. We are in this grey area at the moment, but our policy is fair, clear and consistent with the High Court decision.

On Beds and Banks we are a little more in the hands of others, including the Australian Government, but we are happy to be an honest broker in that as well. Do you have anything to add, Andy?

Mr COWAN: As part of this policy, the government has made it very clear that they want to ensure that the ownership of land does benefit Aboriginal people economically and socially. One of the things we have been progressing is a strategy that looks to coordinate that effort across government.

The Chief Minister has touched on a number of those actions, but I might just itemise the 10 actions in this plan. This is a draft plan that is now ready to go out for consultation and we hope to have this finalised by the end of the year, around November:

1. resolving outstanding land claims
2. resolving Blue Mud Bay access arrangements

3. progressing the Aboriginal Land Commissioner's recommended changes to Part IV of the Land Rights Act
4. developing an NT Government native title policy framework
5. developing a strategic approach to tenure and other issues in mining towns that will eventually become Aboriginal land
6. reinvigorate jointly managed parks administered by the Northern Territory Government
7. enhancing the opportunities for long-term leasing on Aboriginal land
8. supporting economic development and investment on Aboriginal land
9. looking at legislative improvements and administrative processes from an NT perspective
10. looking at legislative improvements and administrative processes from a Commonwealth perspective.

They are forming a consultation paper around what we hope will be an NT land and sea action plan. There may be other priorities that come up through the consultation process that will form the final action plan, but this is a way we are looking at coordinating an effort across government and ensuring that we are progressing through a number of these commitments from government's perspective.

Mr WOOD: Madam Chair, can I ask a question? As you know, we will have the amendments to the *Pastoral Land Act* coming forward, and I think it has been withdrawn for the time being. Are the issues around the *Pastoral Land Act* in any of those 10 points?

Mr GUNNER: There are probably two different things there. One, we withdrew the *Pastoral Land Act* recognising that we had not done contemporary consultation with the Northern Land Council. The previous consultation had been done with them under the prior government, with those amendments. Practically, we had to do that.

I believe these principles capture that around supporting economic development. There is obviously the pastoral estate and pastoral licence and what rights you have under that—and then native title rights you have, and have the two work in harmony.

Obviously, what we need to work through is the degree to which someone's native title rights might be compromised or impeded if you develop an estate for cropping or something like that. It is a manageable thing. We have not done the formal negotiations around that yet, but we are.

Mr WOOD: How far have we progressed that *The Pastoral Land Act* can come back to ...

Mr GUNNER: That will be a conversation for the Minister for Environment and Natural Resources. That is being conducted by Environment and Natural Resources.

Mr WOOD: Will that go back out for consultation? Obviously, the pastoral industry will want to know what ...

Mr GUNNER: The pastoral industry is part of the consultations. This has been done in conjunction with recognising that you have to talk to all parties involved.

Mr WOOD: Okay, thank you.

Madam CHAIR: Chief Minister, a program that I support, the First Circles Program—I am just wondering if the number of participants remains the same in the next budget. I believe there are 16 members of the program. Also, what budget allocation is there specifically for the First Circles Program?

Mr GUNNER: An alumni of the First Circles Program—an excellent program for leadership for remote Territorians. It started under the previous government, from memory. I think one of the crucial aspects of First Circles Program which I like is that it is not age restricted. We want to support young leaders, but it is great to recognise that people can evolve into leaders at any age in their community.

I think it is a fantastic recognition. We had that presentation to Cabinet from First Circles very recently. We are also actively looking at how members of First Circles can be actively involved in a range of government

consultation, committees and membership to make sure they are involved. It is a fantastic program. Sixteen is the number. I will get Andy to talk a bit about how the program is running this year.

Mr COWAN: We are currently out to an expression of interest for members for this year, with a view of that starting at the new financial year. As the Chief Minister indicated, we have eight south and eight north. It was a fantastic graduation ceremony in Parliament House after presenting to Cabinet. As the Chief Minister indicated, we are looking at how we can build that alumni across the Territory.

One of the things we recently held was the inaugural leadership and governance conference in Alice Springs, which was attended by around 150 people. That was a great opportunity to bring emerging leaders from across the Territory and a number of other Aboriginal corporations to share their stories around leadership and governance.

We also partnered with the Australian Institute of Company Directors for that conference. The feedback has been fantastic. It is definitely one we are looking to grow next year. That tied in very nicely with the start of the Sir Doug Nicholls round for the AFL, where we had Melbourne and Adelaide playing in Alice Springs. It was a great opportunity to have these members there to attend the football and also celebrate all the positive stories happening across the Territory around Aboriginal leadership and governance.

Mr GUNNER: It is a shame that Top End Storm did not bring their form on the day the Redtails went away.

Mr WOOD: I was only watching the goal umpire.

Mr GUNNER: I think next year we will need the Crows to play the Redtails.

Mr WOOD: I think the Storm needs to have a bit more practice before they go to ...

Madam CHAIR: Chief Minister, can I just clarify the end of my question, the actual budget allocation to First Circles for the next financial year please?

Mr GUNNER: Sorry. We will have to take that one on notice.

Madam CHAIR: I ask myself to take it on notice.

Question on Notice No 3.2

Madam CHAIR: I will repeat the question for the record.

Chief Minister, can you please outline the budget for the First Circles Program in the next financial year.

Mr GUNNER: I am happy to accept that question.

Madam CHAIR: Thank you, Chief Minister. My question has been allocated the number 3.2.

Mr WOOD: Madam Chair, I left a question.

Madam CHAIR: Of course you did, Member for Nelson. Go ahead.

Mr WOOD: I jumped into the Barunga agreement from the budget.

Madam CHAIR: Go ahead, Member for Nelson.

Mr WOOD: Who was at the regional coordination meetings? What is the purpose of these meetings? How are their outcomes measured? Where is their budget allocation in the budget? There were 44 meetings estimated in 2017–18, but in the budget papers nothing is shown on page 32.

Mr GUNNER: I will seek clarity on the acronym, because there are quite a few regional meetings. Can you point to the page so I make sure I am talking to the right regional meeting?

Mr WOOD: Hang on a second, it is the one I did not write down.

Mr GUNNER: We have regional economic development committees. Is that what you are talking about?

Mr WOOD: They are called regional coordination meetings. I might have been using your annual report to find them.

Mr GUNNER: Member for Nelson, the officials believe they know exactly which meetings you are referring to.

Mr COWAN: Member for Nelson, in response to your question, across the Territory we have five regions as part of the DCM structure. We have regional executive directors who chair those regional coordination committees. The objective of those committees is ensuring we have good coordination between the agencies. As I mentioned before, they also have a role around implementation, whether it is local decision-making—they will have a stronger role going forward around Aboriginal affairs with the Aboriginal affairs strategy.

I think, from memory, in the annual report there is a commitment to a set number of meetings each year. Those regional coordination committees also then feed up and report to the CEO coordination committee, for which Jodie is the Chairs. So that is a structure to ensure we are having clear communication between both the regions and also in Darwin with CEOs around the table.

Mr WOOD: Do they also include coordination with local government?

Mr COWAN: Yes, each of those regional coordinations have slightly different structures depending on the region. For example, if we look at the Big Rivers region, they have local government whose CEOs sit on those groups. Some also have representatives from land councils in the region. It depends on the region, but there is definitely good connectivity between not only the local government but also the Commonwealth Government.

We have the regional manager from the Commonwealth Government sitting there because we know often the challenges and coordination that is required in regions is not just the Territory government. We need to ensure we are coordinated. That is what governments expect. It is government—not necessarily the Commonwealth and the Northern Territory. We are seen as one government.

Mr WOOD: Do they produce any sort of report so you can see what they have done during the year?

Mr COWAN: There is not a structured report that they provide apart from the reporting mechanism we have up to the CEO coordination, which is post the meeting requirements. Then they also provide highlights as part of our annual report.

Mr WOOD: I suppose the reason I was asking the question is that it is good to have these things but you need an outcome. That is what we are about here today. So, what are the outcomes that one can put their hands on and say, 'This is an outcome of having those meetings and this is an improvement in that community'?

Mr GUNNER: With the regional coordination meetings, they are a set of outcomes that were agreed separate to the meeting so that—what is a good example here. You might have health outcomes that you have agreed to which are public and reported against, and you are aware of them—everyone is aware of them. The regional coordination meetings go towards making those outcomes real. It is not the RCM setting separate objectives or outcomes. Often it is about reporting to the—find the best, most efficient way to achieve the outcome you have agreed to in a separate strategy document. That would be a reasonable summary.

What you are talking about might be more like the regional economic development committees, which get together to create a series of priorities they think should be followed within their local community and work towards them. That is creating a document reporting to it. These are more about getting all the people in a region who are relevant to having an impact in that region together, to work out the best way to deliver what they have all said they would do separately, but recognising we do not want to have silos remotely and we are working together to achieve it.

Madam CHAIR: Chief Minister, you have responsibility for the Department of the Chief Minister; Police, Fire and Emergency Services; the Department of Trade, Business and Innovation, which also includes major projects and northern Australian development through the federal government partnership between NT,

Queensland and WA; veterans affairs; and three statutory offices. How are you able to provide adequate time, with your many demands, for the Aboriginal Affairs portfolio?

Mr GUNNER: Hard work. The single most important thing for me to do within the Aboriginal Affairs portfolio is travel as much as I can within the Territory and meet as many people as possible who are impacted by this area.

As I mentioned in my opening statement, I have made 45 separate trips within the Territory. We brought back our community cabinets and have gone out to Ntaria, Jabiru, Groote Eylandt, Utopia, Katherine, Alice, Maningrida, Newcastle Waters and Ngukurr so we are doing an extensive amount of travel to make sure that we are delivering on the Aboriginal Affairs portfolio but I think that just simply comes with the work load of Chief Minister. The two work together.

It is crucial that we have as many conversations as possible firsthand and directly with people on the country that is important to them. I recognise that often the Aboriginal Affairs portfolio is defined through our remote areas, but we have the privilege of having people through all aspects and walks of life of in the Northern Territory.

Often the attention is on remote areas, the challenges that are faced around service delivery—the roads that get people to that community. It will be a minor thing but crucial for those community Cabinets—we often have one or two people drive in to that community, which I think is critical. We stay overnight, we do everything we can to be part of that community for those days that we are there. We take the CEOs with us so they can experience the situation firsthand—often the problems—and be part of the solution.

For me the time I make for the Aboriginal Affairs portfolio is the time I actually make available—full stop—for the Territorians who sit under my watch as Chief Minister.

Mr HIGGINS: Can I just follow that one up—you mentioned the community cabinet meeting. One of your election commitments was to do them in high schools and involve young people and hear from them. Have we done any of those at this point and where have we done them?

Mr GUNNER: In every community cabinet that we have done we have met with students. Maybe not formally as structured as what you are proposing there but the comment I made on Kriol just before came from that experience. We had been briefed by the language centre around the use of Kriol. Their mandate had been around the preservation of original languages, but everyone had talked about Kriol.

I then did a school visit, went through every classroom there and I asked the students in every single classroom what was their first language, and it was 100% unanimously Kriol. They all had a different second language and they all spoke a second language, but they all spoke first in Kriol.

You should not make policy based off one single school visit—we have done follow-up work since around this—we have interpreters who speak Kriol. I know the CEO of the Aboriginal Interpreter Service at the time, Jamie Chalker, has done further work since the consultation about language centre around this. We do have policy around Kriol, I am not saying we are suddenly developing a policy around Kriol. I think it is an important distinction between first languages and original languages and the work we need to do for preservation, which is crucial—we do not want to lose these languages—but also recognition of the importance of service delivery in the first language that person uses.

Mr HIGGINS: My question was more about—a lot of kids got the impression, when that election commitment was made, that they would see Cabinet in the schools. That is the question that has come to me. Is that something that was planned or have they misinterpreted that, or are we going to do it? I know we do community Cabinet, whereas I suppose this is younger people saying there was a commitment made to do it through the high schools, not through primary schools.

Mr GUNNER: That included high school students, what I was talking about. When we go out to these remote areas the Cabinet is involved with high schools and there is direct access to ministers and often CEOs on that trip.

Are you thinking more for the remote areas or are you asking that question more about ...

Mr HIGGINS: No, only areas where you have high schools. It is more people that are getting closer to having a say in their community and wanting some input to government.

Mr GUNNER: To take (inaudible) Ngukurr-based one, that was the most recent one. The conversation I had with the high school students there revolved around jobs in community—what jobs they wanted to work towards, their aspirations and desires. What I thought was really good was that not all of it was around trade—trades are important, as is construction all that kind of certification—but there was interest around services such as police, fire, teaching and other jobs, which I thought was excellent as well.

Utopia cabinet was at the high school as well. We got involved in the high schools when we have gone to community cabinets.

Madam CHAIR: Committee members, are there any further questions for Output 7.2?

That concludes consideration of Outputs 7.2 and Output Group 7.0.

OUTPUT GROUP 8.0 – GOVERNMENT BUSINESS SUPPORT **Output 8.1 – Support to Ministers and Leader of the Opposition**

Madam CHAIR: The committee will now consider Output Group 8.0, Government Business Support, Output 8.1, Support to Ministers and Leader of the Opposition. I am sure there are some questions.

Mr HIGGINS: My first question, Chief Minister, follows on from last year. It was about the 12 community engagement officers who are located on the fifth floor of Parliament House. My question is what are their new specific roles and where have they been relocated to if we still have those?

Mr GUNNER: Our staff now work within the ministerial offices so it was essentially a redistribution of the community engagement officers out to specific ministers' offices and they work with stakeholders in those offices, so more direct engagement with the minister and that line management.

Mr HIGGINS: Okay. What accredited cultural competency training has been undertaken by your Indigenous Affairs adviser?

Mr GUNNER: Our Indigenous Affairs adviser came with the training. That was not something we needed to do.

Mr HIGGINS: So you are saying he has not done any accredited cultural competency training?

Mr GUNNER: I am saying it was not necessary for him to do it in his current role because he came with that background and training experience. He had worked for the Northern Land Council, NAAJA, APONT—he had an extensive background.

Mrs LAMBLEY: Is he Aboriginal?

Mr GUNNER: Yes.

Mr HIGGINS: Nice to identify him. How many union liaison officers do you employ on the fifth floor and can you describe a typical day on what that person might do?

Mr GUNNER: There is one.

Mr HIGGINS: I figure that there is one—Phil Tilbrook.

Mr GUNNER: He would liaise with unions. I can get you advice about what that actual job description would be.

Mr HIGGINS: He is engaging with unions. How does that then differ to the adviser to the Office of the Commissioner for Public Employment in Minister McCarthy's office?

Mr GUNNER: Not all unions are part of OCPE or have responsibility to the Northern Territory Government.

Mr HIGGINS: Why do we have two people? Do we need two?

Mr GUNNER: They do different roles. The adviser to OCPE would be engaged more in EBAs and so on with unions as they are with the Northern Territory Government. Not all unions are involved in those EBAs or have that relationship with the Northern Territory Government.

Mr HIGGINS: So what would be your adviser's typical day? What does he do?

Mr GUNNER: I am happy to get you a breakdown of the ...

Mr HIGGINS: A position description.

Mr GUNNER: Yes.

Mr HIGGINS: Okay. How many members of your Cabinet attended the Australian Institute of Company Directors course, at what cost, how many completed the training course and how many did not?

Mr GUNNER: Some of those questions I cannot answer. They do not come out of my budget. I compelled all of them to do the Australian Institute of Company Directors course. It was my mandatory instruction to them. When I was in opposition I was approached by both the community sector and the business sector and said, 'If you are going to be taking on Cabinet, if you are successful, this is the most senior board in the Territory. We are extremely disheartened and frustrated with the various forms of Cabinet that have existed during this term and how they have carried out their duties. We think it is critical for you to do this course, this is the course that we recommend.'

I did that course in opposition. It was an exceptional course and, in government, I said to all my Cabinet ministers, 'It is my expectation that if you are going to be on this board, the most senior board in the Territory government, that you do the Company Directors course which has been roundly recommended to me as the best course available for executing your duties as a director,' which, essentially, a Cabinet minister is in many ways.

Mr HIGGINS: Okay. If we forget the cost, will you be able to take on notice, a question on how many completed the training course and how many did not?

Mr GUNNER: They all completed the course. It is a five-day course and they all completed the five days.

Mr HIGGINS: How many passed and how many failed?

Mr GUNNER: That is a separate question. I cannot answer that.

Mr HIGGINS: My understanding is they have to do some work after the five-day course to pass?

Mr GUNNER: No that is not correct. The Company Directors say there is a five-day course. Doing the course is the course. There is an optional examination that you can do after it which is optional, not mandatory, and there is no expectation to complete that. That gets you a pass or fail or a graduate, so you get the G instead of the M, but the advice from Company Directors is partaking in the course, doing the five days, is the training. The examination process after that is optional.

Mr HIGGINS: Could I get a list of those—assuming all of them completed, I would like to ask the question, how many opted to sit for the test, and how many of those passed and how many failed? How many opted not to sit the test?

Mr GUNNER: No.

Mr HIGGINS: So the answer is no, you will not give us that information?

Mr GUNNER: That is their information. I will ask them who did the five-day course.

Mr HIGGINS: Can I have numbers rather than names? The numbers that said they would sit for the test, the numbers that said they would not, and the numbers that took the test how many passed and how many failed? Just numbers.

Mr GUNNER: No. My expectation of them was to do the five-day course. That is what Company Directors recommend you do. The examination is purely optional. It does not go to whether you have done the five-day course or not. I asked them to do the five-day course.

Madam CHAIR: Chief Minister, can I just clarify, the question from the Member for Daly is to do with the department's budget? Or is that separately on their own, the individual minister's budget?

Mr GUNNER: Yes. It does not sit within this budget or my budget, or anything DCM spends money on.

Mrs LAMBLEY: Where does the money come from that pays for those courses?

Mr GUNNER: Potentially DLA. It depends on how the arrangement was made, but DLA covers professional development.

Mrs LAMBLEY: So none of it has come out of any ministerial budget or the Chief Minister's Office?

Mr GUNNER: No.

Mrs LAMBLEY: It is not of value to the public to know if people have passed or failed, you do not think?

Mr GUNNER: The requirement of the course is to go for five days and do the training. My understanding is that it is the entitlement under DLA—professional development.

Mr WOOD: The heading of that section is important to ministers and the Leader of the Opposition. As there is two-and-a-half times more Independents than opposition, why can we not get similar support that the opposition gets?

Mr GUNNER: The RTD has looked at this and made a recommendation around resourcing.

Mr WOOD: The RTD, when originally asked about this, said it is none of their business. I get very confused. I would like the Chief Minister to reconsider the process, that we at least be allowed some of our own research officers to work for us, not through a pool as presently provided. I think it is unfair because the opposition has 10 people working upstairs—am I correct? You have a lot of people working upstairs.

Mr GUNNER: You can formally ask that question. I do not know the answer, but DCM knows the answer to how many staff.

Mr WOOD: I remember the original, but you have the power because you are the ones that set the agenda for the Speaker to provide two people. I think that is under some discussion at the moment.

Mr GUNNER: Which was based on advice from the RTD.

Mr WOOD: And there is some discussion about who pays for that. But I think you have the power to set some sort of report for the Independents because we are a larger majority of people than the opposition, yet we are not treated that way.

Mr GUNNER: If you remember, this is now going back almost two years, when we received legal advice from the Solicitor-General about what constitutes and opposition, who is the opposition ...

Mr WOOD: We are Independent members of parliament and I think we—I am not saying I need excessive numbers of people working for me. I said I will live with half a research officer. But we do not have the flexibility that the opposition has, and we do not have the flexibility you have. We have to wait.

I am not saying anything against the good people who presently work in the research area—they do good work for me—but there is not the flexibility that we would have with a person working in my office—which I had previously under Labor and, sometimes, late in the CLP's time. I also had that flexibility. But we do not have it now.

Mr GUNNER: My decision was based on the advice from the RTD. I am happy to see if the RTD is prepared to give similar advice again, but it was based on advice from the RTD.

Mr WOOD: Unfortunately, the original advice from the RTD, when we asked this way back, was that it had nothing to do with it. That is why the Chief Minister at the time, Clare Martin, made the decisions to give us—Lorraine Braham and myself—a research officer. We were told by the RTD it had nothing to do with them at all.

I know what you are saying. Somehow that decision has been overturned and now it is their role to do that. The point is, we do not have the same flexibility as all other members of parliament in relation to the ability to get advice from within their own group, to put it that way.

Mr GUNNER: I am happy to seek that advice again from the RTD.

Mrs LAMBLEY: Following on from that, I have been advised that the assistance given to the Independents has been effectively halved. There were two research officer positions and that has been reduced to one.

Mr GUNNER: That is not my advice. We have maintained our funding to DLA, they may have made a decision separate to us, but we have maintained the funding for two positions.

Mrs LAMBLEY: You are saying that the decision was made by the Department of Legislative Assembly to reduce that?

Mr GUNNER: I can provide the advice on the amount of money that we have provided and that has not changed. We have not made that decision. I was not aware of that decision.

Mrs LAMBLEY: I have been a member of parliament for eight years and it has always been my understanding that the Chief Minister decides what support the opposition gets and the Independents. So you are changing that has changed.

Mr GUNNER: I made my decision based on the advice of the RTD. We are in a unique set of circumstances with five Independents. The Member for Nelson was referencing two Independents, himself and Lorraine.

We were in a position at the start of this term where there was doubt about who forms an opposition, what is an opposition. We received advice from a variety of sources, the Solicitor-General and the RTD about what we should do. I said I was happy to seek further advice from the RTD again.

Mrs LAMBLEY: I do not think the RTD advised you on how many people to employ to support us though, did it? It was a general advice over who would make the opposition ...

Mr GUNNER: It recommended two.

Mrs LAMBLEY: Given that our resources have been depleted by 50%, it seems, is that something you could take up on our behalf?

Mr GUNNER: Yes. Our funding commitments remain the same and I am happy to ask questions. We will follow up.

Mrs LAMBLEY: I would like to reiterate what the Member for Nelson has just said. It is almost impossible for us to function in our parliamentary duties with two research officers, now one. It really deteriorates the effectiveness to hold you to account as a government, given that we have no assistance at all, pretty much. Five people using one research officer.

Mr GUNNER: We provided additional money for resourcing to be managed through DLA. We will follow up on how that has happened. Our budget has not changed.

Mrs LAMBLEY: In terms of transparency and accountability, which is one of your platforms, you would be happy to ensure that we are provided that complement of resources that you provided us two years ago, minimum?

Mr GUNNER: The funding has not changed, we will follow up with Madam Speaker and the Clerk about what has happened.

Mrs LAMBLEY: But is there any possibility of an increase in resourcing as Member for Nelson...

Mr GUNNER: I've said I will seek advice from the RTD again.

Madam CHAIR: Are there any further questions for Output 8.1?

Mrs LAMBLEY: Those 12 community advisory positions you had this time last year. Well, it was not this time last year, you were asked about that in the scrutiny process for annual reports. They suddenly disappeared pretty much after that process. Was your decision to merge them into the ministerial offices as a result of that scrutiny that was placed on you during that annual reports process? Why did you make that decision then?

Mr GUNNER: We brought them in, when we first came into government and parallel—independent of the scrutiny committee process, looking at how they were working. I thought it worked better if those people were physically in a ministerial office and dedicated within a minister's office. So there was more line of sight, control and work practice.

Mrs LAMBLEY: From an outsider's perspective, it looked like you were hiding those positions, that you had been exposed and that you were then seeking to hide them within the ministerial offices.

Madam CHAIR: Are there any further questions?

That concludes consideration of Output 8.1.

Output 8.2—Support to the Administrator

Madam CHAIR: The committee will now proceed to Output 8.2, Support to the Administrator. Are there any questions?

That concludes consideration of Output 8.2.

Output 8.3 – Government Services

Madam CHAIR: The committee will now move to Output 8.3. Are there any questions?

That concludes consideration of Output 8.3 and Output Group 8.0.

OUTPUT GROUP 9.0 – CORPORATE AND GOVERNANCE

Output 9.1 – Corporate and Governance

Madam CHAIR: The committee will now move to Output Group 9.0, Output 9.1. Are there any questions?

Mr HIGGINS: I have a couple. What is the government doing to mark the 40th anniversary of self-government this year? Can you give us a quick outline on that?

Mr GUNNER: Most of that is being done through the Department of Tourism and Culture. It is best asked there.

Mr HIGGINS: I will ask those questions of them later on.

Subsequent to the questions we asked, the global questions, I have some follow-up ones. You may not have all of the answers to these. Why has the overall staffing increased from 190.3 FTEs at 30 June 2017 to 230.6 FTEs as at 31 March this year? That is an increase of roughly 40.

Mr GUNNER: Jodie Ryan will take you through that.

Ms RYAN: I have that. The larger part of that was the transferring of the Office of Parliamentary Counsel from the Department of the Attorney-General and Justice. That was 13 FTEs. We have put on eight graduates this year, which is a new program for the Department of the Chief Minister. Generally, there has only been one or two.

We have seven additional people in the regional network. Some of those were for local decision-making and some for the City Deal team. The Alcohol Review Implementation Team was an outcome of the Riley review; there are five people in that.

There are four additional people in our security and emergency response team. Those are being funded by a range of sources, Commonwealth through to the National Partnership Agreement on Natural Disaster Resilience. There was a transfer of position from Police. We have three additional people in Government House.

Mr HIGGINS: How many of those are executive contract officers?

Mr GUNNER: Not the graduates.

Mr HIGGINS: No, not the graduates. I think we can cross those eight off.

Ms RYAN: Four.

Mr HIGGINS: Okay. Why have we had an almost doubling of unattached from 11 to 24?

Ms RYAN: Eight of those are the graduates. They come in as graduate positions, complete their 12-month contract and then if they are successful, they will win a position in the department after that.

We had to set up the Alcohol Review Implementation Team immediately. They have been set up for a short period of time. We also had a Hydraulic Fracturing Taskforce, which is now the hydraulic fracturing implementation team. Those are different people, but it is a very short time frame. We are not against ongoing positions.

Mr HIGGINS: Nhulunbuy has had a decrease in the town population, but an increase in the regional staffing from five to seven. Can you explain that?

Mr GUNNER: Something worth celebrating here is that the Nhulunbuy population has actually gone back up. The population levels are slightly above curtailment. It is a success story and celebration of deals and what is happening. Population numbers are at or above curtailment.

Mr HIGGINS: Why do we increase the staff from five to seven then? It is still a valid question.

Ms RYAN: There is an additional staff member looking after Groote Eylandt particularly. We have transferred a regional development officer from Barkly to Nhulunbuy to help with the local decision-making and Aboriginal Affairs refresh.

Mr HIGGINS: Why is the staffing then reduced in Alice Springs from 15 to 9.75, and from five to three in Tennant Creek this financial year?

Ms RYAN: Is that from our answers?

Mr HIGGINS: Yes.

Ms RYAN: At a point in we might have had an extra resource in Tennant Creek. We have not taken any staff out of that office. How many did you say we have reduced in Alice Springs?

Mr HIGGINS: Alice Springs has gone from 15 to 9.75, so the dates of these are comparing 30 June to 31 March.

Ms RYAN: What question number was that sorry? I will just check.

Mr HIGGINS: What global question number?

Ms RYAN: I did not think we had reduced our Alice Springs office but our Office of Aboriginal Affairs in total is split between Alice Springs and Darwin.

Mr GUNNER: Can we take that on notice because it sounds like the detail does not correspond of the CEO's understanding of the situation.

Question on Notice No 3.3

Madam CHAIR: Member for Daly, could you please restate the question for the record?

Mr HIGGINS: Why has staffing reduced in Alice Springs from 15 to 9.75 FTE and Tennant Creek from five to three FTE this financial year, being the period referred to as the 30 June 2017 to 31 March 2018?

Madam CHAIR: Chief Minister, do you accept the question?

Mr GUNNER: We are happy to take that on notice. We cannot find any numbers that correspond to what you are asking. We will work it out.

Madam CHAIR: The question asked by the Member for Daly has been allocated the number 3.3.

Mr HIGGINS: It would have been to 31 March because of when we lodged the global questions. You demoted your representative in the Barkly region from an EO2 to an EO1 and that role now reports to Alice Springs instead of straight to head office. Given all the issues which have been going on in the region, will you now undertake to review that role with a view of making it a more senior position?

Mr GUNNER: I think there has been a degree of misunderstanding here. I met with the coord in Tennant Creek and made it very clear—by coord I mean all the public servants that get together in Tennant Creek to talk about the issues and make decisions—that it was my expectation that decisions get made in Tennant and I was very clear on that. I think there has been some misunderstandings about pay levels and at what pay level you can make decision. At ECO1 level—it is ECO1 not EO1—at ECO1 you can make decisions but I will ask Jodie Ryan to add further to that.

Ms RYAN: We did have that role as an ECO1, but we just recently—as part of the response to the Royal Commission—got funding for an ECO2 for the Barkly region which we are in the process of sorting through that recruitment now.

Mr HIGGINS: How many executive contract employees will not have their contracts renewed to achieve some of the public service cuts in your department?

Mr GUNNER: That would be a decision by the CEO within DCM. Issues come in and issues go out because it is a coordination agency rather than a line agency so we have seen some of the variations in our budget as a result of that—already significant variations based off that. I will pass to the CEO, but DCM itself feels the fluctuations of policy more than most.

Ms RYAN: That is correct but we are not targeting any particular number of executive contract officer reductions as a result of those savings measures. You are talking about the voluntary targeted redundancy?

Mr HIGGINS: Yes.

Ms RYAN: No particular executive contracts.

Mr HIGGINS: If you have an executive contract come up for renewal, surely that would be one position that you would definitely consider?

Ms RYAN: I do not think we would think about it at the time the contract is due for renewal. What might happen is if a role changes or responsibilities change we might think about doing something differently.

Mr HIGGINS: But is that not what we do with voluntary redundancies or when people retire? Surely that is then a saving, we do not replace that person.

Mr GUNNER: I understand what you are asking, I think it might be more relevant to other agencies. I think the distinction in DCM is that a lot of the DCM roles are actually time limited so you do not have to offer a targeted voluntary redundancy because the job you are working on ends, so that might trigger that decision in another agency. In DCM it is time limited to begin with because you know the hydraulic fracturing committee is going to end its work.

Mr HIGGINS: I notice you have two deputy chief executive officers sitting here. When their contracts come up for renewal, would you not evaluate whether you need—sorry to talk about you sitting there. Would you not evaluate that to ask if you need that ongoing?

Mr GUNNER: There are two quite distinct workloads here, if that makes sense, and the CEO can take you through what they are. I will not make Maria and Andy pitch for their jobs.

Mr HIGGINS: They might be sitting there thinking their tenure is temporary.

Ms RYAN: Rather than at a time when someone's contract is finishing, would be considering renewing it, it might be when someone leaves. Say you have someone that chooses to take another job, it might be at that point that you would ask, 'Do you still need this role?' If we were to substantially restructure DCM we might reconsider how many deputies we would need, but at the moment we need two and we made that

assessment early on in this term, particularly with picking up the regional network and the Office of Aboriginal Affairs.

At every point, we are constantly looking at what we need—do we have the resources to do the job we need to do, and is there a better way of doing it? It is just part of the appropriate resource allocation.

Mr HIGGINS: Okay. With grants—and I asked this question in parliament and I would like to get some more clarity around it. What is the purpose of the grant of \$250 000 that was paid to the NT Trades and Labour Council? Surely, they applied for a grant on a grant application. Will you table that application that outlines clearly what that grant was for?

Mr GUNNER: This was an election commitment. I said in parliament we have, obviously, two completely different philosophies as parties. Every time the CLP came in, they cut the funding to unions. In my opinion, they do not respect workers. Every time we come into government, we restore the funding that the CLP cut.

There are four funding agreements we have put in place that go to Unions NT, Australia Day Council, NT Council of Social Service and the Volunteering SA and NT over five years. Within Union NT that funding goes to protecting and furthering workplace rights and safety, advocating with policymakers to ensure future skills needs are met. Essentially, it employs people within Unions NT to do that kind of policy work, which is similar to what we do with NTCOSS and others.

We value that policy work. I understand that you do not, as a completely different ...

Mr HIGGINS: I did not say I did not value it.

Mr GUNNER: Sorry—the CLP historically have not. I welcome the day a CLP government is elected and does not cut the funding to Unions NT. It seems to be an immediate thing that CLP governments do when they come in, and then Labor governments restore it.

Mr HIGGINS: Will we be able to get a copy of the agreement that outlines that funding? Surely, at the end of any time, like all grants and funding agreements, there is a measure of how that has worked and accountability. That is usually pre-empted with an agreement. Could we get a copy of it?

Mr GUNNER: I am happy to take that on notice.

Question on Notice No 3.4

Madam CHAIR: Member for Daly, could you please restate the question for the record.

Mr HIGGINS: Will the Chief Minister please table the agreement between the government and Unions NT in regard to the \$250 000 grant over five years?

Madam CHAIR: Chief Minister, do you accept the question?

Mr GUNNER: Yes.

Madam CHAIR: The question asked by the Member for Daly of the Chief Minister has been allocated the number 3.4.

Mr HIGGINS: One of the Labor election commitments was to reduce the cost associated with the production and placement of advertising across government. How do you then account for such a substantial increase in print, TV and radio advertising costs of \$81 000 for the period September 2016 to 31 March 2017 to a whopping \$347 000 for the first nine months of this current year?

Mr GUNNER: We have significantly reduced communications. I am not sure of the exact amount you are referring to, but I know overall what we have spent as an agency has dramatically reduced. Do we have that figure?

Mr HIGGINS: Maybe if I put that one on notice, I will simplify it.

Mr GUNNER: I am very happy to oblige. We have significantly reduced the amount of money that is spent on comms. It pales in comparison to the budget we inherited. That was a massive area of cuts.

Mr HIGGINS: This is print, TV and radio advertising.

Mr GUNNER: We will take that on notice.

Question on Notice No 3.5

Madam CHAIR: Member for Daly, could you please restate the question for the record.

Mr HIGGINS: How do you account for the increase in print, TV and radio advertising costs from \$81 117 for the period 1 September 2016 to 31 March 2017 to \$347 366 for the same period this current financial year?

Madam CHAIR: Chief Minister, do you accept the question?

Mr GUNNER: Yes.

Madam CHAIR: The Member for Daly's question to the Chief Minister has been allocated the number 3.5.

Mr HIGGINS: Can you explain why we used an interstate firm and paid \$122 887 to develop our early childhood development plan?

Mr GUNNER: DCM might be able to answer that. That falls under the Minister for Children.

Ms RYAN: We went through a tender process for that well over a year ago. That company won the tender, using the Buy Local rules as well in the scoring process.

Mr HIGGINS: So there was no one locally that could have undertaken that?

Ms RYAN: I was not involved in the actual procurement but I know we went through a tender process.

Mr HIGGINS: Why were two interstate companies, Megan Dyson and Risk Edge Pty Ltd paid \$98 506 and \$33 477 respectively to review the water extraction licences?

Ms RYAN: Again, we went through a process of trying to find a lawyer, water scientist and an auditor. We went through a process and those are the two we were able to procure. That was an extended process. We could not get anyone else here.

Mr GUNNER: That stemmed from the fact that we could not get an expert in the area to be a permanent formal member of the panel. As a result, the people on the panel said, 'We need this work done,' and had to go out and contract it. It was a very protracted process trying to get that level of research and detail available for the committee to consider.

Mr HIGGINS: Was there any case to answer out of that report or anything found to be untoward?

Mr GUNNER: Water policy and implementation of it sits essentially within DENR. We have released that report publicly—a whole list of recommendations and things that we need to work on. There were a number of critical areas identified within that, but the minister for water will be able to talk in more detail on it.

Mr HIGGINS: Your estimated expenditure on corporate and governance is \$6.9m and shared services you receive as \$4.8m. So how much was your ICT expenditure, and how much is allocated in 2018–19?

Mr GUNNER: We will take that on notice.

Mr HIGGINS: I might add the other ones in that they probably will not have the answer for either, with the fly-in fly-out, so I will do that all in one.

Question on Notice No 3.6

Madam CHAIR: Member for Daly, please restate the question for the record.

Mr HIGGINS: How much was your ICT expenditure, and how much is allocated in the 2018–19 budget?

The second part is, do any of the contractors engaged to provide ICT services use fly-in fly-out employees to work in your agency? How many fly-in fly-out people are employed by contractors to work in your agency?

Ms RYAN: So the second one was ICT contractors specifically? We do not have the ICT contractors in the department.

Mr HIGGINS: This is contractors engaged to provide it.

Ms RYAN: We have an IT unit within DCM. We do not have contractors.

Madam CHAIR: Chief Minister, do you accept the question?

Mr GUNNER: Yes.

Madam CHAIR: The question asked of the Chief Minister from the Member for Daly is allocated the number 3.6.

Mr HIGGINS: Okay, so just the first part of that question. The last question—do you have any bullying claims?

Ms RYAN: I will have to take that on notice as well.

Question on Notice No 3.7

Madam CHAIR: Member for Daly, please restate the question for the record.

Mr HIGGINS: How many claims of bullying were lodged by employees of the agency during 2017–18?

Madam CHAIR: Chief Minister, do you accept the question?

Mr GUNNER: Yes. None that we are aware of, but we will check for the Leader of the Opposition.

Madam CHAIR: The question asked of the Chief Minister from the Member for Daly is allocated the number 3.7.

Madam CHAIR: Any further questions for Output 9.1? Thank you. That concludes the consideration of Output 9.1.

Output 9.2 – Shared Services Received

Madam CHAIR: I will now call for questions relating to Output 9.2, Shared Services Received. Are there any questions?

That concludes consideration of Output 9.2.

Output 9.3 – Shared Services Provided

Madam CHAIR: The committee will now consider Output 9.3, Shared Services Provided. Are there any questions? That concludes consideration of Output 9.3 and Output Group 9.0.

I note that while the Administrative Arrangements Order puts responsibility for the Department of the Legislative Assembly with the Chief Minister, by convention the Speaker administers the department. Consequently, the questions relating to the Output Groups 10.0 and 11.0 were answered by Madam Speaker yesterday.

Non-Output Specific Budget-Related Questions

Madam CHAIR: Are there any non-output specific budget-related questions for the Chief Minister?

This concludes consideration of all outputs relating to the Department of the Chief Minister.

Chief Minister, on behalf of the committee, we would like to thank you and the departmental staff attending today.

Mr GUNNER: Thank you. I thank the CEO and the two Deputy CEOs who have appeared. Despite the efforts of the Leader of the Opposition, they will be keeping their employment. I also want to thank the whole team behind them who have not appeared at the table, but there is a significant amount of work that happens in the department to allow us all to appear today. I want to thank them for the work they have done to brief us and prepare us so we could best cooperate with the committee. Thank you.

Madam CHAIR: Thank you, Chief Minister. The committee will now move on to consider the Northern Territory Police, Fire and Emergency Services. The committee will take a 10-minute short recess and recommence at 1.55 pm. Thank you.

The committee suspended.

NORTHERN TERRITORY POLICE, FIRE AND EMERGENCY SERVICES

Madam CHAIR: Chief Minister, I welcome you, as the Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Services, and invite you to introduce the officials accompanying you today.

Mr GUNNER: Thank you, Madam Chair. To my left is Police Commissioner and Chief Executive Officer, Reece Kershaw APM. To my right is Michael Willis, Executive Director Operational Support Directorate within NT Police, Fire and Emergency Services. We have a team of people behind us who may appear as necessary as we go through the outputs.

Madam CHAIR: Chief Minister, do you wish to make an opening statement regarding Police, Fire and Emergency Services?

Mr GUNNER: I will make a brief opening statement, reflecting on the work of NT Police, Fire and Emergency Services. I believe they are making real inroads in key areas, much of this being achieved through active policing strategies such as Operation Haven in Katherine, Tennant Creek and Katherine. We have police led by evidence and intelligence.

There is often a focus on negative crime stats, but I think it is worth celebrating a number of things police have achieved because this has a real impact on reducing victims.

In the 12 months ending March 2018 police recorded positive outcomes including sexual assault charges being down by 5%; total property offences down by 4%; house break-ins down by 8%, motor vehicle theft and related offences down by 20%—that has a lot to do with changing police practices; and theft and related offences other than motor vehicle down by 4%.

There is always too much crime. Even one crime is too many. We want to keep working on reducing that. I acknowledge the hard work of many police and note that they are making gains in certain areas, and they make decisions based on the evidence in front of them.

Crime trends like these are important because they guide police strategies. As a government we want to give police the capacity and flexibility to develop new strategies and initiate new operations. That comes through proper resourcing.

We have a fully funded four-year program to increase police numbers by 120 to 1494. As of 21 March we have 1477, so half way through our term we are rapidly approaching the target we set for police. I thank the commissioner for the work being done on that recruitment and tackling attrition.

This year, as part of our recruitment program, two constable recruit squads have graduated, including an accelerated recruit squad in Alice Springs. There have also been graduations by an Aboriginal community police squad and an auxiliary police squad.

Our investment is not restricted to NT Police. This month NT Fire and Rescue Service will see its biggest graduation of firefighter recruits. Twenty-four members of squad 43 will graduate as firefighters on 28 June. This follows the 12 recruit firefighters who graduated in December last year.

In December the fire service accepted delivery of the \$1.6m hydraulic ladder platform Bronto appliance. A number of people are excited about that. The NT Emergency Services continues to monitor the implementation of the Territory Emergency Management Council's Strategic Plan 2016–2019, which is aligned to the principles of the National Strategy for Disaster Resilience. We saw many of those people working recently through Cyclone Marcus.

NTSES continues to ensure staff and volunteers are properly supported and trained to be able to meet community expectations on service delivery, and to enable the continued growth of the agency.

Before taking questions I want to recap on some of the key initiatives the government has helped deliver over the past year to deliver on our promise to increase police by 120.

We announced the new 97-member alcohol unit within Police—the new alcohol police support unit will have 75 police auxiliary liquor inspectors, 12 police officers specifically targeting secondary supply, operational staff and three prosecutors. The first 20 of the 75 police auxiliary liquor inspectors have begun training. The commissioner swore them in the other day in Alice Springs. They are due to graduate in Alice Springs at the end of August.

Work has begun on the new \$30m Palmerston police station. The contract for the new station was awarded to Sitzler on 6 April—an election commitment—and we will see the new station operational from around the middle of next year.

In Budget 2018 we have provided for the redevelopment of John Stokes Square in Nightcliff. Plans are for the redevelopment of a new 24-hour police station within that housing precinct. We are doing that in partnership with Housing.

CCTV is a key tool for police. We are continuing to grow our closed circuit network. By the end of this month new fixed CCTV cameras are due to be operating in Nightcliff, Bakewell and Tennant Creek. There is also \$2.5m in 2018–19 for a further 10 mobile CCTV units.

Work continues on the \$45m replacement to the core police ICT system, PROMIS, to the new SerPro—I am not sure that name has taken off yet. In my conversations with officers, PROMIS remains one of the most frustrating things they work with. They are very welcoming of the fact that a government has finally committed to replacing the program.

There is also \$7m into the new Katherine fire station, which is fantastic. That was a variation on the infrastructure commitment based on feedback from police and fire in Katherine how we are going to deliver that, which is fantastic and I thank police and fire in Katherine for the work to do that.

We are now happy to take questions from the committee, Madam Chair.

Madam CHAIR: Thank you, Chief Minister. I would like to welcome the shadow minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Services, the Member for Spillett. Are there any questions on the statement?

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I would like to thank the Chief Minister, the Commissioner and the police for all the hard work that they have done in preparation for today's estimates hearing. We know a lot of work goes in to this and we are incredibly grateful for your time and diligence. So thank you very much right from the outset.

I am happy to go output by output, Madam Chair, so I am in your hands.

Madam CHAIR: Any questions on the statement? The committee will now proceed to consider the estimates of proposed expenditure contained in the Appropriation Bill 2018–19 as they relate to the NT Police, Fire and Emergency Services.

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

Madam CHAIR: Are there any agency-related whole-of-government questions on budget and fiscal strategy?

I have one which relates to government employee housing, Aboriginal police liaisons and ACPOs. I was just wondering if there was anything in terms of a whole-of-agency approach to that, Commissioner.

Mr GUNNER: We will obviously do that in consultation with housing but I will let the Commissioner take that.

Commissioner KERSHAW: Thank you. I think Aboriginal liaison officers do not have an entitlement to police housing at this stage, but our Aboriginal Community Police Officers do.

Madam CHAIR: Is there any plan to work with Department of Housing and Community Development in pushing for liaisons to be eligible for government employee housing?

Commissioner KERSHAW: Yes, we are looking at some of that and it is a case-by-case example for us but also some of those officers actually have housing already in the community. They come from other family units that have those houses. However, it is something that we are looking at if it is a concern to that particular liaison officer.

Madam CHAIR: Thank you. Are there any questions in relation to agency whole-of-government approach?

That concludes the consideration of agency-related whole-of-government questions on budget and fiscal strategy.

OUTPUT GROUP 12.0 – COMMUNITY SAFETY AND CRIME PREVENTION

Output 12.1 – Community Safety and Crime Prevention

Madam CHAIR: We will now move on to consider Output Group 12.0, Community Safety and Crime Prevention, Output 12.1, Community Safety and Crime Prevention.

I note that while the Minister for Territory Families has overall responsibility of youth justice under the *Youth Justice Act* the Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Services is responsible for Part 3 of the act relating to youth diversion.

Are there any questions?

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Chief Minister, as an opposition we absolutely understand that the POSI of police personnel is an operational matter for police; however, when the presence of a police member in a community becomes such a problem that traditional owners are writing letters condemning the behaviour of certain police officers in the community that should be something of concern to you as the Police minister.

As an opposition we have heard complaints about the officer in charge at the Wadeye police station and we understand that a firearm was discharged in order to disperse a crowd.

Why has the officer in charge been allowed to keep his position despite a letter of 11 May 2018 from traditional owner, Boniface Perdjert, on behalf of the Kardu Diminin Corporation, formally notifying the government of the sergeant's lack of care about the lives of Aboriginal people, failure to work well with Aboriginal people, rough treatment of Aboriginal people and failure to work with traditional owners and the inability to listen or to understand the community in which he works?

How has that been allowed to take place and will this individual be removed from that position at the Wadeye police station?

Mr GUNNER: Thank you for the question. I know Boniface quite well. I visited Wadeye to discuss it directly with him and sat in his front yard there with him and immediate members of his family talk about the letter and their concerns and I met later that day with the Kardu Diminin Corporation as well.

As I explained to Boniface there is a process, in this case the PAA, and his letter was a powerful trigger for those process. How it then gets handled from that point is with the commissioner—I will pass to the commissioner in a moment. I thought, having received that letter, the most respectful thing for me to do would be to meet with him in the community directly, which I did, and then later on with the Kardu Alliance.

Police now have a formal process that they need to go through in terms of investigating the issue. The commissioner can talk to the work that has happened to date, or is happening, but we also have to allow—the PAA allows for natural justice both ways.

Commissioner KERSHAW: Thank you, Chief Minister. We take all complaints from our community, especially elders of remote communities, and we take them seriously. We have a very robust process which allows us to investigate these matters in a methodical, objective way to corroborate, substantiate or not substantiate the allegations that are made. That officer is afforded natural justice and procedural fairness and it can take a bit of time, but there are reasons for that. I can assure you that we have taken the matter seriously and it is still an ongoing issue for us.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: So is there a time line for that process?

Commissioner KERSHAW: We try to work them as expeditiously as we can, and it is often on availability of other community members and other witnesses and people to corroborate some of these things. We do take it seriously, but it has to be done properly and it also has to withstand the scrutiny of any appeals tribunal or any decision that has been made affecting a police officer either being forcibly removed from that community or not.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: In a situation like this, does an officer remain with their standard duties or are things changed until that process is completed?

Commissioner KERSHAW: My information at this stage is that the officer is staying put until that process is complete.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Thank you, Commissioner. Chief Minister, how many members of the police force have separated either through retirement, resignation or termination in the period of time between 1 September 2017 and 31 March 2018?

Mr GUNNER: Mick will take this.

Mr WILLIS: The numbers are relatively low, which is good in the sense of attrition rate. I will go on the year to date, if that is okay. For 2017–18, year to date, which is 31 March, total separations for constables and above was 28, or 1.5%, so it is fairly low. I can say that in previous years it has been between 4% and 6%, so our attrition rate is considerably lower than what it has been traditionally.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: So you do not have the breakdown of whether that is resignation, retirement or termination?

Mr WILLIS: I do not have that here.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Are you able to take that on notice Chief Minister?

Question on Notice No 3.8

Madam CHAIR: Member for Spillett, can you please repeat the question for the record.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: How many members of the police force have separated either through retirement, resignation or termination in the period of time between 1 September 2017 and 31 March 2018?

Madam CHAIR: Chief Minister, do you accept the question?

Mr GUNNER: Yes, thank you.

Madam CHAIR: The question from the Member for Spillett has been allocated number 3.8.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Chief Minister, how many police recruits have graduated training since 1 September 2017? At which rank, and when I say rank I mean constable, auxiliary, Aboriginal community police officers.

Mr GUNNER: Graduating as constables: Squad 131 in November 2017, 29; Squad 132 in May 2018, 28; there is a current squad going through training now which is due for graduation October this year, 30, so they are currently in training; and we have had an accelerated recruit squad graduate in April this year of 33, constables as well.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: So four constable squads by October?

Mr GUNNER: So two constable squads have graduated, an accelerated squad has graduated and a constable squad is currently in the process of training, and will graduate in October this year.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Okay, so no auxiliaries or?

Mr GUNNER: Apologies. An Aboriginal community police recruit squad of 12 graduated in April this year. Nineteen auxiliaries graduated in August last year, 13 in January this year, nine in June this year and there are currently 20 in training.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Chief Minister, how many police officers per rank were there at 1 September 2017 and at 1 June 2018?

Mr GUNNER: We will take this on notice. I have March last year to March this year. You asked for September last year to March this year.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: To June.

Mr GUNNER: We can give you to 31 March, June we can give you later. We might need to take that on notice, because we have the information different to what you asked for. Do you want the information as at 31 March this year?

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Yes, that would be good for now.

Mr GUNNER: As at 31 March this year there were 22 police executive, 1194.61 police constables and above, 55 police recruits, 133 police auxiliaries and 72 Aboriginal Community Police Officers. That gives you 1477 and there is a head count of 1518.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: What is the difference between the 1518 and 1477?

Mr GUNNER: One is full-time equivalent and one is head count.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Madam Chair, if we can take my question on notice.

Question on Notice No 3.9

Madam CHAIR: Member for Spillett, can you please repeat the question for the record.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: How many police officers, per rank, were there at 1 September 2017 and at 1 June 2018?

Madam CHAIR: Chief Minister, do you accept the question?

Mr GUNNER: Yes. I will get some clarification around when we can provide the June numbers.

Madam CHAIR: The question from the Member for Spillett has been allocated the number 3.9.

Mr GUNNER: Member for Spillett, I do not have it broken down, but I can advise the June FTE payslip number is currently 1485, as of pay day tomorrow. But we will do a proper breakdown.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: What is the total funding for the 75 auxiliaries that have been designated by the government to take on these licensing inspector roles in Alice Springs, Tennant Creek and Katherine?

Mr GUNNER: We have approved funding for 2018–19 of \$11.82m, and for 2019–20 ongoing \$12.82m.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: What is the total salary package for the auxiliary liquor inspectors and how does that compare to other auxiliaries?

Mr GUNNER: There is a pay scale for police auxiliary liquor inspectors, and there are negotiations between the Police Commissioner and the association about whether an additional allowance is required for the liquor inspectors. Essentially, we have 20 currently in training knowing what the police auxiliary is paid and then there is the potential for an additional allowance that is being negotiated between the commissioner and the Police Association, which will come from within. It is a negotiation so I should not talk further about that.

Commissioner KERSHAW: It is the standard auxiliary package and we can get you that exact figure.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: With an opportunity for additional?

Mr GUNNER: There is essentially a negotiation around whether there should or should not be an additional allowance paid—static allowance, for want of a better word.

Mr WOOD: Following on about police auxiliaries—and you know I have a different opinion of my view of the Riley report. I do not believe you have followed the Riley report. You have passed legislation which allows police auxiliaries to be licence inspectors, will they be part of the 120 extra police?

Mr GUNNER: No, they are additional. They are not police.

Mr WOOD: So, why should those who are doing a licensing inspector job be paid for out of the police budget and not out of either the industry or some other budget?

Mr GUNNER: There are a couple of things to this. First of all, licensing inspectors—only a portion of their job involves liquor, which is something that Riley formed an opinion on when doing the Riley review. We therefore wrote our legislation around having liquor inspectors. The question then is where they sit and who tasks them. Police have some degree of power already and we wanted to strengthen that and make sure police have the capacity to roster and target breaches, essentially. The Police Commissioner can talk to that.

That is a policy distinction. We have, obviously, transport security officers and Public Housing Safety Officers, which went to some of your points. This one sits neatly with police. There is a ...

Mr WOOD: My concern is that Riley did not say they should be police ...

Mr GUNNER: They are not police.

Mr WOOD: He said, 'This will reduce the pressure on police'.

Mr GUNNER: Yes.

Mr WOOD: That in plain English means they will not be police. But they are now police.

Mr GUNNER: No. They are police auxiliaries, not police.

Mr WOOD: But I just asked will they be part of the 120 extra and you said they would be.

Mr GUNNER: No, they are not. They would not be. No, they are not part of the 120 They are additional to the 120.

Mr WOOD: Regardless, they are still police.

Mr GUNNER: They are police auxiliaries taking pressure off police. In my understanding of this, at the moment we have fully trained police officers standing out the front of bottle shops—and the commissioner has made that point—often of sergeant, senior sergeant status, detectives and others, taken away from ordinary general duties or their other tasks to do that. Taking pressure off police is having a liquor inspector stand at the front of bottle shops.

No one knows the rostering that is required to be done for the front of bottle shops better than police. No one knows the other secondary supply issues that need to be tasked or targeted, or on-premises issues, better than police. They are the ones who have all the experience in doing this work and managing this issue. That is why we wanted police to be in charge of that. They are the best placed to take the pressure off current serving police who are doing these roles.

I ask the commissioner to expand on this, because it concerns me that over a significant period of time we have had sergeants, senior sergeants, detectives and others doing this work.

Commissioner KERSHAW: The mandate there is around policing bottle shops in both Tennant Creek, Alice Springs and Katherine, broken down to a target of 42 in Alice Springs, 11 in Tennant Creek and 22 in Katherine. They are going through their course now, specially trained in being able to enforce the *Liquor Act*, and the duties of an auxiliary. We are looking forward to them coming online because it frees up some of our senior police who have been standing outside bottle shops over the last five years now.

We also have a support team that will support those auxiliaries, as well as 10 mobile CCTVs for us to police those environments and hot spots.

Mr WOOD: You said there would be 11 POSIs in Tennant Creek. My understanding, from my independent scrutiny committee trip that went down that way, is that there are three main bottle shops and the Memo Club, which is probably not the problem area you are looking at. You will have 11 auxiliaries for three bottle shops that are open from 4 pm. I think they will close at 7 pm. Do you think that is a good use of resources?

Commissioner KERSHAW: Yes, I do. It is based on covering leave entitlements all the days of the week. The Liquor Commission has just handed down—I have not had time to digest it—the new restrictions in Tennant Creek. We have to align that with those officers.

Mr WOOD: But you could nearly walk between the three bottle shops. They are not far apart.

Mr GUNNER: The question you ask goes to what current police are doing in Tennant Creek and have done for a number of years now.

Mr WOOD: That is right. But the issues I have is it will cost a lot of money.

Mr GUNNER: Less than it is currently costing.

Mr WOOD: You will have to find accommodation for 11 police auxiliaries, and find work for them because they will not just work, I presume, from 4 pm to 7 pm. They will be standing on top of one another. What work will they do outside of being liquor or licensing inspectors?

Commissioner KERSHAW: As auxiliaries, there are multiple tasks we can look at. We have auxiliaries in the watch house, at the front counter answer phones, helping out with administrative duties and supporting police officers.

Mr GUNNER: So this goes to one of the reasons police auxiliaries are a good method of delivery—police auxiliaries have jobs and roles outside of the new liquor inspector model. It allows us the flexibility and transition within police.

My great desire with implementation of the Riley review—the full implementation of it is that over a period of three, four, five years or however long it takes to start seeing significant improvements in alcohol issues in the Northern Territory. Then what do you do with those liquor inspectors? If you reduce the numbers, police auxiliaries give you a great capacity to absorb back into other roles within the police force.

Mr WOOD: My concern is that they are doing a job to protect people in the community from people who misuse alcohol. But they are doing it, to some extent, on behalf of the liquor industry. So why is there not some contribution from the liquor industry? I am not saying individual takeaway; that would be too hard on them. Why is there not some contribution to this program? I think people would at least see that this is not just us funding it, that the industry is taking some responsibility.

Mr GUNNER: That is a separate question that the Attorney-General can answer in more detail, but we are going to a risk-based licensing system. At the moment you essentially pay a one-off fee of \$200 to have a liquor licence and no ongoing annual fee. That will change as a result of the Riley recommendations. There

will be risk-based licensing. Depending on your licence, the circumstances you have and what you do with it, whether it is on-premises or off-premises, there is a formula that has been worked out.

While it is not directly linked to police auxiliary liquor inspectors, and we have been quite clear that we are not doing this as a tax basis—this is not a revenue raiser—there will be ...

Mr WOOD: It is a revenue spend at \$11.3m.

Mr GUNNER: ... ongoing annual expense there. Police have been absorbing that cost within their agency. They were never funded to do this role and we were massively distorting police rosters and ongoing operational duties. This is a reflection of what police have been forced to wear for a number of years, but has now been properly costed and tasked out to others within Police so they can manage and roster and plan for it.

What has been missing in this space is any sense of a transition plan. What do you do? From experience, you cannot cold crash from police doing this to not doing this. How do you actually manage this process? This puts in place, based off the Riley review—I know you have a difference of opinion and interpretation of it—a plan where police can manage this through the police auxiliary liquor inspectors, and we have a capacity to manage out over a period of three, four, five, six years or however long it takes to get on top of abuse of alcohol issues in the Northern Territory.

This is now a proper, developed, considered policy response based on that Riley review in a space where there has not really been any fully formed policies. Police are doing what I think is a positive thing but at a significant internal cost and distortion of their roster.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Chief Minister, you say that this is a proper policy and now it has been fully costed, but I mean how can you say that with a straight face? It is astounding that you do not know how much they are going to cost you because the negotiations have not yet been completed on what types of ...

Mr GUNNER: We are just talking about a static allowance. Their salary is their salary. It is just a small question about an allowance.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: How can you be confident that \$11.82m is going to cover it if you do not know what allowance they will get? Like, what type of allowance might we be talking about? Is it housing allowance?

Mr GUNNER: No, we went through that before—the conversation about whether there should be a static allowance or not. There is nothing substantive.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: So a single different allowance on top of a standard auxiliary pay?

Mr GUNNER: Their salary on appointment will be \$53 665 per annum, based on an accrual of 280 hours of annual recreation leave. On completion of training and commencement of duties they will also receive an additional 20% consolidated allowance and a 5% general policing allowance. So that is the standard package, and it is just separate conversation about whether there is a static allowance or not. That will just be resolved from within.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: So you are not concerned that that is going to eat into Police's operational budget? It is additional to what you have budgeted for the auxiliaries.

Mr GUNNER: No. It is a minor issue.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: How many weeks of training in total will the new auxiliary inspectors undergo?

Commissioner KERSHAW: Twelve weeks, but there might be a few extra days in there though so it could take longer. It also depends on everyone passing each component and some people may have to go back. Overall it should be about 12 weeks.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: And is that usual, Commissioner, that you would not necessarily know how long a training program goes for?

Commissioner KERSHAW: No this is the first time we have done this, so we have to be a bit flexible here with our training college. That is what they have indicated, but they often reserve the right, our college, to

either extend it or shorten it but it is around 12 weeks. We have a locked-in graduation date so that is around the 12-week mark.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Chief Minister, what equipment will these auxiliary liquor inspectors be outfitted with? We have heard a lot of different versions from your government about whether or not they will be carrying Glocks, as you previously suggested. Will they have tasers? Will have they have bulletproof vests? What exactly will these auxiliaries be provided with?

Mr GUNNER: My answers on this have always been consistent. That is a decision for the Police Commissioner. The Police Commissioner has the ability to make a variety of decisions within that which go to whether they carry or not carry, or what they wear, but it has always been a decision of the Police Commissioner.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Chief Minister, would this not have to be sorted out when you came up with the budget? Obviously guns are more expensive, tasers are more expensive, bulletproof vests are expensive. How can you come up with a figure of \$11.82m without knowing what they will have?

Mr GUNNER: There is an ongoing police budget which these things are absorbed out of.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: So they would just have to come out of the police budget?

Mr GUNNER: Which is what happens year on year, so it is not anything extraordinary.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: It is extraordinary in the sense that you are putting 75 new auxiliaries in a brand new role with a brand-new task and training, and you are not sure—are you saying you are still not sure what these auxiliaries will be outfitted with and whether or not the \$11m is adequate to cover it?

Mr GUNNER: No. What I am saying is that is the decision of the Police Commissioner, and it always has been the decision of the Police Commissioner. There are a number of things that the Police Commissioner can decide on.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: But you are confident that the \$11m covers everything and if it does not, too bad, it can come out of the police budget?

Mr GUNNER: Not too bad. That is actually how budgets work. It is just a sensible allocation of resources.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: It is your policy, so I thought you would have a clear understanding of what that policy will actually look like in practice and how much it will cost.

Mr GUNNER: Yes, we do.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Well then, commissioner, do you know what equipment the auxiliaries will be outfitted with on graduation?

Commissioner KERSHAW: Yes, at this stage they will be equipped with Glocks. I have been on record on that, and also with tasers and the usual accoutrements of a police officer. They will be trained by sworn police officers in the use of that. We are very satisfied with the training that will be deployed in relation to the use of our accoutrements and our operational safety training requirements.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: How long is a normal—say if you were an existing auxiliary, how long would your training program have gone for?

Commissioner KERSHAW: It depends on the role sometimes. Call takers can be up to four or six weeks, watch house could be around the six-week mark as well, so this is the longest auxiliary course, that I know of, that we have ever run.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: And that is to take into account specialised training for these utilities that they might not ordinarily have?

Commissioner KERSHAW: Yes, and the extra knowledge around the *Liquor Act* and their powers.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: How long is a constable training course?

Commissioner KERSHAW: It is around 32 weeks.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Thank you, commissioner. Chief Minister, when will the new auxiliary police commence their roles at takeaway alcohol outlets and how many shifts per week will they be doing?

Mr GUNNER: Commencement is in August, post-graduation. Obviously rostering is done by police, but there is significant experience by police of the current requirements for takeaway alcohol stores.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Is it envisaged that the auxiliaries will be on their own? Will it be one auxiliary, one shift, one bottle shop?

Mr GUNNER: That is an operational decision for the commissioner.

Commissioner KERSHAW: My advice from the team down there—and they are very experienced police officers who have pooled together their rosters. The plan for the safety first rule for our officers, which we are always focused on, is that they will not be left alone initially. They will have sworn police officers for their initial—like a buddy-type system which we use for a period of time until they are assessed to be competent and confident to be one-up should it be. That will be supported by CCTV and a mobile response van with a minimum response time.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Chief Minister, can you foresee any community issues in relation to people understanding when to call for help from a police auxiliary, as opposed to when you might ring or approach a constable if you saw one in the street. Obviously, safety first. We agree with that—safety to the officer and safety to the community.

Is it foreseeable that a situation will come up where a police auxiliary, who is trained as an auxiliary with some specialised training, could be put in a position where they may need to undertake the role of a full constable by virtue of the fact they are on the front line?

Mr GUNNER: No. We have police auxiliaries now, as well as Aboriginal liaison officers and other roles, so we do not see that as an issue. I am sure the commissioner can add further.

Commissioner KERSHAW: Part of their training will be in the use of force. They will be trained in our defensive tactics, as a police officer is. We are confident enough with the system in place that we can adhere to that 'safety first' principle. However, every officer who wears this uniform, auxiliary or not, may be called upon off duty. That is a decision for that officer at the time. They have to do a risk assessment, weigh it all up, call for backup if they are by themselves—there is a range of procedures they will be trained in, such as how to engage and disengage.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: It is foreseeable if something else is happening in the park across the road or you have had a car accident—'Fantastic, there is a police officer!' Will the auxiliary have to say, 'You had better ring 131 444'.

Commissioner KERSHAW: An auxiliary police officer takes the same oath, as do our Aboriginal community police officer, and we have to abide by that oath about keeping the peace—Her Majesty's peace—and acting without fear, favour or ill-will towards others. We take that oath seriously and they will be trained in that as well.

Mr GUNNER: I was in Barunga recently, and I met there with ACPOs and Aboriginal liaison officers. To the naked eye you could not tell the difference between their uniforms. These are things police deal with regularly as issues.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: They will be so prominent. As we said, safety to the officer and safety to the community. There is no question our police are extremely professional operators no matter at what level they come in to the force. I have no doubt about that. It is about the sophistication of the training they ought to be provided given the role they are being put into, ensuring that training is adequate and appropriately supported, and that the risk assessments around the role have been conducted.

Following on from the Member for Nelson's example, if it were a licensing inspector in the civilian sense of the word, you would almost never have a situation where someone would run up to them asking for help, because they are not wearing such an iconic symbolic uniform, presenting that safety message.

My last question on auxiliaries—will other ranks of the police force continue to work at takeaway alcohol outlets in a temporary beat location capacity as well as these auxiliaries? The commissioner mentioned the buddy system, but is that a phase-out?

Mr GUNNER: That is my understanding. Police continue to make operational decisions—that led to TBLs in the first place.

Say there is a football weekend, or carnival in Alice Springs—they may choose to go in addition to or instead of auxiliary liquor inspectors. Those would be operational decisions that police make, I assume, from time to time, just as they do now.

I will let the commissioner answer, but I think there would be a transition out.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Following on from that, does that mean that the 75 auxiliaries, when they are in full force, can be pulled off bottle shops to undertake other duties.

Mr GUNNER: You asked if police would ever do this role again. I was trying to give an example where police may make that decision.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Could it go the other way?

Commissioner KERSHAW: What needs to be explained is that if we were short of auxiliaries, you would have sworn police undertake that role. That is something we will be looking at. That is how we work out our resources anyway, based on every day and every roster.

Mr GUNNER: Going to the other part of your question about police auxiliaries doing other roles besides standing outside a bottle shop, the commissioner touched upon that earlier in response to the Tennant Creek example where police auxiliaries have roles in the watch house, communications or other things, where they may be able to be rostered, depending on the circumstances.

We had that in mind in making the decision. Hopefully, those decisions were based on the fact that the abuse of alcohol drops off or significantly reduces, therefore, police have the flexibility of tasking in other ways.

Mr WOOD: I hear that the police auxiliaries are taking on other tasks they normally would not have—that is, looking after bottle shops, wearing a gun, et cetera. Are there discussions with the union about a change in their salary because of extra duties?

Mr GUNNER: The Police Association was part of the working group around this. The negotiations the Police Commissioner touched upon before is about whether there should be a static allowance or not. But the actual salary is the salary that is accorded to a police auxiliary. I am not sure if you want to add further, commissioner.

Commissioner KERSHAW: For example, we have three of the auxiliaries on this training course now who are existing auxiliaries who have—I do not know whether they were from the watch house or the front counter—transitioned into wanting to be police licensing inspectors. They will also be trained in front-of-house, watch house and so on, and front counter duties as well. That is an auxiliary function we currently have.

Mr WOOD: That is right. I suppose the normal auxiliary function is front counter, cells and whatever. There might be a few other things but they are not normally standing outside a bottle shop with a gun, and having to learn to do some of the other things you are training them for. Would they normally be entitled to a higher rate of pay, simply because their duties have now changed to a different level?

Commissioner KERSHAW: As the Chief Minister said, that is something we are working out with the Northern Territory Police Association.

Mr WOOD: This one of the Chief Minister. In my travels, a number of things were raised. One of the things raised in Alice Springs, Tennant Creek and Katherine was how come this only applies to Katherine, Tennant Creek and Alice Springs? Why does it not apply to the rest of the Territory? In other words, people were feeling that you have a law for all Territorians and we have bottle shops everywhere, so why does it apply to only one part of the Northern Territory and not another part.

One of the areas that was mentioned to me when I was in Katherine is there is quite a substantial number of people who have drifted into Darwin because they call it the 10 to 10. They know they can get alcohol from 10 am to 10 pm in Darwin. There has been a drift. I was in town last night and there was a fair bit of antisocial behaviour in the middle of the city last night with tourists everywhere. So, why is it not an equal playing field across the Territory when it comes to having POSIs?

Mr GUNNER: I will ask the commissioner to expand. My understanding is it has essentially been an historic police decision about what they are capable of doing within their resources. Darwin has too many takeaway outlets—it cannot be done.

Police have, in the past, tried on a rotational or short hour basis in Darwin. At one stage, there was a police officer standing in front of a Parap corner shop for two hours. It would be fair to say the impact of that is significantly different to what has been occurring in Alice Springs, Tennant Creek and Katherine.

Mr WOOD: A mobile phone will tell them when they have gone.

Commissioner KERSHAW: A couple of reasons. One is the legislation. You have designated areas and, essentially, dry towns. The other this is we do TBLs in Darwin and we have different strategies. We have found that often we have displaced some of that crowd out into the northern suburbs if we run one in the CBD. It is about how we use our resources effectively.

What the command has done recently with the advent of the 12 extra police we are getting out of this initiative, who will be targeting secondary supply—in particular in Darwin and Palmerston, but also regional Northern Territory—is created the metropolitan alcohol social order group in Darwin. There will be 70 of those officers specifically targeting licensing enforcement, antisocial behaviour and social order. They will also be supporting the 12 officers who will be specifically looking at supporting some of our auxiliaries out there in those three towns and also the secondary supply aspects across the Territory.

Mr WOOD: So they will take the role of a licensing inspector?

Commissioner KERSHAW: Yes they do.

Mr WOOD: Will they be in plain clothes?

Commissioner KERSHAW: They may be and we have actually run our own operations, even recently, and we published some of that information and what happened in Operation Haven. We will be continuing to do that and making sure that, in particular, licensed premises are making sure they adhere to their licence and responsible service of alcohol.

Mrs LAMBLEY: I have lived in Alice Springs with POSIs and TBLs over the last seven years and the difference they have made to the town of Alice Springs is nothing short of miraculous compared to any other strategy that has been in place. Despite the problems that the police services had in keeping them there, particularly over the last two years since the change of government, I would like to thank you from the bottom of my heart for making such a difference to my community of Alice Springs.

I guess I have had difficulty in understanding why you have pulled back, and I think a lot of people in Alice Springs feel that not providing 100% coverage to the 10 takeaway liquor outlets in Alice Springs is very difficult to understand when it has been so successful.

My first question is, in between now and when the police auxiliaries graduate and start work on the bottle shops, do you intend to provide full coverage over the next 12 weeks?

Commissioner KERSHAW: That is something the operational commander—we have had those conversations and they are rostering to those hot spots. We also have a new tool that I think is very useful, and Alice Springs is using that—that is, our last drinks survey. What is quite interesting for us is that on premises, DV offenders have had their last drinks at on-premises not off-premises.

There are some well-known establishments down there, which you would be aware of, and we will look at how we actually enforce some responsible service of alcohol. Some of that is quite disturbing. Our teams are also focusing on making sure everyone gets put on the BDR.

We have had some very innovative police officers. I will give you one example of some of the care that our officers have for the community, the Alice Springs community and other towns. A female victim of DV who

was pregnant and drunk—it does not automatically put you on the BDR, but that officer individually made an effort to the registrar, put an application in—did not have to do this—and got her put on to the BDR.

There are lots of different operations going on in Alice and the other towns of officers who have that duty of care. We also have to balance that with when we do operations, like Operation Shulton. We have finite resources and Operation Shulton was a very successful operation in Alice over the holiday period.

I am looking forward to when our PALIs come out and having that secondary supply approach, but also an intelligence base and evidence base as to who these offenders are and where their last drink was. What it is showing us in Alice at the moment is our top DV offenders have had their last drink on-premises. That is an interesting statistic and eventually we will be able to share that data publicly.

Mrs LAMBLEY: I guess a piece of evidence that came to light recently was an almost 30% increase in alcohol-related assaults in Alice Springs over the previous 12 months. That is a piece of evidence which says to most people who live in Alice Springs that the reduction of POSIs is a major contributing factor to an increase in alcohol-related crime. That is a fairly reasonable correlation to make, would you agree?

Commissioner KERSHAW: There is some correlation, but also there was commentary around the last two homicides. They were not restricted premises and this is where there is a bit of misinformation out there that some people are lawfully allowed to purchase alcohol.

I have been saying for years that domestic violence is driving our assault statistics and it continues to increase. That is an area that we will really concentrate on, and that is why we have created the DV Command. We have combined our youth division into that DV Command and work with Territory Families, and through the children and families standing committee, to really have a coordinated approach with all the government agencies around the Family Safety Framework and so on. It is a long way to go but we still have an issue with alcohol misuse in the Northern Territory.

Mrs LAMBLEY: I would say it has been an abject failure, the reduction of POSIs outside of bottle shops in Alice Springs, given the 30% increase in alcohol-related assaults. That is evidence to say that the strategy of reducing POSIs is simply not working.

Commissioner KERSHAW: I think you will find that, like drugs, across this country people will work around the system. That is what we have found, and we have been there for six or seven years—people work around the system. If they are an alcoholic—and you map out a day in the life of an alcoholic, which we often do—they will find a way to get their alcohol.

We have also uncovered, through Operation Haven, that there are some irresponsible practices that have gone on, and those have been highlighted with those premises and with the Director-General of Licensing. There are a range of factors there that—I do not agree that it has been an abject failure.

Mrs LAMBLEY: It is the only thing that has really changed over the last 18 months.

Commissioner KERHSAW: I think what you will find is that is what I am saying. On-premises has been an issue for us of late.

Mrs LAMBLEY: The Police Association talk a lot about the safety of police officers on the point of sale outlets. I guess my concern is, how unsafe is it? What is the incidence of police being assaulted standing outside bottle shops? Over the last 12 months how many police have been assaulted? If it is so dangerous, should there not be more police rather than less? If it is dangerous for the police officers who are there to keep the public safe, then it is a safety issue for a lot of people, particularly in the supermarkets where they are buying food as well as alcohol. What is the actual situation in terms of danger at bottle shops?

Commissioner KERSHAW: Our average over the last five years has roughly been around the 240 mark of police officers assaulted per year.

Mrs LAMBLEY: On the POSIs?

Commissioner KERSHAW: Across the Territory. In the POSIs, I would have to come back to you. It is not a large number.

Mrs LAMBLEY: I put these written questions to the police service a few weeks ago, asking for these statistics.

Commissioner KERSHAW: I can get you that information.

Mrs LAMBLEY: It is already on notice.

Commissioner KERSHAW: I read our assault statistics and I would say it is a small number, but any assault for us is not acceptable of any police officer.

Mrs LAMBLEY: I guess the strange sort of dichotomy we are in is that you hear that the safety of police officers is of concern for the Police Association, but the police are there to look after our safety. How do you sort of address that?

Commissioner KERSHAW: I think it is a bit of history. Police officers have been getting assaulted for a thousand years. When you deal with people who are alcohol-affected, drug-affected, motivated politically or whatever it is, we are the ones that actually stand in the way between the public and that particular offender. We would love an environment where we do not get assaulted, but sadly we do.

Mr GUNNER: And it would also be an environment where we might not need police. That is probably one reason why there is so much respect for the uniform, knowing that—it is a bit like firefighters run towards the fire. Police are the ones that are often having to report to, respond to or be involved in situations that the general public would not enter into.

Mrs LAMBLEY: Just to clarify, when the police auxiliaries commence, will 100% of the bottle shops be manned 100% of the time that they are open?

Commissioner KERSHAW: I do not think they ever have. This is, again, a bit of misinformation. I know for a fact that police officers have been called away. A good example is in Tennant Creek. We had three officers—full lock down—called away to a riot that was literally 400 metres down the road. I cannot guarantee to you that at any point in time has every single officer been 100% of the time there, because they have been called away for various reasons. It is a bit of a misnomer saying they will be there 100% of the time.

Mrs LAMBLEY: Is that what they aspire to?

Commissioner KERSHAW: I think I can reassure you that you are about to see a very large, I guess, operation with these PALIs being rolled out against irresponsible service of alcohol, making sure the wrong people are not getting the alcohol in their hands, stopping secondary supply and reducing alcohol supplied to vulnerable communities. That is one thing we will continue to be focused on. We really appreciate your support, as we always do, in making sure we are able to identify these people.

With our last drinks survey we are also encouraging the community to let us know when they see things. A lot of word gets around, and then we look at things like we had done some data initially about the number of calls in town to 131 444 about antisocial behaviour and there is not enough people ringing that number. We really encourage the public to ring us and let us know if there is some antisocial behaviour or an issue there. You would be surprised when we run those metrics and find out that no one has phoned because everyone thinks someone else has rung the police.

Mrs LAMBLEY: A logistical question. Where will you put the 42 police auxiliaries who are starting in Alice Springs? Where will they sit?

Commissioner KERSHAW: We will put them in the police station. We are working through all of that.

Mrs LAMBLEY: It will be pretty cramped.

Commissioner KERSHAW: It is a bit, but we are confident we will work it out. We have some other premises there as well where police are based, so we will work something out.

Mrs LAMBLEY: Okay. Thank you.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Thank you. Chief Minister, will the existing Palmerston police station remain in use as a front counter when the new police station opens?

Mr GUNNER: I will let the Police Commissioner answer the question.

Commissioner KERSHAW: To reassure the residents of Palmerston, we will have a front counter staffed in Palmerston. In that transition we will make sure we are not closed, if that is what some of the concerns are.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: But is the idea that the existing police station be closed down and police will fully bunk out of there and move to the new facility?

Commissioner KERSHAW: Yes, that is the plan because we have a lease and we will be getting out of that lease and those premises.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Okay. Chief Minister, how many cells will the watch house of the new Palmerston Police Station have?

Commissioner KERSHAW: We would need to look at the plans, but it is a fully functioning watch house. It will be as big as Darwin watch house and capable of handling a larger number of our clients.

Mr GUNNER: I was talking to Palmerston police the other day, and they are worried Darwin police will start coming out and use the Palmerston watch house.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Wow! It is a good problem you have, compared to the situation at the moment. Of course, to have a watch house, you then need the staff to man it. It is never necessarily been the issue of not having cells, but of having police to man the cells. Will this be a fully functioning, 24/7 watch house, or is it an on-demand watch house? How will it work?

Mr GUNNER: I will pass it on to the commissioner, but the issue in Palmerston has been the cells rather than people. The cells currently in Palmerston do not meet the standard we would accept in a watch house. That is why they have not been used. I will pass to the commissioner.

Commissioner KERSHAW: Yes, it is a work in progress. To outline some background, we have a new bit of technology coming, which is mobile responder. In all of our vans, we will be able to see geographically and geospatially where they are, so we will be able to be a bit more efficient with the allocation of our jobs. That may mean that Palmerston is used for certain things at certain times, and then Darwin as well. You may have some flexibility around rostering and who goes where, but we are looking at the time in motion. As you know, they drive kilometres to come into Darwin. Obviously, Palmerston will be a bit more efficient there. That means more police will be staying on the road.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: That is right. That was the whole point of the Palmerston Police Station when we first decided to do it under the previous government. Importantly, the Palmerston catchment obviously takes in the rural area as well. If we can reduce driving time—I do not need to explain that to you—then the turnaround is quicker and we get police back out.

Mr GUNNER: The advice I have given—and you probably know this—it can take up to four hours to process someone through the Darwin watch house. That is a police officer off the road for four hours. Whereas, in Palmerston, it is more likely around the half-hour mark.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Okay. Does the agency intend to open a shop counter in a shopping centre or similar high traffic location in Palmerston? You previously had the one in Palmerston Shopping Centre. Are there any plans to open another one?

Commissioner KERSHAW: Not at this state. I could probably, again, provide you some information. We just got a letter from Casuarina, which is in competition with Palmerston now with the shopping centre.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: We do talk about Casuarina in Palmerston.

Commissioner KERSHAW: We have worked a lot with Casuarina Shopping Centre. We have a good model. We just got a letter to the Chief Minister's Office about our officers and how well the station has worked with security there and the transit officer with the bus exchange. We are using that model in Palmerston. When we move our extra numbers to the new station I think the whole community will feel the presence of up to 200 police being in that precinct.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Thank you, commissioner and that takes me to my next question. Do we know what kind of numbers we are going to have out at the Palmerston police station and what units we might be moving there?

Commissioner KERSHAW: We are building it—we are trying to future proof for the growth. Part of it was around a 20-year plan around the growth, the demographics of that corridor, the response times. We are looking at moving our entire traffic branch out to Palmerston, so we have designed the station with that in mind. You will see a lot of police cars, mobile vans all sorts of things out there.

Mr GUNNER: Commissioner, is there a reflection on Palmerston drivers that you are making there? Is that an aspersion you are casting?

Commissioner KERSHAW: On a positive note, Chief, I think stolen vehicles are down in Palmerston by about 25%.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: What is the time line for the tender and development process of the Nightcliff police station, which was announced in April this year?

Mr GUNNER: It is being done in consultation with Housing, and DIPL is taking the lead on it. If you wanted to put that on notice we could take it and coordinate an answer through the three.

Question on Notice No 3.10

Madam CHAIR: Member for Spillett, can you please repeat your question for the record.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: What is the time line for the tender and development process for the Nightcliff police station announced in April 2018?

Madam CHAIR: Chief Minister, are you happy to accept?

Mr GUNNER: I am happy to take that on notice, and just to provide some extra clarification, Member for Spillett, there is a decanting process happening at John Stokes—that is not within police hands. The timing issues are not with us so we will work that through with housing and DIPL.

Madam CHAIR: The question asked by the Member for Spillett has been allocated the number 3.10.

Ms NELSON: Member for Spillett, do you have more questions? I just wanted to go back to the auxiliary police—I have a couple of questions.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Do you mind asking at the end of this output? I will ask a couple more. I still have questions of this output. I promise we will not change outputs until you have asked your questions.

Ms NELSON: I appreciate it, thank you very much.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: How much is budgeted this year for the opening of the 24/7 police station in Nightcliff? Do we have a budget?

Mr GUNNER: What we have announced for the new station is \$45m and it is on the design list. That obviously sits separate to us.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: There is not even an aspirational date or even year of when this station will be operational?

Mr GUNNER: It is an important caveat. We are building essentially a new community housing police model, which I congratulate police on—it is something that they are trying to do. For example, in Palmerston they have the community hall—try to take this new approach—it does require us to decant John Stokes. That is just a sensible limit on the speed at which we can work and then we have dates after that.

I would love this to open as soon as possible, but we are dealing respectfully with the current tenants at John Stokes. Both governments have done this at various times. I know in my electorate Warrina and Kurringal for example, and so there is just a respectful process to go through of tenants and then once that is done we will then have more firm time lines.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: So we are talking years?

Mr GUNNER: To use the Palmerston station as an , it is essentially a year in construction.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: But before that Nightcliff police station will be open—if we have to decant the existing residents and do all these things the day the station opens is probably years away.

Mr GUNNER: Obviously while that is happening there is a station in Nightcliff that they are operating from. This is just at a different standard. There is no denial or service we are just working towards a new model.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: I am just trying to ascertain a rough time line for when this will actually be delivered. Do we know how many police officers will actually be posted to that station?

Commissioner KERSHAW: Yes, we are looking at up to 100 with my brief from the commander and maybe it is the commander's wish here because I need to look at this design. The Darwin commander wants to put the metropolitan alcohol social order group out there, which is 70 police, and then we would have another complement of police out there.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Thank you. Chief Minister, what is the budget expectation for overtime in 2018–19 and how does this compare to the previous two years of actual spending on overtime.

Mr GUNNER: As low as possible, but I recognise that police are a demand agency, a bit similar to health or others. Sometimes if you are on shift you have to finish what you are working on and that can lead to overtime, but obviously we would love to reduce overtime as much as possible. I think the new SerPro will be very helpful towards that and we are working through that process. I will let the commissioner talk about our overtime aspirations and reduction.

Mr WILLIS: I might just do the figures then I will hand over the commissioner for the operational expectations. The budget for this year is \$14.5m and we are anticipating an overtime expenditure of \$17.3m, so it is overrun.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: And do you have the figures for the previous years?

Mr GUNNER: How far back do you want it?

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Just two years, just 2017–18 and 2016–17.

Mr GUNNER: We will take that on notice. We have a graph but we will take it on notice to make sure we get you the actual information.

Question on Notice No 3.11

Madam CHAIR: Member for Spillett, can you please repeat your question for the record?

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: What is the budget expectation for overtime in 2018–19 and how does this compare to 2016–17 and 2017–18 actual spend on overtime?

Madam CHAIR: Chief Minister, do you accept the question?

Mr GUNNER: We accept the question.

Madam CHAIR: The Member for Spillett's question has been allocated the number 3.11.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Thank you. Chief Minister, has there been or will there be a directive given to police to cut back overtime approvals? I know you said earlier in your answer as little as possible. Obviously your government has delivered record levels of debt in this budget so is any messaging being sent down to police to cut back on overtime?

Mr GUNNER: We have asked police, as always, to try and keep overtime to a minimum but we obviously respect the fact that it is a demand agency. Overtime is an obvious area where we are hoping to find a reduction, but police have to manage that as they go through the year.

Mr WILLIS: I might just add, if I can, that there is no operational instruction to reduce overtime, but what has occurred—as you would expect of the agency—is in containing our budget and working to the budget that we have, we have put in place processes by which we can reduce those incidents of overtime that are not directly related to front line—in other words extension of shift overtime.

To be honest, that is achieving results. Police overtime, in particular, is starting to plateau out. Whilst we are still over budget, we are bringing it back, but it is starting to plateau out. Certainly not an operational instruction of the commissioner to reduce overtime but from my side of the house, certainly a budget instruction about how we can contain and work within our budget.

Commissioner KERSHAW: To help out there, we did talk about administrative overtime and that is a directive we have looked at. Unless it is operational—there is a direction around administrative overtime—it has to be related to an operational matter.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Chief Minister, how much has been budgeted for the ongoing management and administration of the Banned Drinker Register for this financial year?

Mr GUNNER: That is not police.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Is it squarely in the health ...

MR GUNNER: We do not maintain the BDR. Police might do things that are BDR related as part of their ongoing police activity. The BDR itself is not funded from here.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: I guess what I am getting at is that police do not keep separate records on how much the BDR and all of the police work associated with it is costing the agency? It is not captured separately?

Commissioner KERSHAW: No, the only stat we keep is how many people we put onto the BDR.

Mr GUNNER: The last drink survey has been very informative.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: What is the time line for the redevelopment and the replacement of the PROMIS IT system?

Mr GUNNER: SerPro. We are trying to get the new acronym to take off. 'Serve and protect' is where it has come from, police worked to get that name. I have said to the commissioner that PROMIS will stick. We still call our hotels by their original names even though they have changed 12 or 13 times, it is a Territorian thing. He is convinced that SerPro will take off.

Commissioner, do you want to talk to the time lines? It is being done with DCIS—so is the new Health IT system and the new Territory Families system—DCIS take a lead role but we can talk to it.

Commissioner KERSHAW: Yes. That announcement will be made soon about the successful tender. We will be looking at, within the next 12 months, the first module. One of the modules we are focusing on is custody and apprehensions. Our aim is to reduce our overheads—I am not too sure if you are aware we have to use a couple of systems. We hope to avoid duplicating IJIS, which is the justice system and talk to the new justice system, which I think is called Odyssey. That is our hope within the first 12 months once the announcement is made.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Okay. Is there an aspirational time line by which it will all be completed?

Commissioner KERSHAW: Yes, it is a three-year project, with three lots of funding over the next three financial years. We would be looking at meeting our budget and our time line. But, again, focusing on our front end to make it as efficient as we can. The first module helps get police back out on to the street.

Mr GUNNER: I can flag these were questions also asked of DCIS because it has a series of decision gates they are monitoring to make sure that this, the Health system and Territory Families system all stay on time and on budget and are managed properly.

It is something where we are extremely cautious, careful and mindful of, as a government, knowing that IT systems around the world can have problems in the design and implementation process. DCIS is taking the lead on that. It has exceptionally good project plans in place. It will be definitely worthwhile asking it for more detail on this as well.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Thank you. Will the police consent agreement reflect the recently announced 2% wage deal cap?

Mr GUNNER: The new wages policy takes effect from October. It is something the OCPE minister can talk about in further detail. But as of October, the new wages policy takes effect.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Okay. So, anything relating to the consent agreement and whether the 2% cap will stay in place is for OCPE?

Mr GUNNER: Yes. OCPE look after all EBAs. The new wages policy takes effect from October.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Chief Minister, how many youth engagement officers are currently working as at 31 March, in comparison to the previous year?

Mr GUNNER: When you say previous year—31 March previous year?

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Yes, 31 March previous year.

Mr GUNNER: That is how we had it before. We will have to take that on notice, Member for Spillett.

Question on Notice No 3.12

Madam CHAIR: Member for Spillett, could you please repeat your question for the record.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Yes. How many police engagement officers are currently working in the force as at 31 March 2018, in comparison to 31 March 2017?

Madam CHAIR: Chief Minister, do you accept the question?

Mr GUNNER: Yes, thanks.

Madam CHAIR: The Member for Spillett's question has been allocated the number 3.12.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Can you please explain how schools are now working with youth engagement police officers?

Mr GUNNER: In 2016, under the previous government, there was a change to youth engagement police officers and how they work with schools. Mainly in the Darwin and Palmerston areas.

We have recently commenced conversations with COGSO about varying the model. I have made clear to COGSO that we are happy to work with them about the pace of change there. We do not want to bring in a new model they are not happy with and have to do a new model again. Essentially, we flagged a new model that has come out of the Royal Commission recommendations around the New Zealand approach. We have taken that and presented a potential draft plan to COGSO and they are chewing it over. We are working that through.

The commencement date for that is solely in their hands, in a way. We want to make sure we get it right. We have a Kiwi secret weapon—the deputy commissioner. It is extremely helpful that the Royal Commission made a recommendation about the New Zealand policing model when we have a deputy commissioner from New Zealand who is incredibly familiar with the New Zealand policing model.

I am happy to have the commissioner talk about how it works and what the potential changes will be and how they relate to schools.

Commissioner KERSHAW: We will coalesce part of our youth division, our youth diversion officers and our youth engagement police and our community engagement police into one division, supported by our judicial operation section, because they are the ones who work out who is diverted and so on.

Part of the New Zealand model is about partnering with communities, reducing escalation and early and sustainable exits. I just had a presentation of what the team in Katherine is doing with youth. They are looking at even younger children, from zero to 10, and their exposure to domestic and family violence, and making

sure we work together with Territory Families, Education, Health and the Attorney-General's department in that early intervention and information sharing.

It is going to be a holistic approach because often with our youth engagement police, as you know, it is often the kids who are not at school that are the ones we need to be engaging. Also, whilst we are working on those who are our repeat offenders, we need to get on to the next level with those families before they become an offender.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: So are school-based constables part of this new strategy or could be part of it?

Commissioner KERSHAW: They are. The youth engagement police are school-based. That model we are looking at is a cluster model, and that is what we are talking with, because we cannot be in every single school. We have finite resources and we are prioritising those schools.

Mr GUNNER: We have involved Education and COGSO into the conversation. There is advice we have around schools and school needs. Various schools have different needs depending on their size, population number and problems that present in the school.

We recognise that schools want a relationship with police, and that is extremely positive. We want that. But, as the commissioner mentioned, there is also a whole degree of youth that do not present through the schools that we want to make sure we are working with. They are often the ones who are more likely to present as problems for us later on.

Madam CHAIR: I will call a five-minute recess, to recommence at just after 3.15 pm. Thank you.

The committee suspended.

Madam CHAIR: Thank you. Chief Minister, we will continue.

Mr GUNNER: I have an answer to a question.

Answer to Question on Notice No 3.8

Mr GUNNER: For constables and above there was one retirement of a superintendent, three resignations of a sergeant and one retirement invalidity. There was one resignation of a senior constable first class, one retirement of a senior constable first class, a letter of resignation from a senior constable, one retirement of a senior constable, eight resignations of a constable first class and one resignation of a constable.

Constable recruit—one resignation and one termination. For ACPOs—two retirements, one retirement invalidity, six resignations of police auxiliaries and three retirements of police auxiliaries.

Ms NELSON: Minister, I want to go back to the auxiliaries, if I may. I have a questions about the auxiliaries for Katherine. I know you touched on that briefly, but I was wondering if you could clarify how many auxiliaries officers is Katherine actually allocated?

Mr GUNNER: To my understanding Katherine will be rostered 22 auxiliaries, which is based off the historic approach police have taken in Katherine. The first recruit squad has obviously been in Alice Springs for Alice Springs. There are two more recruit squads planned for this year.

Commissioner KERSHAW: We will be prioritising Alice Springs first, then it is likely to be Katherine and then Tennant Creek.

Ms NELSON: What is the time frame for that?

Mr GUNNER: That will mean, based off that, commencement of liquor inspectors at the latest in Katherine will be late January/early February. That would be my understanding.

Mr KIRBY: I thank the police for all the hard work they do, especially through the CBD, which I see on a regular basis.

My question is about CCTV. The technology is obviously improving a lot and it helps a lot. Can you explain how many cameras we have scheduled to come in the near future?

Mr GUNNER: We went to the election with a promise about fixed roll-out, which we are honouring. This month, nine in Nightcliff, three in Bakewell and 12 in Tennant Creek are fixed. Additionally, this term, based on feedback from police—I recognise these are very popular around the local community—we are increasing our investment in mobile CCTV as well. There is a great ability to target what can emerge as a hot spot and then disappear as a hot spot. Some places you need permanent fixed.

We are sometimes constrained by local government lighting, so we sometimes work with them on where those mobiles can go. There is a difference between the fixed and the mobile. Other good news for mobile is event management. As events occur we can deal with them.

Commissioner KERSHAW: With the use of technology, we are looking at how we can use facial recognition, linking that in with our body-worn cameras. Technology is getting better and better.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Following on from that question, Chief Minister, would it be right to say some of the funding for the CCTV would be federal funding?

Mr GUNNER: Not the fixed. I think there has been some federal funding for mobile. There were a couple of mobile CCTV units—a bit complicated. It was a Darwin city grant application to the federal government that they have transferred across to the Territory government. I did not mean to steal any Australian Government credit there—there was some that came from them. We have also done some extra mobile ourselves. I think five came from Darwin City Council via the Australian Government.

Mrs LAMBLEY: I am wondering what the male-to-female ratio is in regard to the police service employees.

Mr GUNNER: Do you want them separately?

Mrs LAMBLEY: Just the police service.

Commissioner KERSHAW: It is around the 30% mark. We have improved over time and had our first lot of fifty-fifty courses with recruiting. It is slow going with increasing that representation. We are pretty well in the top echelon with that ratio.

Mrs LAMBLEY: Something that was brought to my attention recently was the morale in the police force in the moment, with everything that has been going on. There was a general feeling conveyed to me that morale in the NT Police Force is at a pretty low point. Would you agree, and if so, what are you doing about that?

Commissioner KERSHAW: Morale is a complex issue, because it is a feeling. When I have gone around, people have different viewpoints. Recently we have conducted some of our command assessments. That has not been conveyed to me—I am not saying there is no issue with morale.

There are also studies that police officers actually seek recognition from the public a lot of the time and then blame management for not giving enough recognition. We have some improvements to make in that area, with awards and so on. The highest morale in police forces—and this is evidence based—is when there is an emergency situation on. That is based on Queensland floods and the earthquakes in New Zealand. They did metrics and said police morale was at its highest, and then it tailed off again when they were not in that mode.

There is some evidence around police feeling they are doing a good job for the public. That is something we are constantly trying to reinforce because, unfortunately, social media at the moment tends to be quite negative. Police take on all these issues and stresses, and it can affect us.

Mr GUNNER: There has been one very public incident lately regarding the former commissioner. I have had two sets of feedback from officers—often the same officer making the same point, which goes to positive and negative morale. There is disappointment at seeing someone of that rank go before the courts and be found guilty. Morale impacts that, but uplifting is the fact police clearly followed the evidence and there were no favours done—confidence in police and ability to do that.

Sometimes the same incident can cut both ways to the same officer. It was negative to see the police reported in that way. I do not think it would be fair to have the current commissioner comment on that. It is a negative

impact in that sense, but a positive impact to see the fact that it happened because the police showed no favours and followed the evidence where it led to. It can be complicated at times, police morale.

Commissioner KERSHAW: To help out there, we did a survey of some of our commission officers. Of those, each one mentioned that they needed more resources. Every police officer will say that. Our message is that we manage our resources from within. We are focusing on a three-year return to budget strategy and a five-year strategy around how we can be more innovative and efficient, also combatting that with the Commonwealth stations and funding to make sure we are being most efficient in our service delivery.

Mr GUNNER: Have you ever met an officer who says, 'I do not need this resource; please take it back'?

Mrs LAMBLEY: How many police officers have been suspended over the last 12 months?

Commissioner KERSHAW: Currently five officers are suspended. I would have to get you the figure overall as to ...

Mrs LAMBLEY: What is the male to female ratio there?

Commissioner KERSHAW: I would have to get back to you on that.

Mr GUNNER: Do you want that on notice?

Mrs LAMBLEY: Yes, that would be good to know.

Question on Notice No 3.13

Madam CHAIR: Member for Araluen, can you please repeat the question for the record?

Mrs LAMBLEY: How many police have been suspended over the last 12 months, and what is the male to female ratio of those?

Mr GUNNER: We accept the question.

Madam CHAIR: The question has been allocated the number 3.13.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Madam Chair, I am seeking clarification. Given there is one hour left for today, are you happy to take holistically Police questions or are we moving through the outputs because I have questions on those.

Mr GUNNER: I lost track of time, we are rapidly approaching 4 pm.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: We are still on the first output.

Mr GUNNER: In recognition of the time—obviously we normally work through the outputs—but I am happy to just take questions.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Thank you, Chief Minister.

How many arrests were made for breach of bail in fiscal year 2017–18?

Mr GUNNER: We are just seeing if we have that data here.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: I have a couple of questions on that.

Mr GUNNER: We will need to take that on notice.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: My next question is, how many arrests were for court non-appearance? How many of those people are being electronically monitored?

Question on Notice No 3.14

Madam CHAIR: Member for Spillett, can you please repeat the questions for the record?

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: How many arrests were made for breach of bail in fiscal year 2017–18? How many arrests were there for court non-appearance during the same time period? How many of those were of persons being electronically monitored?

Madam CHAIR: The Chief Minister has accepted the question on notice and the Member for Spillett's question has been allocated the number 3.14.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Chief Minister, on 9 May 2018 I asked you in Question Time how many electronic monitoring bracelets had been fitted by police since you passed the changes to the *Bail Act* on urgency in March 2017. You said:

There have been eight occasions whereby police have determined that electronic monitoring would be a suitable diversion option. There have been seven breaches on those eight occasions.

Chief Minister, I have some follow-up questions in relation to that statement. Is there a budget allocation for police issuance of electronic monitoring bracelets in the 2018–19 budget?

Mr GUNNER: It is done from within.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: So that is both the obtaining of bracelets, issuing and all related associated costs?

Commissioner KERSHAW: My colleague, Mick Willis, may help me out with the money side of the house. We go through a contract of the back of Corrections, so we sort of piggyback and buy a certain amount. We are looking at that contract right now and are setting a more realistic target as to how many we actually need.

Mr WILLIS: That is correct, commissioner. We are in the process—it will take us another 12 months. It is the start of the procurement process; it may go into the second year. The contract is actually managed by Corrections, but procurement-wide, we are swung off their contract.

When we set it up, it was new. 'How many do we need? What do we do?' With the evidence we have now and the usage of where we are going ...

Mr GUNNER: And the eligibility ...

Mr WILLIS: ... and the eligibility and how this process works, we are probably looking to reduce the number of physical bracelets we have procured and hold on stock. That is a process we are working through.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: How many did you procure originally?

Commissioner KERSHAW: It is a licence, so if that makes sense, we have access to a certain number and we cannot exceed that number through Corrections.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: So what is that maximum number?

Commissioner KERSHAW: It was originally 40 at any point in time, because their capacity is how they budget because it is done then through a vendor and another security agency and we are probably looking at reducing that. We do not need 40 at any one time.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: So you are looking at reducing it. If you had access to 40, why were only eight ...

Mr GUNNER: The advice I have received, Member for Spillett, is that only eight were deemed eligible—if that makes sense—or suitable for the bracelet rather than only eight.

Commissioner KERSHAW: Correct. We have actually undertaken a review of our processes at the watch house. We want to use it more, in particular for our front line to use it for our domestic violence offenders. That is something you will see over the next 12 months.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Chief Minister, I think it is fair to say at this time your government was responding to a lot of angst in the community around crime. You made this announcement on urgency; we were in parliament at the time; nothing came of it; we waited a month; the next parliament came; the legislation was brought on urgency and it passed. Since then we have seen a very small use of this policy. I completely understand, from the policing perspective, the issues around criteria because prior to this legislative change it was only the courts that could release someone with an electronic monitoring bracelet.

The courts would have to commission Corrections to undertake a report that would often take two or three weeks to do; come back to the court; the court would review it and make the determination of suitability. By creating this policy you bestowed on police a very difficult policy to implement. How do police satisfy themselves of the eligibility requirement? I think that is why we have seen such a small uptake.

It is no surprise that the police have made the decision to use bracelets for DV offending. Has there been a total abandonment of this policy because it is not working as you envisaged it?

Mr GUNNER: The policy request for these bracelets came from police. It is clear, after 12 months of operation, that the framework we put in place—now that it has been in effect and in practice rather than estimating what will happen and we can look at the actuals—is very constrictive on police.

Commissioner KERSHAW: Anything electronic—what we have learned with police officers is, we trialed body-worn for nearly a year and only used a limited number, and now every police officer pretty much wants it. So this is something that we as an agency—we are adaptive, so we are learning as we go. We think it is a useful tool. We have seen the courts do a lot more—and I would have to get these stats, but the information I have is that there is a lot more court-issued electronic bail and there is quite strict processes on that area.

We have diverted more youth, as a percentage, we are denying less youth for diversion. Those are the latest stats I have. There are some good initiatives happening out there. As I said, the growth area for us is domestic violence. In our youth area we have some good strategies that we are rolling out and we are keen to stop the repeat offending of our DV offenders.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Absolutely. There is no question electronic monitoring is a good tool, but police have to be given that tool with an appropriate policy framework behind it. This whole idea of electronic monitoring on police bail was clearly a fraught policy to begin with.

In any event, we know it has not worked. Police now want to now use electronic monitoring for DV offending. Why do you still feel that you will need less than the 40?

Mr GUNNER: I should clarify, they were using them for repeat DV in Alice Springs from the beginning, so that is not new.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: The legislation we passed was specifically around police bail. That was on urgency.

Mr GUNNER: We are still talking about the police bail stage, are we not?

Commissioner KERSHAW: Yes.

Mr GUNNER: When the commissioner mentioned DV, he was still referencing the police bail period. The courts can obviously do electronic monitoring and they were, this is about trying to cut that gap.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: At that point, so while will you need less than 40. Even expanding it to DV when police bailing ...

Commissioner KERSHAW: I think just being fiscally responsible—what we would rather build into our model is that we can escalate it up. I have given Mr Willis instructions, instead of purchasing X we will purchase less and then have in our contract that we can purchase more as we require them.

It is because it is a monthly fee that we pay—correct me if I am wrong, Mr Willis. For us to be more fiscally responsible now that we know where we are at.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: If the courts issue a bracelet at that point, Corrections pay the bill?

Commissioner KERSHAW: Yes.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: If the courts are increasingly using electronic monitoring at that point and have the benefit of having the Corrections report to assess the suitability for bail, it is also saving police dollars because police do not have to try and work out the eligibility or foot the bill for the bracelet while police bailing.

I still think this ties back to the fact that has been a policy failure on the run. But I will move on.

Are youth in bail accommodation being fitted with electronic monitoring bracelets? This one for Territory Families.

Mr GUNNER: That is one for Territory Families.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: With the eight bracelets that were issued, where were they issued—Darwin, Alice Springs, Katherine? There was talk of trial sites at the beginning of this policy.

Mr GUNNER: Alice Springs and Palmerston.

Commissioner KERSHAW: Yes, Alice Springs and Palmerston—definitely Alice Springs and Darwin.

Mr GUNNER: We do not have the breakdown, we can take it on notice.

Commissioner KERSHAW: Five in Darwin and three in Alice Springs.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Thank you.

Mr GUNNER: I take issues with police, they have captured Darwin and Palmerston under Darwin, which is obviously not how we view Palmerston.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: It is not how we do things.

Chief Minister, what is the average number of police officers assigned to patrol duties in Palmerston, Casuarina and Darwin over the last 12 months. Is that how you record that?

Mr GUNNER: Do we break it up that way, commissioner?

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: You could say how many at the moment.

Commissioner KERSHAW: We can give you the Darwin Metropolitan Command figures. We would have to take that on notice, it is flexible but we do have fixed positions for general duties.

Mr GUNNER: We can take that on notice.

Question on Notice No 3.15

Madam CHAIR: Member for Spillett, please restate the question for the record.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: What is the average number of police officers assigned to duties in Palmerston, Casuarina and Darwin over the past 12 months?

Madam CHAIR: Chief Minister, do you accept the question?

Mr GUNNER: Happy to take that on notice.

Madam CHAIR: The question from the Member for Spillett has been allocated the number 3.15.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Chief Minister, how many people were taken into protective custody in financial year 2017–18?

Mr GUNNER: We are just checking to see if we have that data.

Commissioner KERSHAW: I will have to come back with that. It is in the high thousands, 9000 to 10 000. I think it has been dropping over the years and ...

Mr GUNNER: We can just take the question on notice.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Yes, because I have a follow on from that. How many were on the BDR and how many have been arrested more than two times. I am happy to state that for the record.

Question on Notice No 3.16

Madam CHAIR: Member for Spillett, please restate the question for the record.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: How many people were taken into protective custody in financial year 2017–18? How many of those were on the BDR and how many were arrested two or more times?

Madam CHAIR: Chief Minister, do you accept the questions?

Mr GUNNER: Yes.

Madam CHAIR: The question from the Member for Spillett has been allocated the number 3.16.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Chief Minister, how many people were taken into protective custody via paperless arrest powers?

Mr GUNNER: They are not the same thing.

Commissioner KERSHAW: No, they are not.

Mr GUNNER: Do you want paperless?

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Paperless, yes.

Commissioner KERSHAW: We can get you those figures.

Question on Notice No 3.17

Madam CHAIR: Thank you Member for Spillett, if you could repeat that question for the record.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: In how many instances did police use arrest powers? How many of those were served with an infringement notice or charged with an offence? How do these figures compare to the financial years 2016–17 and 2015–16?

Mr GUNNER: Is that three year-to-dates?

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Thank you.

Madam CHAIR: Chief Minister, do you accept the questions?

Mr GUNNER: Yes.

Madam CHAIR: The question from the Member for Spillett has been allocated the number 3.17.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Chief Minister, is there any intention by your government to repeal paperless arrest laws?

Mr GUNNER: The commissioner has just found the protective custody numbers. We have been consulting on the paperless arrest power—whether we amend it, modify it or repeal it. We are in conversations about

that. My understanding is that it has not been done in Alice Springs but has been used in metropolitan Darwin. We are working through the problem we are dealing with and what the potential solutions are.

Rather than saying paperless or not paperless, it is, 'What is the problem, and what is the best solution?' We are taking on board the request to reform trespass—that is, police with justice. Based on advice, trespass can be not the easiest thing to apply if not in force. It might be that in improving trespass we get to a policy solution, or it might be a range of other things.

For me, it is important that until you know what the solution is, do not change the current situation. We have been consulting on that with various agencies. NAAJA is the obvious third party stakeholder in the sector.

Commissioner KERSHAW: If I can just provide—protective custody episodes from 1 July 2017 to 31 March 2018 was 8760. Do you want a breakdown by commands?

Darwin Command, which includes Palmerston, is 3927; Northern Command, 74; Central Command, 1149; and Southern Command, 3600. From 1 July 2017 to 31 March 2018 we have used 133AB 2034 times.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Thank you. I think you might have answered this question earlier in an answer to the Member for Araluen's question, but her question on notice is slightly different. How many reports of assaults against police were there from 1 April 2017 to 31 March 2018?

Mr GUNNER: I think it is an average of 240.

Commissioner KERSHAW: For 1 May 2017 to 30 April—I apologise for that reporting period—it is 254 police officers.

Mr GUNNER: We are up on the previous year and down on the year before, and the four-year average is 271.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: What strategies are in place to ensure we are best arming and ensuring our police are as safe as they can be given they are in a high-risk operational role? In regard to resourcing for backup, are police alone—things like that?

Commissioner KERSHAW: We use that risk assessment model. We have officers that are one up, whether they are in traffic or other parts of the agency, and if the officers feel it is not safe to undertake a particular task they will not. They have procedures to follow.

Our trend has come down from police officers being assaulted. We have not done any evidence base on this; it is the body-worn—we think that has made a difference when people understand when they are being videoed. We have done a lot of training around engaging and disengaging. Back in 2014 we had 311 police officers assaulted, so it has gone down. It is slowly trending down.

Mr GUNNER: I understand the other thing that can help, from talking to police, is CCTV. If you are reporting to an area with CCTV cameras you can see what you are attending in advance and have the ability to properly prepare for the situation. Police like to know as much information as they can before attending the scene.

When you call up you get frustrated by the questions you are asked, but all information you provide in that phone call helps police attend safely.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: What is the status of Task Force Trident? Have numbers been reduced to create the new Task Force Haven, and has funding to Trident been altered?

Mr GUNNER: I have not made any changes. Operationally, police assess that as they go.

Commissioner KERSHAW: I was just advised that we are actually doing the opposite. Trident is getting another six officers. They will be looking at youth strategies.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: You fund the additional six from within?

Commissioner KERSHAW: I advised by the Darwin commander that this is based on his view of allocating the resources appropriately and making sure that they have enough resources in that area. They are a busy team and they have made lots of arrests and done a lot of good work on driving property crime down.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Chief Minister, what is the intention of Operation Haven from 1 July 2018, and will its operation be extended beyond Alice Springs and Tennant Creek.

Mr GUNNER: I think we have covered a part of this already with Operation Haven. Police obviously make those operational decisions about how that works. We give them the resourcing and the support about how they make those decisions. I understand from previous briefings, commissioner, you are looking at Katherine. I will let the commissioner answer that question.

Commissioner KERSHAW: We have the Territory Intelligence and Coordination Centre, which has a number of government agencies and other agencies in it. They are producing a valuation of Operation Haven. We said that we will re-evaluate where it is at and tailor it to particular locations. For example, I just had the Katherine team present on some of their data from Operation Haven. It is a different analysis compared to Alice Springs.

What we are looking at through our tech is having a tailored approach to each location based on the success of Operation Haven in collecting all that information.

There are things like in Katherine working with the FISOs—we learned a lot working with those in Alice Springs and the other agencies, and some of those restrictive premises have helped out a lot in the domestic violence area and in other techniques and strategies that we are looking at. The goal of Operation Haven was to grab a very quick snapshot of where we are at with violent crime across the Territory and then what have we learned from it and how can we improve on it.

Mr GUNNER: There are obviously different agencies, but the appointment of three permanent Public Housing Safety Officers in Tennant and in Katherine helps police. Sometimes I found while we are giving police extra 120 and there is lots of other stuff we are giving police—the support police often need is actually from other agencies. A strong focal point is that thin blue line, but then where do you send that person, who do you work with and tackle that issue where there are Public Housing Safety Officers and Territory Families workers?

Tennant Creek was an interesting example—not interesting; that is completely the wrong word. It is an important example, where we had 41 police doing really good work, but who do they report to and what can they do? That is often where the support we need to give police is around police.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: How many operations are there ongoing this coming financial year? We have Trident, Haven ...

Commissioner KERSHAW: We have multiple because we also have operations on road safety. The drug squad run multiple operations. It just depends on what type of operation you are talking about because even Major Crime might run an operation. But public order operations or domestic violence—that is a matter for each command. It is quite complex because there are so many different operations that are running at any one time.

Mr GUNNER: Some operations get higher profile attention than others.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Understood. Chief Minister, do Northern Territory Police test offenders for ice or other drugs at the time of arrest?

Mr GUNNER: No. I believe not.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Is there are reason? Is it a resource issue?

Commissioner KERSHAW: It just depends on what you are talking about—roadside tests we do.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Does ordinary, everyday, run of-the-mill policing—you are at a job and you have to arrest the person, and then they are brought back to the station.

Commissioner KERSHAW: We do not have any power to do that.

Mr GUNNER: It is a powers issue.

Commissioner KERSHAW: I do not think any jurisdiction that I know in Australia has the ability to do that because it has to be linked to—if I arrest you for say breaking in to somebody's property I am not allowed to test you for drugs.

Mr GUNNER: If I can give an example, Member for Spillett. We support this. This is a CLP policy we supported last term. If a police officer was scratched or spat on during the course of their duties, the ability to test that person who did that—so the police could get a much quicker advice about whether something had been communicated or not. Otherwise, it is a three-month wait period before you can find out.

We understood why you wanted that policy, but there was significant debate about whether you could have that power or not. So, with this general testing at least a specific action had occurred that could justify the test. We were able to work it through on that basis. But just general testing, my understanding is that would be a power issue that would be rather controversial.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: How many flight hours were provided to your government ministers by NT Police from 1 April 2017 to 31 March 2018? How much was police reimbursed for that travel?

Mr GUNNER: Very few. We will have to take that on notice, about reimbursement. Very rarely have we used police planes. I have travelled with the commissioner to Tennant Creek with the Police Air Wing—in that instance I was travelling with the commissioner. We will take that on notice. The plane was already going there, so I am not sure if I was charged for it or not.

Question on Notice No 3.18

Madam CHAIR: Member for Spillett, please repeat your question for the record.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: How many flight hours were provided to Territory government minister by NT Police from 1 April 2017 to 31 March 2018? How much was police reimbursed for that travel?

Madam CHAIR: Chief Minister, do you accept the question?

Mr GUNNER: Absolutely.

Madam CHAIR: The Member for Spillett's question has been allocated the number 3.18.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: How many complaints against police investigations were conducted in financial year 2017–18 at Category 1, 2 and deferred investigation levels respectively?

Mr GUNNER: We are getting that information for you.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Thank you.

Mr GUNNER: The commissioner has the answer in front of him.

Commissioner KERSHAW: Sorry, was that 1 July to 31 March?

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Just for the last financial year. Whatever dates you have, I will take.

Mr GUNNER: We will give you from 1 July to 31 March.

Commissioner KERSHAW: Is that just Category 1 and Category 2?

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Category 1, 2 and deferred investigations.

Commissioner KERSHAW: Okay. We had seven Category 1, 26 Category 2 and one deferred.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: How many police were suspended pending internal investigation in 2017–18?

Mr GUNNER: Can we halt that. We have conflicting advice about what the answer is.

Commissioner KERSHAW: Oh, something is not right.

Mr GUNNER: We have one table that says one and another table that says 1107.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Well, that is a lot!

Commissioner KERSHAW: I think one ...

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: I hope one.

Mr GUNNER: Big corporate knowledge if they cannot tell the difference between one and 1107.

Commissioner KERSHAW: It is 107 deferred category. So, it is one, 107.

Mr GUNNER: Oh, the category is 107, and one has been deferred.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Okay, thank you. What was the total amount spent on police prosecutors in financial year 2017–18? What is the budgeted figure in 2018–19?

Mr GUNNER: We will take that on notice.

Question on Notice No 3.19

Madam CHAIR: Member for Spillett, please repeat the question.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: What was the total amount spent on police prosecutors in financial year 2017–18? What is the budgeted figure for 2018–19?

Madam CHAIR: Chief Minister has indicated he will accept the question. The question asked by the Member for Spillett has been allocated the number 3.19.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Thank you. What was the total amount spent on prisoner escorts and/or transporting alleged offenders to court hearings in financial year 2017–18?

Mr GUNNER: We will take that one on notice.

Question on Notice No 3.20

Madam CHAIR: Member for Spillett, can you please repeat the question.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: What was the total amount spent on prisoner escorts and/or transporting alleged offenders to court hearings in financial year 2017–18?

Madam CHAIR: Chief Minister accepts the question. The Member for Spillett's question has been allocated the number 3.20.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: In relation to road safety, obviously our road toll is very concerning and tragic. What additional resources have been provided to police, or has the agency allocated within, to focus on road safety in light of our heightened road toll?

Mr GUNNER: It is more about how police manage their work load. They adjust that, not just year on year but month to month, based on what they are seeing as a trend.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Police are participating in the Towards Zero campaign?

Commissioner KERSHAW: Yes, and one of the concerning statistics for us is the number of people drink driving. We have had quite a dramatic increase. I acknowledge the work of our traffic area and general duties in the extra work load they have had in bringing those drink drivers through the courts. We are up around an almost 30% increase. I will have to get back to you with those exact figures.

We have put some analytics around where we are at this year. It comes back to the fatal five—constantly reinforcing people not to drink and drive. If we have gone up by that many people we have proceeded against for drink driving, that is a real concern to us across the Territory.

We have undertaken a number of operations as well. Operation Lamani has been running quite regularly. It is a concern to us and we are trying to collect as much data as we can. If you look at the financial year versus calendar year, we are about on track with most of the financial years. As in, we are not high, but we are high for the calendar year.

Mr GUNNER: Just to clarify, we are doing the Last Drinks survey on drink driving so we get a better understanding of where they had their last drink. If it is on premises it informs police about some of the other work police should do.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: How many police officers are currently assigned to the traffic units in Darwin, Katherine and Alice Springs? Has this increased, decreased or stayed the same in comparison to the previous financial year?

Mr GUNNER: We will take that on notice.

Question on Notice No 3.21

Madam CHAIR: Member for Spillett, can you repeat the question for the record, please.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: How many police officers are currently assigned to the traffic units in Darwin, Katherine and Alice Springs? Has this increased, decreased or stayed the same in comparison to the previous financial year?

Madam CHAIR: The Chief Minister accepts the question and it has been allocated the number 3.21.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: I just want to ask a couple of personnel-related questions relating to investigations on specific officers.

Mr GUNNER: If they are ongoing investigations, we may be constrained in our ability to comment.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: That is fair enough. Over the weekend we learned of a former Territory police officer who had been charged with rape in 2004, and that other officers are currently under investigation. Previously, the commissioner had said the 2004 matter had been finalised. If I am verballing you, commissioner, please correct me.

What is the current status of those inquiries? How many officers are under investigation?

Commissioner KERSHAW: What is important to clarify is that these are incredibly complex matters when dealing with historical allegations of sexual assault. These are police officer on police officer. They are incredibly difficult due to a number of reasons—the historical nature of them being one. It has taken us years to be able to undertake thorough investigation to get to the truth. One of those individuals is facing court now and there are likely to be other charges forthcoming in some other matters.

I have a duty of care to our serving police officers. I do not want to go down the line of how many there are. We did a survey in late 2016 on the cultural assessment of where we are at. It came back saying we had a problem with sexual harassment in the workplace, bullying and racism. We have actively worked to create a safe environment for those victims to come forward and make those complaints, and they have to see a resolution or some sort of action taken.

Understand that we have to follow the procedures of our judicial system, so we take advice from DPP and other agencies that have assisted. They are incredibly complex and sometimes we have had to go externally to get external expertise.

We are not alone—I know, from talking to other commissioners around the country. You will read in the other papers about other agencies and the same issues are coming up, that today's values and our values are kicking in. People are confident in reporting these matters and understanding that some action will be taken.

It is disappointing that this has occurred, but a lot of these are historical in nature and are quite complex. We have to make sure we investigate them appropriately and properly.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Thank you, commissioner.

Today we learned that Deputy Commissioner, Kate Vanderlaan, had been placed on administrative leave approximately two weeks ago. I do not know what you can say about those circumstances and whether or not Deputy Commissioner Vanderlaan is being paid while on leave pending this investigation.

Commissioner KERSHAW: Deputy Commissioner Vanderlaan is on personal leave. There is an investigation. That is all I am able to say, based on advice legally and my duty of care to the parties involved.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Thank you, Commissioner. I believe Assistant Commissioner Peter Bravos has been stood down from police duties?

Commissioner KERSHAW: No, that is not correct. He is on sick leave.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Thank you for clarifying those questions.

This is my last one in this line of questioning. What is the status of Executive Director, Jennifer Reilly, who was reportedly stood down in March of this year? Has that investigation taken place? When do you expect it to be concluded?

Commissioner KERSHAW: Again, there is the right of reply and processes in place. They take a lot of time. There are lawyers involved and it can take longer than what perhaps both parties are hoping for. We hope to resolve that as expeditiously as we can.

Mr WOOD: I think the Independents might need a few questions, just for balance the well-staffed ...

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: I will just keep ploughing along, Member for Nelson.

Mr WOOD: I know. I just mentioned that to the Chief Minister.

Mr GUNNER: I am not the Chair, Member for Nelson. The committee has to sort out their own business.

Madam CHAIR: Time is precious. Member for Nelson, ask your question please. We are running out of time.

Mr WOOD: I will. I just thought I would have a little dig at the number of people we have helping us.

Chief Minister, can you tell us if the Wongabilla riding facility is still operated by the police and used for diversionary programs?

Commissioner KERSHAW: Wongabilla is still operational. I am not aware that it is closed. If it appears it has, it is news to me.

Mr WOOD: That is alright. It has had a few trees knocked around, but anyway.

Commissioner KERSHAW: It is still operating.

Mr WOOD: Is it used as a diversionary program as it used to be?

Commissioner KERSHAW: I would have to get back to you on that. It may be, but it may not be ourselves that are using it.

Mr WILLIS: To our knowledge, and as of last week, it was still part of our PCYC program. You are correct that it did get a bit of damage in Cyclone Marcus and some of the facilities were remarkably damaged.

We are in the process of repairing those. Whilst it is a land grant, being the Crown, we hold the right to that land, which we then give to PCYC. For all intents and purposes, I am not aware of any change in the program at all.

Mr WOOD: It was used as a diversionary program for young people.

Commissioner KERSHAW: It may still be. I do not have a brief on that. It would not normally come to my office anyway. We can get you that information.

Mr WOOD: Could I ask the question on notice?

Mr GUNNER: We will informally get back to you rather than take that on notice.

Madam CHAIR: Okay, thank you.

Mr WOOD: One area we have a bit of in my part of the world is hooning. How many vehicles were seized for hooning? Can you say how long they were seized for over this year compared to last year?

Mr GUNNER: We will take that question on notice, Member for Nelson.

Question on Notice No 3.22

Madam CHAIR: Member for Nelson, please repeat the question for the record.

Mr WOOD: How many vehicles were seized for hooning? For how long were they seized? Could you give us the numbers from this year to last year?

Madam CHAIR: The Chief Minister accepts the question. The Member for Nelson's question has been allocated the number 3.22.

Mr WOOD: Can I ask a Fire question here, because you said it was in a block?

Madam CHAIR: You may. The Chief Minister has agreed to take all outputs from 12 to 17.2. Please ask away.

Mr WOOD: Fire does not get asked a lot of questions because we usually run out of time. Chief Minister, the Northern Territory Fire and Rescue Service used PFAS chemicals in the past. Were the areas they were used and tested to see if PFAS had leaked into the ground? Was it used as part of the fun days, or did they use soap suds? If so, what is the likelihood that people could have been affected? You might remember, Chief Minister, the days when the fire brigade would come out and everyone would be bubbled.

Mr GUNNER: I have been bubbled.

Mr WOOD: Yes, I have been bubbled. Was that PFAS or just soap suds?

Mr GUNNER: I have never used that phrase before. Some of this has not been done for PFAS. We have an IGA and we have done a significant amount of work. DCM is coordinating some of that.

My understanding is NT fires stopped using PFAS-related stuff much earlier than Defence. So, there is not the same concern about us. I will take the question on notice because this is not really with Police, Fire and Emergency Services.

I was asked the other day about testing that was being done at fire stations and other locations that had been part of a press release from the EPA last term. I followed that up and found that the EPA had issued the release but the testing had not commenced. That is not meant to be a crack at the EPA, so do not think I am picking on them.

That testing is now occurring. There is a range of tests being done, but my understanding is that work is not being done through NTPFES. It is not a question on notice because it is not within this department, but we will get you an answer about the testing and where it is occurring.

In terms of when NT fires stopped using ...

A WITNESS: In 2006.

Mr GUNNER: In 2006. We will get someone to talk about this who is more qualified than I am. My understanding is that the exposure you need to PFAS over what length of time—being bubbled would not be an issue. The Member for Katherine has probably been briefed more often on this than I have, knowing that Katherine is a focal point for this. That would not be an issue.

We also have a significant amount of PFAS in us from Teflon. You are more likely to get more PFAS through using non-stick saucepans and things than being sprayed by the NT fires with bubble foam.

Mr WOOD: I am not trying to be an alarmist ...

Mr GUNNER: Just trying to put it into perspective.

Mr WOOD: I need to know whether those bubble machines were actually using soap or PFAS.

Mr SPAIN: There is not a 100% guarantee that it was not AFFF foam in those days, but Comprox foam was always cheaper—which is your dishwashing liquid. It was always cheaper than the expensive foam the majority of time. There are two elements to this. Aviation also used bubble machines for events, so we cannot guarantee that foam was either aviation fire service or us.

Mr GUNNER: For Hansard, if they did not hear that—essentially, it is unlikely PFAS foam was used for bubble parties because it was cheaper to use dishwashing soap. For all those kids out there who ...

Mr WOOD: They were so clean when they went home.

Mr GUNNER: ... were getting the full fire treatment. You were more likely to have had the dishwashing liquid.

Madam CHAIR: Chief Minister, for the *Hansard* record, could you let us know the officer's name who spoke.

Mr GUNNER: That was Mark Spain. If Hansard could hear him—he spoke in a loud voice so it was likely that Hansard heard him.

Mr WOOD: My other question is in relation to the special measures plan regarding gender equity within the service. Why has the government gone down that path? I should state up front I am very happy for males or females to be in the fire brigade or police force. Why is it applied to this particular portfolio rather than other portfolios?

Mr GUNNER: I will make initial comment and then pass to the commissioner. Special measures actually refers to OCPE policy. That is not what is applying here. What NTPFES has tried to do is increase the number of females who are entering training programs. Rather than special measures, we recognise—and the commissioner can talk about this in more detail—that the training program we were doing was essentially knocking women out from being able to participate.

The example that has been given to me—there are quite a few you could use—was early on, almost the first thing you do would be asked to carry a hose which is quite heavy. A lot of females were knocked out at that stage from going through the full training process. That is basically a technique issue, not necessarily a strength issue. By moving that aspect of the testing process towards the end has seen a significant increase in the number of women who can participate.

Rather than special measures what we are acknowledging is that the training that we were was geared unconsciously towards men and we were knocking out females by accident.

Another example that was given was often females were asked to do this wearing clothes that had been designed for men and so they were essentially being asked to participate through the process and being accidentally handicapped. This was not deliberate to throw the hose in early or have the wrong clothes available. What we have done is essentially make a training recruitment processes work for both genders where they had not been in the past.

Mr WOOD: I am happy with that explanation but that is not the explanation that came back to me and I had complaints from senior men about them feeling that they had been now not able to get a job because women had taken their place. But the explanation makes a lot of sense; you are making sure the training is equal and therefore people have equal opportunity, which is what I think it should be about.

Mr GUNNER: It had been biased, but not deliberately biased. I am with you, Member for Nelson. I understand a lot of these concerns and there may have been a failure to explain what was being done but essentially it was not deliberate—fire fighters did not engage in a process of eliminating women through the program—it was just the way it had been designed. Unfortunately it was biased.

Commissioner KERSHAW: Interesting that it is men who make the complaint because that is all I hear from them too. To give you an example of the maths on this it is really quite simple. We just did some metrics and, for example, if you have 1000 people that are applying for police, and 700 of those are male and 300 are female, you will end up with 70/30, which is what has been happening over the years. They are actually as successful as each other. All we did was changed our marketing and also where we were recruiting from and some of our processes. We did not lower any standards and we got the same number of people pretty much applying and that is how you end up with the fifty-fifty. It is simple maths.

As well as putting our fitness test at the end of the process so that we were knocking out a lot of people that gave up—but they might have had the right character, the right qualities that we were looking for, and we are able to say to them, 'Go away for a month and come back after you do a training program and pass the fitness test. Then you are in.'

The other thing we learned was that we were bias against women. We made them actually travel to Darwin and do a whole range of things, not understanding that women tended to let their bosses know that they would take leave—proper leave—where men would go on sick leave. From an integrity point of view for us when we did all the testing, we found that those were the women we wanted because they had the better integrity.

I could go on all day about this because I have more and more examples—it did get a bit lost in translation. We said it is a target not a quota. Some other agencies have set a quota but we set a target and then we had a look at our processes—the fire service has done similar. We have gone from 2% women in the last two or three years in the fire service to 8%. They are not taking over the fire service; at police we are still at 30%.

We worked out that to get parity it is 168 years, where we were heading. We have a long way to go but currently, with our new program, that will take less than 168 years to get to parity.

Mr WOOD: Is it not the issue here, Chief Minister. Perhaps the explanation has not been right and it has come over as—there will be 50% women regardless, but the real reason is the way it has been ...

Mr GUNNER: We want to remove the barriers and give everyone an equal opportunity of being able to get in and become a firefighter. That is the process we are taking and I acknowledge some people out there have not realised that is what we have done, or they thought we have gone out set a special measure or a quota. As the commissioner has just said, it is a target not a quota. We have essentially made it a level playing field.

Mr WOOD: How has that gone across with the people? For instance, I got the complaints from—have they started to understand the background behind what you are doing?

Mr GUNNER: To my understanding—the commissioner can comment on this further—now that we have had a couple of these training programs or recruit processes and there have been graduations, some of the concerns were whether this is a merit-based appointment or a quota. People can now clearly see that this is merit-based. They have gone through the full training now and are equipped and capable of doing this job. That has removed a lot of the concerns. There may still be disgruntled people out there who did not get into the squad because there is now a more level playing field. There are more squads they can apply for. There is always a new squad coming up.

Commissioner KERSHAW: We also know that men are disproportionately represented in discipline. Our top 20 disciplined police officers are all male. If you applied a ratio, in theory, you might say it is a 70/30 split, but it is not.

We know that women bring a range of different skillsets. We also know from talking with the New South Wales fire service at length, their commissioner spent 14 years going from 0.5% women in their fire service to 7%. That is how long it took—14 years.

It broke down a lot of the cultural issues they had and provided a much more positive environment, and so on. There are lots of benefits. I think the communication on this—what I say to people is go and talk to your

sister, mother or aunty about it and tell them what your opinion is. See what they say to you about some of your attitudes. It has to change.

Mr WOOD: I have three daughters and they tell me exactly—the only thing I would say is, whilst I agree with what you are doing, I am concerned about the teaching profession. I will not go into that now, but we need to change there as well.

Madam CHAIR: Are there any other questions for the Chief Minister?

Mr GUYULA: Thank you, Madam Chair. I am sure this might be a bit sensitive, but I need to ask about an incident that happened in Gapuwiyak a couple of weeks ago, because people are concerned.

Chief Minister, a recent incident in Gapuwiyak was very upsetting for that community and family. A young person passed away and was taken by police before the family were really ready for the body to be taken away. Following this, the family were subject to more interviews by police, who had flown in from Darwin. The family respectfully asked for time of mourning for a few days at least, but the police who flew in were unable to provide this to the family. Given the trauma they were suffering, I hope there may be some time given to the family.

What kind of cross-cultural training is provided for police officers in all regions, especially when they have to fly into Aboriginal communities from Darwin? Who provides the cross-cultural training? How many elders are involved? How extensive is it? My question is really about how we can work better across cultures.

Mr GUNNER: If I can first comment generally. We had a look at many things. I sat on the Youth Suicides in the NT parliamentary committee that produced *Gone Too Soon: A Report into Youth Suicide in the Northern Territory*. One of the areas that came up as a point of significant concern was how to manage the moment post suicide. It is obviously incredibly impactful on the family.

At that point in time, it was not always immediately declared a suicide. Police were required to investigate around what has occurred. That is an extremely fraught moment, whether it is Aboriginal community or non-Aboriginal community, how you handle that moment post death. If it is later determined that it was not a suicide, police need to have had—it is a period of great difficulty.

There were questions around notification to the Coroner, counselling to make sure there are not more clusters, which can often occur. There is a series of things that have to be triggered from that point in time, which is extremely difficult for the family. You have just suffered the loss of a loved one. It is a horrible moment in time that requires some things to occur.

I understand exactly the point you are making. I will hand to the commissioner. He may or may not be able to talk about this specific incident, but it came up in the Youth Suicides in the NT committee process, which led to *Gone Too Soon: A Report into Youth Suicide in the Northern Territory*. It is a horrible moment in time where certain things have to happen.

Commissioner KERSHAW: Yes, I am sad for the loss for the family and pay my respects. I am disappointed that they felt that way. We would never want to upset the family like that.

One of the things we have been working on is establishing a new unit, our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander's development unit. We held three forums throughout the Territory with our Aboriginal officers who basically said they felt they wanted to take some ownership of some of these issues.

The other goal we have been set by some of that group is to have an all-Aboriginal police station. That is something we would enjoy your help with in encouraging more Aboriginal people to join our organisation. We only have 9% who identify as being Aboriginal in our organisation.

We know that each town or region has a different cultural authority and awareness that is required. We have been working with Tanyah Nasir. She is very good up here in the north with how we can roll out more cultural training. We are doing it in Katherine with May Rosas and in Central Australia as well. Our cultural awareness training is an area we need to improve in and increase the number of Aboriginal officers.

Mr GUYULA: Well, in that case, it might have happened after you had gone or before you got there. The family came to me and I just filled in. I could be an interpreter or an elder in the community or a cross-cultural communicator so that both parties—the family and the police—were consulting equally with each other.

When they came there would have been some elders around the place. They were not just sitting around, they were there also investigating through Yolngu law as well. That is why when police or someone comes along, maybe it is best to sit down with some elderly women and men and work out how things will be worked out properly so the family is not feeling left out. If things are done correctly then things may work out properly, rather than what is normally happening.

Mr GUNNER: Perhaps we can get some further conversations, with police and you. I know there are protocols, but maybe we can work on how some of those protocols can be adapted. It is not necessarily the cultural training which they are receiving; it is updating the formal protocols they have in some situations. Maybe we can learn from this example about who they talk to, when and in what order so that the investigation is not impaired but is done in a respectful way as well.

Mr GUYULA: We can see that in the morgue and the inspections of what happened and how the death happened, there is also Yolngu law that carried out the same kind of things. We are coming from two sides, where we can come together and work on them both and make sure we work together towards getting a good result for everyone—the family, the police, the elders, the people in the community—towards somewhere that we can communicate and work on it together.

Mr GUNNER: I understand that police made some variations on the day about when the plane left, but did not work in with all the family, to the extent that it was actually a police decision or not. I will have to follow it up. I understand the police were able to hold the plane on the ground for a few hours longer before it departed. They were able to make that variation, but there was obviously a desire for it to stay overnight, which could not be accommodated. But we can follow up to what extent that was a police decision or not, and what process kicked in when that led to that outcome.

My understanding is police followed up the next day to talk to people and apologise and try to explain what occurred. It does not mean to say that improvements cannot be made. We will find out to what extent that was a police improvement that has been made, or somewhere else in that process ...

Mr GUYULA: I thought I would follow it through because the family was concerned at that time of the day. A few days later it could have been all right.

Madam CHAIR: And to acknowledge as well—I was in Lake Evella the same time as the Member for Nhulunbuy, for different reasons. The Gapuwiyak police were working extensively with the families ...

Mr GUYULA: They were working very well.

Madam CHAIR: ... but the time line—I know what the Member for Nhulunbuy is talking about. The time line is not the right time line for the grieving family.

Gapuwiyak is very strong with having an Aboriginal liaison recruited who works in the police station. A young man from Lake Evella is working there, filling in the role from when Damien moved on to become a police constable.

Mr GUYULA: That is all for the time being.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: I will squeeze one last question in, about remote policing. How many police stations do we have in the Territory that are not being manned?

Mr GUNNER: Where this gets complicated is that there are temporary Themis police stations and police posts. We have a requirement to have 300 police outside Darwin and Palmerston. We have over 500 police outside Darwin and Palmerston; that is our funding agreement with the Commonwealth. We go above and beyond our agreement.

Part of the problem is the confusion around our police stations versus the Themis ones, which essentially have reached their use-by date, and the police posts.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Perhaps you could break that down to posts, Themis and stations?

Mr GUNNER: Yes. Separately there is a new remote policing strategy that police are working on about where exactly police should be based off population numbers or response time.

Central Australia might be a good example of this. Communities in Central Australia are smaller than the Top End. Where do you base police so there is an even spread of response time out? In the Top End where do you base police—on population numbers and other things?

Commissioner KERSHAW: It does depend on what you are talking about—permanent station versus the old Themis stations. We currently have 22 vacancies, but they are funded positions. It is not unusual for us to have vacancies.

These are full-time police stations ...

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: You have the money for them but not the police to fill them.

Commissioner KERSHAW: Yes, but that is a point in time. I could probably report in two weeks that we have 10. These are ones that have been advertised and they will be getting filled ...

Mr GUNNER: Is there no one acting in the role while it is being filled?

Commissioner KERSHAW: These are sometimes constable or sergeant positions. We would have people there at the permanent station. At our Themis stations we place them according to priority, and the money the Commonwealth supplies will help us for the policing.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Is it envisaged that at Themis stations there are not always police, and at posts there are not always police? And that is done on demand?

Commissioner KERSHAW: Yes. And as the Chief Minister, we have a funding appropriation of 300, but we are breaking it down to the dollars ...

Mr GUNNER: Can I clarify—the Commonwealth does not pay for 300 police. The Commonwealth pays for around 58 police. The amount of money the Commonwealth has provided us for police has decreased over time as the police numbers have gone up. The agreement with the Commonwealth is that there will be 300 police based outside Darwin and Palmerston, so we will pick up the bulk of that. We are actually at over 500 police.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Are you able to give a breakdown—well, no. You cannot; posts and Themis stations at any one time could be zero.

Commissioner KERSHAW: What we can say is, getting into the funding aspect, which is important for us, we use about 80 police. We go 22 police, on average, over what the Commonwealth funding model is. We have to borrow that money from the NTG budget, which then causes overspend for us.

It is an ongoing issue for us from a budget perspective. This is confirmed by Ernst & Young's financial audit of us as well. That is an ongoing issue to allocate funding to those temporary stations. They are getting old, those facilities—most time they are 12 weeks on, 12 weeks off with different officers. In our permanent stations we always have vacancies at any point in time in those stations, with people transferring or return to service. We advertise them and fill them as they come online.

Mr GUNNER: To address that there is a relief pool ...

Commissioner KERSHAW: There is. Darwin relieve a lot of the north and Alice Springs relieve a lot of the south.

Mr GUNNER: To make sure there are no vacancies in the community.

Madam CHAIR: Thank you, Chief Minister and Commissioner.

This concludes consideration of output groups relating to the Northern Territory Police, Fire and Emergency Services.

On behalf of the committee, I would like to thank the officers who provided assistance to the Chief Minister today.

The committee also acknowledges and thanks the Department of Trade, Business and Innovation staff for their preparation in the estimates process and apologise that due to time restrictions that the Department of Business, Trade and Innovation will not be able to appear today.

Mr GUNNER: The department has also done a significant amount of work to prepare for today, and I think the committee will regret not having had Michael Tennant appear.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: I would also like to thank police—thank you for your hard work. This has been a very beneficial process, as estimates always is. I would also like to thank DTBI staff because I know they have poured a lot of energy in to and have probably sitting waiting anxiously to appear today, but I can assure you we will be providing written questions. It is disappointing we could not get to it, but time is very tight. Thank you.

Madam CHAIR: The Estimates Committee will recommence tomorrow morning at 8 am. Thank you everyone.

The committee suspended.
