

The Estimates Committee commenced at 8.30 am.

MINISTER CHANDLER'S PORTFOLIOS

POLICE, FIRE AND EMERGENCY SERVICES

Madam CHAIR: Good morning to everyone listening in at home or at work. Thank you for joining us for day five of estimates. We are joined by minister Chandler in the Northern Territory Police, Fire and Emergency Services portfolio. Minister, I welcome you and ask you to introduce the officials accompanying you today.

Mr CHANDLER: I welcome Commissioner and Chief Executive Officer, Reece Kershaw, and the Northern Territory Police, Fire and Emergency Services senior executive team seated behind us.

Madam CHAIR: And Ms Ko?

Mr CHANDLER: Audrey to my right, Reece. There is no one else here? No.

Madam CHAIR: Minister, I invite you to make an opening statement of no more than five minutes. 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 questions first followed by committee members. Finally other participating members may ask questions. The committee has agreed that other members may join in on a line of questioning pursued by a shadow rather than waiting for the end of the shadow's questioning on the output. Would you like to make an opening statement, minister?

Mr CHANDLER: The Northern Territory Police, Fire and Emergency Services is a tri-service comprising the Northern Territory Police, the Northern Territory Fire and Rescue Service and Northern Territory Emergency Services. The Commissioner of Police exercises Chief Executive Officer authority over all three entities. The vision of the agency is to be values-led to serve and protect the people of the Northern Territory.

Throughout the year the Northern Territory Police has continued to provide services that help keep us all safe. In the first 10 months of this financial year to the end of April the Northern Territory Police has recorded over 271 000 incidents. This equates to 27 100 on average per month, over 6200 per week and an average of almost 900 incidents in every 24-hour period.

This is a phenomenal workload that is often forgotten when focusing on a particular incident or statistic. This is not always undertaken in a pleasant environment. In 2014 there were over 270 police assaults recorded, which is an average of over five per week. In addition, police take approximately 13 000 people into protective custody in their watch houses every year. It is a tough gig.

The same can be said for the Northern Territory Fire and Rescue Service and the Northern Territory Emergency Service paid staff and volunteers that keep Territorians safe 365 days every year.

The Northern Territory Fire and Rescue Service operates out of 24/7 career stations located in Darwin, Berrimah, Marrara, Palmerston, Alice Springs and Humpty Doo on week days, and there are five career and part-time auxiliary volunteer stations located in the major regional centres of Yulara, Tennant Creek, Katherine, Jabiru and Nhulunbuy. There are seven volunteer Fire and Emergency Response Groups, or FERGS, located in Adelaide River, Batchelor, Borroloola, Mataranka, Timber Creek, Elliott and Pine Creek. A further five volunteer fire brigades exist at Howard Springs, Koolpinyah, Alice Springs, Humpty Doo, Virginia, Bees Creek, and there are three remote volunteer brigades at Bathurst Island, Yirrkala and Larrimah. The NT Fire and Emergency Service is currently re-establishing a FERG unit at Ti Tree with localised recruitment campaigns under way.

As of yesterday, the Northern Territory Fire and Rescue Service supports a combined workforce of 277 paid or part-time firefighters and support staff, along with 262 volunteers.

I acknowledge the commitment and dedication that our firefighters display in keeping Territorians and those visiting the Territory safe and secure. The range of services they provide extends well beyond firefighting and fire protection to road crash rescue, managing hazardous material spills, undertaking bushfire mitigation programs through to educating the public.

They even played an essential role in undertaking rapid damage assessments across areas impacted by Cyclones Lam and Nathan, where they also assisted their interstate colleagues in establishing Camp Elcho.

The Northern Territory Fire and Rescue Service personnel do this every day of the year out of each of their 27 emergency response areas.

The Northern Territory Emergency Services has its Territory and northern region headquarters in Berrimah and in the southern region, headquarters in Alice Springs and a paid staff member in Katherine.

The Northern Territory Emergency Services is responsible for facilitating emergency management planning, raising public disaster awareness and delivering public disaster preparedness education. The organisation also provides a response capability for emergency events through a pool of over 300 dedicated volunteers in cooperation with the Northern Territory and local government agencies and community groups.

I seek to acknowledge the great work of all Northern Territory Emergency Services personnel not just in times of emergency response as we have witnessed recently, but throughout the entire year. Much of the work undertaken by the Northern Territory Emergency Services involves emergency planning, public education and strengthening of its capacity and capability. While the response and recovery phases in an emergency can be very public, the prevention and preparation phases are sometimes less visible. The Northern Territory Emergency Services personnel consistently contribute to all phases across the Territory every year.

Like its state emergency services counterparts in other states and territories, a significant proportion of the organisation's response capabilities rely on volunteers who continue to dedicate their time to ensure a safe Northern Territory. By way of example, this year alone the Northern Territory Emergency Services volunteers played a pivotal role in responding to two tropical cyclones and flash flooding of the Todd River. During the same period, paid staff have played a pivotal role in emergency management and the organisation has grown in both capability and size.

Northern Territory Police has played a major focus on domestic violence through Project Respect. The focus is on prevention of this abhorrent crime and bringing perpetrators to account through the courts when this type of offending has occurred. Across the Northern Territory the latest publicly-released crime statistics for the 12 months ending March 2015 showed that domestic violence-related assaults are down 10%, which is 447 less domestic violence assaults in the year. In Alice Springs domestic violence assaults are down 19%, or 204 less in the year. In Tennant Creek domestic violence-related assaults are down an amazing 58%, which is 278 less for the year ending March 2015 compared to the previous year. This is directly as a result of the proactive initiatives of policing in tackling the causal factors and actively working to prevent crime.

The government has remained committed to its crime reduction election commitment and significant results have been achieved. In the two years following the election - that is year ending August 2014 to show a comparative period with the pre-election year - total victim-based offences, which is offences against persons and property, were 9.54% lower than the year ending August 2012. Offences against property were 14.1% lower and offences against the person were 2.4% higher.

The roll-out of the SupportLink Referral Management System which is now operational across the entire Northern Territory, has been a great outcome for policing and community. With referral partnerships in place with 83 government and non-government service providers, police are now able to make a range of referrals for victims and offenders to the social support services they need. This is to reduce the risk of repeat victimisation and offending. In the past six months to the end of March 2015 Northern Territory police officers have made 1909 referrals by using SupportLink.

The highly-skilled police officers in the Northern Territory Police have contributed not only across the Territory in keeping our community safe, but have also made national and international policing contributions, for example, through providing resources for the G20 Summit in Queensland, hosting police members from the Royal Papua New Guinea Constabulary and mentoring through various placement programs across the Northern Territory Police business units.

The policing environment is also constantly evolving due to the complexity of crime and changing technologies. Whilst in the first instance there has been relevance in focusing on infrastructure such as how many buildings and where they are placed, that is becoming somewhat redundant. Every police

vehicle is a mobile police station nowadays with its in-car data terminals and each frontline officer having been issued with an iPad which allows them to undertake police checks and complete many online forms. It is an exciting time and is allowing the police to better meet the needs of the community by ensuring they can flexibly deploy resources to where they are needed, rather than requiring staff at locations that are not in demand.

The Northern Territory government is committed to a strong community, particularly a safe, secure and resilient Northern Territory. In 2015-16, we are continuing to invest in law enforcement and emergency management through technology, frontline resourcing and training initiatives totalling \$14.6m. These include Police Real Time Online Management Information System (PROMIS) replacement. The Northern Territory government has provided additional funding of \$1m in 2015-16 to develop the business and technical requirement specifications for the replacing of the core policing system known as PROMIS. PROMIS was originally provided and supported by the Australian Federal Police. It is at its end of life and is impacting on business continuity and hindering the ability for business improvement and transformation for support of a modern-day police force.

While the business of policing is largely community based, the complexity has increased with state and national borderless policing, continuous advancement in technology-based crimes and increased risks of terrorism. A contemporary computer system that supports core service delivery, increased data intelligence, ready access to data and to keep pace with other national and international police and law enforcement agencies is essential. A modern system will improve efficiencies for frontline police, increase police presence in the community and contribute to a reduction in crime. Additional benefits across the Northern Territory government include streamlined processes across the justice continuum and automatic electronic interfaces with the Department of Attorney-General and Justice Integrated Justice Information System. Once the functioning requirements are finalised, Cabinet will consider the options to advance a replacement system.

Palmerston CCTV additional cameras and monitoring staff: CCTV is a critical tool in detecting and responding to crime as it occurs in the community, and the key to the success is ensuring that there is adequate coverage of identified antisocial behaviour and other criminal hot spots. The Northern Territory government has provided additional funding of \$600 000 in 2015-16 and \$300 000 ongoing from 2016-17 to support the establishment of additional cameras in Palmerston and two additional CCTV camera monitoring staff at Peter McAulay Centre. CCTV monitoring allows police to be directed to crime incidents as they occur. This proposal will allow monitoring of additional CCTV locations in Palmerston and will have a significant impact on crime detection, prevention and assisting with the protection of offenders and/or incidents arising in places under surveillance.

Northern Territory Police enhanced tactical equipment: as first responders to emergencies and often violent incidents, police officers are regularly placed in high-risk situations. It is unfortunate that the very people who work tirelessly to keep people and communities safe need to look at their own safety as well. There has been an increase in the national terrorism threat level, including against law officers.

A review of protective security policies and practices has been undertaken which highlighted the requirement for a number of vital enhancements in the Northern Territory Police's tactical capacity. In support, the Northern Territory government has provided additional funding of \$1.686m in 2015-16 to procure enhanced tactical equipment. This includes Territory Response Group rifles and auxiliary equipment. Frontline police officers will also receive a personal issued load-bearing vest sized to the individual with enhanced ballistic armour and equipment-carrying capabilities. Interstate jurisdictions have advised these vests provide further benefits by removing up to 60% of the weight from the hip/waist area, significantly improving the health and safety of police in the field.

Whilst the information technology and equipment resources initiatives enhance police business, they do not replace police on the beat, on patrol. There must be sufficient police on duty to respond to calls for assistance from members of the public. The Northern Territory government is continuing to commit to frontline Northern Territory Police resources through additional funding of \$8.7m in 2015-16 ongoing to support a further 38 police positions.

In addition to the above I am pleased to announce the Northern Territory government has funded an additional 13 Aboriginal Community Police Officer positions at \$2m in 2015-16 ongoing. Community engagement is a vital component with police business and these positions will enhance communities and communications and positive interactions, particularly in remote communities.

Recent cyclone events have highlighted the importance of communities, government and non-government organisation to be prepared. The nature of emergency management involves reliance on functional group representatives from various government, non-government and community organisations, all of whom exercise emergency management functions during the response and recovery phases of an emergency situation.

The Northern Territory government has provided additional funding of \$625 000 in 2015-16 and 2016-17 and ongoing support of \$300 000 from 2017-18 to Northern Territory Emergency Services to develop and deliver a structured, coordinated and comprehensive framework of emergency management training across the Northern Territory to prepare individuals for the roles they are likely to be asked to perform in a disaster response and recovery.

All agencies have been required to make savings measures to help bring the budget back to surplus and the Northern Territory Police, Fire and Emergency Services is no exception with an additional 1.5% of efficiency dividend applied. Northern Territory Police, Fire and Emergency Services has identified a number of areas where savings can sensibly be made without impacting on operational frontline response. In light of the recent technological advancements such as frontline iPads integrated into core police systems and the anticipated efficiency gains, the Police Commissioner is taking advantage of the opportunity to maximise his existing resources in a fiscally responsible manner whilst also achieving agency savings. The agency will continue to focus on streamlining process and business practices, as well as identified legislative reforms to enhance frontline efficiencies to ensure the resources we have targeted in the most effective way to meet the community safety outcomes expected and required.

To further support policing in remote area, police stations are being built in Yuendumu and Alpara. Refurbishment projects for police stations in ...

Mr GUNNER: Excuse me. A point of order, Madam Chair! It is meant to be a five-minute opener. Are you close to finishing, minister?

Mr CHANDLER: Yes, we are. We have all day; you are okay.

To further support policing in remote areas, police stations are being built in Yuendumu and Alpara. Refurbishment projects for police stations in Pirlangimpi and Oenpelli are also under way.

The construction contract for the Greatorex police station is nearing completion. The new building will contain a modern police station for the use of a new headquarters and operation centre at a cost of \$9m, built to help meet the needs of the community as well as the challenge of contemporary law enforcement.

Moving on to the Northern Territory Fire and Rescue Service, I am pleased to advise that a new 1400 L light tank rescue appliance has been delivered to Adelaide River. A specialist Internet control vehicle has also been commissioned and is now located at Berrimah Fire Station and will play a significant role in ensuring command and control arrangements are enhanced at major emergency accidents in the greater Darwin area and more remote locations as a result of substantial improvements in on-board technology.

There are three new fire appliances under construction to replace aged fleet which consist of a four-wheel-drive light rescue appliance for Palmerston and a four-wheel-drive medium tanker rescue for both Yulara and Jabiru Fire Stations. These appliances are scheduled for completion late this financial year with the introduction into service soon after. In addition Northern Territory Fire and Rescue Service replaced four four-wheel-drive grass fire units at Palmerston, Koolpinyah, Katherine, and Humpty Doo. Additional four four-wheel-drive grass fire units will be replaced in the coming financial year.

A three-year program has seen 138 outdated breathing apparatus sets replaced across the Territory ensuring essential firefighter safety and operational readiness.

Some \$3.4m over three years has been provided to upgrade the mission critical Northern Territory fast alarm monitoring system to a digital platform from an analogue system. This will ensure Northern Territory Fire and Rescue Service continues to have a state-of-the-art fire alarm monitoring system across the Territory providing protection to thousands of Territorians who occupy buildings worth billions of dollars that require monitoring under the Building Code of Australia.

The role of the Northern Territory Emergency Services in delivering both emergency management and emergency response services has already been highlighted on several occasions this year. Torrential rain effecting the Todd River earlier this year and the most recent back-to-back Tropical Cyclones Lam and

Nathan again demonstrated how important the paid staff and volunteers of the Northern Territory Emergency Services are in contributing to the safety of Territorians. During Tropical Cyclone Lam a total of 88 Northern Territory Emergency Services volunteers provided more than 2500 voluntary hours to the response and recovery operations. This included Northern Territory Emergency Services volunteers who travelled from as far as Hermannsburg to assist. During Tropical Cyclone Nathan Northern Territory Emergency Services volunteers from Nhulunbuy, Galiwinku, Gapuwiyak and Maningrida provided over 200 hours of services to affected communities.

The Northern Territory Emergency Services recently provided a custom-built flood vessel to the Daly River volunteer unit to enhance the capability of that unit to respond to a range of water-related incidents. This complements a similar vessel introduced to the Palmerston volunteer unit. Three more vessels are currently being constructed for Alice Springs, Katherine and the Darwin region volunteer units, further strengthening the response capability for inland flood rescue.

The Northern Territory Emergency Services is continuing to develop a volunteer unit at Waruwi with funding recently approved to conduct a building for those volunteers to operate from. Members of the Waruwi volunteer unit commenced their initial training just one week before the onset of Tropical Cyclone Lam and performed a critical role in evacuations of South Goulburn Island.

Over the past year the Northern Territory Emergency Services has undergone a series of internal reforms aimed at making the organisation more efficient and better able to serve Territorians. Some of these reforms include strengthening the volunteer network and producing a Northern Territory Emergency Services mascot for use in delivering disaster resilience and education to school-aged children.

The Northern Territory Emergency Services remains grateful to the volunteers and their families who give their valuable time to keep Territorians safe. It continues to operate as a business intent on being innovative, engaging and responsive to the needs of our public.

In summary, the NT Police, Fire and Emergency Services has demonstrated its commitment to enhancing community safety with the provision of innovative and responsive services. With these few words I am pleased to take questions from the committee on behalf of this agency. Once again, I put on the record that our Police, Fire and Emergency Services do an amazing job in the Northern Territory.

Madam CHAIR: Thank you, minister. Are there any questions on the statement?

Mr GUNNER: Do you need a lozenge and a break after reading that? A couple of questions upfront about where things may fall. Would you take questions about the chaplain at whole-of-agency?

Mr CHANDLER: Absolutely.

Mr GUNNER: And TBLs would be at Output 1.1 or whole-of-agency?

Mr CHANDLER: Either, member for Fannie Bay.

Mr GUNNER: In that case, Madam Chair, I have some whole-of-agency questions.

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 (2015-2016) as they relate to the NT Police, Fire and Emergency Services. Are there any agency-related whole-of-government questions on budget and fiscal strategy?

Mr GUNNER: There are, thank you, Madam Chair. Minister, could you please provide a breakdown of NTPFES staff by rank and classification? Most ministers had their information up to 31 March so I am assuming that would be where yours is up to - the breakdown as in the annual report by commissioner, deputy commissioner and assistant commissioner. Are you aware of that breakdown? I am getting nods.

Mr CHANDLER: One commissioner, four assistant commissioners, six commanders, 32 superintendents, 68.5 senior sergeants, 187.1 sergeants, 42 remote sergeants, 836.37 constables, 28 recruit constables, 62 ACPOs, 120.83 police auxiliaries and ...

Mr GUNNER: That is a total of?

Mr CHANDLER: That is FTEs as of Pay 20, 20 March 2015. It is a total of 1388.8.

Mr GUNNER: That is 1388.8.

Mr CHANDLER: I have a head count as of 20 March 2015 of 1432.

Mr GUNNER: What date was that for?

Mr CHANDLER: 20 March.

Mr GUNNER: 20 March.

Mr CHANDLER: Yes.

Mr GUNNER: Could you provide the rate of separation broken down as in the annual report for consistency? That is overall police, constables and above - NTFRS and NTPS.

Mr CHANDLER: I am happy to take that on notice. What I can give you here though for today is 2014-15 total separations constables and above 3.55%, so that is 43 total separations, with constable recruits total separations of two, ACPOs total separation of three, and police auxiliaries total separations of 14. It is worth noting that ...

Mr GUNNER: That is an improvement in the constables rate by the look of it.

Mr CHANDLER: Yes, in 2013-14 there were 83 separations, this year only 43.

Mr GUNNER: From 84 to 43?

Mr CHANDLER: From 83 to 43. We dropped from 6.6%, constables and above down to 3.55% total separations.

Mr GUNNER: The next question is hopefully simple while it is slightly more complicated. We asked police in a written question about the units within police. The answer that came back read top to bottom rather than page to page. Apologies, Madam Chair, this is not a stunt, this is just how it prints out. This is the police structure that was provided to us by police - there are 110 business units - Cold Case Task Force, Assets Forfeiture Unit, Computer Crime Unit, Major Fraud, Drug and Organised Crime Squad – there are 110 - service command, divisions, sections and units.

I am trying to make my question as clear as possible. Could we have the establishment numbers for each of those units?

Mr CHANDLER: Member for Fannie Bay, did you want total sworn officer numbers or total employees? There would be civilians working in some of those units.

Mr GUNNER: There would be a breakdown between civilian and sworn, I imagine. Essentially I want the establishment number and then the number, if that makes sense. Sometimes there might be over-establishment or under-establishment. It is more to understand where the police are broken out to.

Mr CHANDLER: We can do that. We will start at the top. We have one commissioner - a good commissioner too; Risk Management and Internal Audit Division, two; Business Improvement Division, one; Commissioner Support Unit, two; Legal Branch, one, making a total of seven in the commissioner's Darwin regional office.

Office of the Deputy Commissioner, Darwin region is two; Professional Standards Command, one; Complaints Management Division, four; Internal Investigations Division, seven; Custody Service Division, two, makes a total of 16.

Innovation and Enterprise Services, Darwin region is – are these all separate divisions?

Mr GUNNER: You are reading out in a different order to what I have so I cannot track your answer.

Mr CHANDLER: I am trying to give you all the information. It may just be better to give you the totals in each of the ...

Mr GUNNER: You might need to take it on notice, I want it by the station/unit.

Mr CHANDLER: We will go through this because then it is - I will read out the individual ones so it is on *Hansard* and you will have the information.

Innovation and Enterprise Services, one; Innovation Command, two; Capability Command, two; Professional Development Command, one; Development Studies Division, six; Operational Safety Section, nine; Road Policing and Driver Training Unit, three; Katherine Command Training Unit, two; Alice Springs Command Training Unit, three; Armoury Unit, one; Foundation Studies Division, three; Instructional Unit, 10; Recruit Course, 32; Remote Police Development Section, three. That is a total of 78 for Innovation and Enterprise Services, Darwin region.

Corporate Services Darwin region: Police Recruitment and Selections, eight.

Moving on to Crime and Specialist Services Darwin region, majority with some Alice Springs region: Crime and Specialist Services, two; Crime and Specialist Service Command, one; Crime Division, one; Major Crime Squad, 15; Cold Case Task Force, five; Serious Crimes Squad, 19; High-Tech Crime Squad, one; Assets Forfeiture Unit, three; Computer Crime Unit, four; Major Fraud, six; Drug and Organised Crime Division, one; Drug and Organised Crime Squad, 29; Sex Crimes Division, one; Sex Crimes Unit, eight; Child Abuse Task Force, 11; Reportable Offender Management Unit, two; Online Child Exploitation Unit, two; Family Violence Unit, seven; Territory Coordination Unit, two; Territory Intelligence and Specialist Service Division, one; Operational and Field Intelligence Section, 37; Technical and Covert Section, one; Special Projects Unit, eight; Police Technical Unit, three; Covert Operations, one; Traffic and Operational Support Command, one; Traffic Operations Division, one; Darwin Traffic Operations, 17; Major Crash Investigation Section, one; Major Crash Reconstruction Unit, one; Darwin Major Crash Investigation Unit, five; Alice Springs Major Crash Investigation Unit, three; Forensic Science Section, one; Exhibit Reception Unit, two; Crime Scene Examination Unit, seven; Firearms and Tool Examination Unit, two; Fingerprints Unit, 11; Public Safety Division, one; Crime Prevention Section, two; Community and Youth Engagement, one; Junior Police Ranger Support Program, two; PCYC Support Program, two; Neighbourhood Watch Support Program, two; Firearms and Policy Recording Section, two; Judicial Operations Section, one; Judicial Operations Unit, three; Youth Diversion Program, 10; Prosecution Section, one; Alice Springs Prosecutions Unit, nine; and Katherine Prosecutions Unit, four. That is a total of 263 for Crime Specialist Services.

Darwin Metropolitan Services, Darwin region including the Tiwi Islands: Darwin Metropolitan Services, two; Darwin Metropolitan Command, four; Darwin Metropolitan Division, one; Darwin Police Station, 61; Darwin Front Counter and Beat Unit, 13; Darwin Youth Engagement Officers, three; City Safe and Licensing Patrol, five; Darwin Watch House, 22; Wurrumiyanga Police Station, three; Pirlangimpi Police Station, two; Milikapiti Police Post, two; Palmerston Police Station, 62; Palmerston Front Counter and Beat Unit, nine; Palmerston Youth Engagement Officers, three; Humpty Doo Police Station, seven; Casuarina Police Station, 72; Casuarina Front Counter and Beat Unit, 14; Casuarina Youth Engagement Officers, five; Property Office, two; Metropolitan Operations Group, 21; Scene of Crime Unit, three; Special Operations Command, one; Special Operations Division, two; Metropolitan Patrol Group, 60; Specialist Enforcement Group, two; Dog Operations Unit, eight; Police Mounted Unit, seven; Immigration Liaison Unit, three; Territory Duty Superintendents, five; Northern Watch Commanders, five; Territory Communications Division, one; Territory Communications Section, 64; Territory Response and Emergency Management Division, one; Territory Response Group, 39; Water Police Section, 17; Security and Emergency Coordination Section, six. That is a total of 537 of Darwin metropolitan services including the Tiwis.

Moving on to Regional Operations, Northern Command for Katherine and East Arnhem Regions: Regional Operations, one; Northern Command, one; Arafura Division, one; Arafura, one; Jabiru Police Station, seven; Gunbalanya Police Station, four; Maningrida Police Station, six; Ramingining Themis Station, four; Pine Creek Police Station, two; Adelaide River Police Station, two; Batchelor Police Station, three; Nhulunbuy Police Station, 19; Galiwinku Police Station, four; Gapuwiyak Themis Station, four; Katherine Division, one; Katherine Police Station, 69; Katherine Watch House, five; Northern Investigation Section, seven; Northern Domestic Violence Prevention Unit, five; Northern Crime Scene Examination Unit, two; Northern Substance Abuse Intelligence Desk, three; Northern Dog Operations Unit, two; Northern Traffic Operations Unit, four; Northern Youth Engagement Unit, two; Arnhem and Western Division, two; Alyangula Police Station, 14; Maranboy Police Station, two; Yarralin Themis Station, four; Lajamanu Police Station, two; Kalkarindji Police Station, three; Timber Creek Police Station, two; Daly River Police Station, three; Wadeye Police Station, eight; Borroloola Police Station, eight; Mataranka Police Station, two; Ngukurr Police Station, three; Warrawi Themis Station, two; Minjilang Themis Station, two; Numbulwar

Themis Station, two; Minyerri Themis Station, two; Bulman Themis Station, two; Peppimenarti Themis Station, two. That is a total of 224 in Regional Operations Northern Command.

We are onto the last page.

Region Operations Southern Command takes in the Tennant Creek and Alice Springs regions: Southern Command, two; Alice Springs division, one; Alice Springs Police Station, 142; Alice Springs Custody Unit, 13; Alice Springs Operational Support Unit, one; Southern Traffic Operations Unit, nine; Alice Springs Crime Prevention Section, seven; Central Desert Division, two; Ntaria Police Station, three; Kulgera Police Station, two; Papunya Police Station, three; Yuendumu Police Station, five; Yulara Police Station, four; Kintore Police Station, two; Warakurna Police Station, one; Ti Tree Police Station, three; Harts Range Police Station, two; Mutitjulu Themis Station, two; Tennant Creek and Barkly Division, one; Tennant Creek Police Station, 33; TCK Investigations Unit, three; TCK Domestic Violence Prevention Unit, two; Ali Curung Police Station, five; Elliott Police Station, three; Avon Downs Police Station, two; Southern Investigations Division, one; Southern Serious Crime Squad, eight; Southern Crimes Scene Examination Unit, five; Southern Domestic Violence Prevention Unit, nine; Southern Coronial Investigation Unit, two; Southern Child Abuse Task Force, four; Southern Tactical Investigation Squad, 14, Southern Dog Operations Unit, two; Southern Substance Abuse Intelligence Desk, two; Imanpa Themis Station, two; Haasts Bluff Themis Station, two; Nyirripi Themis Station, two; Aputula Finke Themis Station, two; Yarrenyty, four; Alpara, two; Willowra Themis Station, two; and Alpururulam/Lake Nash Themis Station, two. That is a total of 318 in Region and Operations Southern Command.

Region Operations Remote Police and Command Darwin region: Remote Police and Command, one; Remote Development Division, one; Remote Workforce Development Section, eight, which gives as total of 10.

Total regional operations 552, and that is 1461 in total for police.

In the NT Fire and Rescue establishment: Fire and Rescue Services, one; Division Support is eight, with a total of nine.

Operation Services: Operational Services, one; Darwin and Rural, six; Darwin, 57; Marrara, 21; Palmerston, 26; Humpty Doo, four; Berrimah, 22; Southern, two; Alice Springs Southern Region, 32; Tennant Creek Southern Region, two; Yulara Southern Region, two; Volunteer and Regional Stations North, one; Nhulunbuy, two; Katherine, three; Jabiru, two; Volunteer Coordination, one. That is a total of 184.

In the Development Strategy Area: Development Strategy, three; Special Operations, six; Community Safety, 16; Training and Development, 13, making a total of 38. Of the fire services for clarity, there are 213 total in uniform and 18 civilians employed.

Mr GUNNER: Excellent. They were the establishment numbers?

Ms KO: Yes.

Mr CHANDLER: NT Emergency Services establishment: NTES Executive, two; NTES Corporate Division, three; Northern Division, six; Southern Division, five; Training Division, two. That is a total of 18. There are 403 civilians for the police civilian employment unit.

Mr GUNNER: Excellent. Can you provide a breakdown, on notice, of how many of those establishment positions are filled to vacant.

Question on Notice No 8.1

Madam CHAIR: Opposition Leader, please restate the question for the record.

Mr CHANDLER: We have the information here if you want it.

Mr GUNNER: By the 110 units?

Mr CHANDLER: Yes, it is in another column.

Mr GUNNER: Yes, but you would then have to read it all out again just as you have done.

Mr CHANDLER: I am happy to do it on notice.

Mr GUNNER: For the sake of time I am happy to do that. We have the establishment numbers and then to know the filled versus vacancy rate.

Madam CHAIR: Opposition leader, please restate the question for the record.

Mr GUNNER: Could the minister please provide the occupied and vacant rates for establishment numbers for the business units? Does that make sense?

Mr CHANDLER: Can we add at 30 April 2015?

Mr GUNNER: At 30 April.

Madam CHAIR: Minister, do you accept the question?

Mr CHANDLER: Yes.

Madam CHAIR: That question will be number 8.1.

Mr GUNNER: How many temporary contracts do you have in police at the moment?

Mr CHANDLER: You are not including my contract, are you, member for Fannie Bay? At the moment temporary contracts is 150.48 FTE.

Mr GUNNER: Can you break that down by level at all?

Ms KO: No, we have to take that on notice.

Mr GUNNER: That is not a problem. How many people are on sick leave at the moment in the service?

Mr CHANDLER: On any given day?

Ms KO: We can give you longer than 12 months because there are a lot of one or two days.

Mr GUNNER: Sorry, I should give you a time frame. As at the last pay, would that be ...

Mr CHANDLER: On that pay day?

Ms KO: We have seven longer than 12 months, but shorter than that we would have to take on notice.

Mr CHANDLER: No, the member for Fannie Bay is asking how many people were on sick leave on a given day.

Mr GUNNER: At the last pay period. Is that a reasonable way of phrasing it?

Mr CHANDLER: We can take that on notice.

Question on Notice No 8.2

Madam CHAIR: Please restate the question for the record.

Mr GUNNER: How many people were on sick leave as at the last pay period?

Madam CHAIR: Minister, do you accept the question?

Mr CHANDLER: I do.

Madam CHAIR: That question will be number 8.2.

Mr GUNNER: We are getting that breakdown of the vacancy rate by unit, but do you have a total number for vacancies within the Police, Fire and Emergency Services at the moment?

Mr CHANDLER: Thirty-three vacancies.

Mr GUNNER: That is total or is that for Police?

Mr CHANDLER: That is for total Police.

Mr GUNNER: When we asked this question two years ago there were none for Emergency Services, 14 for Fire and plus-two for Police. Do you have the Emergency Services or Fire numbers at all – vacancy rates?

I am aware of the back-to-back recruit squads for Fire. I am curious about the facts. I realise there are back-to-back recruit squads.

Mr CHANDLER: There are 12 recruits at the moment.

Mr GUNNER: Twelve vacancies at the moment and all 12 vacant spots will be taken by the two recruit squads going through at the moment?

Mr CHANDLER: Right. In Police there are 20. Just so we know; on 15 June there are 25 expected to graduate – sorry, starting.

Mr GUNNER: On 15 June there are 25 police recruits commencing.

Mr CHANDLER: Yes.

Mr GUNNER: In 2013 at estimates we were advised it cost \$228 000 for a police officer in the NT. Do you still have a figure that you use?

Mr CHANDLER: \$241 000.

Mr GUNNER: That is \$241 000 for an officer. You take repairs and maintenance in whole-of-agency, I am assuming?

Mr CHANDLER: Yes.

Mr GUNNER: Can you advise how much on repairs and maintenance has been spent in 2013-14, 2014-15 and 2015-16?

Ms KO: I only have 2014-15 and 2015-16. I do not have 2013-14. I will have to take time to get it, but it is similar.

Mr GUNNER: I think 2013-14 was nine, from memory.

Mr CHANDLER: The total was \$8.373m.

Mr GUNNER: For both those financial years?

Mr CHANDLER: Yes.

Mr GUNNER: It is just a coincidence it is an identical number.

Mr CHANDLER: Yes.

Mr GUNNER: The Renewal Management Board recommended \$48m worth of repairs and maintenance for Police, Fire and Emergency Services. Do you know which of the projects they recommended for repairs and maintenance that have not been done?

Mr CHANDLER: Not off hand. I do not think there would be an agency that could not do with more money for repairs and maintenance. This year this government is spending record amounts of money in both infrastructure and repairs and maintenance. Whether it is a school, a police station or a community, I do not think anyone would deny that more money could go into repairs and maintenance.

Mr GUNNER: I agree with that. It is just that the Renewal Management Board was employed specifically to make a number of recommendations. One of them was that \$48m was spent within Police on repairs and maintenance, and they would have had a list of things. We have not been given a copy of that report so I do not know the list of things they recommended within the \$48 that should have occurred. Over four years ...

Mr CHANDLER: Was that \$48m over four years?

Mr GUNNER: I have not seen a copy of the report, but we were advised of some of the things out of the report. Maybe you can take it on notice. What was recommended and what has occurred? What has been the gap that you are working on next? There are things that we know and things that we do not know?

Mr CHANDLER: Yes, that is okay. We will take that on notice.

Question on Notice No 8.3

Madam CHAIR: Yes, please restate the question for the record.

Mr GUNNER: Can the minister please advise what the repairs and maintenance money has been spent on in police since the Renewal Management Board's recommendations. If you can, advise what the Renewal Management Board's recommendations were, and what the things still to be done. Essentially how you have prioritised what you have done and what is remaining to be done.

Madam CHAIR: Minister, do you accept the question?

Mr CHANDLER: Yes.

Madam CHAIR: That question is number 8.3.

Mr GUNNER: Minister, there were some cutbacks to the Chaplaincy Service and some changes to how support services were done for police. Could you advise how support services are now being provided to police for this financial year?

Mr CHANDLER: This is an interesting question. I will get the commissioner to advise a little further. It is something we have spoken about since Reece took on the role as commissioner. It is one area I was particularly concerned about. I have had many discussions with the Police Association about the benefits of a Chaplaincy Service and the need to ensure we have chaplains available for police officers, as well as the welfare system and how we provide a good service for police officers.

People have personal views on this, but from the outset there would be some police officers who would sometimes much prefer just to speak to another officer who has been at the coalface and understands, rather than a formal counselling session with somebody who is trained in that field. That is my point of view. Mind you, there are people who might want to speak to a chaplain. They also might want to speak to a more formal counsellor. It is important we ensure that within our system we have a robust enough process for providing these services for members who sometimes face some pretty horrendous tasks. I will pass over to the commissioner to give further advice on that.

Commissioner KERSHAW: Thank you, minister. We take welfare and wellbeing seriously across the agency. As you are aware, we have employee support services which provide a range of services from psychological, all the way through.

Since coming on board we advertised for a chaplain for Darwin which is a full-time position. I am on that panel because I have an interest in pastoral care in making sure we deliver the best services for our members. That is also based on getting feedback from the membership in conjunction with discussing that with the NT Police Association.

We have a Peer Support Coordinator who has just started. That is a program that is rolling out. We had an Intranet message go out the other day explaining what the Peer Support Coordinator role is. On top of that, I just wrote to the Retired Police Association requesting to have a look at a model around whether or not at times we could use our retired police officers for a peer support-type program. In addition, I have discussed with the association - the minister has brought it to my attention – about sworn welfare officers. We are looking at that as well.

On top of that, there will be a restructure and a better alignment of our resources across our human resources area, coupled with our Professional Standards Command and our Professional Development Command.

Mr GUNNER: Will the chaplain have a car? Will they be allowed to attend critical incidents if needed?

Commissioner KERSHAW: I believe so, similar to the last chaplain we had. I have spoken with Peter Wright recently. I maintain contact with him; he has been a great advocate and supporter for us over 12 years.

It has taken, in my opinion, a little too long to recruit the chaplain, but I am happy to say we have a number of applicants and that process is under way now.

Mr GUNNER: Minister, how many shifts were TRG officers and Water Police officers required to work in the Joint Emergency Services Communications Centre in 2014-15, or do you prefer to take that at the response services section?

Commissioner KERSHAW: I am aware that there were some shifts. We could try to isolate down those particular officers attached at that time if they were on the roster for the JESCC. We have return-to-work programs where a number of our officers, no matter what area they are from, sometimes are required to work in our JESCC as part of their return-to-work program.

Mr GUNNER: That makes sense, but I am not concerned about the return-to-work program. It is more a question about when active officers out of the Water Police Unit or TRG required to be tasked to JESCC to make up the numbers to take the calls?

Commissioner KERSHAW: To clarify that, sir, some of those shifts would have been offered as overtime, not as direction to those officers. We do our best to work out which ones worked overtime shifts in that area.

Mr GUNNER: I am happy to take that on notice and have it clarified in the answer. Do you want me to repeat that Chair?

Commissioner KERSHAW: That may have been the previous financial year. But I can come back.

Question on Notice No 8.4

Madam CHAIR: Yes, if you restate the question for the record.

Mr GUNNER: How many shifts were Territory Response Group officers and Water Police officers required to work in the JESCC in 2014-15?

Madam CHAIR: Minister, do you accept the question?

Mr CHANDLER: Yes.

Madam CHAIR: That question will be number 8.4.

Mr GUNNER: It is worth noting the commissioner was aware of it this time. When we asked this question in estimates two years ago, the commissioner was unaware of Water Police and TRG having been tasked into the call centre.

Minister, could you please advise for 2014-15 how many general duties vans are on the road per shift, for the three shifts, with greater Darwin region broken down into Casuarina, Darwin and Palmerston and for Katherine, Tennant Creek and Alice Springs?

Mr CHANDLER: I will pass over to the commissioner.

Commissioner KERSHAW: At any one time, we can have a number of vans depending on the demand and operation. I can go back and have a look at the rosters. That may not represent the vans that were available because we have, for example, in Darwin metro, the Metropolitan Patrol Group. Sometimes if it has capacity, it will make itself available on air to our JESCC, which will not be captured in our stats.

It is something we are working on with our computer-aided despatch system - to work out how many actual vans we have at a particular time. It is a difficult task, given the fact that it is a flexible arrangement. We have a standard amount of vans we try to aim at. However, we are working now with the Acting Assistant Commissioner in Darwin on a better model, trying to roster to demand periods we know about. We want to make sure we have the right number of officers at the right time and not a set template that will have, for example, two vans on at every point in time.

Mr GUNNER: I am aware when demand hits, other resources can be tasked in, but as I understand there is a definite roster for a minimum number of vans to be on shift per shift. I would like to know that number by those regions.

Commissioner KERSHAW: It is possible, but it may come out as not an exact figure, if that makes sense.

Mr GUNNER: I am happy to take a mean by month. So for the month of March, there was an average of two, two and two, or by that region ...

Commissioner KERSHAW: Yes, we can do that.

Question on Notice No 8.5

Madam CHAIR: Yes, do you want to restate the question for the record.

Mr GUNNER: For 2014-15 how many general duties vans are on the road per shift, for the three shifts, broken down into the greater Darwin region and then broken down again into Casuarina, Darwin, Palmerston and for Katherine, Tennant Creek and Alice Springs. I am happy to take the mean number by month.

Madam CHAIR: Minister, do you accept the question?

Commissioner KERSHAW: No, the only thing I would like to state is that it does not take into account specialists units either. It needs to be noted that Trident, for example, does not have a van but they are on duty to respond to general duties and incidents as well.

Mr GUNNER: I am happy for the commissioner to add that as a separate column. But I am interested in those general duties first response vans that are rostered.

Madam CHAIR: Minister, do you accept the question?

Mr CHANDLER: Yes.

Madam CHAIR: That question will be number 8.5.

Mr GUNNER: Can you please provide the total cost of travel for the agency and authority broken down by international, interstate and intrastate?

Mr CHANDLER: The total 2014-15 travel cost to 31 March 2015 is \$2.2m for official duty fares, accommodation and travel allowance. The breakdown is as follows: international \$19 812.48, interstate \$326 965.61 and intrastate \$1 879 216.46.

Mr GUNNER: Can you please provide details and costs of all travel undertaken by the minister or another minister or members of the Legislative Assembly that were paid for by the department?

Mr CHANDLER: Zero.

Mr GUNNER: Would that include travel taken on the police plane?

Mr CHANDLER: No. Member for Fannie Bay, there was some travel taken when another department used the plane. That department would have paid for that travel, not police. They would have been billed for that travel.

Mr GUNNER: If anyone travels on the police plane that is not a police member that is billed back to the department? If you were to catch the police plane, minister, that is billed back to section 8 of DCM?

Mr CHANDLER: Yes, unless it was – I am probably giving you a question to ask during Education. There have been a couple of times in the last 12 months where Education had available to it the police plane, so the bill would be paid for by the Education department to police.

Mr GUNNER: In that instance, if the police plane was used by the Education department it is billed back to ...

Mr CHANDLER: Yes.

Mr GUNNER: All the expenditure for the police plane so far has been done by police or cost recovered from the other agencies?

Mr CHANDLER: Yes. To clarify, the usual thing would be - I will give you an example. We did a trip last year to Groote Eylandt where we went via Katherine because it was the normal route the police plane was taking. All we were effectively doing was buying some additional seats on a plane that was already flying to Groote Eylandt. Does that make sense?

Mr GUNNER: In that case it might be on notice. Could I have a list of all agencies and other people who have travelled on the police plane that have then been billed back? A breakdown of trips and costs?

Mr CHANDLER: We would be able to get that information.

Madam CHAIR: Are you taking a question on notice?

Mr GUNNER: We are.

Question on Notice No 8.6

Madam CHAIR: Please restate the question.

Mr GUNNER: Can the minister please provide a breakdown of trips and costs taken on the police plane by people other than police that were recovered by the police?

Madam CHAIR: Minister you accept the question?

Mr CHANDLER: Yes.

Madam CHAIR: That question will be number 8.6.

Mr GUNNER: Thank you for the answer that led to the clarifying question, minister. That would include obviously travel taken by ministerial staff, if that was the case?

Mr CHANDLER: Yes.

Mr GUNNER: Can you please detail all travel costs undertaken by the department through Latitude Travel?

Mr CHANDLER: There were 14 travel events undertaken through Latitude Travel since 2010-11 to 31 March 2015 costing \$50 936. I will give you the breakdown. In 2010-11 there were seven movement requisitions totalling \$11 048.88. In 2011-12 there were two and that was \$26 660.79. In 2012-13 there was one for \$6749. In 2013-14 there were three at \$5482.50, and in 2014-15 one at \$995. That is a total of 14 since 2010-11, totalling \$50 936.17.

Mr GUNNER: Can you provide a breakdown of each of the trips? For 2011-12 there was a total of X. Can you provide a breakdown individually by trip?

Mr CHANDLER: In the years 2010-11 there was a Darwin-Dallas-San Francisco-Sydney-Darwin trip, approved by minister Henderson. Katie Fowden travelled to the United States, as outlined in a movement requisition, for the Chief Minister's Fellowship.

Reference No 2: Darwin-Alice Springs-Darwin airfare which was \$710.64 for the Deputy Chief Executive Officer, intrastate travel for Commissioner CEO McRoberts to attend Alice Springs command status report and follow-up activity.

Reference No 3: Darwin-Alice Springs-Darwin, airfare only, \$628.82, Commissioner CEO McRoberts, intrastate travel for Assistant Commissioner Chalker to attend Alice Springs command status report and follow-up activity.

Reference No 4: Darwin-Canberra-Sydney-Darwin, airfare only, \$934.55 and that was approved by Commissioner CEO McRoberts, interstate travel for Assistant Commissioner Chalker to accompany commissioner to Canberra to attend Ministerial Council on the Administration of Justice meetings.

Reference No 5: Sydney to Darwin, economy class airfare and accommodation, \$662.27, approved by Deputy Commissioner Maines, for interstate travel for Commissioner CEO McRoberts to attend business in Sydney and attend Australian Crime Commission Board meetings and CrimTrac meeting in Canberra.

Reference No 6: Darwin-Alice Springs-Darwin, airfare and accommodation, \$878.53, approved by Commissioner CEO McRoberts, intrastate travel for Deputy Commissioner Maines meeting with South Australian and Western Australian Police.

Reference No 7: Darwin-Adelaide-Canberra-Sydney-Darwin, airfare and accommodation, \$3929.53, Commissioner CEO McRoberts approved interstate travel for Deputy Commissioner Maines, Australian government meeting in Canberra.

Moving on to 2011-12.

Reference No 8: London Heathrow-Singapore-Sydney-Darwin-Sydney-London Heathrow, airfare and accommodation, \$10 589.79, Commissioner CEO McRoberts approved, invited guest speaker at NT Fire and Emergency Services management conference.

Reference No 9: Darwin-Sydney-Los Angeles-Washington-New York-Los Angeles-Sydney-Darwin, airfare and accommodation, \$16 071, approved by minister Henderson, international travel for Deputy Commissioner Maines, FBI course.

Moving on to the year 2012-13.

Reference No 10: Darwin-Singapore-London Heathrow-Amsterdam-London Heathrow-Singapore-Darwin, \$6749, approved by minister Giles, international travel for CEO PC McRoberts to attend Pearls in Policing Conference.

Moving on to the year 2013-14.

Reference No 11: Darwin-Alice Springs-Adelaide-Darwin, airfares, \$2399, approved by Deputy Commissioner Maines, interstate travel for CEO McRoberts to attend the opening of the 14 Australian Police Championships in Alice Springs, and attend Australia and New Zealand Police Commissioners' Forum in Adelaide.

Reference No 12: Darwin-Alice Springs-Darwin, airfare and accommodation, \$2239.50, Commissioner CEO McRoberts' approval, intrastate travel for Commander Michael Murphy for police station visits.

Reference No 13: Darwin-Sydney-Darwin, \$844, approval by Deputy Commissioner Maines, interstate travel for CEO McRoberts to attend Australian Institute of Police Executive Leadership Program.

In 2014-15: Reference 14: Brisbane-Adelaide-Darwin, airfare only \$995, Deputy CEO, interstate travel for CEO McRoberts to attend the Australia New Zealand Police Commissioners' Forum in Adelaide. That is the only record.

Mr GUNNER: Do you take questions on police stations to whole-of-agency or by an output?

Mr CHANDLER: We can.

Mr GUNNER: Confirming the Alice Springs Police Station is still open 24/7?

Mr CHANDLER: Yes.

Mr GUNNER: I thought that was a straight-out one.

Mr CHANDLER: I thought that was a trick question.

Mr GUNNER: That was not a trick one. That leads into my next question which is what resources are used to keep Alice Springs Police Station open 24/7?

Mr CHANDLER: Police officers.

Mr GUNNER: Okay. How many for the three shifts? What is required to keep ...

Mr CHANDLER: What, daytime, evening, night time?

Mr GUNNER: Yes, what is required to keep it open 24/7? Police officers, police auxiliaries - what is the requirement?

Mr CHANDLER: We can take that on notice. I have just been advised, member for Fannie Bay, that it will depend on the day, the rosters, what is happening in town at the time.

Mr GUNNER: I guess I should clarify it then. There would be a minimum requirement, I am assuming, to make sure it is open. I assume the roster for the Alice Springs Police Station goes beyond ...

Mr CHANDLER: It is my understanding from when I was there that Friday nights was a particularly busy night so there are more officers rostered on. It would be different on any given day.

Mr GUNNER: But those police officers rostered on for the Alice Springs Police Station are ...

Mr CHANDLER: Oh, you mean what it takes to keep it open?

Mr GUNNER: Yes, to keep it open - not necessarily patrolling out and about in the Alice Springs community. The promise was to keep the police station open 24/7. What is the requirement to make sure it can stay open 24/? This is a more specific question than just what you are doing in the general community patrol-wise. Does that clarification make sense?

Mr CHANDLER: Yes. I am advised that five auxiliaries would be required to keep the station open. It would not matter what shift, the front counter keeps it open.

Mr GUNNER: Five per shift, or five for the day?

Mr CHANDLER: Five all up.

Mr GUNNER: Five total. No worries, thank you. When will the election promise to have the Nightcliff Police Station open 24/7 be met?

Mr CHANDLER: That is an interesting question because I do not think it is a minister's prerogative or even responsibility to tell a Commissioner of Police what is the best way to use his resources to provide policing, whether it is in the northern suburbs or across the Territory. In fact, we had this argument with the federal

government in regard to some of the funding we have in the Northern Territory when they tie it to very strict controls. Again, it should be up to the commissioner to deploy the resources where he sees fit.

My understanding with the Nightcliff Police Station is that the Traffic Squad has been there, and there are police officers there. But if you are talking about being opened for the general public to walk in ...

Mr GUNNER: That was the election promise from the CLP.

Mr CHANDLER: It comes down to what should be required to provide effective policing to the best ability of the police. As I said, it does not matter where you are in Territory. My advice is that based on statistics it is not warranted, to the point where police are responding and do respond to issues in Nightcliff just like they do in Wanguri or Fannie Bay, where there are no physical police stations. The point is that police will respond to issues no matter where they are, and quite quickly.

It is the same thing with some of the Police Beats. They are, from my point of view, a bit overrated for what they were providing the community, compared to whether or not police can patrol, whether it is on bikes, push bikes or walking around a shopping centre versus sitting behind a desk unable to go anywhere. It should be up to the police to decide where those resources are put. The Nightcliff Police Station is being used but not for walk-in matters 24 hours a day.

Mr GUNNER: So the answer to the question, 'Will the CLP election promise be met this term?', is no, there will not be a police station ...

Mr CONLAN: A point of order, Madam Chair! The Leader of the Opposition is verballing the minister for Police. He has answered the question. You cannot put the answer in the minister's mouth.

Mr GUNNER: I do not think I was verballing the minister at all, member for Greatorex.

Mr CONLAN: So you can take that as you like. The minister has answered the question. Thanks, Madam Chair.

Mr CHANDLER: I will add that I would not rule anything in or anything out. Policing described earlier by the commissioner is a very fluid program; it is always evolving. There are always changing needs and we need to be as a government - just as the commissioner needs to be - responsive to the community's needs. If there was a great need in any particular suburb, there could be a new police station constructed or an old police station reinvigorated. You cannot rule anything in or out.

Mr GUNNER: There is a chance before August 2016 that the electoral promise to open Nightcliff 24/7 may happen?

Mr CHANDLER: I would not rule it out because it would come down to what the needs are of the community and what the police advise government as to where those needs are.

Mr GUNNER: Can you please provide details and costs of all hospitality expenditure which the agency undertook on behalf of the minister, or at events which the minister attended?

Mr CHANDLER: He has never bought me a beer. In 2014-15, the hospitality expenditure for Northern Territory Police, Fire and Emergency Services, to 31 March 2015, was \$43 540, 80% of which, or \$34 952, related to the category 'sustenance - finger food whilst on duty'. It reflects the nature of Police, Fire and Emergency Services operations and the inability to take standard meal breaks during certain activities.

Northern Territory Fire and Emergency Services do not pay for entertainment on behalf of ministers. The GAS system does not identify whether ministers attend events or not, such as recruitment and graduations.

Mr GUNNER: Did the chief executive, former chief executives or commissioners use government issued credit cards in 2014-15?

Mr CHANDLER: The position of Northern Territory Police, Fire and Emergency Services is that Commissioner of Police and Chief Executive Officer is not issued with a corporate credit card.

Mr GUNNER: Can you detail the fees and charges levied by your agency, the revenue raised and whether any of these fees or charges increased in Budget 2015-16?

Mr CHANDLER: All right. Fire alarm monitoring fees, \$1 472 364; working with children checks, \$1 464 032; unwanted alarm charges, \$1 337 652; criminal history name checks, \$535 118; shooters' licences, \$310 388.74; Yulara Corporation payments, \$217 681.84; criminal history fingerprint checks, \$210 362; NT Fire Services building report, \$184 692.11; purchase firearms permits, \$183 385.61; Nhulunbuy Corporation payments, \$167 656.50; police escort charges, \$101 185.30; Northern Territory Fire Service building inspection, \$98 920.07; accident reports, \$55 471.50; external training charges, \$54 685; other charges less than \$25 000 were \$144 446.04; totalling \$6 538 041.34.

Mr GUNNER: How many internal audits or financial investigations were conducted in 2014-15?

Mr CHANDLER: Twelve.

Mr GUNNER: Were any fraud anomalies, breaches of financial legislation or NT government policy or breaches of law exposed by the audits?

Mr CHANDLER: I am advised no fraud or breaches of legislation.

Mr GUNNER: Breaches of policy?

Mr CHANDLER: Yes, there were some breaches of policy.

Mr GUNNER: Can you please detail those?

Mr CHANDLER: Most of the policy guidelines were not fraudulent in any way; they were usually administrative procedures and so forth that were not adhered to. It is probably best to read a couple of examples to give it some context.

This was an external Auditor-General's agency compliance audit. The summary was:

The audit found instances of non-compliance with the Treasurer's Directions in the agency's accounting and property manual as follows:

(1) accounts payable, one instance of payment outside 30 days.

The payment was made outside the 30-day period so it is a breach but it is not fraudulent in any way.

There is one here:

Northern Territory Police, Fire and Emergency Services Training College to provide standardised firearms training induction packages to all Northern Territory Police fire training squads.

That was an internal compliance audit in regard to training delivery of long arms. They are not major breaches but they are areas that did not comply with policy and, therefore, adjustments have been made.

Mr GUNNER: I am comfortable with that answer, minister.

Mr CHANDLER: Nothing fraudulent.

Mr GUNNER: Nothing fraudulent, no breach of the law. Okay. Minister, will you still be happy to take TBL questions here or do you want us to go to Output 1.1?

Mr CHANDLER: Your time as much as mine; we are here and I am happy to answer questions.

Mr GUNNER: Minister, could you please provide a breakdown of how many police officers have been stationed outside liquor stores and/or licenced premises each month from 1 April 2014 to – I assume - 31 March 2015?

Mr CHANDLER: Temporary beat locations have been implemented as a policing strategy to target alcohol-related antisocial behaviour and violence through a high-visibility policing presence at liquor points of sale, targeting alcohol consumption in public restricted areas. TBLs also focus on alcohol-related offending with a zero tolerance approach and has realised significant results.

The answers are in here: the Northern Territory Police Force provides a dedicated focus on reducing antisocial behaviour, unlawful alcohol consumption and alcohol-related offending in the Territory. This policing strategy has been introduced in Alice Springs, Tennant Creek and more recently in Katherine, showing encouraging reductions in acts intended to cause injury.

Following Operation Marcos, the introduction of Operation Veto has bolstered TBL activities in Katherine at takeaway licensed premises since 18 December 2014, and has shown encouraging reductions in acts intended to cause injury. From that date until 16 April 2015 there has been a significant reduction in offences in Katherine, as well as when compared to the same period the previous year.

Offences against the person reduced by 44.04% with 122 offences compared to 218 offences, and property offences reduced by 20.33%.

I do not think it is here, but ...

Mr GUNNER: If I can provide an example, minister. We were advised from 1 September 2012 to the end of March 2014 the name of the liquor store or licensed premises, how many police were stationed outside those premises, and the total cost of the stationing police officers outside those premises. We were given that breakdown.

Mr CHANDLER: The information I have here is that across each of the regional centres there are a total of 113 takeaway licensed premises, 52 of which require coverage under the current TBL concept of operations. In Alice Springs there are 13 licenced premises; three are clubs that largely self-regulate, so there are 10 takeaway licensed premises. In Tennant Creek three, Katherine six, and in the greater Darwin area there are 33 takeaways. Are we able to get that info?

Mr GUNNER: I can read it out so you have the whole question on notice if you want.

Commissioner KERSHAW: Perhaps that figure has no doubt increased since you were first supplied it. It is a complex area for us because it depends on the fact that every day it can change. As an example, we may have two officers stationed in Katherine at a takeaway outlet, who then get diverted off to do other duties. We would have to go back - it is a fair amount of work but we could give you a rough estimate. It may not be an exact figure.

Mr GUNNER: I would be happy to accept, if it makes it easier, that you have rostered on two at the start of the day for that store. At that point in time that is the fact. I recognise they might get taken away occasionally. Rather than you trying to work out if during that shift they got taken away or not, what was the rostered-on figure? Is that a better way of saying it? What was the rostered-on figure for those police officers? Is that acceptable, minister?

Mr CHANDLER: I am happy to accept that, but based on the fact that it does change daily with the availability of resources and what other activities are happening at the time - and it should also be put on the record that whilst an officer is rostered on to a TBL location, there are many other instances of policing they undertake at the time, even if it is community engagement.

The other thing to recognise with TBLs is they are not that panacea for all grog-related issues across the Territory. Whilst I will argue up hill and down dale that they are providing a significant change to the character of towns like Alice Springs, Tennant Creek and Alice Springs, they would be far more problematic to operate in the greater Darwin area with the number of takeaways.

I also go as far as saying there is evidence of a drift of some of these people out of these communities into larger locations like Darwin which provides further complications for our police to deal with.

They are not a single response to a great problem. Do they work in those locations where complete lockdowns have been tested and tried? Absolutely; it makes a huge difference. Nurses will ring you from Katherine to say they have never seen Saturday nights like it in Katherine before. Only a few weeks ago in Katherine I was told by a tourist who was here at the same time last year and could not believe the difference in the town through fewer drunks on the street. Do they work in those locations? They do.

I am not so naïve to suggest that the same results we are getting today will be long term, because as you and I both know, people are very resourceful and usually will find ways to get around a system. With policing, it is true we have to always keep one step ahead. At the moment, the commissioner and the assistance commissioners are working on strategies that will be sustainable long term. Will it meant that

TBLs continue long term? It is part of the strategy but there has to be a more holistic approach to some of our grog problems, right down to sitting down with the Darwin City council and thinking more holistically how we approach some of the long grass problems and some of the issues facing people who obviously have a problem with grog. It is not simple.

Mr GUNNER: No, it is not, minister. It requires more than one response. I agree completely with a lot of what you have said, especially about the mobility of the problem, the effect of lockdowns in other places and recognising the impact it will have on Darwin and Palmerston.

Mr CHANDLER: Absolutely.

Question on Notice No 8.7

Mr GUNNER: I will read that question out, Madam Chair?

Madam CHAIR: Yes.

Mr GUNNER: How many police officers have been rostered outside liquor stores and/or licensed premises each month? How many liquor stores and/or licensed premises have police officers been stationed outside each month and which liquor stores? What has been the cost of rostering police officers outside liquor stores and/or licensed premises each month?

Mr CONLAN: Can I just get some clarification on that. Is that for the year 2014-15?

Mr GUNNER: Yes, sorry. That is from 1 April 2014 to 31 March 2015.

Mr CHANDLER: These will be estimates, because it will be as good as the information we can provide.

Mr GUNNER: I accept that. It completes the numbers we have been provided since 1 September 2012, so it is a continuation of that.

Mr CHANDLER: Sure.

Madam CHAIR: Minister, you accept the question?

Mr CHANDLER: Yes.

Madam CHAIR: That question will be number 8.7.

Mr GUNNER: With rostering for the temporary beat locations - which I assume would normally occur from the local police station - can you advise how often police have been required to be rostered to TBLs from other business units within police, that is, water police or school-based constables?

Mr CHANDLER: I do not know how readily available that information is, but I know of cases where overtime has been offered. They are not pulled off their work areas, they might be doing overtime. It will be from other business units ...

Mr GUNNER: I know of examples within the Darwin/Palmerston area where school-based constables are tasked to do the first two hours of a temporary beat location. In Darwin it is not a lockdown for the whole opening time, so they do the first two hours of the day. There is a temporary beat location outside a particular bottle shop, run by two school-based constables. At the end of their two-hour shift, they go back to their ordinary duties. Obviously at that point in time the temporary beat location outside that liquor store will stop. That is one example. I am interested in how the rostering decisions are made around temporary beat locations regarding those positions.

Mr CHANDLER: They are really there for attendance strategies, are they not, to make sure the kids are at school.

Mr GUNNER: I am hoping the kids are not buying alcohol from the local corner shop.

Mr CHANDLER: No, no. I agree; I do not think it will be easy to get that kind of information.

Mr GUNNER: So we cannot get the breakdown, but there will be times when people are asked if they want to work overtime from those units and they would accept, but there would also be times where police are required to be taken from those units to fill those shifts? That is the question that can be answered.

Mr CHANDLER: Again I think it would be difficult. It would be a rostered ...

Mr GUNNER: I not asking for the breakdown, I am asking for confirmation that there would be times when police are required to be taken from those other business units to run a TBL.

Commissioner KERSHAW: That is an operational deployment decision made by our people on the ground at the time. One of the things we are looking at is keeping everyone, no matter what unit they are from, contemporary with their skills. Even undertaking, for example, a TBL activity they may effect an arrest. We have had that quite often where a stolen motor vehicle might turn up and someone is an on APO; they do the checks and effect an arrest. Often it is done in relation to keeping people contemporary into the front line and supporting it. That can change dynamically day to day depending on the OICs who are running these activities and the other support units.

Mr GUNNER: So there would be no occasion where someone calls the Water Police, 'We would like you to respond to something,' and the Water Police say, 'I am sorry, we cannot respond to that because we have X number of officers outside a temporary beat location'?

Commissioner KERSHAW: I had a question from Warren De Witt yesterday about that. I have asked for evidence of that. I am not aware of that circumstance occurring. It needs to be noted some of these shifts are offered on overtime. Some officers choose to do that outside of their normal rostered hours. I am not aware of the Water Police not being able to undertake a task because they are rostered at TBLs. If anything, the shooting we had in Leanyer, we had TRG who were rostered on a partial TBL. They responded to that Leanyer matter and it was a TRG officer who shot that offender.

Mr GUNNER: We have heard similar concerns. I wanted to know the evidence behind it before getting to details as you have just spoken about the complaint from AFANT.

Minister, can you please detail the costs in 2014-15 of legal services provided by private legal firms to the agency?

Mr CHANDLER: Legal services for NT Police, Fire and Emergency Services primarily relate to disputes raised in relation to employee actions and include the provision of legal advice and court settlements. The total legal cost in 2014-15 provided by companies and sole traders with registered Australian business numbers at 31 March 2015 is \$301 802. I have a breakdown of firms if you want.

Mr GUNNER: Thanks, minister.

Mr CHANDLER: Because these are private firms and sole traders are you happy for the names to be read?

Mr GUNNER: For example, Cridlands?

Mr CHANDLER: Yes.

Mr GUNNER: Other ministers have done that.

Mr CHANDLER: Of course, some of them are private names and I suppose that is what they trade as: Brendan Kay Lim one payment of \$3000; Brain Cassells one payment of \$600; Connop Barristers and Solicitors Pty Ltd one payment of \$710; Cridlands MB Lawyers two payments totalling \$7946; De Silva Hebron two payments totalling \$17 500; Dr James Renwick one payment of \$51 155; Frederick Jordan Chambers two payments totalling \$13 200; Halfpennys one payment of \$1909; Hunt & Hunt Lawyers one payment of \$5000; John Adams one payment of \$375; John Lawrence one payment of \$2669; John Toohey Chambers two payments, \$27 200; Mark Johnson one payment of \$710; LBLLB Louise Bennett six payments, \$5430; List A Barristers one payment of \$7200; Maley & Burrows Barristers and Solicitors 14 payments, \$21 460; Merrill Corporation Australia one payment of \$150; Michael Whelan & Associates 14 payments, \$19 801; Ruth Morley Legal Services, one payment, \$2000; Murphy & Associates two payments, \$1890; Nikolai Christrup, Barrister, three payments, \$4300; Peter Elliott one payment of \$9091; Pipers Barristers & Solicitors two payments, \$17 693; Povey Stirk Lawyers & Notaries, one payment of \$5000; Robert Welfare & Associates one payment of \$5925; Robert Welfare Barristers & Solicitors four

payments, \$18 497; Ruth Morley Legal Services, 12 payments, \$10 550; Sonia Brownhill four payments, \$35 775; William Forster Chambers three payments, \$5065. That is 87 payments totalling \$301 802.

Mr GUNNER: Thank you, minister. Can I ask question about the Safe Streets Audit here?

Mr CHANDLER: Absolutely.

Mr GUNNER: That was tendered out to Charles Darwin University and the Australian Institute of Criminology. Has that been completed and made available?

Mr CHANDLER: The Safe Streets Audit was completed on 12 December 2013. I reiterate Charles Darwin University was commissioned to undertake the Safe Streets Audit. The report was due to be finalised in February 2013 and has now been submitted to the Northern Territory Police. The audit undertook a literature review, media analysis, data analysis and consultation process with key stakeholders across the NT. Of note, the issues raised in relation to best practice and community perceptions of safety are already practices undertaken by NT Police. The audit also referred to some broader whole-of-government considerations for contributing to community safety. I do not believe it was released to the public.

Mr GUNNER: The Chief Minister and minister for Police advised in estimates 2013 that following the literature review stage and after it was provided to police it would be followed by community stakeholder consultations. Have those consultations occurred and with whom? Were they given copies of the Safe Streets Audit?

Mr CHANDLER: My advice is that the Charles Darwin team did undertake some community consultation during that process.

Mr GUNNER: But post the completion of the Safe Streets Audit there was nothing further by police? So CDU did its work and it was then handed to police. Police received it 1 January 2014. Essentially what have the police done with that since then? What resource allocation decisions have been made from the Safe Streets Audit?

Mr CHANDLER: My advice is that in regard to the recommendations that were put forward by CDU, Northern Territory Police was already doing those things. There was no need to do anything in regard to the recommendations.

Mr GUNNER: What was the purpose of the \$300 000 grant to CDU?

Mr CHANDLER: To demonstrate how good Northern Territory Police really is.

Mr GUNNER: The initial election promise behind the Safe Streets Audit was to identify hot spots and then police them. I understand we have funded CDU to do research work that has identified that the police are already aware of the hot spots and are already patrolling them.

Mr CHANDLER: Again, my advice is that those recommendations validated the work already being undertaken by police at that time; that it was best practice and recommended to continue.

Mr GUNNER: I am comfortable with that because that is what we said at the time of the announcement; the police had the data and were already working to it. Is it possible to get a copy of the Safe Streets Audit report? If it is validating the work police are already doing and ...

Mr CHANDLER: I will have to take that on advice. I do not have the report; it was given to the Chief Minister. If he is happy to release that report that is fine, but that would be up to him.

Mr GUNNER: Okay, but it would now sits with the minister for Police?

Mr CHANDLER: Not necessarily.

Mr GUNNER: We will take that on notice then.

Madam CHAIR: I do not think you can take it on ...

Mr GUNNER: We will ask questions so the answer will either be no or yes.

Madam CHAIR: It is more that the minister, if he can get it then he will get it.

Mr CHANDLER: Probably not a question for ...

Madam CHAIR: The question on notice would be: can you please ...

Mr GUNNER: Can you provide a copy - the answer will either be no or yes, here it is.

Madam CHAIR: Are you happy with that, minister?

Mr CHANDLER: Yes.

Question on Notice No 8.8

Madam CHAIR: Please restate the question for the record.

Mr GUNNER: Could the minister please provide a copy of the Safe Streets Audit, if possible?

Madam CHAIR: Minister, do you accept the question?

Mr CHANDLER: I do.

Madam CHAIR: That question will be number 8.8.

Mr GUNNER: Thanks, Chair. Just wrapping up this line of questioning around the Safe Streets Audit and temporary beat locations and patrols. I was made aware the other day, in conversations with the NT Police Association, that the Victorian police now have a 'no officer works alone' policy. I am just wondering if NT Police is looking at that policy for the grounds of why they came to that conclusion. If we are, where are we on that track? Is it possible that it will be implemented in 2015-16? What impact will that have on a range of NT Police services?

Mr CHANDLER: It is probably an operational question the commissioner will provide some further advice on. I have had a pretty spectacular opportunity recently to look at a number of different police forces around the world. I was quite surprised at how many large jurisdictions still have one-police-officer vehicles on the street, but there is a lot of them. Whenever there is an issue they respond very quickly to dealing with that issue. These are in some pretty large cities around the world that still have one officer on patrol. It is an operational matter for the commissioner.

Commissioner KERSHAW: Thank you, minister. As you are aware, we are ahead of Victoria in this area; we are two up in our vans. That is a standard practice that has been ongoing for a number of years. We also have some load-bearing vests that are coming our way which are world class. Our capability of protecting our officers will be second to none.

In relation to Victoria police, as you are aware, there is a number of specific incidents that have occurred where specific officers have been targeted. We work through the Australia and New Zealand Counter Terrorism Committee. We are, on a daily basis, receiving information about police officers and any specific threats. There is no intelligence at this point in the Northern Territory to indicate our threat level to our officers has increased. On a daily basis we are constantly reviewing our posture, so to speak, and whether or not we need to reinforce any of our areas. But our practice is ahead of some of the other police forces.

Mr GUNNER: The most public example I can think of is an officer working alone outside a temporary beat location. At this stage we are still comfortable with single officers in some of those instances, as opposed to two up?

Commissioner KERSHAW: Yes, we do a risk-type matrix on all of our operational deployments. That is done on a daily basis. We will make sure we run that risk over the top, even to specific incidents. We have reinforced our approach to managing these kinds of matters by having a 24/7 Territory duty superintendent. So we have a senior officer on duty 24 hours a day, seven days a week to make those kind of decisions if we need to up the ante, for example, if there is specific information or intelligence.

Mr GUNNER: I have to ask about the trial of the two Segways and how that went. Are we ordering more? Did it go well? Do we prefer horses?

Mr CHANDLER: I have to tell you I am pretty disappointed. I have not had a chance on these Segways yet, so I am deeply disappointed, commissioner.

They are another avenue of policing. The one thing I noted in different jurisdictions where Segways were being used was they were a bit like a magnet for tourists and residents, so they are a great way for police to interact with the general public. They draw attention just like the horses often do wherever they go, and they do a fantastic job. They are just another tool. Whether or not we need more or less of them - I am told there are two on hand and there are four on order at the moment, so they will have a total of six. As far as I am concerned, I will wait to judge them after I have had a go.

Mr GUNNER: I am comfortable with your position, minister. Can I have some advice from the commissioner about the success of the Segways?

Mr CHANDLER: Okay, you can be involved as well, member for Fannie Bay. Could we arrange for the member for Fannie Bay and me to have a go on the Segways, please? Is that what you are after?

Mr CONLAN: I am not sure if he knows what the question is. What is the question, Leader of the Opposition?

Mr GUNNER: I was asking about the success of the Segway and not whether the minister and I could have a ride.

Commissioner KERSHAW: We had a long consultation, through our association, with our membership about Segways. Interestingly enough, we have discovered that the public in particular quite like them, which was a bit of a surprise to us initially. In the community engagement aspect, our officers have noticed it is a talking point now so they are able to have quite an interesting conversation with members of the public.

As far as access goes, we have trialled them in Alice Springs and some of them have been taken into mini-four-wheel drive territory they have not previously been able to access in an expeditious manner. So from a capability point of view, we have found they are delivering quite a good service for our officers on the beat and as a community engagement tool which, initially for us, is why we did a trial.

We get quite positive feedback from the membership. It takes a level of coordination to use one, so we have to do a training course for every member.

Mr GUNNER: So will you be looking at expanding the number of Segways we have and the locations that they are in?

Commissioner KERSHAW: The approach we have taken is we have listened to our senior officers and the officers in charge of these areas and taken on advice that they believe they are a worthy asset for us to have. That is why we have increased our numbers slightly. We will see how it goes from there.

Mr GUNNER: Thanks, commissioner. We have gone through a number of areas I wanted to ask questions through whole-of-agency and Output 1.1, which has been fantastic. I have a question now about calls and response services, which is technically Output 2.1. What was the number of calls to 000 and 131444 numbers during 2014-15?

Mr CONLAN: Leader of the Opposition, I would just like to follow on that line of questioning with a couple of questions before we move on to another output. Minister, there has been some consternation around TBLs. The opposition has stated it will bring back the BDR, and has even alluded to the fact that they will remove the TBLs. To put some context and balance around this, I was wondering if you are able to provide this Estimates Committee with some evidence to demonstrate the success with crime reduction strategies the TBLs have had?

Mr GUNNER: A point of order, Madam Chair! The minister gave that answer to my first TBL question. I do not know if the member did not hear it, but the minister went through stats and a whole range of other things around temporary beat locations and the success of them. We accepted that answer. It has been asked and answered.

Mr CHANDLER: I am happy to expand on it.

Mr CONLAN: I am happy for the minister to expand on it, if you feel that it needs to be, minister.

Mr CHANDLER: It is worth expanding on because it is a contentious issue, no doubt about it. There will be points of view whether or not TBLs are successful or not. I am hopeful to get secondary evidence through other government agencies before too long. When you get a phone call from a nurse in Katherine who says she has never seen anything as quiet on a Saturday night, I am more than positive that whilst you can effectively put a cost on an officer standing outside a TBL, what is more difficult to measure in dollar terms is the benefits downstream.

The rates of assaults have come down, particularly in areas like Tennant Creek, Alice Springs and Katherine. If you were to put a cost on each of those assaults - the cost of an ambulance turning up, medical treatment, the ongoing medical treatment sometimes for weeks if not months if stab wounds get infected - there are some long-term effects. Good policing is always that kind of policing which prevents something from happening in the first place. Prevention is better than cure. That kind of information is slowly filtering through; a lot is anecdotal, I give you that. Over time we will have some good evidence of the Health department, ambulance services and police not having to involve themselves in things that would have occurred later that night.

Whenever I have had the chance I talk to police officers outside a bottle shop – and I am not saying I frequent bottle shops too much - particularly when I am in Alice Springs, I ask the same question, ‘Do you think it is a waste of police resources for you to be standing here?’ Each of those officers has said to me, ‘I know what this stops my colleagues from dealing with later tonight.’ They are powerful statements. Whilst standing outside the bottle shop may be a boring thing to do for a few hours, they recognise the benefits to their own colleagues, ambulance offices and the health system down the track.

It is unfair to just put the cost an officer standing on the beat outside a bottle shop as the true cost of providing a service. I do not think it is accurate. Once we look at the prevention and things that have not occurred - the fact the ambulance and the medical facilities have not been involved and operating theatres do not have to work tonight to get rid of a broken bottle or a knife out of somebody's gut - there are downstream savings to be made. When we are in a better position to describe that people will accept that the real cost to the community as a whole is less than the cost of putting an officer outside a bottle shop.

I reiterate what I said to the member for Fannie Bay earlier, it is not a panacea for every grog-related problem in the Northern Territory - I and this government recognise that - but it is one of the tools in the toolbox that has been very effective in a few areas across the Northern Territory. A responsible government is one that continues to use the tools that are most effective. That is not to mean we will not have to change our approach in the future. It does not mean that we will not be looking at technology in the future. It does not mean we will not be looking at other ways to deal with the problem of alcohol in our community. However, at the moment it is one tool that is very effective in certain areas and one we will continue to use.

Mr CONLAN: It is worth putting on the record, can you confirm - or perhaps it might be a question for the commissioner because it predates your time as minister - that the TBLs were introduced by the previous Labor administration in 2012?

Mr GUNNER: I can confirm that is true.

Mr CONLAN: It is true? Okay, thank you.

Mr CHANDLER: That question we went to, member for Fannie Bay, on 000?

Mr GUNNER: What was the number of calls to 000 and 131444 during 2014-15 and how many of these calls were alcohol related?

Mr CHANDLER: From 1 July 2014 to 27 April 2015 calls to 000 for the whole of the Territory were 80 930, and to the police assistance line, 139 806. I can break that down to region if you want.

Mr GUNNER: The first question was how many were alcohol related.

Mr CHANDLER: I do not think that is on here. Do we have that?

Commissioner KERSHAW: For the call centre and in relation to alcohol, the officers who attend those incidents can confirm whether or not they are alcohol related. When the call is first taken we do not have that data available, but when the officers go to the job and then return they will tick a box saying alcohol related or not.

Mr GUNNER: How difficult would it be to provide an answer on how many were alcohol related?

Commissioner KERSHAW: We can break it down by offence count, which is different to incident count, which is different to the calls taken.

Mr GUNNER: I might come back to this in a different way through a briefing or written question. What proportion of calls were answered within 10 seconds and responded to within 10 minutes?

Mr CHANDLER: From July 2014 to 27 April 2015 the proportion of 000 calls answered within 10 seconds was 94.3%.

Mr GUNNER: And responded to within 10 minutes?

Commissioner KERSHAW: It depends on the priority rating and on the centre, because we can split it right down to each area. From a software point of view though, because we use Intergraph CAD, that determines our response time. That is an extra module we are in the process of purchasing to get a more accurate figure on our response times. Currently any data that we supply you - I would have to take more information from my ICT people who have advised me it would not be reliable because of the Intergraph system working out the time the call is taken, it might be put in the waiting bay, then despatch happens and then there is response time from despatch.

Mr GUNNER: I understand that is important, because the measure is how often you answer a call in 10 seconds and respond within 10 minutes. That is the way of treating how we have dealt with 000 calls.

Commissioner KERSHAW: That is correct. We have had a large reduction in the number of complaints in relation to providing a customer service. Taking into account we have about 300 000 calls per year, our complaints in relation to our response times is minimal in comparison to the number of calls we receive. It is important that we have the correct response and that goes back to the grading of the job. This is where it can get quite complex because it may change at some point of time to become a lower level of response category, which means it sits within a longer response time. That is one of the modules that we are in the process of installing. It coincides with refurbishment of our new call centre.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR: We will take a 10-minute break, since the minister and his staff have been going for two hours.

The committee suspended

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR: Welcome back to estimates for another exciting adventure. We have to wait for someone to sit here.

Answer to Question on Notice No 8.6

Mr CHANDLER: I have an answer to an earlier question with regard to ministerial support on the police planes. There have been 50 flight hours flown supporting ministerial travel during the reporting period. The office of the Chief Minister has been invoiced \$80 181 for these flights.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR: That was the answer to Question No 8.6. Please continue your line of questioning.

Mr GUNNER: I am at Output 2.2, Investigations. I have worked down to Output 2.3. I just want to make sure we are all on the same agenda.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR: Do you want to close out Output 1.?

Mr GUNNER: I am happy for them to be closed out.

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

OUTPUT GROUP 1.0 – COMMUNITY SAFETY AND CRIME PREVENTION
Output 1.1 - Community Safety and Crime Prevention

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR: We will now consider Output Group 1.0, Community Safety and Crime Prevention, Output 1.1, Community Safety and Crime Prevention. I believe there are no questions.

Mr GUNNER: Thank you, minister, for how we worked through that.

**OUTPUT GROUP 2.0 - GENERAL POLICING, CRIME DETECTION,
INVESTIGATION AND PROSECUTION**
Output 2.1 - Response Services

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR: The committee will now proceed to Output Group 2.0, General Policing, Crime Detection, Investigation and Prosecution, Output 2.1, Response Services. Questions have been asked.

Mr GUNNER: Thanks, minister.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR: That concludes consideration of Output 2.1.

Output 2.2 - Investigations

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR: The committee will now consider Output 2.2, Investigations. Are there any questions?

Mr GUNNER: Minister, can you clarify and confirm how many investigations are being conducted at the moment into the pensioner concession travel scheme or into the travel? I do not know if you want me to be more specific. We are aware of at least three. Can you confirm how many there are?

Mr CHANDLER: I will ask the commissioner to clarify where we are sitting with that.

Commissioner KERSHAW: The Solicitor for the Northern Territory's investigation is complete. The Ombudsman, who exercises jurisdiction, is investigating two matters as complaints against police. His investigation is complete. The investigations that are currently left are the AFP investigation, which is on the public record, into criminal allegations of the former commissioner and dealing with a special prosecutor who is based in Victoria. The other matter we currently have, which makes three, is Operation Subutai, the pensioner concession travel scheme investigation where one alleged offender is before the court.

The other matter is the Special Reference Unit looking at an anomaly around some travel emanating from the Department of the Chief Minister. However, a criminal offence has not been disclosed at this stage.

Mr GUNNER: They are the ones we know about. That is the totality of the investigations occurring at the moment? How are the costs working with the Australian Federal Police? The investigation was commenced, and on the recommendation of the Commissioner of Public Interest Disclosures in March that was transferred to AFP. We would have spent a certain amount of money up to that date, then AFP picked it up. Is there a cost recovery structure in place? Is there a terms of reference in place for how it is managed between AFP and you? How does that work?

Commissioner KERSHAW: Yes, we have an MOU. Unfortunately for the AFP it is more in favour of the Northern Territory. The only cost we incur is any travel or accommodation. The AFP wears all the other costs. We do not wear the costs of the special prosecutor unless the DPP decides to bill me for that, which may or may not occur. At this stage the only costs with the AFP are the travel and accommodation.

Mr GUNNER: There was a pre-existing memorandum of understanding between AFP and NT Police about how to deal with these matters, or is this a new MOU for this matter?

Commissioner KERSHAW: This is a new MOU for this matter. Having said that, across Australia police services, depending on the nature of the incident - for example for G20 we billed Queensland Police for the entire cost of our members working at G20. In regard to normal criminal investigations it is not a standard practice that the other police force would bill their total costs. It is case by case.

Mr GUNNER: Is it possible to have a copy of the memorandum of understanding between the AFP and NT Police?

Commissioner KERSHAW: I would have to take that on notice and get some legal advice. If that advice was that nothing would prejudice the current investigation then I do not see any reason why we could not release that. Again, I would have to take advice.

Mr GUNNER: I am comfortable with that caveat, Mr Deputy Chair.

Question on Notice No 8.9

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR: Please restate the question.

Mr GUNNER: Can the minister please provide a copy of the memorandum of understanding between the Australian Federal Police and the Northern Territory Police, subject to legal advice, about the suitability of release of the ...

Mr CHANDLER: Subject to legal advice, yes.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR: You will accept the question?

Mr CHANDLER: Yes.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR: Noted in the affirmative. The question will be number 8.9.

Mr GUNNER: The memorandum of understanding means there is no need for a terms of reference because it is all handled in the MOU?

Commissioner KERSHAW: Yes, the terms of reference are contained within the MOU.

Mr GUNNER: What would be the process of that returning to the NT Police? Is it possible for AFP to, if need be, take this all the way through the process, or at some stage does it have to come back to you and the DPP?

Commissioner KERSHAW: No, it is not coming anywhere near the NT Police. The process that has been decided is that their investigation brief of evidence would be submitted to the special prosecutor who is working on behalf of the DPP, and they would make a decision on whether or not any charges were to be laid. It deliberately does not go anywhere near Northern Territory Police as far as decision making and the like.

Mr GUNNER: It falls within the Australian Federal Police ambit then, under the MOU - this is in the absence of seeing the MOU – and they would be tasked with gathering evidence from the Chief Minister's statements about the senior police and members of the political fraternity being involved in the coup? That would fall onto AFP bailiwick now and is out of Northern Territory's jurisdiction?

Commissioner KERSHAW: The terms of references is in relation to a criminal allegation of attempting to pervert the course of justice, which is in relation to Operation Subutai. That is their terms of reference so it does not sit with anything else but that.

Mr GUNNER: Those allegations about senior members of the police force actively running a coup or a campaign in cahoots, and some alleged politicians being a significant problem is a separate issue altogether? How is evidence about that being handled?

Mr CHANDLER: First of all I do not want to tell, say, direct or influence what those officers are investigating under the terms of reference, or what they are doing and where that investigation leads them. It is not up to me or anybody else to say; it is up to them to investigate what they find as evidence comes forward. Whatever they find, they will investigate.

Mr GUNNER: I am trying to work out where things are falling. There will be a judicial inquiry into - I will use the Chief Minister's words:

We want to ensure any misuse is pursued properly, and the inquiry is the best way of doing that in regard to rumours being circulated about politicians and maintaining public confidence.

That was announced; there would have been legal advice sought on terms of reference, and the Chief Minister would have consulted with Gerry Wood and me. That judicial inquiry was scrapped and a number of investigations are occurring. As I understand, the advice was the inquiry was not needed because there are investigations occurring between SFNT, the Ombudsman, AFP, PCT, SRU, etcetera. I am trying to work out where those allegations and concerns are now falling amongst the investigative mix.

Mr CHANDLER: That would be up to investigating officers. You are right in one regard, in that there were a number of issues and allegations raised. But there are a number of things on foot. The most important thing for the record is whatever course of action we chose as a government, it needed to be (1) accountable and (2) very careful it did not prejudice any ongoing investigations that were afoot involving Northern Territory Police. The course of action was taken only after a long series of advice from the Solicitor-General, as one avenue of advice.

With any of these investigations it would be silly to go down another track when the ongoing investigations would cover the majority, if not all, of people's concerns. I go back to the point that the Federal Police were brought in to ensure there was a perception of a level of accountability to the general public. I have no doubt this investigation could have been done by the Northern Territory Police very professionally, but to remove all level of suspicion it was important to bring in the Federal Police.

What they choose to investigate and what threads they follow is their call. At no stage - other than the fact I was also interviewed by the same police officers as part of their fact-finding mission and investigation - there was no interaction between those police officers and me on what they should or should not be investigating.

Mr GUNNER: Because you were being interviewed.

Mr CHANDLER: Absolutely.

Mr GUNNER: As part of the inquiry?

Mr CHANDLER: Absolutely, yes.

Mr GUNNER: It would make sense, on the grounds of what you are saying, that because the Chief Minister's accusations went to NT Police and NT politicians, if anyone was to follow these threads it would be the Australian Federal Police as part of the work they are doing - which is happening separately through the MOU to what Northern Territory Police are doing on the other investigations.

Mr CHANDLER: That would be for them to answer. I cannot ...

Mr GUNNER: I appreciate that. That is what I was trying to understand. It is something to pursue with Australian Federal Police. That is where we are: several inquiries have been handed in regarding the Ombudsman and Solicitor for the Northern Territory, and there are three outstanding investigations at the moment. Chair, that concludes my questions on investigations.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR: How wonderful. That concludes consideration of Output 2.2.

Output 2.3 - Services to the Judicial Process

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR: I will now call for questions on Output 2.3, Services to the Judicial Process. Are there any questions?

Mr GUNNER: My next set of questions will go to fire prevention, if that helps.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR: That concludes consideration of Output 2.3 and Output Group 2.0.

OUTPUT GROUP 3.0 - ROAD SAFETY SERVICES

Output 3.1 - Road Safety Services

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR: We will proceed to Output Group 3.0, Road Safety Services, Output 3.1, Road Safety Services. There are no questions?

OUTPUT GROUP 4.0 - FIRE PREVENTION AND RESPONSE MANAGEMENT
Output 4.1 - Fire Prevention And Response Management

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR: We will move to Output Group 4.0, Fire Prevention and Response Management, Output 4.1, Fire Prevention and Response Management. Are there any questions?

Mr GUNNER: Minister, the EBA of firefighters has not been settled yet. Can you take us through what the sticking points are on that and what you are budgeting for in this budget to deal with the EBA and the outstanding issues that exist between you and the firefighters?

Mr CHANDLER: I want to clarify that this sits with OCPE ...

Mr GUNNER: Negotiations do, but you have resources within your budget for it, would you not?

Mr CHANDLER: Yes but the best I can say here is I have a very open and honest engagement practice with fire services. I have visited a number of fire stations now and had the chance to sit down with a number of firefighters to talk – not one on one because there were more than one in the room – about some of the issues they face.

Taking on the role recently was a learning experience for me. We were not worlds apart on some of the issues they were talking about. Was I frustrated that NT Fire Services chose not to accept the latest offer? Absolutely. I believe it is fair and reasonable – and still do. Notwithstanding I appreciate the type of work they do, I said that years ago if I ever went back into the Air Force it would be as a fireman. Compared to the shifts we used to work, the fire shifts were pretty handy.

We all appreciate the work the firefighters do, whether in a full paid capacity through to the volunteers across the Territory. As the minister responsible, was I disappointed? Yes, I was. Again, I believe it is a fair and reasonable offer.

On many of the questions that were raised with me about the conditions of their service and their job in general, we were not world's apart. In fact, in some cases we are heading in the same direction. Hopefully before the long weekend we can get that sorted, move forward and make sure we are providing the right kind of resources to back up the job they do.

Mr GUNNER: What resources have been allocated in this budget then, pending a successful conclusion to the EBA?

Mr CHANDLER: Of course, the 3% wage parameter is included in all agency budgets. Many of the things raised with me will be issues I will take back to my Cabinet colleagues. Some of it is replacement of the equipment, upgrading certain equipment from old appliances to newer appliances.

No doubt about it, some of our fire stations are immaculate; they have fantastic equipment and resources. Some have been well designed. The Berrimah station has been well designed for the future, with plenty of capacity to grow. I commend the previous government for building infrastructure that will last for many years to come. It is fit for purpose.

It is a changing world. I raised an idea that government might find worthwhile to work out with the fire service. There is nothing concrete, it is just fleshing out ideas. Across different parts of the country and the world first responders who are fire service personnel have upgraded qualifications as paramedics. Is there a view in fire services for us to go to the next step in the Northern Territory and provide another level of training for all or a certain number of our firefighters to be trained as paramedics? Is that something we should, as a community and government, consider for the future? It is worth exploring whether we want to pursue that. The few fire service officers I have spoken to were excited about the prospect of that kind of training to lift their qualifications.

Mr GUNNER: Does that capacity exist within the budget? Is there room in the budget for professional development like that?

Mr CHANDLER: For professional development, yes, there would be. Some of these ideas we are fleshing out now, we will be talking about come the end of this year when we are discussing the budget for the following year. If there will be big replacements of plant, a change of structure within the fire service now is the time to start talking to gear up to future budgets.

Mr GUNNER: We are doing back-to-back recruit squads with the firies at the moment to get firies back up to establishment. Are you concerned about the retention rate amongst firies? Do you think part of the problem might be the delay in finishing off the EBA?

Mr CHANDLER: It is probably one of the factors. We have by comparison a pretty low rate of attrition in fire services. There are about 12 a year leaving fire services. That is not a huge attrition rate compared to some of the jurisdictions. But all those factors would come in.

There are probably not many jobs - government jobs in particular - which the community holds in high regard. Most people love our firies. They do a fantastic job and as a government we should support them. Notwithstanding, there needs to be a level of understanding on the size of the Northern Territory and its population. At the same time it is important government keeps up with ever-changing needs and respond to emergencies when they occur.

Mr GUNNER: Do you have the budget to back pay firies to the date the last agreement expired?

Mr CHANDLER: The simple answer that is yes.

Mr GUNNER: My next set of questions is to Emergency Services.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR: That concludes consideration of Output Group 4.0.

OUTPUT GROUP 5.0 – EMERGENCY SERVICES

Output 5.1 – Emergency Services

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR: The committee will now move onto Output Group 5.0, Emergency Services, Output 5.1, Emergency Services. Are there any questions?

Mr GUNNER: I have gone over time so I will trim my Emergency Services questions. In the last annual report there were an number of places identified where there were no volunteers. Do there still remain some places with zero volunteers and what sort of work are we doing to identify and recruit potential volunteers in those areas? I recognise that zero can happen, so it is not – we love our volunteers.

Mr CHANDLER: My advice is that emergency services is currently doing a footprint analysis across the Territory to identify where there are shortcomings to ensure we have the right people in the right areas. The amazing thing for me, particularly with our volunteers, is the resourcefulness they inspire in others. Even in areas where we do not have emergency services personnel per se, the resourcefulness of the communities in those areas can be quite amazing during times of emergency. Recently with Cyclones Lam and Nathan, the call of duty from people across the Northern Territory was quite amazing to see. You would agree that the volunteers do an amazing job.

I read in my opening statement the number of hours put in over those times. These are volunteer hours governments could not afford - not just in the Northern Territory but across Australia and perhaps the world -- to pay the dollars required if these people were paid for their services. The volunteers do an amazing job.

It is always an area that can be equally frustrating because sometimes you never know what you will need. With the recent purchase of the flood boats - the one I had the pleasure of announcing at the Daly a couple of months ago - what an amazing resource they now have. I know more vessels will be constructed. It is about being able to identify the needs, where those needs should go, and of course ensure we have the budget capability to step in as a government at any time to cover off on emergency.

One of the greatest testaments of this government – I will play politics here for a moment - is the debt situation we have put ourselves in now, after many hard decisions, puts us in a position where the vast majority of the cost of the cleanup after Cyclones Nathan and Lam is being covered off within a normal budget cycle rather than having to borrow further money. We would not be in that position if some of the harder decisions were not made earlier. It is good work by the volunteers.

Mr GUNNER: Do you want to take that on notice, minister? Perhaps adapting the original question which was are any communities with zero? Do you want to provide a copy of that report about the footprint and what you have identified?

Mr CHANDLER: I can go through the different areas and can give you the numbers. There are not that many so I can read through them.

Mr GUNNER: The ones at zero?

Mr CHANDLER: Yes, the ones at zero and the other ones. In Bulman we have one; Cox Peninsula, six; Daly River, 11; Darwin, 42; Galiwinku, 13; Gapuwiyak, 11; Gunbalanya, eight; Kalkarindji/Daguragu, zero; Katherine, 19; Lajamanu, five; Maningrida, 19; Maranboy, zero; Milingimbi, zero; Ngukurr, zero; Nhulunbuy, five; Numbulwar, zero; Palmerston, 33; Pirlangimpi, 11; Ramingining, three; Wadeye, zero; Warruwi, a new unit there of 12; Ali Curung, nine; Alice Springs, 39; Avon Downs, seven; Harts Range, six; Kintore, nine; Kulgera, zero; Ntaria, 13; Papunya, two; Tennant Creek, 11; Ti Tree, zero; Watarrka, five; and Yuendumu, 13. That is a total of 313 volunteers.

Mr GUNNER: As an example, Ti Tree was zero in the annual report and remains zero now. Do we at some point say that is a concern and do some dedicated work within the community? There are three police officers stationed there and other resources in Ti Tree. Do we think it is covered off at the moment and is not necessarily ...

Mr CHANDLER: That is the work being undertaken at the moment. It could be ...

Mr GUNNER: Is it possible to get a copy of that report when it is done? It might fall outside the time frame of the Estimates Committee, but would it possible for that to be available when it is done?

Mr CHANDLER: Happy to.

Mr GUNNER: We will do all that, member to member?

Mr CHANDLER: That is fine.

Mr GUNNER: I appreciate that. That concludes my questions today, minister. I thank the minister, the commissioner, Audrey and all the staff who have done a lot of work to be ready for today's estimates. I appreciate it, and thank the minister for the way you conducted it.

Mr CHANDLER: Thank you member, for Fannie Bay.

I have two answers to questions taken on notice.

Answer to Question on Notice No 8.2

Mr CHANDLER: The question was how many people were on sick leave during the last pay period? In police there were 68 staff on sick leave; police civilians, 21; fire services, three; and emergency services, one.

Answer to Question on Notice No 8.8

Mr CHANDLER: To answer question on notice No 8.8, about the Safe Streets Audit, which was whether the opposition can have a copy of the report. The Australian Institute of Criminology released a public version of the Safe Streets Audit on its website. The AIC uploaded a copy of the Safe Streets Audit in July 2014. The publication is available at www.aic.gov.au/publications/current%20series/special/1-20/004.html - do you want me to keep reading?

Mr GUNNER: Was it July 2014?

Mr CHANDLER: Yes, July 2014.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR: This now concludes consideration of all output groups relating to the Northern Territory Police, Fire and Emergency Services. On behalf of the committee, I thank officers from Northern Territory Police, Fire and Emergency Services who provided advice to the minister today.

The committee will now move on to consider outputs related to the Department of Education.

The committee suspended

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR: Minister, I invite you to introduce the officials accompanying you and, if you wish, to make an opening statement regarding the Department of Education. If you could keep that within cooeee of five minutes that would be great.

Mr CHANDLER: No problems. I introduce the officials from the Department of Education who are with me today. Chief Executive Ken Davies is on my left. The Deputy Chief Executive Organisational Services, Catherine Weber is on my right. Chief Financial Officer, Jasmin Aldenhoven - where has Jasmin moved to? - is on my right. Deputy Chief Executive School Education, Susan Bowden, is on my left. Nicole Hurwood is behind us. She is the Acting General Manager Strategic Services.

Mr Deputy Chair, there are 189 schools in the Northern Territory providing education to over 45 000 students in both government and non-government schools. In addition, 29 government homeland learning centres are operating in 2015. About 70% of Territory schools are located in remote and very remote areas and 41% of our students are Indigenous, representing the highest proportion of Indigenous students in any Australian state or territory. Almost three-quarters of student enrolments are in Northern Territory government schools.

The average attendance rate for non-Indigenous government school students is consistently above the 90% target set by the Council of Australian Governments. While we continue to see improvements in the Indigenous student attendance rate - which in Term 1 2015 was 71%, up from 68.2% in 2014 - we have further work to do in this area to meet the COAG target and overcome the challenges faced by many children in engaging with attending school, particularly in our remote and very remote areas.

These students are supported by a workforce of over 4100 full-time equivalent staff, 86% of whom are school based. At 11%, the Department of Education's proportion of Indigenous staff is amongst the highest in any Northern Territory agency. The Territory's 2463 teaching staff are amongst the highest paid in Australia.

In 2015-16 a record \$1.012bn will be invested in education to implement major system reform that focuses on delivering a long-term sustainable plan to improve outcomes for all students, particularly our most disadvantaged Indigenous students. It provides a much-needed boost in infrastructure investment for special needs, preschool and childcare facilities, as well as repairs and maintenance for a range of schools across the Territory.

Our schools and the department are running more efficiently through greater local control and better targeting of resources. Australian government funding is an important contribution to our efforts. Our budget shows a reduction in Australian government funding due to cessation or uncertainty about some national partnership agreements and national grant programs at the time of finalising Budget 2015-16, of about \$12m worth. Some of this resourcing was later announced in the federal budget and we will still need to negotiate the Northern Territory proportion of some programs before our budget can be adjusted upwards.

As we have done with the national partnership on remote Aboriginal investment, we will continue to work with our Australian government colleagues to negotiate a more strategic approach to the allocation and use of Commonwealth funding that ensures the funding is aligned to our reform efforts and is focused on making a difference to improve outcomes in the areas that matter to Territory students. In fact, all investment made through our 2015-16 Budget focuses efforts to improve the quality of education services and contribute to better outcomes for all Northern Territory students, no matter where they live.

We continue to support parents by allocating \$6.6m for the Back to School grant that provides \$150 per student to assist with the costs of school education. Our \$6m Early Childhood Subsidy supports long and family day care services to provide quality support to families.

In partnership with the Australian government, we are investing \$190m over the next three years in implementing Their Share in the Future Indigenous Education Strategy 2015-24. In 2015-16 we have

allocated \$46.3m under this strategy to: strengthen our work to support families and children in the early years; to focus on children engaging with and attending school regularly; deliver explicit teaching, learning and assessment of English oracy, literacy and numeracy programs; provide Indigenous secondary students with access to quality education options and support to make successful transitions between primary and secondary schooling; and to ensure that remote education is delivered by highly-skilled and motivated educators and support staff including local recruits.

By 2024 we want Indigenous students in the Northern Territory to be successful and confident in their education journey and to achieve outcomes comparable with those of their non-Indigenous peers. The first year of implementation is critical to settle the foundation for us to work towards this ambitious goal.

We continue to have among the highest paid teaching workforce in the country, with our schools having a greater say in the teaching resources they need to deliver the programs suited to their student needs. For the first time, schools have a line of sight to the full resourcing available to them. In 2015 \$368m is allocated to 152 government schools through global school budgets, with a further \$57.5m set aside to meet centralised school costs. An additional \$23m has been allocated over four years to assist schools implement global budgets and transition to the student needs-based funding model, bringing the total transitional funding to \$40m over four years.

A total of \$1m this year and \$2m per annum from 2015-16 is provided to support independent public schools to innovate and set new standards in public education. Six independent public schools are already in operation and 11 more school communities are now considering if they want to apply to operate this way from 2016. We are also acting innovatively in how we strengthen the Northern Territory's position as an educational gateway for Asia and investing \$1m towards implementing our 10-year plan for international education, including the operation of the international education and training hub.

Our additional capital investment is needs based and includes continued investment in special education infrastructure, with \$21.4m allocated for a new special school in Palmerston, as well as \$2.7m in new facilities at Kintore Street Primary School in Katherine. This is in addition to our \$33m investment in the new Henbury School.

We are investing in early childhood infrastructure with \$5.3m provided for a new preschool facility at Brainting Primary School, as well as an extension to the Bees Creek Preschool facility. We will construct a \$5.5m child and family centre at Larapinta Primary School which will provide integrated community health and early learning support services for families and children.

A total of \$33m will be invested in repairs and maintenance to ensure Northern Territory education facilities continue to remain amongst the best in the country.

In summary, we are delivering on innovative, ambitious and sustainable reform programs. They are properly funded and we are eliminating wasted resources and focusing on areas of most need where the evidence says we will get most return for our investment. We are targeting spending in areas we know will make most difference to the quality of education, to ultimately deliver better outcomes for all Northern Territory students.

I welcome questions in relation to education.

Madam CHAIR: Are there any questions relating to the statement?

Ms MANISON: Madam Chair, I am quite happy to move into the whole-of-agency questions if that is okay. We have a lot to get through and a very busy minister with many portfolios.

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

Madam CHAIR: The committee will now proceed to consider the estimates of proposed expenditure contained in the Appropriation Bill (2015-2016) as they relate to the Department of Education. Are there any agency-related whole-of-government questions on budget and fiscal strategy?

Ms MANISON: Can we start off today with what is the current staffing figures for the Department of Education? What is the FTE equivalent?

Mr CHANDLER: Member for Wanguri, 4131 with 86% of them based in schools.

Ms MANISON: Regarding that number of 4131, I will ask you a few questions about staffing numbers and why we have seen such dramatic cuts from the Department of Education in particular under the CLP government. If you look at the annual report staffing figures for the Department of Education from June 2012 you will see there were 4647 FTEs within the Department of Education. Today, in March 2015, we have 4131. That is a cut of 516 staff from the Department of Education. I appreciate about 30 staff were formerly within the training sector of the agency that would have moved, but why have there been such huge job losses from the Department of Education?

Mr CHANDLER: First, we could go back to when we inherited a department that was severely out of balance with the needs of education in the Northern Territory. There was a stage, if I recall my numbers correctly, where over a few short years the Department of Education had grown by around 600 or 700 staff. At the same time student numbers had grown by about 171. So across the Northern Territory we had student growth within education of 170-odd students, and at the same time the department grew by nearly 700 staff members. One might appreciate that if the results were getting better, but the truth is the results were not getting better after that amazing investment in staff by the previous government.

The reality was something had to give and change, and today we have a far more efficient education system than we inherited and results and attendance rates are improving. Whilst I am yet to be satisfied we are anywhere close to the results I want to see in education in the Northern Territory, we are on track and the right approach and things are improving. Whilst there may be fewer staff numbers within the Department of Education today than 2012, I can assure you the needs of the most important people, the students, are being met. .

Ms MANISON: Of that 516 job losses from the Department of Education, where have those jobs gone from?

Mr CHANDLER: First I will clarify a couple of things. From January to March 2014 to January to March 2015 the difference in the school-based teaching workforce has gone from 2527 to 2487.

Ms MANISON: Can you repeat those numbers for me? The school-based ...

Mr CHANDLER: The school-based teaching workforce has gone from 2527 in January to March 2014 to 2487 in January to March 2015. That is a difference of 40. A couple of things need to be put on the record. One is we have seen a shift out of the public education system of about 650 students across the Northern Territory. A large proportion of those are from Nhulunbuy with the closing of the refinery.

Ms MANISON: Sorry, minister, what was the loss of enrolments?

Mr CHANDLER: About 650 students less across the Territory this year than last year. We have only seen a difference of 40 in staffing numbers, but more importantly, if you look at the staffing budget this year it has not changed from last year. We have not, in your words, cut back funding for teachers in this budget.

Ms MANISON: Will you acknowledge that if 516 staff have been lost from the agency there have been some big cutbacks made. Where have they been made?

Mr CHANDLER: Most of the differences in staff numbers we see today, compared to where we were in 2012, have come from the back office. There has been a major shift from the department back into the schools, and in some cases the decisions made by staff in the department are now being made by people in the schools, where they should be.

I acknowledge there is a difference in numbers today in regard to the number of people within the Department of Education, but for the number of staff the dollars going into education are going up because we are investing more this year than ever before. That spend and the focus is leading to better student outcomes and educational results. You can argue that we have a smaller but more efficient system today than in 2012 and are now delivering better outcomes.

Ms MANISON: Minister, I think you would agree with me that the secondary education space for students is a vital part of their education journey and development in their life. I turn your attention to the staffing figures and dramatic changes we have seen through middle and senior schools in the Northern Territory. I am taking these figures from questions that have been submitted in previous estimates to recent written questions.

I am looking at staffing from May 2012 through to my latest round of school figures, which I had from November 2014. These are some of the cuts we have seen at Territory schools: Casuarina Senior College from 106 staff to 81.8, which is a cut of 24.2; Darwin High School from 131 to 123, which is a cut of eight; Darwin Middle School from 57.7 to 53.4, which is a cut of 4.3; Dripstone Middle School from 61.59 to 52.1, which is a cut of 9.49 staff; Nightcliff Middle School from 33.35 to 25.5, which is a cut of 7.85 staff; Sanderson Middle School from 71.59 to 63.6, which is a cut of 7.69 staff; Centralian Senior College from 63.1 to 53.9, which is a cut of 9.2 staff; Katherine High School 66.42 to 55.5, a cut of 9.2 ...

Mr BARRETT: A point of order, Madam Chair! Is there a question involved here or will she just go through ...

Ms MANISON: I am almost there, member for Blain. I have some terrible figures from Palmerston that I will ...

Mr BARRETT: Do you have a question?

Ms MANISON: Yes, I do, at the end of it. It is important that we scrutinise these staffing figures because it goes to the operation of those schools.

Mr BARRETT: Should you not be asking what the figures are, rather than reading out what you think they are?

Ms MANISON: I am confirming these with the minister: Taminmin College from 105.33 to 97.3, which is a cut of 8.03 staff; Rosebery Middle School from 64.85 to 51.8, which is a cut of 13 staff; Palmerston Senior College 92.37 to 69.7, which is a cut of 22.67 staff; Tennant Creek High School from 41.6 to 31.2, which is a cut of 10.4; Shepherdson College - and I acknowledge that school goes into primary years also - from 75.56 to 63.6, which is a cut of 11.96; Yirrkala School - which also goes across those ages groups - from 31.15 to 25.2, which is a loss of 5.95 staff. In total that is a loss of 153.71 staff across middle and senior schools. If you look at those figures we see that 188 fewer staff are in our schools across the Territory.

How do you expect our secondary schools to do the very important job they have with 153 fewer staff in the system?

Mr CHANDLER: That is a very long-winded question. If you look at the results in all of those schools, which I am focused on, they are improving. You continually say the number of staff has a direct impact on the student outcomes. Well, you are wrong. Under the Labor government's watch there were far more teachers in the system, but the results were worse than we are getting today. Your argument does not stack up.

As a government we are refocusing and reprioritising the investment we have in education to where it matters, that is, in the classroom. We can clearly see the results are improving. You used a cluster of schools. I will do the same thing. I will pick a small cluster; it will not be as many as you used: Bees Creek Primary School in 2014, 369 students declined to 354, which is a variation of 15; Berry Springs Primary School went from 213 up to 219, an increase of six; Girraween Primary School, 430 up to 456, a variation of 26 more students; Howard Springs Primary School, 250 down to 240, a variation down of 10; Humpty Doo Primary School, 390 up to 398, an increase of eight; Middle Point School, 20 to 22, an increase of two; and Taminmin College 1019 to 1053, up by 34.

The difference of what we are talking about is that there is a variation of 51 in that cluster of schools. What we have seen is no variation whatsoever, or very small variations, to the number of staff still employed this year compared to last year.

I go to the very heart of this question. It is about how we are refocusing the spend and investment in education. I say far more wisely than what was previously done. The reality is any of the schools you have nominated today where there are fewer teachers than there were this time last year, I guarantee if you look, it is on the back of declining enrolments in those schools.

Second, we do not have a cap on teacher numbers in the Northern Territory. As student numbers increase, if we have schools where we can clearly see numbers are going up, they will be appropriately resourced for those numbers. Where we see schools where there are decreasing numbers for whatever reason, of course the resources in those schools would be taken away. Under the former government's policy, you would attack schools at different times through the year based on what their current numbers were, and schools never knew from one minute to the next what they would have.

The difference today though is that at least under our model schools are given their money upfront. They know what they have for the rest of the 12 months to employ staff, and there are no changes through the year. So even on the back of a decline in a school, they have that funding arrangement in place for the entire 12 months, not cut out halfway through a term or at the end of a term. They have that certainty for the entire year.

Ms MANISON: Minister, about this efficient education system you keep referring to, what type of impact do you think teachers have on the education outcomes of students?

Mr CHANDLER: Sorry, can you just repeat the question?

Ms MANISON: What type of impact do you think teachers have on the education outcomes of students?

Mr CHANDLER: They have every impact. If you have any understanding of what teachers do every single day in the classrooms, they have every impact. We have some of the highest-paid and best-resourced teachers in the country. Our schools are well resourced. Wherever you go there are no shortage of resources. Only yesterday we were at Bakewell Primary School talking about the 2500 new laptops for teachers, with 4500 new iPads going across the Northern Territory for our children. So not only are we resourcing in teachers, we are also providing money into resourcing the very things they need to become even better teachers than they are today. There is no question that I am arguing with you on this particular point: teachers have a huge impact on students.

Ms MANISON: To go back to the figures we were speaking about before, what I am struggling to ascertain is an exact number of how many teacher jobs have been lost under this CLP government. You referred to a loss of 30. I believe that was between January and March 2005 to ...

Mr CHANDLER: No, 40 between quarter three of 2013-14 to quarter three of 2014-15 – again on the back of enrolments. We have about 650 fewer students in the Northern Territory in the public education system today than we had this time last year. Has that led to a reduction in teachers? Yes, it has led to a reduction of 40, but it is on the back of enrolments being less this year than they were last year.

Ms MANISON: I am looking forward to seeing your next annual report. I would not mind any figures you can provide me today with regard to teachers and positions. When referring back to previous annual reports - and I compare again June 2012 to June 2014 - there are 105 fewer classroom teachers, 80 fewer Senior Teacher 1, 15 fewer Senior Teacher 2, six fewer Senior Teacher 3, four fewer Senior Teacher 4, and 18 fewer Specialist Teacher 2.

From June 2012 to today, how many teachers have we lost from the Department of Education?

Mr CHANDLER: There are a couple of angles within your question. First of all, you were talking about teacher positions that may not be teaching in schools. They may have been in positions where they were employed by the Department of Education in a back room-type job. So it does not necessarily mean we have that number of teachers missing in the system.

Second, with global budgeting schools are making decisions dependent on their needs - quite different to how they operated under what I would consider a bloated education system under the previous Labor government. I put it to you again that the decisions being made today by schools under the global budgeting autonomy that is provided, are based on their needs. Yes, there are 40 fewer teachers on the back of 650 fewer students. There is no cap on teachers. I have every confidence in the world that the Northern Territory will continue to grow as people realise what a great place the Northern Territory is to invest in and move here with their children, so teacher numbers will go up as enrolments go up.

Ms MANISON: Minister, are you able to provide the current figure of how many school-based staff we have, by FTE.

Mr CHANDLER: I think I have already provided ...

Ms MANISON: School-based employees ...

Mr CHANDLER: I have already given it to you. It is 2487.

Ms MANISON: Is that teachers or school-based employees?

Mr CHANDLER: Sorry, that is teachers.

Ms MANISON: So that was 2487 within schools. As you provide in your annual report, what is your current school-based employee FTE figure?

Mr CHANDLER: I am happy to take that question on notice.

Ms MANISON: Thank you minister.

Question on Notice No 8.10

Madam CHAIR: Please restate the question for the record.

Ms MANISON: Can the minister please provide the full-time equivalent of school-based employees.

Madam CHAIR: Minister, you accept the question?

Mr CHANDLER: Yes I do.

Madam CHAIR: That question will be number 8.10.

Ms MANISON: I have some more questions on the breakdown of staffing numbers so I can get that on the record, though I suspect some of them will need to be taken on notice. Can we please get the number of permanent part-time contract staff in the Department of Education? These were some of the written questions on notice, actually.

Mr CHANDLER: Yes, we have those answers here. For 2014-15 as at Pay 20 on 26 March 2015, the paid full-time employees or FTE number of employees for the department was 4148; there were 151 FTE ongoing permanent part-time employees; 1336 FTE fixed period temporary contract employees; and there were 36 FTE employees who were ECO1 level or above. I can give you the breakdown. Do you want the breakdown of those? The executive contracts?

Ms MANISON: Yes, can we get that classification?

Mr CHANDLER: I thought you might want it.

Ms MANISON: Thank you. You know I like details.

Mr CHANDLER: EO1, 10; EO2, 18; EO3, five; EO4, two; EO6, one, with a total of 36. I believe it was over 50 we inherited in the department which is down to 36.

Question on Notice No 8.11

Ms MANISON: I have some other questions I believe you will need to take on notice. In previous estimates we have been able to get the full-time equivalents by school for May 2012, 2013, and 2014. I am hoping to get that for May 2015 as well, to get a complete document of full-time equivalent staff by school and by positions for May 2012, 2013, 2014 and 2015.

Mr CHANDLER: I would be happy to take that on notice.

Ms MANISON: Thank you.

Madam CHAIR: That question is number 8.11.

Question on Notice No 8.12

Ms MANISON: Could I also get, minister, the total classroom teacher numbers broken down by levels from CT1 to CT9?

Mr CHANDLER: We can do that on notice?

Madam CHAIR: Yes, that would be number 8.12.

Ms MANISON: Could I also get the total of senior teacher number broken down by 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6?

Mr CHANDLER: Yes, happy to take that on notice.

Ms MANISON: CT1 to CT9.

Question on Notice No 8.13

Madam CHAIR: Sorry, what was that last question?

Ms MANISON: The question is total number of senior teachers broken down by one through to six.

Madam CHAIR: Minister, do you accept the question?

Mr CHANDLER: Yes, and we can provide that school-based and office-based if you like.

Madam CHAIR: That is question number 8.13.

Ms MANISON: Thank you, minister, and the total number of specialist teachers one and two. .

Mr CHANDLER: They are all special.

Ms MANISON: They are indeed.

Mr CHANDLER: Yes, happy to take that on notice.

Ms MANISON: Going back to some of the questions on notice, how many staff resigned in 2014-15 to date and what is the percentage of the agency's total staff?

Mr CHANDLER: For the period 1 July 2014 to 31 March 2015 the number of resignations was 375 head count or 9% of the total number of employees in the department of 4148. There have been nil redundancies.

Ms MANISON: I will turn to principal numbers as well. As you appreciate, principals are vital in the system and it is important that we have strong leaders at our schools. We have also seen a decline in principal numbers from 177.5 to 173.3. This is from the comparison in the annual reports. What is the current number of principals and why have we seen a decline?

Mr CHANDLER: I am making assumptions but I am pretty certain some of these principals were employed in the back room and those positions are no longer there. It is not a decline in principals in our schools. All schools still have principals, and there are 79 principals in schools.

Ms MANISON: Could I also get – it is probably one to take on notice – the current number of school principals broken down by executive contract principals, executive principals and teaching principals?

Mr CHANDLER: Executive contract principals 79, but the head count of principals at the moment is 90.

Ms MANISON: That is not including the executive principals and teaching principal positions?

Mr CHANDLER: It will not include teacher principal positions.

Ms MANISON: Would I be able to put that on notice to get those figures?

Mr CHANDLER: Yes, I am happy to take that on notice.

Question on Notice No 8.14

Madam CHAIR: Please restate the question for the record.

Ms MANISON: Can we please get the current number of school principals broken down by executive contract principals, executive principals and teaching principals?

Madam CHAIR: Minister, do you accept the question?

Mr CHANDLER: Yes.

Madam CHAIR: That will be question number 8.14.

Ms MANISON: Sticking to this theme of a few of the whole-of-agency questions we submitted, could you please provide the total cost of travel in the agency broken down by international, interstate and intrastate?

Mr CHANDLER: Total cost of travel in the Department of Education for the financial year to 31 March 2015: international travel \$73 000; interstate \$591 000; intrastate \$2.891m making a total of \$3.555m.

Ms MANISON: Could you please provide details and costs of all travel undertaken by you paid for by the agency, including travel on charters?

Mr CHANDLER: Costs for minister and ministerial staff in the table below: for me the destinations were Cape York, Wellington in New Zealand, Central Australia, Singapore, Yuendumu and Papunya and the total cost, including charters, was \$23 241.

Ms MANISON: Is it very usual for a minister of government having their international travel paid for by the agency?

Mr CHANDLER: In times when you are asked by your department to support a particular operation that they are working on - and I recall the trip that I did, which included 10 principals that were travelling ...

Ms MANISON: And where was that to, minister?

Mr CHANDLER: That was to China.

Ms MANISON: Was that paid for by the agency?

Mr CHANDLER: That was paid for by the Centre for School Leadership, Charles Darwin University.

Ms MANISON: Is the Centre for School Leadership funded by the Department of Education?

Mr CHANDLER: Yes, through Charles Darwin University.

Ms MANISON: So, effectively, that would be the agency paying for your airfare to China?

Mr CHANDLER: The question was about the value and why you might undertake this type of travel. It was invaluable on a number of levels. The first is that the doors that were opened in China for the travelling delegation. The second value for me and for the principals, was the opportunity to sit on the coach and talk one on one, listen to what they had learnt on the trip and what they would do with the information. It was also for me to understand a whole new world of what it means to be a principal, particularly working in schools.

Value for those type of trips will always be hard to justify in the public's eye. But does it make you a better minister? Absolutely. Does it give you insight into making better decisions? Absolutely. I would do it again in a heartbeat.

Ms MANISON: Who did you travel with on that trip aside from the principals? Did you just go to China? Did you travel to other parts of Asia on that trip?

Mr CHANDLER: I can give you a full and comprehensive answer to that.

Ms MANISON: Does it include a breakdown of the cost of airfares, accommodation and any incidentals as well?

Mr CHANDLER: It will tell you just about everything.

In June 2014 the Department of Education provided a grant to the Centre for School Leadership at Charles Darwin University for the purpose of organising a study tour to China and Hong Kong for the executive leaders program participants.

The Centre for School Leadership implemented a tender process through Charles Darwin University, for a provider to design and conduct the program for school leaders. As part of the program the successful tender was required to develop a study tour. The Queensland Education Leadership Institute was the successful bidder.

The planning for the study tour commenced in February 2014 and involved detailed consultations with provincial and municipal government departments in Anhui Province. The study tour to Anhui Province, China and Hong Kong proceeded in November 2014. The group comprised Northern Territory government and non-government school principals; executives of the Department of Education; academics from Charles Darwin University; and representatives from the Queensland Education Leadership Institute and the Association of Independent Schools NT. The Minister for Education and his adviser accompanied the group.

The total cost of the tour was \$160 204 for everybody. The cost of travel for the two executives and the interpreter from the Department of Education, the minister and his adviser was \$60 071.

The purpose for the minister's participation in the study tour included meetings in Shanghai with Shanghai Municipal Education Commission, Australian Trade Commission's Education Commission Commissioner for Northern Asia, Australian Consulate General in Shanghai, senior trade commissioners, Chinese business officials interested in investing in the NT, and the Shanghai Planning Commission. In Shanghai the NT Department of Education executives ...

Ms MANISON: Was this trip funded by the Centre of School Leadership?

Mr CHANDLER: In fact it was. In Shanghai the NT Department of Education executives engaged in ...

Ms MANISON: It sounds more like a business trip at the moment.

Mr CHANDLER: Whenever you travel you try to capitalise on every possible thing. We do not sit on our butts. We actually work hard from dawn to dusk and later. There are many meetings that are worked out in this planning. We try to utilise that time as effectively as we can.

In Shanghai, the NT Department of Education executives engaged in consular briefings from the Consul-General, international education and training briefing from Education Commission North Asia, and meetings with potential education agents and the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade.

In Anhui, there was minister modelling high-level government negotiations and relationship-building skills for the participants in the leadership program, a meeting with the Anhui Provincial Government officials including the Minister for Education, visits to and meeting with the Vice Chancellors and senior members of the staff at Hebei Normal University, Anhui Normal University and Wuhu foreign languages schools, and visits to Anqing and Tongling Middle Schools. The group also visited several schools in Hong Kong including the international school to receive professional learning on Hong Kong educational reform over recent years.

Outcomes achieved included: the principals investigated particular educational reforms in China that linked with projects derived from work on the executive development for educational leaders program run by Queensland Educational Leadership Institute; presentations by the principals were published in a Chinese educational journal and presented in the university in Anhui Province; principals received modelling of high-level negotiation and relationship-building skills within an intercultural context; the President of the Wan Lung Anhui Normal University has requested proposals from the minister on how to extend the Northern Territory's friendship province agreement; and four officers from the Department of Education will travel to Anhui province in June 2015 to finalise these arrangements for 20 students and three staff from

Tongling Middle School to perform as part of the Northern Territory Department of Education's annual student performing arts showcase, in the Beat Festival at the Darwin Entertainment Centre in September 2015 and to establish a school-to-school partnership between Palmerston Senior College and 168 High School Hebei.

Another study tour to Anhui province and Hong Kong will proceed in October 2015 comprising 11 Department of Education principals, two Department of Education executives, three CDU staff and one non-government school representative from the Association of Independent Schools NT.

It is important to note a little background in regard to these. The Northern Territory has developed close links with the Anhui Province over an extended period. Since 2000 delegations from CDU and the NT government have visited the province to build relationships with the Northern Territory.

In October 2000, an arrangement between the Northern Territory of Australia and the Anhui Province of the People's Republic of China was signed by the then Chief Minister, Hon Denis Burke MLA, to establish a friendship agreement. In October 2004, an affirmation and extension of the friendship agreement was signed by the then minister, Hon Paul Henderson MLA, and the Director-General, Foreign Affairs Office of Anhui Province People's Government recognising this friendship agreement. In 2012, the Anhui Normal University, one of the partner universities in the CDU Confucius Institute, signed a memorandum of understanding with CDU to collaborate in education, research and staff and student exchanges.

A delegation of 12 principals from Anhui Province, China, visited Darwin for 12 days in November/December 2013 for a leadership program hosted by the Centre for School Leadership at Charles Darwin University. During the official welcome, the Department of Education Chief Executive indicated the department would reciprocate with a visit to Anhui Province during 2014.

A list of participants in Group 1 included: me, Minister for Education; Ken Davies, the Chief Executive, Department of Education; Anthony Jarvis, adviser to the minister; Dr Kevin Gillen, Executive Director Education Partnerships, Department of Education; Weifeng Mao, Interpreter, Languages Consultant, Curriculum Assessment and Standards, Department of Education.

In Group 2: Mr Gary Fry, Director, Centre for School Leadership funded by CDU; Pam Erfurt, President, Association of the Northern Territory School Education Leaders, who was self-funded; Gail Barker, Executive Director, Association of Independent Schools of the Northern Territory, again self-funded; Chris Harvey, Principal, Nyangatjatjara College, self-funded; consultants Queensland Education Leadership Institute Professor Peter Kell, Head of School Education, Charles Darwin University, funded by CDU.

The principals participating in executive development for educational leaders program were Sharon Reeves, Woodroffe Primary School, Palmerston; Daniel Mertas, Katherine South Primary School, Katherine; Edward Fabijan, Centralian Senior College, Alice Springs; Andy Mison, NT Music School, Darwin; Jenny Nash, Casuarina Senior College, Darwin; Mark Monahan, West Arnhem College, Jabiru; Carolyn Edwards, Henbury School, Darwin; Sabina Smith, Nhulunbuy High School, Nhulunbuy; John Cleary, Casuarina Street Primary School, Katherine; and Ryan Martin, Batchelor Area School, Batchelor.

Any one of those principals you speak to today have valuable memories and lessons learnt from a trip like that. The value of the Northern Territory continuing to have strong relationships in Asia is paramount. I do not think any government would shy away from that fact.

Ms MANISON: I have more questions about what has been an extremely unusual process for a department to pay for your travel to go overseas. You mentioned a \$60 000 amount for four people. There was you and your ministerial adviser which was then Mr Anthony Jarvis. Is that correct?

Mr CHANDLER: Correct.

Ms MANISON: Plus a few executives from the department. I would like you to outline - because as I said it is extremely unusual for a department to pay for minister's overseas trip - how much for your airfares was charged to the department? How much was your accommodation? How much were any other travel-related expenses or incidentals on this trip of \$60 000? How much were expenses attributed to you?

Mr CHANDLER: First of all I do not think it is unusual for a department to fund a minister to join a party such as this. It was at the request of the department for the minister to accompany them.

Ms MANISON: It is extremely unusual, minister.

Ms LAWRIE: The Department of Chief Minister pays for ministerial travel.

Mr CHANDLER: Second - you can ask a question if you like, member for Karama, but ...

Ms LAWRIE: Highly unusual.

Mr CHANDLER: ... it is not unusual at all.

Ms MANISON: It is extremely unusual. We have asked this question of every minister so far at estimates and there and it has not happened so far ...

Madam CHAIR: Members, the minister is answering the question. Please do not interrupt.

Mr CHANDLER: I gave a comprehensive answer to this. I can tell you again I would do it again in a heartbeat, given not only the outcomes but the opportunities that presented themselves by travelling to China ...

Ms MANISON: Minister, how much did this trip – of that \$60 000 ...

Madam CHAIR: Member for Wanguri, the minister is answering the question. When he has finished then you can ask your next question.

Mr CHANDLER: The information I have in front of me is that Group 1, which included me, the Chief Executive of Education, Anthony Jarvis, my senior adviser at the time, Dr Kevin Gillen and the interpreter, Weifeng Mao, cost \$60 071. That is the advice I have.

Ms MANISON: Minister, I believe there are account sections that you would be able to provide ...

Madam CHAIR: Member for Wanguri ...

Ms MANISON: ... how much your airfares, your accommodation ...

Madam CHAIR: Member for Wanguri! I cautioned you before. If the minister has finished answering that part of the question, then you can ask your next question.

Mr CHANDLER: I am happy to take that on notice, but I put on record that I do not know the last time that you travelled as a minister's adviser, and I do not know how much you were involved in organising the trip. In this case I can tell you we had no knowledge, no input into organising this trip. There will be a cost involved. Regarding the costs in my area, I am quite happy to take that on notice. The information I have in front of me gives me a cost that covers Group 1 and a total cost of the trip.

Question on Notice No 8.15

Ms MANISON: Can I please put on notice then to get an exact breakdown of how much this travel cost for minister Chandler which was paid for by the Department of Education for his airfares, accommodation, hospitality and for any other travel incidentals?

Madam CHAIR: Minister, do you accept the question?

Mr CHANDLER: It depends on travel incidentals. Ministers in this government do not get a travel allowance. I do not know what you used to get, but we pay for ...

Ms MANISON: What other travel costs did the department pay for you to be on this trip?

Mr CHANDLER: Sure, that is fine.

Madam CHAIR: Minister, you accept the question?

Ms MANISON: So hospitality or other travel costs?

Madam CHAIR: That question will be number 8.15.

Ms MANISON: Ministerial travel is done through the Department of the Chief Minister. We had an interesting session with the Chief Minister trying to ascertain what the cost of ministerial travel has been. Generally there would be an approval process for you to travel. Who approved your trip to China and for this trip to be paid for by the agency, given it is such an unusual process?

Mr CHANDLER: First, your words are it is an unusual process. All ministerial travel needs to go through the Chief Minister's department. He has to give approval for any travel.

Ms MANISON: The Chief Minister approved this trip and for the Department of Education to pay for it?

Mr CHANDLER: Normal process. All ministerial travel is approved.

Ms MANISON: You also mentioned some other locations you have travelled to which were paid for by the department including Cape York, Wellington, Yuendumu and Papunya. What was the trip to Wellington for?

Mr CHANDLER: The Northern Territory Open Education Centre project to visit Te Kura Correspondence School to investigate programs, systems and infrastructure delivered by a best practice education and distance learning provider. In the middle of quite a substantial investment by this government for a new open education centre it was important that I and others working within the department knew what best practice was.

There were two trips to Cape York looking at the Noel Pearson Direct Instruction and seeing the great work they are doing in his academies at Cape York.

There was a trip to Central Australia to Yuendumu and Papunya. In Central Australia we went to Canteen Creek and Ali Curung and travel undertaken to visit schools in and around Alice Springs and Tennant Creek, including travel by chartered aircraft. Yuendumu and Papunya also included Docker River and Kulgera. Travel was undertaken to visit remote schools in Yuendumu and Papunya in chartered aircraft. It is part of normal travel to visit schools.

Ms MANISON: Can you give us a breakdown of how much your trip to Wellington cost?

Mr CHANDLER: I can take that on notice. I have a global figure here.

Question on Notice No 8.16

Madam CHAIR: Please restate the question for the record.

Ms MANISON: Can the minister provide the full cost of the trip to Wellington paid for by the Department of Education, including a breakdown of airfares, accommodation, hospitality and any other travel costs?

Madam CHAIR: Minister, do you accept the question?

Mr CHANDLER: Yes.

Madam CHAIR: That question will be number 8.16.

Ms MANISON: Out of curiosity, minister, what is the global figure you mentioned before?

Mr CHANDLER: \$23 241.

Ms MANISON: We have been speaking about budgetary constraints. You say you are running a more efficient department. Why are you taking money out of the Education department's budget, which should be spent on education and students in our schools, and using it on travel when generally ministerial travel goes through the Department of Chief Minister's budget?

Mr CHANDLER: Welcome to the new world, member for Wanguri. This is about being more efficient. Rather than doing separate trips we combined many of these trips. That is far more efficient than doing it separately. If the Department of Education CEs were going on chartered aircraft and I decided a week later to ask the Chief Minister to send me to the same schools, that is ridiculous. We were combining

efforts. When you are travelling with the department, having the CE or other departmental staff with you is efficiency. That is probably why the budget was in such a terrible state under the former Labor government.

Ms MANISON: It is very unusual for ministers to take overseas trips paid for by their departments.

Mr CHANDLER: Very unusual for ministers to travel with the CE of the Department of Education to visit schools? I hardly think that is unusual.

Madam CHAIR: Are there any further questions?

Ms MANISON: Not with regard to travel at this point, but I will continue on with some more of our whole-of-agency questions.

Minister, going back to some of the costs within the department. Regarding the teachers' EBA which was resolved recently, can you please provide how much each increment of the teachers' EBA has cost and when those increments are due to be paid?

Mr CHANDLER: Enterprise bargaining negotiations commenced in May 2013 for the new agreement. The progress was substantially delayed as the Australian Education Union rejected a number of offers. The Commissioner for Public Employment conducted two ballots, with closing dates 20 December 2013 and 12 June 2014 that were unsuccessful. Further details were attributed to internal issues amongst the AEU NT executive and members. Negotiations recommenced on 24 September 2014, with the AEU NT negotiating team led by new President, Mr Jarvis Ryan.

The estimated cost of the new enterprise bargaining agreement for teachers and educators. The first increase September 2014 - I have two figures here because one is the 2014-15 financial year and one is the calendar school year to 2015.

Ms MANISON: Can we get both, because the more figures we have hopefully the more work we can do to get a clear answer?

Mr CHANDLER: In the 2014-15 financial year, which was the first increase in September 2014, \$6.981m and the global budget for 2015 was \$8.377m.

Ms MANISON: Is that by the calendar year that you were speaking about?

Mr CHANDLER: Yes, the calendar year.

Ms MANISON: The calendar year for which year?

Mr CHANDLER: For 2015.

Ms MANISON: Thank you.

Mr CHANDLER: The second increase in December 2014, \$5.724m. The global figure for the calendar school year was \$8.628m.

Ms MANISON: Which calendar school year was that?

Mr CHANDLER: For 2015.

Ms MANISON: For 2015 as well?

Mr CHANDLER: Yes. 1 October 2015 is factored in at \$2.222m. The total for 2014-15 financial year is \$12.705m, and for the calendar school year it is \$19.227m.

Ms MANISON: Which year does that one get paid into?

Mr CHANDLER: On 1 October 2015.

Ms MANISON: So that will be in the calendar year this year. All three of those increments have come in this calendar year?

Mr CHANDLER: A 3% increase from the first pay period commencing after 1 September which was paid on 11 September. The 3% from the first pay period commencing 5 December was paid on 18 December 2014. The 3% increase from the first pay period commencing after 11 October 2015 will be from 22 October 2015, and the 3% increase from the first pay period commencing after 11 October 2016 - that is the fourth payment - will be from 20 October 2016.

Ms MANISON: The full EBA payments need to go through this calendar year to the schools and - sorry, the total in millions was in the vicinity of what, for all three increments?

Mr CHANDLER: What they will not have in their budgets at the moment is \$2.222m, which will be paid into their budgets prior to October.

Ms MANISON: The total amount for the three increments of the EBA being paid into this calendar year was what?

Mr CHANDLER: In this calendar year \$19.227m.

Ms MANISON: You are saying that ...

Mr CHANDLER: The \$2.222m ...

Ms MANISON: You are \$2m short, but with the ...

Mr CHANDLER: Not \$2m short. The schools do not have the \$2.222m at the moment, but it will be paid to them prior to October when they need to pay ...

Ms MANISON: That has not been factored into their global school budgets at the moment, you are saying, that \$2.222m shortfall?

Mr CHANDLER: It will be paid once the new financial year kicks over. They will get it as soon after July as we possibly can pay it.

Ms MANISON: You are saying that within the global school budgets schools have, that they will be receiving the full \$19m ...

Mr CHANDLER: It is \$19.227m, but that includes the \$2.222m they do not have at the moment.

Ms MANISON: But they will get.

Mr CHANDLER: They will get it, yes.

Ms MANISON: That is a commitment on the record for estimates. I will turn to global school budgets now, which I am sure is no surprise to you.

Do you stand by the commitment that you made to Territorians that no school will be worse off under global school budgets?

Mr CHANDLER: Absolutely.

Ms MANISON: We are seeing a very different story on the ground. There has been a lot of angst out there about the process. Prior to the full implementation of global school budgets did you undertake any trials in any schools? If so, can you provide the details of what those trials showed you?

Mr CHANDLER: Increasing the level of school autonomy is, and was, a priority for the Northern Territory government as outlined in the strong society goal of Framing the Future strategic plan and the departments' strategic plan Creating Success Together. Enabling greater local decision-making in the allocation of available resources and increasing community involvement in management of schools are strategies to improve overall schools performance.

Global school budgets have been implemented in all Northern Territory government schools in 2015. A new student needs-based funding model has been developed based on research by Australia's leading authority on needs-based school resourcing by Professor Steven Lamb of the University of Victoria.

Student needs that attract additional funding for schools include socioeconomic status, stage of schooling, Indigineity, and remoteness. The model allocates resources simply and transparently. A school's funding will progressively transition from current levels to the new student needs-based funding model to ensure principals have the necessary time to plan and work in the new environment. Schools have received more funding per student in 2015 than 2014 cost per student.

Schools will have only received less overall funding in 2015 if there has been a decrease in student numbers. This is consistent with historic practices of reducing staff allocations with reduced enrolments. Extensive stakeholder consultation was undertaken prior to the introduction of global school budgets - refer to the school autonomy and independence public schools estimates brief. I have that as Attachment A.

Preliminary school budgets for 2015 were made available in Term 3 2014, giving schools adequate time for educational and workforce planning for 2015. School budgets for 2015 were finalised in March and reflect the movement in student numbers, including high-support students, consistent with the previous practices of adjusting staffing allocations at the start of the school year, along with the adjustments for additional bridging funding provided from the Northern Territory government budget, preschool universal access funding, and increased threshold for small schools and other minor amounts. The majority of principals received their budgets in Week 8 of Term 1. A small number of schools affected by the cyclones or undergoing a data audit are receiving their final budgets in Term 2.

For 2015 there is \$425m in direct funding for schools, including \$368m in global school budgets and \$57m for expenses paid centrally on behalf of schools. This is an increase of \$21m, or 5.9%, compared to the equivalent costs in 2014. From Term 1 2014 to Term 1 2015, government school enrolments had decreased by 648 or 1.9%.

The Northern Territory government has provided \$40m over four years to smooth the transition of schools to the student-based level of funding. This includes \$23m over four years, announced in January 2015, added to an existing commitment of \$17m over three years, bringing the total to \$40m. For 2015 \$13.5m has been provided to schools in addition to the preliminary budget allocation. This includes \$8m of the additional funding from the NT government, \$3.9m to meet the full cost of universal access to support preschools, and \$1.2m from the department to support smaller schools.

A suite of reports has been provided to allow schools to monitor budget versus expenditure throughout the year. The department is continuing to work with schools to provide professional development, adapt and improve management reporting and to support and identify strategies to manage their resources.

The NTPS Teacher and Educator 2014-2017 Enterprise Agreement included two 3% increases in teacher salaries in 2014. The agency budget included provision for these increases and met the cost of these increments. The 2015 budget allocation for each school was based on 2014 costs and incorporated the funding provided to the agency for the anticipated salary increases. Budget for the 3% pay rise under the enterprise agreement due in October 2015 will be provided to schools during Semester 2 2015.

Ms MANISON: My question was were any trials conducted? I am gathering the answer is no. A huge major reform to the education system - did you do any trial work?

Mr CHANDLER: In Victoria and Western Australia, which are innovators in this area of school autonomy, most other jurisdictions are in varying stages of increasing ...

Ms MANISON: I understand they did trials.

Mr CHANDLER: School autonomy is also a priority of the Australian government. There is significant work to do to ensure schools are adequately equipped and supported to work more autonomously. The Northern Territory is learning from what is being achieved nationally and internationally in this area to inform the development of options that will best suit Northern Territory schools.

Extensive communication and consultation with staff, parents and school councils and stakeholder groups has been undertaken during the development and implementation of global school budgets. The Australian government has committed \$70m nationally to support programs increasing school autonomy. The Northern Territory has secured \$1.6m over four years under this program which is being used primarily for capacity building to support schools to work more autonomously in support of the global school budgets and independent public schools initiatives.

Schools will continue to operate under existing industrial and employment legislation frameworks including the *Public Sector Employment and Management Act*, relevant enterprise agreements and the principles of merit selection and natural justice. A website has been established for principals and staff to access information about school autonomy, and school councils are being kept informed through their principals, the Council of Government School Organisations and by online materials. Significant effort is being focused on supporting school leaders, their business managers and school councils to build their capacity and capability to operate successfully within an increasingly autonomous environment. Capacity building commenced in 2014 and is ongoing. A Principals Reference Committee contributes expertise to planning and implementation of this reform..

Ms MANISON: That was a very long answer to a very direct question. No trials of global school budgets before you rolled out the system?

Mr CHANDLER: This is more about a philosophy. You have a certain view on the way schools ...

Ms MANISON: Yes or no, minister. It is pretty straightforward. Were there any trials?

Madam CHAIR: Member for Wanguri, you cannot dictate how the minister answers a question. The minister is answering the question.

Mr CHANDLER: There is enough evidence across this country where school autonomy has focused on improving results in schools ...

Ms MANISON: So the answer is no trials?

Mr CHANDLER: It does not take Einstein to work out that if another jurisdiction is following a particular method that is working, why would you not try to do it here? The best answer you have, and the previous Labor government had, in education is to throw more money at it and expect better results from the same system. Quite frankly that is madness. That is the only answer you ever had.

Ms MANISON: So no trials was the answer there clearly, minister. You spoke about the budgets going out to each school at the end of last year. Would you be able to provide a list of the budget for every school in the Northern Territory under global school budgets? We do not have that information. Can you table that information?

Mr CHANDLER: I am happy to go through this.

Ms MANISON: Would you be willing to table it given we are very close to the lunch break?

Mr CHANDLER: No, because there are a few figures in here that are yet to be finalised. I am happy to read out the ones that have been finalised.

Ms MANISON: We are almost at the end of Term 2.

Mr CHANDLER: You are asking the questions, I am happy to answer them.

Ms MANISON: I am asking for the sake of efficiency because we have a lot of ground to cover ...

Madam CHAIR: The minister is under no obligation to table the document. He is answering the question.

Mr CHANDLER: I am quite happy to read out the budgets of each of the schools in the government sector.

Ms MANISON: Yes, if that is the only way I will get the information from you.

Madam CHAIR: Sorry, minister just so you know in about three minutes I will interrupt you and we will go to lunch.

Mr CHANDLER: Acacia Hills School, \$3 457 780; Adelaide River School, \$569 861; Alawa Primary School, \$2 262 134; Alcoorta School, \$366 251; Alekarenge School, \$1 267 397; Alice Springs School of the Air, \$1 866 683; Alpurrurulam School, \$1 315 944; Alyangula Area School, \$2 659 900; Umbakumba School, \$905 861; Amanbidgee School, \$380 586; Amoonguna School, \$355 472; Ampilatwatja School, \$814 294; Angurugu School, \$1 863 121; Anula Primary School, \$4 492 732; Areyonga School, \$599 107;

Arlparra School, \$2 109 917; Bakewell Primary School, \$6 067 021; Baniyala School, \$435 993; Barunga School, \$932 419; Batchelor Area School, \$2 518 143; Bees Creek Primary School, \$3 272 789; Belyuen School, \$423 950; Berry Springs Primary School, \$2 046 822; Bonya School, \$372 516; Borroloola School, \$3 012 811; Bradshaw Primary School, \$4 777 685; Braitling Primary School, \$2 627 785; Bulla Camp School, \$420 691; Bulman School, \$600 771; Canteen Creek School, \$969 151; Casuarina Senior College, \$10 205 361; Casuarina Street Primary School, \$3 120 286; Centralian Middle School - still to be determined - \$5 030 867; Centralian Senior School, \$6 520 579; Clyde Fenton Primary School, \$2 465 337; Darwin High School, \$13 399 104; Darwin Middle School, \$5 747 033; Docker River School, \$401 197; Douglas Daly School, \$375 430; Dripstone Middle School - yet to be confirmed - \$5 795 127.

Madam CHAIR: Minister, do you mind placing a pencil note next to Dripstone?

Ms MANISON: We are only at D, minister. Would you reconsider tabling this information?

Mr CHANDLER: It will not take long.

Madam CHAIR: It is now 12.30 pm. We will return at 1 pm after the lunch break. Thank you.

The committee suspended

Madam CHAIR: We are in whole-of-government questions with the member for Wanguri.

MANISON: D for Dripstone, minister?

Mr CHANDLER: Before we start I have a correction to a statement earlier – to get something on the record correctly. I may have misheard a question earlier by the member for Fannie Bay, Michael Gunner.

His question was, when read back: will the minister honour an agreement to back pay to the expiry of the enterprise bargaining agreement?

When I previously confirmed there was money within the agency to pay Northern Territory Fire and Rescue Services employees back pay to the expiry of the enterprise bargaining agreement, the agreement on the table was to go back to the last offer made by the Commissioner for Public Employment on 12 March 2015 and not the expiry of the old enterprise bargaining agreement, which was 7 November 2013.

The Commissioner for Public Employment's offer put to the union is a total of 12% wage increases with three 3% increases paid between now and November this year for an agreement that expires in November 2017.

When I said yes to Mr Gunner's question, I did not mean back pay to 13 November 2013, but meant yes to the back pay from 12 March 2015, a date which is currently being considered by the union. Just to clarify that, thank you.

We are up to D ...

Ms MANISON: D for Dripstone.

Mr CHANDLER: We have done Dripstone.

Driver Primary School, \$4 121 130; Dundee Beach School, \$492 857; Durack Primary School, \$3 461 040; Elliott School, \$1 268 199; Epenarra School, \$623 688; Finke School, \$419 567; Gapuwiyak School, \$2 938 574; Gillen Primary School, \$3 000 259; Girraween Primary School, \$4 106 072; Gray Primary School, \$3 282 483; Gunbalanya School, \$3 437 498; Haasts Bluff School, \$367 341; Harts Range School, \$642 055; Henbury School, \$4 875 072; Howard Springs Primary School, \$2 440 253; Humpty Doo Primary School, \$4 410 051; Imanpa School, \$363 655; Jabiru Area School, \$2 975 159; Jilkminggan School, \$908 101; Jingili Primary School, \$2 968 972; Kalkaringi School, \$2 001 768; Karama Primary School, \$2 547 505; Katherine High School, \$6 265 216; Katherine School of the Air, \$2 751 098; Katherine South Primary School, \$3 587 531; Kiana School, \$404 131; Kintore Street School, \$1 453 016; Lajamanu School, \$2 313 109; Laramba School, \$470 492; Larapinta Primary School, \$2 934 009; Larrakeyah Primary School, \$2 962 432; Leanyer Primary School, \$4 469 430; Ludmilla Primary School, \$1 439 479; MacFarlane Primary School, \$2 237 689; Malak Primary School, \$2 954 308; Mamaruni

School, \$544 840; Maningrida College, \$6 726 127; Manunda Terrace Primary School, \$2 309 419; Manyallaluk School, \$385 142; Mataranka School, \$404 719; Mbunghara School, \$371 521; Middle Point School, \$364 841; Milikapiti School, \$820 211; Milingimbi School, \$3 084 798; Millner Primary School, \$2 131 305; Milyakburra School, \$500 018; Minyerri School, \$1 806 947, Moil Primary School, \$2 776 515; Moulden Primary School, \$3 611 233; Mount Allan School, \$559 923; Mulga Bore School, \$398 175; Murray Downs School, \$351 034; Mutitjulu School, \$422 854; Nakara Primary School, \$4 848 647; Namarluk School, \$6 518 390; Neutral Junction School, \$388 578; Newcastle Waters School, \$348 333; Nganambala School, \$525 734; Nganmarriyanga School, \$1 587 470; Ngukurr School, \$3 207 677; Nhulunbuy High and Nhulunbuy Primary Schools, yet to be finalised; Nightcliff Middle School, \$3 529 435; Nightcliff Primary School, \$4 532 015; NT Open Education Centre, \$5 891 568; Ntaria School, \$1 582 445; Numbulwar, yet to be decided; Nyirripi, \$444 544; Palmerston Senior College yet to be finalised; Papunya School, \$1 186 597; Parap Primary School, \$4 114 428; Peppimenarti School, \$498 310; Pigeon Hole School, \$381 948; Pine Creek School, \$456 993; Pularumpi School, \$775 913; Ramingining School, \$2 522 552; Robinson River School, \$792 998; Rockhampton Downs School, \$412 832; Rosebery Middle School, \$5 708 430; Rosebery Primary School, \$3 969 344; Ross Park Primary School, \$4 662 893; Sadadeen Primary School, yet to be finalised; Sanderson Middle School, \$5 369 781; Shepherdson College, yet to be decided; Stirling School, \$363 794; Stuart Park Primary School, \$4 423 012; Taminmin College, \$11 875 690; Tennant Creek High School, \$3 649 365; Tennant Creek Primary School, \$3 653 170; Ti Tree School, \$1 028 245; Timber Creek School, \$712 865; Tipperary Station School, \$327 793; Titjikala School, \$380 263; Urapunga School, \$432 161; Wagaman Primary School, \$2 779 396; Wallace Rockhole School, \$341 139; Walungurru School, \$647 708; Wanguri Primary School, \$3 621 537; Waruwi School, \$1 150 808; Watarrka School, \$371 526; Watiyawanu School, \$456 387; Willowra School, \$345 594; Woodroffe Primary School, \$4 953 256; Woolaning School, \$343 463; Woolianna School, \$636 272; Wugularr School, \$947 181; Wulagi Primary School, \$2 668 909; Yarralin School, \$469 365; Yirrkala Homelands School, \$2 511 041; Yirrkala School, \$2 414 354; Yuendumu School, \$2 748 515; and Yulara School \$773 793.

For the record, this is money these schools see today. Under the old regime they would not have had any idea how much of that was theirs to use. It is quite clear; that is the money the schools see. There is another \$57m held by the department which covers the costs that schools do not have to cover, that is remote incentive allowances, freight allowances, remote retention allowances, motor vehicles, principal salaries, principal vehicles, study leave, parental leave, leave airfare entitlements, workers compensation, fares out of isolated locations, highly accomplished and lead teacher allowances, specific maintenance, cyclical maintenance and urgent minor repairs, capital works, relocation costs and Back to School Grants.

Centrally managed programs include resources for schools such as special education assistance, special education support programs and that funding, positive learning centres, additional counsellors in regions, Families as First Teachers, mobile preschools, English as a Second Language for Indigenous language speaking students, Stronger Futures in the Northern Territory, education for detainee children, teacher housing costs, teacher housing electricity costs and long service leave which is all funded by government's Central Holding Authority.

As of November last year there was about \$73.877m held by schools around the Northern Territory in their bank accounts. The difference with what you see here and what you see with the money in the bank accounts is that will not be taken back by the Department of Education. This is schools' money to spend, and at the end of the year, even if they have underspent, which is different to under the previous government, they get to keep that money. Prior to this autonomy and global funding model, any additional money not spent by schools in regard to staff was kept by the department, not the schools.

Ms MANISON: Minister, on the point about schools that have worked hard to raise money for their school councils, are you aware of any schools councils having to fund staffing positions at schools due to shortfalls because of global school budgets?

Mr CHANDLER: No, I am not. If schools decided to fund above what they were funded that would be a decision the school council could make, if they choose to do so.

Ms MANISON: In the long extensive list we just went through, there were some budgets not confirmed. We are sitting in June now and we are almost at the end of Term 2 in the middle of school year. Why is it that those budgets are not yet confirmed? Are you aware of any schools that are operating their budgets in the red?

Mr CHANDLER: I will get CE Ken Davies to answer that. Before he does, we have come off an incredibly complicated way the previous modelling funded schools. There was an extremely complicated

methodology applied and it has taken quite a bit of work by the department staff - they have done a fantastic job - working with schools to work out the real needs of every school. There have been some complications, but I can assure you that this government has provided education with the money to ensure that schools are covered off and their needs will be met.

Mr DAVIES: Member for Wanguri, for those schools where the budgets are not settled, we are dealing with a historical context. We want to make sure that the school funding formula set up under the global school budget model matches their real costs. So we are doing a lot of unpacking around historical costs.

We had schools that were like-for-like, with completely different funding levels when we aggregated their staffing. It meant under the old system some schools got extra staff, not always for rational reasons. We have had to go back and work out what the base is, and make sure that in settling the final allocation that it is done with some science to it. That is why we are taking a bit more time.

Going back to your other question about what schools are in the red, there are no schools in the Northern Territory that are currently in the red. All they have is a projected budget figure for the end of the year. There are no schools in the red at the moment.

Ms MANISON: At the moment. But there were ...

Mr CHANDLER: There would be schools that might project towards the end of the year that they might not have sufficient funds. We will work with them, but they are very few in number. I emphasise no schools are in the red; all they are operating with is a projected budget.

In a global budget context, schools have the capacity to manage their budget throughout the school year. I am confident that by the end of the school year we will find that most schools will be coming in on budget, and if they are not we have transition funding to support them in getting there.

It is important to emphasise that this issue of schools being in the red is purely a projection at this point. No schools are running a deficit budget right now.

Ms MANISON: Towards the end of last year, however, we heard about a lot of schools trying to finalise and sign off budgets at school council level that would be in the red. Basically there was a reshuffle in the government and the member for Araluen became the new Education minister. On top of the \$17m that was allocated for transitional funding for global school budgets, an additional \$23m was brought in. I believe that amount was over three years, which was on top of the \$17m over four years, bringing it to a total of \$40m of funding to help with transitional cost for global school budgets.

Can you please outline by financial year how much is projected to go into these global school budgets of that \$14m bucket of money?

Mr CHANDLER: As the acting Treasurer at the time, signing off on that was a good thing ...

Ms MANISON: And probably a bit of an admission that schools were worse off.

Mr CHANDLER: No, it was an admission that it was a complicated system we were trying to fix and transit from one to the other.

In regard to your question, in 2015 the transitional May 2014 budget is \$5m bridging to January 2015 of \$8m. So in 2015 there is a total of \$13m. In 2016 again it is \$13m; in 2017 it is \$10m; and in 2018 it is \$4m, the total of which is \$40m.

Ms MANISON: Given there has been an \$23m extra put into this because clearly there were massive shortfalls identified, can you please outline for me what this money is covering?

Mr CHANDLER: Sorry, can you just repeat that.

Ms MANISON: Given that the additional \$23m had to be found because there were clearly big shortfalls with the global school budgets roll-out, what is this \$40m covering? What is it for?

Mr CHANDLER: I will get the CE to take this question but from the figures here ...

Ms MANISON: What are the types of expenses that schools will be covering with it?

Mr CHANDLER: ... we had a 2014 base amount of \$350.9m; base pool \$352.6m; transitional funding of \$5m; bridging funding of \$6.5m; and 2015 universal access funding of \$3.9m. That takes it to the 2015 increase to \$368m which is an increase of 4.9%.

Mr DAVIES: In 2015, \$5m in transitional funding was allocated to schools in their preliminary 2015 budgets during September 2014. This budget was provided to schools where funding levels will increase under the student needs-based funding model.

An additional \$8m in bridging funding was allocated to schools through the budget finalisation process in March 2015. Not all schools received additional funding. Consideration was predominantly given to schools with larger overall budgets including middle, senior and special schools due to their size, complexity and specialisation requirements. The need for additional funding was considered on a case-by-case basis overseen by a panel of regional directors and finance staff.

The final decision on funding allocation rested with senior executive staff. The process was designed to be fair, accountable and transparent. Information regarding the process was provided to principals and they were asked to share this with their school councils.

The other thing we did, member for Wanguri, was to make sure our very small schools had enough base funding to make sure there were always two adults with the children as a minimum, even in our smaller schools.

Ms MANISON: We heard of massive shortfalls in our special schools, middle and senior schools. In the initial round of global school budget allocations, why were those needs not addressed?

Mr DAVIES: The issue was our special schools' budget initial calculations were based on forecast enrolments,. They forecast a set of enrolments, usually an increase, so they were being funded on their 2014 base. In their calculations some factored in big increases in enrolments which did not occur. When they did their original budget basing towards the end of the 2014 year, the projection was based on additional students. That was why, with the special schools in particular, we had to go back - plus the complexity of the old funding allocation model as well – to make sure it was rebased properly.

Ms MANISON: Minister, are you able to provide, based on global school budgets, what the base-load funding per primary student, middle student and senior school student?

Mr CHANDLER: Averaged out across the Territory?

Ms MANISON: Yes, that would be good, thank you. Take it on notice?

Mr CHANDLER: Happy to.

Question on Notice No 8.17

Madam CHAIR: Please restate the question for the record.

Ms MANISON: Minister, please provide the base-load funding per student by primary, middle and senior school levels?

Madam CHAIR: Minister, do you accept the question?

Mr CHANDLER: I do.

Madam CHAIR: That will be question number 8.17.

Ms MANISON: After looking at the budget papers, one thing I want to point out was a fairly flat-earth assessment of funding versus enrolments. I am talking about public schools. If you look at Budget Paper No 3 for 2015-16, there is \$663m for 29 924 students, which would equate to about \$22 166 per student. Going to previous budgets, in 2014-15 there were about 30 062 enrolments and a budget of \$675m, which would equate to about \$22 457 per student student, which was \$291 extra per student. We have in the current budget \$8.7m.

If you go back to 2012-13 there were about 29 970 students and a budget of \$685m, which would equate to about \$22 880 per student. That is about \$714 more per student than we are seeing in the current budget.

In the global school budgets we had an additional \$13m this year, which was funding to help with the transition. We have seen some significant cuts in public education funding and even the enrolment numbers show there is less money per student. How can you expect schools will be better off when there is far less funding for each student in their schools?

Mr CHANDLER: You opened your statement by saying the ‘flat-earth assessment’ – that is a flat-earth approach ...

Ms MANISON: It is.

Mr CHANDLER: ... the way you have worked that out. The reality is there are many ways you can provide and pay for a service. I will use an analogy. You could go to Coles and get a glass of Coca-Cola for 80c or you could go to a bar and pay \$3. You still have a glass of Coca-Cola at the end of the day.

We have turned a very inefficient education system into a very efficient system in the Northern Territory. There are 19 fewer executives at the moment on contract -19 less cars, phones, PAs and systems to support those executives.

Have we been able to deliver an education system for less cost for that service than previous governments have? Yes, we have. To argue that we are not investing in education is wrong. This year’s budget, if you include infrastructure, is the largest there has ever been. This government is investing in education. Do we have a bloated system today? No, we do not.

I take my hat off to Ken and his executive team. The Department of Education is probably the most efficient department we have across the Northern Territory government. That is a testament to this team. When you put that on the back of results improving and attendance rates going up that is a great achievement of not only the Department of Education but for the teachers and people working within the system providing for the children in our classrooms.

It does not all come down to the amount of money; it comes down to where that money is spent, how it is focused, and that it is focused on improving outcomes. That is where we should all be focused.

Ms MANISON: Minister, touching on that attendance outcome you spoke of in the opening statement, on the website I am unable to find attendance data beyond Term 2 last year. We are now in Term 2, 2015. You mentioned Term 1, 2015. Why is that data not there at the moment?

Mr CHANDLER: I will look into that because it should be there.

Ms MANISON: Thank you, minister. Have you found the yellow shirts are making a difference in remote communities?

Mr CHANDLER: They certainly are. There is evidence that it is working better in some communities than others. If you break it down globally, yes. I was looking at figures the other day that show about a 10% improvement. However, I will be the first to admit it is working better in some areas. That needs to be explored a little more.

I welcomed the investment by the federal government into lifting attendance rates, but I was extremely worried at the beginning of that program that if you took a child who had disengaged from the education system for quite a while and threw them back in and demanded they stay in school, you were creating problems for the school, not to mention the teacher in the classroom. I am very mindful of ensuring we watch this closely. In the perfect world you would be demanding that these children go into a transition class built specifically around those children’s needs. Rather than put pressure on the teachers with, ‘It is now your problem, you deal with it’, you may need an elder or someone trained in welfare there with a teacher who could ready those children to go into the mainstream classroom. That was a shortcoming of the program. I have spoken to Senator Scullion about it and we are watching it very closely. Yes, I welcome additional students back into school because they only have one chance, but it can have a negative effect on the running of schools as well.

Ms MANISON: Definitely. It is very important, as we all know. Attendance is key to education outcomes, and I do not think it will be helped by that transitional-style program and support you need in the classroom when you have fewer staff in schools and the department.

With regard to enrolments, the budget papers do not point to the decline in enrolment numbers you opened with. Can you please talk me through the enrolment numbers at present and where you have seen those declines?

Mr CHANDLER: In government schools in 2013 we had 33 430 students. In 2014 there were 33 354, a variance of 0.2% or 76 students. In Term 1 2014, there were 33 541 and in Term 1 2015, 32 893m, which is 648 students or 1.9% variance. It will not take long, but it is probably best if I break this down to regions so you can see where the decreases are, because some have increases and some have decreases.

Ms MANISON: Yes, I am probably keen just to ...

Mr CHANDLER: You tell me where you want to focus and I will go directly to ...

Ms MANISON: Where have the decreases been attributed to?

Mr CHANDLER: A decrease in primary of 216 students, in middle years a 278 decrease, and in senior years a decrease of 204 students. In the regions - this will probably help a bit more - in government schools we have an increase of 63 in Alice, an increase of 70 in the Barkly, a decrease of 275 in Arnhem, a decrease of 457 in Darwin, a decrease of 99 in Katherine and an increase in 52 in the Palmerston and rural areas.

Ms MANISON: With the students leaving the schools Nhulunbuy speaks for itself; we know what has happened there. Where are the students going? Are they leaving the Territory or are they being captured by the private school sector?

Mr CHANDLER: A number have been captured by the private sector. There have been a number of new schools. Palmerston has had a big effect on it, because we have a number of new non-government schools in Palmerston and the rural area - new schools normally draw people away. It has not been helped by the ongoing rhetoric, a lot of it politically based, and the union trashing government education. We have a great system and we have results that are improving. Yes, it is a different system today than it was a few years ago; it is a more efficient system today.

At the end of the day our attendance rates are going up, our results are improving, the resources that are going into schools and new infrastructure is record breaking. I have spoken to a number of parents who thought schools were closing because of the rhetoric and scare campaigns; that we were cutting the guts out of schools and getting rid of teachers. So they made the choice to move their children into the private sector. That is criminal, that people have made decisions on scare tactics.

Ms MANISON: People would argue that the massive cuts - like the 516-odd staff from the education system, teacher number cuts and funding cuts - was an absolute disgrace in the system under your government.

Mr CHANDLER: You would think from that rhetoric that we have this massive change in our school system. Our senior years were attacked quite regularly. In 2012 in Year 11, the average student number - or the class size - was 14. In 2013 it was 14. In 2014 it was 13.5. Would you believe in 2015 the average class size in senior years is down to 12.5?

Again, all the rhetoric is not borne out through the statistics. If our numbers in attendance were declining and our results were going backwards - have a look. This is where I argue my point: put up our public schools against the private sector, look at the NTCET results last year.

Ms MANISON: Our public schools are amazing. They do a wonderful job.

Mr CHANDLER: Amazing. The results are amazing.

Ms MANISON: Look at all those kids in the top 20 every year.

Mr CHANDLER: We have damn dedicated teachers in a well-resourced system that does not deserve to be trashed by the unions, or anyone else who wants to push a political line that we are destroying education, because it is wrong.

Ms MANISON: Looking at the point we are discussing, some of the strong feedback I have been receiving from middle and senior schools has been that with the loss of staff they have had to look at the subjects they are able to offer. An example of one school was that they found it very difficult to compete at times with some of the private school options when they had to cut their electives selection from something like six down to two. It made it harder for them to market themselves as a leader in education when they had fewer options for children to pursue when they attend that school.

Have you done much analysis of the cuts to staffing that have been driven, how that has impacted subject selection and what public schools can offer students?

Mr CHANDLER: That is a good point. It is exactly why we did a review of middle years. I recall having a chat with Syd Stirling some time back before we undertook the review into middle years. He said, 'Pete, it is timely'. It had come in under his watch and five or six years down the track it was timely that a review of middle years was done. I still have some grave concerns about middle years. I have some grave concerns for some of the disciplines, although I have seen quite an improvement in some of the schools recently.

I will not name the school, I do not want to cause it embarrassment, I had attended that school's assembly and, to be honest, I was pretty upset with the behaviour of the children in that school. It always concerned me that when you were to split schools from a comprehensive high school to a middle and senior years program, whilst you might strengthen the senior years, you took away a real advantage that the cohorts in the middle years had which was another level of guidance, support, seniority and discipline within a school.

When Year 7s and Year 8s used to run around in a high school they would see not only a teacher but a senior years student and they would usually pull their heads in because there was a level of discipline provided in those comprehensive schools. When you split them away, you then put Year 9 as the most senior students within a school. In my experience, Year 9 boys in particular, I am sorry, they are not the most mature animals there ...

Ms MANISON: Middle school staff do an amazing job ...

Mr CHANDLER: They do an amazing job but it is important for the government of the day to ensure that out middle years have the proper wraparound services that are required to deal with those children. My focus is getting that right in the middle years. If we could improve the services in our middle years, we can attract more people into the system ...

Ms MANISON: So you are not concerned at the loss of subjects in those schools and how it impacts their ability to market themselves?

Mr CHANDLER: What they choose to have in their schools is a question for individual school councils. I do not want to dictate. As long as they are working within the Australian curriculum, what they teach in their schools should be a decision for that school. Let us face it, a smaller school will not provide all the subject choices a larger school will .

That is one of the problem we have with secondary education in remote areas. You cannot possibly provide the same level of opportunity a child gets at Darwin High School, Katherine High School or Alice Springs Senior College. It does not work. It is the same in our middle year's programs. In the bigger schools you will have more choice, in the smaller schools, you will not get the same choice. Individually, it should be up to the schools to decide what subject choices they provide.

Ms MANISON: Minister, turning to the *Education Act*, last year you stated at estimates it should have been introduced and passed through the Assembly by now. Where are we with the *Education Act*? I understand there is some talk about it being open for public consultation again, which might coincide with the school holiday period.

Mr CHANDLER: A discussion paper released in February 2014 set out ideas for reforming the *Education Act* based on concepts and strategies from across Australia and overseas. Parents, teachers, principals, students and other interested people were encouraged to comment on the ideas provided in the discussion paper.

The preliminary consultation phase closed on 30 April 2014, during which time the Department of Education conducted 42 consultation workshops involving over 260 participants across the Northern Territory including Darwin, Alice Springs, Tennant Creek, Katherine and Nhulunbuy, with 45 written submissions being received.

Feedback has informed government's proposed directions for legislative reform. A consultant has been engaged to develop the draft bill at an estimated cost of \$150 000, which has now been done. An exposure draft of the bill for the new *Education Act* is being prepared and is expected to be released for a further period of public comment in mid-2015.

Feedback from this second phase of consultation will be incorporated in the draft bill prior to it being finalised for introduction into the Legislative Assembly later this year. It is anticipated that the new act will commence in 2016.

I am pleased to announce that only last week Cabinet approved the draft bill. In that form it will now go out for that second round of consultation. At this stage, we are hopeful to get the final version of the bill into the September sittings of this year.

Ms MANISON: Will that consultation period coincide with the mid-year break of school holidays when many people from within the education sector may not have their full attention ...

Mr CHANDLER: I do not think ...

Ms MANISON: ... focused on a document like that?

Mr CHANDLER: I do not think we can pull up the process because of a mid-year break. From those 45 original submissions - I do not have the breakdown - I do not know how many have come from parents into the system. Of course, the unions have submitted their feedback. People very interested in education would have submitted feedback. It may cover some of the school holidays but not all of it, and ...

Ms MANISON: Will there be a fee to attend public schools as part of what Cabinet signed off?

Mr CHANDLER: Sorry, I did not quite hear that.

Ms MANISON: With what Cabinet signed off on, will there be a fee to attend public schools as part of the changes to the *Education Act*? A charge to attend public schools?

Mr CHANDLER: No. In the act that kind of decision would not be for the department or the government; that would be left for councils to make.

Ms MANISON: So there will be a capacity for ...

Mr CHANDLER: There will be a capacity for schools to have fees, but that is only in draft form at the moment. It has not gone before the House. It will be included with more consultation. I believe it is a nine-week consultation period.

Ms MANISON: Nine-week consultation period. Okay. We can expect that to commence very soon?

How is the progress of an international grammar school you have spoken about? How much have you been spending on that project so far? Is it a project you are developing with an existing private school in Darwin?

Mr CHANDLER: There has been consultation with a number of different schools to get their feedback but we are not working with a particular school.

Ms MANISON: Not partnering up with a school?

Mr CHANDLER: No. In fact if there was any partnering that would occur, it would be with a well-known major school. I am thinking of the Kings School or Scots College, an institute that is a known brand rather than a smaller operation ...

Ms MANISON: Not one of our local private education providers ...

Mr CHANDLER: If you are trying to attract people from overseas into a school you would want to have one that already has a name. That is my thinking on the subject. That is not to rule out you could not work with a local school.

Ms MANISON: Because you are considering Berrimah and at the close proximity to Kormilda College.

Mr CHANDLER: I would not rule it out. In my humble opinion if you were venturing into a space for a new international grammar school, you would want to work with an institute that already has a name that will attract people to that school.

Ms MANISON: How much has been spent on this project so far and what have you budgeted?

Mr CHANDLER: The development of a business case for the Darwin international grammar school, with costs apportioned between the Department of Education and the Department of the Chief Minister, is \$100 478.

Ms MANISON: And have you any additional funds budgeted towards that project at the moment?

Mr CHANDLER: The consultation period is continuing so those costs will be apportioned across both the Department of Education and the Department of the Chief Minister. We are working on this together.

Ms MANISON: Turning to the Indigenous Education Review. Thank you, Mr Davies, for your briefing the other day; it was appreciated. My colleague, the member for Nhulunbuy has further questions regarding the boarding school you are going to build there.

I want to touch on the issue of Direct Instruction expenditure. From my briefing the other day there was about \$22m over three years to roll out the Direct Instruction program. Is that correct, minister?

Mr CHANDLER: Yes.

Ms MANISON: Can you outline for me exactly what \$22m buys? Can you break it down? What exactly does that \$22m purchase with regard to Direct Instruction? Is it resources? Are there licensing-type issues for access to use Direct Instruction? Are there additional teachers, for example?

Mr CHANDLER: The \$22m is Australia-wide. There are a few things that cover off on that.

In November 2014, 15 government schools and one non-government school in the Northern Territory were selected by Good to Great Schools Australia to deliver Direct Instruction through the Australian government's Flexible Literacy in Remote Primary Schools program. A total of 156 Northern Territory government school principals, teachers and assistant teachers received training delivered by international experts from the National Institute for Direct Instruction in Darwin from 24 to 30 January 2015.

Following this training, Direct Instruction was implemented in schools from 2 February 2015 with support from the Department of Education, Good to Great Schools Australia and the National Institute for Direct Instruction.

The total average student cohort participating in Northern Territory government schools in Term 1 2015 is 1329 Transition to Year 7 students. The Australian government's Flexible Literacy in Remote Primary Schools program complements a broader school improvement agenda proposed under the A Share in the Future Indigenous Education Strategy.

As part of the strategy a total of \$9.9m of Stronger Futures funding has been made available over three years to further implement Direct Instruction in the Northern Territory. Delivery options are being delivered by the Department of Education to ensure a sustainable and cost-effective expansion. These will be delivered for consideration by government later this year.

In July 2014 Good to Great Schools Australia was awarded \$22m under the Australian government's Flexible Literacy for Remote Primary Schools program to deliver either Direct Instruction or explicit Direct Instruction in the Northern Territory, Western Australia and Queensland.

The Direct Instruction program is a high-fidelity program developed by the National Institute of Direct Instruction in the United States of America. It offers students curriculum continuity and stability, which is important in remote schools where there is a significant impact on engagement and achievement because

of staff turnover, student mobility and attendance. The Direct Instruction programs use a methodology for teaching that emphasises well-developed and carefully-planned lessons. It is designed around small learning increments and clearly defined teaching tasks.

The Department of Education has provided significant in-kind support to enable Good to Great Schools Australia to implement the program inclusive of the coordination of associated travel for placement testing across participating schools, coordination of travel for all staff participating in the January 2015 training, regional consultants who especially support teaching principals with implementation requirements, the development of a memorandum of understanding between Good to Great Schools Australia and the Department of Education to ensure compliance with associated policy and legislation, and the development of a safe and secure transfer system to allow for information exchange to occur across borders.

The budget estimate for 2014-15 was \$786 000, expenses as at 31 March 2015 are \$393 000 and the 2015-16 budget is \$1.431m.

The schools are Alekarenge, Angurugu, Borroloola, Gapuwiyak, Mamaruni, Milikapiti, Milyakburra, Nganambala, Nganmarriyanga, Ntaria, Numbulwar, Peppimenarti, Pularumpi, Tiwi College, Umbakumba and Waruwi School.

Ms MANISON: Listening to that response, would it be fair to say that the \$22m to access Direct Instruction and roll out at those schools has effectively purchased you access to the program and training, but no additional staff, teacher resources, etcetera?

Mr CHANDLER: I do not think it was ever intended to do that. It was \$22m of federal money provided. This is a direction I had taken to Cabinet and this government supported to go forward. It will take not only the money that the federal government has invested, but what we have invested to date and a lot more into the future.

Ms MANISON: Okay, but no extra teachers. It gives you access to the program and training for existing staff to deliver it?

Mr CHANDLER: All the text ...

Ms MANISON: All the resources, teaching materials?

Mr CHANDLER: ... and teaching materials required, as well as resources. You have to remember that even in north Queensland the teachers working for the Cape York Academy realistically have gone through the same standard teaching methods that apply in universities today, and in most cases they were provided with a week of special training in delivering Direct Instruction. It is not about changing a teacher's way of working.

The other thing that needs to be put on the record is that we did not take the entire curriculum, as it is being taught in north Queensland, and try to duplicate it here. We are covering a few core subjects and the rest of the school day is basically the same as it always has been.

Ms MANISON: It seems that \$22m over three years is a lot. Minister, I will hand over to the member for Nhulunbuy who has a follow-up question in regard to the boarding school.

Ms WALKER: Obviously the boarding facility will be constructed at Nhulunbuy, with the creation of Nhulunbuy High School as a regional hub for education for senior secondary. The decision was to make changes and build a boarding facility for remote students. We are talking predominantly about Yolngu students. Then a formal consultation commenced. Can you advise how much funding was provided to the Yothu Yindi Foundation to conduct that consultation, and what were the terms of reference?

Mr CHANDLER: I have the information. I will get you the exact figure.

Ms WALKER: If you have terms of reference, can you table them?

Mr CHANDLER: Do we have the terms of reference here? We might have to take that on notice.

Madam CHAIR: What would you like to do, member for Nhulunbuy?

Ms WALKER: See if we have the information or if I should ask for it on notice, thank you, Madam Chair. We can take it on notice.

Question on Notice No 8.18

Madam CHAIR: Please restate the question for the record.

Ms WALKER: Minister, can you please advise how much funding was provided to the Yothu Yindi Foundation to conduct that consultation, and what were the terms of reference?

Madam CHAIR: Minister, do you accept the question?

Mr CHANDLER: I am happy to.

Madam CHAIR: That will be number 8.18.

Ms WALKER: I have two follow-up questions. Given that there are 13 major clan groups on the Gove Peninsula in northeast Arnhem Land, why was the representative of just one clan group chosen to conduct this consultation?

Mr CHANDLER: I will ask the CE of the department to answer.

Mr DAVIES: The issue was trying to get a consultant in place who would consult across the clans. Money was given to the Yothu Yindi Foundation to source a consultant. Whilst I understand that is one stakeholder in the East Arnhem Land region, the consultant who was chosen - Katherine Henderson who is an ex-Deputy Chief Executive of this department - was tasked with working across those 13 clan groups. So she was auspiced and funded by YYF using money the department provided. The intention always was that she was independent in the context of working across those clan groups to make sure we could get – we needed to have somebody to fund and to hold the money for us, so that was the intent. She was chosen because she had the capacity to network across those clans. She was not chosen because she was a member of the Yothu Yindi Foundation.

Ms WALKER: I was not suggesting that she was. I am not casting aspersions on her capacity. I am sure she is doing a very thorough job. I only met her for the first time at a consultation I attended after I requested an invitation. For those who understand the internal politics of Yolngu clan groups, perceptions are very real. Given that there needed to be a middle man to facilitate this consultancy between the department and the consultant, people have asked why not Laynhupuy Homelands, for instance, or another Indigenous organisation such as the East Arnhem Regional Council that services all of those regions. Was that considered as an alternative?

Mr DAVIES: We were having some discussions with Yothu Yindi Foundation at the time about its education footprint in the context of both the Gulkula site and the training provision they wanted to have. They were talking to us about Ski Beach. We went to them as an organisation that we thought was robust and well managed enough to source and fund a high-quality assessment of the education provision across the region. We did not canvass but went to an organisation that we thought could best auspice consultancy for us.

Ms WALKER: I understand that. Nor am I casting aspersions upon the capacity of the Yothu Yindi Foundation; it is an incredible organisation. But I go back to that business of the perception amongst the 12 clan groups who are not part of YYF, and the fact the Yothu Yindi Foundation represented the clan group which did not support the original boarding facility proposal at Garrthlala because they had a proposal for Gulkula. I am feeding back to you the consternation amongst other groups that come from that perception, which leads me on to my last question.

Given the Indigenous Education Strategy is a 10-year journey and at this stage the government's vision, I believe, is not a shared vision amongst Yolngu families in northeast Arnhem Land, what is the rush at the beginning of this 10-year journey to spend \$20m constructing a boarding facility in Nhulunbuy which starts, I understand, in approximately three months' time, all being well, when we have Yolngu families who are feeling fearful and anxious about some very significant changes to education? Is it a case of build it and they will come? I am interested to hear what you have to say. People have asked me to ask these questions today.

Mr CHANDLER: That is a good question because I have had that same question asked of me a few times. Why Nhulunbuy to build your very first regional boarding facility ...

Ms WALKER: Sorry to interrupt you, minister. Given the recommendation from the review from Mr Wilson said this needed to be a process over a 10-year period, that these boarding facilities should be trialled, and they should be beyond electoral cycles with a bipartisan approach. This does not appear to fit what his recommendation is at all. Sorry, I will let you finish.

Mr CHANDLER: You only have to agree with me and then it is bipartisan. We will tick that one off.

Ms WALKER: You are detecting, minister. I do not. I could be convinced.

Mr CHANDLER: It was about looking at the outcomes of many of those smaller schools in the East Arnhem area. Quite frankly some of the outcomes were appalling. If we were to start somewhere, it has to be in an area where I thought the most need was.

Second, I do not think we can ever rule out partnering up with existing schools that already have capacity to take schools - I have had meetings this week with a number of other non-government schools that have boarding facilities which have capacity. There is no reason we could not, as we roll out the Indigenous strategy and it gains momentum and people start to understand what we are trying to achieve - that is another part of your question and I agree with it. It is our job - I do not like to use the word 'convince' - it is about demonstrating what we are offering and trying to achieve. If we can demonstrate that clearly you will get more and more people understand and want to be involved.

That is a journey we have to take responsibility for and make sure it occurs. That is an ongoing challenge. There is no reason we cannot work with even some of the non-government sector to provide boarding facilities only which would then provide options for those children to go to those schools or others in the area.

I can see a day where you might have children from regional areas perhaps using a boarding facility in Darwin and going Darwin High School. You could have some of the children in East Arnhem choosing to go to Nhulunbuy so they are closer to home. That was a part of that strategy. I have to be honest, Noel Pearson tried to talk me out of that regional boarding school because he believes you have to have schools far enough away to stop children having easy access to their homelands. In his words, you will often find issues getting the kids back to school if it is too easy for them to get home. You have to have a fair distance between them and home.

There was talk about building a big boarding facility in Darwin and getting children to go to existing high and senior schools. What we chose to do was think about children, their connection to country, what their parents want - whether they prefer a child going down the road to their regional facility at Nhulunbuy or coming all the way to Darwin or Katherine? As a parent I would like my children as close as possible, but having access to a better quality of education.

It will not be for everybody. There will be families that choose for their children to stay in their homelands. None of this strategy - none whatsoever - has anything to do with closing down schools or stopping services. It is a shift in focus about providing a better quality secondary education for remote students.

Ms WALKER: It has seen the cessation of the SHEP program at Garthlala, which was offering Year 10 to Year 12 kids a number of programs. I appreciate your position. I will be watching this closely. The member for Wanguri has many more questions. Thank you very much.

Ms MANISON: Another question on the Indigenous Education Review. There is nothing new in children from remote areas going into boarding schools in the Territory, but what I have struggled to find is any real solid data about retention rates of children who go to boarding school in the Territory and interstate and outcomes of those who finish school. Do we have much data about that?

Mr CHANDLER: Yes, a lot of this was raised in Bruce Wilson's report. If you look at some of the reference material of that report, there are some really good outcomes for Indigenous students who have left their communities and gone to boarding facilities. I am pretty certain the member for Arafura went to a boarding facility, as did minister Price. There are some good stories and outcomes.

Again, I refer to that experience in north Queensland where in the primary years they build a capacity for children who will go to boarding school at some stage in their education. They know from the outset that

once they get through primary school they will go to a boarding facility. That capacity is built in from an early age.

That will take us some time to do here because it has not been the norm. It is not to say there are not a lot of parents, even in East Arnhem, who send their kids to Melbourne, Sydney and Brisbane to boarding facilities interstate. As it is changing the way we have done things in the past, there will be time needed to change that way of thinking and to start to build resilience and capacity in children earlier so they accept boarding schools.

Ms MANISON: Turning to the Select Committee on Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder I had the opportunity to work with. It was very clear we have some big issues in the Territory with FASD. The report referred three specific recommendations to the Department of Education to adopt.

One was the expansion of the Families as First Teachers program which we will talk about later, but I understand will happen. The other one was the committee's Recommendation 8 that the Department of Education implement and strengthen its initiatives to address the needs of students with FASD including the delivery of strategies, training and resources for teaching students with FASD and the establishment of a formal FASD reference group. There was also a recommendation about seeing Education working with other agencies such as Health, Children and Families and Attorney-General and Justice.

Minister, what work has the agency done to consider and implement the recommendations of the select committee on FASD?

Mr CHANDLER: I will ask Susan Bowden, the Deputy Chief Executive, to answer this question.

Answer to Question on Notice No 8.18

Mr CHANDLER: Before she does, member for Nhulunbuy \$100 000 was paid to the Yothu Yindi Foundation for that consultancy. I do not have the terms of reference in front of me, but we will work on that.

Mr CHANDLER: Yes, the Family as First Teachers is a program where travel was involved. However, on visiting some remote schools and seeing it for the first time several years ago, I was not convinced. I think I was at Alyangula and there were perhaps seven parents and carers ...

Ms MANISON: Angurugu?

Mr CHANDLER: Angurugu. Then I went to Gunbalanya and it was massive and had been running there a bit longer. The difference it was making for those families was incredible. I thought that was my bridge into education. Mums and dads were sitting down with their children as young as three to six months of age playing games that were leading to ...

Ms MANISON: You will have no argument with us on the value of the Families as First Teachers program.

Mr CHANDLER: I need to back that up. I went back to Angurugu probably 12 months after and saw the difference in that program from that initial seven. We walked into a room and I thought, 'We will have to build a bigger room' because of the number of people who had taken up the program. I saw the difference it was making ...

Ms MANISON: It is a wonderful program at that school.

Mr CHANDLER: Susan, if you could just ...

Ms BOWDEN: Susan Bowden, Deputy Chief Executive School Education, Department of Education. Member for Wanguri, there is a range of proactive strategies the department is currently conducting to address foetal alcohol spectrum disorder. A couple of those are parenting programs for young women. We have one running out of Darwin High School and also out of Alice Springs. We have also been working in partnership with an NGO in Tennant Creek to look at some of the proactive strategies. Through our special education support program funding, schools can access funding for individualised programs for students with foetal alcohol spectrum disorder, as well as our special education settings, our special schools and particular units and annexes that can also support students.

The key thing with foetal alcohol spectrum disorder is that it presents very similar to autism spectrum disorder. That means there are similar strategies that teachers can use. We have a team of special education advisers and autism spectrum disorder advisers who support teachers and provide advice for individual students in the classroom.

Ms MANISON: Effectively the department has taken on board those recommendations from the FASD select committee?

Ms BOWDEN: Furthermore we have also developed an online course because we realise that foetal alcohol spectrum disorder is across the Territory. Not all our teachers can access face-to-face professional learning so there is also an online professional learning program teachers can access.

Ms MANISON: Mr Deputy Chair, that is whole-of-agency for me. I have finished my questions and am happy to go on to other outputs.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR: That concludes consideration of agency-related whole-of-government questions on budget and fiscal strategies.

OUTPUT GROUP 7.0 – GOVERNMENT EDUCATION **Output 7.1 – Early Years**

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR: The committee will now proceed to Output Group 7.0, Government Education, Output 7.1, Early Years. Are there any questions?

Ms MANISON: As we have discussed before, there is no argument from us regarding the importance of investment in children in the early years and seeing a further rollout of the Families as First Teachers program. However, I note the early years budget is currently at \$16.5m. In 2012-13 it was sitting at about \$18m. However, the \$16.5m this year is an improvement on the previous budget of \$11.3. Can you explain the main components of the budget this year and where the Families as First Teachers program will be rolled out and expanded to?

Mr CHANDLER: Completing the assessment rating process for all education and care services under the National Quality Framework including preschools; delivering the Families as First Teachers program; continuing investment in targeted pre-literacy and numeracy strategies that improve school readiness and child development outcomes; an operation of child and family centres in Gunbalanya, Maningrida, Ngukurr, Palmerston and Yuendumu; and a plan for Larapinta to deliver a range of integrated early childhood services including early childhood education and care, child and maternal health and family support programs. There is also the early childhood services subsidy of \$6m.

There is an additional \$1.9m Commonwealth funding for Families as First Teachers; an additional \$1.6m for the national partnership agreement funding for Stronger Futures revised Indigenous implementation plan; an additional \$1m Commonwealth funding on-passing to remote crèche operators; and a one-off \$700 000 Commonwealth funding for community support programs. That is in the current year.

In the year to come in 2015-16 there is an additional \$3.6m national partnership funding for Stronger Futures; a revised Indigenous implementation plan; a decrease of \$1m Commonwealth funding for on-passing to remote crèches; a decrease of \$1.8m Commonwealth funding for Families as First Teachers; and a decrease of \$700 000 Commonwealth funding for community support programs.

Whilst we have seen some decrease of funding from the Commonwealth, I can assure you that early years is very much the focus in the frame for the Northern Territory government. We will be supporting growth in this area and years to come, especially the Families as First Teachers program. As most people know that is an evidence-based program for early literacy and numeracy learning for vulnerable and disadvantaged children. FaFT has been operating for five years in 21 very remote Indigenous communities and is an important part of the Indigenous education strategy. In Semester 2 2014, 1008 children and 1096 parents or carers regularly participated in the program's early learning activities.

Funding from the Australian government's Stronger Futures School Implementation Plan will enable FaFT to expand to an additional 11 sites by December 2017. The 2014-15 budget of \$6m consists of \$2.6m NT government funding and \$3.4m Australian government funding. The total expenditure for 2014-15 to the 31 March 2015 was \$4.2m. The program employs 57 staff, including 28 local Indigenous community members. That decrease that I read out is now being funded through Stronger Futures, so it has been committed to.

Ms MANISON: Thank you, minister. Mr Deputy Chair, I am happy to move on to the next output group.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR: That concludes consideration of Output 7.1.

Output 7.2 – Preschool Education

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR: The committee will now consider Output 7.2, Preschool Education. Are there any questions?

Ms MANISON: Minister, why is there a decrease in the budget for preschool education? We have gone from \$45m to \$37m.

Mr CHANDLER: What you saw in the budget papers was truth on the day. I will read them out: a decrease of \$3.1 m from the national partnership funding for Universal Access; a decrease of \$1.7m national partnership United Reward funds; and a decrease of \$800 000 of NTG funding for savings efficiency dividends offset by budget inflators.

What we see now is those partnership agreements will be continuing. I am not sure if it is signed off, but it is agreed to by the federal government. On the day the budget was prepared and the budget books were printed, we did not have any certainty from the federal government ...

Ms MANISON: Will we see that funding back in the mid-year report?

Mr CHANDLER: You will, yes.

Ms MANISON: Thank you, minister. I am happy to go to the next output please.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR: That concludes consideration of Output 7.2.

Output 7.3 – Primary Education

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR: The committee will now call for questions on Output 7.3, Primary Education. Are there any questions?

Ms MANISON: No surprises here, minister. Why have we seen a significant cut in primary education from \$368m to \$356m?

Mr CHANDLER: I remember that. Much of this was a shifting of money from this year's budget back into last year's budget: an additional \$3.9m output appropriation for global school budgets, independent public school and centrally-funded adjustments; an additional \$1.3m output appropriation for replacing teacher laptops; and a decrease of \$8.4m national partnership funding for revised Stronger Futures implementation plan aligned with Indigenous education strategy. It might appear to be a decrease this year but it was money taken from this year and put back into last year because of those reasons I just stated.

Ms MANISON: Can you please let me know how the new primary schools in Muirhead and Zuccoli are progressing?

Mr CHANDLER: It is like Nightcliff island, is it not?

Ms MANISON: Goodness. Muirhead is a commitment - Muirhead North. And Zuccoli. Come on.

Mr CHANDLER: I have to be careful because I do not want to cross over into Lands and Planning where I used to be and know a little about the agreements ...

Ms MANISON: You do have a section within DET that plans new schools.

Mr CHANDLER: My understanding is there is an area of land that had been agreed to for Muirhead.

Ms MANISON: Yes. Muirhead North. Very clear space there.

Mr CHANDLER: The object of the department now is to do some data analysis. We had done this through John Glasby. One thing I asked John Glasby to do was to look at where the hot spots were in not only the Darwin region but also across the Territory. We have seen in recent times those hot spots

identified. Palmerston was one of them; so was the northern suburbs in one respect. So too was the city centre as the number of units go up ...

Ms MANISON: Yes, absolutely.

Mr CHANDLER: There is also pressure here as well. But there are also other areas that do not appear to have as much pressure. By looking at the infrastructure we had, at the numbers and the projected numbers, we then worked out where we would need schools within the next few years, five years, 10 years and so forth.

Muirhead is front of mind. We are thinking about the growth in the northern suburbs, bearing in mind we have a number of schools in the northern suburbs no more than probably a 10-minute drive from Muirhead that have capacity. Some schools have a lot of capacity, so purely from a point of view of looking at infrastructure and getting best use of that infrastructure, there will be ways we can attract some of those students into those schools that have less numbers at the moment. As schools grow, so do their resources. A Muirhead school, just like ...

Ms MANISON: That is definitely still on the horizon?

Mr CHANDLER: Still on the horizon, absolutely.

Ms MANISON: Very good, because we heard some big commitments about it at the Casuarina by-election. I am glad to hear that is still here. Clearly you cannot give a year projection of when that is expected to come out of the ground then? At last estimates we were talking about around 2017-18?

Mr CHANDLER: It is not in the – because I only have the details here for 2016-17, the outer years. We talked Bees Creek, Henbury, Palmerston new special school, Rosebery Preschool, Anula Primary School works, Wulagi Primary School refurbishment, Zuccoli ...

Ms MANISON: Zuccoli?

Mr CHANDLER: New preschool and primary school. Master planning is in progress.

Ms MANISON: Yes.

Mr CHANDLER: At this stage that is about \$37m in 2016-17.

Ms MANISON: Effectively Zuccoli is under way; in Muirhead you are still waiting to see a bit more population growth?

Mr CHANDLER: Yes, at this stage, only because of the fact we have a number of schools in the northern suburbs that are nowhere near their capacity.

Ms MANISON: Wanguri, Nakara are pretty tight. I am a bit overwhelmed by how many doors I have to knock on in Muirhead; there are so many houses coming out of the ground. It is growing at a rapid rate.

Mr Conlan interjecting.

Ms MANISON: It is a beautiful suburb.

Mr Conlan interjecting.

Ms MANISON: Yes, initiated under the time of the Labor government. Anyway. Yes, absolutely, back we go.

Mr CHANDLER: It is a great subject though.

Ms MANISON: I am happy to move on to the next output, Mr Deputy Chair.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR: I cannot tell you how happy I am as well.

Ms MANISON: I am sure you are thrilled.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR: That concludes consideration of Output 7.3.

Output 7.4 – Middle Years Education

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR: The committee will now proceed to Output 7.4, Middle Years Education. Are there any questions?

Ms MANISON: How is the engagement of a new girls program for the secondary education going after we saw the GEMS program scrapped? Is there a tender process at the moment to reinstate a girls program similar to the Clontarf model?

Mr DAVIES: As you know, we have gone out to a tender program for an engagement program for girls. We will be running one program with two providers. Role Models and Leaders Australia have been funded to the Territory and re-funded through the Indigenous Advancement Strategy. We are currently in the process of tendering for our own girls program. I have not seen who has been awarded the contract, but the Northern Territory government will be directly funding its own girls program as part of this one girls program/two providers approach. As soon as the tender process is concluded and a successful tenderer is known, we will be letting the minister know and it will go from there. It is on foot at the moment; I cannot say any more than that.

Ms MANISON: When do you anticipate that will be finished, Mr Davies, and which schools will receive the girls program?

Mr DAVIES: The current sites for Role Models and Leaders Australia: Palmerston Senior College, Rosebery Middle School, Centralian Middle School, Centralian Senior School, Gunbalanya School and Jabiru Area School have programs. Interestingly, Centralian Middle School also has a Smith Family Program called Girls at the Centre, so they have two programs, which is an historical issue which we are having to sort through. Then there is an own source program at Katherine High School called Stronger Smarter Sisters which the school itself auspices.

In the new program, we will be funding one directly to Katherine High School where we are projecting 120 Indigenous girl students participating. We will be running a combined one at Nhulunbuy High School and Yirrkala School. We are expecting a minimum of 50 students to be involved. We will be putting a new program at Sanderson Middle School, 30-plus students is the aim there; Dripstone Middle, 30-plus; Casuarina Senior College 30-plus; and Tennant Creek High School where we are hoping to get at least 50 girls into the program. That will take the total number ...

Ms MANISON: Dripstone, Sanderson and Nightcliff?

Mr DAVIES: Dripstone, Sanderson and Tennant Creek. Not Nightcliff at this stage.

Ms MANISON: Okay. Darwin Middle School?

Mr DAVIES: No, not Darwin Middle School at the moment. We will see how this program goes and grow it from there.

Ms MANISON: And, sorry, Rosebery?

Mr DAVIES: The total target cohort will be nearly 900 Indigenous girl students.

Ms MANISON: I am happy to move on to Senior Years Education.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR: That concludes consideration of Output 7.4.

Output 7.5 – Senior Years Education

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR: We will now consider Output 7.5, Senior Years Education. Are there any questions?

Ms MANISON: Can I put on notice a breakdown of the \$40m of additional transitional funding under global school budgets each school is getting and for what?

Mr CHANDLER: Yes, we will take that on notice.

Question on Notice No 8.19

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR: Would you please restate the question for the purposes of Hansard.

Ms MANISON: Can the department provide a breakdown, school by school, of how much each school gets of the \$40m of additional funding to transition to global school budgets and what that funding is for?

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR: That question will be allocated number 8.19.

Ms MANISON: Mr Deputy Chair, I am happy to go to the next output.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR: That concludes consideration of Output 7.5.

Output 7.6 – International Education

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR: The committee will now proceed to 7.6, International Education. Are there any questions?

Ms MANISON: I do not have any for international or tertiary education. I am happy to go to non-government education.

Mr CHANDLER: Oh, that is a good story.

Ms MANISON: We do not have much time, minister. You are the minister for everything so you have another two portfolios for you.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR: That concludes consideration of Output 7.6.

Output 7.7 – Tertiary Education

Mr CONLAN: I could ask a question, if you like, minister, on Tertiary Education. I will not do it.

Ms MANISON: Oh, thank you, member for Grotorex.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR: As there are no questions in Output 7.7, that concludes Output Group 7.0.

OUTPUT GROUP 8.0 – NON-GOVERNMENT EDUCATION

Output 8.1 – Primary Education

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR: The committee will now move on to Output Group 8.0, Non-Government Education, Output 8.1, Primary Education. Are there any questions?

Ms MANISON: With non-government education overall we have seen an increase to that budget. Clearly we have some excellent non-government schools and it is good that parents have choice, but we have seen significant increases in non-government school expenditure at a time when we have seen significant decreases in public school expenditure. Can you explain why the non-government sector has received additional funding? Is any needs-based assessment looked at with regard to consideration of this funding?

Mr CHANDLER: It is quite easy to explain. The Northern Territory government supports both the government sector and the non-government sector. As the non-government sector has grown so too has the funding towards it. It is not an increase percentage-wise, it is an increase in the number of students. In the preschool area there has been an additional 22 students, in the primary sector 153 students, in the middle years 142 students and in the senior years 270 students. As you can see, there is a considerable change. I believe all up it is about 586 students or a 5.1% increase in the non-government sector.

Ms MANISON: There is no needs-based assessment for those students; it is based purely on numbers and additional enrolments?

Mr CHANDLER: I do not think it is a fair system at times because historically different schools get different amounts of money. We have been unable to change that system by the previous government. I

understand why these schools received initial start-up money, but it has not ceased. However, it is a pool of money the government allocates to the non-government sector. If you break it down to the number of students it works out to be X amount of dollars per student. Because we have had an increase in students in the non-government sector, so too has the funding increased.

Ms MANISON: Could I get a breakdown of how much funding is provided per non-government school in the Northern Territory?

Mr CHANDLER: We can take that on notice.

Ms MANISON: Is that okay, Mr Deputy Chair, to take that question on notice?

Mr CHANDLER: Sure, and you realise the feds contribute much of the funding - about 60% of it.

Ms MANISON: Yes, it would be good to see the Northern Territory component of it please.

Question on Notice No 8.20

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR: Would you kindly restate your question.

Ms MANISON: Can the department provide a breakdown, school by school, of how much funding they provide to each non-government school in the Northern Territory?

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR: Are you happy to take that on notice?

Mr CHANDLER: I am.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR: The question will be number 8.20.

Ms MANISON: Mr Deputy Chair, we are very limited for time and I appreciate having asked all my questions, particularly the ones we put on notice to the agency. I will put them in writing to the agency.

I very much thank the minister for having a very good, straightforward discussion going into the details about how the agency's functioning and some of the decisions of this government. I thank Mr Davies and his team for all the work they have put in preparing for estimates. Thank you very much.

Mr CHANDLER: Thank you, member for Wanguri. Mr Deputy Chair, if I can clarify a couple of things. The enrolment data for Term 3 and Term 4 is not on the website. I have been advised the Term 3 and Term 4 2014 enrolment and attendance data will be on the web by close of business tomorrow. Term 1 2015 data is being validated and is expected to be released in the coming weeks.

The member for Nhulunbuy before mentioned SHEP being shut down. That is not true. It was shut down due to the cyclone and it is due to reopen in Semester 2. That program has not been cut or anything like that.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR: That concludes consideration of Output Group 8.0, Outputs 8.1, 8.2 and 8.3, also Output Group 9.0, Output 9.1.

That concludes consideration outputs relating to Department of Education. On behalf of the committee I thank the departmental officers who attended and provided information today to the minister.

The committee will now move on to consider the Department of Transport and we will take a couple of minutes while they change over teams.

The committee suspended

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORT

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR: Minister, I invite you to introduce the officials accompanying you and if you wish, to make an opening statement regarding the Department of Transport.

Mr CHANDLER: I am glad you reminded me it is Transport. Good afternoon, Mr Deputy Chair. I introduce the officials from the Department of Transport who are here today: Clare Gardiner-Barnes, Chief Executive of the Department of Transport to my left; Fotis Papadakis, Chief Financial Officer to my right; Paul Rajan, Executive Director Transport Services is behind me; Louise McCormick, Executive Director Transport Infrastructure Planning; Simon Saunders, Acting Executive Director Transport Policy and Planning; and Lisa Braid, Executive Director Aviation Logistics and Industry Development.

The Department of Transport has achieved an enormous amount to date in the 2014-15 year. The focus has been on developing the north with investments in roads and infrastructure key to building the economy and providing economic development opportunities.

Connecting the bush and delivering vital transport and infrastructure assets is critical for more productive businesses, jobs and social cohesion. A record investment in roads and transport infrastructure of \$587.1m in 2015-16 will enable this to happen. The 2015-16 transport infrastructure budget is \$179.1m larger than published in 2014-15 and comprises capital and minor new works of \$496.1m, repairs and maintenance of \$78.5m, transport planning projects of \$2.5m, \$14m in grants for the regional economic infrastructure fund, and \$4m for improving strategic local roads.

The Northern Territory government is partnering with the Australian government to deliver road infrastructure which will continue to support the shared vision of developing the north. Significant projects in progress include continuation of the \$88m Tiger Brennan Drive duplication project, reducing congestion and decreasing travel times from Palmerston to Darwin. There is a total of five of the six priority projects under the regional roads productivity package for \$81.5m.

During May I held Budget 2015-16 presentations in Darwin, Katherine, Tennant Creek and Alice Springs where I was joined by Clare Gardiner-Barnes. I enjoyed the opportunity to speak with industry and present highlights of the \$587.1m investment in transport infrastructure. Some program highlights for 2015-16 include:

- improving cattle roads - a total of \$195m new and revote has been allocated towards upgrading priority cattle roads which includes \$105m on new projects
- Outback Way - \$40m which has been allocated over three years to upgrade selected sections of the Northern Territory Outback Way roads
- Litchfield Park Road - \$15m has been allocated to complete the sealing works and \$13.5m to construct a high-level bridge over the Lower Finniss River
- \$40m as part of the regional roads productivity package for high-level bridges over the Roper and Wilton Rivers. This project is currently out to tender.
- the Mereenie inner loop - the \$25m project is expected to boost tourism revenue in the region by \$16.25m a year
- Sadadeen connection road - \$7.5m has been allocated to review options and deliver a high-level flood immunity access to Mt John Valley.

The department has continued its contribution to red tape reduction, responding to the needs of business and industry and designing services to suit customers. That includes ongoing reforms to the Motor Vehicle Registry being rolled out which has been well received by industry and customers. Some of those reforms include providing customers with access to additional channels of service allowing them to renew their vehicle registration and driver's licences, resulting in reducing over-the-counter waiting times.

In the last 12 months the government has concentrated on improving safety on the bus network and has invested directly in this area to improve public transport in Darwin and Alice Springs. These improvements include a comprehensive review of safety on the Darwin bus network and introducing a new bus ticketing system in Darwin and Alice Springs. The safety review resulted in a range of improvements including

government recruiting two additional transit officers and an additional patrol car. Improvements have been made to CCTV capability at all three bus interchanges in Casuarina, Palmerston and Darwin.

Government commenced a review of the commercial passenger vehicle industry with the aim of improving the safety and quality of transport services for Territorians and visitors. The department released a position paper to industry and held information briefing sessions with stakeholders. The department is preparing a report based on the outcomes.

The Northern Territory government is committed to improving driver, passenger, rider and pedestrian safety on our roads. The department undertakes education awareness programs which complement the Drive Safe Remote, Drive Safe NT Urban and Motorcyclists Education and Training and Licensing programs. As of 31 March 2015 in 2014-15 fiscal year Road Safety Community Engagement Officers delivered 217 school-based sessions to approximately 10 618 school-aged children across the Northern Territory.

The 2015-16 budget provides for a program that awards novice drivers who maintain an unblemished traffic infringement history during their provisional licence period with a free 10-year driver's licence from the Motor Vehicle Registry.

Progress has been made in the aviation area with the Northern Territory continuing to be well serviced internationally and domestically. Scheduled inbound weekly interstate and international seat capacity into the Northern Territory was 3.3% higher in April 2015 than in April 2014. Government is working on connecting the Territory by improving air services within the Northern Territory. Investigations are ongoing into the reinstatement of the spine service which would see services connecting Tennant Creek and Katherine with Darwin and Alice Springs.

During the reporting period the Darwin Harbourmaster and the associated regulatory functions relating to Part 2, Division 4 of the *Darwin Port Corporation Act* transferred to the Department of Transport. The intent of the transfer of the regulatory functions is to satisfy the requirements of the regulatory framework within the recently passed *Ports Management Act*. The Darwin Harbourmaster and his two support staff were transferred from the Darwin Port Corporation to the Department of Transport effective 31 March 2015 to form what would be the statutory role of the Regional Harbourmaster. For the Department of Transport three additional FTE had been assumed and reflected in the department's 2015-15 budget.

I take this opportunity to thank the hard-working department staff whose invaluable expertise and experience have contributed to these achievements.

Mr Deputy Chair, I look forward to any questions the Estimates Committee may have.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR: Are there any questions on the minister's statement?

Mr VOWLES: Yes, Mr Deputy Chair. Thank you, minister, and welcome to all the staff as well. Are you looking to table the whole-of-agency questions?

Mr CHANDLER: No, but I am happy to read out any of the questions that you want.

Mr VOWLES: Okay, we might kick off with that, if that is okay, Mr Deputy Chair.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR: The committee will now consider the estimates of proposed expenditure pertaining to Appropriation Bill 2015-16 that relate to the Department of Transport. We will consider agency-related whole-of-government questions on budget and fiscal strategy.

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

Mr VOWLES: Minister, what was the total cost of all consultancies taken by the agency?

Mr CHANDLER: Total consultants paid to 31 March for the Department of Transport was \$1 486 017. This is broken down between operational consultancies of \$635 997 and infrastructure-related consultancies of \$850 020. I have detailed payments broken down between two categories that I am happy to read out if you want. There is a list of about 10.

Mr VOWLES: That is fine, minister. Will you table those?

Mr CHANDLER: Take two minutes.

Mr VOWLES: Let us do it.

Mr CHANDLER: Audit of Tiger Brennan Drive design ...

Ms GARDINER-BARNES: There is an extra page here.

Mr CHANDLER: Oh, is there? It is a bit longer.

Mr VOWLES: A bit longer.

Mr CHANDLER: Your call. I can read them out.

Mr VOWLES: No. Which consultants were not selected through the competitive tendering processes?

Mr CHANDLER: One consultant, Parsons Brinkerhoff Australia Pty Ltd was selected without going through a competitive tendering process to undertake the regional transport study. As the consultant had undertaken the original regional transport study in 2011, and due to intellectual property rights and the inherent knowledge required for the tender, no other provider could be competitive with the consultant, thus competitive tenders were not sought.

Mr VOWLES: How much was that for?

Mr CHANDLER: I can find that here. There was an original payment of \$50 985 and a second payment of \$164 928.

Mr VOWLES: You have 221 staff. Is that correct? How many are ECO1 and above and where are they?

Mr CHANDLER: There is a total of 10 staff: ECO1, four; ECO2, four; ECO4, one; and ECO5, one. Did you say 224?

Mr VOWLES: You have 224?

Mr CHANDLER: Is that what you said?

Mr VOWLES: No, 221.

Mr CHANDLER: No, it is 224.7. I want to be accurate.

Mr VOWLES: I appreciate that. Can you please provide the total cost of travel in each agency and authority broken into international, interstate and intrastate?

Mr CHANDLER: Intrastate \$245 959, interstate \$149 533 and overseas \$21 557, with a total expenditure of \$417 049.

Mr VOWLES: Can you please provide details and costs undertaken by you paid for by the agency or authority, including travel on charters if any?

Mr CHANDLER: For me that would be zero.

Mr VOWLES: You are sticking with that? I saw Clare point to something; I thought it was a figure.

Mr CHANDLER: For me, no.

Mr VOWLES: Okay, no problem. Which Chief Executive or former Chief Executive used government-issued credit cards in 2014-15? What was total cost and what was spent on hospitality, if any?

Mr CHANDLER: The Chief Executive, Clare Gardiner-Barnes, held a corporate credit card for the Department of Transport in 2014-15 for the period to 31 March 2015. That sounds like I took it off you; I do not think that is correct. The total purchases on Clare Gardiner-Barnes' corporate credit card for 2014-15 until 31 March was \$5762.

Mr VOWLES: Was any of that for hospitality or entertainment? If it is, can you break that down please?

Mr CHANDLER: We have the Chief Minister's Awards dinner of \$1800 for 18 employees; Westpac Bank Essay cruise function was \$50 for one employee; dinner for Kununurra and Ord River trip was \$312 for three employees; Outback Highway Development Council AGM dinner was \$365 for two employees; Economic Development Panel dinner was \$509 for four employees; Senior Leaders Forum luncheon was \$146 for 33 employees – gee, that was a cheap lunch; food supplies for evacuees centre Cyclone Lam was \$347; and food supplies for Cyclone Lam Emergency Response Team was \$233 for four people. The total hospitality provided the by CE's corporate credit card \$3762.

Mr VOWLES: Transport Output Group 10. Under the appropriations listed on page 241 the Commonwealth amount in 2015-16 has decreased by \$12.2m. Can you explain the reason for the decrease and what it means in real terms for your department?

Mr PAPADAKIS: Fotis Papadakis, Chief Financial Officer. Our estimates are in line with the Commonwealth so the overall program has not decreased, it is just the tie-in between the years. The main decrease is between the years of various programs basically. The year's main decrease is in NT highways.

Mr VOWLES: Can you outline the work you will undertake in the management of transport plans and which major private sector infrastructure projects they relate to?

Mr CHANDLER: Sorry, can you just ask that again?

Mr VOWLES: Yes, I will ask that again. Would you outline any work you will undertake in the management of transport plans and which major private sector infrastructure projects they relate to?

Mr CHANDLER: The Integrated Transport Planning and Investment Roadmap consists of a number of strategies, reviews and reforms which will establish government's plan for the long-term delivery of transport infrastructure and services in the Northern Territory. All of the strategies, reviews and reforms which make up the government's transport roadmap for the future are either well under way or nearing completion. Each of the components is being developed or undertaken through consultation with stakeholders.

Further information on the individual roadmap components include the Road and Bridge Strategy. The strategy will articulate government's planned development of transport infrastructure to support economic growth, and will include a planning framework and investment plan. The consultation draft of the strategy will be released at the end of May 2015 for public feedback and comment. The strategy was originally due in late 2014, and later revised to late 2015 so the regional infrastructure study which is currently being finalised could inform the strategy. The strategy is on schedule to meet the end of 2015 due date.

There is a Freight and Logistics Industry Strategy. The strategy will identify freight and logistics requirements to support this important industry into the future. Consultants KPMG commenced development of the strategy in April 2015 and is currently developing a key issues paper which will form the basis of consultation with stakeholders in June 2015. A draft strategy will be available for public consultation later in 2015. The strategy is on schedule to meet its end of 2015 due date.

The Aviation Industry and Services Strategy will outline the Northern Territory's aviation requirements to ensure the sustainable growth of the industry and the positioning of the Territory as an aviation gateway for northern Australia. Following the release of an issues paper for public comment in 2014, a draft strategy is being finalised in consultation with key agencies and will be available for public comment later in 2015. The strategy was originally due mid-2014.

The Darwin Regional Transport Plan will outline key transport issues for the Darwin region and provide high-level strategic direction for regional transport priorities. A discussion draft is expected to be released in mid-2015 for community feedback and comment. Community feedback will be considered in the finalisation of the plan which will be completed by the end of 2015. The plan will be completed in late 2015 instead of the mid-2015 due date. This is due to the addition of a community consultation draft phase to provide more effective input to the plan.

In regard to the Maritime Industry Review, the Northern Territory government has completed a review of the port legislation and has introduced the *Ports Management Act*, and will further engage with stakeholders impacted by the new legislation. The government has also completed a review of the regulations applicable to recreational vessels in the Northern Territory. As an outcome, amendments to the

Marine (General) Regulations with a focus on improving safety for recreational vessels in NT waters commenced on 1 May 2015.

The Motor Vehicle Registry Reform is streamlining the processes and embracing new technologies to improve efficiency for consumers, which has been the priority for MVR. At the same time the MVR footprint has grown from eight shopfronts to 28 using Australia Post. As a consequence, customers' wait times have reduced from 15 minutes in 2011 to an average of 10 minutes in 2015. Online renewals now exceed over-the-counter renewals enabling travelling Territorians to renew their registration and licences where inspections and photographs are not required ...

Mr VOWLES: Sorry, minister, if I can just interrupt there. You said the maritime and shipping strategy?

Mr CHANDLER: The Maritime Industry Review.

Mr VOWLES: Yes, has that happened or is it currently happening?

Mr CHANDLER: It commenced on 1 May 2015.

Mr VOWLES: Can I touch on that? Will the privatisation of the Darwin port impact on this strategy or does this strategy need to be reviewed if the port is privatised?

Mr CHANDLER: The question is a little out of order. However, I can say that it is not about privatising the port. There has been talk of long-term leases of the port. This would compromise ...

Mr VOWLES: I did not want to worry about the leasing. It started on 1 May. Has that been factored in?

Mr CHANDLER: No, it will not have an impact.

Moving on to the Taxi Industry Reform Strategy. A position paper was released for public comment which closed in January 2015. Consultation and finalisation of a report and options for government's consideration is continuing. The options will recommend regulatory proposals aimed at creating a modern, safe, innovative commercial passenger vehicle industry for the Northern Territory. It will address the future of the industry to meet the growing needs, diverse population and so forth.

The Public Transport Strategy will address longer-term public transport planning for the NT and will include fare policies, urban and school transport, future funding, integrated transport and land use issues.

There is quite a bit of planning, as you can see. There is roads and bridges, freight and logistics, aviation, Darwin Regional Transport Plan, maritime, Motor Vehicle Registry, taxi industry and public transport strategies, so it is quite comprehensive.

Mr VOWLES: Madam Chair, I have finished the output and I will go to Output 10.1. I know you are transferring over.

Madam CHAIR: Hello. So you are done with Output 10.1?

Mr VOWLES: I will go to Output 10.1, Passenger Transport.

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

OUTPUT GROUP 10.0 - TRANSPORT

Output 10.1 - Passenger Transport

Madam CHAIR: The committee will now proceed to Output Group 10.0, Transport, Output 10.1, Passenger Transport. Are there any questions?

Mr VOWLES: You just mentioned the commercial passenger vehicle review that was finalised some time ago. I am wondering when the outcome of that report will be known. I know there has been consultation. I had a briefing on this as well but it has been some time ago. Many people are coming to me to talk about taxi plates and whether you be raising the plates or not?

Mr CHANDLER: Is your meter running?

Mr VOWLES: It never stops, minister, you know that.

Mr CHANDLER: It never stops. Government has commenced a review of the commercial passenger vehicle industry as part of its road map for future integrated transport planning and investment. The Department of Transport is working closely with the private sector, both administratively and financially, to establish expanded transport options in regional areas. That consultation is ongoing.

There is still a fair bit to do and a lot of things to consider, right down to how companies like Uber are having an effect on business around not only the country but the world. Interestingly enough, whilst we have taken some questions on travel today, on a recent trip I made I had the opportunity to sit in many different taxis in many different places. I took the opportunity of talking to those taxi drivers about how their industry works in that location. Some of their stories and the issues they faced are very similar to how we face issues here.

At the end of the day, the outcome we want, particularly with the taxi industry, is very robust where the primary focus is on service delivery for our customers. Most taxi drivers want the same things, so we are all trying to get the same outcome. It is about getting the model right essentially.

Mr VOWLES: Will there be a date you are looking at bringing that out and making a decision, and getting out to the industry that yes, we will raise taxi plates or we will not.

Mr CHANDLER: What do you mean, raising taxi plates? Do you mean the cost of a taxi plate ...

Mr VOWLES: Will we have more licensed taxis?

Mr CHANDLER: ... or are you saying more taxis? They are all the things that will come through in the final recommendations. At the moment, member for Johnston, I have seen the final recommendations. As recently as a few weeks ago, I was still having meetings with the taxi industry to sort out some of their final issues. They have put a submission into this review, but there is still lots to consider. The Chief Executive has travelled to places like WA and had a look at how taxis work there. We have all used taxis whenever we have travelled around the country.

The issue I have at the moment – and I am not trying to prejudge the outcome - is there are fors and againsts in everything you do in this space. Do you increase the number of taxis to hopefully get a better service for people? Evidence suggests that will not always work. Probably one of the best things you can do is better manage the existing fleet, having them work closer together so it is working as a team instead of what appears to be at the moment a very ad hoc way.

At the end of the day, you do not want to affect somebody's investment in a business. But by doing things too much one way you can effectively turn people into instant millionaires. That is not the job of government. We need to have an effective taxi industry focused on good outcomes for customers.

Mr VOWLES: In the report have there been discussions included about prepaid fares for taxis?

Mr CHANDLER: I have spoken to different people about prepaid fares. I have seen it work a couple of times. A lot of airports you visit nowadays can have pre-agreed taxi fares from one point to the next; it may be from the airport to any hotel in the city. It has been discussed. I am not sure if it is a part of the recommendations. Clare, do you have any more information on it?

Ms GARDINER-BARNES: It was a part of the review.

Mr CHANDLER: So it is being considered.

Mr VOWLES: Factored in, have there been any more discussions on Uber coming to the Northern Territory?

Mr CHANDLER: Short answer is yes because it is on everyone's lips when you talk to them about the effect it would have in the Territory. Wherever you travel, there are different views. Some taxi drivers have told me if you cannot beat them, join them. One taxi driver I spoke to said they were going out to buy another car - it would be an Uber car - but still maintaining a taxi, so they have a foot in both camps. Some drivers consider that Uber is a real threat to their existence, it is an not a level playing field and the taxi industry is very regulated; Uber does not appear to be regulated. Other taxis drivers told me Uber provides another level of customer who may not have used taxis in the first place. Therefore, it is a little

like a low-cost airline. This often does not have an impact on a full-service airline because it is a different level of customer using the service. Many views were that Uber makes the taxi industry lift its standards to provide a better service. If the bar lifts, more people will be able attracted to the taxi industry. These are the views that have been shared with me.

Mr VOWLES: I want to move on to the Darwin Bus Service. Is the department incurring expenditure in the outsource in the Darwin Bus Service? Any ongoing costs?

Mr CHANDLER: I do not know. I do not think so. I am advised we have a contract in place. It is ongoing and worked out positively at the moment.

Mr VOWLES: Contract with the ...

Ms GARDINER-BARNES: The Darwin Bus Service.

Mr VOWLES: The Darwin Bus Services for that. What about incurring costs for the ticketing system? Did the NT government pay for the ticketing system to be put in? There were recommendations from the transit safety review announced during the Casuarina by-election. I will ask some question about the outstanding recommendations in that review also.

There were some safety issues with the bus drivers and some measures the department was working on regarding the GPS, the new ticketing system. They had all that; I got some of that information in my briefing. I want to ask more about those ongoing costs, if any, for the ticketing system? Is the NT government paying that or the new bus service provider?

Mr CHANDLER: On 15 December 2014 the new ticketing system and passenger data collection system commenced on the Darwin Bus and Asbus networks and has been operating successfully, by April, for four months. It has received high levels of passenger and driver acceptance. The total budget estimate for 2014-15 was \$1.7m. Expenses as at 31 March 2015 are \$711 000, and the budget for 2015-16 is \$700 000 towards the system.

Mr VOWLES: That is what it is costing taxpayers to pay for that in the buses?

Mr CHANDLER: Yes.

Mr VOWLES: What was the total cost of privatising the bus service and having that included?

Madam CHAIR: I welcome visitors at the back. I hope you enjoy this session of estimates. We are examining the Department of Transport portfolio.

Mr CHANDLER: The contracted price to deliver the service over 60 months is \$53.955m.

Mr VOWLES: Does that include the ticketing costs or is that just the contract?

Mr CHANDLER: That is the contracted price.

Mr VOWLES: So five years and \$53m?

Mr CHANDLER: \$53.955m.

Mr VOWLES: Pretty much \$54m plus \$1.7m for the ticketing system?

Mr CHANDLER: \$1.7m, yes.

Mr VOWLES: How long was that contract for?

Mr CHANDLER: For the ticketing system? It was a one-off payment of \$1m to set up the ticketing system and \$700 000 ongoing.

Mr VOWLES: Is that a better deal for Territorians, minister?

Mr CHANDLER: Yes.

Mr VOWLES: Have you finished your answer?

Mr CHANDLER: Yes.

Mr VOWLES: Thanks, minister. I am moving to Output 10.2, registration, Madam Chair.

Madam CHAIR: That concludes consideration of Output 10.1.

Output 10.2 – Registration, Licensing and Road Safety

Madam CHAIR: The committee will not move to Output 10.2, Registration, Licensing and Road Safety. Are there any questions?

Mr VOWLES: Minister ...

Mr CHANDLER: Sorry, I would like to add to that last question. Outsourcing the service will result in a 13% cost efficiency to the taxpayer. That is so you have the full answer.

Mr VOWLES: Around registration, licensing and road safety, what is the description and cost of each of the reports prepared on the open speed limit trial introduced by your government? Have there been four reports?

Mr CHANDLER: Because we are talking about this financial year, there have been no costs in this budget cycle.

Mr VOWLES: In the interest of open and transparent government will you release those reports?

Mr CHANDLER: No, I do not have that capacity because they were Cabinet-in-confidence. Those reports were Cabinet documents.

Ms FYLES: How much has the new online booking system at MVR cost?

Mr CHANDLER: I am happy to take that on notice, member for Nightcliff.

Question on Notice No 8.21

Madam CHAIR: Please restate the question for the record.

Ms FYLES: Minister, how much has the new online booking system at the MVR cost?

Madam CHAIR: You accept the question?

Mr CHANDLER: I do.

Madam CHAIR: That will be number 8.21.

Ms FYLES: Further to that new online booking system, obviously people have to book online or use the NT REGO app. If they do not have access to a computer or a mobile device what are their options?

Mr CHANDLER: They can still go to the MVR and make a booking online there.

Ms FYLES: They have to go the MVR. They cannot get their inspection that day?

Mr CHANDLER: If there was an appointment time, of course. They can also ring in so you do not have to use ...

Ms FYLES: So they can telephone?

Mr CHANDLER: Yes, they can telephone.

Ms FYLES: I have received feedback from some customers that they have not been able to phone and have had to attend, make a booking and then go back a second time which, as you can imagine for some seniors and people who are most likely not to have Internet access, is quite inconvenient. Obviously we have a new system that is probably fantastic for a larger percentage but we have missed some important Territorians in implementing that new system. I am not sure if you have any feedback on that.

Mr CHANDLER: No, just the advice that you can ring in. If that has happened then we will have a look at it.

Ms FYLES: We might need to get that clarified.

Answer to Question on Notice No 8.21

Mr CHANDLER: That question about the online booking system, it costs \$72 per month to operate.

Madam CHAIR: Was that a question on notice?

Mr CHANDLER: I think so.

Ms FYLES: That would have cost more to set up.

Madam CHAIR: It was Question on Notice No 8.21.

Mr CHANDLER: Can you reread that question?

Ms FYLES: I can re-ask it. How much did the new online booking system cost to implement?

Mr CHANDLER: The system costs were done in-house so there were no additional costs, but it does cost \$72 per month to operate.

Madam CHAIR: That is the answer to number 8.21. Thank you.

Mr VOWLES: I want to move on to 10.4.

Madam CHAIR: Are there any further questions for Output 10.2? That concludes consideration of Output 10.2.

Output 10.3 – Transport, Regulation and Compliance

Madam CHAIR: Are there any questions for Output 10.3, Transport, Regulation and Compliance? That concludes consideration of Output 10.3.

Output 10.4 – Transport Infrastructure Planning

Madam CHAIR: I will now call for questions on Output 10.4, Transport Infrastructure Planning. Are there any questions?

Mr VOWLES: Were any departmental costs and road works undertaken to allow the use of the Roper Highway for iron ore or bulk ore sampling traffic, and costs associated with repair and remediation works? Was any money spent doing that road?

Mr CHANDLER: Government money spent on - which road was it?

Mr VOWLES: On the Roper Highway.

Mr CHANDLER: I will pass this over to Louise.

Ms McCORMICK: Louise McCormick, Executive Director Transport Infrastructure Planning. No, there were no specific works done as part of the mining that was occurring on the Roper Highway, but there are a number of upgrade projects which are part of the normal program.

Mr VOWLES: Not from the continual use or ...

Ms McCORMICK: No, things like strengthening and widening projects which are part of our normal ongoing program.

Mr VOWLES: That will probably kill my next question about any costs recovered from mining companies whose iron ore was transported. You have not provided any directly. That is fine.

That finishes that for me there. I will go to Output Group 12.0, Darwin Port Corporation, thanks.

Madam CHAIR: Are there any further questions for Output 10.4? That concludes consideration of Output 10.4.

Output 10.5 – Transport Assets.

Madam CHAIR: I will call for questions on Output 10.5, Transport Assets.

That concludes consideration of Output 10.5.

Output 10.6 – Transport Planning, Policy and Reform

Madam CHAIR: Output 10.6, Transport Planning, Policy and Reform. Are there any questions?

That concludes consideration of Output 10.6 and Output Group 10.0.

OUTPUT GROUP 11.0 – CORPORATE AND GOVERNANCE

Output 11.1 – Corporate and Governance

Madam CHAIR: The committee will now proceed to Output Group 11.0, Corporate and Governance, Output 11.1, Corporate and Governance. Are there any questions?

That concludes consideration of Output 11.1.

Output 11.2 – Shared Services Received

Madam CHAIR: Output 11.2, Shared Services Received. Any questions?

That concludes consideration of Output 11.2 and Output Group 11.0.

Are there any non-output specific budget relation questions?

Mr VOWLES: Darwin Port Corporation.

Madam CHAIR: That concludes consideration of all output groups relating to the Department of Transport. On behalf of the committee, I thank the officers who provided the minister with support today.

DARWIN PORT CORPORATION BUSINESS LINE

Madam CHAIR: The committee will now move on to consider the Darwin Port Corporation Business Line.

Minister, I note that the Minister for Economic Development and Major Projects is responsible for the *Darwin Port Corporation Act* except for Part 2, Division 4, and answered questions relating to his responsibilities on Wednesday 27 May.

As the Minister for Transport is responsible for Part 2, Division 4 of the *Darwin Port Corporation Act* questions relating to the Darwin Ports Harbourmaster will now be answered.

I invite you to introduce the officials accompanying, and if you wish to make an opening statement regarding business line Darwin Port Corporation. For Hansard, perhaps, minister.

Mr CHANDLER: On my left I have Clare Gardiner-Barnes, the CE of Transport, and on my right Fotis Papadakis, the Chief Financial Officer, Department of Transport.

Madam CHAIR: Thank you. Are you making a statement today?

Mr CHANDLER: No.

Madam CHAIR: We can proceed to questions regarding Darwin Port Corporation Business Line.

Mr VOWLES: Thank you, Madam Chair. Welcome, minister, Clare and Fotis.

I have a couple of questions. What is the reason for the decline in the income estimated in the four business lines in 2015-16?

Mr CHANDLER: Member for Johnston, we are only answering questions in regard to the Harbourmaster activities.

Mr VOWLES: That was not my understanding whatsoever on this. How many boats came into the harbour?

Mr CHANDLER: How many what? That is a good question. We will probably be able to find that out.

Mr VOWLES: Sometimes the simplest are the easiest and they are missed.

Ms GARDINER-BARNES: Port management is the minister for Ports

Mr VOWLES: I can hear that, Clare ...

Madam CHAIR: How is the port safety going? Is that Harbourmaster?

Ms GARDINER-BARNES: No, that is Minister for Transport.

Mr VOWLES: Can you provide an update of your responsibilities in this area, please, minister?

Ms FYLES: Let us move on to ...

Mr VOWLES: No, it is a serious question.

Mr CHANDLER: Harbourmaster activities. During the reporting period the Darwin Harbourmaster and the associated regulatory functions relating to Part 2, Division 4, of the *Darwin Port Corporation Act* transferred to the Department of Transport. The intent of the transfer of the regulatory functions is to satisfy the requirements of the regulatory framework within the recently passed *Ports Management Act*.

The Darwin Harbourmaster and his two support staff were transferred from the Darwin Port Corporation to the Department of Transport, effective 31 March 2015, to form what will be the statutory role of the Regional Harbourmaster.

For the Department of Transport, three additional FTE have been assumed and reflected in the department's 2015-16 budget as \$570 000. That is \$530 000 for salaries and \$40 000 operational.

The pilot licences issued – and this is just some activities – are five; pilot licence endorsements awarded, 55; pilotage exemption certificates issued, 32; pilotage exemption certificates revalidated, 19; pilotage exemption certificates upgraded, 21; Harbourmaster's directions issued, four; notices to mariners issued, 115; dangerous goods notifications processed, 112; hot work permits approved, 181; and marine pollution incidents reported, nine.

Mr VOWLES: Thank you, minister. I have a thousand questions about the port but in the interest of time I have to stop it there.

Madam CHAIR: That concludes consideration of this business line. On behalf of the committee I thank the officers who provided advice to the minister today. We will now move to consider the Department of Infrastructure in the 35 minutes we have remaining with the minister today. A quick two-minute shuffle of staff would be appreciated, thank you.

Mr CHANDLER: You fake genuine very well, Ken.

Mr VOWLES: That is why I became a politician.

The committee suspended

DEPARTMENT OF INFRASTRUCTURE

Madam CHAIR: We are here with the Department of Infrastructure. Could you please introduce the officials accompanying you today and then make an opening statement if you wish.

Mr CHANDLER: Good afternoon, Madam Chair. I introduce the officials from the Department of Infrastructure who are here today: on my right Mr Dave McHugh, Chief Executive of the Department of Infrastructure; Mr Bob Pemble, Executive Director Civil Services; to my left Mr Brett Brogan, Executive Director, Building Services; behind me Stephen Hoyne, Executive Director, Major Projects, Procurement and Contract Services; and further left Ms Leah Atkinson, Chief Financial Officer.

The 2014-15 year to date has been very productive for the Department of Infrastructure and just as importantly for all Territorians. As we worked with the Australian government to deliver economic opportunities for the north, we have continued our ongoing commitment to provide much-needed infrastructure investment across the Territory. Northern Territory government construction contracts provide employment opportunities for all Territorians in the construction industry, including Indigenous people especially in the delivery of works in remote locations.

The department has focused strongly on increasing opportunities for Indigenous wealth creation by maximising employment and business opportunities for Indigenous people by examining opportunities for Indigenous businesses enterprises to undertake construction projects and improving the participation rate of Indigenous employees, trainees and apprentices directly employed through the department-issued contracts.

Since October 2014 a nominated provisional sum based on estimated project cost features in all Department of Infrastructure construction tenders over \$500 000 to support Indigenous employment participation. As at March 31, 2015 provisional sums totalling \$20.7m have been nominated within tenders for the employment of Indigenous Territorians.

As at 30 April 2015 the Department of Infrastructure awarded 736 contracts to local companies. Over 96% of tenders awarded by the department were awarded to local companies, meaning jobs for locals.

The department introduced the project bank account on the Tiger Brennan Drive duplication project. This is an alternative payment mechanism that uses a dedicated trust account to facilitate payments directly from the principal through to the head contractor and participating subcontractors involved in a project.

The department has developed a further mechanism to enhance the protections for subcontractors. The initiative was approved in March 2015 for inclusion in all Department of Infrastructure head contracts of \$500 000 or greater and the individual subcontracts valued at \$50 000 or greater that feed into those head contracts. This initiative requires the head contractor to provide the principal, which in this case is the government, with satisfactory confirmation from the subcontractor.

In 2014-15 the department managed \$185m worth of repairs and maintenance works, with \$94m of it going towards Territory roads. Significant projects delivered and in progress in the 2014-15 year include: \$22m in delivering two new operating theatres at short-stay units at Royal Darwin Hospital; \$24m in delivering three new police stations at Yuendumu, Alparra and Alice Springs; \$88m for ongoing major construction of the Tiger Brennan Drive duplication project reducing the congestion and decreasing travel times from Palmerston to Darwin; intersection works at the Stuart Highway and Temple Terrace to accommodate the \$150m Palmerston Regional Hospital; \$15m in cyclone recovery efforts after Cyclones Lam and Nathan in Galiwinku rebuilding and repairing community infrastructure; a further \$15 has been allocated in 2015-16 for works to continue.

During May I held Budget 2015-16 presentations in Darwin, Katherine, Tennant Creek and Alice Springs where I was joined by Dave McHugh. I enjoyed the opportunity to speak with industry and present highlights of the \$1.6bn investment in infrastructure. Some projects being delivered with significant impact on the Northern Territory include: completing the sealing of the Mereenie inner loop of the Red Centre

Way Tourist Drive; commencing construction of bridges over the Roper and Wilton Rivers to provide Wet Season access to Ngukurr; \$31m for the continued delivery of the special school at Henbury Avenue; \$13m for the Northern Territory Open Education Centre; \$150m for the 116-bed Palmerston Regional Hospital; \$7.2m for the new preschool and child family centre in Alice Springs; \$21.3m for the new Palmerston special school; \$21.1m for enhancing the visitor experience at Casuarina Coastal Reserve and Litchfield National Park; \$12.6m for various motor sport upgrades in regional locations; \$20m to expand the facilities at Richardson Park; \$18.3m for redevelopment of the Chan Building into a dedicated visual arts gallery; continuation of the \$88m Tiger Brennan Drive duplication; and \$50m flood mitigation works across the Darwin region and Katherine.

I take this opportunity to acknowledge our local construction industry. Industry and government working collaboratively is critical to delivering an infrastructure program which ultimately benefits all Territorians. I also thank the hard-working departmental staff for their invaluable expertise. Without it, it would make me look like an idiot.

The government is committed to developing the north and this is demonstrated with the significant investment in roads and infrastructure assets across the Territory. The Department of Infrastructure is well placed to successfully manage the 2015-16 infrastructure program.

Madam Chair, I look forward to questions the Estimates Committee may have for me. Thank you.

Madam CHAIR: Member for Nightcliff, questions on the statement?

Ms FYLES: What was the 2014-15 revote in a dollar figure?

Mr McHUGH: Is that revote out or revote in?

Ms FYLES: It is the revote from the previous budget.

Mr CHANDLER: So \$330.9m.

Ms FYLES: That was for 2014-15. What is it for 2015-16?

Mr CHANDLER: It is \$5017.5m.

Ms FYLES: What projects and at what amount are we revoting and why? Can we get a breakdown?

Mr CHANDLER: Projects like Tiger Brennan Drive, for instance?

Ms FYLES: Are we able to get a complete list?

Mr CHANDLER: I can take that on notice.

Question on Notice No 8.22

Madam CHAIR: Can you please restate the question for the record?

Ms FYLES: Can we get a breakdown of what projects and what amount we are revoting?

Madam CHAIR: Minister, do you accept the question?

Mr CHANDLER: Yes, I do absolutely.

Madam CHAIR: That will be number 8.22.

Ms FYLES: What was the 2014-15 Commonwealth funding percentage of the entire capital works program of 2014-15?

Mr CHANDLER: The total approved program of \$918m is made up of \$387m of Australian government funding ...

Ms FYLES: That was 2014-15?

Mr CHANDLER: Yes.

Ms FYLES: I can work out the percentage. What is the 2015-16 Commonwealth funding percentage of the entire capital works program?

Mr CHANDLER: It was 69% Territory funded this year. Your question was in regard to federal so we worked out it was 31%.

Ms FYLES: Thanks, minister. In your opening statement you made mention about Tiger Brennan Drive. What are the site works occurring on the corner of Woolner and Tiger Brennan Drive, at what cost and for what purpose?

Mr McHUGH: Are you talking about the left hand side?

Madam CHAIR: That is not part of Tiger Brennan Drive.

Ms FYLES: It is off Tiger Brennan Drive and Woolner. You are not sure what those ...

Mr CHANDLER: Where that big pile of rocks is? We will take that on notice. It may not be works that are associated with either Tiger Brennan Drive or what the Department of Infrastructure is doing.

Ms FYLES: Perhaps if I ask my next question and then if we need to come back and ask any questions on notice that might be better. Can you provide all contract costs and time lines for the duplication of the Tiger Brennan Drive project?

Mr CHANDLER: Anything that is not in-confidence.

Mr McHUGH: I could explain the process for the Tiger Brennan Drive project which was we awarded a managing contract to BMD. They are subcontracting out various components of that project. They have sublet most of it but not all of it, so we could not provide you with the details of the final components of that yet. We should have that probably in three months when we have all the final subcontract packages finalised. There were early works packages which included the mud stabilisation and mining machines doing cuttings and things like that.

We have also done preliminary works for the bridge going into Hidden Valley. The whole of the Hidden Valley arrangements will be in place for the V8 Supercars so that will not be a problem. But in answering your question I would need to wait a few months before we had that information.

Ms FYLES: Okay, are there any details you can provide at this point or should we do it as a written question in a couple of months?

Mr CHANDLER: That is my suggestion because if we took this on notice and get stuck with a time line we will not be able to meet it, because we will not have that information. Either a briefing or ...

Ms FYLES: Yes, no worries. I will continue to ask questions because we only have a couple of outputs anyway.

In regard to the old Darwin hospital site at Myilly Point, what are the site works currently occupying the site, and for what cost and purpose, if they are yours?

Mr CHANDLER: I am probably answering something outside of my portfolio area, but what I know ...

Madam CHAIR: Then think twice about it, minister.

Mr CHANDLER: I am thinking twice about it. Correct me if I am wrong, but I believe a short-term lease was provided to Power and Water to have as a lay-down area. It is not works happening on the site, it is just being used as a lay-down area.

Ms FYLES: Okay. Thank you, minister, I appreciate that additional information. What are the headworks costs of the new Palmerston Regional Hospital? Can I get that broken down into power, water, sewerage and other civil works, site preparation, and roads?

Mr CHANDLER: We will take that on notice.

Question on Notice No 8.23

Madam CHAIR: Yes. Please restate the question for the record.

Ms FYLES: What are the headworks costs of the new Palmerston Regional Hospital. Can I can get that broken down into power, water and sewerage and other civil works, site preparation and roads? If you could please provide time lines and contract details on each of these works.

Madam CHAIR: Minister, do you accept the question?

Mr CHANDLER: Happy to take that on notice.

Madam CHAIR: That will be number 8.23.

Ms FYLES: Assuming there is additional appropriation, where did that come from - the Northern Territory government or the Commonwealth, or a split - considering the previous Palmerston hospital site was serviced?

Mr CHANDLER: Are you talking about an additional appropriation in addition to the \$150m, or are you talking ...

Ms FYLES: Is that included in the \$150m?

Mr CHANDLER: Yes.

Ms FYLES: All right. Strategic issues in 2015 include balancing delivery to manage the continuity of work across the industry sector. Given the financial pressure may small- to medium-size businesses are under, it is obviously a very important issue in the community. Many small contractors have approached the opposition about the issue of continuation of work. Have you received any representations on this issue from contractors? What steps is the department taking to manage this continuity of work issue?

Mr CHANDLER: That is a good question and is something Dave can expand a little more on. There has been a lot of work to ensure that this massive spend this year is spent in a timely manner to ensure works are spread over the full 12-month period. Second, when we are entering into head contracts with businesses, built into the contracts is a requirement that a large percentage of the work is assured to go to local companies.

A good example of that is Tiger Brennan Drive with two fantastic outcomes: very high employment take-up of Indigenous people within that project and a high percentage of the entire package went to local companies. On the Indigenous – what is the number?

Mr McHUGH: It is about 30%.

Mr CHANDLER: Indigenous workers are 30% of the entire workforce on Tiger Brennan Drive at the moment. That is a fantastic outcome.

We have built a couple of things into the contracts. One is building in certainty that head contractors do not do a runner – as Dave said to me one day, buying a boat and travelling to ...

Mr McHUGH: The south of France.

Mr CHANDLER: The south of France. That cannot happen now because of the trust fund that has been set up. It is important to build into the contracts the assurance that the work flows on to local contractors.

Ms FYLES: You are obviously ensuring that a percentage goes to local operators in larger contracts. Has the department considered breaking up larger tenders into smaller packages so that small- and medium-size contractors are able to tender directly?

Mr CHANDLER: Yes. Dave, do you want to explain that?

Mr McHUGH: At the moment, as a department, we spend about \$60m a year on minor works. All of those minor works projects go to smaller contractors. They are projects of less than \$0.5m. Most of our repairs and maintenance program, which is over \$200m, goes to medium to small contractors. Those contracts may be period contracts that go over a period of years. They could be a three-year period contract but to the medium-size contractor. They are too small to make it viable for the bigger contractors.

If you look at the capital works program, there are only about two projects which Tier 1 contractors are really interested in. All the rest are medium to smaller contracts.

Ms FYLES: Are you able to provide details to the committee of major projects which were contracted to interstate and overseas companies in 2014-15?

Mr McHUGH: Yes, we are.

Ms FYLES: For each contract who was the successful tenderer, what was the description of works or services and what was the value of the contract?

Mr CHANDLER: During the period 1 July 2014 to 31 March 2015 the Department of Infrastructure awarded a total of 267 Tier 3, 4 and 5 contracts, of which 257 were awarded to local Northern Territory businesses. During the reporting period local Territory businesses were awarded 98.73% of the value of Tier 3, 4 and 5 contracts.

Of the ones that went interstate, Northern Territory 239 contracts or 97.55% worth \$353 511 179, and six were interstate tenderers although tenderers established in the NT, which was 2.45% of quantity and for \$3 410 929. Do you want a further breakdown of who they were and what it was for?

Ms FYLES: That was for Tier 3, 4 and 5? Correct?

Mr CHANDLER: Tiers 3, 4 and 5 contracts, correct.

Ms FYLES: Of the Tier 1 and 2 contracts? Of Tier 3, 4 and 5 what is their description? Are they major?

Mr CHANDLER: It starts at \$100 000.

Ms FYLES: And goes up. So under that would be much smaller?

Mr CHANDLER: Yes.

Ms FYLES: So a fair percentage went to local ...

Mr CHANDLER: Absolutely, 97.55% of the quantity and of the value 99.04%. Only 0.6% - by example the Otis Elevator Company, an interstate company, for a lift at the Greatorex Building in Alice Springs. ICN NT did not identify any local suppliers for this type of lift. It was a tender of \$116 600. That is an example of an interstate firm, but the vast majority of works was let to local companies.

Ms FYLES: You mentioned initiatives for Indigenous employment and training opportunities. Are there any specific or unique programs within the department?

Mr CHANDLER: Do you want to describe a little more about what is built into the contracts, Dave?

Mr McHUGH: Regarding contracts - not talking about the internal arrangements within the department - for the provisional sum it is 10% of the value of the contract. Contractors are reimbursed that provisional sum based on Aboriginal employment. They have to provide records and demonstrate they employed people. If they can do that they get that provisional sum paid to them.

Other than that we selectively negotiate with IBEs, or Indigenous business enterprises, in communities and also regional local government to employ significant numbers of Aboriginal people. We place orders directly on those IBEs as long as they can demonstrate they have the financial capability to undertake the work. That is what we are focusing on in contracts.

Internally we have a range of issues associated with employment targets and training. We can talk in some detail about that if you wish us to go into that.

Mr CHANDLER: I do not want to cut over the top of Dave, but the department should be congratulated. In the last 12 months Indigenous employee representation has increased from 2.3% to 7.5%. A number of staff identify as Indigenous. There are 49 staff in programs, with 17 in a Bachelor of Engineering, four in a Bachelor in Engineering, eight Certificate IV in Civil Construction Supervision, seven Certificate IV in Project Management, seven Certificate III Civil Construction, one Certificate II in Horticulture and five Certificate III in Business Administration. That is a great achievement for the department to have 7.5% of the workforce now, up from 2.3%. That is great.

Ms FYLES: I am happy to go into outputs. I am conscious I only have 10 minutes.

Madam CHAIR: The committee will now consider whole-of-government questions. Member for Nightcliff, would you like to go straight to Output 13.1?

Ms FYLES: I am happy to go straight to Output 13.1.

OUTPUT GROUP 13.0 – INFRASTRUCTURE SERVICES **Output 13.1 – Program Support**

Madam CHAIR: The committee will not proceed to Output Group 13.0, Infrastructure Services, Output 13.1, Program Support. Are there any questions?

Ms FYLES: Are you able to provide the committee with a breakup of the expenditure on program support in 2014-15?

Mr CHANDLER: Is it a personal breakup you are wanting or ...

Ms FYLES: Do you have anything to hand or would you have to take it on notice?

Mr CHANDLER: Probably on notice, but I need clarification around the question. Can you ask it again?

Ms FYLES: Are you able to provide a breakup of the expenditure on program support in 2014-15?

Mr CHANDLER: Program support?

Ms FYLES: Yes.

Mr CHANDLER: In what context?

Ms FYLES: I have questions in program support and project delivery, so I wanted to separate them.

Mr CHANDLER: We can take that on notice.

Question on Notice No 8.24

Madam CHAIR: Please restate the question for record?

Ms FYLES: Could you provide the committee with a breakup of expenditure on program support in 2014-15? Do you want me to put the project delivery one on notice as well, minister?

Mr CHANDLER: Yes.

Ms FYLES: Could you please provide the committee with a breakup of expenditure on project delivery in 2014-15?

Madam CHAIR: Do you accept the question?

Mr CHANDLER: Yes.

Madam CHAIR: That will be number 8.24.

Ms FYLES: My next question you might need to take on notice as well. Was there a reason for the \$2.9m decrease in the estimated expenditure for 2014-15 compared to the budget allocation, and was any work

under this output outsourced to the private sector? You can put it all on notice with the other two parts if you want.

Mr CHANDLER: I am happy to ...

Madam CHAIR: Better just say that separately, member for Nightcliff. If you can restate that part.

Ms FYLES: Could you provide the committee with a breakup of the expenditure on project delivery in 2014-15, and what was the reason for the \$2.9m decrease in the estimated expenditure for 2014-15 compared to the budget allocation?

Ms FYLES: I will keep going, because I only have about five minutes left and I have a couple of other questions.

Madam CHAIR: Do you have the answer, minister, or are we taking that on notice?

Mr CHANDLER: I have the answer. The reduction to employee expenses reflects the increase in outsourcing design and professional services to the private sector.

Ms FYLES: Are you able to provide details of the value of works outsourced? Is it a straight ...

Mr CHANDLER: Not here, but we will take that on notice.

Question on Notice No 8.25

Madam CHAIR: Please restate that question on notice for the record.

Ms FYLES: Of the work that was outsourced to the private sector, could we please have details of the value of the work?

Madam CHAIR: Minister, do you accept the question?

Mr CHANDLER: Yes.

Madam CHAIR: That will be number 8.25.

Ms FYLES: I do not have any more on that output, Madam Chair.

Madam CHAIR: That concludes consideration of Output 13.1.

Output 13.2 – Project Delivery

Madam CHAIR: The committee will now proceed to Output 13.2, Project Delivery. Are there any questions?

Ms FYLES: I will go through to 14.1.

Madam CHAIR: That concludes consideration of Output 13.2 and Output Group 13.0.

OUTPUT GROUP 14.0 – CORPORATE AND GOVERNANCE **Output 14.1 – Corporate and Governance**

Madam CHAIR: We will now move to consider Output Group 14.0, Corporate and Governance, Output 14.1, Corporate and Governance. Are there any questions for 14.1?

Ms FYLES: What was the reason for the \$1.2m increase for Corporate and Governance in 2015-16?

Mr CHANDLER: We received a \$2.722m capital grant for the Alice Springs Youth Centre.

Ms FYLES: Under corporate governance, was that the reason for the \$1.2m increase?

Mr CHANDLER: Yes, it is offset.

Ms FYLES: Did your agency utilise the services of Latitude Travel in 2014-15?

Mr CHANDLER: No.

Ms FYLES: I will go to the next output, Madam Chair.

Madam CHAIR: That concludes consideration of Output 14.1.

Output 14.2 – Asset Management

Madam CHAIR: We will now consider Output 14.2, Asset Management. Are there any questions?

Ms FYLES: Is any asset management work outsourced? If so, could you provide details including of description of the working cost?

Mr McHUGH: It all depends on how you define asset management. We project manage all the maintenance and delivery of all those works for and on behalf of agencies. We undertake assessments of building assets and road networks to provide advice to clients on formulation of their maintenance programs. We do that largely in-house but we also use consultants to assist us in the delivery of that service.

Ms FYLES: Do you conduct inspections and maintenance on all public sector assets or is that done by individual agencies?

Mr McHUGH: No, the individual agencies have responsibility but we undertake, over a three-year period, to generally get around all the government assets. We do not do it annually.

Ms FYLES: Are they inspected on an ad hoc basis? It is not an annual schedule but a three-year ...

Mr McHUGH: Generally, but if there are specific issues associated with a particular asset - if people have concerns about the service of air handling plants, conditions or if there has been vandalism and all those sorts of things, we work with various client departments to deliver that, especially education for doing work during mid-year school holidays and over the Christmas period.

Ms FYLES: Do you keep a list of major assets that require significant repairs and maintenance or are approaching the end of their economic life?

Mr McHUGH: Yes, we have what we call a BAMS system, which is Building Asset Management System.

Ms FYLES: Are you able to provide that to us?

Mr McHUGH: It is probably an enormous thing to dump on you, but we could provide you with an outline of what it does and what it can do.

Ms FYLES: Are there more significant assets that are coming towards the end of their economic life or is it not looked at in that way?

Mr McHUGH: No, generally speaking maintenance of government assets is determined on the needs of the client; they are not done on a commercial basis.

Ms FYLES: That is all on that output, Madam Chair.

Madam CHAIR: That concludes consideration of Output 14.2 and Output Group 14.0.

Are there any non-output specific budget related questions?

Ms FYLES: No, there is only a minute to go. I thank the department. I am sure there has been an enormous amount of preparation. I apologise we only had a few short minutes, but we will put some of those further questions through the written notice process.

Madam CHAIR: Thank you. That concludes consideration of all output groups relating to the Department of Infrastructure. On behalf of the committee, I thank the officers who provided the minister advice today. We will now move on to consider outputs relating to Veterans Support.

Madam CHAIR: Minister, do you have an answer to a question taken on notice?

Mr CHANDLER: A correction. There was a question earlier in regard to the Stuart Highway safety improvements study south of Barrow Creek. It was \$38 854.55 that was spent in the 2014-15 year on the safety improvements study.

Mr VOWLES: That was in Transport, thank you.

Mr CHANDLER: Yes.

VETERANS SUPPORT

Madam CHAIR: Thank you, minister. There is one minute. Are there any questions on Veterans Support?

Ms FYLES: I can ask one if you want me to.

Madam CHAIR: We have not called them forward.

Ms FYLES: Are there any significant projects you would like us to be aware of, minister?

Mr VOWLES: We are very thankful for the work that gets done in the department.

Madam CHAIR: That is fine. Perhaps any questions could be written to you.

Thank you everyone from the Department of Business who have come to support the minister for Veteran Support. We have not had time to get to any of those questions. That will also conclude Veteran Support portfolio, and that concludes your time today, minister Chandler. Thank you very much for your entire department and all of your staffs' efforts today.

We will have a short five-minute break for changeover and will return with minister Higgins for the Department of Sport and Recreation.

Mr VOWLES: Thanks Peter, thanks everyone.

The committee suspended

MINISTER HIGGINS' PORTFOLIOS

DEPARTMENT OF SPORT AND RECREATION

Madam CHAIR: Thank you, everyone, for coming back after the break. We are joined by minister Higgins and the Department of Sport and Recreation. Minister, if you could please introduce the officials accompanying you today.

Mr HIGGINS: Madam Chair, as you know, I am responsible for Sport and Recreation output groups. This evening I am joined by Phillip Leslie, the CEO of the Department of Sport and Recreation and Joanna Frankenfeld, the Chief Financial Officer.

Madam CHAIR: Minister, I will invite you to make an opening statement of no more than five minutes. 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 committee members. Finally, other participating members may ask questions. The committee has agreed that other members may join in on a line of questioning pursued by a shadow

minister, rather than waiting for the end of the shadow's questioning on the output. Do you wish to make an opening statement?

Mr HIGGINS: If I could, Madam Chair.

Madam CHAIR: Thank you.

Mr HIGGINS: When I spoke to the Appropriation Bill on 28 April I mentioned the raft of initiatives supported in the Sport and Recreation portfolio and the power of sport and recreation in contributing to community wellbeing. Sport can engender pride and excitement, whether it be an AFL game in Wadeye or supporting the Australian team at the Davis Cup quarter final.

I am very pleased that we have been able to secure events such as the Davis Cup tennis, the pre-Olympic hockey and the Imparja Cup to add to our regular AFL, NRL and Alice Springs Masters Games offerings. All of this comes from building good relationships and much hard work. However, for me the most important focus is what is in it for Territorians - mums and dads, children, teenagers and young adults being able to participate in sport and recreation.

This budget is all about helping more people participate in sport and recreation and providing better places or facilities to participate in. To give you an example, our commitment to Sport Vouchers helps remove cost as a barrier to participation. Our investment in facilities in this budget - especially in sports and facilities that are not always in the news or prominent such as lawn bowls, cycling, velodromes and athletic tracks in Alice Springs - means the facilities will continue to improve and better meet community expectations.

To continue to get the balance right, the budget also provided \$1m for the development of a master plan, \$400 000 for a Hidden Valley plan and \$600 000 for an overarching sport and recreation master plan. The overarching sport master plan will look at facilities and also the critical issues facing sport and recreation organisations. As I said, this is not an exercise in applying more oil to the squeakiest wheel but prioritising what is best for the Territory's future so that future budgets can be well targeted and continue to get the balance right.

It should also be noted there are some serious strategic issues to be tackled by the agency including: assisting peak sporting bodies and recreational bodies to address governance, financial sustainability and integrity issues; enhancing the capacity of regional and remote communities to deliver regular organised sporting competitions with pathways in place for talented performers; improving the availability and quality of sporting opportunities for children, including strategies to improve the quality of coaching and officiating; and maintaining facilities at suitable standards for local and national competition; maximising tourism, economic and community benefits from hosting national-level sporting fixtures.

In summary, the budget brings a significant infrastructure spend, sound planning funding and a great boost to sport and recreation across the Territory. The department is very active in driving sport and recreation and I intend to continue the focus on this important area for the community so Territorians have every chance to participate and get involved.

The staff with me today will assist in answering any questions the committee may have. If necessary, I will take any questions on notice to ensure accurate information is provided.

Madam CHAIR: Thank you. Are there any questions on the statement?

Ms FYLES: We provided some written questions. Are you able to table those or would you ...

Mr HIGGINS: No, I would prefer those questions to be asked and I can give you the answer.

Ms FYLES: In the interests of time, as we have a lot to fit in to your few hours of questioning, I will pick out a few. Are you able to provide details on the progress of all CLP election commitments, including commitments and policy announcements made to Territorians, any policy documents, summaries, snapshots, media releases and announcements, costings and savings? Are you able to provide any updates on those?

Mr HIGGINS: Is that question one? Of the election commitments that fall in the area of the Department of Sport and Recreation six are now complete and two remain in progress.

Ms FYLES: Which are the two in progress?

Mr HIGGINS: The 50% increase for the peak sporting bodies is completed. The Jingili BMX is completed. The \$75 children's voucher is completed. The Alice Springs Golf Club is completed. The Go-Kart track lights in Alice Springs is completed. Anzac Oval is completed.

The in progress ones are to support organisations with administration and training to reduce volunteer workloads. This commitment is on track with industry development activity, including support to volunteers continuing throughout 2014-15. The Satellite City BMX is in progress. Most of the track upgrades were completed in June 2013 and the remaining works were initially expected to be finalised by December, but this date has been extended to at least 30 June 2015.

Ms FYLES: Are you able to update the committee on the details and costs of advertising and communications by your department in 2014-15?

Mr HIGGINS: Advertising costs for the Department of Sport and Recreation are as follows: the NTG-funded advertising was \$289 214 as at 31 March. Broken down by expense type: magazines and journals was \$880, newspapers was \$90 619, online was \$16 480, outdoor, as in banners, was \$11 833, radio \$53 916, statutory notices nil, and television was \$115 487.

Ms FYLES: Was that all the advertising and communications in your department?

Mr HIGGINS: That was advertising, I will go to communications. Communications from NTG expenditure was \$564 918 which is broken down into: displays \$496, events and exhibitions \$500 471, consultants \$2356, marketing materials \$59 445, sponsorship \$1700, media monitoring \$450 and document production was nil.

Ms FYLES: Are you able to provide any details of consultancies undertaken by the agency and why they were undertaken?

Mr HIGGINS: The Department of Sport and Recreation undertook a consultancy in 2014-15 with Mr Brendan Lynch. It was recommendations on developing and implementing a new NT cycling alliance which was \$13 600.

Ms FYLES: That was the only consultancy undertaken?

Mr HIGGINS: That is the only one I have been advised of.

Ms FYLES: Was that done through competitive tendering or was that not possible due to the nature?

Mr HIGGINS: It was below the threshold, which I think is \$15 000.

Ms FYLES: Could you give us a brief outline of staff in your agency? How many full-time or FTEs do you have and how many staff are at ECO level and above, please?

Mr HIGGINS: As at 26 March 2015 the Department of Sport and Recreation had 54.2 FTE employees. There were 0.8 FTE ongoing, so permanent part-time employees, and there were 10 FTE on temporary contracts.

Ms FYLES: On top of the 54.2?

Mr HIGGINS: No, they are part of it.

Ms FYLES: Within?

Mr HIGGINS: Yes.

Ms FYLES: Could you provide the total cost of travel in your agency broken down into international, interstate and intrastate?

Mr HIGGINS: The total cost within the Territory was \$110 190, interstate is \$49 590 and overseas is \$799.

Ms FYLES: Was any of that travel undertaken by you and paid for by the agency?

Mr HIGGINS: No.

Ms FYLES: Was any of that travel undertaken by ministerial staff and paid for by the agency?

Mr HIGGINS: No.

Ms FYLES: Was any of that travel undertaken through Latitude Travel?

Mr HIGGINS: No.

Ms FYLES: Are you able to provide details and costs on all hospitality expenditure in the agency, or authority undertaken on behalf of the minister at events or events which you attended?

Mr HIGGINS: Nil for me. But if you are after ...

Ms FYLES: The department within the year, previous to your appointment ...

Mr HIGGINS: There were two expenses only. One was the Alice Springs Masters Games and that was the Ambassador function, which was \$5795 at the Double Tree Hilton in Alice Springs. Then there was a dinner with the Alice Springs Masters Games patrons and guests at the Steakhouse in Alice Springs, which was \$1461.

Ms FYLES: That was paid for by the department on behalf of the previous minister?

Mr HIGGINS: Yes.

Ms FYLES: Was there any other hospitality that the agency had expenditure on last year?

Mr HIGGINS: The total expenditure on entertainment and hospitality by the department was \$31 816.

Ms FYLES: Are you able to give us a breakdown of that \$31 000 spent by the department on hospitality?

Mr HIGGINS: The only way I can split that at the moment is into employees and non-employees, but if you want it broken down any more than that I can take it on notice.

Ms FYLES: Okay. Are you able to provide any details of what the \$31 000 was? Was it attending events?

Mr HIGGINS: I am advised that a large proportion of it is expenses associated with things like feeding volunteers at events like the Masters Games.

Ms FYLES: Would any of that \$31 000 include alcohol?

Mr HIGGINS: Yes, it could have.

Ms FYLES: Can I get a breakdown further of that on notice?

Mr HIGGINS: Yes, not a problem.

Question on Notice No 9.1

Madam CHAIR: Please restate the question for the record.

Ms FYLES: Could we please get a breakdown of all details and costs of hospitality expenditure in the agency of the \$31 000 the minister has referenced today?

Madam CHAIR: Do you accept the question?

Mr HIGGINS: Yes.

Madam CHAIR: That is number 9.1.

Ms FYLES: Does your Chief Executive or former Chief Executive have any government issued credit cards? If so, what was the total value of purchases on those cards?

Mr HIGGINS: The Chief Executive of the Department of Sport and Recreation has a credit card and the total purchases in 2014-15 were \$7902.

Ms FYLES: Are you able to provide any detail on costs or transactions of that \$7000?

Mr HIGGINS: Out of all of those accommodation was \$2802, car parking was \$530, catering for Adelaide United was \$50, and flights were \$4520.

Ms FYLES: Minister, of that credit card expenditure I question car parking. Would that not normally come under the vehicle? If the Chief Executive is driving, is that not normally covered by the vehicle leasing contract?

Mr HIGGINS: No. When I park at the Darwin Airport I stick my credit card into the vending machine and pull it out. When I leave I stick it in and pull it out and then get a receipt.

Ms FYLES: Likewise with the airfares or travel - I cannot quite remember which one it was. Is that cost normally not put through the agency and invoiced? Is there a reason why it was on a credit card?

Mr HIGGINS: I will get the CEO to answer that one.

Mr LESLIE: Phillip Leslie, Chief Executive Officer. In the early part of the year the travel for the organisation was booked directly on websites, so it was using a credit card. At a point in time, the agency moved over to whole-of-government which is now QBT, so it is done through that.

Ms FYLES: Thank you for that update. Do you have any boards or advisory bodies within your agency? I believe you were at one a day or so ago – it was on Facebook.

Mr HIGGINS: Yes, I was at one yesterday.

The answer is the Northern Territory Water Safety Advisory Council is a ministerially-appointed council that provides advice to government on water safety issues. Its membership is made up of both Northern Territory government agency representatives and community stakeholders with a vested interest in water safety. The role of the council is to provide advice regarding water safety issues and how to minimise drowning and water-related injuries in the Northern Territory.

Ms FYLES: I think members are not remunerated. Am I correct in my thinking on that?

Mr HIGGINS: Only the chairperson is remunerated.

Ms FYLES: Is that the only advisory board that you have within your agency?

Mr HIGGINS: Yes.

Ms FYLES: Are you able to outline any fees or charges levied by your agency, or any revenue raised, and whether these fees or charges were increased in Budget 2015-16?

Mr HIGGINS: There are fees and charges levied and they were not increased as part of the budget in 2015-16. Most of those relate to Marrara Indoor Stadium and Hidden Valley Motorsports Complex.

Ms FYLES: Thank you. That is what I had assumed, but I thought I should check. Did your agency have any costs associated with legal services by private legal firms in 2014-15?

Mr HIGGINS: No.

Ms FYLES: I will continue asking my questions. The NT Institute of Sport has indicated it will have an increase in the number of sports available from nine to 10. Are you able to provide details of what sport you expect to be added? That is on Budget Paper No 3, page 307.

Mr HIGGINS: Do you want me to answer that when we get to the outputs or ...

Ms FYLES: Because my questions are not ordered by output, I do not want to miss anything so I will ask all my questions in global. Sorry.

Madam CHAIR: Is that okay with you minister?

Mr HIGGINS: It means I will be referring back and forth all the time, that is all.

Madam CHAIR: If you prefer. It is supposed to go through outputs so member for Nightcliff could ask to make sure she does not miss any.

Mr HIGGINS: We will get this answer and then I will see how we go from there.

Madam CHAIR: Okay. We are still on questions on the statement.

Mr HIGGINS: The NTIS currently supports 11 sports across three types of programs: the Tier 1 sports have a full-time coach based in Darwin employed by the NTIS on contract until 2017, and at least one scholarship coach valued up to \$1000 per annum and based in Alice Springs. Tier 1 sports includes cricket, hockey, netball and rugby league.

Tier 2 sports are on an annual agreement and have at least one scholarship case coach based in Darwin and one scholarship coach based in Alice Springs. Both scholarship arrangements are valued up to \$10 000 per annum. Tier 2 sports include basketball, football as in soccer, squash and swimming.

Tier 3 sports on an annual agreement and supported by the NTIS through talent development camps for identified coaches and athletes at various times during each year. Tier 3 sports include athletics, golf, and a triathlon. Does that answer the question?

Ms FYLES: Is there a new sport expected to be added?

Mr HIGGINS: Is that in regard to the key deliverable athlete and coach services 2014-15, estimate nine and 2015-16 budget of 10?

Ms FYLES: Maybe that is it. I have misread it. Okay. The Masters Games comes under venues and events, and grants programs come under Sport and Recreation? I do not want to miss the opportunity to ask ...

Mr HIGGINS: Masters Games does not fall under me, no. It does, sorry.

Ms FYLES: It is okay, I understand.

Mr HIGGINS: Venues and events. Yes.

Ms FYLES: We will see how we go. Thank you, Madam Chair.

Madam CHAIR: The committee will now proceed to consider the estimates and proposed expenditure containing the Appropriation Bill (2015-2016) as they relate to the Department of Sport and Recreation.

OUTPUT GROUP 1.0 - SPORT AND RECREATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Output 1.1 - Northern Territory Institute of Sport

Madam CHAIR: We will now proceed to Output Group 1.0, Sport and Recreational Development, Output 1.1, Northern Territory Institute of Sport. Are there any questions?

Ms FYLES: Yes, thank you, Madam Chair. Minister, before I start, does your department still allocate grants annually and tri-annually or are they all on the same funding basis now?

Mr HIGGINS: It is a mixture.

Ms FYLES: So it is still a mixture?

Mr HIGGINS: Yes.

Ms FYLES: Could you please advise the name and intent of each grant program you operate in the department, please?

Mr HIGGINS: I had it here right in front of me.

Ms FYLES: Minister, could you please advise the amount of funds allocated to each of these grant programs?

Mr HIGGINS: The peak sporting bodies as at 31 March was \$3.734m; the active recreational organisations at 31 March was roughly \$1.2m; for the facilities and capital equipment grants, there was about \$779 000 at 31 March; grassroots development there was \$50 000 as at 31 March but there is a second round of that yet to be assessed; for the National/International Competition Incentives program there was \$390 000 provided in the 2014-15 budget which is not expected to be completed until the end of the financial year; for the Quick Response Grant as at 31 March, \$257 000 had been spent; and the Active Remote Community Grants program, as at 31 March, \$1.996m had been spent.

Ms FYLES: You have answered some of my questions I have written here. Are you able to provide us with a list of recipients of the grants to 31 March?

Mr HIGGINS: Yes.

Ms FYLES: Are you able to table that?

Mr HIGGINS: If I could finish the other one. I missed the Learn to Swim Vouchers and the Sport Vouchers as well that would classify as grants. You do not want me to read out the name of everybody who received a \$200 Sport Voucher do you?

Ms FYLES: If you could perhaps table the sports that received grants - the peak bodies.

Mr HIGGINS: I do not mind those ones. That is fine by me.

Ms FYLES: Thank you minister, that is appreciated. To clarify about the Sport Voucher program and eligible recipients, I understand with the Learn to Swim voucher they do the Under 5 Water Safety Awareness program and then they roll into being eligible for two \$100 vouchers per year for swimming lessons?

Mr HIGGINS: Yes.

Ms FYLES: Once they hit preschool are they entitled to the Sport Voucher or is it when they hit Transition?

Mr HIGGINS: No, at preschool.

Ms FYLES: Once they hit preschool they are not eligible for the swimming vouchers?

Mr HIGGINS: Yes.

Ms FYLES: Once you hit preschool instead of getting a \$100 swimming voucher you get a \$100 Sport Voucher per year?

Mr HIGGINS: Yes.

Ms FYLES: Is the water safety awareness program in your budget output?

Mr HIGGINS: Yes.

Ms FYLES: Could I get the take-up levels of water safety awareness, learn to swim and Sport Vouchers please?

Mr HIGGINS: The water safety program is done by ...

Ms FYLES: You operate that as a contract now, do you not?

Mr HIGGINS: Yes, but we have some figures on that. I will get those.

Ms FYLES: Has there been an increase or a decrease?

Mr HIGGINS: On 1 July the Learn to Swim Voucher program commenced and was aimed at providing long-life swimming skills for Territory kids. The Learn to Swim Voucher program is part of the Sport Voucher Scheme. As at 31 March 2015, 1558 vouchers had been distributed and 891 had been redeemed for \$89 100. There are 16 swimming organisations registered for the scheme.

Ms FYLES: How many had you predicted would be enrolled?

Mr HIGGINS: The answer you might be after is this was the first time we had run it and we did not do a prediction as such. We funded the external body for about 1200 people to go through so we were working at roughly 1200. There is ...

Ms FYLES: A total of 891 have been redeemed to date, which is not the end of the financial year.

Mr HIGGINS: Yes, but you would presume the people have to apply after they have completed their swimming awareness.

Ms FYLES: Was that water safety awareness or Learn to Swim?

Mr HIGGINS: No, water.

Ms FYLES: That was water safety awareness?

Mr HIGGINS: No, that was Learn to Swim. There have been 1558 vouchers distributed and only 891 have been claimed so far.

Mr CONLAN: Can I just get a point of clarification? Are we still in Output 1.1? We are shutting off NTIS?

Ms FYLES: We have just rolled on, haven't we?

Madam CHAIR: Yes, sorry. We are in Sport and Recreation. That concludes consideration of Output 1.1.

Mr CONLAN: Which is where we are now? Output 1.2?

Ms FYLES: Yes, apologies.

Output 1.2 – Sport and Recreation

Madam CHAIR: The committee will now call for questions on Output 1.2 Sport and Recreation. Are there any questions?

Ms FYLES: Minister, are you able to provide details of the \$100 Sport Voucher uptake?

Mr HIGGINS: Could you repeat that question?

Ms FYLES: We got some data on the Learn to Swim vouchers. I was hoping for the same data on the Sport Voucher.

Mr HIGGINS: The new Sport Voucher system came into effect on 1 July 2014 with an increase to \$200 per child per financial year. There was also an expansion to include recreation and cultural activities.

The \$75 Sport Voucher Scheme commenced in January 2013 and concluded in December 2014. Up until 31 March 2015 under the \$75 scheme, a total of \$330 237 was provided to Territory families to reduce the cost of playing sport. A total of 181 clubs have redeemed Sport Vouchers covering 42 sports. That is in the urban area. In remote areas, as at 31 March, \$275 022 for the \$75 Sport Voucher Scheme had been provided to remote schools, and 55 sporting programs benefiting 55 schools have been funded. The total funding for urban and remote \$75 scheme was \$605 259.

The \$200 Sport Voucher Scheme came into effect on 1 July 2014 and the scheme was expanded to include recreational and cultural activities. Under the urban model, as at 31 March 2015, a total of \$1.859m was provided to Territory families under the Sport Voucher Scheme. A total of 239 clubs have redeemed Sport Vouchers. For the remote model for the \$200 Sport Voucher as at 31 March 2015 a total

of \$1.066m was provided to remote schools under the Sport Voucher Scheme, which was 64 programs benefiting 64 schools.

The most popular sports and activities for the remote schools voucher activities from July 2014 to March 2015 have been music, dance, swimming, basketball, athletics, Indigenous culture, circus, gymnastics and cycling. The most popular urban school voucher activities in the same period were swimming, dance, basketball, football (AFL), tennis, netball, football (soccer), football (rugby league), gymnastics and martial arts. Registered activity providers as at 31 March – there are 296 registered sports, recreation and cultural organisations of which 216 are sport, 38 are recreation and 42 are cultural.

Ms FYLES: Minister, because the dates do not quite fall within a year – it is an 18-month period and then a year - that is obviously a significant increase from \$330 000 to \$1.8m. Were you expecting that significant increase in expenditure?

Mr HIGGINS: We have more than enough budget to cover it.

Ms FYLES: What happens with that excess budget?

Mr HIGGINS: That is redirected back into sport. Typically at the end of the year we go back and look at what grant applications have been made that we have not been able to fund during the year, and then move that funding to that. It all falls under grants.

Ms FYLES: Do sporting groups reapply or you just tap them on the shoulder or ...

Mr HIGGINS: No, we look at ones we wanted to support previously, but there was insufficient funds in what we had allocated.

Ms FYLES: One would assume there was a couple of million dollars allocated to it each year. You can probably provide me with that exact figure. Obviously \$1.8m was expended in the last 18 months. But previous to that, it was \$330 000. The \$1.5m in extra grants does not seem right.

Mr HIGGINS: No, the \$1.8m you are talking about is simply the \$200 Sport Vouchers that have been claimed in the urban model this year to 31 March. You also then have the remote model which is another \$1.066m. You also have on top of that the tail end of the \$75 vouchers. In the urban you have \$330 000 ...

Ms FYLES: You gave me two figures - \$330 000 then \$1.8m.

Mr HIGGINS: No, the figures I gave you were the urban model \$75 Sport Vouchers to 31 March of \$330 000 ...

Ms FYLES: Can you give me the complete date for that \$330 000? When did it start and when did it finish?

Mr HIGGINS: The \$75 is the first six months of the financial year. It concluded in December 2014. In the first six months of that they were only given \$75 vouchers. When they claimed those vouchers in the urban model - where they were sent to the individual people - it was \$330 000. In the remote model where it is sent to remote schools, it was another \$275 000.

Then the \$200 Sport Vouchers came into effect on 1 July 2014. In the urban it is \$1.859m and in the remote model it is \$1.066m.

Ms FYLES: Do you have a breakdown of participants taking up those vouchers?

Mr HIGGINS: No, I can give you a breakdown to regions for each of those. I can ...

Ms FYLES: That is okay. I was looking at participant numbers which I guess you could work it if you calculated it downwards. What happens to the excess funds? It goes back into a grant? Are you able to say how much you handed out in 2013-14 through that process, and how much it looks like you will hand out this year?

Mr CONLAN: A clarification, member for Nightcliff. Do you mean 2014-15 and then 2015-16, not 2013-14?

Ms FYLES: We are just about to finish one financial year ...

Mr CONLAN: Which is 2014-15.

Ms FYLES: 2014-15. I wondered if you had the figure because it was six months, then 18 months, that is all. But it is ...

Mr HIGGINS: No, I do not have previous years.

Ms FYLES: Okay. I will do a written question. I will go back and review. I appreciate the information. I had one further question about communities. Obviously it is a different way it is processed in the remote areas. How are some of the communities dealing with Sport Vouchers? Do the schools decide what they will use, and they are used through that? Is that how the vouchers are used for a sport?

Mr HIGGINS: Basically what happens is the school applies for the funding based on the number of kids at the school. That is simplistically put. So we do not post the vouchers out to the parents.

Ms FYLES: No. Then the school allocates them as a group and would get a certain sporting organisation to come out ...

Mr HIGGINS: Yes. We do not fund every child to start off with. They would do that inner step.

Ms FYLES: That makes sense. But they are eligible for up to \$200 per year?

Mr HIGGINS: Yes, that is correct.

Ms FYLES: I think that was all I had on the Sport Vouchers but I still had more in Sport and Recreation because that is where the peak body funding comes under. Are you able to provide us with details of what peak bodies you funded in 2014-15 and what peak bodies you are proposing to fund in 2015-16?

Mr HIGGINS: I just tabled that one.

Ms FYLES: Okay, that was included in that?

Mr HIGGINS: Yes.

Ms FYLES: What was the – that is alright; I will have a look at the details. I was questioning around the additional peak body on Budget Paper No 3. Have any sports had a reduction in grant funding in 2014-15?

Mr HIGGINS: No, I suppose if they did not apply it would be a reduction, but no.

Ms FYLES: Minister, you have a grants program for active remote communities. What remote communities have been supported and what are the total funds for this program in 2015-16? That is the active remote communities.

Mr HIGGINS: Which output is that?

Ms FYLES: I do not have that detail - 1.2.

Mr HIGGINS: The organisations that have been funded under the active remote communities are: Anyinginyi Health Aboriginal Corporation, \$39 000; Barkly Regional Council, \$204 000; Belyuen Community Government Council, \$3900; Central Desert Regional Council, \$204 000; Coomalie Community Government Council, \$30 000; East Arnhem Regional Council, \$272 000; Macdonnell Regional Council, \$306 000; Northern Territory Cricket Association, \$50 000; NPY Women's Council, \$20 000; Roper Gulf Regional Council, \$238 000; Tangentyere Council Incorporated, \$28 000; Tiwi Islands Regional Council, \$102 000; Victoria Daly Regional Council, \$146 000; Wagait Shire, \$20 000; Warlpiri Youth Development Aboriginal Corporation, \$39 000; West Arnhem Regional Council, \$208 000; and West Daly Regional Council, \$91 000.

Ms FYLES: Minister, with the capital upgrades, what upgrades do you intend to make? Is that where the motor sports would fit, under the capital works?

Mr HIGGINS: Yes.

Ms FYLES: Are you able to provide us with some details about that motor sports upgrade?

Mr HIGGINS: That is in the venues output if you want to ...

Ms FYLES: Sorry. This is where my questions are.

Mr VOWLES: Minister, do you have a breakup of the grants region by region?

Mr HIGGINS: Yes, I do.

Mr VOWLES: A total if you have that. If you are tabling it or just have the Alice Springs, Tennant Creek.

Mr HIGGINS: I have it by electorate for those remote communities, if you like.

Ms FYLES: Conveniently it is by electorate.

Mr HIGGINS: That is how many different ways we can put it in. Arafura was \$310 000; Araluen was \$50 000; Arnhem was \$238 000; Braitling was \$28 000 – I hope the Chief Minister is not listening; Namatjira was \$326 000; Nhulunbuy was \$272 000; Stuart was \$243 000; Barkly was \$243 000; Daly was \$292 000.

Ms FYLES: I did not hear Nightcliff.

Mr HIGGINS: These are the remote communities.

Ms FYLES: Lucky. It is pretty remote, Nightcliff. Are you able to provide the same breakdown for the urban areas?

Mr HIGGINS: I am sure we have.

Ms FYLES: It is getting interesting now.

Mr CONLAN: A bright spark put them into bloody electorates.

Ms FYLES: He offered it.

Mr VOWLES: I was just thinking that.

Mr CONLAN: Remember that for next year, Ken.

Mr HIGGINS: It gets a bit harder when you look because a lot of it is peak sporting ones ...

Ms FYLES: Oh, we were all excited!

Mr HIGGINS: Most of it would be in the electorate of Johnston, I presume, or Sanderson.

Mr CONLAN: It is probably worth a point of clarification that, for example, in Greatorex there is the golf club and the netball facility, which both would have received a number of peak sporting grants over the course of the year. It does not necessarily ...

Ms FYLES: We were just clarifying that. We have a question about the Katherine Golf Club.

Mr CONLAN: That is right, the Katherine Golf Club as well.

Ms FYLES: Minister, maybe you can tell us about the \$820 000 for the Katherine Golf Club. Did that come from your office?

Mr HIGGINS: Yes, it did.

Ms FYLES: Maybe you can tell us a little about what those works are for?

Mr HIGGINS: That \$820 000 is in capital so it would be sitting in Infrastructure. A capital grant, sorry.

Ms FYLES: I will ask that in Output 1.3?

Mr HIGGINS: Yes.

Ms FYLES: We will come back to that then. Is that where the rugby league funding would also be - under capital?

Mr HIGGINS: As in Richardson Park?

Ms FYLES: Yes, or is that a grant to ...

Mr HIGGINS: Richardson Park is not rugby league.

Ms FYLES: Sorry. Would Richardson Park come under venues or sport grants?

Mr HIGGINS: It would come under venues.

Ms FYLES: Does your department have any specific programs to promote women in sport?

Mr HIGGINS: Not specifically women. We do a lot of work for women's sports, but not women in sport as such.

Ms FYLES: What funding has gone into bringing major national women's sporting events to the Territory? Are you able to provide a list?

Mr HIGGINS: That will be in events and facilities if you want to wait until then.

Ms FYLES: Women in sport, particularly Indigenous women - can you advise what programs you have in place to promote and provide opportunities for young Indigenous athletes?

Mr HIGGINS: There are a couple of things. We went through all the remote grants to communities and to the councils to try to get Indigenous kids involved in sport. A lot of those kids are involved in sport. We also have them coming in to the Michael Long centre. AFL is one of the peak bodies we sponsor. They also have people in some of the communities.

At Wadeye, which at the moment has an AFL comp started up which has a combination AFL people, staff we put out there, and staff we fund through West Daly Shire. There is a Sport and Recreation person running the comps there. They are on the ground running comps trying to increase sport participation.

Look at some of the funding we give to festivals like Barunga. Last weekend at Nauiyu there was the sports festival. We give them money through the shires to help run those sporting festivals. That is a way of getting sport into the communities.

Ms FYLES: Would the Michael Long centre come under Venues and Events?

Mr HIGGINS: Yes.

Ms FYLES: You made mention of Barunga. Obviously the NT government has provided, through your office, support for the sport program? Is that correct?

Mr HIGGINS: We have not directly; it is done through Skinnyfish.

Ms FYLES: Yes, I am aware of that.

Mr HIGGINS: Some of them are not done directly. If you looked at Merrepen, we funded Vic Daly Shire to ...

Ms FYLES: Are you aware that Barunga has not received funding for cultural recreation activities? They have received funding for a number of other outputs. Perhaps something your office could look at would be it is a recreational activity and particularly important with culture. It has been an issue.

Mr HIGGINS: We can look at that, but I had not heard that before.

Ms FYLES: I think the rest of those questions come under Events and Venues in the next output, but I will make comment on women in sport. We do not have any major national women's teams coming to the Territory anymore, which is disappointing for young women. You are relatively new to this portfolio so if you could perhaps - it has been fed to me and I am sure you have heard it directly too - but it would be fantastic for the Territory to have some national women's teams - netball, women's basketball; there are some real standouts. We get a lot of national-level men's teams but it would be great to see some ladies teams.

I have one more question. We know the Chief Minister and the Treasurer are huge Parramatta Eels fans. What steps were taken to ensure there was no conflict of interest in awarding that contract?

Mr HIGGINS: I was not there when that contract was awarded. It was awarded even prior to this financial year.

Ms FYLES: Obviously it is continuing this financial year so ...

Mr HIGGINS: Yes. If I just go back to the women's one, I made an announcement earlier in the year that we would have women's hockey here next year. We are hoping to have four teams - Australia and three others - in the lead-up to the Rio Olympics. We have been active in getting women here next year.

Ms FYLES: Good work, minister. We get to see our own Brooke. What steps have been taken to ensure the Northern Territory government's funds will not be used to pay those salary cap breaches that the Parramatta Eels have been fined?

Mr HIGGINS: The salary cap breaches you are referring to occurred before our contract. While it may have been raised now, it was prior to us having our agreement with Parramatta.

Ms FYLES: Thank you, minister, in that output I think that is all the questions I had.

Madam CHAIR: That concludes consideration of Output 1.2.

Output 1.3 – Venues and Events

Madam CHAIR: The committee will now consider Output 1.3, Venues and Events. Are there any questions?

Ms FYLES: Obviously the Michael Long centre, run in conjunction with the NTFL at Marrara, is a first-class facility and it has clear strategies and goals in engaging young people in sport. Have you been engaged in this facility and did your department assist the program?

Mr HIGGINS: Yes, I have been engaged in having a look at it. I was there at the opening. The capital investment was \$2.5m for the Michael Long Learning and Leadership Centre which was provided in June 2013. The estimated cost of construction of the centre all up was \$15m, of which \$1.5m was obtained from the AFL - which of course is a peak body which we support - \$7.5m came from Regional Development Australia, \$3.5m from the Aboriginal Benefit Account, and as I said there was \$2.5m from the Northern Territory government. It is building on the success of the NT Thunder football team which was established in 2008.

Ms FYLES: Minister, in relation to Richardson Park being awarded \$20m, who was consulted about that expenditure and whose advice did you seek?

Mr HIGGINS: Expenditure on Richardson Park is expenditure on a government asset.

Ms FYLES: That is all you have to say on a \$20m spend? Surely the Department of Sport and Recreation would have been involved in such a significant spend on a sporting facility?

Mr HIGGINS: Richardson Park is a fantastic facility. To spend \$20m on it and get it back up to standard is what we really want to do. When you talk about consulting with people, I interpret that as a being someone who owns it. Government owns it, so within government we had a lot of discussions about Richardson Park and what we would do with it. The design or the concept plans of Richardson Park have been there for a while. When we spoke about Richardson Park, the view was that it should not just be used for rugby league, but for as many sports as possible in the rectangular field area.

Ms FYLES: When did the strategy change to move away from basing rugby league at Marrara and providing an additional rectangular field at Marrara?

Mr HIGGINS: No one has ever spoken to me about a rectangular field at Marrara.

Ms FYLES: In estimates last year we talked about walking away from Richardson Park. There were conversations held with South Darwin about upgrading and basing rugby league at Marrara on their space near rugby union.

Mr HIGGINS: I interpret that as a discussion that rugby league would have had.

Ms FYLES: Who will use the \$20m stadium, apart from rugby league?

Mr HIGGINS: Rugby union, soccer, touch would be the minimum I would see using it.

Ms FYLES: Have conversations been held with those sports?

Mr HIGGINS: Yes and no.

Ms FYLES: Obviously \$20m is a huge shift in sporting infrastructure moving away from Marrara to Richardson Park. It came out of the blue for many people, probably including rugby league. What advice did the department provide in this shift in thinking?

Mr HIGGINS: In making a decision to upgrade Richardson Park - when you talk about other sports having discussions, soccer and rugby union have always made it quite clear they need a better rectangular facility. The location of that facility was then a decision of government to upgrade Richardson Park, which fell out of the fact that it was an asset we own, that rugby league had walked away from, which was then falling into disrepair.

Richardson Park is an asset we own, and a \$20m investment in Richardson Park will create a fantastic facility for all sporting people to use. I am astounded that people might see that as a downer, as opposed to a positive. There will be no facility in the Territory that would match what Richardson Park could offer in the sense that it will have the latest lighting, and everything will be there. It will be fantastic.

Ms FYLES: Considering that only a year ago the sport walked away from that facility and the significant expansion to the facility, what provision have you made for future repairs and maintenance?

Mr HIGGINS: In the allocation for repairs and maintenance, the standard practice is to wait until the final design and construction.

Ms FYLES: We have a venue from which, not that long ago, a sport walked away because they could not maintain it. Yet there is \$20m being spent on it. Surely we would have some provision for future repairs and maintenance - some formal assessments or reporting would have been done? Am I correct in my thinking?

Mr HIGGINS: No.

Ms FYLES: Will rugby union and touch footy be moving to Richardson Park?

Mr HIGGINS: As in moving being moving their offices there?

Ms FYLES: You have said it is a rectangular oval, so will touch football be played at that oval?

Mr HIGGINS: If touch football wants to have a national event that would be the place they would have it, the same as rugby union. You have the lighting and all the facilities for broadcasting from that location. You would have the latest in facilities available to you.

Ms FYLES: But no concrete conversations have been held with touch football or rugby union?

Mr HIGGINS: No.

Ms FYLES: Who made the final decision to allocate \$20m? Was that you?

Mr HIGGINS: The budget decision is made by Cabinet.

Ms FYLES: Did you seek advice? Considering it is a huge sport and recreation facility did your department tell you not to do it?

Mr HIGGINS: Any discussions I have with my department would be my ...

Mr VOWLES: Can I just jump in there, member for Nightcliff? Did you sponsor this going into Cabinet?

Mr HIGGINS: Yes, I did.

Mr VOWLES: Thank you.

Ms FYLES: Going into Cabinet with that paper, surely the department would have provided supporting advice on the issue? Did they warn you against funding this project?

Mr HIGGINS: No.

Ms FYLES: So, the department did not warn you against funding \$20 m to Richardson Park, yet a year ago we had a sport walk away from that facility?

Mr HIGGINS: No.

Ms FYLES: Are you confident that rugby league will be able to fund itself to run that venue going forward?

Mr HIGGINS: Again, I will go back to the point; it is not rugby league. The ongoing use of that facility will be by any sport that has the need of a rectangular stadium. So, you will have soccer, rugby union and potentially touch football - any sport that uses a rectangular stadium.

Ms FYLES: Currently at Marrara we have the soccer fields which soccer manages. It is a formal arrangement with the NT government. Basketball has a formal arrangement on the basketball facility. Surely with this Richardson Park facility rugby league would be the lead sport and have that formal arrangement?

Mr HIGGINS: No. The way I perceive this facility to be managed would be along a similar line to say, Freds Pass where you have a management board. That management board we will establish, which will be made up those peak sporting bodies that we have already mentioned. A final decision on the makeup of that board has not been made. That is how I perceive the ongoing management of this facility. This is why I have been making it quite clear to people like rugby league it is not a rugby league facility or a rugby union facility; it is a facility that is owned by the community, will be managed by the community but utilised by as many sports as we can find.

Ms FYLES: Who did you consult, minister? It is a great idea to spend \$20 m on a rectangular field but if you can imagine this management board being made up of all these sports, surely you would have had some detailed consultations with sports themselves?

Mr HIGGINS: In regard to the specifics about Richardson Park, no. In regard to speaking to sporting bodies, yes. All sporting bodies, such as rugby union, soccer and rugby league, have made it quite clear to us that they need a state-of-the-art facility which we have tried to identify for Richardson Park.

Ms FYLES: So no sports were consulted before the \$20 m decision was made?

Mr HIGGINS: Yes, they were, but not in regard to specifics about where they are. What I am saying is sporting bodies such as rugby league, rugby union and soccer have said they want in Darwin somewhere a national standard facility which currently does not exist in the Territory. They have asked government to find a facility along those lines.

Ms FYLES: But then in allocating \$20 m to this project, there were no specific conversations or consultations which took place with those sports that would use this facility?

Mr HIGGINS: In regard to which aspect of it?

Ms FYLES: To Richardson Park; spending \$20 m.

Mr HIGGINS: Specifically, there was a lot of discussions with the NRL over the type of facilities they wanted. My CEO has reminded me that I also had discussions with Parramatta in Sydney when I was there in regard to what sort of facilities they required for broadcasting NRL. So, I had discussions in that regard with NRL.

Ms FYLES: We just heard a \$20 m announcement and rugby league people have expressed to me that they are surprised at that announcement - literally being advised by phone within hours that that would happen. You have envisaged it for other sports that were not even consulted. There are ongoing operational costs that we are unsure of. Your department supported this going into Cabinet? The Department of Sport and Recreation blues supported a \$20 m upgrade to Richardson Park, knowing ongoing it would be another infrastructure venue they would have to provide the upkeep for?

Mr HIGGINS: Discussions in Cabinet are for Cabinet ...

Ms FYLES: I am not talking about the discussions in Cabinet; I am talking about the recommendation from the departments. They recommended that we spend \$20 m upgrading a facility that a sport walked away from a year ago?

Mr HIGGINS: I am sorry. Could you repeat that question?

Ms FYLES: Did the Department of Sport and Recreation support spending \$20m on a sporting facility that a sport had walked away from a year ago?

Mr CONLAN: A point of order, Mr Deputy Chair! It is the department's job to advance the government's agenda. If the government has a clear vision and wants to construct, in this case, a first-class sporting facility, I would expect and hope the department would get right behind the government and help assist and advance the government of the day's agenda.

What the department has recommended or not recommended in those blues is Cabinet-in-confidence document. Can I ask you minister, following on from that line of questioning ...

Ms FYLES: Can I get an answer to my question?

Mr CONLAN: That is a point of order. To me that question is out of order.

Ms FYLES: Thank you.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR: It sounds to me like a reframe of the similar question you have asked a few times and I am pretty sure he has tried to answer. If you are trying to get to a particular point, get to that part of the question without the background. Ask the question.

Ms FYLES: Thank you, Mr Deputy Chair, and I apologise. I am trying to understand the department's role in such a significant sporting infrastructure spend - \$20m is huge. It is amazing that rugby league got that. A year ago that sport walked away from that venue because it was unable to support the existing venue ...

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR: So what are you asking about? The intention of the government's decision ...

Ms FYLES: I am questioning the department's role in that decision. Does the department support in its advice ...

Mr HIGGINS: The department does not have a role in the Cabinet decision. The department will provide advice on a range of avenues and quite often will put up various options. It is then up to Cabinet to consider those options.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR: The member for Greateorex is correct. Whatever was written on the Cabinet submission form – the blue form – is a Cabinet document. If you have a line of questioning about how it was spent or where it went can we get on with it and perhaps stop asking the same question?

Ms FYLES: Thank you, Mr Deputy Chair. I think my colleague has a question.

Mr VOWLES: Minister, I understand from your answer that it will not be given to Northern Territory Rugby League; it will be a facility managed by the department?

Mr HIGGINS: Yes, that is correct. The money is sitting in Infrastructure as capital works.

Mr VOWLES: Your department will project manage that facility being built?

Mr HIGGINS: It will be involved in the project management, yes.

Mr VOWLES: What about recurrent funding? Will that be provided? Obviously it is a government asset so some recurrent funding must be in the forward estimates.

Mr HIGGINS: The recurrent funding would be based on how the final management of that facility was to be undertaken. Previously it was managed by rugby league, and I have already ...

Mr VOWLES: You have taken the lease off them ...

Mr HIGGINS: Yes.

Mr VOWLES: ... when they handed it in a year ago and the department has taken that over. Have you allocated in that plan appropriate lighting for evening games to be televised? I know it is an issue at Traeger Park in Alice Springs and in Darwin to have the lighting strength.

Mr HIGGINS: In the concept plans we had to help us come up with the costs of doing it we are looking at around 1400 to 1500 lux which is required for televising. That is the point I was making about rugby league, rugby union and soccer. None of those facilities currently have that level of lighting. For government to fund every one of those sporting organisations with that same level is out of the reach of the Territory.

Ms FYLES: Minister, that brings me back to the point I was trying to make. Surely \$20m on one style of oval is huge considering the needs across the Territory. Did the department recommend we build a \$20m facility for a rectangular sports field?

Mr HIGGINS: When you talk about one sport ...

Ms FYLES: Did the department recommend it to you?

Mr HIGGINS: The department makes a stack of recommendations to government all the time which Cabinet considers ...

Ms FYLES: Was one of its recommendations to build a rectangular field costing \$20m?

Mr HIGGINS: It was already a rectangular field we already own ...

Ms FYLES: To spend \$20m upgrading it was a department recommendation, yes or no? Was it a department recommendation to spend \$20m upgrading that field? Was it your chief executive's recommendation, yes or no?

Mr HIGGINS: It is a decision of Cabinet.

Ms FYLES: I am not talking about the Cabinet decision. I guess things go into Cabinet and that is separate, but the department, a \$20m budget ...

Mr CONLAN: Mr Deputy Chair, just a moment please. This goes to the core difference between the Country Liberal Party and the Labor Party. Surely this is not the cart leading the horse; this is the horse leading the cart.

I assume this is a decision by the government, made by the Executive, and the Executive has then instructed the agency to advance that particular proposal. I put it to you, minister, is that a fair assessment of the situation?

Mr HIGGINS: That is a fair assessment. The inference that has been made is that the Department made the recommendation out of the blue. The answer to that is, no, they did not. Right?

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR: So your question is to the heart of whose idea was it, as opposed to who recommended what?

Ms FYLES: The line of questioning I have is we have a facility that a year ago a sport walked away from ...

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR: I understand the line of questioning because you said ...

Ms FYLES: ... because they could not afford the \$5000 a week ...

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR: You have said that about 20 times already.

Ms FYLES: Yes and I find it astounding that ...

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR: I am trying to find where we will get to a question that has not already been answered. The government made a decision through whatever process exists, to build a facility and that is happening with Sport and Recreation.

Ms FYLES: My colleague has one more question on this and then I will move on to another output because I am conscious of time.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR: That would be fabulous.

Mr VOWLES: Thank you very much for your advice, Mr Deputy Chair. With regard to this, there were major upgrades done by the former Labor government of the Palmerston Football Club, and Palmerston Raiders. The Palmerston Magpies facility was upgraded as an opportunity - if TIO Stadium was booked because we have cricket, footy and NRL coming in now – for Palmerston to take those extra bookings.

Is that why you are looking to this facility? Is this a major events facility? If Chelsea come to play in Darwin they are coming here to play at Richardson Park?

Ms FYLES: You just watched the television last night.

Mr HIGGINS: Yes, that would be correct ...

Mr VOWLES: I would not be watching that.

Mr HIGGINS: ... for sorts which need a rectangular field.

Mr VOWLES: Yes.

Ms FYLES: I have another two questions quickly. How much did the Masters Games cost? What were the numbers of participation in 2012 and 2014?

Mr HIGGINS: The 2014 Alice Springs Masters Games was held from 11 to 18 October. It is a multi-sport event, held every two years, and began in 1986.

More than 3800 people participated in the 15th biennial games. A total of 32 sports were featured, including AFL Nines for the first time. In a first, a big screen was set up at the Todd Mall, and interviews with athletes and volunteers, as well as games highlights, were screened throughout the event.

Athletes and volunteers ranged from 25 to 92 years old, from every Australian state and territory ...

Ms FYLES: Plenty of you used to train.

Mr HIGGINS: Athletes and support staff from eight overseas countries took part. More than 110 games records were broken, with the majority of these in the pool. The official Facebook page posts reached more than 45 000 people and more than 4000 people accessed the daily games newspaper, the *Friendly Times*.

The benefit of the games to the community of Alice Springs is somewhere between \$8m and \$12m. The Alice Springs games brought in revenue of \$239 000. The actual expenditure as at 31 March 2015 on operational was \$1.025m, with the revenue of \$239 000.

Ms FYLES: We fully support the Masters Games; it is wonderful for Central Australia. The Arafura Games was wonderful for Darwin. Why was there no expenditure in this budget for bringing back the Arafura Games as promised?

Mr HIGGINS: The Arafura Games was transferred to the Department of the Chief Minister - I think in 2013.

Ms FYLES: The Masters Games sit within Sport and Recreation. Surely as minister for Sport if you are passionate about the north having a similar event, you could have expended some of your budget on an Arafura Games?

Mr HIGGINS: The Arafura Games ...

Mr CONLAN: Minister, I suggest that you reject that question. It is completely out of order.

Ms FYLES: Adviser Matt is over there.

Mr HIGGINS: The Arafura Games was transferred to the Chief Minister in 2013.

Mr CONLAN: Minister, can I make a clarification please? You said the revenue was \$200 000-odd. That is not revenue into the Alice Springs community, that is revenue back to the department. Is that right?

Mr HIGGINS: Yes, back to the department. When we talk about Arafura Games not being held, this government has introduced a large investment into NRL, so we have the partnership with Parramatta Eels. We have the AFL with the Melbourne Demons. There is a stack of sports and activities we have to replace those.

Ms FYLES: You have indicated you will spent \$2m to upgrade remote ovals. How many ovals will that upgrade and where will those oval locations be?

Mr HIGGINS: That final decision has not been made. I will give you an idea on some of the thoughts ...

Ms FYLES: Nightcliff Oval is a great starting point.

Mr HIGGINS: I would have thought that Nightcliff was not remote.

Ms FYLES: By 10 km!

Mr HIGGINS: We went through this one before.

Ms FYLES: I was trying. I was hoping I could just slip it through.

Mr HIGGINS: If you look at say, Wadeye, as I said before there is a fantastic comp going on there with six teams. If you go to Wadeye at the moment, the only way you can play on their oval is in the middle of the day which, of course, is really hot. My thinking would be ...

Ms FYLES: So there has been no decision made on the locations?

Mr HIGGINS: No, no final decision. We know there are multiple facilities there that need upgrading. We have had a lot of people from AFL speak about some of their ovals. There are many ovals that do not have grass.

Ms FYLES: I have a couple of more questions in the interest of time. My colleagues have lots of questions in other portfolios. There was once a number of sports located in Sports House. Are you aware of where they are currently located and of any that may be in need of accommodation? What is the department doing to support those sports?

Mr HIGGINS: I have them, I will find the answer. I will get the CEO to answer that one.

Mr LESLIE: Following the closure of Sports House some of the sports made the decision to get their own premises. Some of them took up an offer from the department to move into Ethos House at Casuarina because it was a facility that was available for that purpose. We are currently providing what assistance we can to those sports to make sure they have somewhere going forward from that, simply because that facility concludes in August. They knew that in advance.

Ms FYLES: The Territory government had a lease on Ethos House and there was space available at the time?

Mr HIGGINS: Correct.

Ms FYLES: So you are working with those sports that might be - great. One other question about the tennis and similar national and international events the Territory gets. Obviously junior sports clubs always look for different ways to fundraise. Are you aware of clubs wanting to be involved in providing barbecues and selling drinks, or even cleaning up venues? Teams of parents and older athletes can get together so we can get some benefit from these national and international sports the government invests in, to help these grassroots sporting organisations.

Mr HIGGINS: Yes, we already make a large use of those. Yes, I am aware of that. The other thing that we do not want to miss in this budget is the master plan I mentioned in my opening statement ...

Ms FYLES: You wanted me to ask some questions on that, did you?

Mr HIGGINS: No, no, no! Part of doing that planning is to try to get out to a lot of these mums and dads. Many of them feel it is very hard to get to government and have their voices heard. This is a way of getting out to see ...

Ms FYLES: You can come to the Nightcliff Markets on Sunday and have a little stall with me.

Mr HIGGINS: That would be one of the great things to do. We invited as many people as we could to the budget road shows. This is the money we are making available over the next 12 months. There were a hell of a lot of sports which came to that which had not been in to see me since I have become the minister. Some of those are water skiing, which I did years ago. The water ski people came and saw us; that was here in Darwin. In Alice Springs we had archery ...

Ms FYLES: There is no water skiing in Alice Springs.

Mr HIGGINS: The archery people came in to see us in in Tennant Creek. We did a tour of the Katherine Judo Club that was doing jujitsu. There is a hell of a lot of sports out there that are not as big as the AFL and other clubs. The master plan is something to try to get down to them.

Ms FYLES: Maybe in that master plan we can bring back the Arafura Games Kenny and I participated in all those years ago, and relive that glory.

Anyway, we are out of time, minister, but I very much appreciate you and your department's staff who have put in their time today to answer our questions.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR: Okay

Answer to Question on Notice No 9.1

Mr HIGGINS: Before you go, there was a question on notice which was to please provide a breakdown and details cost in relation to the \$31 000. If I can just give you that?

Ms FYLES: That would be great, thank you.

Mr HIGGINS: The Masters Games, which was volunteer food and refreshments, was \$29 067; the Chief Minister's awards was \$900 – that was a table for the Chief Minister's Awards: refreshments for various meetings of sporting bodies, which was the Department of Sport and Recreation was \$449; and then a table plus four tickets for the panel members for the sports awards was \$1400.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR: That was question number 9.1.

Mr HIGGINS: There is another one I give you clarification on. We were talking about whether anyone was getting a reduction in their sports grant? I said, 'If they did not apply'. To update you on that, NT Firearms Council was not provided with the 2014-15 funding due to not spending their 2013-14 grant.

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

OUTPUT GROUP 2.0 – CORPORATE AND GOVERNANCE

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR: I assume, member for Nightcliff, that we are done with sport?

Ms FYLES: Yes.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR: That closes Output Group 2.0. There are no more budget-related questions?

Ms FYLES: Can we have ...

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR: When I have finished reading this, yes.

That concludes consideration of outputs relating to the Department of Sports and Recreation and Racing. On behalf of the committee, I thank all officers who assisted the minister today. The committee will now move on to consider outputs relating to the Department of Arts and Museums.

The committee suspended.

DEPARTMENT OF ARTS AND MUSEUMS

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR: Minister, I invite you to introduce the officials accompanying you and to make an opening statement regarding the Department of Arts and Museums.

Mr HIGGINS: Mr Deputy Chair, I introduce those at the table with me: the CEO of the Department of Arts and Museum, Hugo Leschen and the Chief Financial Officer, Ms Joanna Frankenfeld.

I take this opportunity to thank the staff of the Department of Arts and Museums for their continued commitment, professionalism and passion they demonstrate daily to ensure the Northern Territory provides a unique cultural experience, through its cultural institutions and exciting programs across the arts and cultural sector, for both Territorians and visitors alike.

The Department of Arts and Museums is responsible for assisting and facilitating Territorians to tell their stories and understand their history through arts and culture. The department supports, develops and promotes the creative arts and screen sectors and is responsible for protecting and providing access to the Territory's major cultural and scientific assets and collections. It also assists the community to care for and make best use of these assets for tourism, research, education and commercial opportunities.

Within my portfolio responsibilities, the department includes the Northern Territory Library, the Northern Territory Archives Service, the Araluen Cultural Precinct, Arts NT and Screen Territory. The department also works closely with the independent board and management of the Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory; MAGNT.

This department had some exciting and major developments completed since last estimates. Most noticeable was the commencement of the redevelopment of the Chan Building into a state-of-the-art exhibition space for prestigious exhibitions such as the Telstra National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art Awards, as well as national touring exhibitions.

On 1 July 2015, the new *Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory Act* came into effect. This allows MAGNT to be overseen by a board of directors who have the responsibility for the overall management and oversight of MAGNT, its facilities, assets, collections and public programs. As such, the MAGNT will continue to present natural science exhibitions as well as redeveloped galleries featuring Territory history and Cyclone Tracy, with a substantial anchor exhibition of Indigenous art continuing to be a focal point of the Bullocky Point location.

The government has continued its support of arts and culture in the Northern Territory by announcing that the Department of Arts and Museums will receive \$45.123m, as well as an additional \$20.667m for new capital works initiatives, with \$18.3m identified to redevelop the Chan Building, which will be jointly funded by the Northern Territory government as well as generous contributions for external sources. A total of \$20m has been committed towards the future development of the Indigenous cultural centre of national

significance which will be guided and overseen by a nationally representative steering group, along with a consultant to develop the feasibility study.

MAGNT will receive \$6.7m to support its operations, and an additional \$5.3m over four years has been committed to upgrade and replace heating, ventilation and air conditioning. A new library management system will be provided for \$540 000, which will provide library users easier access to catalogues on mobile devices, providing a much friendlier experience.

The Northern Territory government has committed \$6.1m over three years for the development and implementation of the Northern Territory heritage enhancement action plan which will look at better connectivity between heritage places, a coordinated signage policy, and more use of new technology. This will produce a more memorable visitor experience and will also make it easier for locals to embrace our history and heritage sites.

Funding of \$1m for the Godinymayin Yijard Rivers Art and Cultural Centre in Katherine has been committed for 2015-16 to 2016-17, \$2.87m has been committed for ongoing repairs and maintenance to the Northern Territory's cultural institutions, and funding of \$1.04m allocated to upgrade and improve facilities and exhibitions.

The year 2014-15 was a year of strong operational delivery for the Northern Territory Library. The library visitation has increased by 9% for the same period of last year, and it has held eight exhibitions and 27 events. Significant exhibitions include *Ryko Exhibition: A Wild Life* and *Borella's War- the making of a legend*.

The library has made some significant acquisitions during 2014-15 which included collections of personal papers relating to the Sunrise Band from Maningrida, Northern Territory, agriculture in the 1950s and teaching in remote communities from the 1960s.

To commemorate the 40th anniversary of Cyclone Tracy, the library presented an exhibition about Darwin circa 1974 called *Before Tracy*, collaborated with the ABC Open on a project titled Tracy Stories, and with the City of Darwin on the Facing Tracy interactive media project. This project included a touring photographic booth around Darwin. The community was invited to enter the booth and select the photograph of Darwin pre-cyclone Tracy, the event, and then post Tracy Cyclone. A camera in the booth took a photo of the community member with their chosen photograph as the backdrop, and a final image depicting a Tracy scene was created which can be viewed on www.facingtracy.com.

In 2014-15, the library distributed \$3.974m worth of grants to 15 municipal councils and shires. The library continued to provide extensive support to the Territory's network of 32 public and community libraries, Internet access and training to many other remote communities throughout the Remote Indigenous Public Internet Access Program, and a series of highly-regarded early childhood literacy programs.

To date, the 2015 Araluen Arts Centre program in Alice Springs has included a stimulating selection of local, national and international artists, performances, art house cinema screenings and exhibitions, kicking off this year with strong attendance numbers to see the Dan Sultan's Dirty Ground Tour and 100% Kylie.

In 2015 the Araluen Cultural Centre will open Yaye's Café, which will provide patrons of the precinct with a choice of food and beverages and will operate in conjunction with the precinct's opening hours. The name of the café is local Arrernte language, meaning 'sisters' and relates to the Two Women Dreaming story that runs through the land on which the Araluen precinct is situated. Two landmarks associated with the dreaming story are Big Sister hill located immediately behind where Yaye's Café will be developed and Little Sister Hill located in Frank McEllister Park, adjacent to the precinct.

\$7.065m in grants will be distributed in 2014-15 through the Northern Territory Arts Grants program towards community arts infrastructure, arts organisations, strategic initiatives, projects, festivals and events. In 2014-15 this amount includes an additional \$626 000 from the Department of the Chief Minister for support towards Festival NT initiatives. A total of \$3.5m of this grant pool is provided to 21 non-profit art organisations to deliver art programs and services across regions in the NT, including the Darwin Symphony Orchestra in Darwin, Inside Arts in Alice Springs, Barkley Regional Arts in Tennant Creek and Katherine Regional Arts in Katherine.

The Darwin Festival receives a total of \$1m in funding from the arts grant program, including \$50 000 from the Department of Chief Minister's Festivals NT initiative for operational and program funding to deliver this significant, multi-art-form festival in Darwin, and an estimated \$280 000 in-kind for office accommodation,

storage and workshop facilities. The Darwin Festival is an important event for Darwin, and in 2014 recorded an economic impact of \$8m, a total audience of 120 000 and engaged over 977 000 employees, artists and industry professionals, plus a further 100 volunteers.

In addition, the Northern Territory government provides \$580 000 to the Entertainment Centre towards operations and programs and \$120 000 towards repairs and maintenance, matched by the City of Darwin.

A total of \$1.47 m has been approved in 2014-15 to support community festivals across regions of the Northern Territory, including the 30th Barunga Festival in the Katherine Region, Ali Curung Traditional Dance Festival in the Central Desert Region, and the Mandorah Ukelele Festival in the Wagait Shire.

This financial year Screen Territory, through its grants program, will allocate \$345 000 in more than 30 grants to develop the Territory industry as well as to stimulate the telling of Territory stories. Territory film makers are continuing to develop and make quality feature films, documentaries and TV programs, including comedy. Screen Territory partners with federal agencies and organisations to facilitate pathways for the Territory Screen industry and provide specialist advice in relation to project development, financing, marketing and distribution. Through the Screen Territory grants, \$40 000 was provided to Blown Away Productions for *Blown Away*, a documentary about Cyclone Tracy which was broadcasted on ABC TV on 22 December 2014.

On 26 April 2015, *8MMM Aboriginal Radio* was launched which also received Northern Territory government support through the Screen Grants program. *8MMM* was a locally developed television comedy series that was produced and filmed in Alice Springs for much of 2014. The lead cast included Territorians Shari Sebbens – *The Gods of Wheat Street*, *Redfern Now* and *The Sapphires* – and Trisha Morton-Thomas – *Redfern Now* and *Radiance* – and employed an estimated 300 Alice Springs locals as extras.

The Northern Territory Archive Service has seen resurgence since the opening of the Northern Territory Archive Centre on 11 November 2013. New archival records transferred from the Northern Territory government archives to the Northern Territory Archive Service has increased substantially in the last year and the total researcher visits in comparison to the same period for previous years has significantly increased. This growth is as a result of the outreach and events programming to engage the public with archives and the shared services under co-location with the National Archives.

In 2014 the Northern Territory Archive Centre hosted a talk by author Sophie Cunningham, who spoke about her work and the many weeks she spent in archives researching the records for her new book, *Warning: the Story of Cyclone Tracy*. White glove tours of the centre and Caring for Your Own Archives workshops were held with great attendance numbers.

The centre's repositories showcase the extensive collections relevant to Cyclone Tracy held from across the Northern Territory government, Commonwealth and community collections. The Northern Territory Archive Service Cyclone Tracy Oral History project provides people with an opportunity to contribute their Cyclone Tracy story. The nominations received have been recorded and will be added to the oral history collection. An announcement about when they will be made available to the public will be made shortly.

As I stated previously, Territorians have a great appreciate for the arts and culture, so much of which is unique to our own Northern Territory. Growing numbers of visitors are appreciating this, and this support and these initiatives will show this growth will continue by enabling the department to continue to operate efficiently and focus on its core business.

I thank the committee for this opportunity to make an opening statement and I welcome your questions.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR: Are there any questions on the minister's statement?

Mr McCARTHY: I would like to start with the federal issues around arts funding and the significant funds of \$105m that have been cut to the Australia Council for the Arts, the significant cuts incurred in the Indigenous Visual Arts Strategy, which is basically a strategy through the department of Justice that deals with the opportunities in regional and remote communities, and concern around the Northern Territory in the arts community, particularly the grassroots. An example is a regional arts centre in the electorate I represent losing more than \$70 000 in funding that immediately equates to the loss of jobs.

There was a debacle with the Indigenous Advancement Strategy. When a lot of these grassroots Territory arts and culture centres became aware that their submissions to Indigenous Advancement Strategy were

not in the game, they then started to hear they would suffer significant cuts in the co-funding arrangement through the Commonwealth and there was no real increase in the Territory budget. They made a lot of contact and I have been involved in many discussions. Have you been contacted? Were you aware of the extreme pressure put on our grassroots arts and culture community? Did that reflect in the budget Cabinet position and this budget with no significant increase in arts funding in 2015-16?

Mr HIGGINS: There are multiple questions there ...

Mr McCARTHY: Absolutely.

Mr HIGGINS: Member for Barkly, my take on this at the moment is this is a federal government decision. The Department of Arts and Museums will continue to be updated by both the Australian government's Ministry of the Arts and the Australian Council regarding the 2015-16 programs and implementation of changes at the Australia Council. Regarding the Australian government 2015-16 budget, there is an agenda item on the upcoming cultural minister officials meeting with the department's Chief Executive and the Director of Arts both attending. I have also written to the federal Arts minister seeking some clarification.

With regard to our budget, at the time of bringing down our budget we were unaware of any budget changes by the federal government so our decisions in that regard were made in isolation. From a Territory point of view our budget and our commitments to the arts are fantastic and I stand by those.

Mr McCARTHY: I bring this point up early in the opportunity to have this discussion in estimates, because it is of great concern across the Northern Territory. The media has now picked up on it and are starting to articulate some of the challenges. I will refer to a couple of these media events around Browns Mart, for instance: 'Territory arts community faces uncertainty following federal cuts'; 'To be or not to be as the curtain falls' - I am talking about Barkly Regional Arts, Corrugated Iron and of course art centres across the Territory - 'Barunga Festival cultural program funding smashed as government grant denied, organiser says'; 'Northern Territory arts funding freeze could result in artistic exodus'; and 'Darwin Festival not immune to cuts'.

Minister, this is of real concern across the Northern Territory. It relates to is the Northern Territory's budget that is big on capital works. I remember the previous Arts minister commenting in the House that there is no use an artist painting a picture if there is nowhere to hang it. But the concern in the Territory is that if there are no artists then there will not be any pictures to hang.

Are you aware of the job losses that are now directly facing community arts organisations across the Northern Territory?

Mr HIGGINS: I will repeat my answer. that is, it was a federal government decision. I have asked the department to keep me updated on what is happening in this area and the impact it might have on us. The first I was aware of it was on 28 May, which was less than a week ago.

The comments you have made out of the media may or may not be valid, but one of the issues I have is that I rely on the department to give me advice on the impact of any changes in funding from the Commonwealth. I will not respond to knee-jerk reactions by anyone. I will make sure I get the facts, and then see what options are open to us. As I said, I have written to the federal minister seeking clarification, because there needs to be a lot more clarification given to this before we commit to anything.

Mr McCARTHY: You are in a very privileged position as the Minister for Arts and Museums. I can assure you that the Territory is focused purely and solely on their survival. The jobs alone in grassroots remote and regional arts centres are generally the economic drivers within the community. Has the department any economic modelling on the economic output across regional and remote arts and culture centres?

Mr HIGGINS: As in the impact of budget changes?

Mr McCARTHY: No, in economic drivers. Is there any information?

Mr HIGGINS: The answer to that is no.

Mr McCARTHY: That is unfortunate, minister; however, we go for the positive. The positive is, having just sat in on the estimates hearing with Sport and Recreation, you are a cashed-up minister. There is no doubt about the cash you have access to in the 2015-16 year. In Arts and Museums, we can talk about a figure

of \$38.3m just in new capital works that are proposed - \$38.3m while we have community art centres and cultural centres withering on the vine, minister. That is how drastic it is.

Economic modelling would show there will be serious issues around job losses, the economics in these communities, but more importantly, in the cultural output.

Let us talk about the capital you have, as opposed to \$6.4m allocated to the operational areas of the arts sector. I question the priorities. A quick question on the statement as well; the Darwin Festival. You announced \$1m. Is that a one-year agreement, minister, or a three-year agreement with the Darwin Festival?

Mr HIGGINS: It is only one.

Mr McCARTHY: A one-year agreement with the Darwin Festival, so no certainty of their funds going forward?

Mr HIGGINS: No.

Mr McCARTHY: That is unfortunate, minister. I will talk about the Chan Building but I will talk first about the Chan Building Contemporary Art Space. Could you provide the operational budget for 2013-14 for the Chan Contemporary Art Space?

Mr HIGGINS: No, I do not have that.

Mr McCARTHY: Take it on notice, minister?

Mr CONLAN: A point of order, Madam Chair! It could be found in last year's estimate - any number of avenues. As you know, member for Barkley, this a forum for the 2015-16 Appropriation, and with indulgence 2014-15.

Mr McCARTHY: Funny, member for Greatorex, I picked this one up off your estimates prosecutions in the past. Minister, could you provide the operational budget for the 2014-15 for Chan Contemporary Art Space?

Mr HIGGINS: It is not identified as a separate item in the budget; it is just an operational cost.

Mr McCARTHY: As a contemporary art space valued and acknowledged by the community, can you tell us the last exhibition that was held at the Chan Contemporary Art Space?

Mr LESCHEN: Hugo Leschen, Chief Executive. Member for Barkley, the Chan Contemporary Art Space is essentially what would now be called a pop-up gallery. It only happens through the Dry Season. I do not immediately recall the name of the last exhibition there, but it would have been November/December gone.

Mr McCARTHY: Thank you, Mr Leschen. That is November/December 2014?

Mr LESCHEN: Correct.

Mr McCARTHY: Minister, is there any reason why there has not been a pop-up exhibitions in the Chan Contemporary Art Space since that time?

Mr LESCHEN: If I may? Member for Barkly, as I mentioned the Chan Contemporary Art Space operates primarily through the Dry Season. With the announcement of the Chan refurbishment, we are looking to see how the refurbishment and the plans around that will impact on that program for this year.

Mr CONLAN: Can I just follow on? It would be fair to say, Mr Leschen, the reason there have not been any exhibitions in that pop-up arts space between December and May is because it is not the Dry Season?

Mr LESCHEN: A point well made.

Mr CONLAN: Thank you, Mr Leschen.

Mr McCARTHY: Thank you, member for Greatorex. Mr Leschen, I can remember crossover exhibitions in the Chan Contemporary Art Space in the previous government's time, but we will not bore the member for

Greatorrex with that. Minister, is there any operational budget plan for the Chan Contemporary Art Space in 2015-16?

Mr HIGGINS: At the moment we are still considering options as to whether it will be used.

Mr McCARTHY: That is the Contemporary Art Space as a pop-up space while you are considering the redevelopment - the major renovation?

Mr HIGGINS: Yes.

Mr McCARTHY: Minister, regarding the Chan Building, are you aware of any constraints to an \$18.3m renovation in the built form and also the services that are contained in that building?

Mr HIGGINS: The Department of Infrastructure is currently having a look at that. You are referring to current uses of the Chan Building?

Mr McCARTHY: Not only the human resources that use the building, but I am talking about constraints that may be involved in relocation of services from the building, any concerns about asbestos, any structural constraints around spending. That \$18.3m is a big spend. We have community art centres now looking at closure. With \$18.3m going into a building over the road, I am wondering whether, with the economic modelling, you have been advised of any constraints that may see that as not a good spend?

Mr HIGGINS: The Department of Infrastructure is currently reviewing that.

Mr McCARTHY: Minister, have they made you aware of the Northern Territory's government's IT Server system located in that building?

Mr HIGGINS: I came to the Territory 30 years ago as a computer person. Paul Henderson worked for me there. Yes, I am very aware of what is there, and have been for many years.

Mr McCARTHY: How do you think that sits with an \$18.3m spend to turn the Chan Building into an art gallery?

Mr CONLAN: A point of order, Madam Chair! Seeking an opinion is a clear breach of standing orders for this Estimates Committee.

Mr McCARTHY: The minister has just provided me with some great advice that he is expert to commentate in this field. I would love to know, minister, if you are prepared to give a commentary?

Mr HIGGINS: No, I am not.

Mr McCARTHY: Minister, has there been any economic modelling done on an \$18.3m renovation to this stage?

Mr HIGGINS: Not economic modelling, no.

Mr McCARTHY: No economic modelling. Has there been any economic modelling on a recurrent operational budget for an \$18.3m art gallery?

Mr HIGGINS: The ongoing operational costs of any major upgrade or build, as you would know, is not identified until the final construction has been completed.

Mr McCARTHY: I am correct in saying we do not really have an idea around the constraints for the building or the operational budget to continue running it, so the \$18.3m is a bit of a punt at this stage?

Mr HIGGINS: It is more than a bit of a punt.

Mr McCARTHY: It seems to me that there is a lot of planning that needs to be done when you are spending \$18.3m of taxpayers' money. I have had to weather a storm of complaints across the regions. I am taking this information in good faith to provide good commentary when I go back on the road. If we do not have this information, if we are operating in a vacuum about an \$18.3m spend on the Chan Building, how are you attracting external funding agencies to support this project?

Mr HIGGINS: The external funding is an issue that is being addressed by the MAGNT.

Mr McCARTHY: Do you have any idea of who is interested in partnering with the Northern Territory government in this renovation?

Mr HIGGINS: That is a question you would have to ask MAGNT.

Mr McCARTHY: You are the minister who is responsible for MAGNT. Have you had any discussions with the MAGNT Board about possible partners?

Mr HIGGINS: Yes, I have, but the MAGNT has a completely independent board. It is a statutory authority so it is a question you would need to ask them.

Mr McCARTHY: There is \$20m planned for an Indigenous culture centre. Once again, is there any economic modelling, or any definition around the expenditure of \$20m on an Indigenous cultural centre?

Mr HIGGINS: You said before that I have \$38m in capital. There is only \$18m of that in this current year. The \$20m you are referring to is 2018–19.

Mr McCARTHY: For 2018–19?

Mr HIGGINS: Yes.

Mr McCARTHY: I will go back to the budget release where I obtained that information. You, the Minister for Arts and Museums issued a media release titled 'Budget 2015 - A major boost for Museums and Arts', published on 28 April 2015 which said:

\$20m towards the future development of an Indigenous cultural centre.

Now it has been clarified that the \$20m has been put in the bank for 2018–19?

Mr HIGGINS: Yes, that is correct. It is in the forward estimates.

Mr McCARTHY: Ah, it is in the forward estimates. Thank you for clearing that up because there has been a lot of comment across the regions as well about how complex that project will be ...

Mr HIGGINS: I have done three or four budget road shows, one of which was in Tennant Creek where the issue of the time frame for the \$20m for the cultural centre has been quite clearly defined. It has come up for a lot of discussion, all of which I have found has been positive.

Mr McCARTHY: Absolutely, there are no negatives around this. This \$18.3m plus \$20m has been discussed amongst the regional and remote communities as government cash. I tell you now it all goes back to the sale of TIO and the assumption of having a big bag of money and being able to spend it before 2016. People are interested in getting their share.

Thank you for clearing that up because I was unable to attend that road show. I was on the road somewhere; I can guarantee it.

In that situation now, where you will dialogue with your Commonwealth counterparts and look at where you can help, is there the possibility there may be some redirection of this capital grant money back into grassroots art centres and cultural institutions?

Mr HIGGINS: I would not make any decisions along those lines without firstly getting all of the facts, which is what I am saying. I am getting the facts. The second thing is I would then discuss that with my Cabinet colleagues.

Mr McCARTHY: Minister, can I ask for your support to make sure the economic argument is run and the jobs story is told because these are strong drivers across regional and remote areas in the Northern Territory. We could not visualise the impact of these closures at this stage. You do not have any economic modelling to work off so it is a fear in the community.

Minister, thank you for the opportunity to have that discussion, I think I am finished. Do my colleagues have any questions on the statement? Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

Madam CHAIR: The committee will now proceed to consider the estimates of proposed expenditure contained in the Appropriation Bill (2015-2016) as they relate to the Department of Arts and Museums. Are there any agency-related whole-of-government questions on budget and fiscal strategies?

Mr McCARTHY: Minister, to save time are you prepared to table the answers to the written questions that were submitted?

Mr HIGGINS: No. If you want to ask some I am quite willing to read them out.

Mr McCARTHY: Please provide the details and costs of advertising and communications in 2014-2015.

Mr HIGGINS: The advertising costs for the Department of Arts and Museums is as follows: for NTG funded advertising it was \$53 497 and non-NTG funded was \$2183. The expense types were: magazines and journals, nil; newspapers was \$41 597; online, \$295; outdoor, as in banners, was \$3590; nil for radio; and television was \$10 493. That was advertising costs.

Media and communications costs again by funding source: NTG funded was \$83 479 and non-NTG funded was \$45 295. Broken into expense type: for displays was \$120; events and exhibitions, \$59 965; consultants, \$1750; marketing materials, \$52 108; sponsorship, \$14 530; and media monitoring, \$301.

Mr McCARTHY: How many staff are in each agency authority detailed by full-time equivalent, permanent part-time contract or temporary contract?

Mr HIGGINS: As at 26 March the Department of Arts and Museums had 128.6 full-time equivalent employees, 10.1 ongoing permanent part-time employees and 26 temporary contract employees. If you broke that down there would be 14.5 which are fixed period, and then 11.5 casual. That is a breakdown of the 26.

Mr McCARTHY: How many staff at ECO1 level and above detailed by classification level please?

Mr HIGGINS: ECO1 as at 26 March was two, ECO2 was one and ECO3 was one.

Mr McCARTHY: How many staff resigned in 2014-15 to date and what is that as a percentage of the agency's total staff?

Mr HIGGINS: The Department of Arts and Museums had eight resignations between 1 July 2014 and 26 March 2015 which is equivalent to 3.5 of the total staff.

Mr McCARTHY: How many staff were made redundant in 2014-15?

Mr HIGGINS: No staff were made redundant under section 43(2)(b) of the *Public Sector Employment and Management Act*.

Mr McCARTHY: Can you detail fees and charges levied by your agency's authority, the revenue raised and whether any of these fees or charges were increased in Budget 2015-16?

Mr HIGGINS: No fees and charges were increased in Budget 2015-16. Most of the fees relate to the Araluen Cultural Precinct, the NT Library and the NT Archive Service.

Mr McCARTHY: Can you please detail the cost in 2014-15 of legal services provided by private legal firms to each agency authority for which you are responsible in Arts and Museums?

Mr HIGGINS: Nil.

Mr McCARTHY: Regarding whole-of-agency, I refer to the Auditor-General's August 2014 report. I note in this report it was a great opportunity for informed decision making by the department - and you as the minister, or the previous minister - in relation to the CLP Budget Cabinet of February/March in 2015. The Auditor-General's report said:

The objective of the review was to determine whether the systems and processes in place at MAGNT support the management of its collections. The review focused on the MAGNT site at Bullocky Point.

I quote from the next paragraph:

The review focused on the areas of collection development, collection management, collection access and use, collection data systems, the facilities management and risk management, with benchmarking against the National Standards for Australian Museums and Galleries, visitor statistics and exhibition statistics forming part of the review. A number of themes, reported below, emerged as a result of the review.

Minister, I quote from the review conclusions:

Based upon the evidence gathered during the review I have concluded that the systems that were in place at MAGNT at the time of the review are adequate for the purpose of managing the MAGNT collections. However, there were several issues that I believe require attention to ensure the ongoing safeguarding of the collections. I consider that most of the issues raised may require additional resources to address them successfully. This may prove difficult to achieve in the prevailing budgetary climate.

It is interesting, minister; you talked about those big capital figures in the opening statement. Seven key issues were identified; the first one 'Staffing'. I quote from the Auditor-General's report:

An organisation such as MAGNT is unlikely to fulfil its obligations if it lacks sufficient staff to manage its collections - from preserving, safe-guarding and caring for physical items, to ensuring that they are housed in facilities that are fit for purpose.

National Standards for Australian Museums and Art Galleries Benchmark A3.1.8 states that there should be 'enough workers to meet day-to-day management and program requirements'. The results of the review suggest this may not be the case at MAGNT.

Minister, can you define the budget appropriation in 2015-16 that will address the first issue the Auditor-General raised in his review?

Mr HIGGINS: Member for Barkly, those questions should be directed to the Board of the MAGNT.

Mr McCARTHY: Minister, you just told me there has been a decrease in staff; that was evident in the appropriation. Do you have any appropriations that will address that area?

Mr HIGGINS: I do not think I have said that there was a drop in staff.

Mr CONLAN: I did not hear the minister suggest that there was a decrease in staff.

Mr McCARTHY: I will have to get that off *Hansard*, minister. This talks about new staff. Is there any appropriation for new staff at Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory?

Mr HIGGINS: Again I say that is a question you will have to ask MAGNT. You may not know, MAGNT and its funding is subject of an agreement between the government and MAGNT.

Mr McCARTHY: The Auditor-General said on the second point of 'Performance data collection and reporting':

Capturing, reporting and monitoring performance data is one technique that can be used to determine if the collections are being managed appropriately and whether adequate resources have been allocated to that task. Data were either not generated, unable to be generated or not focused on areas that would allow MAGNT to identify if it was doing things efficiently, effectively or with economy.

It was noted during the review that the collection and reporting of performance data on the collection holdings is largely a manual process that involves the extraction of data at the level of individual collection items.

Is there any appropriation towards the performance improvement with data collection and reporting?

Mr HIGGINS: Again, anything related to MAGNT is a question to ask MAGNT.

Mr McCARTHY: It would be good if you would participate in this discussion, because we can see clearly that there are real concerns about the cultural institution that houses and manages our antiquities and will support those antiquities into the future. Minister, have you worked with the new board? Are you advising or meeting the board? Is there any communication about addressing some of these concerns?

Mr HIGGINS: Again, member for Barkly, this is clearly an issue for the Board of MAGNT.

Mr McCARTHY: It was noted in this review that there was limited reporting to management on the outcomes of work undertaken by emeritus curators, research associates and visiting researchers. There is concern in the community about the appropriation decrease in the scientific and collections areas. How do you propose to address that in resourcing the department that will make those changes?

Mr CONLAN: Can I seek some clarification, member for Barkly? What concerns are you alluding to? In all fairness, to allow the minister to answer the question you need to be a little more specific.

Mr McCARTHY: Scientific and cultural collections has a decrease of over \$200 000 in Budget 2015-16. I am asking what you are doing about that?

Mr HIGGINS: Could you tell us where you are getting that figure of \$200 000?

Mr McCARTHY: Budget Paper No 3.

Mr HIGGINS: Is that under the MAGNT grant funding? Are you talking about that in Budget Paper No 3?

Mr McCARTHY: Budget Paper No 3, in the appropriation for scientific collections - Budget 2014-15 figure and Budget 2015-16 figure. The community concerns are about staffing and appropriations. Once again, you seem to have a lot of capital cash. I am asking what you plan to do about these important areas of MAGNT.

Mr HIGGINS: I presume we have now moved on to the output area?

Mr McCARTHY: No, minister, it is whole-of-agency discussion going on here.

Mr HIGGINS: Okay. I will get the answer out of outputs. When we talk about scientific and cultural collections, there was one-off funding in 2014-15 which is a reduction of \$706 000. There was also some one-off funding increases of \$891 000. So when you start to put the ins and outs, that is where you come up with your difference.

Mr McCARTHY: What about staffing? Have we seen a loss in curatorial staff at MAGNT?

Mr HIGGINS: There has been a drop in staffing. It is roughly from 44 staff down to 39. It is mainly in the administrative area but we cannot identify exactly where they are. You go 44.7 at MAGNT down to 39.2.

Mr McCARTHY: You cannot identify whether any of those positions are curatorial staff?

Mr HIGGINS: No.

Mr McCARTHY: Maybe the department officials have that knowledge?

Mr HIGGINS: We could take it on notice, but the information we have here does not identify that for us as it relates to MAGNT.

Mr McCARTHY: Where are we looking at positions that have been lost in the administrative stream operations of MAGNT? Has it been in security, front-of-house staff or office staff?

Mr HIGGINS: We will take that question on notice.

Mr McCARTHY: Sure.

Question on Notice No 9.2

Madam CHAIR: Please restate the question for the record.

Mr McCARTHY: Minister, could you provide the details of the positions that have been lost from MAGNT in their operational procedures?

Madam CHAIR: Minister, do you accept the question?

Mr HIGGINS: Yes.

Madam CHAIR: That is number 9.2.

Mr McCARTHY: There was concern raised by the Auditor-General around visitors, visitation and data collection. Can you determine any appropriation in 2015–16 that will improve those systems?

Mr HIGGINS: Again, that comment was in regard to MAGNT and it is clearly a question for the MAGNT Board.

Mr McCARTHY: Minister, can you explain to me how the MAGNT Board will deal with these issues in the Auditor-General's review?

Mr HIGGINS: You would have to ask MAGNT how they will deal with those questions.

Mr McCARTHY: You are suggesting that the MAGNT statutory board will have their own budget appropriation to address the Auditor-General's review?

Mr HIGGINS: MAGNT is given a budget every year, and as I said before, is subject to an agreement.

Mr McCARTHY: Can you explain what that agreement entails?

Mr HIGGINS: It entails their budget.

Mr McCARTHY: Do you think they would be concentrating on the Auditor-General's review or will it be a completely blank canvas?

Mr HIGGINS: Funding of \$7.1m dollars for 2014 to manage and operate the Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory was provided to the Board of MAGNT through a one-year funding agreement to 30 June 2015, which was between the Northern Territory Department of Arts and Museums and the MAGNT.

Funding of \$6.72m in 2015–16 has been provided for MAGNT to support the new governance arrangements and enable the board to engage in fundraising to attract private, corporate and philanthropic support to further develop MAGNT and its collection. The funding will be provided to the board for 2015 through the next funding agreement to be agreed to with the board. Negotiations with the board in regard to a new funding agreement have begun and a draft agreement prepared by the board has been received.

Mr McCARTHY: That brings me to a point about the physical care of the collections. Does responsibility for repairs and maintenance capital works sit with you or with the statutory Board of MAGNT?

Mr HIGGINS: The maintenance of the physical infrastructure sits with us. That is why in our budget we have the money for the air conditioning upgrades over the next three years.

Mr McCARTHY: Minister, in the Auditor-General's review point four is 'Physical care of the collections'. I quote from the report:

The physical care of collection items lies at the heart of effectiveness of an institution such as MAGNT. Staff displayed a keen awareness about the importance of safeguarding the collections, but several findings suggest some scope for improvement in this area.

Security and access were mentioned, minister. Can you provide any idea of budget appropriation in 2015-16 that will address the security and access concerns?

Mr HIGGINS: Security and access is clearly a MAGNT responsibility.

Mr McCARTHY: That is a big responsibility.

Mr CONLAN: A point of order, Madam Chair! We are getting into tedious repetition. These concerns were raised when the bill was presented to parliament over 12 months ago in a lengthy committee stage. The Auditor-General's report the member for Barkly is referring to is over 12 months old. The MAGNT came into effect on 1 July 2014. The minister has stated ad nauseam that this is in the purview of the MAGNT, a statutory authority. By definition, a statutory authority is at arm's length of the government.

I suggest, minister, that perhaps a briefing for the member for Barkly with the MAGNT might go some way to addressing his concerns with regard to this. It is clear to me that you are unable and at least unwilling to answer questions with regard to the MAGNT statutory authority.

Mr McCARTHY: Madam Chair, I will go to ageing infrastructure. I thank the member for Grotto for his compassion.

In regard to the infrastructure we were talking about, the Auditor General's review made specific reference:

The risk of water damage from monsoonal storms or plumbing leaks represents an ongoing challenge for staff.

Minister, is there any appropriation in that area to address the leaks MAGNT incurs every Wet Season?

Mr HIGGINS: I am advised that is an ongoing problem which is addressed as it occurs.

Mr McCARTHY: Is it under the repairs and maintenance budget allocation?

Mr HIGGINS: Yes.

Mr McCARTHY: What is the budget allocation for repairs to the roof in 2015-16?

Mr HIGGINS: It would be wrapped up in the whole repairs and maintenance budget.

Mr McCARTHY: So ...

Mr HIGGINS: We do not identify roofs in those.

Mr McCARTHY: We had a moderate Wet Season in 2014-15. Were the leaks serious?

Mr HIGGINS: Depends on the definition of serious, but no.

Mr McCARTHY: Was any of the collection damaged? Was the collection threatened or was any of our antiquities in danger of damage during Wet Season 2014-15? Therefore, what appropriation is there to repair the leaks incurred during that time?

Mr HIGGINS: To the best of my knowledge, no they were not.

Mr McCARTHY: There were not ...

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Mr HIGGINS: I have already said the appropriation is part of repairs and maintenance.

Mr McCARTHY: No damage, minister?

Mr HIGGINS: Not that I am aware of.

Mr McCARTHY: No leaks identified?

Mr HIGGINS: Not that I am aware of.

Mr McCARTHY: No appropriation to address? This is a major concern ...

Mr HIGGINS: There was an appropriation which is repairs and maintenance.

Mr McCARTHY: Talking about repairs to the roof, can you give any definition about what that entails?

Mr HIGGINS: Sorry, what was that question again?

Mr McCARTHY: We are talking about repairs to the roof of MAGNT. It is an ongoing item. Can you define what has been done in the last 12 months and what is planned for the next 12 months?

Mr HIGGINS: No, I am not an expert in roof repairs like you. I do not ...

Mr CONLAN: I suggest that might be a question to the Department of Infrastructure, member for Barkly.

Mr HIGGINS: It is minor repairs and maintenance. We provide the funding. It is more a question for the Department of Infrastructure, where there is some expertise.

Mr McCARTHY: Minister, you referred to me an expert. I worked with a roofing plumber when I was a lot younger ...

Mr HIGGINS: I have heard that in the House before.

Mr McCARTHY: I could never run across those purlins like he could, but I got my share of the work done.

Minister, I am concerned that the MAGNT building, under your responsibility, has structural concerns, yet we are appropriating \$18.3m into the renovation of another building with a leaking roof.

Mr HIGGINS: That is an opinion.

Mr McCARTHY: You may take that as an opinion, minister. However, you have no budget appropriation you can show this Estimates Committee to repair a leaking roof at MAGNT which threatens our Northern Territory antiquities.

Mr HIGGINS: I have already said there is a budget called repairs and maintenance. That is what it says, repairs and maintenance.

Mr McCARTHY: Minister, has new infrastructure ever been raised with you regarding trying to do something about our MAGNT?

Mr HIGGINS: In regard to the building at Bullocky Point, no.

Mr McCARTHY: Never been raised with you?

Mr HIGGINS: No.

Mr CONLAN: Following from that line of questioning, would it be a fair assessment to say that a brand new MAGNT building at the Chan Building would go a long way to improving the infrastructure of the Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory?

Mr HIGGINS: It would enable us to move a lot of our collection out of the building at Bullocky Point into a purpose-built ...

Mr CONLAN: State-of-the-art, world-class ...

Mr HIGGINS: ... state-of-the-art facility in the centre of Darwin which would be fantastic for tourism - everyone.

Mr CONLAN: And go a long to protecting ...

Mr HIGGINS: Go a hell of a long way, yes.

Mr CONLAN: ... and enhancing the collections we have in the Northern Territory.

Mr HIGGINS: Yes, that is correct.

Mr McCARTHY: Minister, I suggest while we are having this discussion around the member for Grotorex's contribution, you would be looking at \$180.3m to do what you just said.

Mr HIGGINS: I am not a builder, as I said, and I always seek advice from professional people. The advice I have is that the Chan Building will become a world-class facility for \$18m.

Ms FYLES: Is that for both arts and museum?

Mr HIGGINS: The art proposed to be moved to the Chan Building is clearly defined as visual art.

Mr CONLAN: So, minister, it would be fair to say ...

Mr McCARTHY: That brings me to my next point ...

Madam CHAIR: Member for Barkly.

Mr CONLAN: I follow on from that, member for Barkly, that the natural history exhibitions will remain at Bullocky Point and the visual arts will be housed at the new state-of-the-art, world-class facility in State Square.

Mr HIGGINS: Yes, the visual arts will be moved here and the historic ...

Mr CONLAN: Thank you, minister.

Mr McCARTHY: My next question, minister, is around storage sites. As the Minister for Museums and Art Galleries of the Northern Territory you are responsible for the storage sites? The infrastructure?

Mr HIGGINS: Yes.

Mr McCARTHY: You just advised this Estimates Committee that the visual arts component of MAGNT will be moved to the Chan Building after an \$18.3m renovation.

Mr HIGGINS: No, I did not say it would be moved there; it would be used for visual arts.

Mr McCARTHY: So there would be no storage?

Mr HIGGINS: No, I did not say that either. My understanding of this process is that some of the visual arts could be stored at the Chan Building, but will be displayed there. But some will, or could, also be retained at Bullocky Point. Both of those facilities will still be part of MAGNT. The ongoing use of both of those facilities, and what stays in each one in the longer term, is a question to ask MAGNT.

Mr McCARTHY: Definitely, minister. I would love an opportunity to meet with the board. Maybe one of these days I might get that opportunity.

Mr HIGGINS: That offer is always there, member for Barkly. If you want one, I can organise that. I am more than happy to take you there.

Mr McCARTHY: Thank you, minister. In terms of storage – and you mentioned it could be stored at the Chan Building – that budget appropriation in 2015-16 to repair air conditioning was \$6.1m, was it?

Mr HIGGINS: It was not up near \$6m but I will get the exact figure for you in a moment.

Mr McCARTHY: Thank you, minister.

Mr HIGGINS: Yes, it is to repair the air conditioning. It is over \$1.327m and the repairs will take place over a three-year period. As you know, we cannot shut off all the air conditioning, so we have to do it over a period. It will take us three years to do that.

Mr McCARTHY: Thank you. So \$1.3m for repairs. When we talk about air conditioning in a cultural institution, we are talking about climate control. Minister, would you agree?

Mr HIGGINS: Sorry, member for Barkly, could you repeat that?

Mr McCARTHY: We have this short discussion now. We are talking about a sophisticated system to control climate when we are talking about a cultural institution. You are appropriating \$1.3m to repair the climate control system at MAGNT over three years?

Mr HIGGINS: No, that is the first year.

Mr McCARTHY: That is in the first year?

Mr HIGGINS: Yes.

Mr McCARTHY: So over three years we are talking back to that ...

Mr HIGGINS: Yes, the \$4.5m ...

Mr McCARTHY: A ballpark figure – a \$4m to \$5m repair job? I could only guess how much a new system would be to put into the Chan Building to accept and store appropriately our art antiquities. I could only guess, but I guess it is a big figure.

Mr HIGGINS: You could only guess, but as you know and have alluded to before, there is some very sophisticated air conditioning already in that building.

Mr McCARTHY: In the Chan Building?

Mr HIGGINS: Yes.

Mr McCARTHY: Does it comply with the federal standards for our cultural institution?

Mr HIGGINS: I will again go back to the issue that I am not a builder or an air conditioning mechanic. These are questions that should be more appropriately asked of the MAGNT or the experts from the Department of Infrastructure.

Mr McCARTHY: Great advice. But where does the \$18.3m figure come from then? You have no idea about climate control systems ...

Mr HIGGINS: I have no idea ...

Madam CHAIR: Member for Barkly!

Mr HIGGINS: I have no idea but your inference is that I did not have any expert advice in coming up with that \$18.3m; that I came up with that figure. At no point have I said I came up with that figure. As you know, we rely heavily on advice from our departments. Departments give us that advice and they seek that advice from other departments. So the Department of Arts and Museums is not the one that would determine the amount of money that needs to be spent on air conditioning. It sought the expert advice from the Department of Infrastructure when it realised it had a problem with air conditioning.

Mr McCARTHY: Minister, my point is that the Auditor-General's report is that offsite storage infrastructure that is under your responsibility is also failing, and there is damage to our antiquities because of this. We have not addressed our existing storage facilities offsite from MAGNT, and we are not quite sure what we can afford in the \$18.3m spend on the renovations of the Chan Building. Would it not be more important to fix what we have?

Madam CHAIR: Member for Barkly!

Mr HIGGINS: You are coming to conclusions based on I do not know what. I am not too sure what question you want answered.

Mr McCARTHY: We were talking about offsite storage. In the Auditor-General's review this is considered to be failing and there is damage to the collections.

Mr CONLAN: Can I get some clarification? Is it stated that there has been damage to collections, member for Barkly?

Mr McCARTHY: Madam Chair, I quote from the Auditor-General's report, 'Offsite Storage':

A significant issue for collections management exists in the case of items stored at locations remote from the MAGNT site at Bullocky Point, as well as loaned items, where difficulties may exist in managing items in a way intended to ensure that they do not deteriorate or are not at risk of loss.

National Standards of Australian Museums and Art Galleries Benchmark C2.2.2 require that '[t]he collection storage and display areas are cleaned regularly and kept tidy and free of rubbish'. This appears to have not always been the practice in the case of an offsite storage location that was visited during the course of the review. A visit to this site revealed that protective coverings on many items had perished, raising the prospect of the risk of damage to or accelerated deterioration of the collection items held there.

Minister, I am ...

Mr CONLAN: Madam Chair, no, there is no specific reference to damage to collections ...

Mr McCARTHY: Madam Chair, that is ...

Mr CONLAN: It does not. It does not at all.

Madam CHAIR: Member for Barkly, this is repetitive. This 30-minute long line of questioning is on \$18m to upgrade the Chan Building. The minister has answered the question. Just because you do not like that he does not understand the air conditioning design that will go in does not mean that the question is not answered. His department has appropriated the funds and the works are budgeted and scheduled to go ahead. That is the answer to the question.

I know you like to phrase it as we are having a discussion about what might go in there, but it is irrelevant. You could ask the minister a question he could answer.

Mr HIGGINS: In that Auditor-General's report it referred to offsite storage, which in fact is McMin Street; it is not Bullocky Point. McMin Street is also the responsibility of MAGNT.

Mr McCARTHY: Thank you, minister. As I have been referring to offsite, the concern is the deterioration and the damage that has been listed in the Auditor-General's report. Madam Chair ...

Mr CONLAN: A point of order, Madam Chair! Please ...

Madam CHAIR: Member for Barkly, you just improperly quoted ...

Mr CONLAN: There is absolutely no reference to damage to the collection.

Mr McCARTHY: Yes, it is in the report.

Mr CONLAN: It is not in the report. I just heard you quote it. There is not one line, not one full stop, not one inverted comma that suggests that there is any damage to any collections.

Mr McCARTHY: Goodnight, member for Grotorex ...

Mr CONLAN: You are being mischievous and misleading this Estimates Committee. As a member of ...

Mr McCARTHY: Madam Chair, a point of order! Madam Chair!

Mr CONLAN: As a member of this House committee ...

Madam CHAIR: Both of you! Member for Barkly, you are putting words in both the Auditor-General's and the minister's mouths. The quote you just read out does not say that there has been damage or significant damage. It raises the prospect of future or potential damage. They are very different things, if you could please ...

Mr McCARTHY: Madam Chair, a point of order! I ask you to ask the member for Grotorex to withdraw 'misleading'.

Madam CHAIR: Will you stop misquoting the Auditor-General?

Mr McCARTHY: Will you ask the member for Greatorex to withdraw?

Madam CHAIR: You answer my question first. I am the Chair! Am I the Chair or are you the Chair?

Mr McCARTHY: Madam Chair, I will move on.

Madam CHAIR: Will you stop verballing the Auditor-General, yes or no? If you say yes then I will get him to withdraw.

Mr McCARTHY: Madam Chair, I do not like the use of the word 'verbal' either.

Madam CHAIR: Okay, will you stop misquoting the report?

Mr McCARTHY: Madam Chair, I will stop quoting the Auditor-General's report.

Madam CHAIR: How about full stop? Stop quoting the Auditor-General. Member for Greatorex, you know you cannot accuse a member of misleading.

Mr CONLAN: I withdraw 'misleading'.

Madam CHAIR: Thank you. Member for Barkly.

Mr McCARTHY: Madam Chair, thank you. Minister, in terms of how many – no, you will not like that question, minister. I will go on to ...

Madam CHAIR: Member for Barkly, you have not even asked the question. How can you say that the minister will not like it? Your behaviour is becoming ...

Mr McCARTHY: Minister, regarding infrastructure, are you responsible for the Lyons Cottage on The Esplanade?

Mr HIGGINS: No, it is MAGNT.

Mr McCARTHY: So I should direct that question to the new board about what is happening with the Lyons Cottage on The Esplanade?

Mr HIGGINS: Yes.

Mr McCARTHY: It seems that I will need to put some of these questions in writing then. It seems that the criticisms that relate to lack of staff and lack of resources for MAGNT relate to the budget appropriation that has been reduced. Can you give me an explanation of why that budget appropriation was reduced?

Mr HIGGINS: Is that the budget for MAGNT?

Mr McCARTHY: The budget for staffing at MAGNT.

Mr HIGGINS: We give MAGNT a total budget which was reduced in the budget papers for 2016. It is a return of the Regional Museum Grants Support program funding of 261 from the 2015-16 year, and efficiency measures applied to the MAGNT budget when it was a division within the Department of Arts and Museums, as offset by parameters.

Mr McCARTHY: Minister, your budget papers note \$350 000 allocated to support historical heritage and cultural preservation sites. How much do you expect to preserve with the allocation of \$350 000?

Mr HIGGINS: The \$350 000 is for the first year; it is \$350 000 recurring over three years.

Mr McCARTHY: And what do you expect, minister, in the first year?

Mr HIGGINS: Is this the heritage project that you are referring to?

Mr McCARTHY: The historical heritage and cultural preservation sites, minister.

Mr HIGGINS: The first year we will be planning the program and identifying the sites. The second and third years will be implementation.

Mr McCARTHY: The appropriation would be \$350 000 three times?

Mr HIGGINS: We will get the exact figures for you. The figures are \$350 000 in the first year, \$2.875m in the second and \$2.875m in the third.

Mr McCARTHY: Thanks, minister, that is a good story. I note you stated in the budget paper there will be a review of the Arts Grants Program to align with policy directions. Can you explain what that means in real language?

Mr HIGGINS: In 2015 the Northern Territory government is developing an arts and cultural policy for the Northern Territory in consultation with the community and the arts and cultural sector. The arts and cultural policy will set out a vision and strategy for engaging, supporting and enhancing the arts and cultural sector, and the social and economic contribution of this sector to the Territory. It will provide a guide for Northern Territory government expenditure and the effort in those areas of priority. The policy will provide a framework for further work, including the review and realignment of the Department of Arts and Museums' grant programs with government priorities.

Expressions of interest were sought in November 2014 for members of the community to be part of a reference group. The reference group has been selected, and will be invited to participate in the first meeting to consider a draft discussion paper for the development of the policy

Mr McCARTHY: What is the amount of funds allocated to the Arts Grants Program in 2014-15, and what are the allocations to the program in 2015-16?

Mr HIGGINS: The total arts NT in 2015-16 is \$6.66m. Is that the question you asked?

Mr McCARTHY: It was one of them. What about the year before? How does it compare?

Mr HIGGINS: It was \$7.065m.

Mr McCARTHY: In the previous year?

Mr HIGGINS: Yes.

Mr McCARTHY: There was a decrease. Can you please advise the Estimates Committee of how you intend to progress the new collaborative public library funding agreement?

Mr HIGGINS: The public library funding agreement outlines the roles and responsibilities of the Territory and local governments in the Northern Territory for the funding and provision of public library services. The grant pool for 2014-15 was \$4.098m, of which \$3.974m was allocated to local governments and \$124 000 was transferred to the Northern Territory Library's operational budget to support the library resource allocation provided to the NT Library for the purchase of public library collections. Under the agreement, funding is provided to councils for the continuation of existing library services. Triennial agreements were signed by various councils in 2008 and expired on 30 June 2011. Each year since that time the agreement has been extended for a further year and the current extension expires on 30 June 2015.

Mr McCARTHY: Will the Northern Territory government funding for libraries run by the local government sector increase under this new agreement?

Mr HIGGINS: No.

Mr McCARTHY: No increase?

Mr HIGGINS: No.

Mr McCARTHY: Will it decrease?

Mr HIGGINS: I am advised the only increase would simply be through parameters such as CPI.

Mr McCARTHY: What about the State Library, minister? How much do we fund the State Library for?

Mr HIGGINS: I presume you are referring to the Northern Territory Library?

Mr McCARTHY: Yes, minister. Yes, we are not a state yet, we found out.

Mr HIGGINS: The onsite visitors to the Northern Territory Library is estimated as being below the target due to an ongoing decline in backpacker numbers coming in for the free WiFi, due to a more widespread availability of the service. Visitor numbers are expected to start to grow again in 2015-16 as a response to new programming.

Website visits is estimated as being below target due to technical changes in the catalogue interface affecting the interaction with Google analytic software. That is a technical reporting issue. Actual usage is believed to be growing and a growth in visits is anticipated in 2015-16 from the revised baseline.

Reference inquiries satisfied in 48 hours will be removed as an output measure in 2015-16, as this is a relatively small and declining program in the Northern Territory Libraries' overall business.

Grants distributed: of the overall public library funding of \$4.098m, \$3.79m was distributed to local governments, with the remaining \$124 000 transferred to the library resource allocation to support public library collections.

Library collections managed will be removed as an output measure in 2015-16, as collection size is no longer considered a significant indicator of the Northern Territory Library activity, and it is likely to be replaced in future with measures of use.

Digital library collections managed - that is the terabytes - will be removed as an output measure in 2015-16, as collection size is no longer considered a significant indicator of the Northern Territory Library activity. It is likely to be replaced in future with measures of use. Does that answer the question?

Mr McCARTHY: Yes, minister, there were some dollar figures in that, as well as a great description of the Northern Territory Library operations, thank you.

I am running out of time but I must say that I arm wrestled my mob into two hours. We got an hour-and-a-half. There is a dinner break coming up; I have two questions. One is the arts and screen sector and then Madam Chair, just one of the out-of-agency questions.

Minister, I noticed in Budget 2015-16 in real spending, we have seen another cut to the arts and screen sector. Can you explain why?

Mr HIGGINS: I am advised that it is basically one-off external funding.

Mr McCARTHY: Thank you. Minister, the clock is ticking and there is so much to ask and so much information that is important. I thank everybody. Madam Chair, you might have a script to run through and I have one question for the out of agency.

Madam CHAIR: For non-output specific, you mean?

Mr McCARTHY: Yes.

Output 3.1 – Scientific and Cultural Collections

Madam CHAIR: The committee will now proceed to Output 3.1, Scientific and Cultural collections are there any questions?

That concludes Output 3.1

Output 3.2 – Arts and Screen Sector

Madam CHAIR: The committee will now proceed to Output 3.2, Arts and Screen Sector, are there any questions?

That concludes Output 3.2 and 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?

That concludes Output Group 4.0.

Non-Output Specific Budget-Related Questions

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

Mr McCARTHY: Minister, to conclude I draw your attention to a media release you issued on 29 April 2015, titled 'Labor fails to support the arts'. It was a personal attack on me. I have a quick question. How much does it cost to issue a media release like that?

Mr HIGGINS: That is a question for the Chief Minister. He employs all the staff.

Mr McCARTHY: What would you reckon? It would be a significant cost or it would be just a minimal cost ...

Madam CHAIR: Member for Barkly, honestly, you chose this for your last question?

Mr CONLAN: Madam Chair, that is out of order and a frivolous question.

Madam CHAIR: This is absolute garbage. It is one minute to seven. If there are no further questions on non-output-specific budget-related questions?

Mr HIGGINS: There was a question taken on notice, Madam Chair.

Madam CHAIR: Do you have the number, minister?

Answer to Question on Notice No 9.2

Mr HIGGINS: Number 9.2, details of the positions that have been lost from the Museum and Art Gallery. On 1 July 2014 the Board of the MAGNT commenced as a body corporate, an entity separated from the Territory. Under the new *Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory Act*, the MAGNT Board can directly engage staff. MAGNT Board has employed staff directly, therefore complete staffing figures for MAGNT are not available.

Mr McCARTHY: Minister, I thank you for the opportunity of having this discussion. I thank the public officers, of course, for their participation. Madam Chair, I am not sure about your last comment, but thank you very much.

Madam CHAIR: I am not sure about any of your comments, member for Barkly, but I still have to listen to them.

That concludes consideration of the Department of Arts and Museums. On behalf of the committee, I thank the officers who assisted the minister today.

The committee will move on to consider outputs relating to the Northern Territory Environmental Protection Authority, which we will do after dinner.

The committee suspended

DEPARTMENT OF LANDS, PLANNING AND THE ENVIRONMENT

NT ENVIRONMENT PROTECTION AUTHORITY

Madam CHAIR: Thank you everyone for coming back after the break. We have minister Higgins in his portfolio of Northern Territory Environment Protection Authority, which comes under the Department of Lands, Planning and the Environment. I note that responsibility for the NT Environment Protection Authority sits with the Department of Lands, Planning and the Environment; however, as the Minister for the Environment is the responsible minister, questions relating to the NT Environment Protection Authority will now be answered.

Minister, I ask you to introduce the officials accompanying you this evening and if you would like to make an opening statement.

Mr HIGGINS: Madam Chair, the attendees here with me at the moment are Dr Bill Freeland, Chair of the Northern Territory Environment Protection Authority on my left; on my right is Rod Applegate, the Chief Executive of the Department of Lands, Planning and the Environment; and Fotis Papadakis, the Chief Financial Officer.

The Northern Territory Environment Protection Authority is an independent statutory body established under the Northern Territory *Environment Protection Authority Act*, the NT EPA Act.

The Department of Lands Planning and the Environment supports the NT EPA through the provision of staff and facilities to enable the NT EPA to properly exercise its powers and perform its functions, as well as corporate functions.

The NT EPA is tasked with promoting sustainable development, ensuring a proper and transparent regulatory framework for resources and development proposals, and providing advice on effective waste management and pollution control, including compliance and enforcement activities.

I thank the chair and the members who make up the NT EPA, including the NT EPA staff for their tireless hard work and dedication over the past year. They have achieved a great deal through their active approach and delivery of guidance material and advice on a range of environmental management matters, as well as their continuing commitment to providing industry and the public with certainty, transparency and the opportunity for community involvement.

The NT EPA plays a central role in advising and supporting the government in enhancing and improving environmental legislation and processes, including the development of a new *Environmental Assessment Act* and review of the *Waste Management and Pollution Control Act*.

In contributing to the reduction of red tape, the NT EPA has developed an online system - NT EPA Online - that streamlines the application process for environmental protection licences. NT EPA Online will be convenient for business and clients to manage their licence requirements under one account using an online system, increasing efficiencies for both the client and the NT EPA in managing the process effectively. It is expected NT EPA Online will expand in the future to provide a similar pathway for environmental protection approvals and other licences the NT EPA manage and administer. This online system is due to be launched publicly in mid-June 2015.

Critically the NT EPA continues to develop and consult, and release a range of environmental guidelines to improve accountability to industry, stakeholders and the public. After undergoing public consultation, numerous guidelines have been published, providing certainty, greater clarity and transparency of the environmental assessment process leading to the improvement of efficiencies for developers and the NT EPA. These guidelines provide information to proponents to submit adequate and appropriate documentation to evaluate environmental risks and impacts, and effective mitigation and management measures. A recent example is the finalised guidelines for the preparation of environmental management plans and the latest draft guidelines for the preparation of a notice of intent, which is currently out for public comment.

In addition, a number of other guidance materials and science-based reports, including fact sheets for industry and the public, have been published. The number of policies, guidelines and fact sheets available for industry and the community are progressively increasing, and more are in development by the NT EPA.

This year the NT EPA developed, after public consultation, and published a storm-water strategy for the Darwin Harbour region, which is a broad overarching strategy that provides a basis for improving management of the quality of storm water entering Darwin Harbour. The strategy will ensure an effective, coordinated and assisted approach to storm water management across the catchment area.

The NT EPA's compliance activities have increased this year, with improved reporting of incidents. The NT EPA's two-year compliance program was also finalised and published this year.

The waste management strategy - which was requested by the previous minister for the Environment, Hon Peter Chandler MLA - has been finalised by the NT EPA. It is expected the advice will cover opportunities for improving waste management practices in the Northern Territory. It is anticipated the strategy will be provided in the near future.

The NT EPA continues to implement changes to the container deposit scheme legislation which increases the ability for enforcement under the scheme, ensures collection depots are open to the public, ensures all scheme participants establish their own contractual arrangements and reduces the number of categories that containers are split into at the collection depot level. The return rates under the scheme continue to increase each year and the scheme remains popular and supported by the Territory community.

Madam Chair, I am quite happy to take the lead in regard to the advanced questions that were put in writing and go through those. After that, I will hand to the independent Chair, Dr Bill Freeman, who will take the lead on matters relating to the EPA. I have to assist me the Head of the Department of Lands, Planning and the Environment.

Madam CHAIR: Are there any questions relating to the minister's statement?

Mr McCARTHY: Yes, Madam Chair. Minister and the public specialists, thanks for the opportunity. I am new in this position of the opposition spokesperson, so I am very much looking forward to learning from this process this evening.

In the opening statement, you talked about environmental protection and cutting red tape. I find that a bit of a contradiction, but no doubt that is just rhetoric. Can you explain the online system? How will that still be an effective mechanism to deliver the best possible outcome for the environment, yet be a more streamlined online system?

Mr HIGGINS: I had the pleasure of seeing this demonstrated about a month ago. If someone wants to, rather than fill out paperwork, they fill the applications out online. That is then allocated automatically to the staff in the office. There are reiterations back and forth, but it cuts out a lot of the paperwork going back and forth. It also does much of its validation online. As you enter details it validates whether the information is correct. In that sense, you are converting week's duration into hours.

Mr McCARTHY: In an application process?

Mr HIGGINS: Yes.

Mr McCARTHY: What about the back end of the physical inspections and those type of initiatives that are needed?

Mr HIGGINS: In regard to issuing a licence or ...

Mr McCARTHY: Yes.

Mr HIGGINS: If there is a need for any physical contact or onsite inspections, yes, that has to continue. That will not be done online. You can imagine the process of having to fill out a form and the number of times you have repeat your name and address. I am sure the chairperson can go through the details of what is filled out, but from what I saw it will cut out a lot of paperwork.

Mr McCARTHY: I am assuming they are on two tiers. There will be easy one and then the hard ones. So the online system will streamline the easy ones. What is an example of an easy determination?

Mr HIGGINS: I will get Dr Freeland to answer that one.

Dr FREELAND: You are right; there are easy ones and really tough ones. A good easy one would be something that drives me nuts because I am the delegated person who has to sign off on these things. To give you some idea, somewhere in here I have numbers of these things we have to process per unit time.

Under the *Waste Management Pollution Control Act*, there were 74 licences given out in 2012-13, 91 in 2013-14 and we have done 95 so far this year, and there are more coming. It sounds like a lot. It is, and it takes massive amounts of paper and time. With the system we have, someone has an Excel spreadsheet that runs it and it is absolutely hopeless. The easy ones are easy.

One of the banes of my life is the waste transport or a waste storage licence. Every time they change a vehicle and have a different number plate they have to change their licence. Every time they change the person who is the responsible party for some part of it they have to get a whole new licence. It goes on and on and is absolutely crazy.

For example, if they get a new car with a new number plate, they can do it themselves and we do not even have to see it. We are setting up all that efficiency into the system so people can do inspections and those types of things.

There are plenty of more difficult ones around. They have been fairly popular in the media - no point in elaborating. They take a huge amount of time in inspections prior, during and after. It is onerous and has to be done because if you do not know do it you will not get what you want, that is for sure.

Mr MCCARTHY: Thank you, Dr Freeland. Minister, who made the decision about the streamlining - which ones could be purely online and which ones will need follow up?

Mr HIGGINS: That was a decision for the EPA. It is operational.

Dr FREELAND: Essentially we broke it into things that need to be done now because they are volumetrically time consuming and onerous. That is the *Waste Management Pollution Control Act* approvals and licenses; straight and simple.

The next cab off the rank will be discharge licences under the *Water Act*. Again because it is number one, the processes for the system are very similar in those two cases and we will get that done this coming financial year with a bit of luck.

The next step is likely to be the *Environmental Assessment Act* for EAS's and notices of intent and so forth. That is quite a challenge. We have not finalised the tracking and all other issues of how it will be done yet but we think it will speed things up again quite dramatically and effectively.

After that there is some more like contaminated soils. There are a couple of other modules that have to be added.

Mr MCCARTHY: Sure, thank you. Do you want me to talk through you?

Mr HIGGINS: If you talk ...

Mr McCarthy: We will have a discussion. Are we picking up on other jurisdictions and systems that are already in place?

Dr FREELAND: Absolutely. We investigated for this one, particularly the South Australian, Victorian and the New South Wales systems. There were some good systems. The problem is they are antiquated and they work on systems we do not have, so we basically started from scratch. The good thing about it though was it was not quite from scratch because the Department of Lands, Planning and Environment has a system called ILIS, which is related back to the cadastre. It is an online system. Essentially we linked into that and that allows us to record locations on the cadastre as well, put insights with contaminated soils and relate it back spatially. That system was in existence and it was building on that rather than complete invention.

Mr MCCARTHY: One for you, minister. Any IT investments – considerable investments, sometimes very uncharted territory? I have not seen a significant increase in the budget appropriation for the EPA. Is there a budget appropriation for this new information technology system or systems?

Dr FREELAND: It comes through the capital funding to Lands, Planning and the Environment. I doubt if it has a specific designation.

Mr MCCARTHY: Minister, what are we talking about in that investment for the EPA's new management system?

Mr HIGGINS: My understanding is it comes out of their ongoing operational, but I will ask the head of the department to see if he can add to that.

Mr APPELEGATE: Rod Applegate, Chief Executive. Thank you, minister. Yes, we have an existing capital budget which is split between the different divisions based on needs. As you would be aware, the electronic application has not just been applied in the EPA; we are using it for development applications online; we are using it for building.

We are moving into a far more efficient system for the clients out there to place their requests with the agency, no matter what division. The X number - I think is has \$0.5m in the capital budget this year for these IT things. I split it up between the various divisions according to what their needs are.

Mr MCCARTHY: Thank you, Mr Applegate. Minister, I was expecting to hear a considerably bigger figure than \$0.5m.

Mr HIGGINS: The \$0.5m is spread across the different divisions in the answer, so we are not talking \$0.5m for this system.

Mr MCCARTHY: No, that is what I mean. Yes. If you do want to make any comment on that, I have great memories of the Asset Management System that I inherited. Reflecting on that journey, I have a lot of caution around any IT developments, minister.

Mr HIGGINS: I do not think it is anything like the Asset Management System, no.

Dr FREELAND: I can reassure you a little. I am not saying there are no glitches; no new software system is glitch free. We are almost ready to go out. We are getting people from the waste industry. We have told them we will not give them a licence because we want them to trial the system, so they have been sitting around waiting for about a month for their new licence. We will get them to trial the system over a period of a week to see whether or not they can handle every aspect of it. It looks pretty good at the moment.

Mr McCARTHY: Minister, is there a help desk? Is there some support structure around this new technology?

Mr HIGGINS: The only help desk would be contacting the EPA if people had problems.

Mr McCARTHY: Does that incur extra staff?

Mr HIGGINS: No.

Mr McCARTHY: In the EPA, is there a front-of-house person to deal with the inquiry? I label myself as an IT dinosaur. If I am struggling with the online application is there somebody I go to front of house at the EPA?

Dr FREELAND: It would go to the Waste and Resource Recovery Group and they, as a group, would handle it depending on who is there. It is pretty straightforward. It is similar to going online to the places my daughter spends all my money online buying things which have little things you click into.

Mr McCARTHY: My logic does not match where your daughter is, and I have tried going down this road. I have memories of transport when we were doing IT implementations. We had a support network that was working with industry stakeholders and the clients. Is there a plan for that?

Mr HIGGINS: An answer to this, member for Barkly, is the previous opposition spokesperson on the Environment did a good briefing with the Chair, independent of me and my staff. I suggest that would be a good place to get a feel for the system. The demonstration only took about half-an-hour. It would be well worth it, even to talk about the other issues.

Dr FREELAND: You are more than welcome. We do not foresee huge problems. People use it on the net every day. It is just tick boxes and you can choose your own permit condition. We check them. We have all that stuff in it.

Mr McCARTHY: Thank you for that opportunity. In quality control, if anybody can melt it down it would be me. We might have to have a go at that.

Minister, I was pleased to hear you mention in your opening statement storm water management of Darwin Harbour. Have we ever reached the point of defining what created those algal blooms and the issues that ran between 2009 and 2013 that were so heavily publicised in the media?

Mr HIGGINS: Not that I am aware of.

Dr FREELAND It was largely sourced from nutrients and *E.coli*-type sources on land or in water adjacent to the harbour. There are a few well-known sources such as Buffalo Creek - the poo shooter was one. We found another one by accident last year. It was supposedly a storm water drain but turned out to be pumping raw sewage. These things hopefully do not exist anymore. Some of them exist, but at least we know where they are.

Ms FYLES: Was the one pumping sewage in Darwin Harbour?

Dr FREELAND: Yes.

Ms FYLES: Any more details?

Dr FREELAND: It came off the Defence Force base and had probably been there since World War II. Everybody thought it was a storm water drain. It has been stoppered up.

Ms FYLES: How did you find it?

Dr FREELAND: One of your colleagues got very upset about drainage in a certain part of the foreshore and requested it be cleaned up. Lo and behold, they found this.

Ms FYLES: There you go.

Mr McCARTHY: That confirms my theory that Darwin, as an emerging city and the capital of northern Australia has some serious constraints around existing infrastructure. The Larrakeyah sewage outfall was very suspect when we first started looking at contamination.

Dr FREELAND: The poo shooter was probably the best outfall we had in efficiency and getting rid of effluent. Let us not blame it for what we pump down it. As a place and a way of getting rid of effluent, it was the best one we had. It got it right out into a deep part of the harbour where there are massive currents and was well dispersed out to sea.

The issue was what we were putting down it. It is unfortunate it is gone, because if we had kept it you might have had some much better solutions to some of the problems that will happen in the future.

Mr McCARTHY: How very interesting. Dr Freeland, I come from the land of the Bondi cigars - I witnessed that growing up in Sydney and seeing those massive changes; government investment to create better water quality around the eastern suburbs, that then transferred the problem to further down the coast. So I was very interested when government was working in that space, and I thought that was a good outcome. Are you saying that the Ludmilla effluent treatment and outfall is a problem?

Dr FREELAND: I cannot answer for Power and Water – okay? - but they have a project - I do not know where there are at with it - to enhance the length of that outfall and take it further out to sea.

Mr McCARTHY: Sure. I am also interested in traffic in Darwin Harbour. It came to my attention about visiting international ships and Defence ships, and their management of their waste effluent.

Dr FREELAND: Can be problematic.

Mr McCARTHY: Have we investigated that? Was that a core ...

Dr FREELAND: One of my staff chased one of the dredgers from INPEX from this end of the harbour out to that one partially out to sea. But they would not stop and the whole way they just disposed sewage down the length of the harbour, and there was nothing we could do about it. These things do happen and it is not all that unusual.

Mr McCARTHY: So once again, this is pressure Darwin has never seen before and we have to adapt systems around managing it?

Dr FREELAND: We are fortunate in that we are still ahead of the game. It is not doom and gloom, it is just something we need to watch. That is what our storm water strategy is about. It is not about saying everything is terrible; it is about recognising the harbour is not what it used to be in many ways. We are still lucky; it is pretty healthy. Let us be more careful in the future about what we are doing.

Mr McCARTHY: I come from Sydney. Growing up in Sydney, I am very aware of the creation around hardstand areas, particularly roads. Did the EPA do any work about Tiger Brennan Drive and the next stages in the possible contamination of runoff from hardstand road surfaces into Darwin Harbour?

Dr FREELAND: The only good part of that is - that happens off all roads, and it does have impacts on the storm water quality. It is a very difficult problem. I do not know if anyone has solved it. I guess it is a bit lucky that you have mangroves along that way, which act as some kind of filter, I suppose.

Mr McCARTHY: That is important to note.

Ms FYLES: You made reference before that your people chased an INPEX dredger out, but there was nothing they could do. Is that a legislation fault or just a time or resource issue? Surely they could report that incident?

Dr FREELAND: No, it is more a practical problem of a tinny trying to commandeer a large ocean-going ship. That is all there was to it.

Ms FYLES: Sure, I understand the boat issue, but surely you do not have to chase a boat, you can get information and then report it and investigate?

Dr FREELAND: No, not a hope.

Ms FYLES: So, you could not get any ship details and then make contact?

Dr FREELAND: We had the name of the ship and the company that owns it, I suppose, but they will not come back.

Ms FYLES: I find it quite interesting that for a large ship in our harbour, surely someone knows who they are, and that they left ...

Dr FREELAND: We know the company and we know the name of the ship. Right? But you will not chase a ship like that halfway around the world and fine them – what? - \$5000 or something. The cost effective is zero.

Ms FYLES: You would not physically chase the ship; I am not proposing that.

Dr FREELAND: No. We have a compliance and enforcement policy and a program. The objective is not to put people in gaol or fine them hundreds of thousands of dollars. In a real sense, that is counter-productive because if you have to wait around to get someone in court, it could be two years. The reality is you have a problem right now, otherwise you would not be thinking about putting them in court.

We do everything we can. We issue suggestions, warnings, then we issue formal directions. We have a whole cascade of levels of prompting, if you like, before we become serious. We very rarely get serious because I would rather have the person who is doing it slowly learn, if necessary, what is appropriate and how to deal with it. And I would like him to clean his mess up, which we can direct him to do. I would rather do that than penalise them. The penalties we usually issue are simply traffic tickets. It may be trivial in financial terms, but it works.

Ms FYLES: I found it interesting that we had a ship in our harbour that we knew who it was associated with, and it was not chased down.

Dr FREELAND: Oh, they had finished their INPEX contract and they were leaving the harbour. Bingo! Nothing to do with INPEX.

Ms FYLES: Obviously there had been reports, so they had been the whole time they were here ...

Dr FREELAND: Probably not.

Ms FYLES: Okay.

Mr HIGGINS: When we talk about Darwin Harbour, I point out that there is an annual report issued by I think minister Westra van Holthe on the health of Darwin Harbour.

Mr McCARTHY: Minister, I have a concern in that dialogue about Environmental Protection Authority officers operating small tinnies on the harbour in amongst, basically, super tankers. Is that correct?

Dr FREELAND: They did not get that close, and it was somebody else's tinnie.

Mr McCARTHY: So the EPA does not have a boat?

Dr FREELAND: We do not have a boat.

Mr McCARTHY: So do you contract, charter or just borrow?

Dr FREELAND: We usually charter an accredited person.

Mr McCARTHY: So a crew that identified that problem with an international vessel discharging sewage in the Darwin Harbour had testing equipment? Were they taking samples?

Dr FREELAND: There was not much point. Those people all have their little sample bottles and that type of thing. Unless you can get up on the ship and get samples from the ship as it is streaming out, you cannot do it. You cannot get that close.

Mr McCARTHY: Going back to major roads. Tiger Brennan Drive is major arterial infrastructure that reclaims marine muds and operates now as a very busy road network. Does the EPA have a place in that planning for a development of that scale?

Dr FREELAND: Our role for a road would normally occur at the level of an environmental impact assessment under the *Environmental Assessment Act*, with the first step getting a notice of intent. That occurred. It was all assessed and viewed as not requiring an EIS. That work was done. They did quite an elaborate notice of intent. We made recommendations and they have implemented them.

Mr McCARTHY: We assume in that infrastructure development that storm water runoff will enter the harbour?

Dr FREELAND: It will in that circumstance, same as it does from the Stuart Highway or any of the other roads around town.

Mr McCARTHY: Dr Freeland, you were saying that the mangroves in the Darwin Harbour are an asset in managing that runoff and contamination that comes with it?

Dr FREELAND: Yes, some of it will settle out, but it is not all good. But, yes, it is something.

Mr McCARTHY: So Darwin and the Northern Territory government will be well advised to preserve those mangroves as opposed to losing the mangroves in the harbour?

Dr FREELAND: Mangroves are used for many purposes and you do not want to – I will not get into a speech on mangroves. Mangroves are important.

Mr McCARTHY: But other jurisdictions have learnt that lesson the hard way, yes?

Mr APPLEGATE: I can add a little. There is approximately 27 000 ha of mangroves in Darwin Harbour. The government - I think it was the previous government - protected about 95% of those mangroves and nothing today has altered that figure dramatically.

Dr FREELAND: He used to run a different department than he does now.

Mr McCARTHY: The other area I am interested in is the developments like the industrial developments in Berrimah where hardstand areas were created and the runoff into those natural drainage patterns like Knuckey Lagoon. Is it the same process that developers go through with the EPA in a development like that?

Dr FREELAND: Quite often, yes. It depends on the scale of the development. We have provided a guideline for people to read because they are supposed to notify us when they have a development that has a significant or potential for a significant environmental impact. That does not help people understand what is really required so we provided – at our first meeting of the NT EPA in 2013, we approved it to go out for consultation - a guideline on when you do not need one of these notices of intent. You can say 'Hey, I am home free' and if you are not home free you have to do one. That is very important.

Mr McCARTHY: That is in the planning and the approval stage?

Dr FREELAND: That is right, but not always do they need a notice of intent. I have some figures. We receive notices of intent for about 70% of projects that do not go any further than that; they do not require an environmental impact statement.

Mr McCARTHY: Sure. Then after the development – particularly the Knuckey Lagoon area, the area around Bayview or the second stage of Tiger Brennan Drive – is the EPA monitoring those areas and reporting?

Dr FREELAND: No, we do not do that. Lands Resource Management does a lot of that. We have an implementation plan for the Darwin Harbour storm water strategy. It was approved at the EPA's last meeting and it will go out to the community relatively soon for consultation.

Mr BARRETT: A point of order, Madam Chair! If the member for Barkly wants to get a briefing on what it is the EPA does and does not do, that is fantastic, but we are supposed to be asking questions about appropriation, funding and what is happening in funding for this unit.

Whilst it is fascinating to talk about what the EPA does and does not do, and whether or not they have followed boats halfway around the world looking for traces of what type of sewage came out of that boat – which is all very fascinating, do not get me wrong – can we ask a question vaguely relating to appropriation?

Madam CHAIR: Member for Blain, it also goes to operations. We will be spending the next two-and-a-half hours asking as many questions as possible. Member for Barkly, go for it.

Mr McCARTHY: Thank you, Madam Chair. I will continue to ask the questions on this statement. Member for Blain, if it is past your bedtime then you could go home if you like.

Madam CHAIR: Member for Barkly, do not start up again. You have been behaving. Let us just keep this going. You are on a roll; go for it.

Mr McCARTHY: Thank you, Madam Chair. The interesting link I was making is that Lands, Planning and the Environment does those monitoring investigations, and then would report to the EPA if there were anomalies ...

Dr FREELAND: No, it is Land Resource Management!

Mr McCARTHY: Land Resource Management. They would report to the EPA if there were anomalies? Yes?

Dr FREELAND: They would report to everybody.

Mr McCARTHY: The new storm water management plan will provide new systems in the exploration we have just been conducting?

Mr HIGGINS: In short, yes. It is open for public comment at the moment, is it, Bill - the storm water strategy?

Dr FREELAND: No, it is out and done, but we just have the implementation. The storm water strategy is very broad and needs refining into certain focus areas. We have an implementation plan that goes out for consultation, hopefully within the next couple of weeks, and associated with that we have encouraged people to apply as part of our grants program to do projects under that in the coming financial year. That should be helpful.

You were asking how we know things and talking about Land Resource Management monitoring matters. One issue becoming very helpful to us is the public. The Pollution Hotline has been in existence for quite some time.

In 2013 there were 331 reports, in 2013-14 there was 529 and so far this year up to 667. They can range from the irritatingly irrelevant through to quite serious things. Most of our information comes from the public and is very important.

Mr McCARTHY: This management strategy will be another way of raising that awareness and educating the public? That is great to hear. Well done, minister.

With container deposit legislation, are there any planned changes for the public to the management of redeemable containers like crushing cans, crushing containers, broken glass?

Dr FREELAND: The issues really come down to – we have it down to the point where we are not talking about every single container having to be classified on its own. We now have it down to nine different categories of material. Those materials are aluminium, PET, HDPE, glass, LPD and the other categories are steel or other. That is not so many categories and that helps the depot sort them more effectively.

That is what the amendments to the act were really about; to reduce that cost and make it simple. The problem though is that coordinators in the system have to come to contractual arrangements and that is like chasing I do not know what. Getting them to together to talk to each other is almost impossible, but it seems to be happening. Once we get that going it will be far more effective.

Mr McCARTHY: Minister, in your opening statement you mentioned the return rates increasing. Do we have any figures on regional or remote areas and return rates?

Dr FREELAND: Overall it is 54%. Would you believe I did not bring it with me? I did not bring it. There is a very gross calculation for the regional areas. It is not as high as Darwin and includes Alice Springs too, which is high. I am not sure if the figure is meaningful.

Mr HIGGINS: We can get those figures if you want, member for Barkly.

Dr FREELAND: There is actually ...

Mr HIGGINS: The last time I looked at the figures, the return rate is gradually increasing, which is always a good sign.

Mr McCARTHY: The big constraint is transport. If people were able to convert a wool bale full of empty cans into blocks there would be a lot more people collecting cans.

Dr FREELAND: Can I say one thing about that? If a glass bottle goes back and it is Coca-Cola's or somebody else's it does not matter. What the depots will take when it is delivered and what the coordinators take - you would have to check with each one to see if they are prepared to take squashed and encased cans, for example. I am not sure what they would take.

Mr McCARTHY: Yes, that has been ad hoc.

Dr FREELAND: The issue is that not all glass containers are in the scheme and not all aluminium containers are part of the scheme.

Mr McCARTHY: Yes.

Dr FREELAND: You cannot just squish anything and hope to get paid for it. That is insurmountable.

Mr McCARTHY: There are definitely areas for efficiency that I hope ...

Dr FREELAND: We would all love to see it, but until everything becomes a returnable container, we are dead in the water.

Mr McCARTHY: Thank you, minister. It is great to have the opportunity to have a discussion about your opening statement. Madam Chair, I am prepared to move on to the written questions that were tabled for the minister.

Madam CHAIR: There are no output areas in this area, so you can ask any questions on the Northern Territory Environment Protection Authority in this next section.

Mr HIGGINS: We were going through the written questions?

Madam CHAIR: Yes, so it is up to the member for Barkly to ask them, so he can just go for it.

Mr McCARTHY: Madam Chair, the member for Blain might like the minister to table the answers to those questions.

Mr BARRETT: Why do you not just ask your own questions?

Mr McCARTHY: The member for Blain is not interested in that. Minister, will you table the ...

Mr HIGGINS: No, I am very keen to read them, member for Barkly.

Mr McCARTHY: I am sure the member for Blain is interested in hearing the answers. Can you please provide details on the progress of all CLP election commitments, including all commitments and policy announcements made to Territorians in CLP election policy documents, summary snapshots, media releases and announcements, costings and savings documents, media advertisements and other printed material, around the environment?

Mr HIGGINS: The Department of Lands, Planning and the Environment reports against 19 election commitments, of which nine are complete. The following report provides information on five election commitments which fall under the environment portfolio.

The first one is 'Streamline development approval processes without compromising the environment'. The NT Environment Protection Authority and the Department of Lands, Planning and the Environment have identified reforms that will streamline development processes and are aimed at resulting in savings to the development industry.

Reforms that fall under the environment portfolio are environmental assessment guidelines. The NT EPA developed a series of environmental assessment guidelines to better define matters to be addressed when a developer seeks environmental approval. The guidelines increase transparency of the environmental assessment process and provide certainty to industry. The final guidelines are available on the NT EPA website.

This process is continuing, with recent finalisations of a guideline on preparation of environmental management plans, the release of a guideline on preparation of a notice of intent for public comment. That one is completed.

The split of the Lands and Planning ministry is completed. On 4 September 2012, government announced new public sector agency arrangements, including changes to the Northern Territory government departments responsible for lands and planning, transport and resource management. New departments were formed including the Department of Lands, Planning and the Environment, Department of Transport, and Department of Land Resource Management.

The creation of the NT EPA and the new legislation on 1 January 2013 gave more independence to environmental regulatory responsibilities. Further details on the work of the NT EPA are detailed under election commitments to establish the NT EPA, independent of government. The establishment of the NT EPA, independent of government is also completed.

With the oil, gas and mining industries expanding, the government wants to ensure these important assets are managed sustainably. As a result, new legislation commenced on 1 January 2013 which established an independent board called the NT Environmental Protection Authority, with administrative support provided by the Department of Lands, Planning and the Environment.

The NT EPA is tasked with providing advice on environmental impacts on development proposals, policy advice and regulatory services for effective waste management, pollution control and sustainable practices. It undertakes environmental assessments and provides advice under the *Environmental Assessment Act*, manages the regulatory functions of the *Waste Management and Pollution Control Act*, and is responsible for the administration of other environmental legislation.

To date, the NT EPA assisted the department to review outdated legislation to improve environmental assessment processes. The NT EPA also assisted the department to review and implement legislative changes in the *Environmental Protection (Beverage Containers and Plastic Bags) Act*. This included the passage of the Environmental Protection (Beverage Containers and Plastics Bags) Amendment Bill 2014 through the Legislative Assembly on 7 May 2014, which was assented to on 2 June 2014.

The new act commenced on 30 June 2014. The new act creates new requirement under the Container Deposit Scheme (CDS) to increase the ability for enforcement of the act, ensure collection depots are open to the public, ensure all CDS participants establish their own contractual arrangements, and reduce the number of categories that containers are split into at the collection depots.

The NT EPA is currently finalising a waste management strategy and developing an implementation plan under the storm water strategy. Further details are under the election commitment, Better Waste Management Practice.

'Investigate legislative policy review and advisory roles to the previous EPA' is also completed. The legislative policy review environmental quality reports and advisory role sits with the new EPA.

The NT EPA prepared the Redbank Copper Ltd mine environmental quality report and in March 2014 provided the then minister with recommendations on the environmental assessment and regulation of mine sites in accordance with these powers.

The NT EPA has recently released an individual quality report on the biodiversity of the Howard sand plains site on conservation significance for public consultation.

In addition, the NT EPA reviewed its organisational structure to bring together its regulatory and policy responsibilities to ensure it can provide a holistic approach to waste management and resource recovery issues.

The NT EPA's operations are subject to the Ombudsman's investigation.

'Better waste management practices' - these are the ones that are progressing. The NT EPA is responsible for waste management, that is, under the *Waste Management Pollution Control Act* which includes regulation of municipal tips, etcetera. The Department of Lands, Planning and the Environment is supporting the NT EPA to develop a waste management strategy, and the NT Planning Commission can provide guidance as it develops strategic land use plans.

Specifically, the NT EPA is to provide advice that identifies matters impacting effective and efficient waste management in the NT, opportunities to improve waste management outcomes and options, and recommendations for how the government should respond to the identified matters and opportunities.

Preliminary advice was provided to the then Minister for Lands, Planning and the Environment on 1 May 2014 outlining opportunities for improved waste management practices. Public consultation on the draft waste strategy commenced on 7 November 2014 and closes on 5 December 2015. Final advice is expected to be provided to the minister by mid-2015.

The storm water strategy for the Darwin Harbour region was finalised in August 2014 after public consultation, and published on the NT EPA website on 1 September 2014. The strategy provides a strong basis for improving the quality of storm water entering Darwin Harbour. The NT EPA proposes to report on the strategy annually and review outcomes after five years.

An implementation plan is being developed under the overarching storm water strategy. This implementation plan documents how the NT EPA and the community will achieve the purpose and objectives of the storm water strategy, and is anticipated to go out to public consultation in mid-2015.

Mr McCARTHY: Minister, can you please provide the details and costs of advertising and communications for the agency's 2014-15?

Mr HIGGINS: Advertising was \$21 380 and communications was \$5537.

Mr McCARTHY: How many staff are in the agency, full-time equivalent, permanent part-time contract and temporary contract?

Mr HIGGINS: The total number of staff in the NT EPA as at 31 March 2015 is 34.9 full-time equivalents. These are employees of the Department of Lands, Planning and the Environment. The total number of permanent part-time employees as at 31 March 2015 is 2.89 full-time equivalents. The total number of temporary contract employees as at 31 March 2015 is 2.54 full-time equivalents.

Mr McCARTHY: How many staff are ECO1 level and above?

Mr HIGGINS: I find this a very interesting answer: 1.54.

Mr McCARTHY: I like those staffing figures. I used to deal with them all the time.

Mr HIGGINS: I think that is when they distribute across the department somehow but I ...

Mr McCARTHY: That is a great answer. Minister, how many staff resigned in 2014-15 to date and what is that as the percentage of the agency's total staff?

Mr HIGGINS: Between 1 July 2014 and 31 March 2015, the department had one staff member resign and that is 3% of the full time equivalent staff.

Mr McCARTHY: Minister, how many staff were made redundant in 2014-15?

Mr HIGGINS: No staff were made redundant.

Mr McCARTHY: Can you detail fees and charges levied by the agency, the revenue raised and the whether any of those fees or charges were increased in Budget 2015-16?

Mr HIGGINS: No fees and charges were increased in the 2015-16 budget outside of fees and charges calculated under the revenue unit system.

Mr McCARTHY: Any details on the revenue raised?

Mr HIGGINS: To 31 March 2015, \$53 000.

Mr McCARTHY: Does the EPA occupy a leased premise?

Mr HIGGINS: Yes.

Mr McCARTHY: Can you provide the total cost of that leased accommodation in 2014-15 and estimated for 2015-16?

Mr HIGGINS: That question is probably one that should have gone to the minister for Corporate and Information Services, or DCIS.

Mr McCARTHY: Can you detail the cost in 2014-15 of legal services provided by private legal firms to each agency and authority, regarding the environment?

Mr HIGGINS: The cost of legal services provided by private legal firms to the NT Environment Protection Authority during the period 1 July 2014 to 31 March 2015 was \$15 242.10.

Mr McCARTHY: That is private legal firms? Yes?

Mr HIGGINS: Yes.

Mr McCARTHY: Okay. In appropriation, the 2013-14 budget estimate for EPA was \$9.977m. In 2015-16, the budget is \$8.06m. Can you explain the difference in budget allocations for the EPA over those years?

Mr HIGGINS: I do not have 2013-14 here. I have the 2014-15 which was \$6.972m and an increase to \$8.013m ...

Mr McCARTHY: My advice is 2013-14 was \$9.977m, so over that period 2013-14, 2015-16 we see a decrease. I am sure there is an explanation for it.

Mr HIGGINS: The preparation for today is on last year's budget and this year's estimates, not on the previous years. If you want those figures we have to go back to the previous year. We are doing 2014-15 and 2015-16; I did not know we were supposed to be doing 2013-14.

Mr McCARTHY: The questions interested in the new EPA because the opposition has been following the evolution of our new independent EPA. I am interested in those differentials around budget appropriations. However, we can move on.

What has been the history of staff establishment since the establishment of the EPA? For instance, FTE numbers and change in staff profile since establishment of the new independent EPA?

Dr FREELAND: I do not think there is any real change.

Mr HIGGINS: My advice is that the numbers have gone up, but your question was more around ...

Mr McCARTHY: Changes in FTE. Dr Freeland said no major changes.

Mr HIGGINS: No.

Mr McCARTHY: How many FTE in the EPA have technical and scientific qualifications relevant to their EPA role?

Dr FREELAND: This will sound facetious but it is not. All those other than six admin support staff. In fact one of those has technical qualifications as well.

Mr McCARTHY: Minister, how many staff have expertise in water management and water quality issues?

Dr FREELAND: I am not sure; water management is a big area. In water quality, sampling, looking after pollution issues and designing discharges licences there is a group of people and then there is another group of people. There is the Pollution Control Group and there is the Waste and Resource Recovery Group. They are mutually supportive and share the burden of going out in the middle of the night, the hot line or sampling at a mine. They share those roles. Some of them a very good and very knowledgeable all the way down to people who are still learning. It is the way it should be.

Mr McCARTHY: How much of the workload is about water?

Dr FREELAND: It is about water, dirt and air. I would say water and dirt take up most of it in relation to pollution control, waste and things. Water and dirt take up more of our time than air does.

Mr McCARTHY: Dr Freeland, with the developing northern Australia agenda, do you see water featuring more and more in the work of the EPA?

Dr FREELAND: Our work is not managing the rivers and streams; our job is working out how to stop people polluting those streams, and that is what we do.

Mr McCARTHY: Minister, noting the Chief Minister's \$7.9m appropriation to the Office of Northern Australian Development, what direct support is being provided to the EPA for any work related to this activity?

Dr FREELAND: I was not sure of the question. Can I ask ...

Mr McCARTHY: The Chief Minister appropriated a significant amount - \$7.9m - to the Northern Australia Development Office. What direct support is being provided to the EPA for any work related to this activity?

Mr HIGGINS: That question should have gone to the Chief Minister. Direct support to the EPA, yes. I am not too sure we have any information on that.

Dr FREELAND: I cannot answer because I do not know. Anything that comes from the development of the north I cheer, as somebody who grew up in the tropics. Our job in the EPA is to assess the major developments, mitigate impacts and provide environment protection when things develop.

Mr McCARTHY: I looked everywhere in budget papers but could not see any extra appropriation for that important work in relation to the increased workload in developing northern Australia.

Dr FREELAND: Yes, but the question then is, has it happened yet? To what extent have we had growth? I gave you an indication before, looking at the licensing under the *Waste Management and Pollution Control Act*, where it has grown since 2013 from 74 to 95.

We have similar numbers in the things we are supposed to be doing in environmental impact assessment. We have figures for that. Over that same three-year period, the numbers of notices of intent have not changed much. It went 31, 46, 34, so it varies depending on the surges in industry and the state of the economy.

Currently we have 18 environmental impact statements we are managing, and we have some waste discharge licences. They too have increased, but have not gone mad. It is within our capacity and if we get EPA online sorted out, our efficiency will go up and we are doing things better and smarter. Fix the legislation and life will get a lot easier. There are ways of doing things other than spending money, and we are doing all right at the moment.

Mr McCARTHY: When we talk about these issues we are talking Territory-wide, of course?

Dr FREELAND: Yes. There are issues, as we all know, in the remote areas regarding waste and those type of issues with tyranny of distance and all that sort of stuff.

Mr McCARTHY: Yes, this question was around development, the office and policy. Thanks, Dr Freeland.

Minister, can you table a complete list of the consultants you have engaged in the past 12 months, showing the date, the nature of the service, the consultant who provided the service and the value of the consultancy?

Mr HIGGINS: I am advised the Minister for Lands, Planning and the Environment gave answers on all the consultancies, including the ones that were done on behalf of the EPA. Lands and Planning that is, not Lands, Planning and the Environment.

Mr McCARTHY: Yes, that was one I would have commented on. You are not involved in any decision making that involves considerations of contracts with firms?

Mr HIGGINS: No.

Mr McCARTHY: What has been the cost of the recent move of the office to the address The Avenue? Why was that move necessary and were other options considered?

Mr HIGGINS: That is a question for DCIS as well. We have no information on it. We know we moved, but ...

Mr McCARTHY: Been out there, minister?

Mr HIGGINS: Yes.

Mr McCARTHY: So have I, it is a great location. Good office?

Mr HIGGINS: Yes.

Mr McCARTHY: What floor?

Mr HIGGINS: Two.

Mr McCARTHY: Floor two. I have been on a great tour.

What is the expected annual difference in cost of EPA office accommodation, comparing the annual cost of the past accommodation with the new office location, and how has the move to the new office location enhanced the operations of the agency?

Mr HIGGINS: Again that is an answer for DCIS.

Mr McCARTHY: Minister, this is right up your alley in considering costs. We have a comparison between the old office and new office ...

Mr CONLAN: A point of order, Mr Deputy Chair! It clearly is a question for DCIS. They handle all the property management. What goes on inside those environs is a matter for the Environment Protection Authority and they can answer any questions there. But with regard to the structure of the office and the cost relating to that, I ask you to direct the member for Barkly back to DCIS for property management.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR: Minister, do you believe you have answered the question?

Mr HIGGINS: Yes.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR: He has answered the question. Go to your next one.

Mr McCARTHY: Class act!

Minister, can you provide a list of current EPA environment grants, outlining the value of the grant, recipient, purpose and duration of the grant?

Dr FREELAND: We will not have the purpose, I do not think.

Mr HIGGINS: That was contracts and grants, or just grants?

Mr McCARTHY: EPA Environment Grants, please.

Mr HIGGINS: The EPA grants and subsidies from 1 July 2014 to 31 March 2015: current grants were \$613 580 and capital grants were \$15 000.

Mr McCARTHY: Could you outline or table the criteria used for assessing environmental grant applications?

Mr HIGGINS: I will let Dr Freeland answer that one.

Dr FREELAND: I do not have them in my back pocket. We use an online system for that. We can get back to them with something on it?

Mr HIGGINS: We can take that question on notice. The EPA makes the decision on the grants, so we can get that if you would like to give us that question on notice.

Mr McCARTHY: We will try this one, because they may have to go together. The next question I have is about the assessment of those applications. Is it a panel or is it the role of a single officer?

Dr FREELAND: It is a panel.

Question on Notice No 9.3

Mr McCARTHY: We will put the first part of the question. Can you outline the criteria you use for assessing environmental grant applications?

Dr FREELAND: That is the thing I ...

Mr HIGGINS: The question would be to the EPA, not the minister, if that is all right.

Mr McCARTHY: Thank you, minister.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR: That is the question on notice?

Mr McCARTHY: No, the minister – you have answered that or would you like to take it on notice?

Mr HIGGINS: I am not the one who makes the decisions on the grants, that is the EPA is what I am saying. So the question on notice is to the EPA. The question should be to the EPA.

Mr McCARTHY: Dr Freeland? Sure.

Mr HIGGINS: Yes, he has already said he will take that question on notice.

Mr McCARTHY: Okay.

Dr FREELAND: All the communities, when they apply for the grants, are aware of it. It is public knowledge. We are very strict on that.

Mr McCARTHY: So we will get a list of those assessment criteria?

Dr FREELAND: Yes, and ...

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR: You could google it and find out?

Dr FREELAND: It will not be up at the moment.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR: So, question on notice. We will assign that one number 9.3. You are happy to take that? Yes. Excellent, continue your line of questioning.

Mr McCARTHY: Can you outline the key recommendations you have made to government in relation to the reforms to the NT *Environmental Assessment Act*?

Mr HIGGINS: None.

Mr McCARTHY: What stakeholders were consulted in preparing the recommendations to government? What were the key issues raised with you, particularly by industry, land councils and the non-government environment sector?

Mr HIGGINS: My government understands that robust regulations are essential to ensure sustainable use of our unique Northern Territory environment. One of the first actions of this government was to introduce legislation creating a truly independent Environment Protection Authority. At that time, my government foresaw the need for a comprehensive review of the Northern Territory's environmental regulatory framework.

Dr Allan Hawke confirmed the need for review in his recommendations following the hydraulic fracturing inquiry. It was requested that Dr Hawke undertake a further review to that end. My understanding is he recently completed his review and the government will review the outcome of that shortly. That review was undertaken on behalf of the Chief Minister, and that report is with the Chief Minister. It is a question that should be asked of the Chief Minister.

Mr McCARTHY: As the Minister for Environment, you provided no recommendations in that process?

Mr HIGGINS: My understanding is that Dr Hawke had lengthy discussions with Dr Freeland. I will let him expand on that.

Dr FREELAND: Dr Hawke requested that we make a formal submission to him, and he laid down the criteria for that - things he wanted us to address - and we did that. It is a medium fat document and he has it, or he had it.

Mr McCARTHY: That was my next question. Where are the recommendations in relation to the *Environment Assessment Act*?

Dr FREELAND: I suggest we have to wait for the end of this process. The *Environmental Assessment Act* has been around since - what? - 1983. It has been riddled with inadequacies from day one; they are very well known and are not unusual. Everyone who has ever looked knows what they are. Our clients know what they are. We are in a fortunate position at the moment in that something is being done about it. The process is under way; we just have to wait a bit.

Mr McCARTHY: Are there any time frames around that process, minister?

Mr HIGGINS: Not that I am aware of. As I said, it is with the Chief Minister and that is where you would have to direct the questions.

Mr McCARTHY: Media reporting of the Port Melville issue referred to your concern about shortcomings in the Northern Territory *Environment Assessment Act*. AAP reported you, 5 May 2015, as describing the Northern Territory *Environmental Assessment Act* as grossly deficient. Could you outline the changes that we should see in the act, thinking particularly of the shortcomings as they applied to the change in land use at Port Melville from basically a wood chips bulk export to bulk fuel storage for overseas vessels?

Mr HIGGINS: I have answered that question as Dr Freeland has, that is, that this act has been in force since 1983 and there are a lot of deficiencies in it. There is a review in process and I do not think I should pre-empt any of the decisions that might come out of that.

Mr McCARTHY: Port Melville and Sherwin Iron notice of intents and the environmental impact statement material were both put together by environmental company EcOz. Do you believe that EcOz bears some responsibility for the poor quality of information that was provided on those two projects?

Mr HIGGINS: You are asking for an opinion. That question is better directed at Dr Freeland as part of the EPA. If he wants to express an opinion, he can.

Dr FREELAND: I am certainly not expressing an opinion about one of our clients.

Mr McCARTHY: That is the environmental company?

Dr FREELAND: Yes.

Mr McCARTHY: Dr Freeland, do you acknowledge that was poor-quality information?

Dr FREELAND: I am happy to acknowledge poor quality which has a multiplicity of causes, mate. I will not put a finger on anyone like that.

Mr McCARTHY: No, no. Regarding poor quality, why was it poor quality information in the industry of environmental protection?

Dr FREELAND: If I had the material with me I could go through and point out the inadequacies in the information. Why, in certain circumstances, do companies end up submitting substandard material? There is a host of reasons; the imagination is unlimited. You have just named one: (1) they might be in a hurry. (2) they might not have enough money to do the type of studies - and it just goes on and on. All of those things will be active in every case and it is how they manage those things that dictate the result.

Mr McCARTHY: Sure. But at some stage there is quality control that has gone wrong and the information has progressed past that point. Is that correct?

Dr FREELAND: Yes, it ends in my lap.

Mr McCARTHY: Do you find this is an ongoing problem?

Dr FREELAND: As the minister has clearly said, there are lots of inadequacies in the act. It does not provide us with any mechanism for guaranteeing the quality of the material that is given to us to assess, and that puts us in a very difficult circumstance.

Mr McCARTHY: Sure. A follow-up to that, Dr Freeland. I am sure you are aware that Port Melville and Sherwin Iron both had major projects status from the government, and both have been well below par in meeting their environmental regulations under the NT system. Without blaming the companies for their lack of attention to law, or the Northern Territory government for failing to apply the existing regulations, what is the way forward with the lessons we have learnt on those two particular projects?

Dr FREELAND: The government is already doing it. Quite seriously, the *Environmental Assessment Act* has been notorious for a long time. The previous EPA, with Graeme Webb and company, produced a lengthy report to the then Environment minister. There was massive public consultation but nothing happened. Now something is happening and I am relieved.

Mr McCARTHY: It is easy to act in hindsight, but the EPA must be looking at these examples for improving that quality control.

Dr FREELAND: I can assure you those circumstances influenced the nature of our recommendations.

Mr McCARTHY: Minister, why did you blame the lack of an environmental impact process on a loophole that there is no minister for ports, when it was revealed by media a day later that there is a minister for ports and it happens to be the Chief Minister? Who gave you that bad advice?

Mr HIGGINS: I will correct what was said. My comment during that interview was there was no responsible minister under the act. The interpretation that there was no minister for ports was a misinterpretation of what I was saying. My exact words were there is no responsible minister under the act.

Mr McCARTHY: Minister, I would like to correct you. I think your exact words were:

The responsible minister for port development is a loophole in the legislation ...

There is no responsible minister for signing off on a port development.

That was on 6 May 2015.

Dr FREELAND: That statement is correct because it is not a government port. It is a private port and it is quite distinctively different.

Mr McCARTHY: Minister, the ABC reported recently that the developer of Port Melville was surprised by accusations of environmental delays and efficiencies. Was that a surprise to government?

Mr HIGGINS: Not that I am aware of.

Mr McCARTHY: Not that you are aware of?

Mr HIGGINS: I have not heard any comments.

Dr FREELAND: The only surprise to me was it took so long for the ABC to find out about it.

Mr McCARTHY: Minister, what were the deficiencies in the information you have referred to as part of the notice of intent you received in May 2014?

Mr HIGGINS: In regard to?

Mr McCARTHY: Port Melville.

Dr FREELAND: I will deal with it. There were a number of issues. We were particularly concerned. One, for example - I cannot go through them all - that was there at the beginning and came right through to the end has been through each of three requests for information. There is more information on the nature of potential impacts and risks associated with sailing ships through an area with large number of dugongs, significant turtle nesting areas in close proximity, small cetaceans - dolphins and things - and how they will mitigate those risks. We finally got it in the latest submission. There are silly things like that. Their mitigation was simply a non-event and absurd and does not work. It took a long time and lot of coaxing at times to get the kind of information we needed.

Mr McCARTHY: What about the emergence of the dual purpose of that port? It was obviously to support the transport logistics of woodchip but that had a defined time line. The real essence of its future business is about bulk fuel diesel oil. Was that a complicating factor in this matter?

Dr FREELAND: It is more a matter of servicing the offshore oil industry. That is what it is really about. For whatever reason, it was very difficult to extract that sort of information early in the process.

Mr McCARTHY: To a lay person surely there is a big difference between bulk storage of fuel oil on-site and loading onto ships, as opposed to export of wood chips?

Dr FREELAND: Yes.

Mr McCARTHY: So that was obviously complicating ...

Dr FREELAND: That is not surprising ...

Mr CONLAN: We might be wandering out of the level of expertise and the parameters of the Estimates Committee structure here ...

Ms FYLES: I thought you were going to say out of Bill's expertise.

Mr CONLAN: This is to deal with the Appropriation Bill (2015-2016), and some latitude is given to the Appropriation Bill of 2014-15. Mr Deputy Chair, I ask that you ask the shadow minister to stay within the parameters of the Estimates Committee please.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR: Yes, member for Barkly, the idea of estimates is that there can be proper scrutiny of the Appropriation Bill. If you want to ask questions about policy and these sort of things, some latitude is given where the policy relates to particular expenditure, particularly when you are coming to some kind of point on expenditure. Unless you come to some kind of point on expenditure in the next minute, can we get onto some questions relating to the Appropriation Bill, which is the purpose of why we are here?

Mr McCARTHY: Minister, what formal response did you make to the notice of intent in relation to the project of Port Melville.

Mr HIGGINS: I do not make a response.

Dr FREELAND: The minister does not respond.

Mr McCARTHY: Dr Freeland, what was the formal response?

Dr FREELAND: We asked for more information. That followed consultation with government agencies.

Mr McCARTHY: The media reported that there had been a process way too slow in rectifying deficiencies in the information provided regarding Port Melville. Can you elaborate on what occurred and what would normally be expected?

Dr FREELAND: It is not a fast process. It consists of two elements. We are obliged to consult within government, which we do. That takes time. We have to write it up and get it back to them, then they have to respond and gather new information, perhaps, and all that sort of stuff. It takes a long time to get around.

Mr McCARTHY: Thank you, Dr Freeland. Minister, what information about the Port Melville development was received by you on 12 May 2015, and what has happened following the review of that information?

Mr HIGGINS: Mr Deputy Chair, I would like to get some clarification that was first raised by the member for Grottrex. My understanding is this is questioning on the Appropriation Bill. As you just said 12 May, my understanding is we have figures for 2014-15 up until the end of March, and the appropriation for next year. I am not too sure of the relevance of this line of questioning. I do not mind supplying the information if I have the information.

Mr McCARTHY: What information about the Port Melville development was received and what has happened in the review of that information?

Mr HIGGINS: By me, none.

Mr McCARTHY: Sorry minister, I missed that.

Mr HIGGINS: By me?

Mr McCARTHY: Yes.

Mr HIGGINS: None.

Mr McCARTHY: No information. Thank you. Are there still deficiencies in information about the Port Melville development that need to be addressed?

Dr FREELAND: There seems to be a misunderstanding. The *Environmental Assessment Act* is under the auspices of the EPA. It manages it from go to whoa, from getting the notice of intent through to providing the responsible minister with recommendations in the form of a report. During that time, the minister has no access to that information, any more than you do, other than that which is part of the public process, which is quite extensive.

Mr McCARTHY: Sure. With all the conjecture about whether it was a port or was not a port, Dr Freeland, you pointed out it is private port. Can you explain why that makes it different in environmental protection?

Dr FREELAND: There is a failure in your logic somewhere there. It assumes an answer which has nothing to do with what you implied.

Mr McCARTHY: I was talking about the conjecture. Is it a port or is it not a port? I believe it is a port. Whether it is a private port or a government port, does it come under the same ...

Dr FREELAND: No.

Mr McCARTHY: It does not. Can you explain the difference then?

Dr FREELAND: One is owned by the government. The port act applies to government ports, it does not apply to a private port.

Mr McCARTHY: So a private port ...

Dr FREELAND: That means there is no responsible minister for the development of a private port.

Mr McCARTHY: Oh, sure, you have established that. But in the process and the notice of intent, is that all the same?

Dr FREELAND: It means ...

Mr CONLAN: A lot of latitude is being given here. I understand, Mr Deputy Chair, that there is still an hour-and-a-half to go tonight. Perhaps the shadow minister does not have enough questions to fall within the parameters of this Estimates Committee to drag this out until 10.30 pm. We are more than happy to adjourn until tomorrow morning, if you like.

If you cannot bring the line of questioning back to the parameters of this Estimates Committee, which clearly states it is relating to the Appropriation Bill of 2015-16, there are any number of avenues you can source this information, member for Barkly.

Mr Deputy Chair, I ask that you rule on this, or encourage the member for Barkly to come back to the Appropriation Bill of 2015-16.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR: Thank you, member for Grottrex. The definition of what we will have a quick minute to talk about is where there are any questions on the operations or financial positions of the departments and agencies which seek funds in the estimates are relevant questions for the purpose of estimates hearings, this word 'operations' is a governance term. The word 'operation' usually stands in juxtaposition to strategic.

It gives you the latitude to not just ask, 'How much did you spend on this, how much did you spend on that?' it gives you latitude to say, 'What are you doing in this space, or that space?' from an operational perspective at a departmental level so you can get an understanding of the financial position - not the dollar figure but what is happening for that dollar figure.

You have been given so much latitude, it is nuts. You are asking questions that are solely and wholly related to policy decisions as they relate to the EPA and its terms of reference of what it is and what it does.

I remind you - and I will warn you here - if this does not come back at some point to some kind of structured operations as it has to do with financial relationship, then we will do something further about it. Do you understand, member for Barkly?

Ms FYLES: Speaking to the point of order! The EPA expends funds, therefore these questions are the purview of estimates.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR: That is why I went through the entire definition. In case you were not listening, member for Nightcliff, when I read the definition of it out, yes, I understand these people get money, but I also understand where it relates to operations and financial positions. It is not about looking at what is the EPA's baseline policy on this, that or the next thing.

At some point this has to come back to appropriation. Whilst we give lots of latitude, it is starting to look like we are not coming back to anything to do with operations as they relate to finance. All we are doing is talking about what is the EPA's opinion on this, and what is the EPA's opinion on that.

If you ask about Port Melville and these type of things, that is fine, but you have to keep it around appropriation a bit. Give me something to work with. At least say appropriation in your question. Keep it about what we are supposed to be here for, because it sounds like you are wasting this committee's and these people's time.

Mr McCARTHY: Thank you, Mr Deputy Chair ...

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR: Do you understand what I said?

Mr McCARTHY: Thank you, Mr Deputy Chair ...

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR: Do you understand what I said, member for Barkly?

Mr McCARTHY: Thank you, Mr Deputy Chair. Minister ...

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR: So you will not even respond?

Mr McCARTHY: ... in your last published annual report ...

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR: No.

Mr McCARTHY: Sorry, Mr Deputy Chair.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR: You are flirting with the line in the sand.

Mr McCARTHY: I thought I could go on with the prosecution, Mr ...

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR: I asked you a question.

Mr McCARTHY: Sorry?

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR: I asked you a question.

Mr McCARTHY: What was that question? I missed it.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR: Do you understand what we are talking about?

Mr McCARTHY: Yes. Yes, thank you for the explanation, Mr Deputy Chair.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR: Fantastic. Please continue with your line of questioning.

Mr McCARTHY: Minister, in your last published annual report you noted difficulties with project components providing inadequate information to you. How do you plan to address that? Is there a budget appropriation and will it be dealt with in Budget 2015-16?

Mr HIGGINS: Dr Freeland will answer that question.

Dr FREELAND: That is one of those issues we have just been discussing about the *Environmental Assessment Act*. It can only be cured, realistically, with what is being done at the moment by people who know what they are looking at, trying to come up with significant improvements. It is long overdue and it is happening. It is good.

Mr McCARTHY: Thank you, Dr Freeland. Minister, can you outline the progress in the devolution of powers under the Commonwealth EPBC Act to the Northern Territory, outlining the benefits and the risks to the NT and the cost of implications for the office?

Dr FREELAND: I am not the appropriate person to be speaking on behalf of government about a bilateral arrangement. I am not even a public servant, so it is the type of question you should ask the Chief Minister's department.

Mr HIGGINS: The Chief Minister's department has been managing the bilateral agreements. The only information I can give you is that the EIS bilateral agreements are in place.

Mr McCARTHY: Minister, have you done any assessment of the cost implications for the department?

Mr HIGGINS: No. I repeat that these negotiations and what is involved are with the Chief Minister so he would be aware of the implications.

Mr McCARTHY: In consideration of marine issues and the definition around national environmental management, are there appropriation considerations or determinations of that with our EPA with the Territory and the Commonwealth?

Dr FREELAND: I was not quite clear on the question.

Mr McCARTHY: That is what it looked like, Dr Freeland.

Dr FREELAND: Yes, we are still not quite clear on the question.

Mr McCARTHY: I am interested in the marine environment and the crossover between Commonwealth and Territory. What are the budget implications with the management of EPA work and issues with our marine environment?

Dr FREELAND: We keep doing what we have always done; it does not make any difference.

Mr McCARTHY: Is there Commonwealth support in budget appropriation?

Mr HIGGINS: The EIS bilateral is simply that the Commonwealth recognises our EIS as meeting its requirements. Proponents would not be required to prepare two separate environmental impact statements.

Dr FREELAND: It does not cost us any more or less.

Mr McCARTHY: So the Commonwealth does not bear any of the cost?

Dr FREELAND: No.

Mr McCARTHY: Minister, thinking of marine-related issues, what work is being done in respect of the pollution associated with NT port loading facilities at Bing Bong in Darwin, Groote Eylandt or Port Melville?

Dr FREELAND: I am not aware of any at Port Melville. There was no marine pollution that we have become aware of other than a little sediment. The other one at Bing Bong – we have asked them to investigate what the potential was for remediation, knowing pretty much that the probability of being able to remediate a mud flat would cause more damage than letting it slowly recuperate itself. That is the advice that we are likely to receive from them, and I was not terrible concerned. What was the other site you were concerned about? Darwin?

Mr McCARTHY: Yes.

Dr FREELAND: When we have pollution events we try to have them cleaned up and prosecuted, as appropriate.

Mr McCARTHY: What went so wrong with Western Desert Resources load-out at Bing Bong that created many of the problems for the port?

Dr FREELAND: There were two issues. One was wind from the load-out and the other was inappropriate sediment control points.

Mr McCARTHY: I lived in the area for a long time and visited regularly to monitor that. What I mean by that question is how come it reached a point, with major status, that nobody foresaw the problems with that iron ore dust and the problems it caused in the port? Does it relate to this notice of intent process - poor information?

Dr FREELAND: That is fair.

Mr McCARTHY: In regard to the work you have done – I am a lay person – I saw it as a missed opportunity to get that right. Even local constituents explained to me regarding dust suppression on those live stockpiles, covered conveyor load-out facility and a covered barge. We were having these conversations on the coast looking at this. How come it went so wrong?

Dr FREELAND: I probably cannot answer.

Mr McCARTHY: The EPA did not have any grunt regarding that project going wrong?

Dr FREELAND: No, no. There are two separate issues and we must not confuse them. One is what the EIS process was and the outcome, and we have discussed that. The other one is where management responsibility lies in relation to management options in managing environmental issues. We have no role on mining sites.

Mr McCARTHY: You have no capacity in regard to that issue or now the issue of Bing Bong and possibly water contamination?

Dr FREELAND: At Bing Bong?

Mr McCARTHY: Yes, heavy metal contamination.

Dr FREELAND: We have no evidence of heavy metal contamination at Bing Bong.

Mr McCARTHY: Do you do testing there?

Dr FREELAND: It is just iron oxide. It is rust.

Mr McCARTHY: I am talking about the McArthur River mine operation.

Dr FREELAND: The Bing Bong facility issues have been associated with Western Desert, not McArthur River. Are we back to McArthur River mine?

Mr McCARTHY: I believe Bing Bong got a bad deal out of what happened with the iron ore dust. I am interested in the capacity of the Environment Protection Authority to deal with these issues. I seem to be hearing it is a mines port, so therefore you do not have any capacity in this process.

Dr FREELAND: Our responsibilities begin and end at the edge of the mineral lease. Unless something comes out of the mineral lease in the atmosphere, in water, or oozes through the ground, we have no role. Once it is outside we have a role.

Mr McCARTHY: Is the marine environment considered outside the mining lease?

Dr FREELAND: It depends where the mining lease goes.

Mr McCARTHY: We are talking about Bing Bong.

Mr CONLAN: A point of order, Mr Deputy Chair! Again, this is well outside the parameters. It is a freestyle conversation between Dr Freeland and the member for Barkly which is out of order in the first instance. All questions need to be directed to the Minister for the Environment. Notwithstanding that, this is again well outside the parameters of the Estimates Committee. Saying the words 'Appropriation Bill 2015-16' does not make the question in order by any stretch. I would like to hear about the money, the numbers. I ask if this line of questioning continues then maybe adjourn the Estimates Committee for the evening if the member for Barkly does not have anything further to ask in regard to this.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR: Member for Barkly, is this coming back to staff numbers and resources allocated to this particular task, or will you continue in the same vein?

Mr McCARTHY: I am about to quote from Budget Paper No 2 regarding a question. May I proceed?

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR: You are altering your line of questioning a little so that would be great. Proceed.

Mr McCARTHY: Minister, quoting from the Northern Territory Budget Paper No. 2, Budget Strategy and Outlook:

The Territory has provided an indemnity to DPC in relation to certain remedial works at East Arm Port. The indemnity covers third-party claims that may be made against DPC, as well as rectification of damage to the wharf or other DPC property caused by the carrying out of the remedial works. Comprehensive risk management procedures are in place to minimise risk exposure to the Territory.

I believe that is in relationship to the tie rods project and probably relates the storm water project. What is the EPA's role in those remediation works currently at the Darwin Port Corporation?

Mr HIGGINS: My advice is that it all falls under the *Port Management Act*, which is clearly under the Chief Minister. As far as I have been advised, there is no role for the EPA.

Mr McCARTHY: Budget Paper No 2 outlines very clearly that there is an indemnity provided by the Northern Territory government. Are you saying the EPA has not been contacted about these issues and has no role in monitoring that situation?

Mr HIGGINS: I repeat it is a question for the Chief Minister. The EPA has been advised of it.

Mr McCARTHY: No advice about structural integrity of the wharf or storm water management?

Mr HIGGINS: I have answered the question ...

Mr CONLAN: A point of order, Mr Deputy Chair! This is the third time he has asked the question. The minister is now answering the question for a third time.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR: Do you believe you have answered the question?

Mr HIGGINS: I believe I answered it the first time.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR: Let us move on.

Mr McCARTHY: Thank you, minister. Can you outline the roles and actions of the EPA in respect of the smoking rock pile at the McArthur River mine site and any appropriation by the EPA in the work that was conducted?

Dr FREELAND: Both the EPA Board, and separately our staff, inspected the site. We determined that, yes, there was smoke but we did not think it would be of a significant impact to people or to the environment. We figured it would be dissipating. We got word from the Northern Land Council that they were worried that one of the outstations was being impacted. I sought their assistance in confirming that. They went down there and camped the night and, yes, they got sulphur dioxide.

We then directed the company to undertake an audit of the emissions of sulphur dioxide and other gases off site and to that end, do a lot of modelling of the dispersion of the gases from the site and to establish 24/7 air quality monitoring at the site of the outstation and at Borroloola. That was based on some preliminary hand-held results the company got of exceeding the national standards up to 25 km from the site. We felt quite justified in doing what we did. We are quite pleased to say that early this month – soon – it should be up and running.

Mr McCARTHY: Thanks, Dr Freeland. Did the EPA bear the costs for that work?

Dr FREELAND: The only costs that we bear in that is the cost of my staff travelling down there to check it out and make sure it is happening. That is about it.

Mr McCARTHY: Does the company share any costs of the work the EPA did?

Dr FREELAND: We just drive down, that is all. The rest of the cost is entirely up to them.

Mr McCARTHY: You talked about ongoing monitoring, so I presume there will be multiple trips to monitoring sites?

Dr FREELAND: We have numerous clients in the gulf country, and they need to be seen. Yes, it is just part of our job.

Mr McCARTHY: Sure.

Dr FREELAND: If there is a prosecution, or if we direct them to do something, they have to clean it up. The only case where we would be reimbursed our costs would be in a prosecution.

Mr McCARTHY: Minister, in your statement and in the budget appropriation there is work around legacy mines for the EPA. Can Dr Freeland inform me about Redbank mine and progress that has been made there since it was first identified as a significant environmental impact on the environment around it?

Dr FREELAND: We wrote an environmental quality report to the previous minister for the Environment and provided advice under the act in relation to that. The first purpose of the report was to primarily not find a solution to it; that was not the intent. The intent was to say, 'These are the things that went wrong and these steps it might be very helpful to take to ensure we do not get these things so often in the future'. A big chunk of that was that *Environmental Assessment Act* again.

Mr McCARTHY: Causing the problem?

Dr FREELAND: Yes.

Mr McCARTHY: Sure. And the appropriation for the work you have done at Redbank is significant?

Dr FREELAND: I went down with the minister for Mines once, and one or two of our staff went down on a sampling trip. Somebody went down and attended the liaison meetings with other local Aboriginal people, the pastoral leaseholder and all those sorts of people. They are not huge costs.

Mr McCARTHY: And ongoing? Is there a budget appropriation that will support you?

Dr FREELAND: Oh, goodness gracious me, no! It is too small.

Mr McCARTHY: That particular legacy mine – that project is too small?

Dr FREELAND: No, our expenditure down there. We do not have responsibility for the legacy mine. It is a Mines department issue.

Mr McCARTHY: I have been working with Glencore and traditional owners in that area. I have been trying to encourage the company to take on local people into real jobs to work alongside the professionals in monitoring. Can I ask you a couple of questions? First of all, do you think that is realistic? Second, would the EPA have any budget appropriation that would support that? Third, would the EPA look at taking on traditional owners who were prepared to do the study and the work to become an independent environmental monitor?

Mr CONLAN: Mr Deputy Chair, I suggest all three of those questions are out of order. The first one is asking for an opinion, the other two are completely unrelated to the purview of this Estimates Committee.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR: The first one I think you are right, but the second two, there is probably an argument for it. Judging by the minister's facial expression, he can make a decision on whether he thinks that is appropriate or not.

Mr HIGGINS: The question should have been asked to the Mine's minister, for starters.

Mr McCARTHY: Well, Mr Deputy Chair, it looks like nobody wants to support my constituents. Maybe we could have a private conversation, Dr Freeland ...

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR: Hang on, member for Barkly. Putting on record that nobody wants to support your constituents is unfair, particularly in light of you asking questions of the EPA about their opinion on

something, then trying to bring it back to appropriation by saying, 'Do you have plans in your appropriation to employ locals?' That kind of question is within the ability of these guys to answer, but I need to keep you on a bit of a tight road here.

Mr McCARTHY: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker.

Mr HIGGINS: I know that McArthur River mine does make funds available locally. I am sure the member should know that, and the mines department would be the place to put the question.

Mr McCARTHY: Thank you, minister. I do know that and we are going there.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR: He asked the question about the EPA and whether the EPA has money set aside for employing local monitors.

Dr FREELAND: No.

Mr McCARTHY: Thank you, Dr Freeland. In the lessons learned around Redbank and legacy mines, minister, what sort of appropriation are we looking at to address this legacy issue across the Territory?

Mr McCARTHY: Again I say to you, that is a question for the Mines minister. We answered that same question a few minutes ago.

Mr CONLAN: Mr Deputy Chair, this is becoming tedious repetition. These are questions that need to be directly asked of the minister for Mines.

Member for Barkly, you clearly have a very strong interest in this area, and I respect that. But as a member of the PAC we need to remain within the confines of the PAC parameters, which is asking questions of the Environmental Protection Authority, through the minister, about appropriation with regard to environmental protection issues.

Dr Freeland has already stated they do not manage legacy mines. This is a question that needs to be directed to the minister for Mines or the Mines department. There are a number of opportunities or avenues for you to seek this information.

There is still an hour and five minutes to go. If you are finding it difficult to get to 10.30 pm, there is no shame or embarrassment to adjourn this committee. No one will judge you for it. You have had three hours, just about, to discuss this.

If you have questions regarding the appropriation within the parameters of the Estimates Committee, please continue. But if not, Mr Deputy Chair, I ask that you remind the member for Barkly that he is on a warning for wandering well outside the parameters of this Estimates Committee.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR: Let us keep it close please, member for Barkly.

Mr McCARTHY: Thank you, Mr Deputy Chair.

Mr CONLAN: Mr Deputy Chair, please, point of order! I did not ask that it be kept close. There has already been an extreme amount of indulgence given to the member for Barkly. I ask that it remain within the parameters, or we seek an alternative course of action.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR: Understood.

Mr McCARTHY: Thank you, Mr Deputy Chair. Minister, only four pages of questions left. I hope I can fit them in before 10.30 pm.

What is the status of the EPA's work and recommendations in relation to environmental assessment guidelines for land clearing proposals submitted under the *Pastoral Land Act*?

Dr FREELAND: When I said we had a guideline on when not to submit a notice of intent, one was done for issues associated with the *Pastoral Lands Act*, one for the *Mining Act*, one for the *Petroleum Act* and one for the *Planning Act*.

We believe the Pastoral Land Board makes use of that and, where appropriate, send us copies of the applications for land clearing. We comment on it and make recommendations as appropriate. To date there has not been one of sufficient significance to require an EIS since I have been in the job.

Mr McCARTHY: Would an EIS now involve significantly increasing herds on pastoral properties?

Dr FREELAND: Increasing?

Mr McCARTHY: Herds. Due to better management practices, you see a lot of gulf country cattle stations that were traditionally running 4000 head, now running 15 000, 20 000 head. Is there an EIS process around this movement in industry?

Dr FREELAND: I am unaware of one ever occurring anywhere in Australia.

Mr McCARTHY: In relation to land clearing, would you have concerns?

Dr FREELAND: That is one issue we do. That is what I was just describing to you. We have land clearing issues crossing our desk, yes.

Mr McCARTHY: But not in relation to the size of the herd? It would be more in the traditional sense of clearing land?

Dr FREELAND: That is correct.

Mr McCARTHY: What role does the EPA have in considering environmental issues in respect of water allocation and environmental flows of Northern Territory rivers and streams?

Mr HIGGINS: The Chair of the EPA answered that question about an hour-and-a-half ago.

Mr McCARTHY: I can remember a discussion about natural rivers. What about water allocations?

Dr FREELAND: The EPA has never been involved in it in the past. Technically we possibly could, but I do not think it is necessarily appropriate. The *Water Act* has supremacy there. There is a public consultation process which does pretty much what we do.

Mr McCARTHY: Given the results of a recent Supreme Court case, do you think there is more scope for the EPA to be involved in the water allocation process?

Mr HIGGINS: My understanding is the decision of the Supreme Court was just clarifying the process of the appeal.

Mr McCARTHY: Do you think the EPA has a role in the formula and the science of water allocations? Perhaps Dr Freeland would like to respond. Is it appropriate work for an EPA in the Northern Territory?

Dr FREELAND: I have already given an answer to that. Technically it may be possible to conjure up that from the current act, but I do not necessarily think it is appropriate. That is for the second time.

Mr McCARTHY: You do not want to give me reasons why it is not appropriate?

Dr FREELAND: I did that too.

Mr McCARTHY: Minister, can you update us on the EPA's work in relation to waste management in the Northern Territory?

Dr FREELAND: The waste management strategy is currently being formatted professionally and will be submitted to the minister in the relatively near future. Everyone will get to see it. There will also be advice to the minister under the Northern Territory *Environmental Assessment Act* associated with it.

Mr McCARTHY: In budgets, what are the key challenges for local governments in improving waste management in remote communities?

Dr FREELAND: If you want an expert, talk to the regional councils. I am quite serious. They are very good and they are doing a very good job on waste, as best they can.

Mr McCARTHY: I expect there would be considerable budget implications for that area in the improved act?

Dr FREELAND: We have a long way to go before we get to that.

Mr McCARTHY: We are seeing some movement in that now in the bush at local rubbish tips. There are considerable appropriations needed to continue that. What is the benchmark? Is it the national legislation we are looking at? How are we designing our waste management act?

Dr FREELAND: The *Waste Management and Pollution Control Act* has been operating since about 1999. We put out a White Paper last year and we have a Green Paper coming out in the near future looking at feedback from the community and everybody on what needs to be done in relation to it.

In regard to the management of waste sites and waste tips, there is a series of national standards and things that people adhere to. That is what we manage.

Mr McCARTHY: Minister, is the EPA involved in the development of the Top End regional waste management facility?

Dr FREELAND: There is no such beast at the moment. There was preliminary environmental work undertaken by the previous government, but they did not go ahead with it. As far as I am aware, it is pretty much in abeyance at the moment.

Madam CHAIR: I apologise, minister, we have not given you a break since 7.30 pm. We will have a 10-minute break so you can refresh.

The committee suspended

Madam CHAIR: Thank you everyone for coming back after the break. We have minister Higgins with the Environmental Protection Authority. Member for Barkly, you were just asking questions in that portfolio area.

Mr McCARTHY: Thank you, Madam Chair. Minister, can you update the estimates committee on the work in relation to the pollution control act?

Dr FREELAND: Regarding our attempts to put out a White Paper and a Green Paper?

Mr McCARTHY: Yes, and I have questions about that act, so I am very interested.

Dr FREELAND: We put out a White Paper to the community and industry – we send it everywhere – which basically says, ‘Tell us what you think’. We gave them some things to think about in there and they have come back with answers. We are currently finalising a review of those responses and we are hoping in July/August - maybe September depending on how difficult it is to get things organised - we would go back with a Green Paper which would be a more definitive statement of things which we thought people might think were good things to do. To get feedback on the specifics after having listened to them, got their ideas is where we are at. That is the beginning and end of the story.

Mr McCARTHY: That is great. Thank you, Dr Freeland. Has noise pollution featured in that consultation?

Dr FREELAND: Noise pollution would not feature as an issue on its own. Noise pollution is one of the things we have to deal with. We are currently writing a series of approaches to noise, including a guideline on noise in relation to bird scaring devices, which will hopefully go out soon for public consultation. That is where you get the specific levels. You do not do that sort of stuff in legislation.

Mr McCARTHY: I am particularly interested in relation to two areas. One is the development of the RAAF and the other is the increase in building activity. Has the EPA seen an increase in this area of concern around noise pollution?

Dr FREELAND: We get hotline queries about noise quite regularly. Sometimes they are associated with people building outside their permitted time periods, that is, the middle of the bloody night.

Mr McCARTHY: This is major construction?

Dr FREELAND: Yes, and house construction.

Mr McCARTHY: Right. Have we seen a significant increase of concerns by residents in this area?

Dr FREELAND: I am not sure if it is an increase in concern or just an increase in building activity that has occurred over the last two-and-a-half years after a period of abeyance, basically. It could just be that. I would not want to put any cause on it.

Mr McCARTHY: Does the Department of Defence submit through the same processes in their developments?

Dr FREELAND: You mean about aircraft noise?

Mr McCARTHY: Yes, through the EPA.

Dr FREELAND: No. There is a Commonwealth process that I am not familiar with where they work out noise contours anticipated from various military and civilian aircrafts around airports, and that is their business.

Mr McCARTHY: That is then overlaid in an area plan?

Dr FREELAND: Yes, it affects planning.

Mr McCARTHY: So the EPA does not play a part in that at all?

Dr FREELAND: Not particularly, no.

Mr HIGGINS: Member for Barkly, the Commonwealth supplies a lot of those figures to the Planning minister on a regular basis.

Mr McCARTHY: No, I had not made the connection with the EPA. Thank you, Dr Freeland, you have informed me. That is a question I took with me when I left the department.

Minister, can you outline key enforcement activities undertaken by the EPA in the past 12 months?

Dr FREELAND: Probably. I am not sure what 'key' means but to give you some idea of compliance activities, I can give you a good overview over the last three years.

We went looking for the records back to 2012-13; there really were not any that were reliable. We took over on 1 January and prior to that there were no substantive records of a lot of things, so we have no data on compliance enforcement activity for that year that we could rely on.

I mentioned earlier that we use a variety of different approaches. If you break it down we have a whole bunch of things called pollution abatement notices, authorised officer directions, warnings, requirements to do an audit, show cause letters, escalating out, investigations into offences and penalty infringement notices.

If you add up all those different ways of doing things, in 2013 there were 72 we dealt with, and so far this year we have had 143.

There is a bunch of different things associated with the infringement notices – whether they applied to an unlicensed facility, it was a failure to comply with a licence conditions, it a waste-related issue, whether it complied with an officer's authorised direction, and environmental nuisances. We had nine last year and we have only had 31 infringement notices this year. That says we go out of our way to try to avoid penalties and would rather give advice, encouragement, directions and warnings than go the next step. That is the most important thing.

We have one prosecution under way.

Mr McCARTHY: In relation to that list, how many were determined as significant environmental issues?

Dr FREELAND: Even the McArthur River mine issue, which I believe was significant, we only ended up giving a penalty infringement notice, which is like a traffic ticket. That was to get their attention, rather than anything else.

Mr McCARTHY: The other case is more significant than the smoking rock pile and the configuration of the tailings dump at McArthur River - the one you mentioned as a prosecution?

Dr FREELAND: There are several issues you have to evaluate when you decide on what course of action to take. One of them is, as you have implied, the significance of the environmental impact or the potential for environmental harm, as it is called in the act. The other one is who is doing it and what was the basis of their behaviour? If you have some dumbo who does something really stupid you take a lot more lenient attitude, particularly if they get off their bum and clean it up.

However, if it is someone whose role in life is such and such, for which you have already given a licence and they should know what they are doing, they know it is happening and they do nothing, then I have no sympathy.

Mr McCARTHY: That person who is uneducated in environmental awareness - are they then given directions about how to clean up the mess they create?

Dr FREELAND: It depends on the nature of the issue. There are a lot of things people cannot just clean up themselves; they have to hire someone to do it.

Mr McCARTHY: It is about bearing the cost of a cleanup or rehabilitation?

Dr FREELAND: That is correct.

Mr McCARTHY: Would the EPA determine the level of that?

Dr FREELAND: Yes, what we would do - and we have done a few of them - is make a direction to the company or whoever to hire an environmental auditor. They are accredited people. The auditor has to hire someone to conduct the work to the required standards, which are usually national standards.

Mr McCARTHY: Minister, this might be for Dr Freeland as well. What investigation, compliance training and support is provided to the EPA investigators?

Dr FREELAND: That is very important. One of the things behind that increase in numbers is that we have a higher proportion of trained people. You do not send out people who do not know what they are doing. There are procedures and ways of doing things and they have to be up to scratch.

We introduced a competency training process and we have different levels of people in different areas. Basically there is a series of competencies they have to achieve to do certain things.

Mr McCARTHY: Is this nationally accredited training?

Dr FREELAND: No, we are just doing our own thing, but it is basically the same thing that happens everywhere.

Mr McCARTHY: Do you have a budget appropriation for training?

Dr FREELAND: Within our budget. It would not appear in the budget for government. Yes, we have a training budget.

Mr McCARTHY: So you are training staff in-house?

Dr FREELAND: We also send them on courses and things like that.

Mr McCARTHY: What is the budget appropriation, minister, to look after that part of the EPA? External consultancies, RTOs or registered training organisations?

Mr HIGGINS: What is provided to the EPA is basically the one line item. Right? How that is expended in that area is up to the EPA - how much it spends on training as opposed to something else.

Mr McCARTHY: Dr Freeland is saying it is not a significant budget line.

Dr FREELAND: It certainly would not appear in the government's budget.

Mr McCARTHY: Yet it is a very important job. Does it cross into the occupational health and safety area around people with aggressive responses to investigators?

Dr FREELAND: My staff are under strict instructions: if someone gets aggressive, go away and come back with some police.

Mr McCARTHY: That is always the first rule. Yes that is rule 101 in engagement. There is nothing more formal?

Dr FREELAND: No.

Mr McCARTHY: You do not do any security training or safety training?

Dr FREELAND: No. At the first sign of significant intransigence, go and get a copper.

Mr McCARTHY: Would the staff you are talking about have a baseline qualification already?

Dr FREELAND: They all have science qualifications.

Mr McCARTHY: So is operating in hazardous environments and dealing with dangerous goods part of the training that the EPA will provide?

Dr FREELAND: It is a very serious issue.

Mr McCARTHY: And you do that in-house? You do not have a nationally-accredited package?

Dr FREELAND: The Department of Lands, Planning and the Environment has its own work health and safety issues. We abide by that, and we also have other things we require.

Mr McCARTHY: It sounds interesting.

Dr FREELAND: For example, we had to Q fever shots because of the abattoir.

Mr McCARTHY: Sorry, I missed that. Immunisations?

Dr FREELAND: Yes.

Mr McCARTHY: Because of the new scope of work that you are involved in?

Dr FREELAND: Yes.

Mr McCARTHY: What immunisations are required in terms of AACo?

Dr FREELAND: Q fever.

Mr McCARTHY: Q fever, right. I was wondering what you meant by that. And regarding the other immunisations such as tetanus, hepatitis B ...

Dr FREELAND: They are all significant, particularly the hepatitis.

Mr McCARTHY: So hep A and hep B will be provided to all?

Dr FREELAND: We have not as yet. We have not finalised what we will do about that one.

Mr McCARTHY: Interesting, because that is available in other areas of the public service.

Dr FREELAND: It is a very important one.

Mr McCARTHY: Yes.

Dr FREELAND: Yes.

Mr McCARTHY: So is that on the plan?

Dr FREELAND: We have a work health safety committee and they are working that through.

Mr McCARTHY: Yes. In a program like that to protect the worker, there would be hepatitis A, hepatitis B, Q fever, tetanus?

Dr FREELAND: Yes, there is a string of them.

Mr McCARTHY: That bears a cost. You would be aware of that.

Dr FREELAND: Yes. You would not find it in the budget.

Mr McCARTHY: A budgetary consideration, dare I say it, minister.

Dr FREELAND: Not of major significance.

Mr McCARTHY: We might beg to differ there, it depends on the number of personnel ...

Dr FREELAND: Monetarily.

Mr McCARTHY: ... we are talking about. A whooping cough shot is \$50. That is just for the vaccine, let alone the bills for medical and the rest of it.

Minister, what work is occurring to improve cooperative work with environmental management staff at the EPA and the Department of Mines and Energy?

Dr FREELAND: Naturally we work hand in glove with them the whole time.

Mr McCARTHY: Yes.

Dr FREELAND: We have joint monitoring excursions down the gulf and things, so yes, we work closely.

Mr McCARTHY: Is this a formal arrangement or is it ...

Dr FREELAND: No.

Mr McCARTHY: ... an ad hoc arrangement or ...

Dr FREELAND: It is a practical arrangement based on mutual need to cooperate and do the right things.

Mr McCARTHY: So staff travel together?

Dr FREELAND: Yes.

Mr McCARTHY: Share costs in terms of ...

Dr FREELAND: Yes.

Mr McCARTHY: ... that part?

Dr FREELAND: Mostly it is us bludging off them, but anyway ...

Mr HIGGINS: I can add to that, member for Barkly, that many of the mining companies come in and meet with us regularly, and the Minerals Council as well. All of them are encouraged to have meetings with the EPA, so ...

Mr McCARTHY: Thank you. Minister, how does the EPA work with environmental health - the Department of Health - in relation to sharing work and issues? I am particularly interested in any work that is going on around mosquitos?

Dr FREELAND: Our only interest in mosquitos is getting advice from environmental health when it comes to an environmental impact statement. Okay? It is not our interest, it is the interest of the proponent who has to get the information.

The environmental health people work with us very frequently on all our environmental impact statements, as do many departments when required. In addition to that, we work together on mutual areas of interests, because it overlaps.

If you look at noise, I worked out one time there are about six, seven or eight different acts which deal with noise in the legislation of the Northern Territory. How they overlap and interact is quite complex. We deal with Health on that and many things.

Mr McCARTHY: So, Health asking for your advice?

Dr FREELAND: Again, it is mutual. We are not backward about asking for help and advice. They come and ask us about things too.

Mr McCARTHY: Can I ask about specific work done in relation to the pollution issues around Buffalo Creek?

Dr FREELAND: Buffalo Creek is simple. It is just effluent, and that is all there is to it - nutrient-rich effluent. It has been improved, but there are limits to how much can be done.

Mr McCARTHY: I expect also the amount of traffic in and out of that area is a significant issue in pollution around Buffalo Creek, with cars, boats and fuel ...

Dr FREELAND: Well ...

Mr McCARTHY: ... carcasses of ...

Dr FREELAND: I do not think that would require a discharge licence, but the effluent from the sewage ponds do.

Mr McCARTHY: Sure.

Dr FREELAND: Much more important.

Mr McCARTHY: That is the significant work that is going on around Buffalo Creek? Or has it been identified and now we will wait and see?

Dr FREELAND: You asked about monitoring earlier. We try not to do monitoring. The Department of Land Resource Management does that. If there is monitoring needed, we like to have the monitoring focused. We like the work to be paid for and done by the person who is making the mess. Power and Water has requirements under its discharge licences to conduct monitoring and provide us with the results. We occasionally double-check on these things, particularly when there is cause for concern. But, yes, we would prefer the client pay up rather than us.

Mr McCARTHY: In relation to the *Marine Pollution Act*, do you have a gap analysis of that? Is this part of the work you do as you move forward?

Dr FREELAND: We inherited the *Marine Pollution Act* two-and-a-half years ago. Not a lot has ever been done with it. It is a funny act. It is geared to something called MARPOL which is an international agreement on pollution and things at sea. Not much has ever been done. It is outdated in that it has not been kept up with MARPOL, so there are certain issues there. None of the required training had been done. We have had a big pile of stuff on us and it did not come to the top of the pile. But we are slowly working it through in getting people aware, trained and organising things at both national and Territory levels.

Mr McCARTHY: Have you seen an increase in budget appropriation to address this new areas of work?

Dr FREELAND: We do not really have a huge issue in the Northern Territory with marine pollution. MARPOL is all about ships, shipping and stuff falling off ships. We are not in a position to even think about additional funding at the moment.

Mr McCARTHY: I am getting a feeling that you were talking more about offshore marine pollution when we heard about a ship leaving Darwin Harbour that left behind significant pollution ...

Dr FREELAND: Yes, that is right.

Mr McCARTHY: It is all covered under the same act? Yes?

Dr FREELAND: Potentially, yes.

Mr McCARTHY: So we are not talking international waters?

Dr FREELAND: No.

Mr McCARTHY: But there will be a significant area in the future with the development of Darwin as the harbour city and ...

Dr FREELAND: It will grow along with everybody else and every other thing.

Mr McCARTHY: A very relaxed attitude to it, Dr Freeland. That is good to hear and learn about.

Are there any current gaps that might affect the EPA's ability to regulate activities and investigate incidents in relation to the marine pollution act?

Dr FREELAND: I do not think we are ready for it. I do not think there is a demand. I would be very hesitant to leap too far. We have a long way to go in getting the staff ready, and we have to do something about that act. I do not think we should rush into it. I do not want a small flotilla of baby ships going out, running around doing things. I do not think that is appropriate. We need to take it really cautiously. We have this act. What does it mean? What do we need to do? We are nowhere near that yet.

Mr McCARTHY: Interesting. I was with colleagues recently on Groote Eylandt and we visited the ranger base. They were bringing in quite a load of ghost netting and other associated rubbish. I was talking to the rangers about that and the problem, and they cited it as significant. Would that fall under the marine pollution act?

Dr FREELAND: Honestly, I will have to go and check. I do not know.

Mr McCARTHY: I suggest that in the coastal environment of the Northern Territory this is a significant issue and will continue to be ...

Mr BARRETT: You have strayed way, way away from anything relevant, but you only have 25 minutes to go, mate.

Mr McCARTHY: Dr Freeland, I was asking your opinion on that. You will check to see if it does fall within it? To me that is new age pollution that will be of significant threat to our Northern Territory environment.

Dr FREELAND: It is ...

Mr BARRETT: It takes time.

Mr McCARTHY: It is important to me.

Mr BARRETT: Well, get a briefing.

Madam CHAIR: Member for Barkly, with 25 minutes to go, can you ask some relevant questions ...

Mr McCARTHY: It is important for the opposition and Territorians, Dr Freeland.

Madam CHAIR: ... on operations and financial positions of the EPA?

Mr McCARTHY: Want me to move on to the next question?

Madam CHAIR: I think so.

Dr FREELAND: I think so. Ghost netting has been a big issue for a long time and it is primarily a Commonwealth issue. Realities and practicalities are obscure for us.

Mr McCARTHY: Thank you, Dr Freeland for that comment.

Minister, what capacity does the EPA have for site inspections of remote sewage ponds? How often in the last financial year have they been conducted by the EPA?

Dr FREELAND: We are currently working through a large backlog which we inherited of unlicensed systems in remote areas. We have been working assiduously in collaboration with the Power and Water Corporation to work out what the serious ones are that need licensing, where are they and what sorts of licensing is appropriate for those circumstances. We have a bunch of probably the most significant ones and we are working through those. We just finished. We will then look at the rest of them and work out priorities and what needs to be done. It is not a simple problem.

Mr McCARTHY: It is good to hear that comment, Dr Freeland. What is the status of the EPA's work on contaminated land management in the NT and the budget appropriation for that?

Dr FREELAND: We do not have a budget appropriation for that. It is not separate from the rest of our operations. We are in the process of trying to formalise. We can manage under our act quite well, but there are a few extra steps we will have to take and will have to get the minister's assistance if he is happy with that when we get it to him as a proposal. We want to develop that area because it is becoming a significant issue in and out of town. Yes, it is an issue.

Mr McCARTHY: Is there a case of contamination that is of major significance for the Territory or is it a number of different cases? I am thinking about asbestos in the greater Darwin area.

Dr FREELAND: Asbestos is not my problem. Our responsibility under our act relates to the transport and disposal of asbestos. What happens with asbestos on a building site is work health and safety and a Health department issue.

Mr McCARTHY: Contaminated land sites in the Northern Territory – will you approach the minister for more support? We need to look at this area. Is there a significant issue in land contamination?

Dr FREELAND: There are places where there is asbestos. How significant it is overall, I honestly do not know.

Mr McCARTHY: The Cox Peninsula has always come up in that case and the Commonwealth is appropriating money for the rehabilitation.

Dr FREELAND: It is a lot more than just asbestos over there.

Mr McCARTHY: Sure. Is the EPA involved in that work?

Dr FREELAND: No, Commonwealth land.

Mr McCARTHY: Minister, you may wish to pass this to Dr Freeland. Can you outline the environmental management issues that have been worked through in respect of the AACo abattoir waste water discharge?

Dr FREELAND: I hope so. That has been going for a while. They did an EIS and it suffered quality problems. It was assessed under the *Planning Act* and required a condition associated with the need for an operational environmental management plan, which we became involved in. We had some interesting interactions during that period. They eventually came to us with an operational environmental plan. They changed their proposed waste treatment during the course of that.

We provided them with a waste licence and accredited their plan. This would have been around October last year. Their plan allowed them to start in a small way and gradually commission the process. By Christmas we knew it was not working and there were smells associated with excessive application of liquids. That liquid had high nutrient content – biological oxygen demand. When it fell on the soil it was saturating it because there was so much of it, and it became such that there was no oxygen in the soil. You get terrible smells from the bacteria that grow.

The EPA Board requested senior management from AACo to meet with them in January. We expressed our feelings that what they were doing was unacceptable and we said they had to get it fixed. They agreed that it was unacceptable. We suggested that maybe they should think about doing a plan of how they wanted to do things because they did not have anything.

They went away and the first thing they did was fire the senior management at the abattoir. which I think helped. Then they came back with a plan. It was still smelling pretty bad.

The plan is to, number one, increase the area that is irrigated. They were supposed to have done a much bigger area for irrigation. They were focusing on a very small area which caused a lot of the problem. They have gone from, I think, 2 ha to 6 ha that is being irrigated. It is working at the moment reasonably well. They are also to build an aeration pond for the treatment of the water. That has to be on-site and operational in July.

The next step was to build a covered anaerobic pond as well, which was to be in July next year. They have discovered they can get the equipment they need for that in Australia, and it is now planned to have that all in place before the next Wet Season. So this coming Wet, we will be in a much better position than we are at the moment.

Mr McCARTHY: Thank you, Dr Freeland. I am sure Mr Wood, the member for Nelson, the champion of the rural constituents, will be very appreciative of that information.

In an EIS process, is an abattoir in a tropical area now being reconsidered? Have you learnt lessons here? I will give you the background of this. We were fighting for it in Tennant Creek, but it came to the Top End. Has it created problems that could be avoided in an arid area?

Madam CHAIR: Member for Barkly, what is your question?

Mr McCARTHY: That was an opportunity to have a discussion with a scientist, Madam Chair.

Madam CHAIR: We are not having a discussion with a scientist, member for Barkly. We are in estimates. There are 15 minutes to go. Surely you have three proper questions to ask the EPA.

Mr BARRETT: He is wasting time. This is disgraceful!

Madam CHAIR: There are public servants staying up late, who have worked really hard to prepare all of this, and we are not here to have chat. We can have a chat in the mall later next week.

Mr BARRETT: I am disgusted!

Mr McCARTHY: Thank you, Madam Chair. In relation to communication, minister - and you might want to pass this to Dr Freeland - how does the EPA plan to improve communications, especially in relation to the role with residents of regional and remote communities?

Dr FREELAND: Two questions; one of which is a subset of the first one. The first one is communications, and communication is a difficult thing. We had a communication plan done by a professional and it has helped a lot.

Remote areas are difficult, to say the least. I do not know how you do it, other than a specific endeavour for a specific purpose at a specific time. We do the normal media stuff and all that sort of thing. Everything we do is open, it is available. But you need special communication initiatives to deal with those sorts of issues in the bush.

Mr McCARTHY: Absolutely. Dr Freeland, where I am heading with those questions was, 39% of the Northern Territory's population are Aboriginal people ...

Dr FREELAND: I am aware of that.

Mr McCARTHY: ... with multilingual capacity. I was interested in what work - and that will involve significant budget appropriations if you going down that road.

Dr FREELAND: We have to have a purpose for doing it that will materially help with environmental management and protection in the Northern Territory.

Mr McCARTHY: That is a very clear purpose. Minister, the annual report mentions a development of NT EPA Online to assist users of EPA services. We have heard about the website. Regarding those communication questions, are there any plans to appropriate resources to develop communications online that would impact on regional or remote Territorians?

Dr FREELAND: We looked into Twitter - or Tweak or whatever it is - and Facebook, I think it was. Realistically they are all good ideas, but boy, oh boy, you would burn up a lot of people time in just maintaining them. It is well beyond us and I am not sure how useful it would be to our purpose in relation to what the impost would be.

Mr McCARTHY: That is a very good point, Dr Freeland in budget appropriation. When you are going down the road of information technology you have to have managers. Minister, is there a budget appropriation to support these IT systems?

Mr HIGGINS: There are a couple of things I will add to it. One of course is - and you would need to refer to the Chief Minister on this; I think he has carriage of it, but I cannot quite remember. I know we invested a lot of money in the last 12 months in installing WiFi - paid with Telstra - joint installation of some wireless technology in some of the remote communities. You would have to ask for the details of that. I do not have that in front of me.

That is one area where, when we talk about the EPA having an online system and an Internet site, forgetting the other technology around Twitter and Facebook, etcetera. There are a lot of moves by Telstra to increase free WiFi. We have looked at it in libraries. There is money being spent by other agencies to make access to technology a lot better in some of the remote communities. I have spoken on this in parliament before. It is a pet of mine.

The other things is that the department has a coms hub that services the EPA, as well as their own stuff. They also have a lot of expertise, I suppose, in the corporate area in DCIS that they can get access to. I add those comments to the answer.

Mr McCARTHY: Thank you, minister. Regarding EPA staff, what do you see as the priority areas of staff development? What budget appropriations have been allocated for that?

Mr HIGGINS: I do not think the interference of the minister in the staffing within a department is that helpful. The staffing within a department or an agency like the EPA is up to the person in charge of that area. I do not know whether Bill wants to add to that.

Dr FREELAND: No, I want to finish about the Tweak or whatever it is, and the Facebook. We decided it just was not worth it to us. It is not useful, I do not think. You end up having a conversation with everybody about nothing and it is not necessary terribly helpful.

Mr McCARTHY: Wow! That is a debate in itself, Dr Freeland. What do you see as the real priorities in staff development, and what budget appropriations will be necessary as you move on? You have described for me tonight some incredible work you have taken on around the pollution acts in the Northern Territory. We have looked at the major deficits that have created the problems you are dealing with now. We have talked about initiatives. About good policy ideas around, can you tell me what staff development now ...

Dr FREELAND: We are focused on developing further the competency program and getting all our people through it as best as we can. That is a slow task, but we will get there. That is our priority.

Mr McCARTHY: Sure. Do you use the traditional approach of Cabinet submissions to seek additional resources?

Mr HIGGINS: Any Cabinet submissions from the EPA come through Lands and Planning.

Mr McCARTHY: Mr Applegate, you deal with that traditional processing?

Mr APPELGATE: My job is to resource the EPA with resources that allow the EPA do its business. The approach would be, if the EPA is looking for additional resources over and above what is in the current budget it would put a submission to me and I would take that through the normal budgetary process and see whether the Budget Cabinet agrees.

Mr McCARTHY: Thank you, Mr Applegate. Thank you, minister, and thank you to the departmental officials and the staff. I am 56 years of age and I love learning and I like people I learn from. I try to always avoid any distractions that will interfere with that process. So, thank you for your time. It is late and thank you for the incredible learning because this has all gone done onto a transcript. As the opposition spokesperson, I did not get to the arid lands environment questions, Dr Freeland or minister. I will not have time for them, but we can put those in writing, because they are extensive.

I do this on behalf of Territorians. I take this very seriously, so thank you very much for your contributions in the estimates process. Thank you, Madam Chair.

Madam CHAIR: Thank you. That concludes consideration of the NT Environment Protection Authority. On behalf of the committee I thank the minister for attending and also the officers who attended with the minister today. You are free to go and I will just do my little wrap up.

That concludes the Estimates Committee public hearings. The Government Owned Corporations Scrutiny Committee will be holding hearings regarding Statements of Corporate Intent for the Power and Water Corporation, Jacana Energy and Territory Generation at 8.30 am tomorrow.

I know that all answers to questions taken on notice must be given to the first Clerk Assistant by 17 June. Late answers cannot be accepted.

With the finalisation of the scrutiny of ministerial portfolios, I thank both the ministers appearing before the committee and the officials who attended the hearings. I also take this opportunity to place on the public record my appreciation of the assistance provided to ministers by agency officers.

I also thank the members of the Estimates Committee for the overall manner in which these public hearings have been conducted.

Thank you also to the Legislative Assembly staff who worked tirelessly behind the scenes to ensure the whole process runs smoothly over the five days and that we all had sufficient amounts of lollies.

I now formally close the public hearings of the Estimates Committee for 2015. Thank you and good night.

The committee concluded.
