

The Estimates Committee convened at 8 am.

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

MINISTER MANISON'S PORTFOLIOS

NORTHERN TERRITORY POLICE, FIRE AND EMERGENCY SERVICES

Mr CHAIR: I welcome you, Deputy Chief Minister, to today's hearing, as the Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Services. I invite you to introduce the officials accompanying you.

Mrs MANISON: Mr Chair, there is no doubt that 2020 has been a unique and challenging year—would you like me to go straight into my opening statement?

Mr CHAIR: Would you mind introducing the officials who are accompanying you.

Mrs MANISON: That is at the end of my opening statement, Mr Chair.

Mr CHAIR: Sorry, Deputy Chief Minister.

Mrs MANISON: There is no doubt that 2020 has been a unique and challenging year for everyone. COVID-19 has brought on many challenges for everyone, including our frontline staff in the Northern Territory Police, Fire and Emergency Services.

When COVID-19 hit, government made its priorities and plans very clear—saving lives and jobs. The health and safety of Territorians is paramount. We could not risk COVID-19 getting into our communities. Our police are a huge part of why we have remained the safest jurisdiction in the nation and have not seen community transmission in the Northern Territory. From conducting over 33,000 compliance checks to manning our border checkpoints, they have worked tirelessly through the extra duties COVID-19 has brought upon them.

We have seen police work in some of the most remote parts of the nation on the border control checkpoints. We have seen them having to cancel their leave and we thank them for their service to the Northern Territory at a time when it was most needed. That is why we continue to back our hard-working Police, Fire and Emergency Service workers and volunteers.

We have a record budget for this agency and we have recruited record numbers. To meet the challenges for 2020 and the operational requirements because of COVID-19, we have invested an additional \$10.5m for police to maintain their presence on the borders and in our communities and an initial \$20m previously committed in July this year to boost police staffing and support. This includes: 66 additional frontline constable positions to manage additional tasks brought on by COVID-19, while continuing to tackle crime and alcohol abuse; 30 Aboriginal Liaison Officers to ensure stronger relationships between our police and Indigenous communities; 10 Aboriginal Community Police Officers; 25 support staff including policy and administrative college support, because when you have the college going at full tilt you need that support; and additional welfare and support officers.

We have also seen an additional 20 vehicles purchased and deployed across the Territory to assist with operational requirements.

This is in addition to the 120 extra police and 75 Police Auxiliary Liquor Inspectors, bringing back school-based policing, our new Palmerston Police Station, putting PTSD into presumptive legislation for those frontline workers, purchasing stingers, automatic number plate recognition, more body worn cameras, drones and SerPro and more that were and are being delivered by this government.

We are also investing in more measures to support our force: new infrastructure like the Nightcliff Police Station, Ngukurr and Maningrida police stations, which will be underway soon. There will be more CCTV than ever before. We will deliver a sustainable plan for remote policing.

We will continue work on important reforms in other portfolio areas that will benefit the Northern Territory police—areas like youth justice, housing, alcohol, health and education. We have committed to more reforms in the community safety space like targeting ringleaders through new legislation and reviewing property

offences and penalties. We will continue to support our police with what they need to do their job. We are also supporting our fire service who have also had a difficult to start to the year with the Australian bushfires.

Last year we saw the completion of the Katherine Fire Station and the construction of the new Palmerston Fire Station is underway. This year we will undergo an upgrade of a number of fire appliances in Alice Springs, Humpty Doo and Ti-Tree. Our emergency services have been supporting our COVID-19 response while managing responses to cyclones, floods and supporting search and rescue efforts—to name a few of their tasks—have done an incredible job this year. As the Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Services I extend a big thank you to the staff of this agency in what has been, a very challenging year.

Before the Estimates Committee today I have with me: the Commissioner of Police and Chief Executive Officer of Fire and Emergency Services, Mr Jamie Chalker APM; Deputy Commissioner, Mr Michael Murphy APM; Deputy Commissioner, Mr Murray Smalpage APM; Chief Fire Officer, Mr Mark Spain ASFM; Acting Director of NTES, Mr Bob Evans; and Chief Financial Officer, Mr Paul Kelly.

Thank you, Mr Chair. I look forward to the questions in a year where Territorians have again seen that we have the best Police, Fire and Emergency Services workers in the nations.

Mr CHAIR: Thank you, minister, and for your opening statement. I call for questions relating to the statement in a moment. The committee will then consider any whole-of-government budget and fiscal strategy related questions before moving onto the output specific questions. Finally, we will cover non-output specific budget related questions.

I invite the shadow minister to ask their questions first, followed by committee members and finally, other participating members may ask questions. The committee has agreed that other members may join in on a line of questioning pursued by the shadow minister rather than waiting till the end of the shadow minister's questioning on that output.

Are there any questions?

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Indeed there are. Thank you. I start by thanking our Police, Fire and Emergency Services. It has been an incredible year but for our frontline forces it is a big year every year. This one has just been worse than usual. Their commitment and dedication to protecting lives, property and our community is unparalleled. We cannot thank them enough. On behalf of my team I thank them for their service up until this point and into the future.

I start by asking about police assaults and the type of assaults we are seeing on police. For the last financial year—I do not know if you have the data to date—how many assaults on police were there?

Mrs MANISON: Thank you, Opposition Leader. It is a good point to start the discussion and for us to put on the record that assaults against police are unacceptable. These are the people who are out there in the community protecting people. I cannot tell you again how seriously I take the issue of assaults on police. We have recently seen some footage where I must say—I think I was on the radio talking about this too and I spoke to the Northern Territory Police Association about the police officers who were involved in these taped issues were incredibly professional. They are trained to handle these situations but it is appalling when somebody assaults a police officer. It is unacceptable.

We are reviewing penalties in that space. This is a commitment we have made and are looking at it. The police work closely with the Northern Territory Police Association about the issue. I will hand over to the commissioner to talk further about those numbers.

Commissioner CHALKER: Thank you and good morning everybody. Opposition Leader, we see assaults far too frequently for my liking but in my view, what should be acceptable to the community of the Northern Territory. The predominant assaults we see towards our people include striking them either with fists or by kicking out at them. Equally, by using improvised weapons from time to time, be it iron bars or any other type of issue they have been able to grab hold of. The more disturbing, which still occurs, is spitting. As you can appreciate being somebody who is out there serving and protecting your community to be spat on is something that is just completely and utterly unacceptable and is an act that we consider to be quite reprehensible.

They are the nature and type of assaults that do occur. We have very mature systems in place at the moment if any of our people are assaulted that we have a response process well and truly imbedded; that includes ensuring that there are referrals to our employee support services as well as ensuring that relevant forms are

completed to identify if any injuries have been sustained and the like, which may lead ultimately to workers compensation claims and the like. We have a very rigorous process in there.

We also have our welfare officers that are on the ground in our major centres that touch base. Our chaplain services are also well ingrained in getting in touch with any of the officers and also their partners who may have been injured along the way.

In respect to specific numbers, I will have that for you through the course of the morning. That is just being gathered at the moment.

Mr CHAIR: Minister, would you like to take that question on notice?

Question on Notice No 3.1

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

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: I have a series of questions on this so I will start with this one and you might need to take a series of them on notice.

For the last financial year, how many assaults on police were there and how many assaults on police have there been for this financial year?

Mr CHAIR: Minister, do you accept the question?

Mrs MANISON: Yes.

Mr CHAIR: The question asked by the Opposition Leader has been allocated the number 3.1.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: I wanted to ask, of that number of assaults on police, I wanted to break that down.

How many assaults on police are recorded, how many are then charged, how many are convicted, how many served actual time and what was the average length of a sentence that they received?

Mrs MANISON: Some of those responses might not necessarily be able to be answered by the police. I might hand over to the commissioner, because some of that goes into the space of Attorneys-General and Justice, I would assume. But, we will endeavour to get you what information we can but I need to refer to the Police Commissioner.

Commissioner CHALKER: The records we do maintain certainly are in respect of the formal complaint that any of our officers will make. It is a case that from time-to-time some of our officers choose not to make formal complaints; that is something we try and encourage to not do. We would much rather they do come forward and make a complaint because again that expands not only into my police service but also all of our frontline workers including our paramedics, fire service and the like; and certainly nurses, doctors in medical environments. All of those frontline workers in our view should be able to operate safely.

The records we have for our agency will relate to either whether they have made the formal complaint, because there is a specific offence category of 'assault police'. Equally we can gather the information as it relates to what other documentation they have put forward in so much as an injury on duty, any of the other forms that we have there.

As far as the sentencing occurs, that is something I will have to take advice on as to whether we hold that data. I do not think it fits necessarily in our databases, but I will have to review PROMIS. Certainly, where we meet a criminal benchmark, all of those matters are prosecuted to the full extent with our support.

Mrs MANISON: We would be happy to take that on notice to get what information we can from this agency. To follow on from what the Police Commissioner, is that we would strongly encourage every frontline worker who has been assaulted to absolutely report it. It is really important to have that information there and make sure they are getting the care and support that they need and also that people that assault them also have to face the consequences for their actions.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: I would imagine police would hold, I mean if you are getting the raw data on how many assaults there are, you would also hold the data on how many people are actually charged for the assault?

Mrs MANISON: I might hand to the commissioner for that one as well.

Commissioner CHALKER: The system we own is PROMIS. IGIS is the system where prosecution actions are ultimately commenced so all of the offence codes are liberally held with IGIS, which is owned by Attorney-Generals. I am fairly confident we should be able to gather you the information as it relates to the specific charge of assault police.

Question on Notice No 3.2

Mr CHAIR: Opposition Leader, would you like to please restate the question around assaults reported, charged, convicted and served time for the record?

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Thank you. How many assaults on police were there—I will just ask it all as one even though I asked it last time, it is probably easier.

How many assaults on police were there last financial year and this financial year to date? How many of those assaults proceeded to, or resulted in a charge? How many of those charged resulted in a conviction, and how many of those convictions saw the perpetrator serve actual prison time, and what was the average length of prison time served for an assault on police?

Mr CHAIR: Minister, do you accept the question?

Commissioner CHALKER: Can we just specify the dates from when to when?

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Yes. Last financial year and then for this financial year to date.

Mr CHAIR: This financial year to date. Are you happy for it to be this point in time, is that easy enough?

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Yes, that is fine.

Mr CHAIR: Questions on Notice are due by the 22 January 2021, if we use today's date as the point in time. Minister, are you happy to accept that question?

Mrs MANISON: We will endeavour to come as close as we can to today's date.

Mr CHAIR: Thank you, Minister. The question asked by the Opposition Leader of the minister has been allocated number 3.2.

Mr CHAIR: Do you have any further questions, Opposition Leader?

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Part of the reason I ask is because this is a long-term issue obviously, but we are starting to see more and more of these assaults on police at a time when crime in the community is a huge concern. Our police resources are certainly stretched, and I suppose whilst police may not be the custodian of the database per se I would have thought it is in very strong interest of the police to be watching that data and then clearly working with the police association and advising government on any legislative changes that may be required.

If your serving members are being assaulted and it is not resulting in any criminal consequence as a result of that I would have thought that would be a serious matter for police and that then would be pushed up to government.

Mrs MANISON: Again, I will refer to the Police Commissioner here, but it is fair to say that every assault upon a police officer is taken very seriously just as is a paramedic or a hospital worker, and we keep a very close eye on it because one thing that police have got really well embedded in to the agency is welfare support as well, so when something does happen to an office we have chaplains, as the Police Commissioner said, we have the welfare support officers as well, psychologists within the agency to work with the officers.

I might hand over to the Commissioner again to talk a bit about the process around what happens when an officer is assaulted, just to give you that assurance that we do keep a very close eye on it, Leader of the Opposition.

Commissioner CHALKER: Thank you, minister. Leader of the Opposition, I can assure you that you should hold no concerns about the seriousness of which we look after our people who have been assaulted. It is a very high priority for both the deputies and myself and our executive management team to the point that invariably we will make contact after hours very frequently when we are made aware that any of our people have been injured on duty or assaulted on duty as does their local management team, so there is a very fulsome response that occurs.

I am in frequent engagement as are the two deputies and our assistant commissioners with the President of the Northern Territory Police Association and their field liaison officers to keep them in the loop in the event that they are not necessarily informed.

The broader issue of moving into sentencing is clearly within a separation powers environment, not something I can dive into, suffice to say that our processes, as I have indicated, are very rigorous in so much as we take the appropriate action, we will thoroughly investigate matters and will place them before the court as we do all process where we believe a benchmark has been reached for a prosecution to be commenced.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: I am not suggesting a separation of powers issue and I have got no question about the pastoral care that is wrapped around officers who are assaulted, but it must be critical to police to understand what the court outcomes are or what the charging regime is like because ultimately if it is not resulting—if it is ineffective then it must be—it is not going to be Attorney-General and Justice who say, hey, we are not really prosecuting many people who assault police. It has got to come from police to get to government to say this legislation is inadequate.

Mrs MANISON: Again, Leader of the Opposition, as the Commissioner has just spoken about, they do keep a very close eye on what happens in these processes and what happens to these individuals. I know in my time as Police minister I have seen quite frequently when a very serious incident happens within the police force I have always been quite impressed with how management actually do reach out to the staff that have been impacted on it to give support as well.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: I have no issue with any of that.

Mrs MANISON: As the Commissioner has said, we keep a very close eye on these matters. For myself as Police minister, I regularly engage with the Northern Territory Police Association. We have the senior executive of the police and the Commissioner who engage with Mr McCue and the executive as well. There is no hiding the fact that they are very keen to see some further work in this space and that is why we are pursuing it.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: What is being done? You went to the last election promising that you would look at it, tougher penalties et cetera. What is on the cards for police assaults in that legislative framework?

Mrs MANISON: That work is happening. We are looking at it, Leader of the Opposition. That process is underway.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: When will we expect to see legislation?

Mrs MANISON: We are working through that, Leader of the Opposition. The legislative review sits with the Attorney-General and I am working with her through that.

Mr CHAIR: (inaudible).

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Sorry, Mr Chair, it is not a new policy. The policy was announced about six months ago.

Mr CHAIR: Just a reminder of Standing Order 109.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: It does not apply. Thank you, Mr Chair. Good try.

No date. Can you give us any indication of where that process is going?

Mrs MANISON: As I said, Leader of the Opposition, I am working through that with the Attorney-General and we will be working through that with the executive of the police force and also the Northern Territory Police Association.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: The police plane. How much does that cost per trip?

Mrs MANISON: I do not think Air Wing has ever been more important than this year. Our police work in incredibly remote conditions but we have really had to step up the work with Air Wing this year in particular. It is an important part of the police. We need them to get out there pretty quickly at times to respond to emerging issues and situations and transport prisoners from some of the most remote parts of the Northern Territory. It is used to get officers to where we need them but also to transport people we need out of communities at times.

We have the fleet there with Air Wing. I will go to the Commissioner to talk about the cost per trip if we have that and if we are able to break it down to that level. We are continuing to look at the Air Wing to make sure we are delivering the services we need for the community and our officers.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Commissioner, if you do not mind, before you start can you say what constitutes your Air Wing?

Commissioner CHALKER: Thank you, Leader of the Opposition. Our Air Wing fleet increased this year because of the demands placed upon us particularly with our border checkpoints and the like that are in place. We have a mixed model. We have a privately-owned—as in NT Government-owned—aircraft that costs us about \$1,164 per hour as an operating cost. We then have three others that are leased under an arrangement with the RFDS at the moment which is an interim arrangement as we put forward a more fulsome model following a review that has occurred. The hourly cost of that, which is inclusive of the lease rate, is \$2,200 per hour.

Notably, the review found that those costs are very similar to the cost of a commercial option. The point of difference is that our commercial option does not allow us to fly with some of the equipment, particularly the inherent type of equipment that we need. It is not suitable to be conveyed in that manner with the arrangements we have to make in place nor is the frequency of availability as commensurate as having our own fleet.

The model that I have been able to pull together for this year is ensuring that we can be on the ground anywhere in the Northern Territory within four hours to provide response and respite to a community, any police officers, clinic staff or education staff following any serious event.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: What was the total cost last financial year for Air Wing?

Mrs MANISON: Commissioner, is that something we would have to take on notice?

Commissioner CHALKER: I am comfortable we will have that answer shortly.

Question on Notice No 3.3

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

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: What was the total cost for last financial year for police Air Wing?

Mr CHAIR: Do you accept the question?

Mrs MANISON: Yes.

Mr CHAIR: The question asked by the Opposition Leader is allocated the number 3.3.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Minister, how many times in the last financial year did you travel on the police plane?

Mrs MANISON: Not many. I can take that on notice and check. I made one recent trip from Alice Springs to Darwin, when we had to check some border control checkpoints. I took the opportunity to go with the

commissioner to inspect those checkpoints. In this year that was one of my only trips. I will have to double check the diary, but I am happy to take that question on notice and get back to the committee.

Question on Notice No 3.4

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

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: How many times did the Police minister travel on the police plane in the last financial year and this financial year to date?

Mr CHAIR: Do you accept the question?

Mrs MANISON: Yes.

Mr CHAIR: The question asked by the Opposition Leader is allocated the number 3.4.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: How many times did the Chief Minister travel on the police plane in the last financial year and this financial year?

Mrs MANISON: Again, I am happy to take that question on notice.

Question on Notice No 3.5

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

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: How many times did the Chief Minister travel on the police plane in the last financial year and this financial year to date?

Mr CHAIR: Do you accept the question?

Mrs MANISON: Yes.

Mr CHAIR: The question asked by the Opposition Leader is allocated the number 3.5.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: How many times did the Chief Minister and his wife travel on the police plane in the last financial year and this financial year to date?

Mrs MANISON: Again, I am happy to take that question on notice.

Question on Notice No 3.6

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

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: How many times did the Chief Minister and his wife travel on the police plane in the last financial year and this financial year to date?

Mr CHAIR: Do you accept the question?

Mrs MANISON: Yes.

Mr CHAIR: The question asked by the Opposition Leader is allocated the number 3.6.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: How many times did other ministers travel on the police plane in the last financial year and this financial year to date?

Mrs MANISON: Again, I am happy to take that question on notice.

Question on Notice No 3.7

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

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: How many times did other ministers travel on the police plane in the last financial year and this financial year to date?

Mr CHAIR: Do you accept the question?

Mrs MANISON: Yes.

Mr CHAIR: The question asked by the Opposition Leader is allocated the number 3.7.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: When I say the police plane, I mean Air Wing.

Mrs MANISON: It is clear that we are not referring to one of the charter companies.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Following the death of Kwementyaye Walker, how many times was the police plane sent to Yuendumu?

Mrs MANISON: That is a question I have to place on notice. The commissioner is nodding his head. That was a challenging period, and remains so, and police were putting a lot of support into that community. Understandably, there were significant trips happening there.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: No doubt.

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

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: How many times was the police plane sent to Yuendumu following the death of Kwementyaye Walker? I do not need names, but what were the ranks or titles of people travelling on those planes?

Mrs MANISON: I will ask the commissioner if some elements of that are appropriate questions, given it goes to police operations. Commissioner, would the full content of that question be appropriate?

Commissioner CHALKER: I can confirm up front that most of our resources that went to Yuendumu went via Air Wing. That included ranks from community engagement. Deputies have been there—Deputy Murphy was there the day after the incident; commanders; sergeants; senior constables; and senior sergeants were on the ground. The following investigation obligations and the coronial investigation enquiry had a further tranche of people heading out there to undertake interviews and engage with lawyers on the ground. This was an operational response and then a professional police investigation. The flights over the period of time you are talking about—we have had to get out there in more recent times to continue enquiries in relation to...

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: I mean, perhaps the first week?

Commissioner CHALKER: Opposition Leader, do you want to be as specific as possible?

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Yes, I can ask that specifically.

Mrs MANISON: Just to appreciate that once we look into it—there are ongoing court matters right now. We have a court case and a coronial.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: I am not asking for names.

Mrs MANISON: I want to temper that question as in whatever you put on notice, police will need to consider that before answering it given the situation.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: As is every question.

Question on Notice No 3.8

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

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: In the month following the death of Kwementyaye Walker, how many times was the police plane utilised and what were the ranks or titles of the people utilising the plane that travelled to and from Yuendumu?

Mr CHAIR: Minister, do you accept the question?

Mrs MANISON: Yes. Again, I am not sure where the question is going to but in the context of the ongoing court matters, coronial and so forth, police will answer that how they feel is appropriate. They will ensure no important work is compromised.

Mr CHAIR: The question asked by the Opposition Leader of the minister has been allocated number 3.8.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Minister, on the Royal Flying Doctor Service planes—sorry Commissioner did you say they are available to you at all times so you can do the quick four hour response? What is the length of that lease?

Commissioner CHALKER: We have an extension through to the middle of the next financial year as we contemplate what the future posture is. It is evident that the RFDS fleet are not in operational day to day activity for them and it has been modified to ensure we can move our relevant equipment and make use of those. They are aged assets but have given us the ability to make sure we have sufficient capacity to service the 1.4m square kilometres of the Northern Territory during a trying year.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: On that point, how many police in any one day stationed at airports? I want to break it down so I will explain the whole thing—airports, quarantines facilities and borders.

Mrs MANISON: I will put this question to the Commissioner to answer because he is the Territory controller but I take this opportunity to say that the police have done an outstanding job this year with the COVID-19 challenges that we have faced. There are a lot more challenges and we are nowhere near through this COVID-19 situation.

Situations will present themselves from time to time as we have seen recently with South Australia. There have been many police who have been at border control checkpoints, airports and at quarantine facilities. I stress that this is why we have not faced situations like Victoria. We have the best arrangements in place and that is because of the leadership we have seen in the Territory. I thank the Territory controller, the Chief Health Officer and the Chief Minister. There has been a huge amount of work to ensure that we have world class quarantine facilities and checks in the system to keep Territorians safe.

I now handover to the Commissioner.

Commissioner CHALKER: Opposition Leader, at various times it has grown. When we had the biosecurity checkpoints in place upwards of 10% of our total sworn police force were deployed to those operational posts, 24 hours a day, seven days a week, predominantly undertaking 12-hour shifts and staying in what could probably best be described as some makeshift arrangements in the early days. As that peeled back, we were operating at about 8% of our force which was forward facing as it related to the COVID-19 response. Within the border checkpoints we had 12 that were protecting our borders per se. We then transitioned a number of those via an AMPR solution—automatic number plate recognition solution—to try to diminish some of the physical resource obligation we have had. Naturally ...

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: That transition has now happened?

Commissioner CHALKER: In some locations and is still continuing. Obviously, with the weather events that have now come along, one is closed pretty well because of access. Obviously, the wet weather has closed those roads. We continue to monitor that to try to ensure we have appropriate coverage out there for the engagement and collation of the arrival forms into the Northern Territory.

Within the airports—again, primarily operating out of Darwin and Alice Springs, but you would be aware that we also had to provide a posture at Nhulunbuy, for example. It was a notable case of great police work that identified a breach in that locality. The numbers vary. At a standing point of an arrival, we would ordinarily

have at least three police officers there to ensure that the compliance officers are able to operate in a safe environment and ensure orderly behaviour from the arrivals.

Equally, in Alice Springs we run a similar number, but if we have an increased number of arrivals within a tight time frame, which also occurred over the journey, we have had to increase that number as well to make sure the transition of those who have been directed into quarantine moves seamlessly through the airport directly on to the buses to ensure that there has been no risk of transmission. Again, that is not a permanent posture, it is there for the arrivals and the processing of those relevant people who have come into the Northern Territory.

Similarly, within the compliance side of the house, we had a number of different models that were in place. Some included people being able to self-quarantine. We had people in hotel quarantine at various stages, and now we have moved to our model at Howard Springs and the Mercure in Alice Springs. Again, at various points in time, we have had upwards of half a dozen police officers dedicated to that in a location.

It gives me the opportunity to highlight the efforts of the Australian Federal Police who have been alongside us since the commencement of this in March and then the Australian Defence Force. We are very privileged for the relationship we enjoy with them. Their level of understanding of our operational context, the enormity of what is placed before us as an agency, and their support has been nothing short of vital to the protection of the Northern Territory. I am deeply appreciative of all involved for that.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Absolutely. I appreciate there have been surges and different things. Now when things are fairly routine, there are no hot spots and there is nothing that is requiring a particular additional focus, for airports on arrival generally there are three police for that arrival, in a period of time like now?

Commissioner CHALKER: In Darwin specifically?

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: In Darwin, okay.

Commissioner CHALKER: Say, for example, we still have our international arrivals now for the international repatriation flights. Again, a higher risk which we are critically conscious of and having appropriate mitigation in place.

Mrs MANISON: Commissioner, just to go through, we have an ongoing emergency operation centre as well and we have some very highly experienced police officers who coordinate some of that response day-to-day. I might get the commissioner to talk about where the resources go a bit.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: I am trying to get an idea on a very pedestrian day—say, no international arrivals, just domestic travel into the Territory ...

Mrs MANISON: This will help with that context, Leader of the Opposition. I assure you as well that the Security and Emergency Management Committee of the Cabinet meets regularly as well to keep an eye on the issues. As new issues emerge, we make sure we swiftly deal with them. The TEMC meets and, of course, our EOC has been a critical part of our response to COVID-19. They are still very much working to respond to the issues.

Commissioner CHALKER: Thank you, minister. Opposition Leader, we know we have to have a dynamic and flexible response to these things. There has been many a day where the day has not quite ended as it started and our posture has changed quite monumentally within a very quick period of time.

As much as we will have forward facing numbers. For example, when we had Melbourne as the last remaining hotspot, forward-facing we estimated we had approximately 100 sworn police officers from the Northern Territory police involved in a multitude of COVID response.

That does extend into the emergency operation centre but it also extends into ensuring that there is engagement occurring with remote communities about what their plans are in the event that an outbreak occurs. So pre-posturing people and facing on that sense of preparedness in the event that there was a breach in the Northern Territory and COVID started to spread and how would we be best able to contain it.

It is multi-faceted in so much as there is a whole-of-government response within the emergency operation centre. We run it strictly in compliant with our *Emergency Management Act* but also under the obligations of the *Public and Environmental Health Act*. Such are the declarations of the Chief Health Officer.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Approximately 100 police dedicated to, call it COVID for lack of a better description, plus the ADF—how many AFP, about 30 is it?

Mrs MANISON: Again, thank you to Commissioner Kershaw, he responded very swiftly to this and he certainly understood the needs of the Northern Territory. We were able to engage quite a high number of AFP from the start. That has somewhat reduced, but to have their ongoing commitment has been very important to how we have had to meet the resourcing demand here. I might go to the commissioner to talk a bit about that as well and the ADF.

Commissioner CHALKER: Early days, the AFP contingent was up close towards 100 in the early deployment, because of the necessity of the assistance that we needed. That obviously stabilised and reduced down to a static 30 to 35.

Again, now with the international repatriation agreement with the Australian Government the Australian Federal Police has provided some additional support. The complexity there, of course, is that we are trying to operate two very distinct bubbles within Howard Springs to absolutely mitigate, to the best of our ability, the risk of transfer. Infection control is very much at the forefront of that and we try and maintain the same personnel for as long as we can to operate out there as opposed to have them moving in between different workplaces.

The 100 we spoke about for the Northern Territory Police, I hasten to add, is a point-in-time. All of these things are a point-in-time because the harsh reality of our operating context, is that we have to move to follow the bouncing ball.

Mrs LAMBLEY: May I ask a question? Of those 100 police officers, where do they come from? Are they taken evenly across the Territory or mainly from the Top End?

Commissioner CHALKER: We have tried to predominantly move them where we can and have an equal share. However, Alice Springs, as we critically know, did have some high pressure points. Whilst early on they were contributing to a number of the border checkpoints, we tried to reduce that load quite a bit. Other localities including Katherine were providing additional resourcing for some of our Central Desert border checkpoints so that we could maintain a presence and then, as you would be aware, we sent even further resources from Darwin down to service Alice Springs, exclusive of COVID.

We have pretty well impinged on just about every operational functional area across the service to make sure that the priority of ensuring that the Northern Territory remained safe from the presence of COVID-19 and it came to fruition as it did.

Mrs LAMBLEY: Alice Springs had to do a bit of heavy lifting?

Commissioner CHALKER: Every location across the Territory did heavy lifting. I certainly would not indicate that they did a heavier lifting than anybody else and what I can certainly espouse is the fact that we have sent, and will continue to send, as commensurate appropriate resources to Alice Springs as the need creates.

Mrs MANISON: : With the response to COVID, yes it is one thing where we have certainly been regularly briefed about some of those resourcing pressures, making sure that police responding to the community needs as well. It has been a very challenging year and that is why it has been so good to have the Australian Defence Forces and the AFP officers there.

Often when you would go to some of these points, you would see the ADF and the AFP there as well and it has been a great experience for those serving members too.

Mrs LAMBLEY: Earlier you said, during the bio-security period, 10% of the police force was allocated to those duties. How many officers would that include, what is 10% of the police force?

Commissioner CHALKER: There would be close to 150 police officers, sworn.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: How many times have police had to intervene at an airport?

Mrs MANISON: I will get the Commissioner to see if he has that information at hand.

Commissioner CHALKER: What I can say is in respect to compliance, the Northern Territory and those arrivals into the Northern Territory have been very high. Over the whole period of conducting some 33,926 compliance checks, we only issued 161 infringement notices.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Do those compliance checks include arrivals at airports?

Commissioner CHALKER: That includes anybody where we have engaged them where a breach would have been identified, noting that our arrivals total into the Northern Territory since 17 July have been 196,390 people with a large proportion of those—Darwin Airport arrivals alone was 91,497 people. We have had very little engagement that has occurred where we have had non-compliance. We have had some circumstances where people initially did not comply with wearing a mask when requested. Again, with the involvement of police to make that request as an authorised officer on behalf of the Chief Health Officer, compliance was ultimately gained.

We have had very minimal engagement or disruption at the airport. Certainly early days we know that tempers were frayed because it was a completely new environment across the whole of Australia but the professionalism of our people ensured that those frustrations were allayed and there was a clear level of understanding that the process needed to be complied with. I think the compliance to date is nothing short of exceptional given those numbers.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Can I get a break down for the last month of how many times police had to engage in compliance at an airport?

Mrs MANISON: Commissioner, would we have that data available now or would we need to take that on notice?

Commissioner CHALKER: Leader of the Opposition, that would be very difficult for us to undertake. I would not be expecting that my police officers, for every single conversation they have with a person which would potentially constitute a level of compliance, that I would be able to derive that data for you.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Would there be an incident threshold? I do not know, if it was just like ‘mate, come on, put your mask on’ or ‘please hop in this line’—obviously not that. If it was something where police had to seriously intervene.

Commissioner CHALKER: It would be to an escalated level and over the last month I have not been briefed as the Territory Controller of any behaviours that extended to that level.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: That answers my question. In the two quarantine facilities, what is the police role? What do they do whilst on those duties? Are they inside the perimeter or patrolling? Take us through what they have to do.

Mrs MANISON: Howard Springs has been a magnificent facility in getting the results that we need to see here in the Territory. It has required a great deal of resourcing in order to keep Territorians safe. There have been incidents from time-to-time. I will get the Commissioner to answer the question.

Commissioner CHALKER: Police officers under the legislation of the *Public and Environmental Health Act* are by the nature of their employment, identified as authorised officers so that gives us the power in the authorising environment to undertake compliance checks and take actions on behalf of the Chief Health Officer. Thereby his directions that are currently in place are enforceable.

The model that we have put in place is to make sure that Northern Territory police officers are the ones that will take the relevant compliance checks. The Australian Federal Police are sworn in as special constables so they can pick up that opportunity as well. The practice is to refer to a Northern Territory police officer who will take the relevant steps if it is either an infringement notice as one outcome for non-compliance or the point of making a criminal referral. That is the point of distinction within the quarantine facilities themselves.

The private security are not within the internal perimeter of the infection control area. They maintain the external perimeter security for us. We utilise the Australian Defence Force and the Australian Federal Police alongside us to ensure there is a high level of engagement that occurs day-to-day and through the evening within those areas to make sure people are maintaining compliance with where they are obliged to stay within the facility and to coordinate any areas, for example, people in Howard Springs were able to go and do exercise for specified periods in a safe physical distance-controlled environment.

If the ADF or AFP observe those behaviours they will call us by radio to attend and perform the level of engagement to process any sanctions that may arise from noncompliance.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: So inside the perimeter the Territory police are not in there unless called on? Inside is the AFP and the...

Commissioner CHALKER: No.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: They are in there as well.

Commissioner CHALKER: We are in there as well.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Just no private security?

Commissioner CHALKER: For each of the sites for strict infection control there are briefings that outline the expectations of the protocols that must be complied with. This includes the wearing of appropriate PPE, decanting yourself once you have completed your duties and ensuring infection control remains at the forefront of your mind in all the actions you take.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Okay.

Mrs MANISON: We have been the benchmark for first class quarantine standards, here in the Territory. We took this extremely seriously from the outset when we realised COVID-19 was going to be a big problem globally. We accept that in the Northern Territory we have more vulnerabilities than other populations in Australia. If COVID-19 were to get into the Northern Territory community there would be huge risks. This is why we have had police at the forefront in delivering our COVID-19 quarantining response. It has delivered the results we needed to see.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: How many police on a pedestrian day would be at Howard Springs and at the Mecure?

Mrs MANISON: I will have the Commissioner answer that, Opposition Leader.

Commissioner CHALKER: A pedestrian day is probably difficult to indicate because at various points in time—in Alice Springs for example, we may have only had upwards of 20 plus people but at its peak we had in excess of 200 people.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: So it fluctuates depending on how many people are in the facility?

Commissioner CHALKER: And the arrivals on a day to day basis.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Is it a ratio system like at a childcare centre for example? Like if you have 50 people you have three cops?

Commissioner CHALKER: From the Northern Territory perspective we try to ensure that there is always two who can operate within the facilities for compliance as per authorised officer action. We have some opportunities to have additional AFP and ADF personnel that can provide the additional surge but we put additional police officers on a needs basis.

When we were at our peak during the hotspots of New South Wales and Victoria at Howard Springs, we had upwards of 1,200 people in quarantine. There was an AFL grand final coming up, so who knew? We have a scalable model that has worked well for us.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Are Territory police doing both sides of the facility?

Commissioner CHALKER: Yes, we provide the authorised officer environment to both sides.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: What is the chain of command? Are police reporting to health or being told what to do by the health officials?

Commissioner CHALKER: If we have a matter that is referred to us we can take the sanction. Equally, there are authorised officers under the *Public and Environmental Health Act* who are employed by NT health who can also issue infringements if they so choose. In the early days the preference was for police to be ones

that were undertaking the issuance of an infringement if determined that a noncompliance event had occurred.

The chain of command is such that there is an incident controller put forward at the centre from the police side who works with the forward commander from health, who looks after the facility and engages the day to day operations. There is a collaboration that occurs but each of those ultimately refer into the incident controller of the Emergency Operations Centre who directly reports to me as the Territory controller. There is a clear and rigorous structure and reporting chain in place.

Health are the hazard response lead as it relates to COVID-19. Obviously a pandemic falls into their domain. They are also the controlling authority under our 'all hazards' management approach because of the enormity of the pandemic. They need to focus their capability and capacity on the hazard and PFES took on the role of being the controlling authority. This brings in the Emergency Operations Centre.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Thank you. Strike Force Viper has been set up because people in Alice Springs are at their wits end about crime in the community. Government—whilst dragged kicking and screaming—then said for police to go in and Strike Force Viper was established. How many police make up Strike Force Viper and what stations did they come from? Clearly they are not all from Alice Springs.

Mrs MANISON: Leader of the Opposition, Strike Force Viper has had a very instant impact in Alice Springs. I was there last week, meeting with the officers. It is the same model as Strike Force Trident. I have to commend Rob Jordan who runs Trident and who has gone down to set up Viper. They have had some fantastic results on the ground and have dealt with a number of offenders there. The feedback I have had from people in the community is that they have had a very big impact.

The commissioner has determine that Strike Force Viper will remain as a permanent strike force in Alice Springs. They target property offenders—people who do break-and-enters, property vandalism and motor vehicle theft. Often, they are not the people you see in uniform and they work around the clock, often in unmarked vehicles. They are not the people who are highly visibly present, but they are out and about doing their jobs, just as you see them doing their jobs with Strike Force Trident in Darwin and Palmerston. I will get the commissioner to go further into that.

Commissioner CHALKER: Opposition Leader, when Viper kicked off, we had approximately 12 officers involved. Six were down from Trident. It has been the case that things often go full circle, so it was unfortunate that there had previously been dedicated property teams in an investigative capacity operating in Alice Springs in previous years. For whatever reason—I do not have the answer for you because I was not in the agency at the time—that had not continued. So, part of what we have been looking at in respect to our back-to-basics ethos is the imperative of how we have our models in place.

Obviously, part and parcel of what occurred once the biosecurity lockdowns was removed, was we saw an artificial environment where Alice Springs in particular had a surge in property crime, which was not the case across other parts of the Northern Territory at anywhere near the same level. In fact, a lot of those reportable crimes for property still remain at quite low levels in comparison to previous years.

Alice Springs clearly had a spike; we needed to act and react. The Trident model is one that is tried and true and serves the purpose very well for Darwin and Palmerston, so we sought to replicate that model. My announcement to make it formal was always our intended approach. It is critical to build community reassurance that needs to occur after property crime.

It took them some time to identify those relevant unique offenders. I spoke a number of weeks ago about the breakdown we had identified at that point—100-plus various offences. There were 37 unique youth offenders identified and their activity has been quite significant. We have seen almost an immediate impact on the ground in Alice Springs.

We have couple that also with the technology of providing a drone. You probably have some familiarity with the effectiveness of that. We are continuing to look at how we can best deal with the issue. Part of the reason why we sent the six additional Trident members down there was to start mentoring and guiding those resources in Alice Springs to build the capacity and capability and let them understand the investigative techniques they had adopted and which had held them in good stead. That is slowly seeing the release of those Trident members back to Darwin. At this point in time, I believe there are three remaining from Darwin. Detective Senior Sergeant Rob Jordan will remain there into the new year, to ensure it is appropriately bedded down and we can take on the brunt of the summer in Alice Springs.

There is Operation Sherwood also in place to make sure we have a clear focus on Alice Springs and the summer events that will occur there, as well learn it from the multi-agency perspective and focusing on these kids now we have a lot more information as it relates to the particular individuals involved in criminality.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Commissioner, thank you. You mentioned that there were about 100-plus offences and there were 37 youths responsible for them. What has happened to those 37 youths?

Mrs MANISON: I will get the commissioner to go through that questions. It is fair to say that some of those youth go before the courts and spend some time in our correction facilities.

Commissioner CHALKER: I can advise that since they commenced in October, there have been 111 arrests, 65 summonses, 29 diversion activities, 26 warrants and 11 breaches of bail. There were ...

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Sorry, commissioner. Can you go back to the start and go a little slower?

Commissioner CHALKER: There were 111 arrests, and I can break that down for you. There were 14 females and 97 males. There were 65 summonses, which were 16 females and 49 males; 29 diversion, which were three females and 26 males; 26 warrants, which were four females and 22 males; 11 breaches of bail, which were six females and five males.

There have been 242 total apprehensions by Viper since 14 October. Out of those 242 total files submitted, 115 are for youths, which is 40% of that total. That was 16 females and 99 males.

Within Operation Lunar currently, we have seven females who are being actively case managed and eight males.

Mrs MANISON: The important thing about Operation Lunar is that they do not just work with the individuals, they work with siblings and family groups around them. They stretch out to far broader numbers because they try to make an impact to stop other members associated with those individuals from heading down a pathway of committing crime and becoming a problem for our community.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Explain Operation Lunar as distinct from Viper.

Mrs MANISON: Strike Force Viper is an operational section of the Northern Territory Police. I will get the commissioner to go further into that.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: That is more like the property crime unit.

Mrs MANISON: Yes, like Trident. Whilst operation Lunar is a cross-agency response. What you will see in Operation Lunar is that they are looking at kids who are already involved in criminal activity or who have been, or are at high risk of entering a pathway of crime.

Police are not here to solve all the problems of the world. Often when we meet these individuals their complexities go far beyond criminal activity. We have police co-located with Territory Families, Health, Education and Territory Housing, working together on these targeted individuals and the family groups around them. Their job, ultimately, is to stop them from entering into crime.

You will see a similar model here with Operation Orion, where we have the co-location of these important government agencies. With Lunar, they are not just working with government agencies, they are working with non-government organisations and Congress with individual families. I met with them last week and it is clear they are already having an impact. They have helped some students turn around their school attendance.

There are some cases brought forward where they have been simple matters of turning around attendance by simply getting the hot water system in a house—the kids were going to school because they were not having a hard time for apparently being smelly. They are some of the stories coming out of this. Sometimes it is a simple thing that can help an individual or family group become more functional. That is why there needs to be a cross-agency response.

It should not come down to falling upon police to solve these issues. That is why in this term of government we have put more of an effort into targeted cross-agency operations in the Territory Intelligence and Coordination Centre in Police. Other members of other agencies are working with police to gather intelligence and feed in to inform police operations, and other agencies, day to day about where their resources will go.

I will hand over to the commissioner to talk about Lunar, Orion and some of the cross-agency work. After coming back from Territory Housing, the commissioner has seen firsthand how other agencies have a role in dealing with community safety.

Commissioner CHALKER: We have had a specific focus on multiagency approaches to address the underlying social issues. Those numbers unfortunately paint a particular picture of the types of people we are engaging with, especially in the youth realm.

Viper is very much established to focus on property crime. It is not just about reacting, they are also quite proactive in ensuring people have adequate support and referrals to ensure their property is hardened. If there are vulnerabilities we continue to espouse the necessity for people to lock their doors. The fact of the matter is, we are still seeing a high number of unlawful entries which are opportunistic, where people are trying doors and they are not locked and similar the placement of where car keys are all contributors to all opportunistic criminality.

There is a body of work that we are trying to do to help reduce the offending environment that then extends in to the role that Operation Lunar does, so all of those agencies have come on board, they are working in a co-located work area in Alice Springs, they are going through the information, the intelligence of the previous night's activities and weekend's activities to identify which youth are in a high level of risk and they are coming together to formalise then who has the appropriate case management lead on those particular youths.

It may be Territory Families, it may not be. It may be Education that have the lead on it, it may be more of a Health related issue so there can be mental health issues there and unfortunately FASD is something that we do start seeing emerging through youth and some of their issues on the ground. We are trying to make sure that the intelligence cycle is now not just looking purely at criminal intelligence that it is picking up the relevant information, so if we see high absenteeism for younger people at schools we know that that is a child that is disengaged from the school system invariably through the engagement that Op Lunar does but equally Op Orion, which runs a similar model in Darwin, it can often be, as the minister indicated, some of the simplest things that are the causation of why they are disengaged.

The simple purchase of a pair of shoes had a child re-engage with school that had been non-engaged for four months because he could not afford a pair of shoes and had no suitable environment for the provision of those. These are the things that we are starting to get into and acknowledging that the police cannot do it all by ourselves, we need those other agencies to come to the fore and pleasingly that is the model we are seeing.

To support all that we have moved into a 24/7 intelligence model that was introduced earlier this year. That now sits permanently out at the Joint Emergency Service Coordination Centre, and the former TIC is now known as the TIOC, Territory Intelligence Operational Coordination Centre, and that now sits out alongside the Joint Emergency Service Coordination Centre as well. It has representatives from Corrections, from Health, from Education and from Territory Families, Housing and communities and Police. It is a multifaceted approach, again, all co-located in a single place to make sure that the transfer of information and the sharing of information is going to the right purpose and means.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: It is sad really that policy have to be the ones to pull this together, and the instance of the child without the shoes you would have thought other agencies were aware of that child's situation, and how it got in front of someone wearing blue is an indictment of the system.

Mrs MANISON: I hate to say it, Leader of the Opposition, we are both born and bred Territorians and we can see the horrendous disadvantage that too many kids suffer in the Northern Territory and some of the dysfunctional situations that they live in, and there has been a real focus of our government to break down the silos to make sure that government is acting as one in order to meet some of these systemic issues to do with disadvantage and dysfunction and this is an example of where we have really driven other agencies to work together.

We also do it through the children's subcommittee of Cabinet which is where we have—because we recognise—and all the evidence shows that the first 1000 days in a child's life sets the trajectory for where they head as an adult and that is why we have made such a large effort in this space around maternal health, particularly dealing with that issue of FASD, but also putting more support around the families and from the children from the first 1000 days.

The children's subcommittee of the Cabinet is where the minister's meet. We also have a coordination group of the chief executives that work together to look at specific issues to do with children and disadvantage

because if we can make an impact there that is going to be to the great benefit of Territorians going forward into the future.

This is, like I said, I appreciate the example that you have used of how frustrating that is but the work has been done and we are continuing to making sure that agencies work together. It is not just about government agencies, a lot of funding flows through to non-government agencies, both federally and from the Northern Territory Government. I commend the Productivity Commission, they did a very important body of work last year and this year to look at how federal funding works together with the delivery of services to family and children in the Northern Territory and how we can be working better together, but all of this should not fall to police and that is why we have made a big effort in government to look at the cross agency response of dealing with individuals and families and trying to get them on to a better path.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: I want to drill down a bit on the 242 apprehensions. Can you explain, perhaps Police Commissioner or Minister, what exactly an apprehension is, because underneath apprehensions there were 111 arrests? What is the difference?

Mrs MANISON: I will get the Police Commissioner to talk through this one.

Commissioner CHALKER: Depending on the age of the child, they may have ultimately engaged with them and apprehended them but not gone through the formal process of arresting. Their age may be such that they were not able to place them in the watch house or take their liberty away, but they managed to stop them and have a level of engagement, grab the relevant details with the support person in place and we will follow up at a later time.

Arrest is a last resort, that still remains very clear in our general orders. But where we have active offending going on at a point in time and we have got the appropriate pathway to use arrest, because we believe it will stymie the continuation of offences, we do so. That is the point of distinction.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Is there an age bracket for an apprehension?

Commissioner CHALKER: There can be but equally there is not always an arrest that will occur with an adult depending on the circumstances. They again may be apprehended and then released once bona fides have been obtained.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: There is no policy or procedures for police. If a child is x age, they must only be apprehended?

Commissioner CHALKER: We certainly have a level of consciousness particularly because of the RC around the age of youth, but nothing ceases or prevents us from engaging with anybody. What we need to ensure is that if we are engaging with a youth of any age, that we are undertaking that with a support person in place.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: If it was very serious offending but the child was young, say within the age of criminal responsibility, it would then be police discretion? More than one factor is considered, does serious of offending taken into it? It is not just 'well they are eight years, we are definitely not arresting them'?

Commissioner CHALKER: Under the Youth Justice Act, there is clearly some prescribed offences that we have to take certain action on. Then, as it relates to diversion, there is an obligation on us to consider diversion, particularly at the age of the child, but there are a number of things that will exclude diversion as being an option.

Again, speaking specifically, Viper for example, of the 115 files, 14 were uniquely identified individuals that Viper dealt with on more than one occasion. The 29 diversion files that were undertaken, relate to first-time offenders. That was 24 uniquely identified individual youth who were considered as being first-time offenders at that point in time, hence the reason diversion is preferred.

Mrs LAMBLEY: Can I ask a question, Mr Chair?

Mrs LAMBLEY: With police diversion in Alice Springs, you are down to just one officer providing that diversion, is that correct? I understand functionally there is only one person doing the job and that has been the case for pretty much the last 12 months.

Commissioner CHALKER: That is not according with my awareness of that, but I am happy to follow that up.

Mrs LAMBLEY: I would like you to. I would like to know how many police diversions have been functioning over the last 12 months, because I am told that that is a unit that is not adequately resourced or functioning adequately.

Commissioner CHALKER: What I can tell you, as I said, is that since VIPER has been operating since 14 October, there has been 29 diversion files that have been related to first-time offenders alone. We clearly have a function that is able to undertake those diversion processes. That is not an insignificant case load.

Mrs LAMBLEY: Would you take that on notice Minister, to check that?

Question on Notice No 3.9

Mr CHAIR: Member for Araluen, please restate the question for the record.

Mrs LAMBLEY: What has been the resourcing for police diversion in Alice Springs over the last 12 months?

Mr CHAIR: Minister, do you accept the question?

Mrs MANISON: Yes.

Mrs LAMBLEY: Can I just add, of the positions, how many have actually been functioning in that police diversion role over the last 12 months.

Mrs MANISON: What do you mean by that?

Mrs LAMBLEY: I am told that there are two or three positions, but there is only one position that has actually been filled.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: They are technically part of diversion but they are off doing other things.

Mrs LAMBLEY: Yes, but they are not actually functioning in that role.

Mr CHAIR: The question asked by the Member for Araluen has been allocated the number 3.9.

Mrs LAMBLEY: The other question I have is about an article on the same tangent as the Opposition Leader. On December 3 on the front page of the NT News there was a story about Strike Force Viper—you obviously gave this information to the NT News as there were clear figures—which said 217 prosecution files have been submitted since the strike force began on October 14 of this year. So over seven weeks 217 prosecution files had been submitted, of those 122 were related to property offences and 106 were submitted against youth offenders.

This was an interesting article because it is not something that is normally used to suggest that there is a problem, increase or decrease—the number of prosecution files is not normally used. I notice in your annual report that in 2019–20 the number of fresh prosecution files was around 17,000. You are talking about 217 over a seven week period in Alice Springs and a total of 17,000 across the Northern Territory. Is this going to be a new measure that you use to demonstrate how successful you are?

My other question is, if we are talking about a seven week period in Alice Springs can I have the figures for the previous seven weeks, the next seven weeks and the seven weeks of the corresponding period the year before? You have given this figure in isolation with nothing to compare it to. Do you know what I am saying? It does not really mean anything in isolation.

Mrs MANISON: I think it means a lot. I will have the Commissioner to go through it in further detail from a policing perspective. The feedback I have received from people in the community—I am sure you have had the same as a local member—has been that they have seen the impact of Strike Force Viper and that it has had strong results. I have spoken to the officer in viper and they say they have seen the results of their work.

I will have the Commissioner go through the prosecution files and the work of viper.

Commissioner CHALKER: Thank you. That figure has come from the viper team themselves. That is how they have been measuring what they have been doing from a workload analysis. Arguably, it is not something that ordinarily goes into the public domain but there is a significant amount of attention on viper. People in Alice Springs would have seen the impact that viper has had, specifically 217 files for a dozen police officers is an extraordinary amount of work in a seven week period.

Speaking to your request about seven weeks prior, viper was not in operation then so there will not be a direct comparison. There is an artificial environment that has impacted on 2020 in relation to the lockdown that was in place across the biosecurity zone. There was a mass return to country to remote communities so we are not comparing relevant things across the span of this year. The comparisons are not necessarily even. We know and are not shying away from the fact that there was a serious spike in youth related activity that was being felt by the community. Equally, there was a spike in youth activity earlier in the year and I sent additional resources down to address that.

It is fair to say that what viper is trying to communicate is that they have been very busy and have targeted unique and specific offenders. There has been a long list of criminal activity listed to a number of them and have now caught up with them. Pleasingly, the predominant ringleaders have been identified and are either on remand, have been imprisoned or have been under relevant controllers that relate to further work we have in place with other agencies.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Sorry, Member for Araluen. You have gone off my line of questioning.

Mrs LAMBLEY: No, I have not.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: You have. I am asking about the apprehension...

Mrs LAMBLEY: Mr Chair, I have another question that I would like to ask.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: I ask you to make a ruling Mr Chair. I am asking about the 242 apprehensions, the Member for Araluen is asking about the 217 prosecutions.

Mr CHAIR: Member for Araluen and Opposition Leader...

Mrs LAMBLEY: I have asked two questions this morning.

Mr CHAIR: The line of questioning...

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: I am definitely coming back to this. You are missing a huge line of questioning.

Mr CHAIR: The line of questioning, as I see recall and from my notes were about Viper apprehensions, youth apprehensions, officers in diversion. Member for Araluen, I will allow you another question.

Mrs LAMBLEY: Thank you. I guess the point I am trying to make is this figure came in isolation and we need something to compare it to. I am hearing what you are saying, that Strike Force Viper has been a success from your perspective. Most people in Alice Springs are yet to be fully convinced. They are optimistic. To say that it has been a success is probably a little premature at this stage.

I would like some comparison data. Would you like to take that on notice so we are clear on what this means?

Commissioner CHALKER: I can give you a comparison from unlawful entries in Alice Springs. For the four-week period of 2019, there was a total of 78 reported unlawful entries. For the same four-week period in 2020 that is reduced by 21.8% down to 61. That ...

Mrs LAMBLEY: Commissioner, I am talking about prosecution files. You have given this data to the *NT News*. I am wondering how many prosecution files were submitted in the seven weeks prior to Strike Force Viper, just so we can have a comparison. This looks good and you say it is good, but what are we comparing it to? Can I put that on notice, minister? Is that possible?

Mrs MANISON: Sorry. When was the period you wanted that information for, Member for Araluen?

Mrs LAMBLEY: The information the police gave the *NT News* was for a seven-week period from 14 October to 3 December. I am saying it does not mean anything until people can compare it to the seven weeks prior to that.

Mrs MANISON: Okay. What we are trying to say is we recognise that there was a spike of activity which is why Viper has gone in and done its work. I cannot see ...

Mrs LAMBLEY: We need evidence.

Mrs MANISON: Yes, it has been pretty clear. They have gone out and dealt with the spike of activity there. If you would like to have a look at the seven weeks prior, put it on notice for us to do that.

Question on Notice No 3.10

Mr CHAIR: Member for Araluen, could I ask you to please restate the question for the record.

Mrs LAMBLEY: Could the minister for Police provide data on the number of prosecution files that have been submitted in the seven weeks prior to Strike Force Viper commencing on 14 October?

Mrs MANISON: Shall we make it a similar comparator to the Viper data that has been used?

Mrs LAMBLEY: Yes. And giving a breakdown of the number of property offences and the number of offenders.

Mr CHAIR: Minister, do you accept the question?

Mrs MANISON: Yes, I accept that.

Mr CHAIR: The Question on Notice asked by the Member for Araluen of the minister has been allocated number 3.10.

Mr CHAIR: Opposition Leader, further questions.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Going back to the 242 apprehensions by Viper from 14 October. When does that period close—14 October to?

Mrs MANISON: Commissioner.

Commissioner CHALKER: Opposition Leader, 6 December.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Okay. Of the 242 apprehensions, there were 111 arrests. Sorry, I will go back to the apprehensions. Of those apprehended, how many received a written warning?

Mrs MANISON: We are looking into that information, Leader of the Opposition. It might be that we need to take that specific question on notice.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: I just want to make sure I have this right. Commissioner, of the 242, you were saying that is adults and youths. Is that correct? Of the 242, 115 were youths?

Mrs MANISON: We are speaking about Viper specifically, are we not?

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Yes. The commissioner quoted ...

Commissioner CHALKER: Yes, 115 were youths.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Okay. Of those figures you gave me before, with 111 arrests, 65 summonses, 29 diversions, 26 warrants and 11 breaches, they were adult and youth offenders?

Commissioner CHALKER: Correct.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Are you able to break that down for me into youth and adult offenders?

Mrs MANISON: I thought the commissioner had already given you a lot of this information?

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: No, he gave me female and male.

Commissioner CHALKER: The youth there was 16 female and 99 male.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Can you break them down into those categories though?

Commissioner CHALKER: Sorry, which categories?

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: We had 111 for arrests with 14 female and 97 male. Leaving that aside, how many of the 111 arrests were youth or adults?

Mrs MANISON: We are just checking that information. We are trying to get a comparative that is specific to the question you are asking.

Commissioner CHALKER: If we go back, I think your question was around written warnings?

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Yes but I have just realised that the numbers do not match up so I am trying to pull it back so we are looking at exact numbers. Originally we talked about 242 apprehensions which is made up of 111 arrests, 65 summons, 29 diversions, 26 warrants and 11 breaches. We know the male female breakdown but what we do not know is the adult youth breakdown. I am more interested in the adult youth breakdown than the female male breakdown. If we can go back through those five categories which make up the 242 apprehensions into how many of the arrest were youth...

Commissioner CHALKER: We will have to get you that specific information. We have not broken down the arrests into adult or youth at this point of time. Going back to the written warning question, from 1 July to 30 September, there was 290 events that were diversion-warranted, 35 of those were written warnings. It is not directly overlaying the Viper dates but that is information we have.

Question on Notice No 3.11

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: For the period 14 October to 6 December, during which time there were 242 apprehensions by Strike Force Viper, how many of the 111 arrests, 65 summons, 29 diversions, 26 warrants and 11 breaches, were youth and how many were adults?

Mr CHAIR: Do you accept the question?

Mrs MANISON: Yes, happy to.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Commissioner, so we went through the 242 apprehensions, then you mentioned there were 115 apprehensions for youth which was 40% of your apprehensions but we do not have the exact breakdown. Just to confirm, is that 115 youth number, taken from the 242?

Commissioner CHALKER: Yes. 115 (inaudible) were attributable to 14 individual youth.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: And they were 14. Okay.

Commissioner CHALKER: (inaudible) more than one occasion.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Of the 242 apprehensions for that 14 October to 6 December time period, 115 of those apprehensions were for youth.

Commissioner CHALKER: (inaudible)

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: That represented 14 youths; 14 youths shared the 115 apprehensions. Wow. Okay.

Of those apprehensions then, I asked how many of those received a written warning but you did not have the same date range. Can I ask on notice for the same date range how many received written warnings, oral warnings or diversion?

Question on Notice No 3.12

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

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: For the date range 14 October to 6 December, of the 115 youth apprehensions which represented 14 youth, how many of those apprehensions resulted in a written or oral warning by police, police diversion or proceeded to charge, bail or an alternative outcome aggregated to each youth? If one youth received 15 written warnings, 15 diversions et cetera, can it please be aggregated across the 14 youth.

Mr CHAIR: Minister, do you accept the question?

Mrs MANISON: We will provide the information we can, Mr Chair.

Mr CHAIR: The question asked by the Opposition Leader of the minister has been allocated number 3.12.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: From a crude estimate, that is eight apprehensions per youth during that time period. How many youth for that time period were apprehended on the same day or night?

Mrs MANISON: We do not have that data.

Commissioner CHALKER: Opposition Leader, we would have to break that information down. I think it is appropriate for me to add that operation viper is very busy and we want to provide as much information as reasonably possible. The fact is that operation viper are the ones who will have to provide this level of response, down to the miniature that you are requesting.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Would it be captured in a database somewhere?

Commissioner CHALKER: Not the frequency overnight. That will be something we would engage with them for. They will have to do a manual dive and they are going to be the ones with the best recollection and knowledge as to the frequency of those particular individuals.

I am happy to facilitate a more fulsome brief for you on viper. It is to try and ensure what we provide you meets your interests.

Mrs MANISON: I cannot stress enough that they have had an impact out there.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: I know. I am not questioning the work they are doing or the results. I am trying to unpack the data because we get a lot of spin from government and this is my opportunity to take a snapshot of what is going on. Commissioner to confirm, are you saying apprehensions are not recorded in the police database system? It requires going back to individual police officers to recollect how many times they apprehended the same person?

Commissioner CHALKER: Opposition Leader, no. I am saying that to answer the question of how many times they have been arrested in the same day and night, it is something we would need to do a deeper dive on. We would need to speak to the relevant investigators involved as they will have the most contemporary knowledge of the frequency. The records will maintain an individual case on them but that is going to require a deep manual request that we will want to validate and cross reference with the relevant investigators.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: When apprehending someone are police required to log that into an electronic system?

Commissioner CHALKER: I think the data I have provided you gives a clear indication of the rigorous processes in place. The point I am raising is that providing the response to your specific question is going to require a significant manual response. I am conscious of the balance of my police resources, serving and protecting the community, versus providing that level of detail. It is quite detailed information that you are seeking.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: I do not want to see frontline officers spending time doing office work, but this raises a huge concern. It can only mean that we do not have the electronic facility for police. I am not criticising police but it means we are either not requiring them to record an apprehension or we do not have the technology to record an apprehension.

Mrs MANISON: I am concerned that you are alleging that police are not recording their activities and their work Opposition Leader? That is what I am taking from this question.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: No, I am saying electronically. Try and turn this on me, you can if you want to. I just finished saying that this is no reflection on police...

Mrs MANISON: Then you still asked that question. You asserted that, Leader of the Opposition.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Minister, do you have a database for police where they can record apprehensions?

Mrs MANISON: Yes, I will get the commissioner to go into the detail of how police do their job each and every day.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: No, I am trying—you are slipping around this ...

Mrs MANISON: No, I am not.

Commissioner CHALKER: We have the PROMIS system. I think you are aware that we also have a new system that is currently under development—SerPro. That has been a project to replace Air IT. I may not be explaining myself well because the questions you are coming back to are not commensurate with what I am trying to state is the situation.

Yes, we enter every data set we possibly can as it relates to the arrest of an individual. What I am saying is if we arrest someone two to three times in the course of a day, that will be a manual process for us go back through that individual to understand the frequency of them doing that. We will search PROMIS to work out, on a day. We will print it out and have to look at it to see that on 6 December there was an apprehension report three times on that day. Then we will have to manually validate that to understand that was an actual arrest for that person at that point in time and, at the time, ultimately do a line to 6 December.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Okay. So, it is in an electronic system?

Commissioner CHALKER: Absolutely. It is in the PROMIS system and ...

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Commissioner, you have been saying 'arrest' in that answer. Arrest is different to apprehension. Is apprehension equally collected in that database.

Commissioner CHALKER: Opposition Leader, I go back to the question you posed about within the day. If my recollection is correct, you asked about if they are arrest multiple times in a day, day and night...

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Apprehended.

Commissioner CHALKER: Apprehended? That may be the case that they may received a summons, for example, in the same day, but they may ultimately be arrested later that night. That is two separate apprehensions. The summons may have been produced that day because the officers have finally reached a benchmark of evidence to be able to prefer the charge. Subsequently, the offender may ultimately reoffend that night, but the previous offending may have been some weeks before, but it has taken the officer that period of time to gather the evidence to lay the charge by the summons process.

This is why I am saying it is not necessarily that straightforward just to plug a question into our system that says how many times that person has been arrested in two days.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: But a summons is different to an apprehension. If someone is apprehended—that is, police have had to stop and engage and get their details in the process you explained to me before ...

Mrs MANISON: What the commissioner is saying is how thoroughly police do their jobs, but also the complexity they deal with each and every day on the front line.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: I have no question about that. Maybe I will explain to you what I am trying to work through here. There is a huge concern in the community that repeat offending is rife; that we have this revolving door that police are having to pick people up or be in contact with people. Then, they are back on the street. As local members, we hear this just about every day.

What I am trying to work out is how many times police are having to interact with the same individuals. The commissioner has nominated a period in time, so I am trying to ask all my questions for that period so we have very clear, unequivocal data from police about what is occurring in that area. We know it is 14 youths. It is a matter of public importance that we know how many times the police are having to pick up the same people. This goes to the heart of our youth justice laws and the changes your government made two years ago. That is what I am trying to do.

Police do an exceptional job in extraordinary circumstances every day. This is no reflection on police in any way, shape or form. I am trying to work out whether our police officers are seeing the same people every day, sometimes multiple times in a day.

Commissioner CHALKER: Opposition Leader, I have already stated that of 115 youth, 14 were uniquely identified individuals. So, 14 out of the 115 were ones we had dealt with on more than one occasion. They are ones that we class as recidivist offenders. All of those 14 were arrested and/or summonsed and make up 39 separate prosecution files.

The 29 diversion files that I referenced related to 24 uniquely identified individual youths and they are considered first-time offenders. The majority we are dealing with have been first-time offenders or have low criminal history. Fourteen, as I indicated, are what we classified as recidivist.

Mrs MANISON: Make no mistake, there are several who have been remanded and gone to our correction facility.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: This is what I am trying to break down. That is why I wanted to know of those 14 youths, how many received a written warning, an oral warning or went for diversion.

Mrs MANISON: You have already put that question on the record.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: I am just explaining where we are going.

Mrs MANISON: We have committed to answering that for you. It is clear in these numbers that Strike Force Viper has had immediate impact in the work it has been doing, and that is why it will continue that work in Alice Springs.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: When we say there are 65 summonses, that means all 65 of those people were bailed to appear in court at a later date, is that correct?

Commissioner CHALKER: No, that is not correct. A summons is, as indicated earlier—arrest is a last resort for us. That is a standing principle which extends from previous royal commissions. A summons is where we have obtained the relevant bona fides of the person and the officer is satisfied at that point in time that there is no likelihood of reoffending to occur either at that point or in the near future, and they have sufficient bona fides to ensure that person is ultimately summonsed to appear before court.

In the event that the person does not acknowledge and respond to court as per the summons, the court may issue a warrant for their non-appearance.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Of the diversions, is there ever adult diversion? No? What are the current police diversions? What can you be diverted to?

Mrs MANISON: There is a raft of diversions people can be referred to. I have to stress that if a youth engages in criminal activity that requires them to go before the court, they absolutely will. We have seen in our correctional facilities that youths go through them.

What we have focused on a lot in the last few years is making sure we not only have additional police resources, but we have programs in place. If we think a youth can be turned around and we can stop their pathway into criminal activity in their adult years, we put that in place because it is good for the community.

We have a raft of different options available to police and Territory Families.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Specifically in Alice Springs—I am talking about the 29 youths who were diverted. What diversion would they have been sent to?

Mrs MANISON: We will get back to your written question on the Written Question Paper, Opposition Leader. There is a raft of options that can be used to deal with young offenders depending on the extent of their criminal activity and criminal history. In some cases it could be simply getting them on the right track by having a conversation with their parents. In others it can be getting commitments from them to go to school. Others could be as serious as having to go through drug and alcohol rehabilitation programs to get themselves back on track in that regard.

Some can be referred to the Back on Track program through Territory Families. The minister for Territory Families will speak to in greater detail when she is before the committee. It can involve things such as Seven Emu Station at Borroloola, where we have short and long-term stays for these young people to get them to think about their criminal behaviour and get back on the right track. It could be going through to B18 or Operation Flinders. There is a raft of measures in place.

We also have work programs where we engage young people in doing some practical training and skills development, because sometimes school and education is not the best option for them. They might need an alternative pathway to obtaining qualifications and getting on the right track. There is a raft of options that have been put in place, most of those under the last term of government.

Commissioner, I might get you to go further into some of the options in diversion if I have missed anything in regard to how police work with young people. There is also victim conferencing—I forgot about that one.

Commissioner CHALKER: As the minister said, there is a raft of options available for them to make that assessment. That is where they interplay with the officers involved in the Diversion Unit to seek guidance and advice. We have a general order that also provides guidance and advice to our officers. They have obligations obviously and much of that has come out of the royal commission as to what they are obliged to do as it relates to considering diversion. There is a list of prescribed offences where diversion is not considered appropriate and hence the reason you see the number of offences that are dealt with by arrest or summons direct to the court.

It ranges from written warning, verbal warning up to family conferences and those places to try and help people get back on track.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Thank you. Does police have a statistics section?

Commissioner CHALKER: Yes we do.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: I would like to take my question on notice about the apprehensions if I can?

Mr CHAIR: You would need to ask your question first.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: You have to say your bit and I will say my bit.

Mr CHAIR: It depends what the question is.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: It is up to the minister to accept it or not.

Mrs MANISON: I always try to be helpful, Leader of the Opposition.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: I have no doubt. I am waiting for the Chair to do his bit so I can do my bit.

Mr CHAIR: I think you ask the question first and then...

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: I have already asked it several times.

Mr CHAIR: Do you want to restate the question?

Mrs MANISON: Are you asking the same question again, Leader of the Opposition? You just said you stated it several times already.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: I am going to ask it very specifically. You did not answer it. I got a lot of words.

Mrs MANISON: You put one on notice about 10 minutes ago.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: That was one. I have a million on this topic.

Question on Notice No 3.13

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Utilising the Police Statistics team and its electronic databases, can you please provide me with a breakdown of the 14 youth for the period 14 October to 6 December who were apprehended. How many times were they apprehended in the same 24-hour period?

Mr CHAIR: Do you accept the question?

Mrs MANISON: Yes, Mr Chair. We accept the question which I think is a repeat of the previous question we have just been asked.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Of the 11 breaches of bail, I am talking about the same period, how many of those were charged with fresh offending?

Mrs MANISON: We would need to take that on notice, Leader of the Opposition.

Question on Notice No 3.14

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Of the 11 breaches of bail in the period 14 October to 6 December for Strike Force Viper, how many of those, broken down into youths and adults, were charged with fresh offending during their breach of bail?

Mr CHAIR: Do you accept the question?

Mrs MANISON: Yes, Mr Chair. We will take that question on notice.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Of the 26 warrants, could you please explain what would trigger a warrant? Is it the process you mentioned before if someone is summonsed to court or does not appear in court a warrant is issued? Is that the only time a warrant—could you just explain that?

Mrs MANISON: Yes, very operational question and the Commissioner will answer that I am sure.

Commissioner CHALKER: I would suggest invariably that they will be for non-appearance warrants however in the event that an offender is not ultimately identified and officers reach a benchmark within their case where they can refer a charge, they can put a file up to request a warrant be issued. For example, if we identify someone who may have been undertaking a spate of activity in Alice Springs and then duly skips town, we can still go through the process if we have built up sufficient evidence be it a fingerprint hit, DNA or other corroborating evidence, we can put a case forward to the Judge to contemplate whether they are prepared to issue a warrant for their arrest.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Thank you. I appreciate that.

I appreciate we do not have this number that I am going to ask for but it is in a Question on Notice; of the 242 apprehensions during the period 14 October to 6 December, broken down into adults and youths, how many ...

Commissioner CHALKER: One hundred and fifteen of the 242 were youths.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Yes that is right, sorry 115 were youths, I am just thinking for both. How many were successfully prosecuted or how many received a conviction?

Commissioner CHALKER: We will have to take that on notice and a number of those matters would be before the court.

Mrs MANISON: As advised by the commissioner, that would be another question that we would have to take on notice.

Question on Notice No 3.15

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

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Of the 115 youths during the period 14 October to 6 December, how many were successfully convicted?

Mr CHAIR: Minister, do you accept the question?

Mrs MANISON: Yes.

Mr CHAIR: The question asked by the Opposition Leader has been allocated the number 3.15.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: I was trying to think of the correct language, prescribed offences. Under the *Youth Justice Act*, there are prescribed offences—please commissioner correct me if I am wrong, going back in my brain here.

If a youth is not apprehended for a prescribed offence and the presumption is in favour of bail, and of course police have to go through their own processes around the written warning and oral warning and all those things, can we break down of the 14 youths that were apprehended, how many of them were apprehended for a prescribed offence under the *Youth Justice Act*?

Mrs MANISON: Again, you are going into some detail there. That is something we can take on notice.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: It is really important. Because prescribed offences are very high threshold. It is basically youths enjoy a presumption in favour of bail except for prescribed offences which are a very high threshold; it is like terrorism, murder ...

Mrs MANISON: It is fair to say that if a youth does something very serious and they need to go before the courts, they go before the courts. As I said they are certainly going to correctional facilities as well.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: I have no question they go before the courts, but it is how they get to court. If they are getting to court for a very serious offence and they enjoy a presumption in favour of bail, some people would say that is an issue.

Mrs MANISON: They certainly going to correctional facilities.

Commissioner CHALKER: If it does provide some level of assistance, you are correct that in the higher end categories of prescribed offences there are some very serious ones. As it relates specifically to property, that I would content would account for a large proportion of those, one of the areas that is prescribed is the 'unlawful entry of building'. That is something that has some certain circumstances in it, as is 'assault with intent to steal', that is particularly where the offender is in the company of one or more. There are some elements that do capture some of the activities that those youth have been to that are not necessarily at that very extreme end, nonetheless do cause significant apprehension to a victim.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Thank you.

Mr CHAIR: Opposition Leader, are you comfortable with that or would you like to restate the question?

Question on Notice No 3.16

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

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Of the 14 youths apprehended during the period 14 October to 6 December, how many were apprehended for a prescribed offence?

Mr CHAIR: Minister, do you accept the question?

Mrs MANISON: Yes.

Mr CHAIR: The question asked by the Opposition Leader has been allocated the number 3.16.

Mr CHAIR: Are there any further questions?

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: In respect to the prosecution files, which is certainly new lingo that we are starting to hear from government as some sort of benchmark of success. I really want to break down what a prosecution file is, because certainly in and of itself it does not explain how many—what that process leads to. Just for clarity, what constitutes a prosecution file? For example, it might include files where someone has been charged, files where no charge has been laid and it is given to the DPP for them to consider a charge, it certainly does not go into any detail around conviction, bail et cetera, so I just want to know what a prosecution file is.

Mrs MANISON: Leader of the Opposition, I will get the Commissioner of Police to go through that question again because it is a very operational question.

COMMISSIONER CHALKER: Thank you, Leader of the Opposition. A prosecution file will in essence have what we identify as a precis or a statement of facts that will outline the offences that are going to be alleged by the prosecution, ordinarily will be a police officer in the lower court. What accompanies that is an apprehension report which is basically then IJIS that will indicate whether it is an arrest file or whether it is a summons file.

Equally, with a diversion file what the prosecution file will do is still provide a statement of the facts as well as give an indication of the criminal history, if any, of the person involved, so all the files are pretty well done up to a similar standard in so much as the basics are there that will identify what is the alleged offending, what are the circumstances of the alleged offending, the time and date of those, the identity of the individual involved and then that will be supported by the relevant offence codes that would be alleged under the IJIS system commensurate with the time and date of the incident and the like.

Prosecution file will then also have additional supplementary information such as witness statements, photos, potentially reports of forensic nature, any other information and evidence that they contemplate will support the overarching evidence for the submission of the file.

Mrs MANISON: Again, you can hear the amount of work that police put in to making sure they dot their i's, cross their t's and then get things prepared when dealing with some of these offenders.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Absolutely. Thank you, Commissioner. A prosecution file also includes a diversion file, so if a youth is diverted, are they charged? They are not charged they are chosen for diversion, they are separate ...

COMMISSIONER CHALKER: No, criminally they are not charged but the diversion process is recorded.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Okay. It is fair to say then that of the 217 prosecution files—actually, I will ask. Of the 217 prosecution files, how many were diversion files?

COMMISSIONER CHALKER: As previously stated, Leader of the Opposition, 29 were diversion files. Three for females, 26 males.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: The remaining number of files were—where does that prosecution file go? It goes to police prosecutors?

COMMISSIONER CHALKER: For a criminal and summons matter, correct.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Okay. It goes to police prosecutors to then take to court?

COMMISSIONER CHALKER: Correct, Leader of the Opposition. That will be the first mention of the matter before the court and then that is the formal process kicking off. Again, if they have been arrested and remanded they will be produced at the court at the direction of the remand warrant. Equally, if they have been given bail they have been obliged that under their bail undertaken their returning to court on that particular day, then if they are summonsed then that summons will provide the time and date that they are to attend court for their matter to have its first mention and that process will be repeated depending on their level of liberty during the process of the criminal matter.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: You might have already answered this, but have any of the prosecution files when they get to the police prosecutor, have charges already been laid? Or it goes to the police prosecutor for charges to be laid?

COMMISSIONER CHALKER: That is the process of the complaint or the information being laid on the IGIS system, but the officers will invariably have raised the offences they are recommending under an offence report—that is under the apprehension report that is on IJIS. The formal processing of the charging from the prosecution side of the house will be when they formalise the laying of either the complaint of the information and they will invariably make an assessment on the information they have available to them as to which offences they believe the evidence is going to sustain.

Mr CHAIR: Thank you, Commissioner. Members of the Estimates Committee, we will take a short break. We have had two hours in here this morning so I think everyone may need to potentially stretch their legs, but maybe go to the bathroom or get a cup of tea.

We will return back in five minutes. Thank you.

The committee suspended.

Mr CHAIR: Thank you everybody and welcome back. Are there any further questions relating to the opening statement?

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: I was just about to ask another question on that same line. Of the 217 prosecution files

Mrs MANISON: Sorry. Just before that, Leader of the Opposition, Mr Chair, can we respond to some Questions on Notice that we have answers for?

Mr CHAIR: That would be fabulous.

Answer to Question on Notice No 3.4

Mrs MANISON: I have a response for me first, with regard to my travel on Air Wing.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Do you have the number?

Mr CHAIR: Can the minister please clearly state the number of the Question on Notice ...

Mrs MANISON: You have them in front of you, Mr Chair.

Mr CHAIR: ... which was 3.3.

Mrs MANISON: And Mr Keith. Okay.

With regard to my ministerial ...

Mr CHAIR: Sorry, minister, 3.4. Question on Notice 3.4.

Mrs MANISON: Yes. With regard to what I have looked back on, on 25 September 2019 I travelled with police to Maningrida for the purposes of a community meeting to discuss the Maningrida Police Station. On 7 November I travelled to Groote Eylandt with police for the purposes of the official opening of the Angurugu Police Station. On 12 November 2019 I travelled to Yuendumu to meet with community members. On 1 October 2020 I travelled from Alice Springs to Darwin with police for the purpose of visiting border control checkpoints.

Commissioner CHALKER: Mr Chair, I have an answer to a question on notice. It is number 3.1.

Answer to Question on Notice No 3.1

Commissioner CHALKER: Assaults on police: for the 2018–19 financial year there were 194; for the 2019–20 financial year there were 189; and for year to date for 2020–21 there has been 88. We will continue to try and find the breakdown as it relates to those that have been prosecuted, the outcomes of those and whether they have been convicted.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: That question is still on notice as there are other components to the question.

Mr CHAIR: Thank you Commissioner Chalker for the information regarding question on notice 3.1 but there is subsequent information still to come.

Answer to Question on Notice No 3.3

Commissioner CHALKER: Mr Chair, I have an answer to a question on notice. It is number 3.3.

This relates to the Air Wing costs for the 2019–20 financial year. It was \$4.858m for the four planes, pilots and administration staff.

Mr CHAIR: Thank you Commissioner Chalker. For question on notice 3.3, the total cost of Air Wing for the 2019–20.

Answer to Question on Notice No 3.9

Commissioner CHALKER: Mr Chair, I have an answer to a question on notice. It is number 3.9.

This relates youth diversion staffing in Alice Springs. The advice I received is that there has been a sergeant and two constables ongoing in those roles.

Mr CHAIR: Thank you Commissioner Chalker. Question on notice 3.9 is regarding the question from the Member for Araluen around the diversion officers in Alice Springs.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Of the 217 prosecution files, how many people were responsible for those files?

Commissioner CHALKER: Sorry Opposition Leader, the actual number of unique offenders?

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: How many individuals are responsible for the 217 prosecution files?

Commissioner CHALKER: Including adults?

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Yes. We can break it down into youth and adults.

Commissioner CHALKER: Yes.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: We can do it like that.

Commissioner CHALKER: We will take that on notice.

Question on Notice No 3.17

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

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Of the 217 prosecution files, how many youths and adults are responsible for them?

Mr CHAIR: Minister, do you accept the question?

Mrs MANISON: Yes, Mr Chair.

Mr CHAIR: The question asked by the Opposition Leader of the minister has been allocated number 3.17.

Mr CHAIR: Further questions?

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Commissioner, we had the break but you went through explained what a prosecution is et cetera. Correct me if I am wrong, but a prosecution file is a request by police for charges to be laid by police prosecution. In and of itself, the 217 prosecution files does not tell anyone how many of those files resulted in charges?

Commissioner CHALKER: No, Opposition Leader. There would be multiple offenses linked to those commensurate with the prosecution file that has been pulled together.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Equally, some of them may not have resulted in any charge at all?

Commissioner CHALKER: Opposition Leader, not if a prosecution file has been put forward. If a prosecution file has been put forward, they will be charged unless, in extraordinary circumstances, there was the belief that there was insufficient evidence for that charge to proceed. The normal supervisor checking process would minimise that.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: It would vet it out. Okay. Unless you have it, commissioner, I will ask on notice how many of the 217 prosecution files did not result in a charge being laid?

Commissioner CHALKER: Sorry, Opposition Leader, can I hear what your question was again?

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Sorry. You said it would be very unlikely ...

Mrs MANISON: I am not trying to say that, basically, charges have not been laid for the prosecution files.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: The commissioner said that if a file gets to a prosecution file, it would be an extraordinary circumstance, basically, where a charge would not be laid. My question is that. The answer may very well be zero. Of the 217 prosecution files, how many resulted in no charges being laid?

Commissioner CHALKER: We will take that on notice.

Question on Notice No 3.18

Mr CHAIR: Opposition Leader, could I ask you to please restate the question for the record.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Of the 217 prosecution files, how many resulted in no charges being laid?

Commissioner CHALKER: Sorry, Opposition Leader, if we can just clarify—do you want that for adults as well, because ...

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Yes, broken down into adults and youths.

Commissioner CHALKER: There is only 115 files for the youth.

Mr CHAIR: Minister, do you accept the question?

Mrs MANISON: Yes, Mr Chair, I accept the question.

Mr CHAIR: Thank you, minister. The Question on Notice asked by the Opposition Leader of the minister has been allocated number 3.18.

Mr CHAIR: Further questions?

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: In parliament in November I asked a question. I wanted to get a snapshot of data. I picked the month September, which probably works well given we have a lot of data for the October to now period. I will ask those again.

This is Territory-wide, leaving Viper aside. For the month of September, how many youth offenders were arrested?

Mrs MANISON: Leader of the Opposition, we have some information. However, the time period will be varied to the month of September.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: What time period do you have?

Commissioner CHALKER: I have 1 July 2020 to 30 September 2020. Then I have events considered for diversion over the last five years broken down per annum.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Yes, 1 July to 30 September—I am happy with that.

Commissioner CHALKER: For diversions?

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Yes. The questions was for that time period, for 1 July to 30 September, how many youths were arrested?

Commissioner CHALKER: We will have to take that on notice.

Question on Notice No 3.19

Mr CHAIR: Opposition Leader, can I please ask you to restate the question for the record.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: For the period 1 July to 30 September 2020 how many youths were arrested?

Mr CHAIR: Minister, do you accept the question?

Mrs MANISON: Yes, thank you, Mr Chair.

Mr CHAIR: The Question on Notice asked by the Opposition Leader of the minister has been allocated number 3.19.

Mr CHAIR: Further questions?

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: For the period 1 July to 30 September 2020 how many youths were refused bail?

Mrs MANISON: I am advised we will have to take that question on notice, Leader of the Opposition

Question on Notice No 3.20

Mr CHAIR: Opposition Leader, can I please ask you to restate the question for the record.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: For the period 1 July to 30 September 2020 how many youths were refused bail?

Mr CHAIR: Minister, do you accept the question?

Mrs MANISON: Yes, Mr Chair.

Mr CHAIR: The Question on Notice asked by the Opposition Leader of the minister has been allocated number 3.20.

Mr CHAIR: Further questions?

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: For the period 1 July to 30 September 2020 how many youths were given a verbal or written warning?

Mrs MANISON: I will get the commissioner to answer that question. We have data on—was it verbal or written?

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Yes.

Mrs MANISON: We do have that data.

Commissioner CHALKER: The number of youths for that period with a written warning was 35.

Mrs MANISON: And the verbal was four.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: This may very well be a Territory Families question, but I imagine police—I do not know, so I will ask it. For the period 1 July to 30 September 2020, how many youths in the care of Territory Families were arrested?

Mrs MANISON: We do not have that data. I would say ask the Territory Families minister.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: For the period 1 July to 30 September 2020, how many youths were arrested for new offending while on bail?

Mrs MANISON: Opposition Leader, I am advised that is a question we will need to take on notice.

Question on Notice No 3.21

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

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: For the period 1 July to 30 September 2020, how many youths were arrested for new offending while on bail?

Mr CHAIR: Minister, do you accept the question?

Mrs MANISON: Yes.

Mr CHAIR: The question asked by the Opposition Leader is allocated the number 3.21.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: For the period 1 July to 30 September 2020, how many youths who were bailed, were bailed more than once?

Mrs MANISON: Again, we will need to take on notice.

Question on Notice No 3.22

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

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: For the period 1 July to 30 September 2020, how many youths who were bailed, were bailed more than once?

Mr CHAIR: Minister, do you accept the question?

Mrs MANISON: Yes.

Mr CHAIR: The question asked by the Opposition Leader is allocated the number 3.22.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Of the number of youths bailed over the last financial year, how many were bailed with electronic monitoring?

Mrs MANISON: I will hand that question over to the Police Commissioner.

Commissioner CHALKER: Just confirming, from 30 June this year?

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: For the last financial year, unless you have—I can take both, if you have from 30 June.

Commissioner CHALKER: I will have to take that on notice.

Question on Notice No 3.23

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

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: How many were bailed with electronic monitoring over the last financial year and this financial year?

Mr CHAIR: Minister, do you accept the question?

Mrs MANISON: Yes.

Mr CHAIR: The question asked by the Opposition Leader is allocated the number 3.23.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: When a youth breaches their bail conditions, how are police notified by Territory Families of that breach?

Mrs MANISON: Why would Territory Families be notifying them of that?

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Because they are youth justice. Or maybe they do not. I am trying to ascertain the interaction. If a youth is on bail, how do police find out about a breach of bail?

Commissioner CHALKER: If I am thinking that you are talking about court issued bail where Territory Families have the youth justice responsibility for those youths who are on court issued bail?

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Yes.

Commissioner CHALKER: They will make a referral to us and, depending on the nature or the seriousness of it, that might be a call to our Joint Emergency Services Communication Centre or a referral process that is in place which facilitates that.

Upon receipt of the referral for a breach of bail, the action is that the youth can be placed back before the court for the judge to consider any further changes to their bail; the continuation of the bail or the cessation of their bail and placing them in remand. All of that would be based on the broader circumstances that they would have to make that decision on.

Similarly, with police bail, we actively monitor their bail conditions and if we identify a breach, we will then necessarily take that action and place the child before the court.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Is there any discretion with court bail on when Territory Families can notify police of a breach of bail?

Mrs MANISON: I will get the commissioner to take that question.

Commissioner CHALKER: I would suggest the policies they have in place are more specifically to be directed to Territory Families.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Can police arrest a youth for a breach of bail; or even an adult?

Commissioner CHALKER: Yes.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Yes for an adult?

Commissioner CHALKER: Yes. You can arrest a person for a breach of bail and then the process is you place them back before the court.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Even a youth can be arrested for breach of bail, without the fresh offending component? It can be just the breach?

Commissioner CHALKER: Correct, there is still the power to arrest. The only change in that context for the *Youth Justice Act* earlier this year, was that it is no longer a separate individual offence. What occurs is the breach of bail goes back to the originating offence on the prosecution file.

Mrs MANISON: If they are not complying with their bail conditions; that is exactly what the police do.

Commissioner CHALKER: I will further add, each time if there is a continuance of a breach of bail, the judge on the prosecution file, as will the prosecutor, will have attached to the prosecution file the previous times that any breach of bail may have been alleged.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Moving on to police separations, there is a separation figure presented in the annual report, which is the attrition rate. Separation rates for constables, according to page 78 of the annual report was 4.17%. Why has it been broken down just as constables? How are you measuring attrition in the annual report?

Mrs MANISON: I will get the commissioner to go into the reporting that is used within the annual report. It is certainly something that we keep a close eye on with attrition within the Northern Territory Police. Like any organisation, there is always going to be a turnover of staff due to retirements; some people would like to change career paths because it is not for them; or get elected to Parliament; or other people choose to move for family reasons or those types of things.

We have certainly seen COVID-19 has made people appreciate family more than ever, but we work very hard to ensure we keep our police here and we take good care of them. Going into the reason for reporting at the different levels, I will hand to the commissioner.

Commissioner CHALKER: It is my understanding that is quite standard reporting for us that we will report in percentage terms.

Constables and above are a specific category; so that is sworn police officers identified as members of the police force. The distinction between Aboriginal police officers is another employment stream as are auxiliaries. That is why we have that breakdown. Overall police will encompass the executive role that we have a clear line of sight on what those movements are in those respective employment stream within the classification of the police force.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: In answers to written questions that we received yesterday, there are 99 constables who resigned last financial year. How many of those 99 constables undertook an exit interview?

Mrs MANISON: I will get the Commissioner to answer about the exiting processes when police choose to leave the organisation.

Commissioner CHALKER: Leader of the Opposition, all those that resign or separate from the agency are offered an exit interview. Not all choose to participate but we do hold those records. I can get that number of how many participated in the exit interview for you. It will have to be a question on notice.

Question on Notice No 3.24

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Of the 99 constables who resigned in the 2019–20 financial year, how many undertook an exit interview?

Mr CHAIR: Minister, do you accept the question?

Mrs MANISON: Yes, Mr Chair. I accept the question.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: What is the exit interview information telling police? You would assume there are general themes about why people might be leaving the force.

Mrs MANISON: I will get the Commissioner to answer that question given its operational nature.

Commissioner CHALKER: Leader of the Opposition, invariably it will either come down to resignation or retirement. We then have categories to break down reasons for resignation. A large proportion of those are relocation back interstate to be with family, career progression pathways—so either a continuation of policing services in other jurisdictions. It should be noted there is a significant raft of recruiting going on across the country for police officers and we have a number who have come in via that method for us who are experienced police officers. Similarly other jurisdictions are undertaking that at the moment.

Some of the reasons, of course, are for dismissal which is an unfortunate part of our business from time to time. The full gambit of why people ultimately leave can be explored and captured in the exit interview.

Mr BURGOYNE: What I am trying to figure out through all these numbers is exactly how many police left the police force for the 2019–20 financial year and how many were recruited for that same period.

Commissioner CHALKER: Thank you, Member for Braitling. My understanding is there were 73 police who separated for the financial year, 99 was the figure for the total agency. Just give me a moment and I will collate the actual number of recruitment squads for you.

Mrs MANISON: Just to let you know, Member for Braitling, we are going flat-out with recruitment at the moment. The college is absolutely chockers. We have 90 constables going through at the moment. We also just started another recruit squad of Aboriginal liaison officers in Katherine which is a terrific initiative of the Northern Territory Police to drive more Aboriginal recruitment into the organisation. We have had big numbers.

We have also just had an accelerated recruit squad graduate, many of which have gone to benefit your electorate there in Alice Springs. We also had a transitional squad of Aboriginal Community Police Officers who have gone through the constable ranks. We have continued to recruit aggressively over our term of government. We have delivered the extra 120 police that we committed. We also put in the 75 Police Auxiliary Liquor Inspectors that I spoke about in the opening statement which we put forward over the last term. In addition to that, we have just put on the additional 60 officers to deal with the COVID requirements too.

We are going absolutely flat-out; there is no doubt about it. I have to commend the team at the college. They are doing a magnificent job in what has been a very busy period for them with much more to go. We have several squads lined up to continue into next year as well.

We are recruiting aggressively. We are having to compete with the rest of the nation when it comes to recruiting police. The demands on police have grown across the nation with COVID-19 so you have seen other jurisdictions also embark on new constable squads but transitional squads too. I commend the police; they are doing a tremendous job. We have had huge interest from people wanting to join the police. We are very pleased that we do not tend to have any difficulties filling out our squads with quality recruits to join the police.

COMMISSIONER CHALKER: Member for Braitling, we had 97 recruits commences in the financial year of 2019-20, and so far in 2020-21 we have had 124 recruits commence. There is large cadre due to graduate over March and April of this financial year.

Just leaping back to the exit interview as well, the consistent reasons why people have been given reasons to go through the exit interviews have been family, work life, balance and transitioning to other police and jurisdictions or relocation interstate for family or personal reasons.

The type of information that we request from the employees is, could your employer do something to retain you in the right circumstances, would you consider reapplying for the agency, are you continuing to reside in the NT, and would you like a face to face exit interview. It is quite a fulsome process.

Mrs MANISON: I was delighted at the last accelerated recruit squad, we had managed to poach some back. They started with the NT Police, gone to other careers and then came back.

Mr BURGOYNE: Just to confirm, for the 2019-20 period there were 73 police left and that is a total figure irrespective of rank, and there were 97 that were recruited for that same period?

COMMISSIONER CHALKER: That is correct.

Mrs MANISON: That is building on the past three years before that of our very aggressive recruitment to the Northern Territory police to meet our 120 and our 75 police auxiliary liquor inspectors. And like I said, on top of that we have now gone for another 60 constables. I think it is 30 Aboriginal liaison officers and an additional 10 Aboriginal Community Police Officers on top of the PALIs.

Mr MONAGHAN: Minister, a supplementary question on that recruitment. Is that a genuine interest we are finding in applications to the NT Police as we are vigorously trying to recruit? Do we have large numbers that

we are saying we are full, try next time, and what has been the implications of the COVID been on your recruitment process?

Mrs MANISON: I might hand over to the Commissioner to go through that. Certainly they have been flat out, but always delighted to know that we get lots of applicants to join the police. It is about getting the right applicants because it is an incredibly tough job and we need to have the right people to join the organisation because clearly there are values that people need to work by as well as the rigorous demands on the job day to day.

COMMISSIONER CHALKER: Thank you, minister. Member for Fong Lim, we are very, very active in our recruiting space at this point in time and, I hasten to add, it has not just been within our constable ranks it has also been in our Aboriginal liaison officer ranks and our auxiliary ranks that we have been pushing through a large number of cohorts.

What we have seen in more recent times, which is a pleasing development, is that we have created an appropriate pathway to people to join as either an Aboriginal liaison officer to potentially then become an Aboriginal Community Police Officer, and then transition into being a constable. That is a really pleasing pathway that we have seen significant growth in.

Equally, the auxiliary stream now is a legitimate pathway to ultimately become a constable of police. We have been seeing a number of our squads have those who have had experience in those streams coming in as constable, as well as a large number of people continuing to apply to join our agency. We go through a very rigorous process to ultimately ensure that we are getting the right people to progress.

COVID has had a bit of an impact for us. We have had a number of recruits that had to go into quarantine for various reasons due to hotspots that were in place at those points in time, but we have managed to work through those and bring them online once the quarantine has been completed. We are actively currently interstate seeking to recruit more. We have done a lot of recruiting within the Territory itself and we have a number of Territorians now who have stepped forward to start working with the agency which is equally pleasing.

We are in a highly competitive operating environment and I think people have a deep appreciation of how intrinsically linked we are in our community, hence the reason that we remain an employer of choice.

Mr YAN: Minister, I note there has been quite a discussion about viper and we have seen certainly a high level of offending behaviour taking place to CBD in Alice Springs. I specifically note that there has been a large impact on trying to reduce crime and offending behaviour in the CBD, but I am now getting reports from people of that offending behaviour spreading out from the CBD and we are seeing increases in the areas out on the edges of our communities, specifically around the golf course estate, the casino and in and around the Double Tree. Incidents where tourists are being assaulted. There are increases in break-ins to the motels and hotels, as well as assaults on the staff. My question is, apart from the CBD what measures are being put in place to try and push out into the outer urban areas of Alice Springs?

Mrs MANISON: I would describe it as Alice Springs suburban areas. I will hand over to the Commissioner to talk about it. I assure you Member for Namatjira and Member for Braitling that we have a school holiday program coming up. We have a huge amount of planning happening in each centre which is all about getting young people engaged in constructive activities. There is a busy schedule. We ensure that our youth outreach officers—from Territory Families which Minister Worden will talk about—are doing their job because this is the period where we need to keep kids busy. The summer months tend to be busier months in Alice Springs from a policing perspective.

People come into town from communities to do Christmas shopping, get some air conditioning, see some entertainment and visit families. It brings an influx of people into town. We see higher amounts of criminal activity at that time. That is why we are being proactive and have put these operations in place, particularly since there has been more money flying around, more mobility of people and hence more activity. This is why we have cross agency work happening between police, Territory Families and the Department of the Chief Minister. It is good to see that the council are looking to engage in some activities and are working with the youth centres—Tangentyere, just to name a few providers.

We are working with councils out bush because we want to see more activities happening on community. During the school holidays there will be more options for young people and families to engage in activities. These activity programs run in Alice Springs, Tennant Creek, Katherine, Darwin, Palmerston, Nhulunbuy and remote communities.

I will have the Commissioner talk more about the activity across Alice Springs.

Commissioner CHALKER: Thank you. Member for Namatjira, the point of the matter is that Alice Springs is a complex operating environment as it relates to police. The matters you are referring to attract the attention and perception of crime in Alice Springs. Sadly, what is going unreported and unnoticed is the increase of assaults that have been occurring following the biosecurity lockdown. We have seen an increase in domestic violence incidents and assaults—almost two to one to property—however the conversation focuses on the perception of crime and the property issues.

The four week comparison period of 2019 to 2020 is lower as it relates to property offending across Alice Springs. I say this not to step away from any genuine apprehension people have living in that community, hence the reason why viper is as prominent as it is in its activity. We have ongoing resources deployed to family and domestic violence related incidents, child welfare incidents and assaults. Self-harm is also something that has been significant throughout the COVID-19 period in 2020. We are the first responders dealing with a lot of those things.

We have an incredibly artificial operating environment at the moment. The additional money that is in the mobility that has occurred—you will have seen firsthand the number of second hand vehicles we are clearing out of car yards that have increased the mobility of people coming and going. Alice Springs as a service hub for a lot of the surrounds is feeling pressure. You can feel reassured that your police force is on the front line trying to put proactive measures in place to mitigate things, viper has been a step forward in that regard.

Mrs MANISON: To build on what the Commissioner has said. The year before we had seen fantastic results when it came to alcohol-related assaults—hitting 10-year lows. We have seen the Police Auxiliary Liquor Inspectors take hold and help stop the supply of grog getting out into the community into the hands of problem drinkers. We have seen opportunistic behaviour from criminals pedalling secondary grog supply—which no doubt you have seen in some of your electorate.

Police have been working hard to deal with sly grog as a market has developed for it. These people are ruthless. The going price for a bottle of rum tends to be \$500. We have seen, unfortunately, some issues to do with assaults and domestic violence as a result of that. That is something police are working very hard on as well.

Mr MONAGHAN: Picking up on Viper that the Member for Namatjira spoke of and you touched on at the end, commissioner. What in particular is making Viper so successful in that space in Alice Springs?

Commissioner CHALKER: Member for Fong Lim, the model and the methodology is one that is tried and tested through the experience of Trident—and having those experienced investigators go down. The simple methodology is to focus on the recidivist offenders, understand your intelligence profile and know how you can try to move into more of a proactive response in targeting those individuals to mitigate their likelihood of being opportunistic in their offending.

It is a case that we know property crime causes a great deal of apprehension. It touches your vulnerability if your home has been invaded by somebody who is uninvited and should not be there. We know apprehension and the concern it causes in the community. As I indicated, appropriately I think, that is the domain that police should be first and foremost in, as well as looking after the protection of people.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Minister, there seems to be a severity of offending. There seems to be more and more violent offences happening. Of course, we all read about the poor gentleman in the wheelchair who lives in Malak whose home was broken into and he was assaulted. Yesterday at Woolworths in town, just metres away from police headquarters, we had a horrific rock-throwing incident in the city where a gentleman had to shield a little girl from being injured by this rock throwing that took place.

Are we seeing this trend of increased violent offending across the Territory? What is the government doing to address that?

Mrs MANISON: We have seen coming off, as I said, some really strong results with regard to alcohol-related assaults, particularly in the year before. We have seen some changes. We have come off where one alcohol-related assault can lead to tragedy. But we have significantly driven numbers down; there is no doubt about it.

We have seen more alcohol flowing out there, and a lot more police work happening in that space, where they have been able to bust some significant amounts of alcohol, particularly targeted at going to remote communities.

I will get the commissioner to talk a bit more about some of the things they are seeing out there and what is leading to some of those activities. I have to stress again that there has been a lot of good work. That continues to happen in that alcohol space. The work we are doing in this space is a big reform program. It goes well beyond police, of course, to multiple agencies.

However, the COVID-19 environment has created some very unusual circumstances we are dealing with—as I said, the additional money going through, mobility and some of the opportunistic behaviour where some people are peddling.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Minister, if I could ask about that ...

Mrs MANISON: Let the commissioner finish off the question.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Yes, but you are not answering my question. I just want to bring you back to ...

Mrs MANISON: I need to put some context into it. Anyway, I will let the commissioner explain it to you.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: You said alcohol assaults are down. I want ...

Mrs MANISON: No. The year before that they had been down. We have driven some significant improvements.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: In 2018-19 and 2019-20 they were up.

Mrs MANISON: Last year, they had some significant improvements, driven by the PALIs. We had been seeing some extraordinary changes when it came to protective custody, people being in a watch house and the emergency department admissions. There have been some very strong results in that regard.

But we have seen some issues emerge through COVID-19 where we have seen some additional grog getting out there. I will get the commissioner to go into it.

Commissioner CHALKER: Opposition Leader, there were encouraging signs as we were coming to the conclusion of the 2019-20 year as it related to assaults, and even domestic violence. Again, I hasten to add we were in an artificial environment because COVID-19 created an environment we had never seen in existence in this country, let alone in the Northern Territory. The information that was being provided at the national level was that was quite consistent across the board. They had seen significant reduction in crime. We saw, with the lifting of the biosecurity restrictions and the mobility that afforded for people, there was a gravitation of people back in who, unfortunately, got themselves caught up living rough. That saw a further increase in our domestic violence reporting and alcohol consumption.

As we know from the secondary supply pathway—the minister referenced \$500 for a bottle of rum. When I went to Wadeye to meet with TOs, they told me they were paying upwards of \$900 for a bottle of rum. The additional money that went in—my advice is that the Northern Territory was the highest per capita take-up of the superannuation arrangements through COVID. There was additional money coming in on top of the double payments. We saw a lot of that going to gambling and alcohol. Gambling creates flashpoints for family disputes and arguments, which leads to part of the issue with have with domestic and family violence as well.

It has been a particularly complex operating environment, noting that new police officers have been there trying to keep the Territory safe. That burden of resourcing—ordinarily we would have had a higher level of focus to target the secondary supply and do a raft of other things.

At the end of the day, we as a community have to start coming together to have the conversation about violence, because violence starts with individuals. All those events you referenced come down to the abhorrent actions of particular individuals. We catch up with them and place them before the courts; they face their ultimate sanctions—but we have to be very clear that we do not accept that as a community.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Absolutely. Are all people who are arrested tested for drugs and alcohol?

Commissioner CHALKER: No, they are not.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: You must have crunched some numbers to see a correlation between—if you are attributing these payments and COVID to certain spikes, when you compare the 2019–20 year to 2018–19, alcohol-related assaults are up, domestic violence is up and assault is up. I just want to know how we are attributing that spike to alcohol. If we are not testing, how are we reaching that point to understand what the catalyst is for this increase in violent offending?

Commissioner CHALKER: Officers make an assessment on the information and the offender they are dealing with. They will categorise whether alcohol-related is there—we frequently measure alcohol-related assaults as well as standard assaults and domestic violence assaults. That is the standard breakdown that we have. We know about the presence of alcohol in those assaults.

Equally, if you engage with Health they will inform you that they see a high prevalence of alcohol in the victim and offender when they present to hospital. We try to record as best we can from the assessment the officers make at the scene whether the victim has been consuming alcohol as well as the offender. We have quite a clear focus on it.

Secondary supply has increased. We have been quite busy. You might recall our media releases on the high number of bottles of OP rum that were going to remote communities, cartons of beer and the like which were all destined for communities. We have been proactive in this regard, but unfortunately a number of people see a profit opportunity and take advantage of that. That is ultimately seeing assaults increase. They are alcohol-related; that is all the information we have.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: How is it recorded in the crime statistics if offending is conducted with a weapon? Anecdotally, you hear people in the community talk about criminals carrying knives or something on their person. I think you mentioned earlier the assaults on police and the use of improvised weapons—I think you called it—like bars et cetera.

Are we seeing an increase? Even in terms of property damage, are we seeing offenders conducting property damage now carrying weapons of some kind?

Commissioner CHALKER: Anecdotally, the information has not been provided to me that we are seeing more people going armed in public, which is the reference we would provide to it. In respect of assaults, we do measure if a weapon is involved and that could also constitute an aggravation of the assault; so it is an 'aggravated assault' specifically because a weapon was involved. Someone who uses a weapon and the victim does not, that is an 'aggravated assault', for example. We have a line of sight on that information. I have certainly got nothing that has come through on our trend data or our intelligence analysis that has indicated to me or to the two deputies that there has been a significant spike in people going armed in public.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Are police seeing more instances of property offenders also assaulting people; home invasions then also resulting in an assault to a person?

Commissioner CHALKER: No, that is not data that comes through. What we tend to identify is that type of offending is limited to a very few and we invariably will resolve those types of offending quite quickly. Because of the seriousness of that offending, those people tend to be in incarcerated fairly quickly by the courts.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: On that incarceration, using the senior in the wheelchair who was assaulted during his home invasion, have the perpetrators been arrested, have they been put before the courts yet, what has happened in that situation?

Commissioner CHALKER: They have been arrested and it is before the courts.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Can you take us through some of what happened yesterday? Clearly people are horrified by the news that has come out about it. Do we know how many offenders were involved in this terrible incident?

Mrs MANISON: I will get police to respond. I will say that it is absolutely appalling to see what has occurred, but the police will be dealing with that. I understand they have already made significant headway in this. I will get the commissioner to go through this.

Commissioner CHALKER: Similarly, my understanding is police response was undertaken. There was at least three people believed to be youths involved and the investigation is continuing in that regard. The

individual actions there, completely and utterly unwarranted, behaviour that is not acceptable and behaviour that sadly pervades across many parts of the world, not just in the Northern Territory or Darwin CBD.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: I want to move to policing numbers. We have the Darwin police station at the Mitchell Centre. Is it correct that the watch house is now permanently closed?

Mrs MANISON: I will get the commissioner to answer this question. I just again want to applaud police. We have to ask many members this year to take up roles and duties that are not their typical day job and they have performed magnificently when they have been asked to go out there and do a raft of different jobs to serve our communities. I thank them. With that the commissioner has had to make some very careful decisions about where his resourcing goes and what is best use of police resources to make sure that we are meeting the priorities of the Territory in the COVID-19 environment. Commissioner.

Commissioner CHALKER: Clearly, you are aware of our resource obligation through COVID-19, so I took the decision to close the watch house because of the size of the Palmerston watch house and knowing that Darwin and Palmerston can ultimately be serviced by that, whilst not preferred in a time when we have to prioritise the deployment of our resources.

In answer to your question, no, it is not permanently closed. The resources that are ordinarily employed there have either been deployed to assist with the support in the Palmerston watch house or assisting in prisoner conveyances across the Territory, including with our Air Wing supporting our remote police officers in bringing anybody there being arrested through.

Similarly, we had to close some of the front counters and we have been able to now bring a number of those front counters back online to continue to provide that service, as our resourcing provides us the ability to do so.

I hasten to add that we have pretty well had a cap of 10% of recreation leave across the board, so many of my people have had to sacrifice leave to adapt to the 12-hour shifts that we had to approach, because we had to try and make sure we had sufficient resources forward-facing across the board and trying to ensure that service was continuous across the whole of the Northern Territory including maintaining our servicing to our remote communities. We have had to move quite a few of our chess pieces around to make sure we have a level of service and functionality.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Can you explain what the cap of 10% rec leave means? What does that mean in practice? Does that mean that on any one day only up to 10% can be on rec leave?

Commissioner CHALKER: Correct. That is the methodology we are trying to adopt. As we bring more people online or return them back from the obligations at the border checkpoints or any of the other COVID duties, then we are trying to ensure that we are giving people the opportunity to get some respite. It would be fair to say that the workload of 2020 in totality has seen nothing short of an exceptional response by my people.

Mrs MANISON: It is fair to say that one thing we are very conscious about is fatigue management within the police. It has been a big year. Many people have had to go out there, do the long shifts at the border control checkpoints and then also return to their duties in town whilst also not getting the leave that their used to. Fatigue management is something we are very aware of and the Commissioner is certainly managing through that with his senior executive.

A big thank you to all of the Northern Territory police; they have made immense sacrifices this year to serve our community.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: That was going to be my next question. That must be seriously challenging for our police to be working harder than ever. I imagine our overtime numbers are through the roof and then to not be able to have as much respite as they normally would. How are police balancing that level of fatigue? Are you trying to even it out so that perhaps if an officer would normally have—I do not know how much—say four weeks annual leave a year, is there now an average? Now police are only really able to have two weeks a year or are some getting the full four and others getting none? How are we ensuring that people get that important respite?

Mrs MANISON: The police are working through that. I will hand over to the Commissioner to go through how they are managing those leave requirements. It is a requirement that you give people a break, particularly in such a demanding role.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Leader of the Opposition, as COVID first commenced back in March this year, we established Task Force Protect which was out of our people and capability area. Indeed, the work we did led the way for many other jurisdictions as it related to what our workforce looked like in the event that COVID impacted our actual numbers ourselves; what was our deployment picture looking like? That was down to 80%, 60% and 40% of our total police force, commensurate with also trying to ensure there was a fatigue management approach and understanding we have in place there.

We have been pretty well running that cap since March and the 10% has been assessed. Assistant Commissioner Michael White has been making those assessments. It is to try and share the load and spread it. I think people have developed that level of understanding that 2020 has been the year that the Northern Territory Police Force has been called very much to the fore, probably even further than where we ordinarily stand which is pretty much the very frontline of the frontline.

Our people, I just cannot credit enough just how many of them have accepted that responsibility, understood what is going on and have been quite reasonable in their leave requests and how that has been effectively managed. Equally, we need to leave the ability for managers to identify those in the workplace who need respite and facilitate that. That has been, particularly for our remote stations, make sure that those officers who live in major centres understand their obligation to go and service the whole of the Northern Territory when required. Pleasingly, many are stepping up to do that.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Is this contributing to our attrition rates?

Commissioner CHALKER: There is no information before us that gives that indication. From the exit interviews we have spoken about, we understand the reasons why people are going and there may be a number who have chosen to do that and not given us that information. By-the-by, I think people genuinely understand that the employment we offer, whilst it is challenging work, it can be incredibly rewarding in the ability we have to make a difference in the lives of Territorians.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: The Darwin Watch House is closed until COVID does not have its demands any longer. Is the front counter open at Darwin?

Commissioner CHALKER: Yes, my understanding is that it is operating again Monday to Friday 8am to 4pm.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Has Palmerston received extra resources as a result of that extra demand on its watch house?

Commissioner CHALKER: Yes, as I indicated, resources ordinarily deployed to Darwin Watch House are providing additional support to the Palmerston Watch House. It also extends to continuing our support with prisoner conveyancers and the like.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: How many vans are we running out of Darwin? How many patrols do you have in Darwin at any one time?

Commissioner CHALKER: At any given time we could have one in operation or upwards of eight or 9, depending on the greater Darwin service model that is in place. The Watch Commander sits at the Peter McCauley Centre in the joint emergency services coordination area with the Territory duty superintendent. They have the autonomy to direct and move all of the available resources across the whole of Darwin, Palmerston and the greater Darwin region during their shift.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Is Nightcliff Police Station open?

Commissioner CHALKER: Are you referring to the old police station?

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Yes.

Commissioner CHALKER: There are still people operating out of there but we have made a number of changes to ensure we have as many frontline resources operating out of the major police stations—Darwin, Casuarina and Palmerston—to ensure the adequacy of our forward facing resources.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: So there are still people working at Nightcliff but the front counter is closed?

Commissioner CHALKER: The front counter has not been in operation for many years, to the best of my knowledge.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: But there are still some people based there?

Commissioner CHALKER: They use the facility, correct.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Are there any patrols deployed from Nightcliff? Any vans?

Commissioner CHALKER: No. We had the social order teams there but we have integrated them with the Darwin, Casuarina and Palmerston crews. There is a far better line of sight as to where the relevant hotspots are and they are all getting briefed by the relevant shift sergeants for those regions. The additional resourcing is there trying to mitigate antisocial behaviour before it escalates.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: What about Casuarina Police Station? There is no watch house at Casuarina?

Commissioner CHALKER: No. There is a holding cell availability there but it is not an operational watch house and never has been.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: If someone is arrested and required to go to a watch house in either Darwin or the northern suburbs, they have to go out to Palmerston?

Commissioner CHALKER: That is correct.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: How many patrols would we find coming out of the Casuarina Police Station on any given shift?

Commissioner CHALKER: Similarly, they always aim to have at least two to three plus. Depending on the nature of the operations running out of there, it can be a significantly increased number. If they have foot patrols occurring at Casuarina Square Shopping Centre, that would be another resource they have diverted fit for purpose for what is happening in their environment. The resourcing that we pointed towards Karama and Malak with the recent spike that occurred included the use of Strike Force Trident who are also based at Casuarina.

The resources there are not exclusive to those sectors. They are there for the deployment of the relevant duty superintendents and watch commanders.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Has this impacted the response times of police? For example, if someone is arrested in Nightcliff then that takes a van off the road for an hour and a half round trip?

Commissioner CHALKER: Opposition Leader, I suggest it is probably not dissimilar to when there was only the one watch house running in Darwin city. Palmerston, Humpy Doo and the like utilised that facility. Arguably in this day and age, Palmerston is more central to the work they do. Whilst there are still people engaging in the CBD, a lot of what they are doing will be engaging with people in the antisocial behaviour space.

They have good relationships with Larrakia patrols to ensure people are able to go to the Darwin Sobering Up Shelter and other areas if required. There is a reasonable balance that the proximity to get to the watch house would not have been a stark increase that impacted response times.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: You would see a difference between when Darwin and Palmerston were open? You can go back and look at when it was just Darwin and compare it to now when it is just Palmerston, but when it was both...

Mrs MANISON: Opposition Leader, I think the Commissioner makes the decisions about where the operational requirements are. This has been an extraordinary year without our normal operating posture. As soon as we can get the Darwin watch house back up and operational again, it will be.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Have response times been affected due to the stretched resources because of COVID-19?

Commissioner CHALKER: Opposition Leader, it would be reasonable to understand that we do not have as many resources as we ordinarily would have, when upwards of 8% to 10% of your resourcing is deployed elsewhere.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Okay. How many vans would be on the road in Palmerston, then?

Commissioner CHALKER: Similarly, at any given point in time, they can have upwards of two or three. They have road traffic operations out of there as well, so there is the frequency of motor vehicle movement from that facility that is all linked into that place.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Is Humpty Doo open?

Commissioner CHALKER: Yes.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: How many do they run out of that station?

Commissioner CHALKER: One van is normally rostered out of Humpty Doo.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: One van at Humpty Doo?

Commissioner CHALKER: Yes.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Is Batchelor open?

Commissioner CHALKER: Yes, it is. All the remote stations that are permanent stations are open.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Okay. How many vans do they run out of Katherine?

Commissioner CHALKER: Again, at any given point in time they can run up to two or three. Certainly, at various periods in COVID-19, they were running upwards of five.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Tennant Creek and Alice Springs are obviously open. Nhulunbuy is open. Which stations are closed? Are any closed-closed?

Commissioner CHALKER: No stations are closed-closed. For the temporary stations we have a response model in place. We get out there and operate some overnight patrols for those, but they are all those that linger from the Northern Territory Intervention—13-year-old temporary police stations. It strikes a challenge to what the word 'temporary' equates to these days.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Yes, for sure. With the Wadeye riots recently, how are emergency calls handled for remote areas such as Wadeye?

Mrs MANISON: Again, going to the situation in Wadeye, we all know that it is an area where things flare up from time to time. Historically we have seen plenty of issues there. There is a significantly sized station there, with officers. But there is no doubt, over the last few months, there have been additional disturbances in the community. Again, police have had to do an immense amount of work. I know the commissioner and his senior management have been doing a lot of work in that space with the community and other agencies to send a response into Wadeye.

I will get the commissioner to talk a bit more about what has been happening out there.

Commissioner CHALKER: Thank you, minister. Opposition Leader, I was out there about four weeks ago. I literally flew in on the ground as one was coming to its conclusion. I have to say the leadership on the ground out there—Senior Sergeant Brad Fox and his team—have done a great job engaging with the community. Unfortunately, it is known to us that Wadeye, particularly through the months of November and December, tends to have seasonal spikes. That has occurred pretty well every year for at least the last decade or so.

The methodology and approach they have undertaken now realised, if I recall correctly, some 165 people being subject to either infringement notices and/or prosecution files. They managed to remand in excess of 15-plus people for issues that were predominantly linked to family disputes that was the cause of the riots.

Pleasingly, since that point in time, there has been a significant amount of stability—a lot of community engagement, a multi-agency approach on the ground, including using the regional network from the Department of the Chief Minister, other interested parties and stakeholders on the ground.

I am meeting with NAAJA in the next week as well to continue to have discussion about it. There has been a very fulsome response on the ground and there will be another coming together of all key stakeholders early in the new year to try to set the platform for Wadeye so we can try to avoid any such escalation in 2021.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: How many police are posted to Wadeye?

Commissioner CHALKER: I think it has a permanent strength of 14.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Okay. Did we have a full contingent on the ground prior to the riots taking place?

COMMISSIONER CHALKER: At any given point in time we would invariable not have 14. Part of our 10% leave rule we would always at least probably have one or two that would be on leave and or either their fares out of isolated locations are all their professional development, be it their firearms training requalification and the like, but I believe at that point in time there was upwards between eight to 10 there. Certainly, when I visited there was those types of numbers there.

Again, because of our air wing and necessity of our air wing we have the capability to surge there very quickly and that is something we did to provide that ongoing support, but as I say, I think our clear pathway is that the activities that have been done and the leadership on the ground there at the moment seems to have certainly pointed the community into a better frame at this point in time. Plus we are doing collective work out of Darwin to ensure that the supply chains going through alcohol routes are being mitigated as well.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: How many police had to be sent to Wadeye to deal with the riots?

COMMISSIONER CHALKER: I think it was only a maximum of about another half a dozen to provide a very short-term support and that was primarily to bring prisoners back as well.

Mrs MANISON: That is not out of the ordinary. If things flair up in remote communities police will send additional officers to go in to respond accordingly.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Did TRG have to go to Wadeye?

COMMISSIONER CHALKER: TRG do tend to be the ones that we will deploy, not necessarily because of their broader capability but from time to time it will be an issue of their availability is the easier one for us to deploy for that short-term. We do not actually like to have TRG away from our capital city for very long because of the type of capacity and capability they have.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Are there any plans to return a full-time presence at Alpururulam?

COMMISSIONER CHALKER: That is something that will be subject to the review, I believe, between the Commonwealth and the Northern Territory Government.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: You are talking about the national partnership for the policing funding that expires in two years—are you saying that if the funding does not extend then we will not return to a full-time presence there?

Mrs MANISON: Leader of the Opposition, remote policing is one of the highest priorities on our list when it comes to delivering for the needs of people living out bush because if we get it right in remote communities it is going to flow through to benefit everybody in the Northern Territory. I say it many times in parliament but I generally mean it, everybody deserves to feel safe, and when we go to remote places and experience what isolation is you can only imagine what it is like to not have the knowledge that you have the support of a police officer nearby to keep you safe and to support everyone in the community.

We are doing a body of work here. The Commissioner is working through what our remote strategy looks like. He has already taken some significant steps in supporting some of our communities that require resourcing beyond two.

It is important to recognise some of the challenges in these communities if you have a two person station it is inevitable that sometimes people will be sick, sometimes they will need training or sometimes something

will happen in their life and then often when they are down in numbers the pool from other surrounding communities or urban centres come then we have officers that are having to leave Tennant Creek or Alice Springs and go to the remote locations, so we are trying to put in a more sustainable model.

The thing that is very important though is that from the point of the intervention we had the Commonwealth put in significant additional temporary police stations and at that time they put in significant additional federal police resources to help them.

Naturally, people in those communities now want to keep police presence around and want to keep a level of service coming into their communities, and this is a challenge that we are working through to make sure that we have a model that meets where the demand is coming from but also that we have a sustainable model, because what we do not want is a fly-in fly-out workforce, we actually want people to commit to communities for years as opposed to a couple of months because ultimately it means they are going to have a better relationship with that community and I think we are going to get better community safety outcomes.

Before I hand over to the Commissioner, what I will say is that we continue to have discussions with Minister Wyatt with regards to what happens in 2022. We are already carrying a fair bit of the bill for about 20-odd officers from the remote funding agreement. We have seen some of those old Themis stations—they are done, and we want to make sure that we are meeting the growth of some of our communities.

It is important to recognise that places like Maningrida are now almost comparable to Tennant Creek, Wadeye as well. When you look at the size of the Tennant Creek policing footprint, these are some of the challenges that we are dealing with but one of the highest priorities we have is having sustainable remote policing models to ensure better community safety for everyone across the Territory.

We will continue to work with the feds because they put in a very small percentage of funds into the Northern Territory police budget with their contribution. If they are serious about closing the gap and helping Aboriginal Territorians have a better quality of life and overcome some of the disadvantage they see, and we all see and experience, then they must stay with us on this journey around tackling community safety. That involves supporting police in policing infrastructure and numbers of police.

Commissioner CHALKER: Leader of the Opposition, no I am not saying I will not have police at Alpurrurulam. What I am saying is, I need to understand the review and will be significantly contributing to that so there is absolute clarity as to what expectation has been set in place since 2007, the relationship strain that still exists as a result of that activity back in 2007 and the fact that police still remain that all communities want back there to keep them safe. That way when they do, they understand whether the current Commonwealth commitment is one that they are going to continue or one they are going to walk away from.

Mr CHAIR: Member for Fong Lim, do you have a question along that same line?

Mr MONAGHAN: Yes, I do. It is really around the—minister, you outlined the policy direction in that space, more around the Commissioner, but what work is actually underway to enhance that police presence as well as those relationships in the bush?

Commissioner CHALKER: Thank you, Member for Fong Lim. What I have been focusing on is developing a regional and remote strategy that articulates to everyone in the employment of the Northern Territory Police Force that when you join as a recruit, you join the Northern Territory Police Force. You did not join the Darwin police force, you did not join the Katherine or the Alice Springs police force. You joined the Northern Territory Police Force. I have in excess of 59 locations that require police presence spread over 1.4 million square kilometres.

Equally, what we know is that the two-person model is antiquated. It does not provide for any inbuilt relief or respite for those officers. When some of them are facing significant overtime week in, week out, I need to have a model in place that gives them adequate fatigue relief. Where we have available housing that we can take on board, I have decreed that we will now move to a three-person station model in those permanent NT Government stations.

We are also looking forward at which facilities are beyond their economic repair. I have some facilities, for example, that are over 60 years old and indeed one that is 71 years in circulation. That is well and truly beyond its serviceability and certainly has little recognition to what a modern police station should be looking like.

It is a significant deep dive. At its heart is the fact that we need to have permanent police in community where over a period of two years you can build relationships. I have established the community resilience and engagement portfolio that will seek to facilitate the transfer of people into a community by community, how community will seek to welcome them, whether they will undertake adoption of them upfront or whether that is something they will graduate over time, who will provide the cultural advice and awareness to the officers and their families as they arrive so there is a far greater focus on a two-way pathway.

The securing of the 30 Aboriginal liaison officers as a bridge between community and police on the ground I see as a key tenet of that which will build community resilience and a greater confidence and pathway in reporting all manner of things to police but more notably, making sure that our permanent police out there have significant respite but also are not ultimately being beholden to relief being able to come out from major centres.

If we can build the model the right way, I think we are going to get a far greater efficiency in so much as the demands on major centres will not be pulling people out of vans as frequently and we will have a more stable police force that is well known and engaged to their community.

Mrs MANISON: I cannot stress enough the importance of the Aboriginal liaison officer model. You visit communities and get positive feedback from officers about the impact they have but most importantly, it is getting more Aboriginal people into the Northern Territory Police Force and creating more employment pathways for them and giving our officers stronger cultural knowledge and access to language speakers. It works very well both ways and it is a very important initiative going forward for the police force.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: How many ...

Mr CHAIR: One moment, Opposition Leader. I draw attention to the members that we are still on the opening statement being about 3.5 hours into our deliberation today. I do not want to get to the point where we were...

Mrs MANISON: I think we are all aware of that Mr Chair.

Mr CHAIR: ...yesterday during the Department of Education, where unfortunately we got only just past the opening statement and...

Mrs MANISON: It is just the question whether or not the Leader of the Opposition would like to get to the Department of Industry, Tourism and Trade at some point today?

Mrs LAMBLEY: There are other people here too that have questions also.

Mrs MANISON: Oh sorry, I forgot the Member for Araluen, heaven forbid!

Mrs LAMBLEY: Heaven forbid!

Mr CHAIR: It was perfect timing that the Member for Araluen had drawn my attention to the question. However, I would like to get past Output 1.1 and we failed to get there yesterday which meant we did not discuss with Minister Moss, Senior Women, Youth and Children. I would hate for that to happen again today where we miss an entire area.

Mrs MANISON: It depends whether they want to discuss agribusiness, mining, gas, international education, defence industry, those amazing areas.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: We certainly do. Minister, how many remote stations are doing the 6-week on and off?

Mr CHAIR: The Member for Araluen has the call, in line with the questioning please.

Mrs LAMBLEY: I agree with your Minister, what you said before; the resourcing of remote police stations is essential to the safety of the whole of the Northern Territory. In Central Australia we see that very clearly. Commissioner, you know Central Australia very well, but I am aware that there are at least five police stations that do not have a permanent police presence any more. That has been a great concern for people in Central Australia for quite some time.

Could you tell me which police stations do not have a permanent police presence in Central Australia and are they on your list of police stations that you intend to resource in the future under the plan you have just been discussing?

Commissioner CHALKER: We have a number of temporary facilities that have still got shipping containers or ATCO there. They are not facilities that are appropriate for a police officer to be permanently attached to. The accommodation is not such that it is permanent accommodation, nor is it attractive to try and get a family to move out there, which I have to state is an integral part of bush policing and the opportunities that that creates for engagement with the community and the police officers and their families themselves.

- Finke, for example—if you using the definition of it does not have 'permanent police'—is a temporary police station
- Impanpa is a temporary police station
- Docker River has a facility
- Mutitjulu—we actually have police permanently there
- Yulara, we actually have police permanently there
- Nyirripi—we do not have police permanently there but we visit from either Kintore or Yuendumu; we have increased the number of police at Yuendumu so they can have a greater footprint of patrolling out to Nyirripi, still part of Walpiri nation
- Willowra—similarly we operate that between provision from Yuendumu and Ti Tree, but again the accommodation is such that it is not fit for purpose for any permanency.

This is the discussion we ultimately have to have with the remotes. Arlparra, you would know, was a Commonwealth investment site. It was questionable whether Arlparra was the appropriate site. We requested Alpurrurulam and they provided Arlparra. Questionable as to whether it could have even been in Ampilatwatja, because of where the large population was at the point in time. But there it is now, proudly sitting in:

- Arlparra—We have permanent police there
- Harts Range—permanent police
- Hermannsburg—permanent police
- Papunya, Kintore and Santa Teresa, permanent police.

We have a fairly strong spread there, but again this is where we need to know are the Commonwealth going to be partners into the future.

Mrs LAMBLEY: It is a big weakness in the whole provision of policing and the safety of the whole of the Northern Territory.

Commissioner CHALKER: The provision has to be commensurate with the accommodation and the standard of the police stations.

Mrs LAMBLEY: Will your plan that you are putting together become public. Will you provide publicly what you intend to do in this space?

Commissioner CHALKER: There would be elements of that I would not be seeking to put public, obviously from an operational perspective. The broader content of what we would be looking to do from a strategy I would have no concerns making that public once it is concluded.

Mrs MANISON: The infrastructure elements would go into the 10 Year Infrastructure Plan that gets produced by the Minister for Infrastructure.

Mrs LAMBLEY: I would even say there is a crisis here, really. I am not saying that a majority of crimes in Alice Springs, for example, are committed by people from remote communities, but people coming in to town and leaving their communities because they are unsafe is putting pressure on our town of Alice Springs. I am sure it is happening everywhere, and that just perpetuates all the social problems.

Mrs MANISON: I think we all know there are some very stark challenges in the Northern Territory to do with disadvantage. This reiterates the importance of reform processes and other areas outside of police. The health and wellbeing of children from conception to birth, in the first 1000 days, through to housing—we are making such a big effort in the area of remote housing to prevent overcrowding and create healthy places.

We have gone way off topic, but we think about climate change and the factor of heat and its impacts on liveability and public health in remote communities. There are many different facets of this where we need to tackle disadvantage. Again, I say about the federal government and what it is looking to do in the Northern Territory beyond 2022—if it is serious about tackling disadvantage in the Territory and making sure we have safe remote communities, it should stay at the table and keep working with NT Police on what we intend to do in remote communities to ensure sustainable police models out there.

Mr BURGOYNE: In relation to the TRG being deployed to other areas, will it be deployed to Alice Springs over the summer, as it has been in the past?

Mrs MANISON: Those are operational decisions, so I will hand over to the commissioner.

Commissioner CHALKER: Member for Braitling, that would not be my intention. The planning in place is to ensure we have adequate resourcing in advance. The multiagency approach and activities to date demonstrate that the TRG is not the sole solution to the work. The TRG is an exceptional capability that we cannot take for granted. We need to maintain it for the purpose of which it was created.

It has been by default that they have gone down there. When I was there as assistant commissioner they did not come down for three years, because I would not let them. There is a means for us to do it, and we are getting back to basics on that.

Mr BURGOYNE: The earlier conversation about drones in your opening speech—how many drones are currently operational in Alice Springs?

Mrs MANISON: I will hand over to the commissioner, but it would be fair to say it is still relatively new technology. My first drone demonstration was in Alice Springs, and it was officers showing me how the technology could benefit them. I was very keen to see further deployment of modern technology because it is important that police have access to the latest technology to help them with policing.

What I liked about seeing the drones in action was the fact it helps with officer safety. If they are pursuing someone—Alice Springs has no shortage of hills and bush areas close to urban areas—they have a greater line of sight and are able to manage the risk of sending the officer in, hopefully avoiding work injuries and keeping the officer as safe as they can in their difficult work. I will hand to the commissioner.

Commissioner CHALKER: I would not be inclined to let you know the exact number because it is not required in the public domain. Suffice to say we do have the capability. It is a capacity that we see great value in and we utilise it as another tool for what we need to do.

You should take comfort that I have seen fit to invest in other technological solutions, including the drones, and will continue to do so where I see that they will value-add to our ability to keep the Northern Territory safe, particularly the town of Alice Springs.

Mr BURGOYNE: Thank you. The only reason I ask is that I have heard reports. As we know, criminals are all too quick to adapt to new technologies. I have heard reports of criminals waiting until the drone basically runs out of batteries to commit offences in that downtime. I am keen to find out if there are multiple drones that can be deployed so that this does not happen going forward.

Commissioner CHALKER: Not that I would ever seek to encourage crime, but if criminals want to operate under that belief then I would far prefer they continue with that belief, because it will not end well for them.

Mr BURGOYNE: Certainly. Minister, I welcomed your visit the other week. The question I have for you is a broad one. Who did you meet when you came down to Alice Springs?

Mrs MANISON: I love coming to Alice Springs, Member for Braitling. It is a great place, very dear to my heart. I lived there for a few years—I have lived there twice, actually. It is always good to be on the ground.

I met with a broad range of stakeholders in Alice Springs. Of course, we met with Strike Force Viper and the police and people working with Operation Lunar, which was fantastic. I always make an effort to catch up

with the Chamber of Commerce. It was good to speak to Chamber of Commerce people. We met with tourism operators, sporting organisations, people involved with building and construction. It was a fairly broad range of people.

Clearly, I was there to speak to people about community safety elements as well because it would be fair to say, Member for Brainting, that community safety is a very important topic of discussion for people across Alice Springs. Even when you might be having a conversation to do with other elements of Alice Springs, so often community safety comes up. It is something I am always happy to have the conversation about, but also to hear firsthand about their experiences.

I always make an effort to get to the station when I come to town because I find that the most direct and best feedback I get about how things are going is when I speak to the officers. I try to speak to a broad range of officers. It is not just heading into the muster room, it is going across the building and seeing everybody on multiple floors. I will continue to try to engage like that when I go to Alice Springs. I always find that is a very helpful way to get a good feel for what is occurring on the ground.

Clearly, police keep me briefed; we meet weekly and I find out what is happening and where some of the issues are. Again, I find it is really great to sit down—well, you walk around and talk standing up most of the time—and talk to the troops.

Mrs LAMBLEY: Can I ask a question?

Mr CHAIR: Is it in line, Member for Araluen?

Mrs LAMBLEY: There seems to be calls coming from different communities throughout the Northern Territory for you and your government to meet with communities to talk about the problems they are having with law and order, including from my community of Alice Springs. I know other communities up here have called for the same sort of public meeting, an opportunity to discuss issues with you. Would you be open to that? Would you come to Alice Springs and talk to the people of Alice Springs in a community forum or public forum?

Mrs MANISON: I find the most productive way to go about this, Member for Araluen, is actually speak to people one-on-one and have those face-to-face interactions and engagements. I find they are far more constructive; you can have a really good, deep level of conversation. The other thing I always try to do is make sure police are accessible to meet with people and brief them. I know the commissioner has very active management throughout the different locations too. From an operational level, they also try to do that.

For me, I find the most productive way is to have conversations with people in those one-on-one conversations and also work with local members who have issues too.

Mrs LAMBLEY: So, no, you would not be prepared to front a public meeting?

Mrs MANISON: I think I have been clear. The most productive way to go through those discussions is to meet with stakeholders directly.

Mrs LAMBLEY: So, no.

Mr CHAIR: Member for Namatjira? You have no ...

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Happy to move to outputs, Chair.

Mr CHAIR: Are there any further questions.

Mrs LAMBLEY: I have some here. Mandatory retirement for the police is still 65. I was asking about this years ago. The Chief Minister, who was the Police minister for a while, said he would look into it. I am wondering where that is at? As a government, are you considering taking away that mandatory retirement age, which is unique to the police force? It is ageist and outdated. What is your position on that?

Mrs MANISON: To be really blunt with you, Member for Araluen, it has not been an issue that has been high on my priority list. It has not been one that has been raised with me in recent times. I will hand to the commissioner with regard to that, to look at that issue.

Mr CHAIR: Member for Araluen, can you switch your mike on.

Mrs LAMBLEY: Sorry. Do you want me to ask the question again? It was captured?

Commissioner CHALKER: Member for Araluen, it is a significant topic of conversation when I am meeting with the NTPA. I have been to the NTPA annual conference and I meet regularly with the president of the NTPA. Whilst I hear your message around being ageist, there are broader complexities in undertaking the full role of being a sworn police officer and the rigors that obliges, particularly in the Territory. There is a broader contemplation in that space. It is not something currently on our agenda.

Mrs LAMBLEY: We are the only jurisdiction in Australia that has a mandatory retirement age for police—or one of two, maybe Tasmania has a mandatory retirement age. Anyway, thank you.

In terms of how stretched the police force has been during the COVID-19 period, you said you have increased your workforce but to be stretched so thin in so many areas means that you cannot do everything as well as what you would want. It makes sense that you would be under a lot of strain and pressure. I wonder if looking after the safety of Territorians at the border has been at the expense of the safety of people in other parts of the Northern Territory—for example, Alice Springs—because of the impossibility of being all things to all people and being stretched in so many different directions.

Mrs MANISON: Before I hand over to the Commissioner about the operational decisions and where he deploys his resources, I note that it is a fine balance. I get what you are saying. The risk of COVID-19—when I reflect upon, what feels like an eternity ago, what happened in March and April how we responded, then what happened in June when Victoria kicked off and the extraordinary numbers of COVID-19 there—made us take the position here.

The Aboriginal health organisations have been strong in calling for this. We have had some of the toughest border controls in the nation because of the vulnerability and risk we have in the Territory population. The security and emergency management committee of the cabinet meets regularly and are constantly reviewing the priorities and where the resources are going. The Commissioner, also the Territory controller, provides this advice alongside the Chief Health Officer about where we need the policing resources and border control checkpoints.

It caused a strain but where there has been operational requirements, needs and demands, police have been there. We had some quiet months this year during COVID-19 where we had some of the property offending at 20-year lows and assaults down. Through September and October we have seen a spike of activity that police have swiftly responded to and have seen results there. The Commissioner will touch on some of the resource pressures, stretches and decisions they have made this year.

Commissioner CHALKER: Thank you. Member for Araluen, it is an interesting question because it poses so many 'what ifs'. The fact of the matter is that if we had not ensured there was no community transmission or infiltration into the Northern Territory, the speed of which it would have gone through the Northern Territory and likely consequences of that having occurred would have seen my people completely fatigued and exhausted trying to deal with the probable deaths that may have arisen, particularly across our regional and remote areas. This contributed to our decision making, determinations of our model going forward and how we treated our COVID-19 response from the get-go.

The threat to our vulnerable population was prominent in all of our contemplations and decisions. The flipside is us having been and our ability to engage with people. The trust that people have in our police uniform and police patch to hear then when they are asked to do certain things or provide certain information I think to a degree is almost immeasurable. The fact of the matter is, I had the ability to literally request that remote police officers would travel from either Kalkaringi or Lajamanu to the border at either the Tanami or the Buntine in literally a matter of hours and they left not knowing when they were going to be relieved literally with a couple of camping chairs and eskies and maintain that posture to protect the Territory.

We moved to make sure they were relieved within 12 to 14 hours and that is a testament to the flexibility of what our people do and the heavy focus they had that we had to keep the Territory safe. The consequential outcome had we not, certainly in all of our factoring and scenario planning, indicated that it was going to be quite a tragic outcome.

We know, and this is the national experience in those areas that had far more stringent internal policies around having to be restricted to stay at home, that property crime and personal crime reduced quite markedly. Again nationally we have seen an increase in mental health-related issues because of the

pressures that the year of 2020 has provided because of the COVID complexity and overlay. We were one of the first that had a lot more freedoms within our borders because of the active work that we undertook.

As I have stressed it was an artificial environment because the Territory has never operated with this type of money within the demographic that ordinarily receive payments from the government. That saw a significant amount of money being expended and unfortunately there were some social ills that are clearly associated with that which our more recent stats have started to articulate.

Mrs LAMBLEY: A question that people often ask is, in the CBD of Alice Springs—and I know you guys are stretched and this is not a criticism but it is a question often asked and I think you probably know what I am going to ask—why is there not a police presence on Friday and Saturday nights in the middle of Alice Springs given the turmoil that we have seen pretty consistently for the last couple of months.

Commissioner CHALKER: Member for Araluen, I think it is quite a reasonable question from a point of perception. We have significant CCTV resourcing through the CBD so the intent is always to try and actively monitor that. As I touched on, it is unfortunate but it is a reality that our personal violence is such that when we receive a report of a personal violence-related incident, we attend.

Those matters do not tend to be resolved within 10 minutes of police attendance; they are complex, take a number of hours particularly if there is offender management or victim management required, or if there are broader issues like crime scenes for example. We go with the best laid plan and of course, you know the frequency of activity in Alice Springs but any of our locations on a Friday and Saturday night, to be fair, our best laid plan is to always have a proactive posture but if the shift starts and we have to be called to those kinds of incidents that are going to tie up our resources for two to three plus hours, which is not uncommon, that is why you do not physically see the presence. That is not to say that our CCTV monitors are not continually trying to guide the available resources when they become available to try and mitigate the issues in the CBD.

Commander Craig Laidler has a very clear mandate down there to focus through the CBD in particular. I am conscious of the Member for Namatjira's commentary about this displacement that occurs because we do see with increased police activity in a certain location, other areas become hotspots and we try and move to follow those as well. We know there is a lot of activity. We are encouraging a lot of good community activity in the CBD. Groups of people together there for the right purpose, as you would have seen with the Christmas tree lighting and the Christmas markets, that type of amenity is a far greater reflection of the Alice Springs community and what we want to encourage.

Mrs LAMBLEY: It only happens once a year though, the lighting of the tree.

Commissioner CHALKER: Well, the Sunday markets occur quite regularly and I would contend, because I enjoy going there when I am down visiting Alice Springs as well, I think that is the true heart of Alice Springs. We need to try and capture that CBD to be like that for everybody to use it.

Mrs LAMBLEY: One more question and that is the mounted police in Alice Springs. Why did you decide to remove that?

Commissioner CHALKER: Member for Araluen, part of the back to basics is that we needed to consolidate our resource to make sure that we have deployable capability that is able to be effectively managed. We saw that we had police resources devoted there but because of the condition of the horses and the time taken to care for them, they were doing far less forward-facing activity. The model we work to now is to consolidate them here and they are rostered frequently to go down and do patrols not only in Alice Springs but through Katherine and Tennant Creek as well.

We believe the model is far more professional. They will get far more forward-facing. Equally, there are other methodologies we are using. Segways, for example, are popular when we are out and about doing those things. The motorbike patrols are another. The addition of the drones is another tool. There is a raft of things we are trying to do.

I go back to it. When we get a call for a job that requires a police response, there are some greater difficulties for a mounted police dedicated to do that, to respond to that job when the van has already completely engaged with other tasks. We have had to make a call and we are evaluating it.

Mrs LAMBLEY: It is a sad loss for our community, not having mounted police in town.

Commissioner CHALKER: The broader intent is to try to make sure the NT Police Force does not lose the mounted police at all.

Mrs MANISON: Very important.

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

Mr CHAIR: Are there any further questions related to the statement? There being no further questions, the committee will now proceed to consider the estimates of proposed expenditure contained in the Appropriation Bill 2020-2021 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?

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: I am happy to go to Output 1.1.

Mr CHAIR: No questions, therefore, that concludes the consideration of agency-related whole-of-government questions on budget and fiscal strategies.

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

Mr CHAIR: We will now move to consider Output Group 1, Community Safety and Crime Prevention, Output 1.1, Community Safety and Crime Prevention. Are there any questions?

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Obviously, we asked a lot of questions in the opening statement, so I only have a couple in the output. Minister, is John Stokes Square on track? I am hearing that there are significant delays with that construction project. If it is delayed how long is it? What do those delays look like and why is it delayed?

Mrs MANISON: Leader of the Opposition, the Nightcliff Police Station is a fantastic project. That police station is coming out of the ground nicely. Halikos has done an amazing jobs there and it will be a fantastic police station for the community.

There are some issues with the headworks on the site at the moment they are trying to resolve. It is a very old site. The advice I had from the Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Logistics is they have found more asbestos there, and problems hooking up some of the services there.

I do not have an exact time line for you, but the commitment has been given to me by the Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Logistics that they are trying to work through that as swiftly as possible so we can get that station opened as quickly as possible.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Will that station be a 24/7 police station?

Mrs MANISON: We have given that commitment that we will have a presence there 24/7, but I anticipate that—and I will get the commissioner to speak further about this—like our other stations when it comes to those front counter activities, they tend to go through the usual office hours.

Commissioner CHALKER: Thank you, minister. Opposition Leader, we are reviewing our front counter operations more broadly. Certainly, one part of what enabled us to temporarily suspend some of the front counter services through COVID-19, which was necessitated out of the issues of physical distancing and the contract tracing advice, was that we move to an online reporting portal as well. That has been in place now, pretty well, since March this year and it is quite encouraging in respect of the take-up and use of that. We want to see it working with those who would ordinarily potentially seek to come into a front counter to start using those online portals.

Similarly, it would be a case that I would not think there will be demand for a 24/7 front counter at Nightcliff, but we anticipate that it will be a 24/7 operational facility where staff will be deployed and housed.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Do we need the Nightcliff Police Station?

Mrs MANISON: I say yes.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Of course you would say yes, because Natasha Fyles, the Member for Nightcliff—this was her election promise ...

Mrs MANISON: This will be so—if you go out and have—yes, because she was, as local member ...

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: ... and you are slowly but surely chugging away delivering it. But we do not have a police station at Alpurrurulam, we have all these remote policing issues. We have a full station at Cas, a station in Darwin and one in Palmerston. Do we need a Nightcliff Police Station?

Mrs MANISON: Leader of the Opposition, I appreciate that the former CLP government shot down the Nightcliff Police Station ...

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Well, it is not open under you guys either. There are people working out of there, and that is about it.

Mrs MANISON: ... and we have a fantastic state-of-the-art police station. When you get modern infrastructure, it is warmly welcomed by the members. This will be fantastic and it will enhance our policing capability in the greater Darwin region.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: It does not answer whether we need it.

Mrs MANISON: We do.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Operationally we need a fourth police station in the Darwin area?

Mrs MANISON: Leader of the Opposition, I make no apology for making sure we give our hard-working police access to fantastic infrastructure.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: How much will that cost?

Mrs MANISON: We have committed money to the construction of that station. I do not have the exact dollar amount of the construction in front of me, but I will take that on notice. I will get it back to you after lunch.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: No one has the cost of the Nightcliff police station?

Mr CHAIR: Opposition Leader, are you happy for them to check?

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: They should check; you are meant to give the answers during estimates.

Mrs MANISON: Yes, but I can come back to you after lunch with the exact number.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Will it not be a 24-hour, seven-day-a-week front counter, which is what the Member for Nightcliff promised?

Mrs MANISON: No, it will be a 24/7 police station.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: What units will be stationed there?

Mrs MANISON: It will be an operational police station—I will hand over to the commissioner to talk a bit about the Nightcliff police station and how it will service our community. It will do an amazing job. We will also get those numbers for you on the construction cost—I am looking for them now.

Commissioner CHALKER: It will ease some of our operational congestion. Darwin police station probably has more resources than it can appropriately house. Similarly, Casuarina has general duties presence but is also accommodating Trident. Nightcliff relates to what we will have as an operational footprint, but also the use of multiagency work and accommodation in that space.

The Peter McAulay Centre is pretty much full as well, so we had to move a lot of people around. We have a temporary emergency operations centre in there to cover our COVID-19 response as well as the need for secondary EOCs. It is a space we will be able to utilise.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: I have no doubt it will be utilised, because it is definitely being built. I guess I wonder, had you had your time again, would you be building it in Nightcliff, in the bush or spending that money on remote policing?

Mrs MANISON: We have the biggest population in the Darwin region, so we need contemporary, modern police stations. And not all of them are contemporary and modern.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: We have a facility at the Mitchell Centre that is closed and we are sending everyone to Palmerston.

Mrs MANISON: To be fair, Opposition Leader, you have heard the responses here today with regard to the operational requirements and that these are temporary measures.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: On 20 June 2020—whenever you get that number let me know.

Mrs MANISON: I am getting you the right number.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: I would like the right number. Undoubtedly there are cost blowouts attached to your asbestos findings, so I will have the up-to-date number, please.

Mrs MANISON: I can give you the policing construction element of that tender, as opposed to the overall site. Remember, this was a \$45m project to build a police station and do a significant housing redevelopment to tackle the social housing element. It is broader than police, this development by DIPL.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: I am interested in the police part.

On 20 June 2020—cutting youth crime and supporting our police. There was a long shopping list of all these wonderful things your government will do to tackle crime—strengthen the voice of victims, tough bail and monitoring, targeting ringleaders, clear and immediate consequences for repeat offenders. When will we actually see any of this through parliament and being delivered?

Mrs MANISON: The work is happening now. We are delivering on those commitments. The ringleader legislation will come in early next year, and we will work through the property offences review.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: That is it?

Mrs MANISON: There are plenty of other things there.

Mrs MANISON: No time lines or KPIs? When will the mandatory landscaping—what did you guys call it? The establishment of a community work program, when will that happen?

Mrs MANISON: That work is under way right now. There is a broad body of work happening between multiple agencies on the delivery of those commitments.

Mr CHAIR: As it is now 12 pm we will break for lunch. Thank you everyone for your contributions, attendance and questions. We will resume in 30 minutes.

The committee suspended.

Mr CHAIR: Welcome back everybody. Being 12.30 we will resume estimates for this Tuesday.

When we left we were at Output 1.1, questions around police, John Stokes Square and other. Can I also thank the Department of Legislative Assembly for organising lunch and for all of their hard work to date? You are doing a fabulous job, Mr Keith and your team.

Answers to Questions on Notice No 3.5 and 3.6

Mrs MANISON: Mr Chair, could I please answer two questions I put on notice?

Mr CHAIR: Yes, you may. Which questions were they, minister?

Mrs MANISON: I have two. The first one was the amount with regards to Nightcliff Police Station and the advice I received back from the DIPL minister's office is 10.3 million and then I also want to respond to the two questions with regards to air wing travel for the Chief Minister.

Mr CHAIR: Yes. The Question on Notice, 3.6 related to air wing and the trips taken by the Chief Minister and his wife.

Mrs MANISON: Yes. Dates—and these were all for police purposes. On 27 March, Darwin to Numbulwar to Borrooloola to Robinson River to Darwin ...

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Sorry, is this just the Chief Minister?

Mrs MANISON: Yes. I have 12 November ...

Mr CHAIR: Sorry, is this just the Chief Minister?

Mrs MANISON: Yes, and then I went to the other one.

Mr CHAIR: Sorry, Question on Notice 3.5, 3.6 is the Chief Minister and his wife—3.5.

Mrs MANISON: With regards to the Chief Minister, 12 November, Darwin to Yuendumu to Darwin and then 20 May there were border site visits.

With regards to Mrs O'Brien, she has not been on any flights.

Mr CHAIR: Thank you, minister. We resume at Output 1.1. Are there further questions? That concludes consideration of Output Group 1.0.

OUTPUT GROUP 2.0 – GENERAL POLICING, CRIME DETECTION, INVESTIGATION AND PROSECUTION

Output 2.1 – Response Services

Mr CHAIR: The committee will now proceed to Output Group 2.0, General policing, crime detection, investigation and prosecution. Output 2.1 Response Services. Are there any questions?

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: I have no questions for Output 2.0 because I asked all the relevant questions in the opening statement, thank you, Chair.

Mr CHAIR: Are there any further questions? There being no further question that concludes consideration of Output 2.1.

Output 2.2 - Investigations

Mr CHAIR: The committee will now consider Output 2.2, Investigations. Are there any questions? There being no questions that concludes consideration of Output 2.2.

Output 2.3 – Services to the Judicial Process

Mr CHAIR: I now call for questions on Output 2.3, Services to the Judicial Process. Are there any questions? No questions therefore that concludes the consideration of Output 2.3 and Output Group 2.0.

OUTPUT GROUP 3.0 – ROAD SAFETY SERVICES
Output 3.1 – Road Safety Services

Mr CHAIR: We will now proceed to Output Group 3.0, Road Safety Services. Output 3.1, Road Safety Services. Are there any questions? There being no questions that concludes consideration of Output Group 3.0.

OUTPUT GROUP 4.0 – FIRE PREVENTION AND RESPONSE MANAGEMENT
Output 4.1 – Fire Prevention and Response Management

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

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: I had a couple of questions for fire. I do not know if Mark is still here?

Mrs MANISON: Yes. Mr Chair, I would like to get Mr Mark Spain in from the Fire services.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Thank you. Minister, are there any fire stations that are currently undermanned—Or under-womaned or understaffed?

Mrs MANISON: Under-personed.

Commissioner CHALKER: Opposition Leader, no. All operational fire stations currently have an operational response capability.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Great. A few years ago the Chief Minister, when he was the police minister and fire minister, flagged a target of 50% female firefighters in the Territory. Last year it was tracking at about 8%, how is that target going?

Mrs MANISON: Thank you for the question Opposition Leader. There has been significant work within the fire service to ensure we start seeing more women taking up the role of firefighting. This has required investment from the government because it is hard to believe in 2020 and the few years before that, that we still had fire stations which were built to only have one gender in them. This included only having male change rooms and toilets. There are sleeping arrangements in fire stations too.

The Northern Territory Police, Fire and Emergency Services have embarked on work to refurbish fire stations to incorporate women into the fire service. We have seen an increase in women joining the fire service, which is great news. I will have the Commissioner or Mr Spain to talk about where we are at, but let us face it, we were at a point where there were very few—you could count the numbers on one hand. We have seen increases in our last few recruit squads and will continue to endeavour to have more women joining the fire service, just like the police and emergency services.

Commissioner CHALKER: Opposition Leader, we concluded our last recruit squad in December of last year and brought our current number of female career firefighters up to 9%. It has been an increase in just under 2% since 2016. With recent attrition over the last couple years, we anticipate we will undertake another recruit squad through the course of 2021. Through the work the Chief Fire Officer and his team have been doing, we anticipate we will see a solid representation of females recruits as part of the next squad.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: What are the rates of attrition for firefighters?

Mrs MANISON: Thank you Opposition Leader. The Commissioner or Mr Spain will talk about the attrition of our fire service.

Commissioner CHALKER: Thank you. Opposition Leader, the attrition is quite low. Invariably, it is due to retirement or a transition interstate. I will get the Chief Fire Officer to add value to that.

Mr SPAIN: Thank you Opposition Leader. Regarding the attrition, we had five leave this financial year and seven last year.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Well done.

Mrs MANISON: It is a job for life for many. Something they deeply commit to.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: How many full time vacancies are there?

Mrs MANISON: I will have the question answered by the Commissioner or the Chief Fire Officer.

Commissioner CHALKER: As far as discrete vacancies go, that is something we have undergone a reform process for within the fire service. There was previously a model in place called the FRES—Fire Rescue and Emergency Services—with a different management approach. I have turned that around so that the Chief Fire Officer now is the head of the fire service which is appropriate. The Director of NTES is the Director of the Northern Territory Emergency Services, they both report directly to me as the CEO of Fire and Rescue Services.

We have been able to centralise that model which has created a Deputy Chief Fire Officer and an Assistant Chief Fire Officer within the fire service model. We are doing a body of work to look through the establishment of the fire service commensurate with the classifications they have through their various ranks. There are no vacancies per se as far as what we are trying to recruit for. This is outside the understanding that we run a 'no relief' factor which is inherent to our model. Invariable this is covered by overtime if there are people who are sick and the like. That is something we are building in from an efficiency standpoint to ensure there is a better contingency in place and to mitigate fatigue management so that all of our firefighters can appropriately take their leave entitlements, with some having excess leave.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: How are arson investigations handled? Is that a joint police and fire exercise; there might be burning buildings and also people who light fires which cause catastrophic bush fires like we saw last dry season. Are they treated the same way and how does that response happen?

Commissioner CHALKER: Obviously arson is a crime so it is referred to police in the first instance. I have to say the Chief Fire Officer is very proactive...

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Sorry, can I stop you commissioner. Just to take you back a tiny bit, how do we know that? I assume the fire rocks up first, fire, they are on the scene, and then if it becomes evident it is arson they report it?

Commissioner CHALKER: To any fire that they go to, they will have a general assessment within their forward facing crews' response whether there is any sense of criminality being avoided. More broadly—as I was saying the Chief Fire Officer is quite proactive—in the event that a fire has occurred the police may well have been deployed first and foremost as well, from a safety perspective.

As the fire service comes, the moment there is any inference that there is suspicious behaviour, a fire investigator is ultimately coordinated to be identified by the Chief Fire Officer. Mr Spain is very proactive in the space of picking up any of our awareness of an actual structure fire and ensuring that it is appropriately investigated and if it requires referral; although invariably, there is sometimes a mix. If we get there on the ground, people will give an indication they saw someone deliberately starting a fire, so that is how we can get the police side of it. Equally, if it is just one we have turned up where a fire is engulfed the scene, then the Chief Fire Officer tends to deploy his fire investigators who will then ultimately a referral to police that they believe a crime has been committed.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Thank you. I have no further questions for that Output.

Mr MONAGHAN: Could you please give an update on the new Palmerston Fire Station?

Mrs MANISON: It is going to be a fantastic piece of infrastructure. I think anybody who has gone to the current Palmerston Fire Station can see that it is well and truly past its use by date and does not meet the contemporary needs of our fire fighters. We are building the new fire station and this is going to be a fire station that can be expanded on into the future and also will meet the service requirements of that growing Palmerston area. I might get Mr Spain to touch on how that is progressing.

Mr SPAIN: It is progressing well. It is up to the state where I think they will be turning the soil this month to commence the station. It is designed to provide a professional support into the growing area of Litchfield, predominantly Coolalinga and back feed into Palmerston, which is also growing.

Mr MONAGHAN: Men and women?

Mrs MANISON: Men and women but also our fire service in Palmerston have had to change their capability over the years, as we have seen actual buildings that go up in Palmerston and Coolalinga, they have certainly had to increase their capacity to be able to get some of their fire appliances that can go up a fair few levels. Not quite to the height of Darwin of course but they have had to have the fire appliances that can mean that they can get up apartment buildings and so forth.

Mr CHAIR: That concludes consideration of Output 4.1 and Output Group 4.0.

OUTPUT GROUP 5.0 – EMERGENCY SERVICES

Output 5.1 – Emergency Services

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

That concludes consideration of Output Group 5.1 and Output Group 5.0.

OUTPUT GROUP 6.0 – CORPORATE AND SHARED SERVICES

Output 6.1 – Corporate and Governance

Mr CHAIR: The committee will now move onto Output Group 6.0, Corporate and Shared Services, Output Group 6.1, Corporate and Shared Services. Are there any questions?

That concludes consideration of Output Group 6.1.

Output 6.2 – Shared Services Received

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

There being no questions, that concludes consideration of Output 6.2 and Output Group 6.0.

Are there any non-output-specific budget-related questions?

There being no questions, that concludes consideration of output groups relating to NT Police, Fire and Emergency Services. On behalf of the committee I thank the officers who provided assistance, the minister and her team.

The committee will now move on to consideration of outputs relating to the minister's portfolios of Agribusiness and Aquaculture, Mining and Industry, and Northern Australia and Trade.

Mrs MANISON: And Defence and International Education.

Mr Chair, I also place on the record my thanks to the commissioner and the men and women of the Northern Territory Police, Fire and Emergency Services. They put in a great deal of work in preparing the briefs for estimates; they will clearly have more work to following this session. We know they always put Territorians first; they go in to work every day and make incredible sacrifices for the Territory. This year that has been clearer than ever before—just how important they are to the Territory. I thank the men and women of this agency.

Mr CHAIR: On behalf of the committee, I thank Commissioner Chalker and his entire team.

We will take a couple of minutes' break while we reset the room.

The committee suspended.

DEPARTMENT OF INDUSTRY, TOURISM AND TRADE

Mr CHAIR: Welcome back, everybody. Welcome to our new guests. Welcome, Minister Manison. Minister, I invite you to introduce the officials accompanying you and to make an opening statement regarding your

portfolios of Agribusiness and Aquaculture, Mining and Industry, Northern Australia and Trade, and other portfolio interests you have.

Mrs MANISON: Mr Chair, I am pleased to appear before the committee again today to answer questions related to the very exciting portfolios of Mining and Industry, Northern Australia and Trade, Defence Industries, Agribusiness and Aquaculture and International Education.

Last week, the Territory Economic Reconstruction Commission released its final report offering a whole-of-Territory blueprint for our economic rebound, with an ambitious goal of making the Territory a \$40bn economy by 2030. The commission identified priority industries that are critical to grow our economy, attract private investment and create jobs. Many of these priority growth industries are captured in these portfolios.

The Department of Industry, Tourism and Trade has been tasked with capturing the many opportunities that will emerge for the Territory in the post-COVID-19 environment. I have a team of the department accompanying me here today to assist with the questions, including Mr Shaun Drabsch, the Chief Executive, Ms Joanna Frankenfeld, the Chief Financial Officer, Mr Phil Hausler, the Executive Director of Agriculture, Mr James Pratt, the General Manager of Energy and Governance, Mr Armando Padovan, the Executive Director of the Mines Division, Mr Luke Bowen, the General Manager of Investment Territory, and Ms Anne Tam, the General Manager of Economic Innovation.

The impact of COVID-19 has meant that there has never been a more important time to achieve economic growth in the Territory. To create a \$40bn economy by 2030 we need all of the key industry sectors to grow. The mining industry is the Territory's largest industry, the single largest generator of export revenue for the Territory and is set to take a leading role in the Territory economic recovery from COVID-19. In 2019-20 financial year, the value of the mineral production for the Territory was \$4.4bn and the total mineral exploration expenditure was \$123m—excellent figures despite COVID-19.

The Territory has 17 mining projects in various stages of approval processes. Combined, they represent up to \$5.8bn in proposed capital expenditure, with up to 5,700 jobs in construction and 3,100 jobs in ongoing operation.

In 2019 the agriculture, forestry and fishery sectors contributed over \$1bn to the Territory's economy and employed over 2,400 people. The Territory's iconic livestock industry is valued at over \$610m at the farm gate. The industry manages 45% of the Territory's land mass and about two million head of cattle.

Plant industries, including our famous mangoes, melons and Asian vegetables, is valued at \$445m. Emerging growth industries such as modern cotton, hemp and the value-add potential of our unique forestry plantations will significantly contribute to the Territory economy. The Member for Arafura knows all about forestry.

This year saw an exciting release of three unique, large-scale, highly-prospective agricultural land developments—Keep Plains, Wildman and Larrimah. The Territory's largest ever agricultural land release brings great potential for jobs, economic benefit and agricultural diversification and innovation to the Territory.

The Territory seafood industry creates over 940 full-time jobs and in 2019 was valued at \$85m and \$38m from wild capture of fishing, and \$47 from aquaculture, with great potential to grow. Our extensive and pristine coastline provides great potential to expand the aquaculture industry in partnership with Aboriginal landowners in barramundi, prawns, sea cucumbers and tropical rock oysters.

Project Sea Dragon is an example of an exciting aquaculture project that will have an estimated 1,000 at full development.

Our geographical location provides the Territory with defence and nationally strategic opportunities. The Territory will be home to the Joint Strike Fighters, the MQ-4C Triton, offshore patrol vessels and replacement helicopters for the first aviation regiment. Defence has committed to \$270bn over the next 10 years across the nation. All of the major bases and training areas within the Northern Territory will see significant works occur due to the need for this funding to roll out an investment.

An exciting area for future growth and development in the Northern Territory is gas. The Territory Economic Reconstruction Commission identified that gas will be a driver of our economy. We are seeing private sector investment potential such as Jemena announcing \$5bn in future infrastructure works. There is strong exploration onshore and work offshore. Next year you can expect to see \$170m in onshore gas exploration works.

International education and training was identified as a growth area. We aim to grow the sector to 10,000 students by 2025. The Territory experienced its best year for growth thus far up until recently. They are investing a lot into the Territory economy.

The Territory Economic Reconstruction Commission report has been beneficial in confirming to the government that we have the right policies and plans in place, and to get them out of the door as quickly as possible.

To the committee, we welcome your questions to the Department of Industry, Tourism and Trade relating specifically to my ministerial responsibilities.

Mr CHAIR: Thank you Minister. Are there any questions relating to the opening statement?

Mr SLOAN: Thank you Minister for your opening address. I acknowledge all the hard work of the new Department of Industry, Tourism and Trade. The creation of this huge department in August has caused some change and disruption on top of already dealing with COVID-19. I thank the department.

I thank all the staff of the former Department of Primary Industry And Resources for its leadership during the pandemic to keep our economy moving as best as possible. Additionally, I thank the former Department of Trade Business and Innovation for the work done to deliver stimulus to Territorians when they needed it most.

I have a few questions on the opening statement. Can you please describe the amalgamation process moving from a number of different agencies down to one larger agency and how that has been accomplished?

Mrs MANISON: We made significant government machinery changes after the 2020 election. They were important decisions, particularly with this agency, because these are the portfolios that drive job creation and growth of the economy. We wanted to ensure some areas had more support from the investment side. It would make it a more agile and responsive agency to the Territory's needs, as well as private and industry needs, by having all functions in the one place.

I will hand over to Mr Drabsch to talk about how the changeover is going and the benefits of creating the Department of Industry, Tourism and Trade. We will give a high level answer which refers to elements of the agency which I am not responsible for as minister, but nonetheless they feed into the picture of our creation.

Mr DRABSCH: Thank you Member for Daly for your kind comments about the work of our departments in the COVID-19 response. We appreciate the feedback.

As we seek to address the economy challenges in front of us, it is important that we integrate our industry development activity into one cohesive and coordinated agency. We have a goal to create a \$40bn economy by 2030. That is a vision we have agreed within our new structure. We have elements of four different agencies coming into one, and there is a process we have under way at the moment to develop the high-level structure of that. We will be finalising that over the coming weeks and settling it in by February.

To achieve that \$40bn by 2030 goal we need all the key industry sectors to grow—energy, tourism, resources, hospitality, primary industry, Defence, maritime data and space, amongst others. We need the right infrastructure in place to enable that growth. It is about water security, low emission energy, transport corridors for vehicles and gas, a ship lift and industrial precincts that will attract new investment. We need the right skills and training to create well-paying jobs for Territorians. We need our businesses to have the capability and resources to meet our economic challenges.

This integrate industry department will perform all of those functions in an integrated and cohesive way across a vast range of sectors. Importantly, we need to be ready to implement the recommendations of the Territory Economic Reconstruction Commission. For example, bringing the licensing functions to this new department will support the Territory Reconstruction Commission's target of having the most efficient approval processes in Australia for all Territory business licensing and approvals to start and grow a business.

I have set a clear target and purpose to our agency, to understand that we have important roles to undertake supporting the growth and development of businesses and industry sectors. I have emphasised to all staff, as I have gone around and met them throughout the Territory, that we have an important role to be proactive, efficient, responsive and most importantly, to understand that business and industry are our customers, as an industry agency, and our job is to help those businesses and industry grow. It is important that growth is undertaken responsibly within the public expectations of fairness, equity and sustainability. That is why it is

important that not only are we an industry development department, we are a regulator as well, because good regulation is a foundation for good industry development. It is really important that we integrate our understanding of those industry development opportunities and possibilities and ensure that we pursue those in a responsible and effective way through efficient and appropriate regulation.

The new structure of the department brings together all these functions from a number of agencies to foster a greater level of agility, flexibility and quicker decision-making across government. That is our goal.

Mr SLOAN: You said this amalgamation will be completed by February. Do you have an idea how much it will cost to amalgamate these departments?

Mrs MANISON: I will hand that question to Mr Drabsch to answer. It would be fair to say in the changes we have put together we expect to achieve greater efficiencies across government, Member for Daly.

Mr DRABSCH: We are working on this integration process primarily through our internal resources. The intra-board of management is working together with our executive management group. We have hired a facilitator local consultant to facilitate that process of dialogue, consultation with all our staff and through the change implementation committee. That cost has yet to be finalised, but minor in a relative sense.

Mrs MANISON: Over the long run we expect it to strike more efficiencies within the agency, of having more of the functions together in the one agency.

Mr SLOAN: Page 37 of your annual report outlines a decline in your full-time employees by 67 between 2018-19 and 2019-20. How many full-time employees will this new agency have and how does that compare to the prior staffing levels?

Mrs MANISON: Member for Daly, one thing the department has had to deal with—and it has created a level of issues because it was quite stressful for many owners of citrus trees—was the citrus canker. In my electorate there were very distressed constituents. People get very attached to their trees and gardens and to growing and enjoying what they deliver year in, year out. There were a few tears shed across the northern suburbs, from my experience. But it was important, because it was about biosecurity. Because of the citrus canker response, we stepped up resources to the agency. That is a temporary measure that goes in place to deal with those programs.

That is the advice I have with regard to those numbers. Is there anything you would like to add, Mr Drabsch.

Mr DRABSCH: No thank you, minister. That relates to establishment of the former Department of Primary Industry and Resources and has been the prime reason for our decline.

Mr SLOAN: What will the executive structure of the new agency be? What will the report structure be?

Mrs MANISON: With regard to that, the chief executive is finalising that. There is a level of internal consultation. I do not feel that now is the time to share it with the Estimates Committee, before it has been shared with staff within the agency. I am happy to take that on notice, but it will be getting communicated to the agency very soon. The fair process is to talk to your staff first. Mr Drabsch is finalising that at the moment.

It is a good question. I have seen the structure; it is a very sound structure that will deliver the agility the agency needs to respond to the issues within the industries we have, and to grow them, and to focus on emerging industries and the development of new areas for growth in the Northern Territory.

We are close to finalisation. I appreciate it is the estimates process, but I ask that we go through the internal processes first.

Mr SLOAN: That will be before February?

Mr CHAIR: Minister, would you like to take the question on notice?

Mrs MANISON: I would be more than happy to take it on notice so that we can officially get back to the Estimates Committee when it is ready to be formally announced.

Mr CHAIR: Question on notice are to be answered by 22 January.

Question on Notice No 3.25

Mr CHAIR: Member for Daly. Can I please ask you to restate the question for the record?

Mr SLOAN: What will the executive structure of the new agency be and what will the report structure be?

Mrs MANISON: I am happy to take that on notice, Mr Chair.

Mr CHAIR: The question asked by the Member for Daly of the minister has been allocated number 3.25.

Mr SLOAN: You guys have a huge department. How will you ensure that each part of the agency, for example, Agriculture, Mining and Tourism are all given the appropriate amount of attention. As you said before, the TERC reports identified agribusiness and mining as essential to get to the 2030 target, considering you only have one CEO handling the lot, how do you see the time being divided up to make sure all the different agencies are given the proper attention they deserve and need?

Mrs MANISON: That is a good question, but I can assure you it will make the agency more agile. We have an excellent chief executive. I have no doubt he will be able to drive the agency appropriately. The other thing I have been impressed by since I have taken on the role of minister to elements of this agency, is the professionalism and the calibre of senior executive.

Within this agency, Mr Drabsch has to report to a number of ministers. We all take our responsibilities seriously; however, given that the depth of experience and knowledge within the management group of this department I have no doubt it will deliver results.

We have made our expectations very clear about why we have embarked on this path of creating this department—an industry department for the Northern Territory.

It is also important to recognise this is also a recommendation that came through the budget repair work from John Langoulant as well. Mr Drabsch, would you like to add to that?

Mr DRABSCH: Just to add to that, thank you, minister. It is important to recognise that as we seek to cover the broad range of industry sectors we cannot seek to create one amorphous homogenous blob of an agency. We need to recognise the special requirements of each industry sector and have structural integrity around the support of those sectors, while also ensuring effective coordination of our strategic policy and reform processes, our workforce planning and training activity and our business development activity which affect across those sectors.

There will be a matrix structure which recognises core industry sectors and also the important coordination and strategic policy work that needs to occur across the agency. That will ensure that all sectors received the appropriate attention consistent with the priorities of the government.

Mr SLOAN: You have some very big departments there, do you think that is too much for one person?

Mrs MANISON: Absolutely not. Like I said, I have no doubt in the calibre and the professionalism of our agency staff and the quality of the chief executive that we have here to drive this very important work, because we have some very specialised senior executives within the different streams of the department and within the different industry elements of it and they bring a great deal of depth, knowledge and understanding.

Ultimately, this is a very important change for government because it does mean that the key industries and the key job creators are in the one place. There is an agency with a mandate and we are determined to make sure that they are about driving through, creating jobs, growing industry and developing emerging industries as quickly as possible and they really are going to work very well hand in hand with the Territory Economic Reconstruction Commission recommendations.

It is about having an agile responsive agency and I have no doubt that Mr Drabsch is going to drive this agency the way we need it to be driven.

Mr SLOAN: Very busy. The TERC report clearly identified agribusiness and mining as essential for any future development. Have you got an idea in your head what proportion of that \$40bn will come from mining, agribusiness?

Mrs MANISON: Certainly, a good whack would be my answer. As I spoke about in the opening statement, 17 potential new mining projects there that would pump a huge amount of money into the Northern Territory economy each and every year. Already we know that mining is a substantial part of our economy. Gas presents some very exciting opportunities, agribusiness and aquaculture too. We are not talking about small projects here we are talking about projects of a significant size.

With the mining projects alone that could be \$5.8bn worth of capital expenditure, but when you translate that into the ongoing contribution to the Northern Territory through economic activity through 3000 ongoing jobs and all the benefits that will flow through there as well as royalties, which is always music to a Treasurer's ears, it will be a substantial part. I do not have the exact figure but there is no doubt that one of the key driving factors of these growth targets is going to be mining, gas, agribusiness, aquaculture continuing that very important work.

Mr SLOAN: Have you set yourself any KPIs to reach these targets?

Mrs MANISON: Yes, 40 billion by 2030.

Mr SLOAN: For your department?

Mrs MANISON: That is the ultimate KPI.

Mr SLOAN: How are you going to monitor this over the next ...?

Mrs MANISON: Certainly from my ministerial perspective and for the parts of the agency that I am responsible for it will be seeing how these projects strive getting out of the ground and getting as many of those out of the ground as quickly as possible. From my perspective when it comes to onshore gas ensuring that the exploration process progresses well.

The Department of the Chief Minister is the driver for the recommendations of the hydraulic fracturing inquiry but ensuring that we are accountable to those recommendations and meeting our timelines and targets to push that industry along. With agribusiness; exciting opportunities with the three expressions of interest and making sure that we secure those. I am certainly keen to see a cotton gin here in the Northern Territory.

As mining minister I have made it very clear to the industry that getting my management plans processed in a timely fashion. Making sure we have the right checks and balances in place, because if you do have the right regulation and environmental conditions around it, it gives you the license you need to keep expanding and growing the industry. That is important. Defence industries, as well, presents an amazing opportunity. With international students, it is quite straight forward. We have set in that target of 10,000 students by 2025.

They are just a few of the targets that I am working towards as minister and pushing them along as quickly as possible.

Mr SLOAN: What do you see as the greatest challenges going forward?

Mrs MANISON: That is a very good question, Member for Daly.

Mr CHAIR: Standing Order 109, a question should not be asked for an opinion or legal opinion. (inaudible) what the great challenges are may not be directly related to the budget. Minister?

Mrs MANISON: I am happy to answer that. I would say right now, first and foremost, is COVID-19 and the global economy. That presents the greatest challenge because there is just so much uncertainty associated with it. I certainly hope to see a more certain world with a lot less curveballs in 2020–21. That has been one of the greatest challenges, and it is not predictable, about how it flows on to impact economies around the world at this point and whose recovering faster and how this is affecting trade and consumption. I would say that presents the greatest global threat right now and the development of how we go forward.

Something I am conscious about in the Northern Territory is having the right skilled staff to be able to deliver in these opportunities for these industries. That is why we put a lot of emphasis into training and preparing

our workforce for these future opportunities. We work very closely with industry to ensure that, with major projects coming up and industry-by-industry, we are looking forward into the future about what the needs of our workforce are; making sure we have got the right courses but also trying to work with our schools. Ideally, what we want to see is Territory kids benefiting from these Territory jobs of the future.

That is why we have invested in things such as the STEAM Centre at Taminmin High School and Darwin High School and making sure our kids have got those pathways to benefit from these world-class jobs in the Territory.

Mr SLOAN: On COVID-19, how many staff in the agency areas were working from home during COVID and are all these staff back at work now?

Mrs MANISON: I will hand that to Mr Drabsch to answer, but I appreciate this might go into the space of some of the other ministers that work for this agency and it might be one we have to take on notice.

Mr DRABSCH: Most of the officials working within the agencies were conducting what was often essential worker. In the old DTBI about a third of our workers were redirected to working on the stimulus grants; it was important that that happened within an office environment.

The vast bulk of people were working from the office. There were people who had vulnerabilities in terms of their immunity or their relatives did and they were allowed to work from home, if appropriate arrangements could be in place in terms of ergonomic furniture and so forth. We were flexible and adaptable in that.

The vast bulk of the workforce did operate from an office environment. In the early months of the COVID outbreak, we did engage in some exploration of part work from home, staggering the number of people in the office, just to ensure that the systems could work effectively, in case a more serious lockdown was required. Fortunately that did not occur.

Mr SLOAN: Just going back to the new agency, what functions of the various former stand-alone agencies will be combined, for example will policy be centralised, and what will that look like?

Mrs MANISON: Given the operational nature of that, I will hand to Mr Drabsch. With how I answered the question before, we might not be ready to talk about the full details of some of these elements.

Mr DRABSCH: There is an opportunity to integrate our policy capability from across the agency to deepen our capability and focus on the priority reforms that need to occur. That will become evident in the structure we share with the Estimates Committee once it has been finalised.

Mr SLOAN: Just a question on the budget—the annual report details \$227,000 in write-offs on page 75, due to postponements and waivers due to COVID-19. Can you describe what these amounts were for?

Mrs MANISON: Which agency? It applies to multiple agencies, so I suspect you are looking at DTBI, perhaps.

Mr SLOAN: I might come back to that one. Another question is on travel. I have a document that was given to the Leader of the Opposition's office earlier in the year. There were a few trips overseas—one to Texas in January to February 2020 for three people at \$48,000. Can I get a breakdown on that trip? What was the flight component, the accommodation ...

Mrs MANISON: We might take that one on notice, Member for Daly, so we can get the information to you. In the written question answers we provided information about some of that travel. It is important to recognise that this agency is a big driver of job-creation and investment. Prior to COVID-19, international travel was part of some of those elements of the agency, particularly in the minerals and gas space.

I suspect, off the top of my head, that it has something—I am looking at it now. Here we go. The reasons for travel were to promote investment opportunities through dedicated business seminars and participation in the North American Prospect Expo and to meet with the Railroad Commission of Texas, the North Dakota Department of Mineral Resources and Halliburton to discuss the USA shale industry and challenges being faced.

The former chief executive, the Director of Regional Geoscience and the Senior Director of Petroleum Operations were the three public servants who attended that trip earlier this year, late January to early

February. If you would like those components of the trip broken down, I am happy to take that on notice and get back to you.

Mr SLOAN: Does the \$48,000 include or exclude GST?

Mrs MANISON: I will definitely have to take that on notice, unless our CFO knows, but it is not there. It is usually excluding, that is the advice I have. I am happy to take it on notice.

Question on Notice No 3.26

Mr CHAIR: Member for Daly, please restate the question for the record.

Mr SLOAN: In regard to international travel for the 2019–20 financial year, could I get a breakdown of the trips, on page 20 of that document—I think you have the same document—of the flight component, accommodation components and the hospitality and hosting component.

Mr CHAIR: Minister, do you accept the question?

Mrs MANISON: Yes, I do.

Mr CHAIR: The questions asked by the Member for Daly is allocated the number 3.26.

Mr SLOAN: In the 2020–21 budget there is an efficiency dividend of 1% for certain frontline services and 3% for all other agencies. What is the specific amount of efficiency dividend for the outputs under your responsibility in this agency in 2020–21?

Mrs MANISON: Given that this is not a frontline agency—it is not police—it would be the 3%. We would have to take it on notice about anything breaking down further into the budget. That would be applicable across the entire agency, as it is to all agencies that are frontline agencies.

Mr SLOAN: How are you proposing to achieve the 3%?

Mrs MANISON: I will hand over to Mr Drabsch. With the former Treasurer's hat on, I will say that there is an expectation that every agency within government lives within its means and works to operate their agencies as efficiently as possible. That is why there is an efficiency dividend that is placed on them to make sure they are looking for ways in which they can run that department efficiently and get the best value for taxpayers' dollars. They are expected to meet their budgets. Is there anything further you would like to add, Mr Drabsch?

Mr DRABSCH: Thanks, minister. We seek to achieve those efficiencies within the construct of government policies, such as no forced redundancies. We operate from within; we trim our operational expenditures to the extent that there are positions which can be found to be not required going forward, if they were vacant. There is some reconciliation of those positions.

We also pass on the 3% efficiency dividend in the grants that we allocate to various industry and training organisations, for example.

Mrs MANISON: Again, it is a difficult measure—difficult for those external organisations. But again, when it came to budget repair, it was part of those recommendations. It is important that everybody does some heavy lifting there.

Mr SLOAN: Will any programs or services cease with this new department?

Mr DRABSCH: We have no plans to cease any programs or services. There will be a focus of resources on the priorities that have been identified by the government in its various policy pronouncements and outputs such as the TERC report.

Mr MONAGHAN: Will there be any staff cuts?

Mrs MANISON: I will take that. We have made it very clear through our management of COVID-19 that it is about constraining expenditure and making sure agencies meet their budgets. We are not going on a cuts agenda. It is important to recognise that the best way to repair the budget is to grow the economy. This is an

agency that is critical to that, as well as the service demands in the Northern Territory are far higher than elsewhere. It is important to recognise that if we want people to live in the Northern Territory, we have to make it a safe place. But also the way to grow the economy is not to cut public servant numbers.

You would have seen below today we had a few members of the union movement who were most unhappy about the wages policy that has come forward in this budget. I get that it is difficult for many people to see that we have had to constrain wages growth through our wages policy. Again, we have to stress that this is about meeting the priorities, which is to keep people in jobs and not have to cut jobs to ensure we do not have to cut services. That is why we have implemented the wages policy. I appreciate that is difficult for some people, but at the moment our priority is keeping people in jobs, keeping services for Territorians and making sure we grow the economy. That is why you need a responsible wages policy.

Mr MONAGHAN: A question, Mr Chair, to the Member for Daly's question.

Mr CHAIR: Member for Fong Lim, along the same line.

Mr MONAGHAN: That was further to growing the economy you spoke of, minister. One way you are trying to do that is that \$5bn investment being made by Jemena—the gas infrastructure. Can you talk a little about that?

Mrs MANISON: It is a great sign of confidence in the onshore gas industry and the development of the Beetaloo Basin that we are seeing Jemena, which has invested already in the norther gas pipeline which has connected the Northern Territory to gas markets on the east coast. They have also shown that they will work in partnership to look at the possibility of investing \$5bn into oil pipeline works. It shows great confidence in the gas industry and the need for gas. We are seeing some very promising results through exploration and now it is about driving that forward as fast as we can, whilst also making sure, of course, that we meet our commitments from the Pepper inquiry.

Do you have anything further to add Mr Drabsch?

Mr DRABSCH: That is very well put Minister Manison. The opportunities in the gas sector are enormous and the prospect of the Jemena pipeline being expanded and linking more closely to the east coast market, together with the Agip proposal from the Amadeus Basin down to Moomba, are signs of increasing attention to onshore gas resources in the Territory.

Mrs MANISON: I want to be clear, Member for Fong Lim, that providing gas to customers on the east coast and down south is part of attracting investors but our top priority for the development of the gas industry in the Territory is ensuring we have a gas manufacturing industry. This creates more ongoing jobs for Territorians, grows our economy and is at the forefront of our plans.

Mr MONAGHAN: Thank you Minister.

Mr CHAIR: Any further questions?

Mr EDGINGTON: I have a question about the structure of the organisation. You said you have a consultant on board. Who is involved in the conversations around the restructure? Are the staff on the ground involved in those discussions?

Mrs MANISON: I will hand over to Mr Drabsch to answer that question, Member for Barkly.

Mr DRABSCH: Thank you Member for Barkly for the question. Yes, we are engaging in a detailed consultation process with staff. I have addressed the staff by visiting locations around the Territory on a couple of occasions. We have regular video and email updates on a weekly basis with staff to advise them of the progress. We have consulted with them on the strategic vision, strategic priorities and principles for operation of the agency. We have talked to them about a functional structure.

We received feedback on those drafts and that is the process we are involved in at the moment which we are seeking to finalise. The consultant involved is a local person who has experience in changing management within public and private sector organisations. She is a facilitator providing support to myself, my office and my board of management as we examine the possibilities and best means of organising our affairs to meet the expectations of this integrated industry agency.

Mr EDGINGTON: A follow up question, of which you might not have reached the stage yet, but does that involve a change of location for any of your staff? If so, what would be the cost involved in that?

Mr DRABSCH: We are not anticipating wholesale moves of personnel. We have extensive resources across the regional centres of the Territory. If anything, we are looking to bolster those as we go forward. Within the Darwin CBD we are spread across four different buildings. I am conscious not to unnecessarily shuffle people about just for the sake of change. That can be an upsetting process in its own right.

Over time we will seek to ensure that groups who are working together have an effective capability to do so. That might not always be within the same buildings.

Mrs LAMBLEY: I have a question. The Territory Economic Reconstruction Commission report states that tourism has the highest job creation potential of all the sectors across all regions. How many Territory tourism businesses have been and look to be wiped out by COVID-19?

Mrs MANISON: Member for Araluen, considering this output perhaps you leave that to Minister Fyles tomorrow? She is the Minister for Tourism and Hospitality.

Mrs LAMBLEY: But you are tourism too?

Mrs MANISON: No, I am not.

Mrs LAMBLEY: Okay.

Mr CHAIR: As the minister said previously, Mr Drabsch will be attending with a number of different ministers..

Mrs LAMBLEY: Oh, okay. I will move on to a mining question then. The McArthur River Mine—I am not sure when to ask it in the output groups, so can I ...

Mrs MANISON: Can I suggest in the output group so that way I have Mr Padovan here as well.

Mrs LAMBLEY: Which one?

Mrs MANISON: That would be in Output 8.1, 8.2.

Mr DRABSCH: We have officials ...

Mrs LAMBLEY: Yes, no worries.

Mrs MANISON: We need to talk to you and answer your questions as well.

Mr CHAIR: Are there any further questions relating to the opening statement. No further questions.

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

Mr CHAIR: The committee will now consider the estimates of proposed expenditure contained in the Appropriation Bill 202-2021 as they relate to the portfolios of Agribusiness and Aquaculture, Mining and Industry and Northern Australia and Trade. Are there any agency-related, whole-of-government questions on budget and fiscal strategies?

No questions, therefore that concludes our questions on agency-related whole-of-government questions on budget and fiscal strategies.

OUTPUT GROUP 7.0 – PRIMARY INDUSTRIES Output 7.1 - Agriculture

Mr CHAIR: We will now proceed to Output Group 7, Primary Industries, Output 7.1, Agriculture. Are there any questions?

Mr SLOAN: Yes, I have a couple. Agriculture output was previously an output group with the output research farms, industries development, livestock industries development and agribusiness development. They are no longer reporting lines in this budget. Can you explain the reason for that?

Mrs MANISON: I will hand to Mr Drabsch or Mr Hausler to answer this question. They are all very important parts of the agribusiness part of the portfolio. As the incoming minister, I have already spent significant time going out and familiarising myself with this space and out facilities.

I will had over to talk to Mr Drabsch or Mr Hausler.

Mr DRABSCH: I will start off, if I may. Again, the absence of those from the budget outputs does not, in any way, undermine the priority of those activities in the forward program of the agency. It was a matter of simplifying the allocations within the budget reporting process. I am not sure if Phil or Joanna—did you want to add anything to that as Chief Financial Officer.

Ms FRANKENFELD: As you noted earlier, we are a very large agency. If we purely picked up the outputs as they were before and recreated them, we would have had a very long output list. So, we consolidated some such as agriculture so it is all contained in the agriculture one—the ones that were previously like subsets of aquaculture. Now we just have one line for agriculture.

Mr SLOAN: Can you advise the actual expenditure for each of those lines in the 2019-20 budget?

Ms FRANKENFELD: In the 2020-21 budget, agriculture has an output of \$18.014m and that is comparable with the prior year BP3 output in 2019-20 of \$18.719m. It was a decrease overall of \$705,000.

Mr SLOAN: What is the budget in 2020-21 for research farms, plant industries development, livestock industries development and agribusiness development? Do you have a budget for that?

Ms FRANKENFELD: We do not hold the outputs down for that level. As I said, they are consolidated up into the agriculture line. Then, within the agency they are all split right down into lower level cost centres.

Mrs MANISON: We can always put it on notice if you need.

Mr SLOAN: Okay, thank you.

Question on Notice No 3.27

Mr CHAIR: Member for Daly, could you please restate the question for the record.

Mr SLOAN: I will try to get it right this time. Can you please advise the actual budgeted expenditure in 2020-21 for the lines research farms, plant industries development, livestock industries development and agribusiness development?

Mr CHAIR: Minister, do you accept the question?

Mrs MANISON: Yes, I accept the question, Mr Chair.

Mr CHAIR: The question on notice asked by the Member for Daly of the minister has been allocated number 3.27.

Mr SLOAN: We have all heard reports of the mango farmers being left short-staffed during the COVID-19 restrictions. What preparations for next year are being made to ensure the mango farmers will have access to the workers they need?

Mrs MANISON: It is a really important question. We led the charge nationally by being the first jurisdiction to have seasonal workers; not just one plan but to have two. I appreciate it has been an incredibly stressful time for our mango growers because here in the Territory we are really dependent on seasonal workers. They are regulars, they know the farm owners and they are highly skilled people that come in and do a fantastic job. We are delighted with the work that we have done with Vanuatu. I have to applaud the mango growers and NT Farmers for all the work they have done.

As I said, we have been the leading jurisdiction in this space by a mile. We are looking at the requirements of other plant industries, other parts of our ag sector going forward. I might hand over to Mr Drabsch or Mr Hausler to talk a little more about the work that has been happening with industry around their workforce requirements.

Mr DRABSCH: I will pass to Mr Hausler in a second but to acknowledge also the work that he personally undertook on a daily basis, driving forward the successful integration of some hundreds of seasonal workers from Vanuatu to support the mango industry. We are very pleased with the outcome.

It was quite a complex process engaging with the federal government and so forth. I think the broader issue the Member for Daly raises is how can we avoid this problem going forward and what planning are we undertaking there. I might ask Mr Hausler to talk to that and other processes.

Mr HAUSLER: We have continued to engage with industry and work with them to address access to labour issues. For example, our grape farmers in central Australia, we have been engaging with them, understanding their issues and helping them to access their workers based in Victoria and South Australia.

The team we have assigned to assist working with industry through the flights from Vanuatu, continue to work in this area. We are well aware that NT Farmers are seeking to have additional overseas workers brought in to service the melon industry in early 2021.

Member for Daly, we are continuing to engage closely with industry to understand their issues and to work across other jurisdictions and also with our agency colleagues; for example, Police, Fire & Emergency Service, Department of Health and with the operators of the Howard Springs quarantine facility to work across those areas and assist our industry people as much as possible.

Mr DRABSCH: If I could just add to that. This year has been particularly hard in the seasonal worker context, because we rely strongly not only on seasonal workers from the Pacific schemes and so forth, but also on backpackers coming through, which has been severely constrained as a result of the constraints on international travel. It is going to be interesting to see what unfolds next year.

I think we have to plan for the possibility that those constraints will continue for some time at least and we need to work closely with industry to identify effective strategies to ensure that we can get the crops off the trees and out to market as much as possible.

Mrs MANISON: NT Farmers are not backwards in coming forward and working with government. They have been absolutely fantastic. They will knock on the door, get on the phone and advocate strongly for the industry. They have been working closely with the agency, the Territory Controller, the Chief Health Officer and our federal colleagues to get these workers in and looking at the future demands. They work closely with the farmers about what their workforce needs are.

Mr SLOAN: (Inaudible) plans for (inaudible) to Katherine and is the department assisting efforts by NT Farmers and other (inaudible)?

Mrs MANISON: This is another important element that we are doing as an agency and the work that we need to do to dispel a lot of myths around cotton to make sure people understand that a modern cotton industry is sustainable and it does provide some incredible opportunities for the Northern Territory.

We are continuing discussions with industry and with growers who would like to work with government on the prospect of a cotton gin. I cannot give more details on that at this point, except to say that as minister I am very keen to see further development of modern cotton in the Northern Territory and to have a cotton gin set up here. It is about diversification. The more diverse our economy is, the more jobs and opportunities there will be for everyone.

What particularly excites me is that around parts of your electorate and remote areas of the Northern Territory, such as Katherine and Douglas Daly, it presents amazing opportunities. You have a minister who will be pursuing this. We are in active conversations with growers about a cotton gin, and government is working hand in hand there, as well as with industry and NT Farmers.

Mr SLOAN: Do you have a time frame?

Mrs MANISON: I do not have a time frame, but it would be fair to say the discussions are current and we are looking to get this up and running over the next few years.

Mr SLOAN: As little red tape as possible?

Mrs MANISON: Absolutely. Mr Drabsch spoke about it a bit before—it is important to make sure there is a level of regulation and checks in the system because it gives us the licence to pursue some of these new projects into the future more aggressively, when we have that licence to show that it can be sustainable and work well with the environment and economy.

Mr SLOAN: How often would you be meeting with the growers and NT Farmers to discuss this? Is this an ongoing, regular conversation?

Mrs MANISON: It is an active conversation at the moment.

Mr SLOAN: Highly regular?

Mrs MANISON: I will not talk about that level, but this is active and I have instructed the department to continue to pursue this. It is up there as a priority order, particularly for the agribusiness side of the department.

Mr SLOAN: You would have done some economic modelling on this?

Mrs MANISON: Yes, there has been research and work done. I will hand over to Mr Drabsch to talk further about the development of the modern cotton industry and cotton gin.

Mr DRABSCH: I confirm that officers of the agency are working closely with growers and the NTFA to pursue this opportunity. It was a business case that the local jobs fund made a funding contribution towards, which demonstrated the strong economic potential of developing the cotton industry in the Northern Territory—utilising existing allocations of water and the fact we have substantial rainfall so that we can have a rain-fed cotton crop.

There is enormous opportunity in not only producing high-quality cotton in the Territory—it is a very high grade, from the trials undertaken in your electorate—but there is also the strong potential for cotton seed to be used as a protein supplement in cattle feed, which the cattle industry is interested in pursuing.

The potential over the course of the next 10 years or so is to develop a series of gins and have a cotton output production of \$200m per year, which is almost 1% of gross Territory product, as it stands. We are very keen to see the development of this logical alternative use of pastoral land, much of which is cleared and has existing water allocations. There is strong interest in the Katherine and Daly regions to pursue this and many industries can benefit from supporting that increased activity.

Mr SLOAN: I am mindful of time, so I will push on. What would you consider to be the significant barriers to the growth of the cattle and live export industries in the Northern Territory at the moment?

Mrs MANISON: I will hand this question over for a bit of discussion, but first, as the new minister, I want to say this is such an important part of the Northern Territory economy and something we are world-class at. We have an amazing industry group in the NT Cattlemen's Association, a fantastic live export industry here, and an industry that sends cattle to market down south.

We are world-class in the Territory, so it is high on the order of my priorities as minister to continue to support the cattle industry in the Northern Territory and ensure we grow opportunities for the industry.

One of the things we cannot control which presents an opportunity—which were part of the first conversations I had as minister when I rolled into a pastoral station and it started spitting with rain. The cattle station manager said to me that if you are bringing the rain with you then it is a good start. I would say drought is up there as the number one issue right now for our pastoralists.

I will hand over to Mr Drabsch.

Mr DRABSCH: Thank you Minister. There are two elements, one being the livestock export industry. It is an important means of trade and engagement with the Southeast Asian region, such as Vietnam, the Philippines

and Indonesia, as well as the southern and east coast markets of Australia. It is a major contributor to economic output in the Territory.

Mrs MANISON: Absolutely!

Mr DRABSCH: It will continue to be so for many years to come. I will defer to Mr Hausler who has direct experience in the research and development of this industry.

Mr HAUSLER: Thank you. The last two wet seasons have been two of the poorest on record and the impact of that has seen large numbers of cattle destock from Territory pastoral properties. That has resulted in substantial decrease in the Territory cattle population. We have seen numbers decrease from 2.4m to 2m head or just under. The challenge for our beef producers will be restocking those properties once the wet season is realised. Large areas of the Territory are still suffering from dry conditions. The onset of the wet season has been delayed, especially in central to southern areas of the NT.

There is frustration in beef prices being very high of late. That is combined with a shortage of cattle across Australia because many other areas are still in or just coming out of drought. That is one of the substantial challenges facing the industry at the moment.

There are opportunities in terms of cotton. Cotton has great synergies for integration with beef in that it gives opportunities for market diversification. That will do me for now.

Mrs MANISON: We are hoping the La Nina season is going to bring more rain across the Territory—not enough rain for floods or cyclones but enough to give pastoralists some relief. That has been the first thing people have wanted to speak to me about—the drought conditions.

Mr SLOAN: In regards to infrastructure, stakeholders have advised that the Plenty Highway was recently upgraded and are predicting that it has given them \$57m in efficiencies this year. As a department do you liaise with DIPL to identify roads which are important and need upgrading? Have you any ideas which roads might be upgraded in the next couple of years?

Mrs MANISON: Yes. Member for Daly, roads are high on the list of multiple ministers including myself and the infrastructure minister. We have worked closely with the Australia Government over recent years, particularly for the beef roads and the packages that came out there. Roads are one of the greatest challenges we have in the Northern Territory but they create great opportunities for economic development. They can make life easier for people on the ground.

Seventy per cent of the Northern Territory road network is unsealed. The ball park figure is about a million dollars to seal a kilometre of road. We have worked very hard to get investment from the federal government and some of the examples of where we have seen an investment happen, yes, the Plenty.

I had the opportunity to drive on the Buntine a couple of months ago which was an interesting experience—plenty of cows on the side of the road, lots of rain and it was not pleasant conditions to say the least—another 20 kilometres getting sealed there.

The Tanami, another road that we are working on. In your electorate—Port Keats Road, another very important road. Central Arnhem Road to open up Nhulunbuy for more economic development.

The way it is funded it tends to be that the feds put in 80% and we put in 20%. I have a few different areas of concern is that sometimes our priorities of where we can see the best bang for buck when it comes to roads investment is not the same priorities of the federal government. That can be a bit frustrating at times.

The other issue is the pace of delivery of that funding where you'll see that the feds will go, okay, let us go an invest—let us talk about the Central Arnhem Road—and they will put a package of a couple of hundred million dollars on the table but stretch that well and truly out over the forward estimates when really if we are to pull that money forward sooner rather than later we open up opportunities for economic development.

The transport industry through the trucking association, they are constantly on the DIPL minister's—and certainly this minister's—case when it comes to roads funding. The Northern Territory cattle association as well, clearly want to see beef roads prioritised because it opens up to market. A great example of that is the recent work at the Keep River Road. Because of that road's investment and the bridges that have been done that station around Legune will be open year round. That will mean that they can get more cattle to market around the year which is fantastic, and that will create more opportunities for them.

I will continue advocating for more road investment, particularly for those roads that open up opportunities for economic growth.

It is not with the ag business hat on but it will benefit the industry, is the Carpentaria Highway. I am glad to see that the federal government in their efforts to work with us to open up the Beetaloo for development have put a commitment on the table of, I think, about \$120m for the Carpentaria Highway again so we can facilitate the development of the onshore gas industry.

One thing I want to point out that we all collectively should work towards is members of this parliament is that with roads funding it can often be a very nice big pot of money coming in to the Territory. But in some cases it is equalised away through the GST take. We need to be careful because sometimes the road funding comes in one hand and then through the Commonwealth Grants Commission process it gets equalised out and we lose it in the GST. We do not end up ahead but we do end up having tied funding to do the roads.

I have consistently advocated with Queensland and Western Australia at the Treasurer's level when I was there that we need to have that excluded from GST calculations because if the federal government is dead serious about developing northern Australia and opening up opportunities for more economic development we need to have more sealed roads. It costs a lot of money and we need to do it faster. I do not think you will find many people in the industry disagreeing with us about that.

Mr SLOAN: Is there any plans for any of these beef roads to be sealed in the next four years?

Mrs MANISON: Yes. There is a huge amount. BP4, the infrastructure paper—I will flick through it a bit later on but there is certainly a bit roads program across the Northern Territory that we are continuing to roll out. There is plenty of information in there about the different roads and where they are going. And the 10-year infrastructure—the information will be in there, too.

Mr SLOAN: Just a few questions about non-pastoral use permits. In the last financial year, how many applications were made and how many were granted?

Mrs MANISON: You will have to refer that question to Minister Lawler in her session.

Mr SLOAN: That is all I have for agriculture—I am mindful of time.

Mr CHAIR: Are there any further question on Output 7.1? That concludes consideration of Output 7.1.

Output 7.2 – Fisheries

Mr CHAIR: The committee will now consider Output 7.2, Fisheries. Are there any questions?

Mr SLOAN: I have a question about the Blue Mud Bay permit-free access to Indigenous water, which was set out on 31 December. In early August it was announced that the government and the NLC had agreed that permit-free fishing access would be allowed for a further two years until December 2022. Has that commitment been immortalised in any way at this point?

Mrs MANISON: From my end of things, as the minister, this does not sit within my line of responsibility. This would be a question more appropriately asked—the Chief Minister has the lead on the Blue Mud Bay negotiations, but I am sure you could ask Minister Uibo or Minister Kirby with regard to fishing access. Minister Kirby has Rec Fishing.

Mr SLOAN: In August a rewrite of the *Fisheries Act* was flagged. When will that be commenced and finalised, and is there a time line in place for that?

Mrs MANISON: Yes, that is a very important part of the Blue Mud Bay work. This will be led by the Department of the Chief Minister and Cabinet, with the negotiations going forward into Blue Mud Bay. I will hand over to Mr Drabsch.

Mr DRABSCH: As the minister indicated, the negotiations on Blue Mud Bay are being led by the Chief Minister's department, with consultation with the Fisheries division of this agency. As part of those negotiation there is a commitment to a review of the *Fisheries Act*, the content and outcomes of which will be incorporated in the negotiated outcome on Blue Mud Bay. It is important that all stakeholders are effectively engaged in

that process and we are acting to facilitate engagement with the key stakeholders in the seafood industry and recreational fishing sector.

Mrs MANISON: I suggest you pose the question in Minister Uibo's session as well.

Mr SLOAN: How much has the Territory government provided to Project Sea Dragon in direct and indirect financial assistance? When should we expect a final investment decision on this project?

Mrs MANISON: With regard to the contributions, we will take that on notice. I suggest this is also a DIPL question, and there is overlay of Major Projects work. There have been significant contributions by us and the federal government when it comes to roads investment. The Keep River Road has just been opened—beautiful road. And the bridges—they are beautiful. I love infrastructure. Gunn Point Road as well—we have contributed there. There are a few different areas where work has taken place.

I will take that on notice and we can get a more wholesome answer. It is an important project. It has great potential to make us a big exporter of tiger prawns from the Northern Territory—a world-class project—and it has opened up more opportunities at that station when it comes to cattle and crops. It is a great example of diversification.

Question on Notice No 3.28

Mr CHAIR: Member for Daly, please restate the question for the record.

Mr SLOAN: How much has the Territory government provided to Project Sea Dragon in direct and indirect financial assistance? When should we expect a final investment decision on this project?

Mrs MANISON: With regard to FID, it is getting closer. It has been frustrating for me in the sense that I hoped financial close would have been achieved sooner. Nonetheless, I went out there about six weeks ago to look at the site and where the plans are at. They are pushing towards some work happening out there at the end of next year, and getting started on those important first stages of the project.

Mr CHAIR: Minister, do you accept the question on notice?

Mrs MANISON: Yes.

Mr CHAIR: The Question on Notice asked by the Member for Daly of the minister has now been allocated the number 3.28.

Mr CHAIR: Any further questions?

Mr SLOAN: No.

Mr CHAIR: No further questions on Output 7.2. That concludes the consideration of Output 7.2

Output 7.3 – Biosecurity and Animal Welfare

Mr CHAIR: The committee will now move on to Output 7.3, Biosecurity and Animal Welfare. Are there any questions?

Mr SLOAN: Just one from me. What is the role of the Chief Veterinary Officer in the live cattle trade? How many staff does she have at her disposal? Are the resources available sufficient to fulfil the needs of the industry under increasing regulatory requirements?

Mrs MANISON: We will take that on notice please, if that is all right, because we do not have them here at the table today.

Question on Notice No 3.29

Mr CHAIR: Member for Daly, could you please restate the question for the record.

Mr SLOAN: What is the role of the Chief Veterinary Officer in the live cattle trade? How many staff does she have at her disposal? Are the resources available sufficient to fill the needs of the industry under increasing regulatory requirements?

Mr CHAIR: Minister, do you accept the question?

Mrs MANISON: Yes, Mr Chair.

Mr CHAIR: The Question on Notice asked by the Member for Daly of the minister has now been allocated number 3.29.

Mr CHAIR: Further questions relating to Output 7.3?

Mr SLOAN: One quick one. Do your research farms work closely with the cattle industry? What percentage of the work would you say takes place with cattle as opposed to horticulture?

Mrs MANISON: Member for Daly, a very important question. I have some very positive feedback from the cattle industry with regard to the work they do with the research farms. I have seen in Katherine firsthand some of the work they have done with the mortality rates with the calves, making sure they make improvements in that region—just to name one project.

I will hand over to Mr Hausler to speak about some of the work with the research farms. It will be a focus of mine, though, because I want to make sure we have research that is being driven by the needs of industry and opportunities to further grow the economy.

Mr HAUSLER: The department operates seven research farms across the Northern Territory. In the Top End we have Coastal Plains Research Station which is totally dedicated to horticulture research and development.

We have Beatrice Hill Farm, which is a combination of floodplain pasture and upland improve pasture, focusing on cattle and buffalo research and development activities.

Douglas Daly Research Farm is a mixed farm in the Douglas Daly region that really focuses on beef cattle production on improved pasture. There is some forestry activity. There has been cotton grown there this year. There is some horticulture—some really broadacre cropping work undertaken at Douglas Daly.

We have Katherine Research Station which is the head office for the Katherine region—beef cattle, horticulture and broadacre cropping.

We have Kidman Springs in the Victoria River region that is focused on beef cattle research and development on rangeland native pastures. We run about 800 breeders out there. It also supports the high fertility Brahman herd which has been acknowledged nationally as the highest fertility Brahman herd in the country, if not the world. We get the results of our work out to industry by holding an annual bull sale. There are also females that are sold to industry.

We also have Oldman Plains in Central Australia which is dedicated to beef cattle production on rangeland pastures in the arid zone.

We also have the Arid Zone Research Institute which is the headquarters of Primary Industry in Central Australia. There is a mix of horticulture, a nursery facility for native bush foods and a small number of cattle at the Arid Zone Research Institute.

Mr SLOAN: What is the fertility rate of those cattle you were discussing?

Mr HAUSLER: Sorry, what was that?

Mr SLOAN: What is the fertility rate? You said you had the highest fertility rate of those Brahmans.

Mr HAUSLER: Brahman cattle are a very tropically adapted breed of cattle. They can handle very high temperatures, they are tick resistant and they have a range of other attributes that makes them suitable for the tropics.

In order to be suited, they have an inherit low fertility and we have focussed over more than two decades on selecting our Brahman breeders for fertility traits to the extent that we now have a high fertility Brahman herd, which is again recognised nationally as a very important asset for the Territory.

Mr CHAIR: That concludes consideration of Output 7.3 and Output Group 7.

OUTPUT GROUP 8.0 – MINES AND ENERGY **Output 8.1 – Resource Industry Development Services**

Mr CHAIR: The committee will now move onto Output Group 8.0, Mines and Energy, Output Group 8.1, Resource Industry Development Services. Are there any questions?

Mr EDGINGTON: In the output Resource Industry Development Services, can you please advise the actual expenditure for this Output in 2019–20?

Mrs MANISON: I will get out Chief Financial Officer, Ms Frankenfeld, to answer the question.

Ms FRANKENFELD: In 2019–20 the budget figure was \$11.268m.

Mr EDGINGTON: The DPI Annual Report indicates that a draft Minerals Industry Development Strategy has been developed in collaboration with the Department of Trade, Business and Innovation. What are the themes, action points and new ideas that are included in that strategy?

Mrs MANISON: I cannot stress the importance of this industry enough. We have got some amazing access to resources in the Territory and for me, as the incoming minister, it is how can we get these projects out of the ground as quickly as possible and attract more investment into the Northern Territory. There have been some very strong signals out there of interest here in the Northern Territory.

If you have a look at our figures this year for exploration at \$123m and that is despite COVID-19 and biosecurity zones where people could not get out and do their exploration. That was still a strong result given the challenges that we have faced this year. I might get Mr Drabsch or Mr Padovan to go into further with regards to that work.

Mr DRABSCH: The idea of the Minerals Industry Development Strategy emerged from the economic development framework process that was conducted a few years ago. Since that time a draft strategy has been developed which will be released for industry and public consultation for a four-week period, subject to Cabinet approval, in early 2021.

A strategy establishes a vision for the industry to be a globally competitive, diverse and sustainable mining sector; provides employment, business opportunities, growth and both social and economic benefits to all Territorians and proposes the following six focus areas to grow the industry:

- driving more exploration
- support of the approval and regulatory regime
- attracting and encouraging downstream processing in the Northern Territory
- engaging the community in maximising social value and understanding of that value to the community
- developing the mining services and supply sector so that we can keep as many jobs and business opportunities in the Territory
- supporting a skilled and diversified workforce

That strategy supported by a background market analysis report. That summarises in science on existing mining operations, the sectors advantage, challenges and opportunities and the key drivers for change across the industry.

The TERC report indicated the critical importance of the minerals industry and the potential for the further processing of minerals within the Territory and the extra value that could deliver to the economy.

Mr EDGINGTON: Last year a seismic survey of the Barkly was conducted in conjunction with Geoscience Australia. What does this tell us about the mining and petroleum potential in that area and how is this information being used to promote investment in the Territory?

Mrs MANISON: There is a lot of excitement in your neck of the woods, Member for Barkly. When I speak to the areas who work with Geoscience and exploration elements of the agency, they are very buoyant about the prospects in the Barkly and the level of interest we have had from explorers. It has not just been the juniors but big collaborative work with some of the major companies. I will hand over to Mr Padovan to speak about the work. You were down there the other day?

Mr PADOVAN: Thank you Minister. I was hoping to be, but I am planning a trip early next year.

Mrs MANISON: I thought you were down there.

Mr PADOVAN: The program you refer to does not come under my area, it is part of NT Geological Survey, but I can provide some high level dot points. Some of the work that is happening around the Barkly includes:

- NTGS fast tracking a project to digitally capture all historic exploration drilling and geochemistry data in the Tennant Creek mineral field and across the Barkly Tableland, which will become available to industry in the New Year
- in August 2020, NTG has released four products that provide three-dimensional visualisation and interpretation of the buried Rover mineral field, which is 70 kilometres southwest of Tennant Creek
- substantial new data on the buried geology and resource potential of the Barkly Tableland has been recently acquired through a collaboration between Geoscience Australia and NT Geological Survey, including an 820 kilometre Barkly seismic survey
- a collaboration with the Mineral Exploration Collaborative Research Centre, Geoscience Australia and NT Geological Survey resulted in 10 deep drill holes—most being completed—to sample the geology beneath the Barkly Tableland
- a large range of new Geoscience data releases have lead up to more than 30,000 square kilometres of new exploration licence applications by industry, with an unprecedented level of mineral exploration expected across the Barkly Tableland in the coming years.

Mr EDGINGTON: How is that being used to promote investment in the Territory?

Mrs MANISON: There is a huge amount of work in that space. This is an agency with responsibility for driving investment attraction when it comes to mineral exploration. I will get Mr Drabsch to go into the activities of the department further. This is one area we would happily provide a briefing on for you from the experts in our agency. It is a section they are excited about.

Mr DRABSCH: Yes, we would be happy to arrange a detailed briefing for the Member for Barkly. I acknowledge that not only has the NTGS been investing substantial amounts as part of its \$26m four-year geophysics program, it has been matched by funding from the Commonwealth Government's Geoscience agency. It is an exciting development in the context of the huge prospectivity which had not been understood in the region because some of the minerals are more than 100 metres below the ground. They were not immediately apparent through the gold mining activity that has occurred in the region over many years.

With the level of exploration interest in there now—some 30,000 square kilometres—we will be actively working to utilise the data that NTGS has developed in collaboration with the Commonwealth to promote to potential investors and highlight the work the government will do to facilitate the growth of a vibrant mining industry in that space. There is already substantial interest—BHP, Rio Tinto and other smaller exploration companies are interested. There is good prospectivity in copper, shale gas and copper-zinc, and there is also gold and iron-ore in that part of the region. There is substantial opportunity for development of that resource and for production and export through the Port of Darwin along the rail corridor.

Mr MONAGHAN: Further to that question from the Member for Barkly—as you know, the mining sector is a particular passion of mine. The strong pipeline of developing mining contracts—what will these projects

contribute to the Territory, and what is the streamlining of the regulatory process for the system that will take those mining approvals?

Mrs MANISON: There are very exciting prospects there—when we talk about the 17 potential projects, all at different stages of their development. Some are quite close and some are further away, but they have the potential to create thousands of jobs during construction and ongoing jobs for Territorians into the future, as well as contributing good royalty funds back into the Territory.

I might pass to Mr Drabsch to talk about the further development of these projects.

Mr DRABSCH: Further to the point on regulatory reform and the opportunities there, we are just beginning a process of consultation with industry for the transfer of environmental regulation of mining across to the Environment department. That also provides an opportunity to look at the *Mining Management Act* and its operation.

Environmental regulations being proposed by the Environment department, similar to petroleum, are a risk-based tiered approach to environmental approvals so that if there are low-risk activities which could be resolved through regulation based on standard conditions, we can make a quick assessment and simplify the process. As things get more complex you step up the tiers towards a full EIS.

That will be attractive to industry, particularly to the small explorers who want to get in the ground and not be too highly bound by those processes. Similarly with the mine management plan, now that the environmental regs are moving across this will be a consultation process across the course of this coming year, with legislation coming to parliament toward the end of that time frame.

There is an opportunity to look at how we manage the mine management plan processes, and simplify and streamline them to ensure that we can have confidence that the mining activity will be performed effectively and responsibly, but minimising the time and complexity involved in these processes.

Mrs MANISON: A lot of work has happened in this space to look at how we go about mine management plan approvals. First and foremost, with exploration mine management plans, some significant work has been done to streamline those to make sure they are far faster and more efficient.

There is work with the extractives industry happening at the moment. We are going to consultation with them at the start of next year to look at ensuring streamlined approval processes for them when it comes to mine management plans.

For the larger and more complex mines, under Mr Padovan's team there has been a significant body of work, particularly with two mines recently to look at what was needed there and to streamline those processes. We are also publishing the mine management plans online now, just to give the public assurance about the level of work that goes into it and so the information is transparent.

I spoke about this in the last section but I will speak about it again with mining—in order to have the social licence to expand and grow the industry, we need to be transparent. That is why we are publishing the mine management plans online. There has already been some significant achievement through Mr Padovan's section with streamlining those processes. The instruction I have given as minister is that I expect these to continue to work with industry to make sure we have the best practices in the Territory. That way people and companies have certainty about their expectations when they come here with their mine management plans, and we have a streamlined and efficient process.

I will get Mr Padovan to speak a bit about some of the recent bodies of work he has done which have saved significant loads of unnecessary paperwork going through the system, and made sure we have gone to what is really important to aid the decision-making process for mine management plans and getting the information we actually need to make a good, informed decision.

Mr PADOVAN: Over the last three years we have been putting a lot of effort into streamlining mine management plans, both in what we expect from industry and how we assess them as well. One of the things we were finding was that often mine management plans were very complicated documents, which was expensive and time-consuming for companies and their consultants to develop, but also for my team to wade through hundreds of pages to get to the heart of the information.

Late in 2017, with industry, we formed a mine management plan review group, which was made up of representatives from the Minerals Council of Australia, the Association of Mining and Exploration Companies

and the Extractive Industry Association of the Northern Territory. We wanted to set about reviewing mine management plans for the exploration sector, the extractive industry and mines. What industry told us was, 'Let us start reviewing the exploration mine management plans', and that is what we did.

In January 2019, we introduced the new streamlined exploration mine management plans. We developed, effectively, a template approach, which was used to guide companies and their consultants through the sort of information that we wanted to see. It was basically, 'Let us get to the heart of the information that we wanted, to understand about their proposals'—things like give us good maps for where they wanted to explore, what the risks were associated with their proposals, give them information on where they could go to look up data regarding sacred sites, heritage and biodiversity issues.

The feedback we got from industry was very positive on two counts. First, the assessment time frames were reduced to almost half. Also, from their perspective they were pleased because it takes them a lot less time and money to prepare these mine management plans.

We have gone through another process of reviewing the exploration mine management plans based on feedback that we have been getting from industry since January last year. We hope to be in a position in the new year to go back to the exploration sector before we release the updated exploration mine management plans.

Over the last little while, we have also been working with the extractive industry. That is a very important sector because they provide the raw materials for our buildings, roads and all the major infrastructure projects that the Territory is looking to have. So, we have been working closely with some of the select members and the CEO of the Extractive Industry Association. Again, in the new year we will be going out more broadly to their management board to present that to them and consulting more broadly with that industry.

As the minister pointed out, we have been doing a lot of work in the mine management plan space as well. Mine MMPs are a lot more complex. We are talking about much bigger operations with varying levels of complexity. Mines are more challenging to streamline but, nevertheless, we embarked on a process—I do not think the company will mine me saying—over the last 18 months with Rio Tinto Alcan Gove on developing a 12-year mine management plan, which is quite significant because that plans takes them through mining into post-mining into closure, and then final relinquishment of the site.

That plan is available online. In commitment to transparency, as we reassess mine management plans and they are approved, we are putting them online one by one.

Mr SLOAN: Minister, what ...

Mr CHAIR: Sorry, Member for Barkly. It is 2.30 pm and Mr Keith has pre-empted it. We will take a five minute break. Sorry, since it is 2.30 pm we will take a break and come back to finalise your session.

The committee suspended.

Mr CHAIR: Welcome back. We were on Output 8.1, Resource Industry Development Services. Are there any further questions?

Mr EDGINGTON: Minister, the Territory is currently ranked 30th on the Fraser Institute Annual Survey of Mining Companies Policy Perception Index, what work is being done to improve that result and ameliorate the perception that the Territory's policies are far less favourable as compared to jurisdictions like Western Australia, which is ranked fifth and South Australia which is ranked 19th.

Mrs MANISON: Thank you, Member for Barkly. It is also important to recognise that when it comes to investment attractiveness that the Territory has certainly leapt forward—and also mining potential. When you look at investment attractiveness going from 23rd to 13th and for mineral potential from 19th to fifth. We have seen that and we have seen improvements in the policy potential rankings as well.

Yes. We are working towards making sure this is seen as a world-class mining destination with the right policy settings, the right regulatory settings and with the right settings around how we go about our mine management plans and also attracting investment.

There is ongoing work that is happening. The Territory Economic Reconstruction Commission has also again highlighted that mining and the resources sector is very important so we are going to be making sure that work is happening in this space as Mr Padovan just touched on talking about some of the efforts that are made.

Another area that Mr Drabsch spoke about before, that again goes to the heart of certainty of when businesses come here and knowing what they are dealing with is that we are going through the environmental reform process, and the thing that I want to stress to people that this will mean that our system is in line with Western Australia as well, with how companies deal with us when it comes to the environmental approvals it will be a more streamlined process that is based on risk, so the lower the risk the less work, in terms of paper work that will need to be done, it will be a more streamlined process through to the more complicated matters, and yes, there will have to be more extensive work.

That is going out for consultation within industry early next year. We are going to be making sure that this is a process that gives a more streamlined environmental pathway. Again, I have to stress that it is important to have transparency around these processes so we will continue to publish the mine management plans online.

We are determined to make sure that we are seen as an attractive jurisdiction for investment in the resources sector and we are doing that work around our government process to make sure it is world-class.

Mr EDGINGTON: One of the policy points that the Fraser Institute survey is based on is taxation. Is the hybrid mining tax holding the Territory back as compared to other jurisdictions?

Mrs MANISON: I do not believe so. It is not really a hybrid, it is a minimum royalty scheme. Prior to that we had this profits-based system which meant that it was companies that were just turning those accounting profits that were paying that royalty to the Territory.

These are the Territory's resources. Once they are gone, they are gone forever. It was about having recognition of that and to ensure we do not have companies that come in, mine for a short period, take the resource and do not contribute royalties to the Northern Territory. It is a very low rate, that ad valorem rate, therefore they go into the profits-based scheme and we do not see this as being a barrier for investment or final investment decisions for companies to come here.

Mr EDGINGTON: I think we touched on some of this. What reviews are currently underway into the mining industry and what areas do these touch on? For example, reform in the approval space to encourage investment in the sector.

Mrs MANISON: Probably the most significant one that we have just spoken about is the environmental reforms. That is going out for consultation with industry and we hope to have this all completed within two years. This is to make sure we have a more streamlined process. That it is easier to do business whilst also upholding those important environmental assurances to the community.

That is probably the biggest process undertaking at the moment, as well as on the exploration mine management permits, as Mr Padovan stated. We have already made changes, but we are talking to industry again to make sure those changes are achieving the results we want to see and if we can further streamline them.

In addition to that, the extracted industry has that consultation work about to start where we have got plans to help them again; have a more streamlined process when it comes to their mine management plans. We are continuing work post the Territory Economic Reconstruction Commission on the broader mine management plans and the assessment of that process as to how we can further streamline as well.

Mr EDGINGTON: What is the current time that it takes for a proponent to obtain an exploration time, measured from the time of the application to the time that it is granted?

Mrs MANISON: I will get Mr Padovan to go into that. We have made some significant inroads. There is a lot of misinformation out there about the length of time it takes to have an exploration mine management plan approved; it is actually quite streamlined in the Northern Territory. I just received some information about that the other day. There is some good work that is happened in this space. I have heard some people try to push ridiculous figures like four years. That is not the case. When you have a look at how we compare to Western Australia, we have got some good work in that space.

Mr PADOVAN: In terms of exploration licences and exploration MMPs, there are two components to that. With exploration licences, which is the actual title which allows a title holder to undertake exploration works for lands in the Northern Territory where there is native title land, it is around eight to nine months to get the licence. That is end-to-end from application to when a decision is normally made. Of that, about three months is actual process within the department. A lot of the timeframes revolve around notification and getting replies from the proponent. We are often compared to Western Australia. For the same native title tenure in WA it is around 13 months end-to-end. We are significantly faster.

In terms of the actual exploration activity; when an explorer wishes to do ground-disturbing work or substantial disturbance, they need to go through the *Mining Management Act* and submit to us a mine management plan which we assess. Generally for our KPI for MMPs in general, is to have them determined in less than 90 days. With the exploration mine management plans, before we implemented the change to the exploration MMP templates, we were looking at a median time of 35 days, now we are down to 20 days.

Mr EDGINGTON: You mentioned the 17 mining projects, perhaps we could go through some of those mining projects to get a feel to what stage they are at? The Verdant Ammaroo Phosphate Project was recently awarded federal major project status. The project is also seeking NAIF funding in the amount of \$160m. What is the Territory doing to ensure that this project, which could provide up to 900 construction jobs and 250 ongoing jobs, gets up and running as soon as possible? Are there any outstanding approvals?

Mrs MANISON: There are exciting prospects in the resources sector with 17 potential projects. My task is to get them out of the ground and to the point of approvals so they have more certainty when it comes to financial close.

Projects closer than others include KGL with their work around Jervois...

Mr EDGINGTON: My question was about the Verdant project.

Mrs MANISON: I know. I am trying to put context around it before I hand over to Mr Drabsch about some of the other exciting opportunities.

Mr EDGINGTON: We can get to those, thank you.

Mrs MANISON: Yes, it is good. I have lots to talk about in this space. Lots.

KGL is exciting. We have been working closely with Core Lithium on a project close to the Darwin region which will provide local jobs. It is not something you often see, something near a major urban centre. Regarding the discussion on Ammaroo, I will pass over to Mr Drabsch.

Mr DRABSCH: Thank you Minister. The Verdant Ammaroo Phosphate Project has been a major project under the Territory scheme...

Mrs MANISON: For some time.

Mr DRABSCH: ... for some time. We welcome the federal government's recognition of the importance of this project. The project had been developed originally as a resource extraction project and went through an environmental approval process to that end. It subsequently changed and its proposal was enhanced to include further processing onsite, similar to the operation at Phosphate Hill near Mount Isa. For the review and environmental impacts—because it is a different activity—we were encouraged by NAIF agreeing in principle to allow it go to due diligence on the request for their support. That was encouraged by the advent of a private equity interest from the UK in the mine.

We are optimistic about the prospects of this development going forward. We are working closely with Chris Theolus and his team to advance the project. Members of the major projects area and the Investment Territory teams are actively working directly on it with the support of the mines division agency. That is the current state of play.

Mr EDGINGTON: What approvals are outstanding at this point?

Mr PADOVAN: When the Ammaroo project was under Verdant it went through the environmental assessment processes which was complete. As Mr Drabsch indicated, that was for a mine and export operation with no onsite processing. One of the things the new proponent will need to do is to approach the

EPA and submit a variation to their original proposal to enable onsite processing and conversion of the project to phosphoric acid. That is the first stage in the additional approval process.

Once Verdant has gone through the NTEPA notification process, they can start looking at developing the mine management plan for their project.

Mr EDGINGTON: Thank you. Minister, Arafura is a nationally significant project as rare earths are used extensively in the defence and technology industries. Where are we at with this one and what is the government doing to help get this project over the line as it approaches a final investment decision?

Mrs MANISON: It is an exciting project and the government has been working closely with them. We look forward to receiving their mine management plan to work towards—what we all want to see—getting this mine out of the ground. I hand over to Mr Drabsch and Mr Padovan to talk further about where things are at.

Mr DRABSCH: I will leave the regulatory approval process to Mr Padovan, but I will mention, Member for Barkly, that we have been actively engaged with Arafura Resources for a number of years now. They were, in fact, a number of projects that the investment delivery task force, set up by TERC, focused upon in its engagement with Commonwealth agencies—the Export Finance Agency and NAIF and private investor and debt provider companies—to see what we can do to deal with the fundamental issue, which is attracting the capital to invest in the project, with both debt and equity.

There has been some strong progress and greater recognition on the part of the Commonwealth agencies about the potential of the Arafura Resources Nolans Bore resource. We have been encouraged by the interest of strategic advisers in Canberra and the United States in the critical importance of these critical minerals to the global market and the opportunity of supply from the secure base of the Territory.

We are working actively with Arafura and continue to collaborate with and support them as we pursue the acquisition of the capital support.

Regarding the MMP, I will throw to Mr Padovan.

Mr PADOVAN: Regarding the Arafura's project, they have their mineral lease in place. That was granted in July this year. That enables them to go on and mine. They have their agreements in place as well.

We are awaiting Arafura to lodge their mine management plan with us. We have met with Arafura to talk about the process for the mine management plan and the potential of getting it submitted and assessed in stages as well. My understanding is it is very close to coming in. We are doing what we can to clear the decks, so to speak, so that when we get it we can assess it properly, but as efficiently as possible.

Mr SLOAN: TNG—my understanding is that a mine management plan has been submitted and so has an environmental impact statement. Is that correct?

Mr DRABSCH: An environmental impact assessment process is under way. They have submitted a draft EIS. They have put it out for public submission. Those submission have been made and they are currently preparing their supplementary report, which is in response to those public submissions. That is for the processing facility at Middle Arm.

Regarding their mining tenures—Mr Padovan?

Mr PADOVAN: Thank you, Mr Drabsch. Yes, there are two components to the TNG project. One is the mine itself and the other one is the Darwin refinery. Our interactions with the company is with their Mount Peak mine site. We have their mine management plan and we have been assessing that since April, I think. We have gone backwards and forwards requesting further information.

We recently went through another request for further information and we have just received their mine management plan. That is something we hope to have finished in the first half of next year.

Mr SLOAN: Where is the Tellus Chandler salt mine project in the approvals landscape and what has been done to advance the project since the NT EPA's recommendation that the project be approved in 2017?

Mr PADOVAN: The Chandler project has been fairly quiet for a while. The proponent went through a change in scope in how they wished to move the material they wished to store long-term. There are two components to the Chandler project. It is fundamentally salt mine. There is a large salt mine. From a mining perspective

that is fairly straightforward. But what they want to do with that project is create caverns beneath the ground within the salt resource and use that for long-term storage of low-level waste—toxic waste, put it that way.

A lot of that project is caught up in the environmental impact assessment process. Associated with that and coming out of the assessment process from the NTEPA, there are land access issues that the proponent needs to work through to do with the Maryvale Road, which is the primary road used to get the waste to the mine site.

That is a fairly complex negotiation, to sort out the land access arrangements. But from a mining perspective it is relatively straightforward. It is more the use of the mine once these salt caverns are created.

Mr EDGINGTON: Just a question about Merlin Diamonds Ltd, the Merlin mine—the liquidator is projecting that if the mine were to return to operation it could employ more than 80 Territorians, provide valuable training in Indigenous employment opportunities and generate up to \$480m in revenue. Has the department done any work with the liquidator to facilitate the return to operation of this significant project?

Mr PADOVAN: The Merlin mine, as you said, has gone into administration. Our interaction with the liquidator is more about the liability of the site—the security we hold. What they are doing is preparing the information they need with the hope of selling the operation to another buyer who comes in.

We are contacted by one company that has an interest in purchasing the mine, so at this stage our interaction is more about providing information to the administrators so they can go through their legal liquidation process.

Mr EDGINGTON: How many mines are on the current major projects list?

Mrs MANISON: Can I take that on notice so I can get you the precise number? We should be able to get that pretty quickly.

Question on Notice No 3.30

Mr CHAIR: Member for Barkly, please restate the question for the record.

Mr EDGINGTON: How many mines are on the current major projects list?

Mr CHAIR: Minister, do you accept the question.

Mrs MANISON: Yes.

Mr CHAIR: The question asked by the Member for Barkly is allocated the number 3.30.

Mr EDGINGTON: How does a mine being on the major project list impact on the agency's interactions with that mine? For example, are they given priority in some way or extra assistance with approvals?

Mrs MANISON: It would be fair to say that all these exciting projects get the full attention of the agency, but with the major project status it gives access to having some more champions working across government to ensure we have a more streamlined process of dealing with government agencies.

I will get Mr Drabsch to speak a bit further about the process and how it works, but it would be fair to say, as you heard from Mr Padovan that we work extensively with anyone who will present opportunities for a real-deal project that will create jobs.

Mr DRABSCH: The major project status was administered by the old DTBI, which I used to lead, and is now part of the Chief Minister's agency under Investment Territory. We still work in close collaboration with Investment Territory because our job is to promote the development of industry and provide the research, product and tools to support investor attraction activity that Investment Territory will undertake.

In regard to major project status, there are some formal arrangements which are put into place, such as project control groups, which is a formal process of consultation with representatives of key agencies—the mines division of this department, the Environment department, DIPL with infrastructure and possibly Treasury. More often than not, Treasury is involved in that. There is that formalisation of the process. A case

manager is appointed in a dedicated way to oversee the interaction between the proponent and the various agencies of government, and to help them out in the process.

We have always had an approach of continuous improvement. With what comes out of the TERC report, there will be further work happening about how we undertake that case management activity, providing clearer and more detailed understanding to proponents about the mapping the regulatory processes need to undertake, and them working collaboratively with agencies such as ours and Environment to ensure that our regulatory processes happen in parallel and not in a lumpy sequence to minimise the time taken in what are quite complex processes. That the advantage of the major project status.

The other thing that can emerge from the major project status is a project development agreement, which is a formal memorandum of understanding—not exactly a contract but has contractual force in some respects—which is an agreement about the issues that need to be confronted and the mechanisms by which the government and the proponent will collaborate to work through those issues.

Mr EDINGTON: Have you had any feedback from the mining companies on the assistance being provided through that major status process?

Mrs MANISON: Generally, it is quite welcomed to have that work, prioritisation and emphasis from government to work through to try to make that project a reality. I will hand over to Mr Drabsch to speak a bit further about some of that work, given he has been so heavily involved in the past.

Mr DRABSCH: We have very good relationships with the major project proponents. I have direct dealings with them, as do a number of my executives and officials within my agency and other agencies.

There can always be the opportunity for frustration about how long things take. That is why we have case managers to help work through those issues.

As I said, it is a process of continuous improvement. There are lessons to be learned from the experience we have had with past projects, but also what happens in other jurisdictions. Our goal, as identified in the TERC report, is to be in the top five in the Fraser Institute rankings. We are there with our mineral resource; we need to be there in how we support and deliver policy and create the opportunities for investment.

Mrs LAMBLEY: I just have one question. The McArthur River Mine has had problems with half a billion tonne of burning waste rock, which we are all aware of. It has been in the public domain for quite some time. I am told that the bond was reduced by \$100m to \$400m in August of this year, which does not make a lot of sense when you consider the possible cost of restoring or rectifying that problem. Why was the bond reduced by \$100m?

Mrs MANISON: Member for Araluen, I will go into a few different matters here and also get Mr Drabsch and Mr Padovan to speak to this. Mr Padovan, in particular, has done extensive work with McArthur River Mine.

There is no doubt this has been very heavily scrutinised over the years, but there has also been very rigorous environmental assessment done with this site. There were also very rigorous environmental checks done with this site. They have done a body of work to deal with some of the issues they have had, and to ensure there is continuous improvement and they are also meeting their obligations for environmental protection.

I also want to stress at the Estimates Committee about the importance that they comply with the *Sacred Sites Act* in making sure they are protecting sacred sites too. They recently had a mine management plan approved. I approved that mine management plan after there was extensive work done through the agency and assessment. From that work I was satisfied, with the plans they put in place, that they would be able to meet the obligations through the EPAs report. For some work they wanted to do they required a sacred sites clearance to move forward. In regards to the security bond, I will have Mr Padovan speak about this. There is a rigorous process to assess what the security bond in. In this case we had two assessments done of the security bond.

Under this government we introduced the publication of the information around security bonds to be more transparent in the industry. I will now hand over.

Mr PADOVAN: Part of the process we go through with any proposal—whether it is McArthur River Mine or any other—is to do a security calculation based upon the level of disturbance we expect. In the case of the McArthur River Mine, that project is unusual in that halfway through its life it had to undergo an Environmental

Impact Assessment primarily looking at how to manage the reactive waste rock. There was a lot more reactive waste rock than thought when the mine was first developed.

The thrust of the EIS process and the work of the EPA was to find the best way of managing the waste rock. One of the things that came out of, what is called, the Overburden Management Project was a way in which the reactive waste material could be better encapsulated. The most reactive material would go inside the core of the waste rock dump and the less reactive material is built up around it. One of the elements of the Overburden Management Project was determining what the final cover of the waste rock look.

One of the outcomes of the EIS assessment was that the original proposal was to have an eight metre material thickness covering the waste rock. The purpose of the cover is to stop moisture and oxygen getting into the waste rock. If you starve it of water and oxygen then the rock will not react. An outcome of the EPA assessment process was that it is not effective in its own right. The recommendation was made to have a geosynthetic layer and three metres of material on top. Fundamentally, the reason why the security was reduced from \$519m to \$400m is from effectively reducing the amount of material needed to cover the waste rock dump—from eight metres down to three metres.

In terms of the security calculation, the process we went through was that the department does its own by using the same calculator tool that is available on our website. McArthur River Mine did its own independent calculation. To scrutinise the work we did in this case we engaged an independent company to do their own assessment of what the security amount should be. They concurred with the \$400m figure.

Mining at McArthur River Mine, if everything goes to plan, is expected until 2037. One of the recommendations in the NTEPA's assessment report on the Overburden Management Project was that every three years the security amount is recalculated and independently verified by a third party. That recommendation was accepted by the Minister for Mining and Industry and it is in the authorisation where we have to go through that process every three years or, if there is a substantial change to what is proposed then the security amount is recalculated.

Mrs LAMBLEY: (inaudible)

Mr PADOVAN: The figure is around nine. It depends upon the scale of the operation. We have some large operations such as McArthur River Mine and the Newmont Tanami project. We have several small alluvial mining operations as well. We can take that question on notice if the minister agrees.

Question on Notice No 3.31

Mr CHAIR: Member for Araluen, please restate the question for the record.

Mrs LAMBLEY: How many productive mines are there in the Northern Territory now?

Mr CHAIR: Minister, do you accept the question?

Mrs MANISON: Yes, Mr Chair.

Mr CHAIR: Thank you Minister. The question asked by the Member for Araluen of the Minister has been allocated number 3.31 as a question on notice.

Answer to Question on Notice No 3.30

Mrs MANISON: I will also answer the major projects question. And just to confirm that there are seven.

Mr CHAIR: Minister, your answer was to the question on notice number 3.30 around the mines on the major project list.

Mr CHAIR: Are there any further questions about Output 8.1? That concludes consideration of Output 8.1.

Output 8.2 – Mines Services

Mr CHAIR: We will now consider Output 8.2 Mines Services. Are there any questions?

Mr EDGINGTON: Thank you. It is noted with a high level of concern that the current mines services output was previously an output group, Mining Services, with the output's mineral titles management, mining operations management, and legacy mines, again, these categories are no longer seen as a reporting line. Can you explain the reasoning behind that?

Ms FRANKENFELD: Joanna Frankenfeld, Chief Financial Officer. Same with the agriculture; they were just elevated up being such a large agency and not put in so much detail. So, they have been rolled up into Mines Services.

Mr EDGINGTON: Thank you. Minister, can you please advise the actual expenditure for this output in 2019-20?

Ms FRANKENFELD: The 2019-20 Budget Paper figure for Mines Services is \$9.152m.

Mr EDGINGTON: Thank you. Minister, the DPIR annual report states that in 2019-20 financial year, 86% of mining management plans were determined within 90 days. Is that 90 days within the filing of the application for an MMP or another measure, and is that across the various categories of MMPs?

Mr PADOVAN: Member for Barkly, 90 days is the time that that application is with us. It is not from when we receive the application to when authorisation is issued. If we go back and request further information then we stop the clock. So, 90 days is the time that the application is with us.

Mr EDGINGTON: Thank you. Minister, the annual report, page 30, states that 0% of extractive minerals permits were granted within 11 months compared to a KPI of 85%. Can you please explain this?

Mrs MANISON: We will take that on notice, Member for Barkly.

Question on Notice No 3.32

Mr CHAIR: Member for Barkly, can you please restate the question for the record?

Mr EDGINGTON: The DPIR annual report at page 30 states that 0% of extractive mineral permits were granted within 11 months compared to a KPI of 85%. Can you please explain this?

Mr CHAIR: Minister, do you accept the question?

Mrs MANISON: I accept the question, Mr Chair.

Mr CHAIR: The question asked by the Member for Barkly of the Minister has been allocated number 3.32 as a question on notice.

Mr EDGINGTON: Minister, what is the appropriation this year for legacy mines and how does this compare to the actual spend for last year?

Mrs MANISON: Can we take that on notice please? Because we just want to verify some of those numbers.

Question on Notice No 3.33

Mr CHAIR: Member for Barkly, can you please restate the question for the record?

Mr EDGINGTON: The question is, what is the appropriation this year for legacy mines and how does this compare to the actual spend for last year?

Mr CHAIR: Minister, do you accept the question?

Mrs MANISON: Yes, Mr Chair.

Mr CHAIR: Thank you Minister. The question asked by the Member for Barkly of the Minister has been allocated number 3.33. Thank you. Are there any further question?

Mr EDGINGTON: The further question is, what is the timeline for completion of the Rum Jungle project and what is the estimated total cost of that?

Mrs MANISON: I am going to get Mr Drabsch and Mr Padovan to speak to you with regards to that, Member for Barkly, of where things are at.

Mr DRABSCH: So just to introduce and then I might get Mr Padovan to talk to more detail. But we are working closely with the federal government for the process for rehabilitation of the Rum Jungle site, which was a uranium mine developed during a time when the Territory was in the control of the Commonwealth. So it is a Commonwealth responsibility to undertake the rehabilitation process. We are working collaboratively with them to work out an arrangement by which that work could occur over a period of time. It is a substantial investment that will be involved. It is a good thing in terms of cleaning up the site but also it will create some employment and business opportunities as a result of that. I might ask Mr Padovan to talk in further detail.

Mr PADOVAN: Yes with the Rum Jungle project that has been a project funded by the Commonwealth since 2009, where we have received almost \$30m to inform technical and engineering studies and a remediation design. The last stage we finished was stage 2A on 30 June of this year and the objective of stage 2A was to deliver an environmental impact assessment to the NTEPA and the Commonwealth Government for approval. That is going through that assessment process. We have had to do a supplement to provide additional information. There has been an incredible amount of work done with the Rum Jungle project to get it to that stage. It is a very complex site with a long history and also bringing along traditional owners and understanding what their wishes are for the future of that site as well. So it is not just the remediation project but it is also a project where it has a long history with the traditional owners.

What we are about to enter into, which we hope to formalise shortly, is stage 2B which is an 18 month extension to starting to commence remediation work at the Rum Jungle site. That will be \$3.5m over the next 18 months and that was announced in the federal budget. That will create 10 jobs for traditional owners who will be out on site looking at land management, weeds, fire, erosion and starting to look at remediating one of the tailings areas.

In terms of the future of Rum Jungle we have been working actively with our federal counterparts towards what we call stage three and stage three is the actual remediation works. As Mr Drabsch said this is a Commonwealth legacy mine and they will be footing the bill for doing that. But what we are looking at for stage three, assuming it goes through the federal budget processes, we are looking in the order of \$300m and that is base cost. That does not include contingencies or escalation. We are looking at 50 jobs over 10 years to remediate that site. That is followed by five years of maintenance and stabilisation just to verify that the remediation works are stable and the environmental outcomes we are seeking from that project are being delivered. So that is ten years of actual earthworks, put it that way, at 50 jobs followed by five years of maintenance and 10 jobs.

Following that we envisage stage four where we need to verify over the longer term that this remediation project has been successful. You might be aware that the Rum Jungle site is subject to a land claim, or settlement of native title over that area. And of course the traditional owners want to be assured that the remediation works are successful and ongoing. So beyond stage three we envisage another stage four of intensive monitoring at the Rum Jungle site, the east branch of the Finnis River and further down the Finnis River as well.

Mrs MANISON: Just to add to that Member for Barkly, I received correspondence at lunch today actually from the minister for resources to confirm the Commonwealth's approval of that stage 2B work. Armando is very happy I am sure and so \$3.5m over the next two financial years has been approved by the feds and we will certainly looking to advance that forward as soon as we can.

Mr EDGINGTON: Great news, thank you. I have no further questions for Output 8.2.

Mr CHAIR: Are there any further questions for Output 8.2? That concludes consideration of Output 8.2.

Output 8.3 – Energy Services

Mr CHAIR: The committee will move on to Output 8.3, Energy Services. Are there any questions?

Mr EDGINGTON: Yes. How many onshore gas projects are on the major projects list?

Mrs MANISON: We do not have them there, but they are very active and there is a huge amount of work happening in that space, particularly with Origin and Empire—if you would like further detail, Mr Pratt can update you on where things are at. There has been a huge amount of work.

Mr DRABSCH: I just wanted to indicate that the potential development of the onshore gas projects are still at the exploration phase and yet to become major investment projects. Once they go through an exploration appraisal phase, it may well be that major project status is sought by the companies. That may or may not be the case. Irrespectively, there is still a high level of engagement and cooperation between government agencies and the onshore gas developers to ensure the effective exploitation of the Beetaloo resource while being undertaken in a strict and best-practice environment.

Mrs MANISON: It would be fair to say there is no lack of interest in this area. I will get Mr Pratt to talk about some of the activity we have seen this Dry Season and where we are heading for next Dry Season.

Mr PRATT: As the minister and Mr Drabsch alluded to, exploration appraisal is recommencing this year in the Beetaloo. We had some challenges, like the rest of the world and every other industry with COVID, and that put a handbrake on activity in the region. This was the year many wells would be drilled in the Beetaloo, but we did not quite see that come to fruition.

In better news in that regard, Origin Energy drilled and stimulated a horizontal well in the Beetaloo this year. They managed to do that post-COVID and met all the COVID protocols and regulatory approvals of the Northern Territory Government. They are currently flowing backwater in that well and looking to close in activity in the coming weeks, with the oncoming Wet Season.

Empire Energy is another good story for the Northern Territory. They are just outside the Beetaloo Sub-basin on a geological basis. They are what we call a junior explorer, a very active one, which has come in after the lifting of the moratorium and the implementation of the hydraulic fracturing inquiry recommendations. They have drilled a vertical well and have plans to drill and stimulate a horizontal well next year.

We still have our producing gas supplier in the Northern Territory, in Alice Springs region, which is Central Petroleum. They are not on the major projects list. They have been producing for more than three decades in Central Australia. As Mr Drabsch alluded to earlier, they are looking to build a pipeline from Alice Springs to Moomba so that augurs well for gas exploration, production and benefits for the Northern Territory.

Mrs MANISON: I think it is important to recognise that there has been an onshore gas industry in the Northern Territory for quite a long time, for decades. It is exciting to see more progression in other parts of the Northern Territory.

Mr EDGINGTON: How many wells are currently being drilled in the Beetaloo area, as far as you know?

Mrs MANISON: I will hand that to Mr Pratt.

Mr PRATT: At the moment none are being drilled because they have ceased their work for this year. I am not being cute in that answer, but Origin drilled and stimulated its horizontal well earlier this year. Empire Energy completed its vertical well. Santos was monitoring its well operations on its acreage in the Beetaloo, but did not recommence work due to the impacts of COVID.

Next year we expect to see approximately 10 wells drilled in the Northern Territory, which is a conservative estimate. Our work programs that companies have to adhere to probably have three times that but we expect the impacts of COVID-19 to stifle that slightly. In positive news, we expect to see 10 wells and that includes activity in Central Australia and the Beetaloo.

Mrs MANISON: Member for Barkly, we went out and saw the Origin project which was a substantial investment in itself. There was a fair bit of infrastructure around it and a lot of effort had gone into that well including accommodation for the workers. A substantial amount of investment goes into just a single exploration well.

Mr EDGINGTON: Thank you. What is the estimate for the amount of money already spent on petroleum exploration in the Beetaloo Basin?

Mrs MANISON: I will get Mr Drabsch and Mr Pratt to go through that. We have substantial figures that were forecast and going into the next dry season.

Mr DRABSCH: The Origin exploration well that is in the Kyalla field, for example, involved an investment of some \$30M. You can essentially multiple that figure by the number of wells. I will defer to Mr Pratt in terms of any forward estimates.

Mr PRATT: Member for Barkly, as I alluded to earlier, every exploration permit has a statutory work program. They are initially a five year program for companies to undertake activity on an exploration permit. It generally starts with geological assessment and surveys, progressing through to seismic surveys, then drilling a well and potentially drilling extra wells to appraise the resource—that is a fast-tracked effort. These permits can be re-issued for up to three terms, so five by five by five.

Exploration for shale resources is an extremely resource or money-intensive activity. Under the Petroleum Act we have approximately \$167M forecast for work programs in 2020-21. This work program commitments include 22 exploration wells and acquiring 1,316 kilometres of 2D seismic survey. We expect some of that to be varied due to the impacts of COVID-19—for companies to get on and do their preliminary activities, to undertake Native Title consultations and the like—but if every well is drilled on the work program, we estimate that is about \$167M next year.

Mrs MANISON: Quite a significant spend and most of that will be out in the regions, Member for Barkly. We are continuing to work through the Pepper inquiry to ensure we meet our commitments and working closely with these companies to advance the industry.

Mr EDGINGTON: Thank you. Has there been any review into the royalty arrangements and processes under the Petroleum Act? Has your department taken part in any research or review that would support potential reforms?

Mrs MANISON: That is a question for the treasurer who controls the royalties. The department provides advice to the treasury department but ultimately that responsibility lies with the treasurer.

Mr EDGINGTON: What is the current average time for the grant of a petroleum exploration permit?

Mr PRATT: Member for Barkly, I cannot give you an exact prescription of the granting of an exploration permit, but I can explain the process involved.

If we have what we call alien land, with no tenure over it, under newly reformed legislation as a result of the Pepper inquiry, the minister will forecast to the community she has an interest and seek any objections. There are statutory timeframes around that. She can then consider comments from the community including the geological prospectivity of the area and make a decision to either release an expression of interest for companies to put forward an interest and a work program to seek the grant of a permit from the minister. That also has timeframes around it.

We consider the financial acumen, environmental history and the range of things a company may bring to the table in the Northern Territory. The minister can then consider those applications and then seek to offer an exclusive grant of a permit to a company. That is called an exploration permit application. Once that is granted to a company, it has to undertake native title consultations to seek agreement from the native title owners. If and when they get that agreement, the minister can grant them an exploration permit. That permit gives them exclusive rights to undertake exploration on a piece of land.

It is a bit difficult to give a prescriptive answer on how long that takes. Native title consultations can take anywhere from one to three years and depends on a range of factors that influence it so it is a bit difficult to give a precise answer.

Mr CHAIR: We have concluded our time with the minister today. That concludes our consideration of outputs relating to Agribusiness and Aquaculture; Mining and Industry; and Northern Australia and Trade. On behalf of the committee, I thank the minister and all the different agencies that appeared here today. I thank the officers and staff who assisted you.

The committee will now move to questions relating Renewables and Energy.

Mrs MANISON: Mr Chair, I thank the very hard-working members of this department. They put in an incredible amount of work preparing for estimates. They are critical to the economic development of the Territory moving forward. A big thank you to all of them; they are doing a great job.

Mr CHAIR: We will now take a short break as we have a staff changeover.

The committee suspended.

DRAFT

MINISTER LAWLER'S PORTFOLIOS

DEPARTMENT OF INDUSTRY, TOURISM AND TRADE

Mr CHAIR: Welcome back, everyone. I welcome minister Lawler to today's hearings and invite you to introduce the officials accompanying you and make a brief statement, depending on whether or not your brief statement has the introduction of the officials.

Once that has happened 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 the 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.

However, 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.

Ms LAWLER: Mr Chair, I will begin by introducing Shaun Drabsch, the Chief Executive Officer, Anne Tan, General Manager, Economic Innovation, Jim McKay, Executive Director, Office of Sustainable Energy and Joanne Frankenfeld if she needs to be called as the Chief Financial Officer.

Our government has set a clear agenda to deliver green, affordable and reliable electricity for all Territorians and create more local jobs in this growing industry. We have set an ambitious target for 50% of energy consumed in the Northern Territory to be from renewable sources by 2030 and we are well on our way to achieving this target.

In September 2019, our government established a new Office of Sustainable Energy to oversee a range of energy-related policy functions in recognition of the critical role energy plays as a driver of economic development. The office continues to operate under the new Department of Industry, Tourism and Trade.

The office has been tasked with delivering the government's electricity market reform and facilitating a reliable, secure and least-cost pathway for renewables, integrating and delivering the government's renewable target.

Our plans align with what is happening globally. There is increasing demand for renewable energy to decrease carbon emissions and reach net zero emissions by 2050. There are significant opportunities in the Northern Territory to grow the energy industry through solar and green hydrogen, to not only support the electricity needs of Territorians, but support other growth industries and export markets. This was highlighted in the Territory Economic Reconstruction Commission's final report.

Our government has invested more than \$90m in renewable energy and energy efficiency, including:

- \$8.3m in a battery energy system for Alice Springs
- \$5m over three years to establish the Intyalheme Centre for Future Energy in Alice Springs
- jointly funding, with ARENA, \$50m in the Solar Energy Transformation Program to install 10 megawatts of solar power in 25 remote Territory communities
- \$30m for a new 35 megawatt battery energy storage system, or BESS, for the Darwin–Katherine power system.

While our government continues to invest in renewables and attract private investment opportunities, the key priorities for the Office of Sustainable Energy in 2020–21 are:

- delivery of the government's electricity market and regulatory reform agendas
- coordinate power system technical assessments and planning across a regulated network to inform stakeholders and support the efficient uptake of renewable energy
- advanced roll-out of the remote power system strategy, which will increase the proportion of renewable energy generation in regional and remote Northern Territory.

Priority activities include:

- implementation of a framework for the efficient provision of essential system services to ensure the power system remains stable and reliable, and to encourage private investment in our power system as it transitions to more renewable energy sources
- delivery of the first Darwin–Katherine system plan to support the uptake of renewable energy resources in the Darwin and Katherine regions. The plan will identify opportunities for investment and ensure that the power system remains stable to support more behind-the-metre PV and large-scale solar developments towards 2030
- supporting the Intyalheme Centre for Future Energy in Alice Springs to deliver the Alice Springs future grid project. This project will address issues unique to Alice Springs and plan an efficient implementation path, including through the smarter utilisation of distributed energy resources
- delivering additional solar PV and a utility-scale battery for Wurrumiyanga to increase the community's proportion of renewable electricity to more than 50% of the community's needs, saving more than 12.6 million litres of diesel fuel over 20 years
- a study into high-voltage, direct current transmission system potentially linking new and existing load centres to renewable energy within the Territory, Australia and exploring new exporting opportunities
- developing detailed pathways for remote Aboriginal communities to increase renewable energy generation and reduce omissions from the current diesel generation fleet.

Our government is focused on ensuring a seamless transition for increased renewables in the electricity system and creating more local jobs. I welcome the committee's questions.

Mr CHAIR: Are there any questions relating to the opening statement?

Mr BURGOYNE: Thank you very much, minister, for that statement. The 50% renewables by 2030 is a figure that is often spoken about; what is the projected cost to the government for the Territory to be able to make it to 50% renewables by 2030 while retaining grid stability?

Ms LAWLER: It is a complex question. We need to ask what the cost would be if the Northern Territory did not have a renewables target or a target around climate change and omissions. The work that is being done on that target of 50% renewables by 2030 is ongoing. I said in my opening speech that we have spent \$90m.

It is not just about the cost to government. There are lots of opportunities for private investment as well. We have seen, in the last 12 months to two years, just how many private companies are interested in being a part of renewables in the Northern Territory.

That target of 50% renewables by 2030—I hope we will get to it earlier than that date. It is one that changes very quickly. We have seen technology change. When you talk about the cost, it would be a hypothetical cost because the cost of renewables is going down. Anyone who has solar on their roofs, solar PV or has bought a battery in the last five years will tell you just how much that cost has decreased.

Your question cannot be comprehensively answered because things are changing so quickly around renewables, costs are decreasing and private enterprise is coming into play. If I gave you a figure today, that figure could change tomorrow.

Mr DRABSCH: I am responsible for the Office of Sustainable Energy. The minister has pretty comprehensively responded to that question. It is not so much a cost as an investment in our electricity infrastructure to ensure the delivery of reliable, low-cost energy across the course of the next decade.

We are doing considerable work on planning for the Darwin/Katherine system, in particular, because that Darwin/Katherine/Top End region is the largest consumer of electricity. Also, we are working on the Alice Springs system as well, exploring the potential for micro grids to support the delivery of cheaper, reliable energy there.

We are also looking, not just at the delivery of the generation infrastructure through solar farms, but the technology that needs to support that in batteries and measures to control frequency and voltage to ensure reliability in the system going forward.

Do you want to add anything further to that?

Mr MONAGHAN: A follow-up question to the Member for Braitling's question about the 50c renewables you spoke of. Can you outline that investment that the Chief Executive just spoke of that has been made to ensure that that energy market remains reliable and affordable?

Ms LAWLER: Member for Fong Lim, obviously it is work that is evolving. We can talk more about that today. One of the things we announced in our recent budget was \$30m for the battery energy storage system, the BESS—35 megawatts, a big battery—for Darwin/Katherine to provide that stability and firming of that line between Darwin and Katherine.

The other one that was also announced in the budget was our remote power system strategy. We made announcement about Wurrumiyanga. We have 72 remote communities, 79 outstations. At the moment, most of those have diesel generators. The work we are looking at is about making sure we convert those diesel generators, over time, to renewables. That will be a huge saving for government, those communities and for Indigenous Essential Services. It is also savings of the greenhouse gases as well. It is about return of investment of about 17.8% over 20 years, which is a very good return, particularly at the moment when banks are getting very little return on money. It is a nice return, so we have had quite considerable interest.

We are looking at Wurrumiyanga as the first trial site—I guess a model site—and changing its power over to renewables. Then we will look to rolling that out across other communities. We will be able to look at private enterprise taking up some of those options. It is about reducing greenhouse gases, taking trucks delivering diesel to these communities off the road and savings of 12 million litres of diesel and 34,000 tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions over 20 years. The business case for renewables in our remote communities is substantial.

In the last COVID-19 budget we just did, there were two really nice stories about renewables. One was about the BESS, the other was about the remote power system strategy. As a government, we will continue to invest in renewables because we know it makes good sense for the environment, but the business case actually stacks as well.

Mr DRABSCH: The other thing to recognise—talking about the Darwin/Katherine integrated system plan—is the planning has shown that the 50% renewable target by 2030 is eminently achievable, as long as there is careful management of the integration of more renewable energy into the system on a progressive basis.

The other point about the investment that is being made is there is substantial scope for private sector investment as the minister has indicated because there is a revenue stream that is attached to it. There is active interest for example in exploring delivery of a battery system to TGen which is in the market at the moment.

There will be a need for further batteries down the track which can be funded from the revenue from the sale of essential system services to providers who are looking to firm up their power so that they can predicably forecast their power that they can inject into the system at any point in time. There is a market there and that is important to establish the key foundations of that and that is work that is currently underway as well.

Mr BURGOYNE: Minister has any modelling been done in regards to the cost of achieving this in the short or long term, the target of 50% renewables by 2030?

Ms LAWLER: I will pass to the Executive Director, Jim Mackay. As I said the work that is driving us has been undertaken through the Roadmap to Renewables so Member for Braitling, I am not sure if you are across the Roadmap to Renewables. It came out in 2017 and that has a 50% by 2030 target and provides 11 recommendations for a government on how we can achieve that target. I pass to Jim McKay who is the Executive Director for the Office of Sustainable Energy.

Mr McKAY: There were some modelling done previously on the costs of renewable but as the minister talked earlier, the cost changed so there are cost curves that we look at for places like AEMO where they forecast solar cost and battery cost which are the predominant cost and they continue to fall so that means the modelling that we do is very subjective to what is happening at the time. The technology is changing very rapidly in this space so it is difficult as the minister said before to be sharp on exactly what the cost will be in the long term. We are seeing things like the battery that TGen are doing are MPV positive, the investment we are making in the Remote Power System Strategy, those projects up to about 70% renewables are MPV positive so these things are not costs, they are investments.

Mr MALEY: Minister, your offsider said that you have done some modelling in your costing. What are those costs?

Ms LAWLER: Are you talking about the Executive Director?

Mr MALEY: Yes.

Ms LAWLER: My offsider? I do not know if I would like to call him my offsider. He is very experienced. I think as he previously said, and my offsider there has repeated that private enterprise are very much interested in renewables and to me if the private enterprise were not interested they would not be interested if there was

Mr MALEY: Point of order! Standing Order 35: Relevance. I asked what the cost was, not going off. You said you had done some modelling, what are those costs?

Ms LAWLER: So you are asking the costs.

Mr CHAIR: Yes, minister, please answer the question.

Ms LAWLER: Could you just make it clear. You are talking about the costs to achieve the target or what costs are you asking. I am not sure what you are asking.

Mr MALEY: Your Chief Executive said that they had done some modelling but it changes so it is hard to predict, so what is the cost of the modelling you have done? I am talking about reaching the 50% by 2030, you have done some modelling and you have said it is hard to predict because it changes. So you have done the modelling. What were those costs that you did when you did the modelling? So when you have done the modelling, you have obviously done the costs. What were those costs?

Ms LAWLER: The Roadmap to Renewables Report came out in 2017. I will pass to the Executive Director around that but I will reiterate that it is a hypothetical question that you are asking because it is about

Mr MALEY: Point of order, it is not a hypothetical question. Your Chief Executive said you have done some modelling and you have done some costs but they are hard because they change. So what were those costs? So it is not hypothetical. You have done the modelling, you have costs in relation to that modelling, what are those costs?

Mr DRABSCH: Just to be clear Member for Nelson that the modelling that we talked about is not simply on a financial basis but in terms of the engineering and technical operation of the electricity network.

Mr MALEY: I am asking about the costs.

Mr DRABSCH: The costs will emerge from the modelling.

Mr MALEY: So you are saying that you have no costs in relation to your modelling? You did not do costs. You just did that technical stuff but in the modelling you did there were no costs estimates at all? Is that what you are saying?

Mr DRABSCH: Well. There is a ...

Mr CHAIR: If I might just ask a question of the member. Are you talking about the inputs into the modelling?

Mr MALEY: The Chief Executive said he had done some modelling in relation to how to reach 50% by 2030. I am asking about the cost. And the Chief Executive Officer said that the modelling was to do with technical stuff. So, you are now saying that the modelling you did had no cost attached to it or you did not estimate costs at all? Is that what you are saying?

Mr CHAIR: Just to clarify, when you do modelling, you put inputs in and you are asking for the costs that they have put as inputs to the modelling?

Mr MALEY: No. I am saying that this is a target that you have reached and you have put lots of press releases about it, and you talk about it a lot. You have done some modelling because now you have told us you have done some modelling. I am asking, in that modelling, did you do anything about costs, about how much it is going to cost? And if you did, what were those costs? Not about the technical, but about the costs. Or, are

you saying that you did the modelling and that you did not worry about any costs. You just did the modelling. Could you do it technically, and that was enough? That is what I am asking.

Mr DRABSCH: Member for Nelson, we are happy to take the question on notice but I would not necessarily accept that the particular things you were suggesting might be the case.

Question on Notice No 4.1

Mr CHAIR: Okay, we will take that on notice. Member for Nelson, could you please restate the question for the record?

Mr MALEY: I am asking, you have done some modelling in relation to the 50% renewables by 2030. What are the costs in your modelling that you have done which is going to cost the government to reach the 50% target by 2030?

Ms LAWLER: We will just reiterate that, as I said before, it is like you are talking about a sledgehammer with a walnut because ...

Mr MALEY: No I am not. I am talking about the modelling you have done and the costs you have done.

Ms LAWLER: Yes you are because the modelling because the work that ...

Mr MALEY: You have done some modelling. What are the costs?

Mr TURNER: Point of order, Mr Chair. Interruptions. The minister is trying to speak.

Mr CHAIR: Thank you. Can we please allow the minister to speak?

Ms LAWLER: Just to be clear, as I said, I obviously understand that the Member for Nelson is a climate change denier and he obviously does not believe in renewables.

Mr MALEY: Oh my god, where did that come from? Where did that come from? That is hypothetical. I am not talking about climate change. I am talking about the costs you are going to do, to do the modelling. And will you make that public? Will you make the modelling public?

Ms LAWLER: But to be clear, our government has a target and we will work very carefully to make sure that we achieve that target. As I said, it is not just government; it is private enterprise also that is very keen to work with government around that ...

Mr MALEY: Chairman, we are talking about a question here. We are not answering or wasting time.

Ms LAWLER: The Member for Nelson is interrupting when I am speaking.

Mr MALEY: But we are not talking. You are interrupting. We were on notice. I have said the question and there is a process to follow.

Mr CHAIR: Member for Nelson, the Member for Blain had a point of order which was about allowing the person or the minister or their representative to answer the question. Could you please allow the person to answer the question?

Mr MALEY: But the question was taken on notice. You asked me to repeat the question. I did that.

Mr CHAIR: Could you please not interrupt the Chair while I am speaking? I will point you to Standing Order 109 in the manner and the form of questions. They are not to be debated. The questions are not to be debated.

Mr MALEY: Exactly right. I accept that. So why is the minister arguing with me?

Mr CHAIR: There are to be no arguments, inferences, imputations, insults or hypothetical matter.

Mr MALEY: It is not hypothetical. I am just saying the modelling has been done. Where are the costs?

Mr TURNER: Standing Order 106, Mr Chair?

Mr CHAIR: I will now put the question to the minister. Minister, do you accept the question?

Ms LAWLER: Yes, I do.

Mr CHAIR: Thank you minister. The question asked by the Member for Nelson of the minister has been allocated number 4.1 as a question on notice.

Mrs LAMBLEY: I have a question Mr Chair.

Mr CHAIR: Member for Araluen, is it along the same line?

Mrs LAMBLEY: Yes.

Mr CHAIR: Thank you.

Mrs LAMBLEY: It is on the opening statement. Just before the election, I had the pleasure of attending a briefing by the Alice Springs Future Grid group. They are doing some fantastic work with Intyalherne, the organisation that the Northern Territory Government funds in Alice Springs, and their brief is basically to develop a plan for how to move Alice Springs to this target of 50% renewables by 2030. What they shared was very interesting in terms of the cost of this process.

I will just read a section of something that I was given by this group:

Solar is currently the only viable renewable resource in Central Australia, so to reach 100% solar would require a very large (and prohibitively expensive) battery to cover the overnight periods. If we can overcome grid stability challenges, it may well be possible to reach 100% solar during the day. [But] further investigations are required to determine if wind energy is available to diversify the Alice Springs energy portfolio.

They went on to talk about how basically for Alice Springs to get to this target every household in Alice Springs would require PV solar panels on their roof. It will cost the government and everyone money to get to this target, whether it batteries or solar panels or whatever. I do take up the questions from the opposition, surely there is modelling done on at least how to get Alice Springs to this target by 2030 minister. There has to be plan and there has to be some estimates around the cost to government and to private homeowners, at least.

Ms LAWLER: Thank you Member for Araluen. Yes, the Alice Springs future grid and the work that is being done in Central Australia is important work. As I said it does compliment the work that we are doing to ensure we get to that 50% renewable target by 2030. And Central Australia, as you well know and I know, has always been a solar city. I think you mentioned a 100%, our target is 50% renewables by 2030 and there will be a cost to that. But as we have said the other side of the coin is if there is no move to renewables what is the ongoing cost around diesel—what is the ongoing cost. So there is already a cost there around whether we are using gas-fired power stations.

There is also the cost then around adaptation as the climate gets hotter in Alice Springs. As people are using more power in Alice Springs because it is hotter. They have their air conditioners running, they are all changing from swampies to inverter air conditioners. So it is a complex question and that was the response to Member for Braitling as well. This is not simple, linear A goes to B, give you the answer C. There are so many variables when you are talking about where we are going with renewables. But you know the other thing is we are not unique here, every country in the world probably, has a trajectory to renewables. We have seen that in states across Australia. I think South Australia at time in October this year, all their power was supplied by renewables.

So I hear your question and as I said it is not a simple answer about A to B around costing. But the other side is there is a strong interest from private enterprise around this, so the cost will not always be borne by government, but we are also seeing households embracing PV. You have seen that in Alice Springs. We are seeing that—we have put the \$6,000 home and business solar grant program in. We have seen how well that has been taken up. People in the community are embracing this. Thank you Member for Araluen.

Mr MONAGHAN: Minister to further that question, and it is around the costs associated with the move to renewables, can you touch on the private sector's role in that just to outline that is not all government cost and what the opportunities are for the private sector.

Mr MALEY: Chairman, point of order. That is not following on, this is completely different, now we are talking about private enterprise. It is the opposition's job to ask questions and the Member for Braiting has some questions to ask.

Mr CHAIR: Member for Nelson as in my opening statements as long as it is on a line of question pursued by the shadow minister, rather than waiting at the end of the shadow's questioning for the output, a committee member can join in.

Mr MALEY: But we are talking about the cost of private. We are talking about—the question was modelling, the original question. The costs of modelling, nothing to do with private enterprise.

Mr CHAIR: From my notes, and I have been following this quite closely, we are talking about renewables, 50% renewables, modelling, the private sector, a road map to renewables, better grid stability—it is in line and will allow the question.

Ms LAWLER: Member for Nelson, we have about seven hours tonight. It can be enjoyable seven hours or it can hard work.

Mr MALEY: Minister you are not here to ask questions, you are here to answer questions minister.

Ms LAWLER: I am not in a criminal court to be interrogated, it is about having a conversation. That is how estimates went and that is how estimates work well. If you want to get responses.

Mr MALEY: Your government has cut time down so time is of the essence minister.

Ms LAWLER: Otherwise it will be a long night. So Eni's 25 megawatts solar farm and 2.9 megawatt battery in Katherine, which ...

Mr MALEY: Time is of the essence minister. Your government cut estimates down. We are just trying to get the questions ...

Mr CHAIR: Members, I draw your attention—we have had a really lovely day. Mr Drabsch has been here for most of it, and it has been wonderful and orderly. I bring your attention, as we did yesterday, to the procedural notes on disorderly conduct. Should I find your conduct disorderly I can give a warning, and then I could ask you to remove yourself for one hour. That is a procedural note that I would like to bring everyone's attention to again.

We have had a lovely morning, so let us try to continue down that vein.

Ms LAWLER: There is significant private sector interest in renewable generation and energy storage projects. There are a number of private sector initiatives and renewable energy projects under development, including Eni's 25 megawatt solar farm and 2.9 megawatt battery in Katherine, for which commissioning is under way. There are two 10 megawatt solar plants at Manton Dam and Batchelor; they are under construction.

Construction of solar power systems and RAAF Base Darwin, 10.9 megawatts, and at Robinson Barracks, 3.6 megawatts, are currently under construction. There is Moonfire Energy's proposal for a two megawatt aggregated solar photovoltaic virtual power plant in Alice Springs; Merricks Capital's proposal for a 10 megawatt solar and battery farm near Batchelor in conjunction with a 12 megawatt gas-fired power plant at Hudson Creek.

NT Airports have plans for around 65 megawatts of solar generation across the Territory, with 50 megawatts in Darwin, 10 megawatts in Alice Springs and five megawatts in Tennant Creek. NT Airports also have a proposal for a multiuser battery storage in Darwin. NT Solar Futures has a proposal for a 50 megawatt farm near Berry Springs, as well as 87 megawatts of installed capacity of small rooftop solar in the Territory, and regulated electricity networks across the Territory.

There is lots of interest through private enterprise, and we have not mentioned Sun Cable in that list either.

Mr BURGOYNE: In relation to the modelling that has been done, I am 100% willing to accept that it may be out of date and that it is very hard to predict what will happen in the future. Are you willing to present the modelling that has been done and make that public?

Ms LAWLER: We said we would take that question on notice, Member for Braitling, and we will.

Mr CHAIR: Member for Braitling, please restate the question for the record.

Ms LAWLER: That was the same as the previous question, I understand.

Mr MALEY: It was different. We talked about cost, and now we are talking about making the report public, so it is a different question.

Question on Notice No 4.2

Mr CHAIR: Member for Braitling, please restate the question for the record.

Mr BURGOYNE: Are we able to get copies of what modelling has been done on achieving the 50% renewables by 2030?

Mr CHAIR: Minister, do you accept the question?

Ms LAWLER: I accept the question.

Mr CHAIR: The questions asked by the Member for Braitling is allocated the number 4.2.

Mr BURGOYNE: The \$5m awarded to Intyalheme—I have spoken with the people there, and they do wonderful work. What are you hoping to achieve from that \$5m—what are you hoping to get back for that \$5m investment as far as furthering the renewables sector and working towards achieving that goal?

Ms LAWLER: I will go to my notes to make sure I have the right detail. The Alice Springs future grid was launched in October 2020. Activities under each of the sub-projects have commenced following execution of the external funding agreement.

Through Desert Knowledge Australia, they have secured \$5.369m in external funding from the Australian Government, but there are five sub-projects. Sub-project one involves modelling to define the Alice Springs power system challenges in detail and will consider consumer behaviour, investment drivers, system security, financial and technical variables.

Sub-project two involves the installation and study of a battery storage system at a commercial site in Alice Springs to identify implementation and operational barriers.

Sub-project three is for the installation and study of aggregated residential batteries or virtual power plants in households.

Sub-project four is a trial of shadow tariffs that incentivise consumer behaviour that would support increased renewables into the Alice Springs power system.

Sub-project five is the testing and trial of power system control techniques based on the consolidation of work from the other sub-projects that will be captured in Alice Springs road map to 2030 report.

There are five sub-projects to be developed by the Alice Springs future grid work. They are doing some amazing work, as you said, and leading the way in the Territory.

I was going to pass to the Executive Director. Do you want to comment any further?

Mr McKAY: Sure. The Alice Springs future grid is quite a successful project that has also attracted some additional funding so that the project value is about \$12m, which is fairly important for us to advance Alice Springs. That project is scheduled over the next two years to really lay out across all the aspects and sub-projects that were mentioned for the path forward for Alice Springs, in particular.

Mr BURGOYNE: Thank you. What Northern Territory government money has been spent funding that project over the last four years?

Ms LAWLER: In 2017 the Northern Territory government entered into a \$5m project funding agreement with DKA to develop the Intyalheme Centre for Future Energy to assist a modern Territory to achieve the 50% renewable target by 2030.

Mr BURGOYNE: Minister, can you tell me the current renewable percentage rate we are at. We are wanting to hit that 50%. What are we currently at?

Ms LAWLER: In the Northern Territory by 2020-21, it will be about 16%, which is a great increase on what we have had in the last few years. Yes, the trajectory is going very well. It is about 16% renewables and we have about nine years to go.

Mr BURGOYNE: What are the projections year-on-year to reach that 50% target? Do we have modelling for that?

Ms LAWLER: Again, the Executive Director can talk about that. It is not a linear process. Obviously, the consumption of electricity across the Northern Territory varies. If we have some big industries that have uptake with renewables, obviously, you will see much larger jumps.

We talked about remote power project we have in remote communities where we are looking at our remote communities moving from diesel generation to renewables. That project alone will give us about 5% towards that target. If we can roll that project out in our remote communities, we will achieve 5% straightaway with that. That project will take a number of years, but that is good chunk towards our target.

I will pass to the Executive Director to elaborate.

Mr McKAY: There are a number of pathways, basically, to 50% renewables. As we talked about earlier, solar power is the most likely renewable source that will be available to the Northern Territory. There are challenges, particularly in the Darwin/Katherine system, but they are the same across most systems. There are points in time when the system needs to have investments that are not just adding more solar PV. There are things about batteries and stabilisation in order to facilitate more PV.

That means that even if you select a path by saying it is all just PV, there are hurdles that you need to overcome and investment that needs to be made in order to access, basically, a greater capacity to do that.

Mr BURGOYNE: So, the 16% target for 2020-21 is, essentially ...

Ms LAWLER: It is not a target; that is what we will be at next year. We have achieved that.

Mr BURGOYNE: Are we currently sitting at 16% or are we working towards it?

Ms LAWLER: It is 2020-21. It is not the target, it is what we are achieving, yes.

Mr BURGOYNE: I say it is projection if we have not yet reached it.

Ms LAWLER: Well ...

Mr DRABSCH: If I may, minister? It takes into account the solar farm infrastructure which is currently under construction.

Mr BURGOYNE: Fantastic. Do we have the projections? If we will be at 16% at 2021, can we have the projections for 2022, 2023 and 2024?

Ms LAWLER: No, you cannot because, as I said, those things change very quickly. It depends. I just read out a list of private investment. Those things are evolving, literally, as we speak. There are lots of opportunities for that. If you are here next year and the year after, we will be able to talk about those things in the future.

Mr BURGOYNE: A lot of what we are hoping to achieve does rest at the private investment, obviously if that private investment comes through—and I hope it does, I want to make that very clear, I genuinely want the government to achieve this target. I just want to know we are working towards it and the goals set are

achievable. I am guessing in one sense; we know 16% will be achieved in 2020-21 due to the projects that are currently being finalised. Are there other projects to be finalised to help us to achieve that target of 50% renewables?

Ms LAWLER: Member for Braitling, absolutely, but there are other things that we have done, like the Home and Business Battery Scheme that has been well taken up. With the scheme, if people have PV already, they are able to access a \$6,000 grant to then install an inverter and battery. We have seen 545 applications for the scheme come in. You are trying to make this sounds black and white and it is not. It is an evolving and complex sector. It is happening around the world and we will see the uptake grow. If we spoke 12 months ago to the people of Australia about their views around climate change—we have seen how things can change very quickly. This issue around renewables is being embraced by the younger generations in Australia and I am seeing the construction industry, schools and people moving towards renewables in much greater demand than we would have ever thought.

When we talk about the 50% renewables by 2030, as the executive director said, some the hardest work is around making sure we maintain grid stability. The uptake we are seeing and the interest from the public; the demand is considerable. The Home and Business Battery Scheme; we have had 545 applications for \$6,000 to put batteries and solar on homes in the Northern Territory. Our target to the Roadmap to Renewables will probably be exceeded and things are changing very quickly. I am pleased to hear you embrace solar and are positive around renewables in the Northern Territory. Anybody who comes from Central Australia understands the importance of Alice Springs being a solar city.

Mr BURGOYNE: I certainly do, minister. I have solar panels on my own home. I will ask once more, to see if there is any projected percentage we want to hit with renewables over the next four years? Or are we purely saying, 2030, we are going to get to 50%, but between now and 2030 we have not set ourselves any goals as far as the percentage we would like to be at over the next 10 years?

Ms LAWLER: Member for Braitling, as I have said, there are so many influencing factors. It is not a linear graph. There will be leaps and stabilising needed—as the executive director said—when you need to firm power up and spend dollars, like we are with the BESS. We are spending \$30M on the big battery this financial year.

Yes, we do want to achieve that target and are on track, but if you think it is a straight line—there will be steps at different stages around that. We will see how things evolve in the next 12 months because what we have seen in this last 12-18 months has been a sharp and considerable increase from people interested in having solar on their rooves.

When I am responding in the environment portfolio, we have a framework and strategy for climate change. One of the key bits of work we are doing is an audit of government and what we are doing around climate change in the Northern Territory. Some of our biggest users are schools and hospitals—what can the government do around converting more to solar? There will be large steps that go ahead around solar and renewables in the Northern Territory. We have not even started talking about hydrogen as well.

When you look at renewables, it is not just about solar. The federal government have a national hydrogen strategy, so has the Northern Territory Government. I know you must obviously be a person that likes to see linear and concrete but I can tell you that this is an evolving sector and is not one where you can say this has to happen and that has to happen. I am very happy to have that degree of flexibility around solar to see where it is going into the future.

Mr BURGOYNE: I accept that the projections will not be linear. You mentioned the rooftop solar project for all the schools. We spoke with the Minister for Education about it last night. I would use this as a very good example; those are projects that you are going to complete over the forward years, putting solar on schools. What then, after those projects are completed, will the percentage of renewables be for the Northern Territory?

Ms LAWLER: There are 152 schools in the Northern Territory, from memory. The solar project I think is up to 18. That would be a certain percentage of solar that is then converted. Again, it varies around the usage of solar. Like I think I responded to the Member for Araluen, if the temperature continues to rise, if we have hotter summers and we go through periods of very hot summers then we will see a greater demand for solar in places like Alice Springs because people will want to drive down their power prices.

Yes, the education department I am sure would have data on the power usage—well they obviously have power bills for every school and how much power is being used in their schools. When you convert that to solar, they would have information around that for solar in their schools.

Mr BURGOYNE: My question goes to this department: has the Office of Sustainable Energy done any modelling over the next four years that will show the percentage of renewables we will achieve through the 2022–23 and 2023–24 years, or do we not have any modelling showing what we will be at over those next three years?

Ms LAWLER: I am not sure what you are aiming to achieve around this question but to be clear again, the department works very well and very hard to make sure we get to our renewable target. I will pass to the Chief Executive Officer. He can maybe provide some clarity.

Mr DRABSCH: Just to re-emphasise the point, we are exploring the pathways by which we can achieve 50% renewables by 2030. We are confident that can be achieved. Can we predict precisely the pathway we will take to get there? No because we have a series of players who are involved there. There is the private sector that we have mentioned and we also have government corporations with independent boards who make investment decisions.

What we can do is look at the variety of pathways which are available and progressively as we develop our knowledge, investment opportunities evolve and costs reduce as often is the case with technology in this space, we will be giving an indication of where we are up to in terms of the Darwin Katherine system plan in particular and give some identification on a biannual basis about how far we have progressed.

We will provide where we have got to. We are at 16% next year once the solar farms come on. We can give an indication when the system plan comes out next year about where the trajectory might be and that will probably be a range. Then we will update that on a biannual basis. It is not a precise science—well, the science is precise—but the commerciality and the economics are variable.

Mr BURGOYNE: I am hearing what you are saying. It is hard to actually predict how we are going to get there. I just want to see that there is a plan to get there and I want you to achieve those targets.

A tender recently went out for the \$30m, 35 megawatt battery energy storage system. When will that battery be completed?

Ms LAWLER: There is a two-stage tender process. The first stage is under way. I will pass to the executive director, who is responsible for that project.

Mr McKAY: As the minister mentioned, there is a two-stage process, (inaudible) qualification, followed by a stage for a request for proposals—basically further detail. The first stage is under way. It has been out for release and TGen has received applications back. The second round is expected to be invited early in the new year.

The proponent for the BESS is supposed to be awarded early in 2021, with civil works started in the Dry Season of 2021, subject to the end solution. Commissioning for the system is expected to be early in 2022.

This project is part of the Darwin-Katherine system plan. The Katherine system plan that the OIC is responsible for lays out a process for where we are going. It will be refreshed every two years. The next challenge we see is frequency control and the battery is addressing that. That is in 2022. It is one of the things that enables further solar after that being connected.

Mr BURGOYNE: When was the 50% renewables target set by this government?

Ms LAWLER: There was a report delivered in September 2017 with 11 recommendations. After that I cannot remember the exact Cabinet date, but there was a letter by Alan Langworthy, the expert panel Chair, to the Chief Minister and Cabinet saying:

It is with pleasure that I present the Roadmap to Renewables report for the Northern Territory. This report, provides a roadmap to achieve the 50 per cent renewable energy target ...

It was then signed off by Cabinet. Then it is a matter of working through that.

That target would have been set in late 2017.

Mr BURGOYNE: The target was set in 2017 and I understand that, for this 35 megawatt battery, the tender has only recently gone out. Just then you spoke about it being vitally important to what we are trying to achieve going forward as far as renewables, solar and everything happening there.

If we have known about that target since late 2017 and known about the solar installations, why has it taken until now to release the tender for that battery? I agree that it is such an important and integral part of that system, so why has it taken so long to get to that point?

Ms LAWLER: It has not taken long at all—2018–19. It is about working through what our system needs. The battery energy storage system is \$30m; that is a considerable amount of money. It is just through staging the processes and when we need to roll out what we need for the system to remain stable.

At this stage there has not been a need. The focus has been on solar on rooftops and getting home and battery schemes up. That is what you do as a government. You work through processes and have plans for where you are going. The time was right for the battery energy storage system. The time was right for the remote power system strategy as well.

It is about rolling things through and rolling them out as the need arises. There is also a process through Cabinet and budgets when looking at \$30m projects.

Mr MALEY: Minister, you counted 2018–19, what about 2020, 2021 and 2022. That is another five years. You said it is a short time—2018–19 and then you stopped counting. If the battery is not ready until 2022, that is five years and that is a long time.

Ms LAWLER: Thank you, your views are noted Member for Nelson.

Mr BURGOYNE: The solar array located in Katherine—how many megawatts is that?

Ms LAWLER: It is 25 megawatts.

Mr BURGOYNE: Can that currently be utilised as part of the grid and achieve grid stability?

Ms LAWLER: I am not sure what you are asking but I will pass to the Executive Director around that.

Mr McKAY: The short answer, there is not a short answer. The answer is yes it can be used but the system, not just the system, there are challenges in being able to dispatch solar in a meaningful way and that requires some work to happen outside of just having a solar panel that you connect to the network. A lot of the work that we are talking about is not just technical it is actually market development, regularity reform and technical work all coming together at the same point.

There are a lot of activities that have to happen. Part of that is things like what we call the Generator Performance Standards and the forecasting and that is making sure that putting the rules and requirements in place now so that when these solar farms come and connect they are able to be dispatched in a way that means the system is secure and remains reliable. If we do not have those sorts of regularity reform the system might remain secure. That is one of those things that is important to get right at the start. At the moment that farm in Katherine has to work through those requirements in order to make sure they can be dispatched to their full capacity in amongst a market where there are other participants.

Mr BURGOYNE: When were those generator standards brought in?

Mr McKAY: I do not have the dates to hand.

Ms LAWLER: I think they were brought in earlier this year. Your questioning has just reminded me that some of the things that you are talking about are the mechanics or the technical and the actual machinery, but there has been a lot of work also around governance and the generator performance standards is an example of that. It is not just about making sure that we have a battery or that we are giving out grants. It is also the work that is being undertaken, some by Treasury.

These papers are all available on the website. The Review of Essential System Services in the Northern Territory issues paper went out in June along with the scope of work around the Northern Territory Electricity Market Priority Reform Program. There is a lot of governance work around the generator performance standards to make sure that we are able to reach that target and that we are able to also maintain that stability

in the grid. It is not necessarily about just buying a battery and putting in more solar; there is a lot of governance work that is being undertaken simultaneously.

Mr BURGOYNE: I guess that is exactly what I am trying to get to. So the current solar array of 25 megawatts solar array as it is would create the grid to become unstable if it was entered straight into the grid as it is. We need that battery to create the grid stability. Is that correct or I am quite happy to be wrong.

Ms LAWLER: I will pass to the Executive Director.

Mr McKAY: So, no, the TGen's battery is not required to keep the solar stable at the facility there. The TGen battery is actually designed to meet the needs behind the meter pv, the smaller systems. The idea of the GPS or the generator performance standards, is that the requirement for that solar farm to be dispatchable is with the generator themselves.

Mr BURGOYNE: We have spoken about the battery scheme quite a bit today so I did want to ask a quick question on that. The 545 applications for the battery scheme is fantastic. Is our battery scheme continuing because my understanding was that it had finished at the end of November? Is that battery scheme going to continue?

Ms LAWLER: Yes, it is continuing.

Mr BURGOYNE: And what is the foreseeable future or what is the budget for that battery scheme going into the future?

Ms LAWLER: I will pass to the Chief Executive so he can provide a response.

Mr DRABSCH: There is an ongoing budget which is provided by the savings from putting a cap on the premium feed-in tariff but home business and battery scheme was introduced at the same time as the stimulus programs to respond to the COVID-19 crisis and it was popular in that context and created a good amount of work for businesses in that electricity supply sector and on that basis as the stimulus programs have continued in their subsequent phases, the home business and battery scheme has been allowed to continue similarly. We take applications in, assess and approve them and provide the grants as we go forward.

Mr BURGOYNE: Sorry, was there a dollar figure? I understand where you are getting the money from but is there a dollar figure in the budget that you are putting towards it?

Mr DRABSCH: There is a budget for the stimulus programs from which this is drawn, yes.

Mr BURGOYNE: How much is that figure?

Mr DRABSCH: The stimulus programs budget is considerable. There is a series of numbers which I can talk to. This is probably something I would rather take on notice.

Question on Notice No 4.3

Mr BURGOYNE: What is the current budget for the 2020–21 home battery scheme?

Mr CHAIR: Minister, do you accept the question?

Ms LAWLER: Yes, I accept the question.

Mr BURGOYNE: The 545 applicants, have all of those projects been completed under the home battery scheme?

Ms LAWLER: I will pass to the Chief Executive. He has the paperwork.

Mr DRABSCH: Received 545 applications, approved 274, 24 have been withdrawn or declined—there is a series of criteria which applied in this but the decline rates are relatively small compared to other programs—and the others are being assessed. Some are seeking information. I can give a regional split up on that if you would like? For example, in Alice Springs we have 120 applications of the 545 total which is about 22%; Daly,

Tiwi, West Arnhem have had 41 applications at 8%; Katherine had 21 applications; Tennant Creek had five applications; Palmerston had 102 applications; Darwin Rural had 63 applications which is about 12%.

Mr BURGOYNE: What was the cost of delivering that service?

Mr DRABSCH: The grant is a \$6,000 cash grant. We have approved \$1.6m of grant funding to date and the estimated value of the works that arise as a result of that grant is \$5.3m which is four to one.

Mr BURGOYNE: Fantastic to hear. Just to change tack a bit, the cost to consumers of power has obviously been rising over the recent years as flagged by the Chamber of Commerce. Are there any projections into the future of that cost of power and whether or not that will rise?

Ms LAWLER: That is not correct. That is a question for the GOCs on Friday. You can talk to Jacana, TGen or Power and Water about that matter.

Mr BURGOYNE: Certainly, thank you.

The \$90m in renewables, you outlined earlier a breakdown of some of the major projects. What I am trying to understand as well, of that \$90m what portion of that ended up in renewable sources of energy? How much of that \$90m was invested into solar, batteries and all those things or is that too hard to unpack.

Essentially, I am trying to work out if we are getting bang for buck with that \$90m. It was spoken about earlier: \$5m for Intyalheme and all the rest of it. I am trying to work out of that \$90m spent, what has actually been spent on renewables themselves?

Ms LAWLER: I would have to take that on notice. It is complicated, it is not a straight one-to-one obviously. What I would like to point out because I have the TERC report in front of me and I encourage you all to read it even if you are in opposition, the TERC report has some very interesting reading around the energy transition renewables section. It says:

Energy demand is forecast to grow by 60% to 2040 in the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) region which much of this demand requiring renewable or carbon neutral energy sources.

When we are talking about renewables this is not just us with household batteries. It is about the future economic development of the Northern Territory as well.

Question on Notice No 4.4

Mr CHAIR: Thank you minister. Member for Braiting can I ask you to please restate the question for the record.

Mr BURGOYNE: Thank you. How much of the \$90m laid out in the minister's opening statement was spent on the delivery of renewables?

Mr CHAIR: Thank you Member for Braiting. Minister do you accept the question?

Ms LAWLER: Yes, I accept the question.

Mr CHAIR: Thank you minister. The question asked by the Member for Braiting of the minister has been allocated number 4.4 as a question on notice. Thank you, further questions?

Mr BURGOYNE: Currently in Alice Springs we have been dealing, over the last however many years, with some system insecurity. What is the Office of Sustainable Energy see as a way of ensuring that no longer occurs into the future?

Ms LAWLER: I read out the work of the Alice Springs Future Grid, those five projects and as I said that is the work of Alice Springs Future Grid.

Mr MALEY: I have one further question. You talked about the future grid, when are they expected to come online minister?

Ms LAWLER: In relation to those projects?

Mr MALEY: Yes.

Ms LAWLER: The project comprises five sub-projects, which are scheduled for completion in quarter one of 2022-23. So quarter one of 2022-23.

Mr MALEY: So between now and quarter one 2022-23 the system is going to remain unstable? Is that correct?

Ms LAWLER: They system in Alice Springs is not unstable. They are questions you can ask TGen when you have the GOCs in here. But absolutely there has been a lot of work and the Alice Springs Future Grid work as well. We will be making sure that the system stays stable.

Mr MALEY: What have you planned for between now and 2022-23 to keep the system stable?

Ms LAWLER: That is a question for the GOCs rather than here. There are some quite straightforward answers around that, but I will leave that to the chair of TGen to answer on Friday.

Mrs LAMBLEY: I have question Mr Chair. A couple of months ago it was revealed that the government had commissioned a report called generally a Northern Territory energy report. Sky News journalist Matt Cunningham requested a copy of this report through freedom on information. The report he said was 'a report that detailed the cost and practical steps necessary to achieve its 50% renewable energy target by 2030'. And what he was given was basically the front and the back page of a 118 page report. All the other pages, the 116 in the middle, had been redacted. Now, minister do you know of this report? And if you do could you tell us who wrote the report, why it was redacted, why you are withholding information like this from Territorians?

Ms LAWLER: Member for Araluen, can you confirm the title of the report? I am not sure what you are referring to.

Mrs LAMBLEY: Well I just tried to get it confirmed. It is referred to in the media by Matt Cunningham as an NT energy report, 118 pages. And really, it suggested at the time—I remember very clearly—that the government was not keen to provide the contents of the report because of possibly how difficult this road to 50% renewables by 2030 will be.

Ms LAWLER: It sounds like it was a report from the Department of Chief Minister and Cabinet. So not a report that was industry, tourism and trade, so it is not our agency.

Mr MALEY: I think the report—if I can just butt in—I think the report was called, *Achieving the Northern Territory Renewable Energy Target*, by Houston Kemp.

Mrs LAMBLEY: That sounds correct.

Ms LAWLER: That is not the same.

Mrs LAMBLEY: This is a report that does pertain to your portfolio area. It has been withheld from the public despite a FOI application by Matt Cunningham. What is going on minister? Just from the responses that you have given to the opposition's questions about the fact that you are unable to give any sort of benchmarks over the next nine years as to what you hope to achieve, really suggests to me that you are hiding something, or quite a lot.

Ms LAWLER: Member for Araluen, no, we are not hiding anything at all. That report, the one that you are referring to, I think was a report produced by the Department of the Chief Minister and Cabinet. It is not through this agency. So, it is a question you probably should have asked when the Chief Minister was here. That report, I think, went to Cabinet.

Mrs LAMBLEY: Yes, you have said that.

Ms LAWLER: It was not when I was holding this portfolio. I have been in this portfolio since the August election. But also to say, Member for Araluen, we are not hiding anything as a government. This is an area where we are very proud of the work that we are doing about getting to a renewable target. It is one that, you

know, there is a lot of work to be done and it is complex work but it is one we are working hard to make sure that we do achieve that target.

Mrs LAMBLEY: You have been a minister of this government for more than four years now. You have been a part of the Cabinet process. You have seen this report. You know exactly what I am referring to. Why was this report redacted almost completely? What is in this report that is so precious and damaging, or ...

Ms LAWLER: But, Member for Araluen, as I said, the report would have gone to Cabinet. So, one, it could be Cabinet-in-confidence. That is sometimes why reports are not released. Sometimes reports are not released because it is also commercial-in-confidence. So sometimes are not written necessarily for the public straight away. Sometimes a report is written and it is a report that informs directions and things like that.

I tell you that no, we are not hiding anything around that. We will work towards achieving our target for renewables and that is the work that is to be done.

Mrs LAMBLEY: Minister, you have read this report because you are Cabinet minister. You know exactly what is in this report. Now you are the minister that has the responsibility of renewable energies, this report, presumably, is of great interest to you in your portfolio interests. I think it is important that Territorians know what is in this report and how it might inform us all of the direction you are going to take us. Answer the questions of the opposition, for example, how much this is going to cost us, and give us some milestones as to how you are actually going to achieve this target by 2030.

Mr MALEY: Minister, for the record, can you confirm that you have read the report?

Ms LAWLER: Yes, it was a report that was prepared for Cabinet and, as I said things that go to Cabinet do not necessarily need to be shared. I note your issues that you have raised. Thank you

Mr MALEY: Minister, have you read the report?

Ms LAWLER: I would have read the report if it came to Cabinet and yes it did come to Cabinet. So, I would have read the report. Yes.

Mrs LAMBLEY: It does really go back to the integrity of this government and an inability for people like myself to scrutinise government when you are hiding important documents like this. It is not good. It makes me even curious as to what exactly is going on within your portfolio, minister.

Mr MALEY: Minister, will you provide us with a copy of that report?

Ms LAWLER: The copy that was through the Department of the Chief Minister and Cabinet was redacted. Thank you though. As I said, as a government, we have actually moved on. There has been a lot of work that has been done in this space and that is the work that is now underway towards achieving that target, putting in the government structures that need to be in place to make sure that we have a stable grid.

Mr MALEY: Minister, you say you have moved on. How can you have moved on? We are talking a target of 50% by 2030. You have read this report. Are you going to release the report to the public?

Ms LAWLER: The information in that report was redacted. We saw that. I was not the decision-maker about that report. It was a report produced by the Department of the Chief Minister and Cabinet. It was possibly through treasury and finance or Department of the Chief Minister and Cabinet ...

Mr MALEY: Minister, can you answer the question, are you going to release the report, yes or no?

Ms LAWLER: No, the report was not released.

Mr MALEY: No, I am asking you, are you going to release it?

Ms LAWLER: No, the report was not released.

Mrs LAMBLEY: Minister, are you able to try to give us an indication of when that report will be released to the public? Is that something you could take on notice?

Ms LAWLER: I could take that on notice, but that report is not my agency report, it was a report done by the Department of the Chief Minister and Cabinet. That report was seen as—obviously the decision-maker was

seen that one—not necessarily as going out to the public. Sometimes reports are written and they are to inform directions for government. They are not necessarily reports that then need to be made public.

Mr MALEY: Minister, do you have the power to release that report?

Mrs LAMBLEY: Will you take that question on notice, minister?

Ms LAWLER: Can you restate the question?

Mrs LAMBLEY: Will you undertake to inform us of when that report will be made public?

Ms LAWLER: I can take that on notice and it might be that the answer is no, it will not be made public, Member for Araluen.

Mrs LAMBLEY: Well, that would be good.

Ms LAWLER: It has not been made public. That decision was made. It is not made public. This is complex work that we have moved on to do more work around in this area. That was a report done previously by the Department of the Chief Minister and Cabinet. It was not done by this agency. We now have the Office of Sustainable Energy. We have our work plan and what we are working towards achieving.

Member for Araluen, I know you love to dramatise things, but really this is the work of the government ...

Mrs LAMBLEY: No, do not make this personal.

Ms LAWLER: No, it is always personal with you, Member for Araluen.

Mrs LAMBLEY: That is not fair. It is a reasonable question.

Ms LAWLER: It is about moving forward, getting on with work and that is what we are doing.

Mrs LAMBLEY: This is an important report, so I would like to put the question on notice, please.

Question on Notice No 4.5

Mr CHAIR: Member for Araluen, would you please re-state the question for the record?

Mrs LAMBLEY: When will the report entitled, *Achieving the Northern Territory Renewable Energy Target* by Houston Kemp, be made public?

Mr CHAIR: Thank you, Member for Araluen. Minister, do you accept the question?

Ms LAWLER: I accept the question.

Mr CHAIR: Thank you, minister. The question asked by the Member for Araluen of the minister has been allocated number 4.5 as a question on notice. Are there any further questions?

Mr MALEY: I have a question. Minister, do you have the power as the minister to release the report, yes or no?

Ms LAWLER: That report is not my report. It was a report done by the Department of the Chief Minister and Cabinet so it is not my report. As I said ...

Mr MALEY: I am not asking whose report it is, I am asking do you have the power to release the report, yes or no?

Ms LAWLER: No, I do not, because it is not my report.

Mr MONAGHAN: Minister, it might be worth clarifying for the committee what cabinet-in-confidence means?

Ms LAWLER: Thank you, Member for Fong Lim. Yes, reports or any paper that goes into Cabinet are cabinet-in-confidence reports. Member for Nelson, you also understand because ...

Mr TURNER: A point of order, Mr Chair!

Ms LAWLER: It is legal-in-confidence as well. So there are reports that go to Cabinet at times ...

Mr CHAIR: Sorry, minister, one moment. Member for Blain had a point of order.

Mr TURNER: After about 15 interruptions by the Member for Nelson on the ...[INAUDIBLE]

Mr MALEY: I am just trying to help her, we know the answer.

Mr CHAIR: Thank you, Member for Blain. It would be nice if we could let the minister and the minister's representatives answer the question without interruption. Minister, you have the call.

Ms LAWLER: I do not need to talk any more on that point, thank you.

Mr CHAIR: Thank you, minister. Are there any further questions?

Mr MALEY: I have got one question. Can cabinet-in-confidence be waived?

Ms LAWLER: It is a weird question that you ask.

Mr MALEY: Yes or no?

Ms LAWLER: When it is in cabinet-in-confidence that is the decision of Cabinet. What then happens or the actions that are taken—so whether you approve, endorse, agree or whatever comes through the Cabinet decision through that process. Anything that goes into Cabinet—it is a decision at the time—around any report or anything that goes into Cabinet can then—that is the agreement that 'x' happens or 'y' happens around that.

Mr MALEY: The question is can it be waived? Yes or no?

Mr TURNER: A point of order, Mr Chair! In the estimates committee, (inaudible) broadcast, any questions need to be relevant to the operations and financial decisions of the department and agencies. Seeking the funds in the estimates and their relevant questions (inaudible). I do not (inaudible).

Mrs LAMBLEY: It is very similar to the Member for Fong Lim's question.

Mr MALEY: Yes. Are you going to object to him?

So the answer is yes or no, minister.

Mr CHAIR: Thank you, Member for Blain. I think, on reflection, Cabinet in confidence conversations and the questioning we have about this may not actually be relevant to the estimates. It is a good point, Member for Blain. Minister, if you would like to finish answering the question, potentially then we can move on from the opening statement into the other outputs.

Ms LAWLER: Yes, Cabinet in confidence is as the name suggests. Member for Nelson, I would expect that as a lawyer you would understand legal in confidence as well.

Mr MALEY: I know it can be waived if you will not admit it.

Mr CHAIR: Are there any further questions on the opening statement? The committee will now consider the estimates for proposed expenditure contained in the Appropriation Bill 2020–21 as they relate to renewables and energy.

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

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

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

Output Groups 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 are the responsibility of other ministers.

OUTPUT GROUP 6.0 – RENEWABLES AND ENERGY
Output 6.1 – Office of Sustainable Energy

Mr CHAIR: The committee will now proceed to Output 6.0 – Renewable Energy, Output 6.1 – Office of Sustainable Energy. Are there any questions?

Mr BURGOYNE: Minister, the Office of Sustainable Energy. I went online and had a look at the priority tasks of the office. One of them is progressing the electricity market reform in the Northern Territory. Does the office see the inability of TGen to invest in solar as an inhibiting factor to achieving our 50% renewables target by 2030.

Ms LAWLER: I am not sure what you are asking but I think that is a question for TGen. What are you trying to get at?

Mr BURGOYNE: I am purely asking, part of the Office of Sustainable Energy is progressing the electricity market reform. Obviously TGen is a part of the electricity market. My understanding is that they cannot invest in solar. Correct me if I am wrong.

Mr CHAIR: Member for Braitling, it may be a question for TGen on Friday.

Mr BURGOYNE: I am asking about the progressing of the electricity market reform in the Northern Territory which is a priority task of the Office of Sustainable Energy. I heard Mr Drabsch say ...

Ms LAWLER: Yes, I am passing to the CE.

Mr DRABSCH: There is a policy decision in relation to TGen's operations and its capacity to invest in renewable energy. The reason why it is constrained from doing so is the risk of it dominating the delivery of solar energy at the expense of other competitors who might come into the market. TGen already has a dominant role in the energy market. The objective of the market reforms which you refer to is to generate competition and it is the policy position of the government that to allow TGen to engage in solar generation activity would constrain the development of that competitive market.

Mr BURGOYNE: So it is not seen as an inhibiting factor to progressing the electricity market in the Northern Territory.

Mr DRABSCH: It is seen as a factor necessary to encourage the development of the electricity market in the Territory.

Mr BURGOYNE: So you would rather see private investment in solar rather than government-led investment in solar.

Mr DRABSCH: We are keen to see a competitive electricity market in solar.

Mr EDGINGTON: My question is about solar energy in communities. How many communities are on the program for further installation of solar over the next 12 months?

Ms LAWLER: We are rolling out first of all at Wurrumiyanga and we announced \$4.3m in funding for solar generation and then we are looking at private enterprise being involved and our goal is to have all 72 remote communities and 79 homelands as well into the future.

Mr EDGINGTON: Is that part of the solar set up program or has that been completed?

Ms LAWLER: It is an evolution of the solar set up program that was in 10 communities. It is the other remote power systems strategy that we are rolling out.

Mr MALEY: Minister do you have an estimation of how much that roll out is going to cost?

Ms LAWLER: I will pass to Ms Tan. I think I said in the introduction or at some stage there is a strong business case. For example at Wurrumiyanga it will save 12 million litres of diesel fuel and 34 tonnes of greenhouse emissions over the 20 years. It will provide a return on investment of 17.8% and net present value of \$11.8m over 20 years. It is an investment rather than a cost and that is why we are looking at private

investment for it. \$4.3 at Wurrumiyanga as a set up installing as a first step. I will pass to Anne Tan, Executive Director.

Ms TAN: The government (inaudible) systems strategy as the minister has indicated is focused on ruling out renewables generation, hybrid generation into 72 communities. At this point the government's expectation is there should be some level of private sector interest in that and what the agency is testing at the moment is whether there is a framework that can be put out that is going to encourage private investment. What we are thinking is that it is not necessarily government having to make that initial investment but for the private sector to partner with the government in rolling out.

Mr MALEY: In view of that, when do you estimate the roll out to be finished by?

Ms TAN: The plan is to have the roll out completed by 2030 so that is the timeframe. We are looking to see if it can be expedited, the sooner we can get it rolled out the better. As the minister has said there is a commercial proposition for the private sector to make that investment and that is something we would like to see if we can leverage.

Mr BURGOYNE: Minister in the previous financial year how many communities were completed as part of that program?

Ms LAWLER: Are you talking about the set up program, the previous program? I will pass to General Manager Ms Tan.

Ms TAN: The solar set up program saw renewables into 25 communities. That was completed in about 2019. The remote power system strategy is the government's phase 2 of that and as the minister has indicated, that is going to commence with Wurrumiyanga but we are looking at whether that can be a business proposition that is put to the private sector to roll out across the balance of the communities.

Mr BURGOYNE: What was the cost of those 25 that you have rolled out?

Ms TAN: It was about \$59m and that included a contribution from ARENA.

Mr GUYULA: Can I ask what communities?

Ms LAWLER: I will have to take that question on notice Member for Arafura.

Question on Notice No 4.6

Mr CHAIR: Member for Mulka can I ask you to restate the question for the record.

Mr GUYULA: Can I ask which communities they were rolled out to because I do know within my electorate there were about five or six?

Mr CHAIR: Minister, do you accept the question?

Ms LAWLER: Yes I do.

Mr CHAIR: The question asked by the Member for Mulka has been allocated the number 4.6 as a Question on Notice. I remind everyone these answers are due by 22 January 2021, which is not far away.

Mr CHAIR: Any further questions? There are no questions. That, therefore, concludes consideration of Output Group 6. Output Groups 7 and 8 are also the responsibility of other ministers.

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

There being no further questions, this concludes consideration of outputs relating to Renewables and Energy. On behalf of the committee, I thank the departmental staff who have provided assistance to the minister today. Thank you, minister, for your attendance and to your staff and their hard work. The committee will now move on to the questions relating the Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Logistics.

Ms LAWLER: I thank the Department of Industry, Tourism and Trade and Office of Sustainable Energy staff for their preparation today and attending.

Mr CHAIR: Thank you, minister. We will now take a short break to allow for a changeover. We will be back in about five minutes.

The committee suspended.

INFRASTRUCTURE, PLANNING AND LOGISTICS

Mr CHAIR: Minister Lawler, I invite you to introduce the officials accompanying you and to make an opening statement regarding the Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Logistics.

Ms LAWLER: I am very happy to introduce the officials from the Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Logistics here today. I have the Chief Executive Officer, Andrew Kirkman; Leah Clifford, the Deputy Chief Executive responsible for Lands and Planning; Fotis Papadakis, the Chief Financial Officer; in the back row we have John Harrison, General Manager for Infrastructure, Investment and Contracts; and Louise McCormick, General Manager Transport and Civil Services.

In the back room is Doug Lesh, Senior Director Planning; and Dr David Ritchie, Chairman of the Planning Commission. He is available if needed

The Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Logistics provides key services and functions to the community across the Territory through land use and planning, infrastructure investment, building regulation and maintaining the Territory's logistics infrastructure.

The department has delivered and is continuing to deliver many of the government's key functions, including:

- the government's infrastructure program
- COVID-19 emergency response and recovery as it relates to the transport and engineering functions
- planning reform and regulation
- building reform and regulation
- transport safety and services
- strategic land development.

The department has played an essential role supporting the community and industry through the COVID-19 pandemic, providing the transport and engineering group functions. The department's core services continued whilst also providing significant policy and operational support to secure the Territory's borders by land, air and sea.

The department worked in collaboration with industry and stakeholders to facilitate crucial local air transport and freight and processed travel exemption information for construction contractors and the transport and logistics operators during the pandemic.

Specific planning rules were also relaxed and red tape reduced to enable homeowners to take advantage of the government's COVID-19 Job Rescue and Recovery Plan. Financial relief was also provided to many Territorians who travel the public transport network, where over 831,000 passenger trips were provided for free from March to June this year. Commercial operators also received support, while people were asked to stay home and reduce their movements. With the waiver of the \$1 passenger levy payment, all registration and administrative fees were frozen.

Outside of the COVID-19 response, one of the biggest achievements of the year was the passing of the Planning Amendment Bill 2020 in June following extensive public consultation. This ensures planning is less complex and more transparent for both the development industry and the community.

Our \$2.45bn 2020—21 infrastructure program has continued to support the construction sector with contracts awarded to local companies, supporting a wide range of jobs. We have invested in roads and community infrastructure for housing, education and police, and continue to revitalise our CBD. In 2020-21, we have budgeted \$1.75bn on infrastructure that will support economic development and delivery of services across the Territory.

We have a 10-year infrastructure plan that supports our government to strategically plan for and invest in infrastructure projects that benefit the Territory. This work will be continued through implementation of recommendations from the Territory Economic Reconstruction Committee.

In collaboration with the Department of Territory Families, Housing and Communities this financial year the department is delivering over \$190m in remote housing across 44 remote Territory communities, with multiple Aboriginal business enterprises undertaking some of these works.

This year, the value for Territory has remained our focus to support economic development, with 99% of construction contract projects awarded to Territory enterprises, which means, obviously, more jobs for Territorians.

The exceptional staff on the front line at Motor Vehicle Registry have continued to deliver ongoing high-quality customer services to the 158,000 licensed drivers and approximately 198,000 vehicles registered in the Northern Territory. MVR has also cut red tape for Territory businesses by launching the new MVR for Business portal, which now allows 7,000 eligible businesses 24 hours, seven days a week access to process vehicle registration transactions.

From 1 July 2019 to 30 June 2020, 552 development applications were processed, which has also supported economic development in what has been a challenging year.

The infrastructure amalgamation has brought over 80 staff from across other government agencies into the department's Infrastructure, Investment and Contracts Division. This important change is streamlining infrastructure project delivery and is driving efficiencies and improved coordination across government.

Looking forward, the department will deliver major infrastructure projects to help rebuild the Territory's economy, with the development of the Middle Arm industrial precinct, the ship lift and the Mandorah marine facilities. There is also \$200m being invested into major civil and road upgrades, a \$200m program to upgrade the Tanami Highway, \$225m to upgrade the Central Arnhem Road and \$150m for Carpentaria Highway to support the development of the Beetaloo Basin and the gas industry. The department will also be delivering Phase 2 planning reform and embark on a building reform program to support building confidence in the Territory.

The Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Logistics is a diverse agency that plays a very important role in the community. All staff in the department have stepped up to the challenges of 2020, continuing to provide a quality service to the community in unprecedented circumstances.

Mr MALEY: I thank the public servants (inaudible) job. I acknowledge how hard they work. This has been a very trying year and COVID-19 has changed a lot of things. It has been a very difficult time and I take the opportunity to thank those staff.

Mr CHAIR: Member for Nelson, would you like to turn it on and repeat, otherwise Hansard will not record it.

Mr MALEY: Sorry. Minister, I thank all the public servants. This year has been a very difficult year. Lots of things have changed and there has been a lot of pressure and they performed well. I take this opportunity to thank you and all the public servants who work underneath you. They have done a tremendous job.

Ms LAWLER: Thank you very much, Member for Nelson.

Mr MALEY: Minister, in your budget, you talk about a \$15m cut from maintenance this year. Where will those cuts come from and what will the government not be maintaining?

Ms LAWLER: Member for Nelson, are you referring to the repairs and maintenance?

Mr MALEY: Yes.

Ms LAWLER: First of all, it is not a cut. When we are looking at the repairs and maintenance in the Northern Territory, this year we have had COVID and there have been issues about getting out to remote communities to road maintenance. The figure around repairs and maintenance is one that is a large figure, I am trying to flick to the page but it is about \$158m this year and in 2019–20 it was \$138m. So \$11m was transferred to the minor new works and capital works program and that was due to the nature of some of the work. There was also COVID.

It is a figure that can move around a bit. I always use the analogy of landing a jet on a postage stamp. When you are looking at big figures, which we do in this department, there are ups and downs around things so it was not actually a cut. There was \$11m that was moved into some different programs. We had COVID. There are some swings and merry-go-rounds around that figure.

I will pass to the Chief Executive who can elaborate further on that to allay your concerns. I do not know what your concerns are around that figure.

Mr KIRKMAN: As the minister pointed out, we do have a very large program. We spent around \$138m last year and we plan to spend \$158m-odd this year. Certainly this year was challenging in a number of ways for everyone but we had a few months where we were not able to get out on remote roads or into remote communities as a result of those COVID-19 lockdowns. That meant there was an opportunity for government to look at reallocating funds we would have otherwise spent during the year on those works and reallocate those to other programs as per the minister's discussion earlier.

Mr MALEY: Out of the \$138m, did you spend all of that in 2019–20?

Mr KIRKMAN: That is correct. The \$138m was spent in the 2019–20 financial year.

Mr MALEY: For this financial year, \$158m has been budgeted?

Mr KIRKMAN: That is correct.

Mr MALEY: How much of that has been spent so far?

Mr KIRKMAN: For this Estimates Committee, we have expenditure to June 2020 which is really the last financial year. The oddity of having an estimates at this time of the year. I reflect on the \$138m we spent last financial year.

Mr MALEY: So what about between 30 June 2020 and now? You do not have any figures for that, is that right?

Mr KIRKMAN: That is correct. We have not recorded in the estimates briefs figures for year to date.

Ms LAWLER: Just to clarify, Member for Nelson, this is the estimates where you are looking at the 2020–21 budget which is \$158m. If you want a briefing around how much the department has spent over each month, those figures are available. The Chief Financial Officer has those figures but this ...

Mr MALEY: But he does not have them here today?

Ms LAWLER: Because this is estimates where you are talking about the \$158m for the 2020–21 program and that is what estimates is about. It is about looking at our program and our way forward. Agencies have absolutely every single dollar that they spend and when it is a big agency like this, that stuff that they can produce—if you want a briefing around the dollars that they have spent, that is not what estimates is here for. This is for talking about projects that we have, not down to whether a bill has been paid yesterday, today or tomorrow around some repairs and maintenance.

Mr MALEY: I am not talking about that. This is a unique year and estimates is now; it is in December. Surely the department would have thought that maybe there would be some questions asked about how much money they have spent this year and brought the information along.

Ms LAWLER: That is not how estimates works.

Mr MALEY: Can you take that question on notice then?

Mr KIRKMAN: I will repeat, we have not arranged our estimates briefing to have expenditure as a year-to-date, other than to the 30 June, because we have a part-year. It does not give you a clear indication necessarily of what is going to be spent for the whole financial year. But I can say Mr Papadakis has a figure for the end of November of about \$52m that is being spent. That is just for this department. As the minister pointed out, I am very happy to brief in more detail on that.

Mr MALEY: No, that is enough, thank you for that.

A member: [inaudible]

Mr KIRKMAN: That is correct.

A member: Which quarter of the financial year?

Mr KIRKMAN: First quarter.

Mr MALEY: So back to the \$15m that has been cut from the budget. Where do you expect to make those savings?

Ms LAWLER: Say that again, repeat your question, it is hard to understand.

Mr MALEY: From the \$15m that has been cut from this year's budget where do you expect to make those savings?

Ms LAWLER: I am not sure what you are referring to but I think you are talking about last year's figure where there was, as I have explained and the chief executive has explained, an approved program and then expenditure was \$138.6m in 2019-20. In 2020-21 it is going to be \$158.9m and that is the total we are looking to spend in repairs and maintenance for the 2020-21 financial year.

Mr MALEY: Thank you minister. Minister in the 2020-21 budget there is an efficiency dividend of 1% for certain frontline services, delivery agencies, and 3% for all other agencies. What is the specific amount of efficiency dividend for your agency in 2020-21?

Ms LAWLER: I will pass that to the chief executive. Yes, it is an across the board figure. I will pass to the chief executive to respond.

Mr KIRKMAN: Yes, we have a 3% ongoing efficiency dividend. That has been built in for some time. In 2019-20 that resulted in \$1.5m saving at a whole-of-government level. That will accumulate to about \$3.7m by the end of this financial year.

Mr MALEY: Are you planning on achieving that 3% this year?

Mr KIRKMAN: Yes, absolutely. We have gone through a very extensive budget review exercise, in fact over the last 18 months, which has looked at every element of the department, every business unit, what is required in those units, made some adjustments as required and we will come in on budget as we have last year.

Mr MALEY: Can you give me an example of the top five things you are going to change or modify to meet that target?

Mr KIRKMAN: It is more a matter of ensuring we are efficient as possible. We have a FTE of close to 760 odd people. There has been more come into the department as a result of the infrastructure amalgamation, which the minister referred to in her opening statement. That is close to about 800 bodies and that does enable an organisation to look at where the efficiencies are, certainly tighten our belt where we need to, and still deliver on the priorities that are set for us. There is no one thing we have cut as a result of those efficiencies to date.

Mr MALEY: Can you give me an example of one thing you are going to change to make the efficiency? You said you looked at a number. Can you give me an example of one?

Mr KIRKMAN: Yes, we have a number of efficiencies we are looking at. Again, I think minister referred in her opening statement to that online portal that businesses are now able to access. So instead of having to send their staff in to the MVR to transact a whole heap of changes to vehicle registration. When vehicles are

sold they are able to get on and do that in their business in their own time. That certainly saves, not only those businesses time, but it also saves our frontline operators time in those transactions. So that is one example of the multitude of things that we do to look at how we can do things smarter and quicker.

Mr MALEY: How many staff will be cut from your agency or executive contracts in relation to this?

Mr KIRKMAN: No executive contracts will be cut as a result of this efficiency.

Mr MALEY: What about people not on executive contracts, like normal staff employed with the government?

Mr KIRKMAN: There is no requirement to cut staff. As I mentioned, we are looking to make some efficiencies. Over time we will be able to reduce staffing numbers as those efficiencies kick in, but it will not be a matter of identifying individuals and saying that they do not have a job ongoing. It will be making efficiencies over time.

Mr MALEY: But you will be cutting staff to make those efficiencies?

Mr KIRKMAN: No, we will not be cutting staff to make efficiencies. Over time, as we work through our budgets we will continue to tighten our belts, but we do not need to cut staff to make those efficiencies.

Mr MALEY: I am a bit confused. Earlier you said that you will reduce staff and now you are saying that you will not reduce staff. Are you reducing staff or not?

Mr KIRKMAN: We do not see a requirement to reduce staff. We have reduced a number of staff over the last four years to make sure we are operating within our requirements, but that has not been a matter of tapping people on the shoulder and saying, 'You do not have a job anymore'. We have been able to do that ...

Mr MALEY: I am not suggesting that. I am just suggesting that, to me, your efficiency dividends this year, moving forward, you will reduce staff like you said earlier. I am not sure which one.

Mr KIRKMAN: I do not believe we will need to reduce staff. We have been able to do a lot with the funding we have and will continue to do that. We will now look to—it is not just about personnel expenditure, we have a large operating expenditure budget so we can look at things like reducing travel, fleet expenditure, requirement for a range of things in an operational sense. It means we do not necessarily need to look at personnel costs.

Mr MALEY: Have you looked at what savings you will make, as in reducing staff or travel? Can you give me a figure or are you just saying that now to keep me happy?

Mr KIRKMAN: Can you repeat your question? I am just trying to see where you are going.

Mr MALEY: I asked you for some examples and you only gave me the MVR. Now you are saying 'reducing staff and travel'. Have you done estimates or modelling in relation to what efficiencies they will save or are you just saying those things to keep me happy today?

Mr TURNER: Point of Order. Standing Order 109 pertains to questions, as explained by the Chair earlier. They should not contain statements of fact, arguments, inferences, imputations, insults or hypotheticals. I think that Member for Nelson could probably phrase his question in a more polite manner for the witnesses appearing before the Estimates Committee.

Mr MALEY: I will rephrase my question. I asked you earlier if you were going to—any five ideas and you gave me one. Now you are saying you are reducing travel and fleet, have you worked out an estimate of what they will do and how much you have to reduce those to get your efficiency dividends.

Mr KIRKMAN: In the last financial year, for example, we have achieved a couple of hundred thousand looking at our fleet and reduced those. I should also make the point that as we are absorbing efficiencies, we are also, at times, able to increase our staffing base to deal with the big programs we have on foot. A good example of that is the roads projects we have. We have been able to use some of the funding we get for roads programs and apply it, with approval, to our staffing level.

Whilst efficiencies mean that we have to tighten in certain areas, we have program funding we can use as well, which sustains our staffing levels at the same time. That is about reprioritising and looking at where we

need our staff to operate. We can reduce on one hand, but on the other hand we will redirect staff to be where they need to be, which is delivering our big programs.

Mr MALEY: You get money from the federal government to deliver big programs, such as roads. You get approval and do not build those roads but you increase your staff numbers, is that correct?

Ms LAWLER: No, that is not correct at all, Member for Nelson.

Mr KIRKMAN: We have been delivering a huge amount of roads in the last number of years. We do have an allocation through the funding that we get from the Australian Government to put some of that to our requirement around project management to our direct staffing. At the same time we obviously apply some of that to the consultancy industry to bring those on to assist us with specialist advice on how we deliver our roads.

Mr MALEY: You mentioned earlier that you seek approval. How do you get that approval and who do you get that approval from?

Mr KIRKMAN: With the Australian Government funding obviously we need their approval and just about all Australian Government programs of a large capital nature and under national partnership agreements have an element of program management which they allow to be applied to their funding. We then seek ministerial and cabinet endorsement for that funding to be applied also to our personnel expenditure.

Ms LAWLER: It is done, as the name suggests, through the national partnership agreement so at those stages where the agreement is being negotiated that is where the bureaucrats negotiate what needs to be delivered and that is the work that happens and then there are agreements that are signed.

Mr MALEY: Minister in your opening statement you talked about 80 extra staff that are going to streamline services. How are you going to do that?

Ms LAWLER: Can you say that again, it is hard to hear.

Mr MALEY: In your opening statement you said you were going to get an extra 80 staff that were going to streamline services. How are you going to do that?

Ms LAWLER: Part of the Langoulant's review was about having all infrastructure staff in the one agency, the Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Logistics and I can give an example. Previously there were Infrastructure staff in Education but now those staff are part of the Department of Infrastructure. Last night some on you might have met Adam Walding who was an Education Infrastructure staff member. Through Langoulant the idea was that there would be efficiencies around savings bringing staff into one place, managing projects, sharing resources and that was an amalgamation of a number of staff from other agencies, whether from Health, Education or Territory Families.

Other agencies that had infrastructure have been brought into the Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Logistics. That was the additional staff and the efficiencies then are for example on a project where there is an underspend, those dollars can then be moved onto other projects or a project manager can be used across a couple of projects. It is about making a larger group of people so there are efficiencies around that group rather than having them in separate agencies.

Mr MALEY: (inaudible).

Ms LAWLER: That has already happened.

Mr MALEY: (inaudible).

Mr CHAIR: Member for Nelson please put your microphone on.

Mr MALEY: In the Budget Paper Book 4, at page 4 we talk about revotes in and revotes out, and revotes in at \$1.432m, where does that figure come from and how do you get that figure?

Ms LAWLER: A revote is essentially to provide the continuity of cash flow for all businesses, so in the budget paper you see new projects as well as revoted projects as often it is around the size of the project, the scope, design, land tenure for a whole heap of reasons. Let me give you an example. I will make this up. If I have \$70m in the program to build a road and that tender goes out in January, \$70m will not be spent by the end

of that financial year. The aim might be to spend \$70m but it could be that we have trouble getting agreement through the Land Councils for access to land or it could be that there is a very late wet season and the truck drivers or whoever cannot get onto the project. That 30 June date is an arbitrary date. The dollars that are not spent of that \$70m are then revoted to the next financial year.

It is just like you building your kitchen. You will build a new kitchen that will cost you \$20,000. You plan to have it done in this financial year so you can claim it all on your tax, or whatever else. It is not spent this financial year. You then go into July, August or whatever else.

The revote is that amount of money. It is a very large budget. Very often—or pretty much always—it is not neat and tidy through one financial year; it flows through. There are a number of projects that are revoted for a number of reasons. Those are as simple and as complex as any construction in the Northern Territory. It is just par for the course. Every government everywhere or anywhere that is building big projects have that. The size of the project changes sometimes to scope and design. There are land tenure and essential services issues, as we have seen with some projects with asbestos. Once you get on the ground you find that there are other issues. Often, it is about carrying through and things just do not happen all in one financial year.

I hope that makes sense.

Mr MALEY: Yes, it makes sense. Essentially, you said in your opening statement that you have a \$1.75bn infrastructure spend this year. That is not the case because we are doing revoting in and revoting out.

Ms LAWLER: It is the aim of government to spend that \$1.75bn. That \$1.75bn is the cash we have. As the minister for Infrastructure for the last few years—and the construction industry will tell you this—last year or the year before I had \$1.3bn and the year before that I had \$1.4bn. We delivered on that. As the Chief Executive said, we have been pushing and working hard to make sure that the dollars and the projects get out the door. There is \$1.75bn cash that is there for this 2020-21 budget.

When you talk about wanting to see how much money has been spent, part of my role as a minister is to get regular updates about projects to make sure they are tracking and being rolled out. As a minister I like to get out and about to the Arnhem Highways, Keep River where we have had some very big projects, talk to the people on the ground and see for myself how those projects are rolling out.

For the 2020-21, it is \$1.75bn, which is a huge spend this financial year.

Mr MALEY: Out of that, the figures here talk about a revote in of \$1.4m. That is \$1.4m you did not spend last year coming into this year. Is that right, minister?

Ms LAWLER: I will pass to the Chief Executive.

Mr KIRKMAN: The table you are looking at, Member for Nelson, on page 4 looks at the general government sector for the capital works program. Beyond that, we also, obviously, have a capital works program that sites with the government owned corporations like Power and Water, TGen and the like ...

Mr MALEY: Sorry. I just meant the money that your agency will spend. I am not talking about the other ones, I am just talking about you.

Mr KIRKMAN: Okay.

Mr MALEY: Does that table reflect you?

Mr KIRKMAN: No, that table reflects all of the general government. Predominantly, we deliver 95% of all that. But the figures that I have here probably will not exactly equate to that, but I can talk about that figure if that is what you would prefer to do.

Mr MALEY: Be straight. What I am trying to do is work out how much you will actually spend this year. You talk about \$1.75bn, then we go to that table and it says, 'Cash of \$863m'. Is that what you will really spend? Will you vote some in and then you will vote some out next financial year? Is that where we are heading, really?

Mr KIRKMAN: The \$863m is the cash that will be spent on the capital works program in general government, so excluding those government owned corporations, yes.

Mr MALEY: That is what you have to spend this year?

Mr KIRKMAN: That is correct.

Mr MALEY: So, you will revoke some in. Then what? Like the minister said, if it is halfway through on 30 June next year, that will vote out of this budget and vote into the next budget?

Mr KIRKMAN: That is right. There will be revoke every year, yes.

Mr MALEY: Effectively, this table says you will spend \$863m this year.

Mr KIRKMAN: On capital works in the government sector, yes, that is what government will spend this financial year.

Mr MALEY: Your budget of \$1.75m is including the re-vote out for next year as well, and the re-votes in for this year which have not been spent. Because, like the minister said, you might have a project that goes over three or four financial years and it might be worth \$100m, and that \$100m is in each budget but really it only gets spent maybe \$30m in one year, \$20m in the next year, until it gets spent. But re-vote in and re-vote out says—you can say, 'I'm going to spend \$175bn' but in reality you are only going to spend \$863m.

Mr KIRKMAN: It is probably better that I refer to you to the table at the bottom of page 3 so that you are able to reconcile that figure of \$863m. If you look at the top of the right-hand column, you have \$863m for capital works under the general government. You add to that capital grants of \$236m, repairs and maintenance of \$216m and other infrastructure-related expenses of \$20m to get you to \$1.3bn. And then you add capital works for the public financial corporations, like Power and Water, and repairs and maintenance of \$100m which brings you to about \$415m for those public non-financial corporations which, when you total those with the general government, it gets you to the \$1.75bn full infrastructure spend for the next financial year.

Mr MALEY: Minister, you are saying that you are going to spend the full \$1.75bn?

Ms LAWLER: That is the aim, Member for Nelson. As I was explaining, in the past few years, we have had \$1.4bn, \$1.3bn. That is why I get up in parliament and say, as minister, 'I delivered a \$5bn over four years'. I would not be saying it if it was not true but I would not also be saying it if it was not something that should be noted and clapped, and clapped very loudly. That is why—you were there at the civil construction awards night, where they sang my praises because we are delivering works for them. We are delivering jobs. When the budget and when the times have been tough in the Territory, we have been the people that have been rolling out the cash, getting jobs done, getting money out there.

The capital works is \$863m but there is repairs and maintenance. It is good because it keeps little people in work as well as the big people. Whether you are a big construction company—and we know those big roads companies, whether it is Ostojic's, King and Sons, Aldebaran, you know, those big companies—but then you also need some little companies to be doing the grading work out on the Tanami or doing some repairs and maintenance, somebody putting in some bollards. All of those dollars keep the Territory ticking over. \$1.7bn is a hell of a lot of money.

Yes, I will be pushing the agency to deliver that but people will benefit from that. Those companies employ Territorians. It is about jobs. Those people that are employed then stay in the Territory. They buy a new car; they buy a new house. They are coaching netball teams; they are coaching footy teams. They are good people that we need to keep in the Territory. As a government, we have been rolling out big infrastructure budgets, very big infrastructure budgets.

Mr MALEY: Minister, you just mentioned that you were at those functions and those people there are praising you and your government, and how good you are going. Can you just remind me what the net debt is again for this year?

Ms LAWLER: I know where you are going with this, Member for Nelson, but ...

Mr MALEY: Can you just answer the question? Can you remind me? What is the net debt this year?

Ms LAWLER: You know what the issue is to me?

Mr CHAIR: Member for Nelson, you asked the question. Allow the minister to answer the question.

Ms LAWLER: Member for Nelson, are you saying, if you were in my seat that you would not spend any money on infrastructure because I am sure the construction industry—they are out there listening now and are very, very frightened and very, very worried about that because, you know, that is what governments do. When the times are getting tough, government borrows money.

Money is cheap now, absolutely. You have seen that from the federal government. You have seen that from every state in Australia—Victoria, WA. All governments across the world are borrowing money to keep things going. If we were not spending money on roads, all of those companies would have gone bust. Those trucks would have been having fireside sales. Halikos, or whoever else it was, would not have jobs.

So, if you are saying that you would prefer to get the Territory in the black rather than spending money on infrastructure, I reckon there are a lot of people listening out there that are very frightened now that a CLP government would think that they would prefer to run private enterprise into the ground rather than government having a debt. I am very worried as well, Member for Nelson, because I am a true Territorian that was born here. I have family who also have businesses in the Territory. I am very concerned that your option would be to have Territory in the black and everybody else go bust.

Mr MALEY: I am not saying that at all, and thank you ...

Ms LAWLER: You did just say that.

Mr MALEY: Thank you for your rant. I am just asking you the question, what is the net debt for 2020-21? That is my question. You have not answered it yet.

Ms LAWLER: Because having a debt to me ...

Mr MALEY: Are you going to answer it, yes or no?

Ms LAWLER: No, I am not going to answer that because ...

Mr MALEY: Thank you.

Ms LAWLER: ...as an infrastructure minister I am very happy to spend \$1.7bn on infrastructure in the Territory. If that is about keeping Territory businesses ticking over, people in jobs, those companies buying new equipment, trucks, loaders, and graders. It is about their employees then buying houses, cars and keeping our economy ticking over. I am horrified, Member for Nelson, that you would be thinking you would prefer to see zero debt and wipe out all of these businesses in the Northern Territory.

Mr MALEY: To start, I did not know you had a crystal ball to know what I was thinking. If you do, what are the lotto numbers for next year? My God.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR: Member for Nelson, I am speaking now, thank you. I will just remind everybody to take a deep breath and become calmer in their questioning. The inferences and insults are getting a bit out of hand. I would like to continue with respectful questions of the minister and the department. Thank you, Member for Nelson.

Mr MALEY: I am glad the department is spending that sort of money on infrastructure and I hope you do spend that sort of money. I just want to get to money that you may have been allocated you have not spent. The federal government allocated \$2.8bn in 2013 for roads. My understanding is approximately \$1bn of that has been spent. \$1.8bn has not been spent. Can you explain why you have not spent the \$1.8bn?

Ms LAWLER: What year was that did you say?

Mr MALEY: It was 2013–14.

Ms LAWLER: That was under your government.

Mr MALEY: I am asking you now, you are the previous government; this is your fifth year. You have spent about a billion dollars. There is about \$1.8bn that has not been spent. Why have you not spent that?

Ms LAWLER: Member for Nelson, I really do not know what you are talking about. 2013-14 was under CLP government. I am not sure what program you are talking about. I have got the General Manager for Transport and Civil Services, Louise McCormick, who is an exceptional public servant who has driven our

roads program. I am not sure where you have got this figure from or who has provided you that information but I will pass to Louise McCormick.

Mr MALEY: Thank you.

Ms McCORMICK: Yes, those figures are in the federal budget. I know exactly the ones you are talking about. They are actually two National Partnership Agreements worth of funding. We are only one year into the current National Partnership Agreement. We still have four years left to spend that amount of money and beyond. We have only just finished spending the money from the previous partnership agreement. It was just over a billion dollars. We are only starting the current National Partnership Agreement expenditure now.

Mr MALEY: Minister, are you aware of this program? I know you said you did not know about it but, do you know what we are talking about?

Ms LAWLER: Yes, I am aware of the National Partnership Agreement. I am concerned you would think the Northern Territory government was not spending federal government funds wisely or we are not spending them. I can assure you that we are very much so.

Mr MALEY: A point of order!

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR: Thank you, minister. A point of order, Member for Nelson?

Mr MALEY: Your honour, she is putting words in my mouth. I did not talk about spending the money wisely. I said this money has been available which has not been spent and the general manager confirmed that.

Mr TURNER: I have another point of order when Mr Maley is finished.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR: Thank you, Member for Blain. The minister has answered the question. Another point of order, Member for Blain?

Mr TURNER: If the Member for Nelson wants to raise points of order then it would be my suggestion that he needs to raise a point of order, not something made up about 'putting words in my mouth.'

Ms LAWLER: Let us keep going with outputs. I do not think we have got to any of the outputs yet.

Mr MALEY: I am still asking some questions.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR: Member for Nelson, would you like to repeat your question?

Mr MALEY: Can I just ask another question? To the General Manager, can you please inform the Estimates Committee about the new partnership and the plans to move forward in relation to that?

Ms McCORMICK: The current national partnership agreement started mid-2019 but goes to 30 June 2024. Within that program, there are several what we call rolling programs that go over the five to 10 year period. That includes some of the ones the minister mentioned in her opening speech about \$200m for the Tanami Road, \$225m for the Central Arnhem Road, \$75m for the Port Keats Road and I am trying to remember all the others off the top of my head, but they include large programs. They include programs that go over multiple years along a corridor or a route if you like.

Mr MALEY: Do you have a plan to spend a certain amount this financial year?

Ms McCORMICK: Yes. We are already rolling out early works programs at the moment. We have just awarded sealing to the Yuendumu access on the Tanami. We are doing sealing between the Goyder River bridges from memory as well as an early works package. Under those rolling programs we are doing early works which we had previously designed so that whilst those early works are underway, we do investment strategies. Those are currently underway. Those investment strategies will then inform the priorities on those links on that road.

We also had a roundtable with all the stakeholders in industry with our federal government colleagues about two weeks ago about where their priorities are on those corridors. That will inform the investment going

forward. Once we have it in a priority order, we will then roll out a rolling design program about 12 months ahead of a construction program. That will be rolled out over a number of years.

Mr MALEY: Just to confirm, in the program which you just finished in 2019 ...

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR: A point of clarification, Member for Nelson. Please direct your questions through the minister. The minister will allocate them through to the appropriate person.

Mr MALEY: Minister, just confirming, the money for the previous programs you spent all the money you were granted.

Ms McCORMICK: Yes, we just finished on the beef roads which was the last project we had to finish spending that money.

Mr MALEY: All that money got spent that was allocated in that program?

Ms LAWLER: Yes.

Mr MALEY: Just back to the revote, in relation to the cash amount, can you explain how that figure is made up again, which is on page four?

Ms LAWLER: I will pass to the Chief Executive so he can explain the revote.

Mr KIRKMAN: Just to clarify your question, Member for Nelson. The \$863m that is in table two on page four is what you are asking for some clarity about? That will be spent across a range of functions, all the general government functions, transport, housing, sport and rec and cultural affairs, public order and safety—so police stations and the like—health clinics, education, social protection and general public services. That will be spread across a range of different activities that departments are undertaking for government.

Mr MALEY: So you have allocated that money and you know where it is going to go? You gave me a whole list but if I ask you, you would be able to tell me the breakdown?

Ms LAWLER: Yes, there are a number of projects that the revote is going to. I have some examples that I can give you. The Ngukurr police station revote is \$13.8m. That project had been delayed because of land tenure issues which is something we face in the Northern Territory. Another example is the youth justice centres; that is a revote of \$77.6m. You might remember the story around identifying land. We were originally looking at Pinelands as a possible site to build the youth justice facilities but then, there was a community process that we went through that meant that we moved that site. There are other examples.

There is a revote for Berrimah Farm infrastructure upgrades of \$18.6m because that project has some complex design work and it is being done in stages. The Adelaide River floodplains is a huge project and there is a revote of \$34m but that is because it was done over multiple financial years. A revote of \$49.4m for the Mandorah Jetty because there was further community consultation on the plan. The department is very clear where they will spend the money and what has been revoted and the projects where the dollars are going to.

Mr CHAIR: Are there any further questions?

Mr MALEY: Yes, Minister in relation to water security and planning on the infrastructure about that, can you give us an overview of what your plan is this year in relation to water security?

Ms LAWLER: That question should be under the output for Environment. That work on water security is under my Minister for the Environment and Water Security. At the moment there is some work being done around Arrows? Is that what you are talking about specifically?

Mr MALEY: I am asking about the infrastructure to getting ready for Arrows. I understand there has been a \$2m grant and there is a review that is happening?

Ms LAWLER: A report is being written at the moment. In respect to Arrows specifically as Minister for Water Security that feasibility study and research is being undertaken and you are right, that \$2m was some money from the federal government for that project and that work is still underway at the moment.

Mr MALEY: When do you think that report will be handed down?

Ms LAWLER: I will wait until I am here with the Environment portfolio.

Mr MALEY: In relation to your infrastructure portfolio, do you have any plans for infrastructure in relation to water security and starting forward planning for that now?

Ms LAWLER: I need you to define water security. Are you specifically talking about Arrows because there are so many aspects to water security?

Mr MALEY: Just Arrows, yes.

Ms LAWLER: We will wait for that feasibility study and report to come in on the work that needs to be done.

Mr MALEY: I have some questions in relation to Garramilla Boulevard.

Ms LAWLER: I did not talk about Garramilla in my opening statement.

Mr MALEY: You were just talking about infrastructure in general and you talked about the \$1.7bn infrastructure spend, this is an infrastructure spend and that is how it relates to it.

Mr CHAIR: Are you happy to take the question at this point?

Ms LAWLER: Fine, because I love Garramilla Boulevard.

Mr CHAIR: Please put the question, Member for Nelson.

Mr MALEY: When was the tender chosen and what was the original tender?

Ms LAWLER: I would have to ask the General Manager, Louise McCormack about the specific dates. That was a great project that has come in well before time which was fantastic. We had a dry wet that year so that project was able to be delivered about six months early which was great for commuters. We will take that on notice because that project is not in this estimates period. That project is completed now. The road is open and it is all finished. If you like we can put that as a question around that. What was the question again?

Question on Notice No 4.7

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR: Member for Nelson, please restate the question for the record.

Mr MALEY: When was the tender chosen, and what was the original tender for?

Ms LAWLER: I can say Territory Civil was the contractor that won that one ...

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR: Minister, do you accept the question?

Ms LAWLER: Yes I do.

Mr Deputy CHAIR: The question asked by the Member for Nelson has been allocated the number 4.7.

Mr MALEY: Do you want me to restate the question now?

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR: No, you have done it.

Mr MALEY: Oh, okay. I go on to my next question. Were there any variations to that contract?

Ms LAWLER: That project has been completed, so we can take those questions or that can be part of a briefing. We are here for the estimates for the 2020-21 year.

I will talk broadly. There are often variations to projects. Some projects come in under but some project do go over. Sometimes the variations are—for example, I can talk about the playground at Myilly Point because

that is a nice, clear example where there was asbestos that was a greater amount that has previously been thought. Yes, there are always unders and overs with projects. That is what variation is about. Most projects have some sort of variation to them.

Specifically to Garramilla Boulevard, we will take those questions on notice because that project is completed now.

Question on Notice No 4.8

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR: Member for Nelson, please restate the question of the record.

Mr MALEY: Were there any variations to the contract? My next question is what was the total cost of that variation? I guess to save ...

Ms LAWLER: Yes, add that in.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR: Minister, do you accept the question?

Ms LAWLER: Yes, I do.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR: The Question on Notice asked by the Member for Nelson of the minister has been allocated the number 4.8.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR: Are there any other questions?

Mr MALEY: I have a few more questions in relation to that. Is there any more money to be spent on Garramilla Boulevard this financial year?

Ms LAWLER: In this financial year? I will pass to the Chief Executive.

Mr KIRKMAN: Member for Nelson, yes, there will be a little landscaping work. That is all that is intended for this financial year.

Mr MALEY: I have some specific questions in relation to the bus stop. Do you want to take them on notice? My understanding it was varied out and varied back in. I want to get to the bottom of how much that cost. The bus stop on Cavanagh Street. Where do you want to put them in? How do you want to handle it?

Ms LAWLER: We can do it through the output, otherwise we will never get to the output.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR: Minister, I wondering whether it is covered in the variations question 4.7 that is on record. Member for Nelson ...

Mr MALEY: I am just worried that it was broad, 'Were there any variations?' The answer will be yes. I want to narrow it down a bit to a specific variation about the bus stop being varied out and then being varied back in, and the total cost of that. That is where I am heading with that question. I just want to know whether it is easier for the minister to take it on notice or does she want to answer it now.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR: Member for Nelson, if you put the question, the minister can decide whether she wants to take it on notice.

Ms LAWLER: It is just about getting to the output areas, that is all. We end up with the staff coming and going, that is all. I am not sure what the question was.

Question on Notice No 4.9

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR: Could you repeat the question please, Member for Nelson?

Mr MALEY: My understanding is that for the bus stop on Cavanagh Street there was a variation varied out and then it was varied back in again. What was the total cost of those two variations combined?

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR: Minister, do you accept the question?

Ms LAWLER: Yes, I will accept the question. Member for Nelson, the bus interchange was originally, as you know, outside Woolworths. Then it was moved to Smith Street temporarily. Then it was moved back. I will pass to the Chief Executive, Andrew Kirkman.

Mr KIRKMAN: The work that was done on the relocation of the bus terminal was not part of the broader project of Garramilla, other than to get it out of the way of the intersection when that road was being constructed. There was not a view that we would cost that as part of the Garramilla Boulevard project. That would be a separate project.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR: Excuse me, member. The question was asked by the Member for Nelson of the minister and allocated number 4.9 for the record.

Mr MALEY: Since you have told us that was a separate contract, can you give me some details about the separate contract? When was it awarded and what was the cost of that in relation to the bus stop? There has been a separate contract by the sounds of it.

Ms LAWLER: I will pass to the Chief Executive on that. I travelled past there just recently and one of the good things I will mention is the new bus lane, a first for the Northern Territory, as well as the totem signs which are also new for the Territory. We have ended up with a very nice result there but I will pass to Andrew Kirkman.

Mr KIRKMAN: For expenditure to date for Cavenagh Street, we had installation of CCTV cameras which is about \$9,000.

Mr MALEY: Just to clarify, this is in relation to the bus stop contract?

Mr KIRKMAN: That is right. Saying contract, we effectively project managed all the separate components so there is not a broader project if you like but I can let you know what the costs are.

Mr MALEY: I was just picking up what you said. I want costs in relation to the bus stop going to another spot and then coming back.

Mr KIRKMAN: Yes. That cost has been about \$20,000 for 2019-20 that was installation of CCTV cameras and the traffic impact assessment that happened during that year to enable us to get to the right solution. The commitment this year is around \$412,000.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR: We might just take a quick pause there to be aware of how many outputs we have for this section of the infrastructure portfolio. I am aware we have staff here and that dinner is coming up. Happy to keep going but just be aware. I do not want to have all these wonderful staff here ready to answer your questions and then we all run out of time. Just for clarification.

Mr MALEY: Thank you for that. Effectively it is the Labor government who narrowed down estimates and put it to the middle of the night so unfortunately that is a decision brought ...

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR: Member for Nelson, I would ask you to get on with your question.

Mr MALEY: I am just answering your question. So back to the bus stop. The total cost of moving the bus stop and bringing the bus stop back was \$432,000?

Ms LAWLER: Yes, Member for Nelson, we heard from the Chief Executive that was the cost. We built Garramilla Boulevard. There are costs when you are building some big infrastructure like that as well as the third stage of Tiger Brennan Drive. There are costs around that.

If you had come into town when Garramilla was being built, you would have seen that end of Cavenagh Street had a lot of traffic barriers in place. It would have been very difficult to continue to have the bus stop there. Obviously safety comes first and so we had to move that bus stop to Smith Street. It was in Smith Street in front of a number of businesses near Peel Street. It was there temporarily. We got feedback from some of the landowners there that they were not happy with it there because it took up car parks as well as antisocial behaviour. It attracted a lot of people to the bus stop.

As soon as we had the opportunity once Garramilla was finished and the traffic was flowing very well between Tiger Brennan and Garramilla, the work was done to move the bus stop back to that site which is the one everyone knows outside of Woolworths there in Cavenagh Street. That site seems to be working very well. It has the bus lane—the B lane—which is unique and new in the Territory as well as those totems as well.

There were pluses and minuses about both sites but obviously that site is one looking to the future as well when you have the university precinct there, presumably with university students looking to use public transport more. That site is a positive site. The money that was spent needed to be spent to make sure that we ended up with a good product for the public.

Mr MALEY: Just getting back to the bus stop, was it always planned to move to Smith Street and then move it back or was that an afterthought?

Ms LAWLER: No, that was always going to be the plan. The bus stop needed to be moved from that site. It was moved to Smith Street and then it did not work at Smith Street. Obviously, some of those issues are at Smith Street and so it was then about moving it back to Cavenagh Street.

Mr MALEY: So you moved it to Smith Street on a permanent basis, but then you had some feedback that it was not working, so then you moved it back to where it was originally. Is that correct minister?

Ms LAWLER: It was moved to Smith Street during the construction. It was like a trial, or whatever you want to call it. It was moved to Smith Street. That was not feasible, it was not acceptable and then it went back to that Cavenagh Street site.

Mr MALEY: Minister I am asking you what you called it? Was it a trial or a permanent move?

Ms LAWLER: It had to be moved because that intersection came through from Garramilla to the endpoint there. It was necessary to move it because that project was being delivered. It was moved to Smith Street and then it was moved back. I do not know whether you want to call it a trial or you want to call it a process. But it was a process that had to be done.

Mr MALEY: Minister I am asking you what you called it?

Ms LAWLER: I did not call it anything, I just enjoyed the project. Those nitty-gritties around projects that are being delivered I leave to the engineers and to the experts. To me it was the conversations that I had with the chief executive around making sure that Territorians were safe at all times. That when we use the B-lane that went in there that the buses had priority. I never called it anything.

Mr MALEY: So you are saying you did not know about the move of the bus stop?

Ms LAWLER: I knew all about the move of the bus stop but I did not call it anything. It was about Garramilla Boulevard being delivered and making sure then that Territorians, that Top-Enders that use the bus always had a safe place to get on and off the bus. That was an operational matter for the department to make sure they worked with the contractor, which was Territoria Civil, around the road construction. Once the road was constructed it was then about making sure that the bust stop was in a suitable place.

Mr MALEY: Did the bust stop contract go out to tender? Did it go out to a tender? Have I phrased that correctly?

Ms LAWLER: I will pass it to the chief executive.

Mr KIRKMAN: Depending on what the scale of the works were will be subject to what tier of procurement it would have been. So I will have just have to confer with my colleagues around what the actual procurement for that was. If you can just bear with us a second.

Mr MALEY: Do you want me to take it on notice?

Ms LAWLER: No we can check on that one.

Mr MALEY: Okay, that is fine.

Mr KIRKMAN: The actual traffic light works would have been tendered, but the exact method of that tender we would have to come back to you on a question.

Mr MALEY: So that is my next question, the \$432,000 what tier of tendering is that?

Mr KIRKMAN: If we can include that as part of the question that would ideal.

Mr MALEY: So we will take that on notice.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR: Minister would you like to—

Ms LAWLER: Yes.

Question on Notice No 4.10

Mr CHAIR: Member for Nelson please restate the question for the record.

Mr MALEY: The question is, in relation to the bus stop tender of \$432,000, did it go out to a tender and what tier tender was that and who got the tender?

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR: Minister do you accept the question?

Ms LAWLER: Yes.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR: The question has been asked by the Member for Nelson of the minister and the allocated number is 4.10. Are there any other questions?

Mr MALEY: Minister I just have one more question about Garramilla Boulevard. Was the tender released before the design was completed?

Ms LAWLER: I will pass to Andrew Kirkman, but as I said this is not in this estimates period it might be one we have to take on notice.

Mr KIRKMAN: There was substantial design done on Garramilla Boulevard before that went to tender. There were significant design works undertaken given the complexity of that road. Obviously, there was a large part of that going through, effectively, mangrove swamp, cutting through a number of services, and having to deal with some real complexities in the urban environment. There was a heavy design done on that and then it was awarded.

Subsequent to award, as per usual, there is an iteration, as well, around the design work as contractors come across things that they, perhaps, were not aware of. Services in the road, etcetera, need to be dealt with that, perhaps, were not highlighted previously and some design changes to make sure it is really fit-for-purpose and the road that it is now, which I think is a great product.

Mr MALEY: I agree. I think the product is great and I use it most days. But just back to the question of substantially designed. Because it was not finished, is that why the variations occur? Is that what a variation is? Is that because it has not quite finished and then a contractor or a tender gets it? I am just trying to get at why the variations happened?

Mr KIRKMAN: Variations can happen for a range of reasons. Yes, sometimes they can happen if designs change or there is a design change requirement that was not envisaged at the time of the tender.

It can happen because of what we would call latent conditions. They might hit a pocket of asbestos—that certainly happened on Garramilla Boulevard—hard rock, services that, perhaps, were not listed in the area that they were found and then having to be relocated.

There is a wide range of reasons as to why you can get variations on a project. In an urban project, such as Garramilla Boulevard, there is always going to be something pops up that you were not aware of.

Mr MALEY: Would you be able to give a percentage of what design was finished when it was tendered? Was it 50%, 60%, 70%, 80%, 95%? I am just trying a few figures out there.

Mr KIRKMAN: I will pass this on to Louise McCormick, general manager for the responsible division and who is intimately involved in this project.

Ms MCCORMICK: There were some complex geo-technical engineering components to that project, specifically on Tiger Brennan Drive, Stage Three. There was a reinforced earth wall. There are only a handful of people in Australia that can design those. That was a component that was not designed as part of the design tender. It was added to the construction tender because you have specialist contractors that do that work.

The other component that was not included, which was a bit of an unknown until you got there, was what we call mass or mixing, which is down in the soft marine soils. It actually needs specialist people, as well. It was part of the construction tender. The remainder of the works was actually already 100% designed except for those specialist components.

Mr MALEY: Can you tell me how much those variations cost, minister?

Ms LAWLER: Member for Nelson, we have already taken that on notice. As I said, this estimates is about 2020-21. You should have been here two years ago, mate. We will take those on notice because, otherwise, we are not going to get to—and the Member for Mulka, as well, would like the opportunity, I am sure, to be able to look at this year's budget.

Mr MALEY: And I am sure that the Member for Mulka will have an opportunity to do that. Just getting back, you are going to get on notice for those two variations?

Ms LAWLER: Yes. We have already agreed to that.

Mr MALEY: Back to my original question. Maybe minister, you might want to pass this. What percentage do you think was finished? I know you said you gave us two. Can you give us an estimate of what percentage of the design was done before it was released to tender?

Ms LAWLER: General manager, Louise McCormick, if you do not have that to hand, you can take that on notice.

Ms MCCORMICK: I do not have the specific number but I can estimate that it was probably 90% because all civil works, except for those two components, were completed.

Mr MALEY: Thank you.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR: Are there any other questions to this statement?

Mr MALEY: This now relates to the underground car park. Again it is in that infrastructure spend. What was the amount of the winning tender for the underground car park?

Ms LAWLER: I think we should wait for the relevant output area rather than just pluck things out.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR: That question can move to the relevant output area.

Mr MALEY: Can you explain what relevant output it is? I do not want to get to one and say I should have asked it prior. Can you tell me what that should be?

Ms LAWLER: Output 9.1, Infrastructure investment program support and delivery.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR: It is the first of the outputs so we may not take too long to get to it.

Mr MALEY: I note the time; there is two minutes to go. Do you want me to go on?

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR: Yes, until we get to half past the hour.

Mr MALEY: You made mention of the MVR and the new portal. I just want to talk about the drivers licences. Are they made in the Northern Territory?

Ms LAWLER: Again, it is not the right output area but I can answer that one. No. Those drivers' licences have a high level of security and so one of the issues that we have in Australia and around the world is

around identity fraud. Our previous drivers' licences, as much as we all love them with the Territory colours and things like that on them, they were easily able to be defrauded. We have had to go to—and this is Australia wide—having drivers licences that provide much more security.

The NT drivers' licences are being manufactured in a high security specialist facility that uses advanced printing technologies. That is not available in the Northern Territory. The move to centralised printing is about making sure we have a secure drivers licence so your personal identity cannot be stolen so easily. That is being done interstate.

Mr MALEY: You talked about the fraud of the NT licences, the old one. Are there any examples of specific cases of fraud that you are aware of?

Ms LAWLER: I cannot give you any specifics, you need to ask the minister for Police. I think we all understand that if you need 100 points, the Member for Blain can probably tell me how many points a drivers licence is worth, it is around money laundering and all of those issues where people—and I am sure you understand that—are not always honest in this world who may set up false bank accounts, launder money and those sorts of things.

The new NT drivers licence includes microtext, laser printing, a clear strip to prevent date of birth tampering and a shadow portrait. It is about making sure that it is secure. I have information here that the Commonwealth Attorney-General's department estimated that drivers licences accounted for approximately 40% of fraudulent identity documents used to commit identity crime and facilitate organised criminal activity.

Yes we would all love there not to be fraudulent criminal activity but there is that organised crime. I am sure you have dealt with some of these people in your previous job, Member for Nelson. We are very happy to make sure that we have a secure licence in the Northern Territory for Territorians.

Mr MALEY: So you are not aware of any particular cases of fraud in the Northern Territory using a Northern Territory licence, you personally minister?

Ms LAWLER: I am not going to talk about me personally.

Mr MALEY: I withdraw that. Your department, sorry minister.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR: Just a reminder that expression of opinion by the minister is not something that we let through.

Mr MALEY: Sorry, I withdrew that.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR: Can you please rephrase the question? Let us not. Let us go to dinner. Thank you very much everybody.

The committee suspended.

Mr MALEY: In Budget Paper No 3 at page 103 in the table there under Building Asset Management, \$96.108m is for the 2020-21 budget. In 2019-20-21—it might just be an overlap. Can you explain how you got that figure because the budget before only had \$2.8m and maybe a \$7.4m. I am thinking they are combined with the new agency, but can you just confirm that?

Ms LAWLER: Member for Nelson, I will pass to the Chief Executive Officer, who can pass to the CFO if he likes.

Mr KIRKMAN: Member for Nelson, yes, you are correct. A large portion of that was the result of the amalgamation of infrastructure staff and other agencies. Previously, each agency had their own repairs and maintenance bucket, if you like. Since that amalgamation that has all been consolidated into this department and most of the R&M for those agencies sits in that figure.

Mr MALEY: In the budget for 2019-20, the \$2.8m would be an estimate. But what was actually spent for that?

Mr KIRKMAN: For the \$2.8m in 2019-20?

Mr MALEY: Yes. That was under asset management, \$2.8m. That was the budget. Is that what the actual number was?

Ms LAWLER: Member for Nelson, the Chief Executive Officer is just having a look through the annual report.

Mr KIRKMAN: Member for Nelson, I do not have the exact breakdown of the \$2.8m. That was the original budget for 2019-20 you would be looking at. The final budget after the amalgamation was closer to \$86m because of all those repairs and maintenance being transferred in. The team that existed prior to the amalgamation were there looking at how we manage our assets. There were definitely personnel costs in there and the operational costs related to those staff. There are likely to be some other small items. I am happy to get that response to you if you like.

Mr MALEY: The main question was, minister, where that \$96m came from. That has been answered, so thank you for that.

One more question before we move onto the outputs. Has any money been set aside for the acquisition of Anzac Oval?

Ms LAWLER: Yes, there is \$49.something million dollars for the design and the build, but for the acquisition, no money has not been identified as yet because that is still going through the process. There has been no budget allocation for the dollars for that because that process is still progressing.

Mr MALEY: Do you think that money has to be made available this budget?

Ms LAWLER: I really ...

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR: That is an opinion you are asking for, Member for Nelson.

Mr MALEY: I will rephrase the question. Is that money going to be needed for this budget?

Ms LAWLER: As the minister responsible for the decision around the acquisition I will wait and see. The deadline for the Alice Springs council to provide information is 15 January. I will wait until that deadline. At this stage, yes, there is not a budget allocation for that.

Mr MALEY: So \$50m has been set aside for the planning and building but no money has been set aside for the purchase of the land?

Ms LAWLER: You are correct, yes.

Mr MALEY: If there is no money set aside, and you purchase the land on the deadline of 15 January, how are you going to purchase the land?

Ms LAWLER: Within government, in DIPL, there is a fund—a budget line—for acquisition, but we will let that process go through at this stage—there is also \$8m around the building—and see where we get to.

Mr MALEY: So you have set money aside for the planning and build, but you have not set aside money for the purchasing of the land, is that correct?

Ms LAWLER: I hope the members of the Alice Springs council are listening and may choose to give that land back to the Northern Territory Government, Member for Nelson. There is a process to go through and we will wait to see what the end result is. There is no point in thinking or whatever—I am the decision-maker as the minister for planning. I will wait to see what the information is in front of me and not presume anything until that date of 15 January.

Mr MALEY: But you agree with me there is no money set aside for the purchase of that land in this year's budget?

Ms LAWLER: I agree. There is money though. There is a budget line in the infrastructure budget for land acquisition and that money can be drawn on if need be. At this stage, we will go through that process and wait to see what the end result of that is. It might be that the Alice Springs council want to gift that land back to the Northern Territory Government. There may be continued negotiations around that. There are so many scenarios that could happen around that acquisition. It could, who knows? So let us just wait and see.

Mr MALEY: You said there is a budget line for acquisition, how much is in that line now?

Ms LAWLER: I will pass to the Chief Executive who can pass to the Chief Financial Officer.

Mr KIRKMAN: I will pass through to Fotis if she has got further information. We hold about \$3m per annum for acquisition. That covers a range of things, corridors and the like, when we are doing lands planning. For example, if we need to acquire land off stakeholders. We can certainly apply some of that funding if required.

Mr MALEY: Have you done any modelling or estimates of what the land is worth that we are talking about?

Ms LAWLER: I will pass to the Chief Executive, but it obviously has the unimproved capital value for that land. Yes?

Mr KIRKMAN: Yes, we looked at the unimproved capital value and the value for the land, so we are well aware of that.

Mr MALEY: Minister, what is the value of that land?

Ms LAWLER: I will pass to the Chief Executive.

Mr KIRKMAN: That is still part of a discussion with the Alice Springs Town Council. As the minister points out, we are in consultation at the moment in respect to the objections to the compulsory acquisition. At this stage, it would not be appropriate for me to go into details of what might make up that acquisition agreement.

Mr MALEY: Thank you, minister. I am not asking me to give you details of the acquisition agreement, I am just asking you, what is the unimproved capital value of Anzac Oval?

Mr KIRKMAN: I will see if we have that answer, Member for Nelson, keeping in mind that a negotiation may be somewhat different than the unimproved capital value but I will see if we have that. If not, we will take it on notice.

Mr MALEY: Normally it is a lot more than unimproved capital value.

Ms LAWLER: Yes, we understand all of this.

Mr KIRKMAN: Member for Nelson, we will have to take that on notice.

Question on Notice No 4.11

Mr Deputy CHAIR: Member for Nelson, please restate the question for the record.

Mr MALEY: Minister, can you please tell me the unimproved capital value of Anzac Oval in Alice Springs?

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR: Minister, do you accept the question.

Ms LAWLER: Yes, I do.

Mr Deputy CHAIR: The question asked by the Member for Nelson has been allocated the number 4.11.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR: Are there any further questions?

Mr MALEY: No further questions in relation to the opening statement.

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

Mr Deputy CHAIR: The committee will now proceed to consider the estimates and proposed expenditure contained in the Appropriation Bill 2020–21 as they relate to the Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Logistics. Are there any agency-related whole-of-government questions on budget and fiscal strategy? We

OUTPUT GROUP 9.0 – INFRASTRUCTURE INVESTMENT PROGRAM, SUPPORT AND DELIVERY
Output 9.1 – Infrastructure Investment and Delivery

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR: Are there any questions?

Ms LAWLER: I will note that the General Manager John Harrison is moving to the floor.

Mr MALEY: Minister, in relation to the underground carpark, what was the amount of the winning tender? I know we spoke of this earlier and you referred me to this output.

Ms LAWLER: I would like to also say that it is an amazing project. It is part of the Civil and State Square masterplan and it is a key component of that. There are 450 carparks on three levels. It is also a cyclone shelter. It will see 300 hot carparks being removed out of that area there including the 90 bay carpark that Parliament House staff used. The area in front of the Supreme Court will also be going also. It is an amazing project and now looking wonderful with the gardens on top of that project. I will pass to John Harrison to give that response.

Mr MALEY: Thank you for your opinion minister.

Mr HARRISON: The contract award amount was \$19.4m.

Mr MALEY: Could you just repeat that John, I missed that.

Mr HARRISON: \$19.4m.

Mr MALEY: Who was the winning contractor?

Ms LAWLER: Tomazos was the winning contractor. One of the great things again I am very pleased about is the nearly 90% of the contracts are going to Territory companies. Tomazos were the winning contractor for the underground carpark.

Mr MALEY: Territory companies. What is the department's definition of a Territory company?

Ms LAWLER: I will pass to the CE but I can assure you that there is very clear work around what constitutes a Territory company.

Mr KIRKMAN: Member for Nelson, 'Territory company' is fairly clearly defined in the procurement guidelines that we have. I will ask John Harrison to talk in more detail but they need to have a local base here in the Territory, employ local Territorians and subcontract and do the work using other Territory companies as well. When we are assessing against value for Territory and we look at that buy local component there is obviously varying degrees of how people perform against that category and very happy for John to go into a bit more detail on that.

Mr HARRISON: All that I will add is that companies need to have a residence, whether it be owned or rented and have a permanent presence and employ Territorians. If my CPO was here she would give you a far better definition than that but effectively that is the summary.

Mr MALEY: That is enough thank you. Minister, in relation to that contract were there any variations to that contract of the \$19.4m?

Ms LAWLER: I will pass to the general manager, but before I do I will say that yes, I absolutely know that there were variations because my office actually overlooks the car park and I could see the issues that arose with asbestos. All Territorians would know that it used to be the Supreme Court site and obviously when it was constructed they must have done what we do at times now is bury asbestos. I saw those white tarpaulins over the piles there and I felt at times that I was almost project managing that because I could see the work that was happening there. Yes, there were variations to that but I will pass to John Harrison to provide details around.

Mr HARRISON: So there were significant variations to the State Square underground car park project associated with the asbestos remediation. The fact that the master plan was agreed by government after we awarded that contract so the development of the landscape was in addition to the contract cost. Then there were also improvements that were made to the design because it was a design and construct tender. The total amount was \$26.7m, of which \$2.7m was attributed to asbestos.

Mr MALEY: So minister, I will direct the questions to you, just going back a few steps there some variations and it was a design and construct? So someone won the tender to design and construct it and it was \$19.4m and it ended up costing \$26.7m, \$2.7m was the asbestos—which I can accept that—so what were the other variations? Why were they not included in the original tender of \$19.4m?

Ms LAWLER: Member for Nelson, I will pass to John Harrison the General Manager. But it is not unusual to have variations around projects particularly infrastructure projects. I will pass to John to provide details of that variation.

Mr HARRISON: Just alluding back to my statement earlier, a large portion was the \$2.7m and then another large portion was the landscape development above the car park. So it was a significant piece of work because we had to bring in material to build up the height of the garden without adding the weight of soil, so there was actually a technical solution to that. Then there was also ensuring that when do plant trees they will be able to grow and that they are anchored and do not become a problem for the public. The other large portion was the garden above.

Mr MALEY: Minister, when you are talking about the landscape as a large portion do you have an exact amount for that?

Ms LAWLER: You can take that one on notice.

Question on Notice No 4.12

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR: Member for Nelson please restate the question for the record.

Mr MALEY: Minister, can you please tell me what the exact cost was for the landscaping of the underground car park?

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR: Minister, do you accept the question?

Ms LAWLER: I will take that question on notice. Yes.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR: The question asked by the Member for Nelson of the minister has been allocated the number 4.12.

Mr MALEY: My understanding is that the original plan was for an underground car park, but obviously it is not an underground car park, it seems to be one level above. Can you explain why it is not an underground car park and is one level above?

Ms LAWLER: Member for Nelson I know you are following in the lines of your illustrious leader, Opposition Leader Lia Finocchiaro, who obviously does not like the underground car park. The interesting thing though—and I did that in the last Question Time—you actually put it as one of your three top criteria about employing advisers, was about offering an underground car park.

Mr MALEY: Can you answer the question, I am not interested in your commentary minister.

Ms LAWLER: As much as you do not like the underground car park. It is an underground car park. That is a fact. It is underground. It is an amazing facility that can be used as a cyclone shelter. But it also takes 450 car parks and provides that beautification to that area. So that 90 bay car park and again, obviously the CLP have no vision. We saw that in the four years you were in government. Nothing was done around the CBD in Darwin. But we have a vision for a clean, green, cool CBD.

That is about getting rid of the 90-bay carpark, getting rid of the hot car parks in front of the Supreme Court there. I am very pleased also that the council have now agreed to get rid of and green the car park that is near the Cenotaph as well.

Through that work, we now have 450 car parks, taking all those vehicles—and you see it every morning as you come in here—underground in that space. It is an underground car park—and whether it is semantics or what games you are playing around that—it is an underground car park. It was built by Tomazos, a Northern Territory company. It now is looking beautiful with the garden work there.

You need to have a vision for the CBD. It is about having a beautiful CBD in the Darwin city.

Mr MALEY: Thank you for your commentary, minister. Now can you answer my question?

Ms LAWLER: It is not commentary, Member for Nelson. I do not like that condescending tone that you use.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR: I refer back to our manner and form of questions. There should be no imputations or insults or arguments in this session. There is a question and there is an answer from the minister. Do you have another question, Member for Nelson?

Mr MALEY: My understanding is that the original tender was for an underground car park. Why is the underground car park now an above ground car park?

Ms LAWLER: I am not going to answer that question because, as I said, it is incorrect.

Mr MALEY: I do not think you are here to make that decision. I asked a question.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR: Member for Nelson, the minister has the right to refuse the question and in fact, if the minister has already answered the question she has the right to state that as well.

Ms LAWLER: If he wants to change it and talk about the underground car park, there is ground and it is under that ground. It is an underground car park. I have had two years of the Leader of the Opposition, when you were not even here, making the same allegations about it and you know what, knocking a Territory company. Tomazos employed Territorians, they kept people in jobs and you are not interested.

Mr MALEY: A point of order, Mr Deputy Chair. That is putting words in my mouth. I did not knock any Territory companies.

Mr TURNER: A point of order, Mr Deputy Chair!

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR: Member for Blain, we will deal with one point of order at a time. Minister, do you agree that you are putting words into the member's mouth?

Ms LAWLER: No, and as I said, there is not one single car park in that space that is above ground.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR: The second point of order, Member for Blain?

Mr TURNER: 'Putting words in mouth' is not a point of order. If the Member for Nelson does not have a question, I will have one please.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR: Thank you, Member for Blain. Your point of order is noted. Minister, would you like to continue with your answer?

Ms LAWLER: Yes, it is an underground car park. There is not one single car park of those 400 that is above the ground. It was a Territory company. We ended up with a beautiful product; so beautiful that you used it to entice advisors to work for you, one of the three criteria, by having and offering an underground car park.

Mr MALEY: I understand the surface above the car park was intended to be flat, now it is elevated. Is that correct?

Ms LAWLER: Where the garden is, you can see that it is rounded and that is to make sure that there was substantial amounts of soil that we could plant trees, have pathways and have the gardening area there. It is about the aesthetics and having a beautiful vista there and a lovely garden which we can see now.

Mr MALEY: Minister, if that was the original intention why was there a contract variation?

Ms LAWLER: The contract variation was around the type of garden that has gone in. It was about providing for plants and things like that. It was the same around Garramilla Boulevard. When I came in as minister, Garramilla had minimal landscaping. A clear example is Roystonea into Palmerston. When the CLP built that road into Palmerston, there was not one single plant, it was like an ugly, dry and horrible space.

Whether that is because you have a minister who enjoys and loves the Territory but when I was elected as minister for Infrastructure, I made sure Garramilla Boulevard also had beautification and green. I am really pleased to see then that the City of Darwin Council has taken that step as well and have greened and beautified Daly Street.

I think one of your jobs as a minister is to put the Territory first but also our government's vision is also around a green beautiful city. With Garramilla Boulevard, one of the variations was to make sure that we had that garramilla rock on some of the features. I want to see the trees ...

Mr MALEY: Point of order! Standing Order 35: relevance. I am talking about the underground carpark not the boulevard.

Mr TURNER: Point of order, Mr Deputy Chair.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR: I will rule on one point of order at a time. There is no point of order. The minister is allowed to encapsulate her answer as she perceives fit.

There is another point of order.

Mr TURNER: Standing Order 35 would not apply anyway because it is estimates and we are discussing appropriation.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR: Absolutely, thank you Member for Blain. Please continue minister.

Ms LAWLER: I am trying to explain to the Member for Nelson. One of the privileges that you get as a minister is to work with your agency towards your government's vision and directions. I am a born and bred Territorian, who loves this city. One of our visions as a government is to make sure that we have a cool, beautiful CBD because we think that brings people back into the CBD. They spend money here. It also lures and brings tourists into our city if other tourists report just how gorgeous and wonderful our city.

Garramilla Boulevard, I made sure that was green. I am looking forward to the day when those trees overlap just like they do around the Gardens when you are going through the golf course. That is the vision for Garramilla Boulevard. It was the same then with that carpark. That was our direction. Our view is to have a beautiful area so that we can have festivals. We can have people coming, sitting there, and enjoying a cool area. We also, through that heat mitigation work, had worked out that those carparks were hot and were blowing that hot air down Cavanagh Street.

As a minister, it is about having a vision and delivering on that vision. The example I gave is Roystonea Avenue. The entrances into Palmerston—and you would have to agree with me—are stunning. They are beautiful. We are working on Temple Terrace as well. The Member for Barkly, we are doing the beautification work around Patterson Street as well in the Barkly. You have to spend some money to make the place look great so that Territorians can enjoy being here, and that we can bring tourists here.

Member for Nelson, you may not love that. You may not like that but one day, if you are so fortunate enough to—and I am forever grateful to be the minister that has been able to do this work—I hope that when I am eighty years old in a rocking chair, I will be able to look back at those grounds at that carpark, on Garramilla Boulevard, on Roystonea Avenue, in Patterson Street in the Barkly, and be able to say that I played a part in making sure that we have a beautiful city.

Mr MALEY: Thank you minister. You mention that there is a variation in relation to the landscaping. Can you explain to me what that variation was? And secondly, what was the cost of that variation?

Mr KIRKMAN: Before John goes into the detail of variations, which I think we have taken on notice, I will just allude to the reasoning why there was a variation for that landscaping component. As John Harrison mentioned earlier, we were getting on with the job of building this carpark. That is what government were keen to do as part of the economic stimulus at the time.

We were also, at the same time, master-planning for the entire State Square site, including the landscaping above this carpark. We were not clear at the time that the tender was let, that, in fact, this contract should deliver that landscaping work because we were still master-planning that State Square. We provided some emphasis on the contractor to make sure this element was designed first so that we could—if we wished to, if it was appropriate and if it was the right decision—vary that landscaping work into this contract so we could get the landscaping work done as soon as the car park was finished.

That was why the landscaping work was varied into the contract because we had the design done in time, we believed they had the capacity and they were the right contractor to do it, and they were the most expedient way of getting that job finished. That is why it was varied in.

Mr MALEY: Minister, you said it was varied in. What was the original tender in relation to the landscaping? Why was it varied in? I have your press release dated 24 January 2018 and it has a picture of—and I can show it to you if you like—how it is flat and it talks about that. Why was it varied in?

Ms LAWLER: I have just given a large explanation around that. You can see on that diagram ...

Mr MALEY: It is flat.

Ms LAWLER: It is not exactly flat to me. It looks exactly like what we have now. It was about not just having grass but having plants and things like that over that. That is what we have now. We have a cycad garden there now and I think that looks magnificent. If you were a classical scholar, Member for Nelson, I could talk about Pericles. People out there listening to this would know that and understand that. Pericles, in ancient Greece, built lovely monuments and most of them still remain today. He probably got criticised at that time for doing that.

I am going to make sure that I am an Infrastructure minister who, if we are building functional things like car parks or shade structures—I will mention that as well—or we are building roads, that we end up with a product that is also aesthetically pleasing for Territorians. I think Territorians deserve that. They are things that will be there long-term into the future rather than a road with just some old clay and rock and weeds growing.

As Infrastructure minister, I was re-elected in. My people elected me and re-elected me. My Cabinet colleagues and Caucus colleagues put me in as Infrastructure minister. I will deliver on the job. I am delivering that job on what I see and what I think Territorians who I meet every day and tell me just how beautiful that car park is. They tell me every day about Garramilla Boulevard and the work in Palmerston.

If you are Infrastructure minister one day, you can choose what you want to do, Member for Nelson.

Mr MALEY: Thank you, minister. Now can you tell me what the cost of that variation was?

Ms LAWLER: We will take that on notice.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR: It has already been taken on notice.

Mr MALEY: This is the variation for the landscaping in is what I am asking about.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR: My understanding is it is already on notice.

Mr MALEY: No, it is a different question.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR: Question on notice 4.12 is the underground car park landscaping variation cost.

Mr MALEY: That is correct. That is my question.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR: That is already on notice.

Mr MALEY: So what was it again, sorry?

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR: The variation to the underground car park landscaping. You already put that on notice as 4.12.

Mr MALEY: Changing subject to the heavy vehicle inspection facility. It opened in April 2020. How many vehicles have passed through the new inspection facility at Truck Central?

Ms LAWLER: That is not this output. That is in a different output.

Mr MALEY: What output would that be under, minister?

Ms LAWLER: Logistics and ...

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR: 11.1. Do you want to hold that question off until 11.1?

Mr MALEY: Yes.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR: Thank you, Member for Nelson. Are there any other questions on Output 9.1?

Mr MALEY: Yes, minister, this is in relation to the Palmerston Police Station. Since this \$30m facility opened in August 2019, have there been any major building defects or additional rectification works incurred?

Ms LAWLER: I am looking at the General Manager. I do not believe so. Again, that was Sitzler, an amazing Territory company, \$30m and it is a great thing to be able to make an election commitment, to deliver on that and have it operating. I know the police that have visited from interstate and elsewhere say it is the best police station literally in Australia right now and people are very envious of that. The Palmerston Police Station is a great facility.

Mr MALEY: I thought you said you were going to pass it onto your General Manager.

Ms LAWLER: I said he looked at me and said 'No'.

Mr MALEY: So there has been no major building defects or additional rectification costs? Ok, my next question is has the community hall built to provide the community access to police been actively utilised since opening?

Ms LAWLER: There is some quite specific criteria around the use of the community hall but I am aware of some school holiday activities that have been held in that hall but that hall is also for police to run training and a range of different things that they undertake in there. It is a hall that fits about 100 people. I think because of COVID it has not probably been utilised by the public as much this year but it is a hall that is available for specific community use but it is also a hall that can be used for police training. It can also be used when there is a need to gather police for an emergency or things like that. It is on police property and it is their facility. It is used at times but with COVID it probably has been underutilised in the last 8–9 months or so.

Mr Deputy CHAIR: Can I just clarify for Hansard the community hall you are referring to is the Palmerston Police Community Hall.

Mr MALEY: That is correct.

Mr TURNER: Minister, could you tell us about the community hall at the Palmerston Police Station and the open day where it was used by Neighbourhood Watch, Crime-stoppers and the Water Police had their kids in there as well?

Ms LAWLER: Yes, I was at that opening. I do thank the Police Minister at the time, Nicole Manison, for allowing me to do the official opening and it was used by a range of police support organisations on that official opening. It has also been used at various times by different community groups. I know during the school holiday program it is also used as well. Thank you Member for Blain.

Mr MALEY: I have another question and I am not sure of the output so I will ask it now and you can tell me if it is the right output. This is in relation to your department purchasing land on Stevens Road Knuckey Lagoon, did the government purchase five acres of land on Stevens Road in Knuckeys Lagoon in April this year?

Ms LAWLER: Yes they did.

Mr MALEY: Can you explain why your department purchased that block of land?

Mr KIRKMAN: Yes, we purchased the land at Stevens Road effectively to ensure that the future use of the land was in accordance with the area that it is located. It was a particularly tricky land issue this one because it evolved as many do, from a backyard use to something quite industrial in the end but had been in industrial use for many decades in fact within a rural residential environment. It was not ideal but it had been ongoing for some time so effectively we are looking to have it sit for at least 12 months to enable us to ensure that it is not used for industrial uses again and at some point it will go on the market to be used as rural residential which is in accordance with what the area plan would expect for land in that area.

Mr MALEY: Minister, I agree that using urban land, or rural land, for unauthorised uses or outside the plan is a good idea, but in this particularly block—so you purchase it because that is the reason why. So what criteria—what I am getting at is, if there was another block which is the same problem are you going to purchase that as well? That would be a way to resolve—my understanding is that there are many blocks, many of these small businesses, as Mr Kirkman mentioned, get smaller and get bigger and being going there for a long time and you way to fix it was to purchase it. Are you going to purchase more blocks into the future that have the same situation?

Ms LAWLER: Member for Nelson, obviously each issue is looked at individually and if there issues around those things. Those matters are followed through, negotiated and worked through. But this one is around a planning issue, a long-term planning issue, as you heard from the CO.

Mr MALEY: So minister, essentially you purchased a block of land because it was not being used in accordance with its correct zoning?

Mr KIRKMAN: Yes, that block was not being used in accordance the zoning that we had considered appropriate for that rural-residential area. This was unusual. Your question about—yes this happens but this is not unique there are lots of businesses operating on land that perhaps they should not. That is true. But what is unique about this case is how long it has been going for.

There is a matter in planning that looks to pre-existing use. If that pre-existing use goes on for long enough that makes it very difficult for government or the development consent authority, if they are the ones carrying on a prosecution for example, to successfully undertake that prosecution. We were concerned about any action in this regards because of the extent of that pre-existing use. That is what makes this unique beyond all other issues or other examples we have had. You have certainly seen that the DCA has been proactive and looked at prosecuting for what we would consider inappropriate uses. They have been very proactive with that in the last couple of years. In this case we believe that was going to be a very difficult case for them to run given the length of the pre-existing use. This was a unique case.

Mr MALEY: So minister, if another case, where there is another rural residence or rural block being used they can approach your organisation, your agency, and ask for the same deal where you will purchase their block of land. Is that correct?

Ms LAWLER: Member for Nelson, as the chief executive had said this had been long, complex, difficult issue. Your previous Member for Nelson probably could brief you and I suggest you speak to him around this matter because it is one that he had concerns about for a very long time. But new Member for Nelson, that is one of the things you do as government, you work through issues and in this case that was the solution around that.

Mr MALEY: Can you give me the name of the agency or officer, so when more people come to my office I can give them the contact details so they can go and approach you, because there is going to be lots of people who say well I am in the same boat as that, I have been forced to move. Because remember these people are like Mr Kirkman said small businesses who became bigger and bigger and essentially it is not in the correct zoning now. So these people approaching me if I put them onto your department. Who should I put them onto minister?

Ms LAWLER: Member for Nelson you can refer them to me as the minister.

Mr MALEY: Thank you for that. In relation to the value of that block of land, how did you work out the actual value of that block of land?

Ms LAWLER: I will pass to the chief executive.

Mr KIRKMAN: We looked at obviously what the market rate was for that land. Clearly, as I have discussed earlier about acquisitions, there is obviously a negotiation process that takes place in this regard. But certainly we looked at what the market was paying as well.

Mr MALEY: I just want to make it clear for the record, I support the idea of moving these blocks out of these areas. There is no question about that, I am just getting some questions about how it happened and when the next case comes up what criteria are they going to be assessed against when they come and say well can you purchase my block like you did purchase in Stevens Road.

Ms LAWLER: Member for Nelson, this one in Stevens Road has been a long and drawn-out issue. This was seen as a way of resolving that issue. The Chief Executive spoke about that.

Mr MALEY: I accept that and agree that is to resolve the issue because I am sure there would have been landholders around there who would have been complaining. What I am saying is there are more people in the rural area who are going to be complaining about this and now this has set a precedent; so now, what criteria do they get assessed to go onto the same treatment as you gave this block owner?

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR: Another question, Member for Nelson?

Mr MALEY: Yes. I am not sure of the output. This is in relation to a crown term lease that was dealt with in relation to the previous owner of that block. You know about that if I give you the lease number or the volume folio? I just want to know how this lease came about because it seems these were all transferred on the same day.

Ms LAWLER: I'm sorry, these outputs are not the ones around infrastructure 9.1 ...

Mr MALEY: That is what I am asking.

Ms LAWLER: If you want to finish through, let us just keep moving. These are ones that are in Lands and Planning, which is 10.1. Let us finish 9.1, otherwise—yes, can we ...

Mr MALEY: I just want to clarify, at the beginning you mentioned if I am unsure what output, where to go, so that is what I am doing, I do not want to get to 10.1 and then go, you should have asked that at 9.1.

A member: 10.1.

Mr MALEY: So 10.1 is in relation to crown term lease, and that output is in the right one.

Ms LAWLER: This is infrastructure at the moment.

Mr MALEY: I am just clarifying because I know we cannot go back.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR: Lands planning and land development, 10.1. Are there any further questions for 8.9.1? Member for Mulka?

Mr GUYULA: INAUDIBLE

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR: Member for Mulka, can you just switch your mike on? My apologies, I should have noticed.

Mr GUYULA: I will say again. Minister, I would like to ask some questions about Central Arnhem Road. I have said on many occasions it is very important for the people of northeast Arnhem Land that this development is prioritised to begin at the Nhulunbuy end of the road, extending toward the Ramingining turn - off. This is important for residents and businesses of this region, increasing our ability to travel safely and businesses viability in our region. Am I on the right—yes?

Ms LAWLER: Thank you. The Central Arnhem Road is a very important road and we agree with you. I will pass to Louise McCormick who can give a run through of the packages out now and what work we have planned for Central Arnhem Road.

Ms McCORMICK: Thank you, Minister. We have \$225m in total for the Central Arnhem Road and some of the early works packages we currently are working on or are already out.

The first one is an upgrade of 6.2 kilometres just passed Beswick. I have chainages here if you want me to go to that level of detail. It was awarded earlier this year and started in mid-October and is expected to be complete by June next year.

We have a second package; it is a 13.4 kilometre section near the Goyder River bridges. That one is anticipated to start May next year and complete later that year.

A third package we have is a 4 kilometre section near Bulman and that will be tender-advertising early next year.

We are currently undertaking the investment strategy for the remaining funding. We anticipate having two work-fronts; one closer to Nhulunbuy and one closer down to Beswick and Bulman area.

Mr GUYULA: You have probably already answered this question but I will ask the question. In total, how much funding is the NT Government providing for this road this financial year?

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR: Member for Mulka, can you just articulate for the record, is that the Central Arnhem Highway for this year when you said this road?

Mr GUYULA: Yes, for the Central Arnhem roads.

Ms McCORMICK: This year the Capital Works Program in total over multiple years is \$239m. Expenditure to 30 June this year was \$3.3m, that is before some of these works packages had started but this year we are expecting to spend \$6.3m with the bigger packages of work going out next year.

Mr GUYULA: What is the expected completed date of these upgrades?

Ms McCORMICK: Of the three packages that we currently have underway, the first package will be completed June next year, and the other two packages will be late next year with further works to come.

Mr GUYULA: Can the minister please provide details when works will be done to link Nhulunbuy to the rest of the Arnhem Land region including the Ramingining Link Road?

Ms McCORMICK: We call those the Arnhem link roads that go all the way from Cahills Crossing and across the top end. I think it also gets called the Western Arnhem Road. We have \$15m set aside in Capital Works for that Arnhem link road and that will include a three kilometre section near Red Lilly Lagoon which is near Oenpelli to protect some rock art work that is up on the escarpment there. Mostly the other works include culvert upgrades to many of the river crossings to allow wet season access between communities.

Mr GUYULA: I think it might be included in here but I would just make sure that the Central Arnhem to Ramingining Road is being looked at because it needs to have something done on it?

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR: Sorry, Member for Mulka, can we put that as a question?

Mr GUYULA: I thought I added that too.

Ms LAWLER: Member for Mulka, I was trying to look in the TERC report but it was in that original green paper where TERC had identified that the Central Arnhem Road was a road that should be brought forward and sealed because of the importance for tourism and for the communities out that way as well. There is the Central Arnhem as well as the Tanami, two roads that I know the Chief Executive and I often are lobbied about and I agree having travelled on that Central Arnhem Road, I know it has a lot of causeways and water and is such a dangerous road as well. I will pass to Louise McCormick the General Manager to add to that.

Ms McCORMICK: I think you are referring to the section between Ramingining and Central Arnhem Road. We did some works there to lift and seal a four kilometre section closer down towards the Central Arnhem Road. There was sacred sites there and the traditional owners had asked that, to protect the sacred sites, we lift over the top of them and seal through there so we did not have to continually do maintenance grades. That work was completed last year.

Mr GUYULA: I am aware of the sacred sites—the road upgrades that were done from the Central Arnhem Road towards where there is a sacred site, a place called (inaudible), which is about half way between Central Arnhem Road and Ramingining. From there, that road has not been looked at or worked on. It might have been looked at but needs some work from the Ramingining Road half way towards where the sacred site is.

I have spoken to some leaders and TOs who own land along that road. They are saying they want the road worked on but want to be cautious on the sacred site on that road.

Ms LAWLER: Member for Mulka, thank you. We would be very careful.

Mr COSTA: Old man is also talking about the link between Ramingining and the Maningrida side as well.

Ms LAWLER: It is a priority for us—Central Arnhem Road. Louise McCormack, General Manager, mentioned that the Australian Government is giving us some money for that. We want to see all of it bitumen—but the original money we got from the federal government is over a number of years, so we put it out in packages. You do a certain amount—10 or 15 kilometres—bit by bit over time. It does take a long time. We want to see that bitumen, that is for sure.

Mr GUYULA: To date, how many tenders have gone to local Arnhem businesses, and how many jobs has this created for local people?

Ms LAWLER: Is this in relation to roads or general infrastructure?

Mr GUYULA: General infrastructure.

Ms LAWLER: I will pass to CE Andrew Kirkman.

Mr GUYULA: I think it is the road but includes general infrastructure.

Mr KIRKMAN: If you are looking for a holistic answer, we will have to come back to that. Over last financial year we contracted \$103m to the Arafura and Arnhem regions. There were considerable contracts that went to local Indigenous business enterprises. I do not have the exact figure, but across the Territory we spent almost \$40m—I think it was about \$37m directly with Indigenous business enterprises on our contracts as a direct piece of work with them. That is across roads, remote housing and any other infrastructure works we had under way last year.

We had some very good results in regard to local jobs, particularly on the remote housing side of things as well as with remote roads. If you would like a response in regard to Arnhem in particular, we will come back to you on that.

Mr CHAIR: Would you like to take that one on notice?

Ms LAWLER: Yes, we can take that on notice.

Question on Notice No 4.13

Mr CHAIR: Member for Mulka, please restate your question for the record.

Mr GUYULA: To date how many tenders have gone to local Arnhem businesses and how many jobs has this created for local people?

Mr CHAIR: Minister, do you accept the question?

Ms LAWLER: Yes, I do.

Mr CHAIR: The question asked by the Member for Mulka has been allocated 4.13.

Mr CHAIR: Member for Mulka do you have further questions?

Mr GUYULA: No, that concludes my 9.1.

Mr CHAIR: Thank you Member for Mulka. Are there any further questions?

Mr MALEY: Yes, I have a further question for the minister. Minister, this is in relation to the Coolalinga activity centre. Can you please outline the public consultation surrounding the new plan for the Fred's Pass/Coolalinga activity centre? What I refer to is one in 2016 and now there is one in 2019 and they are different.

Ms LAWLER: Are we moving onto 10 now?

Mr CHAIR: No, this is 9.1.

Ms LAWLER: The Coolalinga intersection and road that is Output 10.

Mr CHAIR: Would you like to delay that until Output 10?

Mr MALEY: 10.10?

Ms LAWLER: Output 10.1? Are you talking about the area plan or the roadworks?

Mr MALEY: The area plan?

Ms LAWLER: The area plan is 12 then.

Mr MALEY: Well I thought it might have been in infrastructure delivery in relation to the activity centre. The roads change inside it. That is why I am asking now because it is a bit of a mixture. It has a bit of both in it. Because I always want to—

Ms LAWLER: We just have to be careful here because some of things are actually the planning commission so I will have to bring in Dr David Ritchie if it is about the planning. If it is about the road and the traffic lights near that it is then under logistics.

Mr MALEY: Well it is in relation to what public consultation you have in relation to it. So I am not sure of the planning—

Ms LAWLER: If it is about the land use plan I can just say but you really should probably have the planning commission. But there has been extensive consultation around the land use plan over a number of years. I think we do need to stick to the outputs Mr Chair and we need to move along because...

Mr MALEY: Again what output are you saying this should be under, 10.1? Again, because I do not want to get there and you say you should have asked that at 9.1.

Ms LAWLER: So 12 for the area plan and 11 for the transport. These are all online.

Mr CHAIR: Output Group 10 is lands and planning as well.

Mr MALEY: What about in relation to the sewer connected to that area? Where would that be? Would it be under infrastructure delivery, are we talking about the sewer into the Coolalinga activity centre? Because that is part of this as well.

Ms LAWLER: That is in 12? No, that is in 11.

Mr MALEY: The sewer is in 11? And the plan is in 12?

Ms LAWLER: Twelve.

Mr MALEY: And the roads is in 10?

Ms LAWLER: But Member for Nelson sometimes it is better to seek briefings and then you could have all of these all at once really.

Mr MALEY: Yes, but I am here at estimates and I am trying make sure—

Ms LAWLER: I know, I am actually just trying to help you. Yes.

Mr MALEY: Yes I know, thank you for your advice minister. So next question. Motor Sports House was built for motorsports activity, over the last year it has been used an emergency operation centre for COVID-19. How long do you expect the emergency operation centre to continue in that venue?

Ms LAWLER: Yes, I will pass to Andrew Kirkman the chief executive. It is an operational matter.

Mr KIRKMAN: The Territory controller will decide how long they require the facility for, at this stage it will be sometime probably in the first or second quarter next year, all going well. The commissioner for police who is the Territory controller would be best to respond to that one.

Mr MALEY: Now next question in relation to Zuccoli Primary School stage one. How is the construction in stage two, due for completion in 2020-21, progressing?

Ms LAWLER: I just drove past the other day. It is absolutely looking magnificent so it will be ready for the school year, at the beginning of the school year. So stage two, as you are probably aware, is the oval as well. The oval was grassed. The Member for Blain will be able to tell you as well how great that is. The oval, that component, is up and running basically. The grass is growing well. There are joint facilities there such as a home economics science area that the Catholic school will share with the Zuccoli Primary School—the government school. There is also additional classrooms for Zuccoli Primary School and a library. That will be finished and ready for the school year. All up it will be an amazing and beautiful school. I always love a new school.

I make a shout-out to the principal there, Carolyn Edwards, who is a good friend of mine. I used to work with her in Humpty Doo a long time ago. She has done an amazing job bringing the school together and developing the culture at the school. A school is not a school if it is just the building. It is about the kids and staff in it and the community.

Mr MALEY: The next question is in relation to Myilly Point landscaping and playground. This project has been delayed again and again. Can you tell Territorians when they can expect to see the works completed?

Ms LAWLER: Unfortunately this project has been delayed. It has been a nuisance and it relates to the asbestos that was found at the site. Everybody expected there to be asbestos because we remember when the hospital and nurses quarters were there.

The aim is to have the precinct operational early in 2021. It will be a playground. Just to be clear, the one on the Esplanade is more of a playground for younger kids while the area we are developing at Myilly Point is more—well, it is for younger children—for youths and a family friendly area. The Friends of Kahlin—we are going to ensure there is an area that is a second stage to recognise the history of the precinct. Before it was a hospital and the university, it was the Kahlin Compound. The site has a great amount of history and we need to recognise that.

In answer to your question, early 2021. In quarter one of 2021 we should have that facility finished.

Mr MALEY: Has all the asbestos been removed from the site now?

Ms LAWLER: Not the complete site at Myilly Point. Where the playground is, the asbestos has been removed because that is where the holes are being dug and where the infrastructure will go. That is where the soil is being disturbed. I can pass to the expert, rather than myself. Mr Harrison will add to that.

Mr HARRISON: You have answered the question comprehensively. We are remediating the playground site and have done a survey of the broader site.

Mr MALEY: Can you tell me what the cost is so far for removing the asbestos?

Mr HARRISON: In the order of \$1.1m. That is for remediation of the playground site and survey of the remaining site so we can use the information for future projects.

Ms LAWLER: I will add, but you understand Member for Nelson, as you were around for Cyclone Tracy. Unfortunately, the impact of Cyclone Tracy meant that there were a lot of buildings and asbestos that were devastated during the cyclone. We see the legacy of that today because it does not matter where you build in the greater Darwin area, we are finding asbestos. It is a part of it all.

Mr MALEY: For the record, I was born in the old Darwin hospital.

Ms LAWLER: So was I!

Mr MALEY: I know what you are talking about.

Mr CHAIR: For the record, I was not alive.

Mr MALEY: What was the total cost of developing the playground and associated landscaping in the area?

Ms LAWLER: In August 2019, there was a contract awarded to DTA Contractors Pty Ltd for \$2.432m to design the project and put in a playground and an ablution block. DTA Contractors are doing the work there.

Mr MALEY: To be clear, \$2.43m to design and construct the playground and the amenities?

Ms LAWLER: Yes.

Mr MALEY: Has there been any variations to that contract?

Ms LAWLER: The asbestos, obviously. Yes.

Mr MALEY: Other than the asbestos has there been any other variations?

Mr HARRISON: I do not have a comprehensive list of variations with me. I know 1.1 was an additional variation and there has been some adjustment to the works because we are not constructing in the broader precinct.

Mr MALEY: Minister, can you tell me what the costs are in relation to those other variations?

Ms LAWLER: No, I cannot. We can take that one on notice. The 2.432 plus the 1.1 issue around asbestos. If there are any more variations, we can take that on notice.

Mr MALEY: Thank you, can you take that on notice?

Question on Notice No 4.14

Mr CHAIR: Member for Nelson, can I please ask you to restate the question for the record?

Mr MALEY: The record is, what was the total cost of the variations in relation to the Myilly Point landscaping and playground?

Mr CHAIR: Minister, do you accept the question?

Ms LAWLER: Yes, I accept the question.

Mr CHAIR: Thank you, Minister. The question asked by the Member for Nelson of the minister has been allocated number 4.14. Question on Notice due by 22 January 2021. Further questions?

Mr MALEY: In relation to the plan infrastructure for Zuccoli Primary School, is there any plan this year for Howard Springs Primary School?

Ms LAWLER: This is a question that should be asked of the education minister because we are the agency that delivers projects. I cannot think of any sorry. They would have got their \$300,000, but I cannot recall anything for Howard Springs.

Mr MALEY: Thank you, Minister. The next question is in relation to the Little Mindil Beach footpath. A tender was awarded on 13 October 2020 for basically \$1.5m. My understanding is there was a lower tender for about \$1m which is roughly 29% lower than the successful bid. Can you explain why the lower bid—basically half a million dollars cheaper—was not successful?

Ms LAWLER: No, I cannot because I keep away from tendering. As minister, I can tell you there is only ever one winner in a tender process. I never get involved in any of the tendering because I often get people coming to see me about tenders they felt they should have won. I trust the people whose job it is and who have the full information in front of them, who then get to look at all of that and make a decision.

There are so many tenders that go out on any given week in DIPL. It is like when people apply for jobs, everybody thinks they should win that tender. I am not going to get into the ins and outs here around the tender. The person who did not win the tender should seek feedback—that is an option always open to people. There is no point in me going through why somebody did or did not win a tender. The Estimates is not a place for that. If somebody did not win a tender, they should seek feedback to allay their concerns.

Mr MALEY: Minister, are you aware if anyone did seek feedback in relation to that tender?

Ms LAWLER: I have no idea about any tenders. As a minister, I keep right away from those operational matters because there are always people who think they should have won a tender. That is one where the person who has spoken to you—obviously somebody has spoken to you, Member for Nelson, and has brought up some concerns—they need to go through the process: seeking feedback, or the ombudsman if they feel there has been something concerning in it. There is also ICAC now—we are the government that brought in ICAC. If anybody thinks there is an issue around tenders I am more than happy for them to follow through all of those processes. I am not going to discuss tenders here. Oh yes, there is also the bi-local advocate too if there is concerns.

Mr MALEY: Thank you, Minister.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR: Minister, a question surrounding the investment in the Ngukurr Police Station, can you give us an update on the completion and timelines of it?

Ms LAWLER: Yes, it is always lovely to deliver infrastructure, particularly when it is in our remote communities. We have both the Ngukurr and Maningrida Police Station underway. This was Norbuilt, another great Territory company. They have won the tender for the Ngukurr police station, \$14.3m. The Member for Arnhem was in Ngukurr recently, in the last couple weeks, and she was telling me the work is underway.

It is a beautiful site on the hill. The new police station complex will include: the police station to accommodate six police members; a multipurpose room which can be used for court facilities; a boat enclosure, you have the Roper River nearby; bulk fuel storage; four new houses; four self-contained VOQs; and a small playground and a BBQ area to be built within the existing police compound. It is lovely to see facilities for families and community engagement.

There is a house there that will be demolished but the remaining two will not. One house ...

Mr MONAGHAN: Sorry to interrupt, just to clarify, is that in the old police site?

Ms LAWLER: Yes.

Mr MONAGHAN: The traditional police site that was there for over 100 years?

Ms LAWLER: Yes. It is a beautiful site. I think they must have used it as a lookout point, it is so high. I enjoy the community, it is lovely. As you know, Member for Fong Lim, it has an outstanding school. I have been there many times to visit the school over the years.

To clarify, there will be a brand new police station for six police officers, a multipurpose which can be used for court facilities, four houses and VOQ for four visiting officers. It will be a wonderful facility. The additional buildings will be water neutral with self-supporting emergency power supply and landscaping to make it attractive to new members. The Northern Land Council and the development consent approvals have all been sorted out. Well done to Norbuilt, \$14.3m, who will do a good job.

Mr MONAGHAN: We all love landscaping.

Mr COSTA: Minister, while we are on community police stations. Can you give us an update on the Maningrida police station?

Ms LAWLER: A design tender will be advertised once the site selection has been confirmed and we get a letter of comfort from the NLC. We are still waiting for that. The design period is anticipated to be 26 weeks followed by a 12-week procurement period and a 52-week construction period. We are waiting from the letter of comfort from the Northern Land Council. The facility will house 10 police officers, which is a good-sized police station. It will have an attached courtroom, four VOQ complex, additional housing, dog kennels and a boatshed.

We are just waiting for the letter of comfort from the Northern Land Council and we will get moving. Hopefully we can have the tender release out in the second quarter of 2021.

Mr EDGINGTON: I have a list of projects here. While we are on the subject of police stations, is there money in the budget for a new police station at Alpururulam and Elliot?

Ms LAWLER: I hear that question every time in 'question time'. No, there is no money for the Alpururulam police station. It would be in our 10-year infrastructure plan—yes, it is in the plan.

Mr EDGINGTON: What about Elliot?

Ms LAWLER: Are you talking about the police station for Elliot?

Mr EDGINGTON: A replacement police station.

Ms LAWLER: He is checking the 10-year plan. No, at this stage—just from memory the ones I have in mind are the ones we have talked about. There is no police station for Alpururulam but in the 10-year infrastructure plan Elliot—we will check the plan. I did open the Alpururulam Preschool which is a beautiful facility. It was two years ago. There has been some work at Alpururulam.

We hear you loud and clear when asking about the police station.

Mr EDGINGTON: A follow-up then on Alpururulam. I was out there the other day. It seems to be the only school without an undercover basketball court cover. Are there any plans to ...

Ms LAWLER: There is. I heard that answer last night from minister Moss. They are using \$300,000 to build a permanent shade structure over the playground there. Yes ...

Mr EDGINGTON: Not a basketball court?

Ms LAWLER: I would have to check, but there is a permanent shade structure going in there. You would know in the past, in a lot of our schools across the Barkly, there had been those shade sails. When I was Education minister, that was one of the things I said, 'No more shade sails. We see them being damaged when there is willy-willies or whatever else'. We were moving towards permanent shade structures. We are doing that across the Territory now.

I am not sure if it is over a basketball court or a playground. We can check that. I thought that question was answered last night by minister Moss. Adam Walding from Education answered that, yes. I can get that ...

Mr EDGINGTON: I have some further questions. The \$9m upgrade of Purkiss Reserve has been spoken about for roughly four years. There was an initial announcement of \$5m and a further \$4m committed on 12 July 2018, making the total \$9m. Two-and-a-half years down the track, the only upgrade has been a new perimeter fence. Can you please advise when that project will be completed and what stage it is at, at the moment?

Ms LAWLER: I am looking to John Harrison for an update on Purkiss Reserve. He is getting his paperwork out.

Mr HARRISON: Running through the packages of work. Recent works packages that were awarded were for fencing, as you stated, and demolition work of some structures. We also have some works that are under procurement—construction of external car parking to Ambrose Street. We also have a further tender for construction of a new perimeter fence and paths around the sports field. We also have a further tender for a major civil package that is to be awarded in February. We have an award in February, also, of a major building package.

Ms LAWLER: You have those? It is \$9.9m ...

Mr EDGINGTON: Minister, what has been the delay in getting that project well and truly under way?

Ms LAWLER: I do not know. I thought you might be able to answer, seeing you had been the Mayor and I would have presumed you would have had some input into that, Member for Barkly.

Mr EDGINGTON: I have been asking but have not been able to get any answers.

Ms LAWLER: We will see if we can get an answer. My notes say 2 October the major building package closed. Most of those packages are being awarded—yes, under way. We can take that one on notice, if you like—yes, what the delays were.

In mid-2020-21 we are looking for completion of that. I do not have the notes on why that has been delayed.

Mr EDGINGTON: Back on the same month, 12 July 2018, the minister for Infrastructure at the time—I am not sure if that was you—announced \$1.45m for Tennant Creek for a revamp of the town centre and a further \$1.5m was committed, bringing the total to \$2.95m of the upgrade of Patterson Street, Davidson Walk and Peko Road. Can you please advise where that project is up to?

Ms LAWLER: Yes, my understanding is that Patterson Street—you are talking about the Patterson Street streetscape?

Mr EDGINGTON: Streetscape—\$2.95m.

Ms LAWLER: Yes. It is planned to go to tender early in 2020-21.

Mr EDGINGTON: That money was committed back in 2018. What is the delay with that project?

Ms LAWLER: Maybe council was not cooperative. I do not know, Member for Barkly. You were on ground. So, I do not know if you are asking ...

Mr EDGINGTON: I think that is an unfair assumption. I think that is fairly unfair.

Ms LAWLER: Well, I do not know why you are asking me if you know the answer.

Mr EDGINGTON: I do not know the answer. That is why I am here asking you, minister?

Ms LAWLER: Okay, well, I do not know.

Mr EDGINGTON: What is the delay?

Ms LAWLER: I have been advised that \$2.95m Tennant Creek streetscape ...

Mr EDGINGTON: You are responsible for the main street not council. The main street does not belong to council. Thanks very much.

Mr CHAIR: Members, can we please allow the minister to answer the question.

Ms LAWLER: I believe that \$1.45m NTG recoverable grant funding when to Barkly Regional Council. So, council has \$1.45m of NT Government money for that streetscape work. Now that you are the local member I am more than happy ...

Mr EDGINGTON: There is \$2.95m for the project.

Ms LAWLER: Yes. \$1.5m is turbo-charging tourism and the client agency is obviously Industry, Tourism and Trade. \$1.45m NTG recoverable grant funding is with the Barkly Regional Council.

Mr EDGINGTON: The project is being managed by the department of Infrastructure. Can you please give me an update on where the project is up to?

Mr HARRISON: That project has been through, as you would be aware, some extensive master planning for the streetscape and we are currently tendering the design of that work. There is a number of outcomes that we expect to get from the design. As we work through that design process, we will design for some work to be delivered within that budget and then there will also be some concepts developed for the broader Tennant Creek over time.

Mr EDGINGTON: Thank you for that update. The \$2m entry statements were announced back in 2016. Can you please advise where that project is up to?

Ms LAWLER: Yes. I will pass to the Chief Executive but I have understood that there has been some consultation with the local traditional owners.

Mr KIRKMAN: Yes. This has certainly been an interesting project, as I am sure you are aware, Member for Barkly. We would have liked to have delivered this by now, of course, but we have a local artist who is developing some work for us which will be truly fantastic. For those who have seen the start of this artwork, which will be some Nyinkka lizards represented, amongst other things, which will be on display at either

entrance to Tennant Creek. This was no surprise. The start of these sculptures were presented in one of the shows last year, the Tennant Creek Show, last year, in fact. They are truly magnificent sculptures.

Like any artistic piece of work, it is taking a fair while. I had the pleasure of having a look at progress in Tennant a few weeks back and they are getting a whole lot closer. The sites have been prepared for some time and, obviously, there will be other landscaping works attached to those entry statements. The centrepiece relies on our local artist completing those sculptures.

I am certainly keen that he does that soon rather than later and he has been endeavouring to do that. He has been working, obviously, day and night to get those done. We are very much looking forward to getting those done, Member for Barkly, but they are underway.

Mr CHAIR: Thank you Mr Kirkman. Members, we will just take a short recess considering we are going late into the night. We will take a recess now at 8.30 for five minutes and then return here at approximately 8.35 pm to get started again.

The committee suspended.

Mr Chair: Thank you everybody and welcome back. We are proceeding with Output 9.1: Infrastructure Investment and Delivery. Are there any questions?

Mr EDGINGTON: Yes, Chair.

Mr Chair: Member for Barkly.

Mr EDGINGTON: Minister, I think we were halfway through the question about the entry statements for Tennant Creek. What is the overall cost of the entry statements, and— well, the anticipated cost, and has there been any variations on that project?

Ms LAWLER: The project costs that I have got here is \$2.3m for the entry statements, and I will— and expected completion date is May 2021, so I look forward to coming down and opening those in May 2021. But I will pass to John Harrison around any variations to that, so he's saying no, so no variations is the \$2.3m.

Mr EDGINGTON: Thank you, Minister. Another project from 2018, the Hilda Street Park was, I believe, awarded back in November 2018. Can you advise the status of that project?

Ms LAWLER: The Hilda Street Park? We will take that one on notice. I do not have information on the Hilda Street Park.

Question on Notice No 4.15

Mr Chair: Member for Barkly, can I please ask you to restate the question for the record?

Mr EDGINGTON: The Hilda Street Park in Tennant Creek was awarded for work on the 14-11-2018. Can you please advise the status of that project?

Mr Chair: Minister, do you accept the question?

Ms LAWLER: Yes I do.

Mr Chair: Thank you, Minister. The question asked— Sorry, Member for Barkly. I just need to finish the script. The question asked by the Member for Barkly of the Minister has been allocated number 4.15 as a question on notice.

Mr EDGINGTON: Again back in 2018 on 23-2-2018, the member for Casuarina announced \$5.5m in turbo-charging tourism. Can you please advise what that funding is being used for and when will it be expended?

Ms LAWLER: I am just going through my notes, it might be one that I do need to—because I have got, so the streetscapes, I think were, so the streetscape. It is probably easier to take that one on notice rather than breaking it down, but I mean the information I have— but I will take it on notice to get more detail for you.

Upgraded facilities and interpretive signs at Kunjarra and The Pebbles is underway with civil works commenced, so that was one part of it. \$300,000 is being granted to Barkly Regional Council for a new playground at Lake Mary Ann that is anticipated to be completed in March 2021. There is also an order to Battery Hill Mining/Visitor Centre that has been undertaken with work on whole pending completion of feasibility starting on that site as well, and as I think we have mentioned before the Paterson Street Streetscape which is \$1.45m, so Paterson Streetscape, order to Barkly Hill— Battery Hill, the Mary Ann playground at Lake Mary Ann, interpretive signs and upgraded facilities, and the Streetscape, I think that should all add up to that turbo-charging tourism dollars.

Mr CHAIR: Thank you, minister, and ...

Ms LAWLER: You are going to have some nice things to be able to claim now, Member for Barkly, they will think it is all your work. You will be able to tell them that you have done a great job.

Mr EDGINGTON: I am looking forward to going around, I am hoping to get invited to the ...

Ms LAWLER: You will always be invited. I am sure in Tennant Creek you will not escape.

Mr EDGINGTON: Thank you. Well, if we go back to July, 2018 the Minister for Health announced a \$5m to build a new alcohol rehabilitation centre in Tennant Creek that would free up 19 Territory housing properties. Two and a half years later there is still no new facility. Public housing still has a wait time of six to eight years, can you tell us where that project is up to?

Ms LAWLER: So that is the Barkly Region Alcohol and Drug Abuse Advisory Group project you are talking about?

Mr EDGINGTON: Yes

Ms LAWLER: As I said, I am obviously, I am very aware of issues with community consultation. And I mean you are obviously aware of that too. So on those 19 public house dwellings, we would like to see that project sorted out. The current preferred location is on Lot 1238 at the corner of Newdall road and Leichhardt Street, adjacent to the Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Logistics depo, but as you know, I think you were on the DCA at the time? The community had strong expectations on being involved with the new site, and so there is that ongoing consultation around that.

Also I can tell you around that BRADAAG Site—any CE? Anything else? Yes, as I said, it is a project we want to see sorted. Obviously in small communities there is a lot of concern around sites and things like that, there is work that is ongoing around that, but we probably do need the help of people like you to facilitate and help to find solutions rather than making things difficult around this one. So, we would like to see this one sorted.

Mr EDGINGTON: Sorry Minister, I am not making things difficult at all ...

Ms LAWLER: I am thinking in your previous role there were some difficulties around that so we want to see this one move ahead.

Mr EDGINGTON: Sorry minister, I find that offensive. And no, I was not difficult at all.

Ms LAWLER: Well, we look forward to this solution being found.

Mr EDGINGTON: The fact that you failed to consult with people is a matter for you.

Ms LAWLER: Well, we look forward to a solution now that you are working on this side.

Mr EDGINGTON: Always looking for solutions, Minister.

Ms LAWLER: That is good because we want to have solutions too for the people of Alice Springs

Mr EDGINGTON: We have got a long list of projects here that are two and a half years old.

Mr CHAIR: Members, can I just revert you back to the format of today which is a question and answer estimates committee? Thank you. Any further questions?

Mr EDGINGTON: Yes, further questions. The \$10m upgrade of Nyinkka Nyunyu was promised back in 2016, can you please advise where that project is up to?

Ms LAWLER: I will pass to the CE around that one.

Mr KIRKMAN: Yes there has been considerable consultation with the Padder group and the broader community of Tennant Creek in regards to this facility. Will just look for the latest update.

Mr CHAIR: Sorry while you are looking, Member for Barkly what was the name for the project again?

Mr EDGINGTON: (Inaudible)

Mr CHAIR: Thank you.

Ms LAWLER: As it is not in our briefing folder, we think it might have been a grant that went to council.

Mr Kirkman: They will definitely be looking at— and this is through Territory Families housing and sport— around the distribution of the funding in regard to that facility. But I do know it is being worked through, and we will probably have to come back to you with a response on that one if we have not got anything directly on that.

Mr MALEY: (inaudible) follow-up question—

Mr CHAIR: We will just get this one on—are you going to take that one on notice?

Ms LAWLER: Yes.

Question on Notice No 4.16

Mr CHAIR: Member for Barkly, please restate the question for the record.

Mr EDGINGTON: A \$10m upgrade of the Nyinkka Nyunyu Art and Culture Centre was an election commitment from 2016, can you please advise the current status of that project?

Mr CHAIR: Minister, do you accept the question?

Ms LAWLER: Yes.

Mr CHAIR: The question asked by the Member for Barkly of the minister has been allocated number 4.16.

Mr MALEY: Can I have a follow up question? Minister, your CE has stated that there has been considerable consultation since 2016. Can you outline what that is exactly? How much public consultation have you had in relation to that?

Ms LAWLER: In relation to what?

Mr MALEY: The question you just took on notice.

Ms LAWLER: Regarding the Nyinkka Nyunyu Art and Culture Centre?

Mr MALEY: Yes.

Ms LAWLER: No, because we are saying we will take it on notice. When a project is—we are the builders for the project and do the delivery work. The consultation is done by the agency. The arts trail one would have been led by the arts area of government. It is like health or education, they do the consultation and we are the people that deliver.

I could not tell you what consultation has happened. You have the arts minister in the next few days, I suggest you ask them about that.

Mr MALEY: So this has been ongoing for four years? Is that correct?

Ms LAWLER: I am not aware of the exact timeline. The design tender was awarded in November 2020 and the expected completion is in April 2021.

Mrs WORDEN: Regarding the Alekarenge School, I believe there will be some replacement buildings. Can you advise when that project will commence and how much money has been invested into that project?

Ms LAWLER: That question could have been asked last night of the Minister for Education. I know Alekarenge School well and that it is ageing. That is one of the issues we face in the Territory—a lot of our schools were built 30–50 years ago. We do not have the details of that project.

There are two options, we can take it on notice and provide you with information—I think it was for providing transportable classrooms to the school.

Mr EDGINGTON: I do have some questions to go with that. Does the upgrade of the Alekarenge School include landscaping the school grounds and a new perimeter fence?

Ms LAWLER: I will take the package of questions regarding Alekarenge School on notice.

Question on Notice No 4.17

Mr CHAIR: Member for Barkly, please restate the question for the record.

Mr EDGINGTON: The Alekarenge School will be receiving replacement buildings. What is the total cost of those replacement buildings? Does the overall project include landscaping the school grounds and a new perimeter fence?

Mr CHAIR: Minister, do you accept the question?

Ms LAWLER: Yes.

Mr CHAIR: The question asked by the Member for Barkly of the minister has been allocated number 4.17.

Mr CHAIR: Are there any further questions?

Mr EDGINGTON: Minister, \$2.5m has been allocated in the budget for the Borroloola Sports Courts and Cyclone Shelter. Is that one project or two separate projects? Is \$2.5m sufficient to complete that project?

Ms LAWLER: In Borroloola there has been an update. The Borroloola Sports Courts and Cyclone Shelter project was jointly funded by the Northern Territory Government with \$2.9m, and the McArthur River Mine Community Benefits Trust contributing \$1.5m. Following further investigation into the requirement and scope of the project, the estimate has increased from \$4.5m to \$6.9m with an additional \$5m NTG capital grant contribution.

I was in Borroloola late last year and I met with Roper Gulf Regional Council. It started as the McArthur River Mine Community Benefit Trust putting in some dollars. I am sure you are aware of all of these issues, anyway, Member for Barkly.

Following some of those conversations, it was realised that we need to provide some cyclone shelters. One of the key concerns of government is making sure we have resilient communities. When the cyclone that went through Borroloola and the McArthur River area a few years ago people were evacuated. It is not ideal to evacuate people from communities. People like to be close to their homes. So, it was seen as an opportune time—as we have done in other areas of Arnhem Land as well such as Maningrida and place like that—to make sure that we upgraded that indoor facility to make sure it was cyclone-proof.

The project has gone from \$4.4m to approximately \$6.9m. That was about taking the opportunity to make sure we made that community much more resilient and had that cyclone shelter included. John?

Your are across that, Member for Barkly?

Mr EDGINGTON: It was only an allocation of \$2,5m in the budget. Where are the additional funds?

Ms LAWLER: That project will flow through this year. The \$2.5m, along with the \$1.5m from the Community Benefit Fund—what is that? That is \$4m. Then it will be after July—next year's budget.

Funding has come in after this budget. So, additional funding has come in after this COVID-19 budget, mid-budget. I can assure you that the full amount will come through for that. There was additional money and that will be in July 2020-21.

Mr EDGINGTON: When will that project commence?

Mr KIRKMAN: The design work is under way. It will be done in a couple of stages. Do you want to do the timing of that?

Mr HARRISON: It will be done in two stages. The external sports court and cover works will proceed first whilst design of the cyclone shelter proceeds. Court 2 construction is anticipated to commence following the Wet Season in March/April, then Court 1 is expected to commence in mid-2021.

Mr EDGINGTON: So, it will not be built for this cyclone season? Are there any other cyclone shelters on the infrastructure program for this year?

Ms LAWLER: I will pass to the Chief Executive.

Mr KIRKMAN: Borroloola's cyclone shelter is being built over this financial year. There is a project under way in respect to prioritising cyclone shelters across the Top End. It is important work being auspiced under the Territory Emergency Response Council. That will look at where the priorities are and be able to effectively direct our capital works program in respect to cyclone shelters going forward.

Mr EDGINGTON: A total of \$3.5m has been allocated to this year's budget for subdivision works in Borroloola—35 residential lots. Can we expect this project to be delivered in the next four years?

Ms LAWLER: That is Garrawa? Yes, if it is housing lots, absolutely. It is a push for us to make sure we deliver housing in Borroloola. I was out there recently and saw the need for public housing in Borroloola.

Mr EDGINGTON: When will that project commence?

Ms LAWLER: The housing? I will pass to John Harrison who has all of the housing. These are nitty-gritty questions. It is really—I know it is your electorate. I said the same to the Member for Nelson. If you want, you can have specific briefings around your specific areas.

Mr EDGINGTON: I can assure you, minister, they are not nitty-gritty for my constituents.

Ms LAWLER: Nitty-gritty as in they are going down to—instead of asking what the budget is for housing, you are asking about specific electorate questions, obviously. That is what I am saying. You can always ask for a briefing around your own areas rather than just talking about the broader issue of housing.

Mr EDGINGTON: Thank you, minister, but many of these projects are approaching three years old.

Ms LAWLER: As I said, Member for Barkly, you were the mayor of Barkly. I could also criticise a large number of projects in the Barkly that you probably did not deliver as mayor. As a government, we work hard to deliver projects and we will continue to work hard delivering ,,

Mr EDGINGTON: I am sorry but that is baseless.

Ms LAWLER: You just gave me an underhanded backslap ...

Mr EDGINGTON: That is a baseless argument that you are putting forward.

Ms LAWLER: ... and so I am just doing the same to you, Member for Barkly.

Mr EDGINGTON: You have no evidence to support that in any way whatsoever so do not make those statements.

Ms LAWLER: Absolutely have.

Mr CHAIR: Members will allow the general manager, Mr Harrison, to answer the question. Maybe we can refrain from arguing. Thank you Mr Harrison.

Mr HARRISON: In response to the question about construction of Garawa Two, we are anticipating a contract award in March 2021.

Mr CHAIR: Thank you Mr Harrison.

Mr EDGINGTON: Thank you for that update. I have one further question about remote airstrips. Is that a different output?

Ms LAWLER: Yes.

Mr EDGINGTON: Which output would that be?

Mr CHAIR: I think also, members, Mr Maley has a couple of questions for Outputs 11 and 12. It might be worth just double-checking the time as we are still on Output 9.1. If we try and get through to Output 12, just be mindful of that to push on a bit. There are also options at the end of outputs where there are non-specific budget-related questions, if you need it.

Any further questions on Output 9.1?

Mr MALEY: Yes, I have a question. In relation to John Stokes Square redevelopment, can you please explain what the delay is in relation to the building there? We asked this question earlier and we got referred to this output.

Ms LAWLER: Thank you Member for Nelson. There was a delay around the asbestos on that site but I will pass to John Harrison, General Manager, to provide more detail on that. As you know, those John Stokes buildings were very old and, again, it was an issue of asbestos being buried under.

Mr HARRISON: Yes, it was a number of issues identified on the site. Asbestos remediation was one of them, as well as other organic and inorganic matter found underneath the buildings that we demolished from previous developments that had not been remediated appropriately during the last redevelopment.

Then, in conjunction with that, we had quite a complex arrangement with adjacent property owners, etcetera, and authorities, just working through service connections, etcetera, to complete the design to be able to tender the head works. Those are predominantly the delays.

Mr MALEY: My understanding is that the police station is almost ready to open. Is that correct? When do you expect the opening date, minister?

Mr HARRISON: I think that was a question for the minister this morning but by the middle of next year, the middle of 2021. That is the aim to get the police station opened.

Mr MALEY: What was the cost of those variations in relation to the services, minister?

Ms LAWLER: I will pass to the General Manager. So, variations in relation to the police station.

Mr HARRISON: I do not have the detail of the variations for the asbestos remediation on the police site. Just keeping in mind that it was a broader remediation of the whole precinct. The cost of that remediation would be aggregated over a number of contracts, including demolition, the police station site and the residential site as well.

Mr MALEY: Are there variations in relation to the connection of services to the police building?

Mr HARRISON: We are yet to negotiate an award arrangements for the head works. So, at this stage, no.

Mr MALEY: I do not understand. The building is ready to open in May yet there are no services connected to that building and you have not issued a tender yet, is that correct?

Ms LAWLER: Member for Nelson, this is a \$59.3m build and Halikos won the tender for the police station, \$10.3m. That police station, as I said, will be looking to open in the middle of the year. As I said, Greenspace won the tender for the development of the accommodation which is one- and two-bedrooms.

The head works that you are talking about, that process is being worked through between Halikos and Greenspace who are the two companies that have been building on that site. This is a great build to be able to have more public housing, one- and two-bedroom public housing for people with disabilities. More accommodation is an absolutely good news story.

As well as having a police station—as I said, the CLP were the people that closed the police station in Nightcliff. I know the people in Nightcliff are very grateful to be able to get a brand new police station and also to be rid of John Stokes Square.

Mr MALEY: I accept all of that and I agree that having more housing is a good idea but I am asking in relation to the police station. The tender for the services has not been awarded yet, is that correct minister?

Mr HARRISON: That is correct. It has not been awarded yet.

Mr MALEY: We have a building that is almost complete. It is going to open in May 2021.

Ms LAWLER: No, you said May. I have said the middle of the year. May is only the fifth month of the year.

Mr MALEY: So, June, one month later. End of June? 30 June? Middle of the year? So, four weeks later?

Ms LAWLER: Well, we will see.

Mr MALEY: Okay, back to my original question. We have a building which is going to be opened on 30 June, which is the middle of the year, and yet there is no tender for the services to connect to that building yet. Is that correct minister?

Ms LAWLER: I will pass to the CE, Andrew Kirkman.

Mr KIRKMAN: We are working through with the current developers onsite as to the work around head works connections. Yes, the station is substantially under way. The head works connections to the station will be required in early 2021, which we are still on target to deliver. As the minister points out, by mid next year, it will be connected and ready to go. By the end of next year, there will be a whole lot of new residential dwellings for social housing which will also be connected.

As Mr Harrison has pointed out, we have come across some significant issues given the nature of this urban development. There have been significant developments there, in the past. We have come across a number of things which we, perhaps, would not have anticipated, a whole heap of dieldrin, for one thing, and a bit of asbestos, for the other. That has all been remediated but it comes at a cost and time. Obviously, there are services attached to surrounding neighbours still in residence that need to have their services continue while this work is under way. That work is continuing but it will be delivered early next year and the station will be connected in that time frame.

Mr MALEY: What is the estimated cost of that variation or a contract award—I am not sure what it is—minister?

Ms LAWLER: I will pass to the Chief Executive.

Mr KIRKMAN: We are working through that. It will be in the order of about \$8m.

Mr MALEY: Just to get this story right. Someone has built a building which is going to open on 30 June next year, and there are no services to be connected and those services are going to cost approximately \$8m?

Ms LAWLER: Let us just back up a bit. The original total program was \$59m. The tenders that went out—as I said, Halikos was \$10.3m; Greenspace have come in at \$27.4m. I am just doing the Maths. So, that is about \$37m. So far, it is quite under budget at \$37m. That \$8m is the additional money that has always been earmarked to do the work to make sure that that stage of the infrastructure build is done. It was originally a

\$59.3m build and as I said it is so far the \$10.3 from Halikos, \$27.4 from Greenspace. It is a build that will be a great asset to the Nightcliff community with a Police station, residential accommodation there, and as I said it is a great asset for them, the people of Nightcliff.

Mr MALEY: Minister, I agree that it is going to be a great asset when it finishes but in just thinking about costs so, get this right, so there is a building is being built, no services connected, is that common practice in the building industry?

Ms LAWLER: I think we have answered the question around that, that this was a difficult site. It was a site that had previously been built on with John Stokes Square, and when they built John Stokes Square there was, as Andrew said, as the Chief Executive said, large amounts of asbestos and we are continuing to work through that. Halikos have built the Police station, or they are building that Police station and Greenspace have got that contract for the accommodation so it was split up into those two tenders, one for the Police station and one for the accommodation, and now as I said it is the work that then needs to be done for the headworks there. I will pass to Andrew Kirkman, is there anything else you need to, would like to add?

Mr Kirkman: No, I do not think so, Minister. I think you have covered that off.

Mr MALEY: I am mindful of the time, I will move on. Some questions in relation to the Cavanagh Street shade structure, what are the ongoing costs in relation to pruning maintenance of that shade structure?

Ms LAWLER: Yes, I will pass to the Chief Executive around that. But again I know it is a project that the CLP do not like, CLP have no vision around cooling and greening the CBD ...

Mr MALEY: Listen, you do not have a crystal ball, how do you know that? That is irrelevant. You do not know what we do like and we do not like, Minister. Please do not make statements that are untrue.

Ms LAWLER: ... But I do like the shade structure, and as I said I think it is looking magnificent there, but I will pass to Andrew Kirkman around the maintenance.

Mr Kirkman: We have completed a maintenance contract on the work in Cavanagh Street and we will be looking to reissue a new maintenance contract for that work. Working obviously hand-in-glove with City of Darwin, so at this stage those costs are yet to be defined.

Mr MALEY: So, Minister, your— you just mentioned that there is a maintenance contract been completed, what was the cost of that?

Ms LAWLER: I did not say maintenance, I mean the actual facility has been completed. As Andrew said he will work with the council around the ongoing maintenance of that facility.

Mr MALEY: Minister, I stand corrected but I am sure your CE said that the maintenance contract has just been finished and there is a new one about to be started and they are working with the council about that. Is that correct?

Ms LAWLER: I will pass to the CE.

Mr Kirkman: That is correct, I do not have the exact details of what that will look like.

Mr MALEY: Can you take that on notice, Minister, what the cost is of that maintenance program that has just finished?

Ms LAWLER: Yes.

Question on Notice No 4.18

Mr CHAIR: Member for Nelson, please restate the question for the record.

Mr MALEY: Minister, can you please advise the committee what the maintenance contract which has just completed cost for the shade structure in Cavanagh Street?

Mr Chair: Minister, do you accept the question?

Ms LAWLER: I do.

Mr CHAIR: Thank you, Minister. The question asked by the member for Nelson of the Minister has been allocated No 4.18. Thank you. Are there any further questions?

Mr MALEY: Yes there is. Minister, in relation to the vines that were meant to take 12-18 months to cover, will the Government finally admit and replace the poorly selected vines with something that will grow into a lush canopy as originally planned?

Ms LAWLER: So what are you saying? Replace the vines, so chop down the ones that are currently there?

Mr MALEY: Yes. So essentially, yes.

Ms LAWLER: No.

Mr MALEY: You said originally they would take 12–18 months to achieve full coverage. The NT Parks and Wildlife Superintendent John Antella said it is unlikely to happen.

Ms LAWLER: John Antella, yes.

Mr MALEY: Will the Government finally admit defeat and replace a poorly selected vine so it can grow and cover the lush canopy ...

Ms LAWLER: No.

Mr MALEY: ... which as expected some twelve months after completion.

Ms LAWLER: So no, we are not going to chop down the vines that are growing there. As I said the advice that the department got at the time was that it would take 12 to 18 months. Obviously, it is continuing to grow. Hopefully, we have a good Wet Season this year and will see those vines continue to grow over that structure. I think it looks very beautiful as it is with the vines as they are now. It has that beautiful Gumatj stringybark wood. It is looking great aesthetically. We will keep monitoring that to see how it grows. Nobody will be chopping down the vines that are already there.

The advice, at the time, from a horticulturalist who had the contract was that those vines are suitable. We will allow them to continue to grow.

Mr MALEY: Thank you for the advice of what it looks like. Effectively, it has not grown. It was originally set up for a heat and shade structure, which included keeping the sun off the bitumen. That, obviously, will not happen. Why will you not replace the vines or at least cover it so it does what it is designed to do—put shade on the road?

Ms LAWLER: I will not continue. We have had lots of discussions about the vines. Those vines will continue to grow. I have already answered saying that in the Wet Season, hopefully, we have a great Wet and they will continue to grow and provide coverage.

Mr MALEY: When do you think they will grow and cover the wood structure completely?

Ms LAWLER: I will allow an expert who is a horticulturalist—the contractor—to continue to provide advice on that. I think it is looking great as it is. It looks beautiful at night when it is lit up as well. There has been enough discussion about that shade structure. There is no need to waste any more of estimate's time continuing to talk about that shade structure.

Mr CHAIR: A reminder to members as well that we are still on Output 9.1 in case you want to get to 11 and 12.

Mr MALEY: I do, but I also want the minister to answer questions. I appreciate her opinion, again, but, effectively, that was a heat reduction method and it is meant to be covering and it has not. My next question is ...

Mr CHAIR: Member for Nelson, the relevance within the budget is not whether the vines will grow. That is not related to the budget.

Mr MALEY: Okay. What will be the cost to replace the wood now that it has been exposed to the sun longer than originally planned?

Ms LAWLER: My understanding is that wood is hardwood and it will not need replacing. As the minister, I seek expert advice and I will continue to get updates, if necessary. My understanding is that wood is very suited to what it is being used for.

Mr MALEY: Minister, what were the terms of reference for the \$80,000 Sydney University study for the shade structure?

Ms LAWLER: To be clear that was not just about the shade structure, it was a heat mitigation study where we were seeking expert advice. It is about heat mitigation across the whole CBD area, not just the vines. It is work on identifying the hot spots, what can be done and to evaluate all of that. It was not just about the shade structure. I know you like to think that, but it was about research.

We are a government that uses research and base our decisions on research. That is what that was—the University of New South Wales providing expert advice.

Mr MALEY: Minister, will you release the terms of reference in relation to that advice sought.

Ms LAWLER: It is not my agency; it is the Department of the Chief Minister and Cabinet. You can pursue that through them.

Mr MALEY: The next question is in relation to rooftop solar in schools. How many schools across the Territory had solar panels installed to date?

Ms LAWLER: That question was answered last night. I think it was 18 or 19, from memory. You probably should ask whoever it was who was here. The Member for Katherine was in the room. She can respond.

Mr MALEY: The cost of infrastructure tenders has increased to include the outsourcing of project managing in relation to these construction projects. I am saying that instead of managing in-house, you get a tender to manage the project. What has been done, if anything, to broaden the skillset of the department staff to adequately deal with those project managing so that does not happen in the future?

Mr KIRKMAN: There are a broad range of consultants and project managers to assist the work. We have very proficient and experienced project managers in this agency who take the lead on delivering the work. As you have seen from the discussions so far, we have a broad remit in terms of what we deliver. We range from small components to extremely large builds. Wherever we can, our senior project managers deal with the large projects. We bring in support as required.

We have an ongoing program of training on procurement for project management. We will continue to build on that over time. We have experienced project managers in the agency, but given the size of work we have on at the moment we are going to bring in external people to support us.

Mr MALEY: Mr Chair, I have no further questions in relation to that output. I am conscious of time.

Mr CHAIR: Are there any further questions?

Mr EDINGTON: I have one further question. Is there sufficient staff in the agency in Tennant Creek to manage the outstanding projects?

Ms LAWLER: I will pass that operational question to the Chief Executive.

Mr KIRKMAN: We have recently recruited a new lead, a regional director, for the Barkly. Damian (inaudible) is doing an outstanding job driving the projects, some of which you have mentioned tonight. We will get external help as is required by the local director and ensure he has the support he needs to deliver the projects currently in front of him and those for the Barkly, which are quite extensive.

Mr EDINGTON: Thank you. No further questions.

Mr CHAIR: That concludes consideration of Output 9.1, Infrastructure Investment and Delivery.

Output 9.2 – Infrastructure Planning and Governance

Mr CHAIR: The committee will now consider Output 9.2, Infrastructure Planning and Governance. Are there any questions?

Mr MALEY: I have one question. We are assuming that for this output the budget of \$8.223m was made up of the previous output program for support, which was \$4.6m, and asset maintenance of \$2.8m, is that correct? Is that where it has come from?

Ms LAWLER: Yes, I am just looking at the Chief Financial Officer.

Mr MALEY: Just to clarify.

Ms LAWLER: I think it is correct.

Mr MALEY: Output 9.2 is a budget of \$8.223m. I am asking where that has been made up from. We think it is made up of the asset maintenance and program support. Is that correct?

Mr KIRKMAN: It is a separate unit within the division which focuses on procurement, reporting and a number of other functions. There is quite a bit that makes up that work. It also includes the contractor compliance unit which is there to kick the tyres on projects—to ensure when a contractor is saying they are going to do something in terms of their local content, Indigenous employment, participation plans and their work, health and safety, that it is done. It is a solid unit which goes out to audit those companies and ensures what they are saying they will do in their tender bids, is being done on the ground.

This unit is largely personnel related. There are probably some other operational costs. I will pass to Mr Papadakis to make any comments.

Mr PAPADAKIS: Yes, back to your questions whether it includes program support. It does. It is, essentially, reorganisation after the machinery of government, once all the Infrastructure staff are amalgamated from other agencies.

Mr MALEY: No further questions, Chairman.

Mr CHAIR: If there are no further questions, that concludes consideration of Output 9.2

Output 9.3 – Building Asset Management

Mr CHAIR: We will now consider Output 9.3, Building Asset Management. Are there any questions?

There being no questions, that concludes consideration of Output 9.3 and Output Group 9.

OUTPUT GROUP 10.0 – LANDS AND PLANNING

Output 10.1 – Land Development

Mr CHAIR: We will now consider Output Group 10, Lands and Planning, Output 10.1, Land Development. Are there any questions?

Mr MALEY: I have a question, Chair. Can you please advise the actual expenditure in 2019-20 for this output?

Ms LAWLER: This is 10.1, Land Development?

Mr MALEY: Yes, 10.1.

Ms LAWLER: The 2019-20 final budget, you are asking?

Mr MALEY: Yes, please.

Ms LAWLER: It is ...

Mr CHAIR: Minister, could I ask you to put your mike on please?

Ms LAWLER: Sorry. The final budget for 2019-20 was \$6.2m.

Mr MALEY: This year's financials are \$10.5m. Is that correct?

Ms LAWLER: That is correct.

Mr MALEY: Can you explain why that has gone up?

Ms LAWLER: I will ask the Fotis, the Chief Financial Officer. He can respond.

Mr PAPADAKIS: Sure. The main increase in that output is funding we got for the gas task force.

Mr MALEY: Thank you. Minister, in relation to the Katherine Logistics and Agribusiness Hub, this project has been around for a while, but what has the government actually delivered so far?

Ms LAWLER: The Katherine Logistics and Agribusiness Hub is, as you say, a project we have been working on for a while. We have big plans to make Katherine a hub for the agriculture in the region—that Douglas Daly, broader Katherine region. There is a considerable amount of money in 2020-21 for that project. It will be delivered in multiple stages, with an initial investment of \$30m to build the external headworks and Stage 1 subdivision works.

It is a great project for Katherine. There are about 250 hectares of land adjacent to the Katherine railway terminal. It has access to the Victoria Highway and future Katherine heavy vehicle alternate route. It is a great bit of land, setting us up for the future of that logistics and agribusiness there.

Mr MALEY: Minister, what has actually been delivered so far? What has been done to date? Like you said, it has been around for a while. What has been delivered?

Ms LAWLER: I will pass to Leah Clifford, the Deputy Chief Executive Infrastructure Planning of DIPL.

Ms CLIFFORD: As with any land development process, it is quite a sequential way to go about doing land development. We start with land investigations which, principally, is what we have been focusing on. Things like the critical site investigations, looking at land suitability, doing geotechnical works—things like looking at drainage, any Aboriginal areas, any heritage located on-site. We also start to look at doing some concept designs for external headworks and moving on to detailed design for the external headworks.

Mr MALEY: When was that actually started? When did you start doing that work, minister?

Ms LAWLER: I will pass to Leah Clifford.

Ms CLIFFORD: There was funding in the budget paper of \$30m. Those works have been undertaken over the last 12 months.

Mr MALEY: How much have you spent in the last 12 months, minister?

Ms CLIFFORD: To date, we have spent \$1.9m which has been on land investigations and design consultancies which I have explained.

Mr MALEY: When do you expect work to start on the site?

Ms LAWLER: I will pass to the Chief Executive, but we have some good work about to start.

Mr KIRKMAN: As Ms Clifford pointed out, we have been doing investigation work and have also designed the intersection. There is work underway with some of the power works that were required to bring appropriate power sources to the site. There have been discussions with the current land owners to negotiate the transference of that land. It will require a native title resolution. There has been ongoing discussions and we now have agreement with the owners of Manbulloo to procure the site.

We need to work with native title holders for the transference of the land from a pastoral property to industrial land. That is quite a process.

Mr MALEY: How will Katherine businesses and the community benefit from another industrial land estate?

Ms LAWLER: This one is for agribusiness and is close to the rail. It is about a long term focus of Katherine as a hub. When you look at the west, for example the NT Land Corporation has released an expression of interest for a large amount of land on the Keep River.

It is about looking to the future and having this as an agribusiness and logistics hub. Whether it is trucks coming from the west or south, agriculture and horticulture in the Katherine region, getting things to market, it is about the future. It is not right now and sometimes you have trouble envisioning this. We want to ensure we are not playing catch-up and that we have this logistics and agribusiness hub there.

In the future we will see Katherine grown, as well as agriculture and horticulture in the west. This provides opportunities for the rail and trucking. It is about the future of Katherine.

Mr MALEY: What is cost to extinguish the native title on that site?

Ms LAWLER: I will pass to Mr Kirkman.

Mr KIRKMAN: That is to be worked through with native title holders. There are a couple of claimants in that regard in the township of Katherine which will ultimately extend to this area. We will be able to sit down and work through an appropriate compensation, if you like, for that site when we work with the claimant.

Mr MALEY: My understanding is that the land has already been purchased by the government for this project. Is that correct?

Ms LAWLER: No, that is not correct. You will have to go back to the person who is telling you that.

Mr MALEY: So you are doing all this work on land that you do not own?

Ms LAWLER: There are negotiations with the traditional owners underway with Manbulloo.

Mr KIRKMAN: We have an agreement with the land holder which is to be finalised. We will be working through that early in the New Year.

Mr MALEY: My understanding is that Manbulloo was recently sold. Is that correct?

Ms LAWLER: Yes, that is correct.

Mr MALEY: So, who are you negotiating with? The old one or new one? How far into negotiations if it has just been sold?

Ms LAWLER: I will pass on to the chief executive, but yes, these things are the work of the agency and they are working through that.

Mr KIRKMAN: We commenced consultation with the previous owners of the station, Consolidated Pastoral Company. When it was sold we recommenced those discussions with Cross Pacific who have been forthcoming. They are keen to see the growth of Katherine and the agribusiness side of things, and are happy to work with us on this project.

Mr MALEY: Do you think there is a realistic chance you will purchase the land?

Mr KIRKMAN: There is an agreement in place and yes, I do not foresee any issue.

Mr MALEY: Minister, you said there is an agreement in place to purchase the land?

Ms LAWLER: There is an agreement the department has with the holders on the Manbulloo Pastoral Lease.

Mr MALEY: Is that agreement signed, sealed and delivered? Is it a binding contract on both parties?

Ms LAWLER: I will pass to the chief executive.

Mr KIRKMAN: The final version was swapped in the past months and is yet to be signed, but all clauses are agreed so I do not foresee any issue in that being signed, sealed and delivered.

Mr KIRKMAN: Essentially you are telling the committee, minister, you have bought this land—signed, sealed and delivered—yet there is no deal done with the native title as to how much that is going to cost you in relation to trying to extinguish the native title on that particular block of land, is that correct?

Ms LAWLER: Yes, that is correct, Member for Nelson. The department will work with the traditional owners. This is the Northern Territory, we have traditional owners and pretty much any project, whether it is the Central Arnhem Road or the Tanami, putting in a gas pipeline, private enterprise or government, you work with the land councils on those projects. We will continue to work to deliver this project because this is part of the landscape of the Northern Territory.

Mr MALEY: Minister, is it not going to put you in a tough situation to negotiate a fair deal with the native title owners when they know you have a contract and purchased the land already? Would that not put you in a very hard position to negotiate?

Ms LAWLER: We will work through those things, Member for Nelson.

Mr MALEY: Do you think that position is going to cost the taxpayer more money than normal, minister?

Ms LAWLER: Member for Nelson, we will work through that. The Katherine logistics and agribusiness hub has been on the horizon—we have land use plans. It has been no secret that would be a future use of the site. We will work through those processes.

Mr MALEY: What is a realistic time frame for that block of land is in your possession and the native title claim has been resolved?

Ms LAWLER: We will work through that, Member for Nelson.

Mr MALEY: Is that the best answer you can give Territorians, minister?

Ms LAWLER: Member for Nelson, those issues need to be worked through. Those things could be resolved in a day or it could take a while. It is the reality of working in the Territory with the issues of native title. We will work through those matters, but the vision is to have a site central for Katherine and its people and businesses in to the future. Whether you are a horticulturalist in Katherine or growing crops or whatever else, you will be able to have a great facility there. We will continue to work through that, Member for Nelson.

Mr MALEY: So you cannot give Territorians a better idea of when it is going to be done, minister?

Ms LAWLER: It is an issue that will be worked through with the department and the land council.

Mr MALEY: Just to be clear, you have signed a contract to purchase the land and you have not entered into negotiations or finalised negotiations with the native title owners yet. Is that correct minister?

Ms LAWLER: Yes. It is a process that gets worked through, Member for Nelson. It is one that is—or probably not unique in the Territory—but it is a process in the Territory that you work through with the native title holders. That is a fact. It does not matter where you are working, whether it is through road infrastructure, that is what you do. You work through the native title holders whether you are a developer—whatever you are—in the Northern Territory that is how it is done. We will do that. We do that work respectfully. As I said, I will pass to Andrew Kirkman, the Chief Executive, but that is the reality in the Territory, in Alice Springs, Tennant Creek, Katherine and all the remotes as well.

Mr KIRKMAN: Just going further from where the minister left off, we have been in discussions, obviously, with the Northern Land Council which is the representative body of claimants. They are very supportive of this project and I have personally spoken to some of the claimants myself, who are supportive. Everyone in the Katherine region is supportive of this project. It will go ahead. It is a normal process to work through the land tenure both in terms of the ownership but also the underlying native title. That is a process that we will have to work through.

Mr MALEY: Minister, are you saying it is normal to purchase the land and not know the final cost of that land before you can use it? Is that what you are saying is normal practice in the Northern Territory, minister?

Ms LAWLER: I said it is normal practice to have to negotiate with land councils around land that has native title on it. Yes.

Mr MALEY: Minister, there is a contract that has essentially been signed, sealed and delivered. Is there a clause in there that releases the government if a deal cannot be done with the native title owners, or the deal that has been done is so expensive, it is not worth you progressing this matter?

Mr KIRKMAN: Yes, the agreement allows us to do whatever is appropriate but government is very clear that this project will go ahead. These things are processes which we are working through. We would hope that they are completed sooner rather than later but we are working through those. There are processes, obviously, that governments can undertake to acquire land if so necessary. At this stage, we have not had to go through any compulsory acquisition on this site but government is keen to, obviously, see this project come to fruition as all the parties are.

Mr MALEY: Minister, if you compulsorily acquire the land, does that extinguish any native title claim?

Ms LAWLER: As I said, Member for Nelson, we would prefer to work with the native title holders but, yes, it can be through that acquisition process. But we will work, as I said, with the traditional owners.

Mr MALEY: Do you think that would be fair on the traditional owners if you compulsorily acquired the land and then extinguished the native title without compensation?

Mr TURNER: Point of order, Mr Chair.

Ms LAWLER: Yes, this is a hypothetical.

Mr CHAIR: Member for Blain, your point of order?

Mr TURNER: Standing Order 109. That is both hypothetical and an expression of opinion and contrary to Standing Order 109, manner and form of questions.

Mr CHAIR: Thank you Member for Blain. I think you are right; it was a request for an opinion on whether it was fair or not. Minister, do you want to finalise your answer? You were answering the question.

Ms LAWLER: No, I am very keen to move on because we are only up to 10 and I have got another folder still, as well as half a folder here. I would like to get to the Environment portfolio, too.

Mr MALEY: Thank you minister.

Mr CHAIR: Further questions?

Mr MALEY: I know you are mindful of the time and I have some more questions but just to some up, essentially, you have purchased some land and you now have to go to the native title owners and finish the negotiations in relation to that? And you are not sure what that is going to be but you agree that that puts you in a tough financial negotiating situation because the native title owners are going to go that you have purchased the land?

Mr TURNER: Point of order.

Ms LAWLER: No, I do not agree with any of that at all.

Mr CHAIR: One moment, minister. The Member for Blain had a point of order.

Mr TURNER: Contrary to standing order 109 to see that is an inference.

Mr CHAIR: Thank you, Member for Blain. I think the minister was finishing her answer.

Ms LAWLER: Yes. Just to say that we will work with the native title holders, and as I said, the outcome is to have a fantastic facility for the people of the broader Katherine big rivers region.

Mr MALEY: Just one final question on this, minister. Have you done a deal with our native titles on another piece of land similar, and what was that cost to extinguish a native title?

Ms LAWLER: No, we have not.

Mr CHAIR: Further questions? Yes, Member for Barkly on 10.1.

Mr EDGINGTON: Minister, Lot 7025 on Warrego road was initially set aside for multimodal transport and logistics hub. Can you please advise the committee what the status of that land is, and the outcome of the study for the multimodal and logistics hub?

Mr KIRKMAN: Yes, that site is still set aside for a multi-modal hub, and potentially also for I guess industry related activity. It is an ideally located site adjacent to the railway as you wait, next to Warrego road. We had some studies done as part of the work we had done earlier for a Mount Isa to Tennant Creek rail link. There was technical assessment done in terms of that. We have got slight assessment work that needs to be done and obviously—a bit like what we did earlier with the agribusiness arm of government in Katherine, we would also look to obviously partner with our government agency responsible for mining in particular, and work with them around perspective uses.

So seek I guess advice from potential business who would look to setup in Tennant Creek, do some business studies in that regard. But all that really needs to lead into a strategic sort of masterplan in terms of what that site can deliver. But certainly, it is something that is on the radar. The site selection assessment which I guess is the first piece of work is something that we are keen to get moving on this financial year.

Mr EDGINGTON: How long before that piece of work will be finished, and has there been any interest in developing that land?

Mr KIRKMAN: As I said, we would be looking to get that work completed this financial year. In respect to interest, yes there has been quite a bit of interest from individual proponents around that site, and I guess we welcome co-investment from the private sector. What we would not want to do is exclude it to multi-use. We are of the opinion—and in fact I think it is pretty clear for anyone who is looking at the future of Tennant Creek—that site needs to be a multi-use site, common user site certainly can house a number of proponents, but we are looking to obviously make that available for a number of industry players, whether it is in logistics, whether it is in the gas or the minerals sector, we want to make sure that is open for a number of proponents to come in and use that facility to operate out of that Tennant Creek hub.

Mr EDGINGTON: Sorry, minister, so are you suggesting that that will go out to the market for an expression of interest?

Mr KIRKMAN: Well initially we would be talking to parties who would be looking to set up there, as I said there have already been some proponents who have expressed some interest in the site. We would be looking to certainly do a broader piece of work around which business, which industries would like to set up in a location like this, what their uses would be, what the size of the landholdings they would require, whether it is close to the railway or not, and work through sort of what those requirements would be for infrastructure to deliver that land to those businesses in a way that would see the greater development for the Tennant Creek region.

Mr EDGINGTON: Are there, minister, is there any current leases over that land?

Ms LAWLER: Chief Executive?

Mr KIRKMAN: I am not aware of their being any current leases.

Ms LAWLER: No, not aware, but look at the Deputy Chief Executive, she is saying that she is not aware either.

Mr EDGINGTON: Thank you, Minister.

Mr MALEY: Minister I have got a question in relation to Gunn Point and Glyde Point, can you give the committee an update in relation to the land development out there?

Ms LAWLER: Yes, I will start with Gunn Point. There are a couple of things. The road out there, bituminising that road was a great project, that we did around stimulating the economy as well as a commitment around sea farms. Three local Territory businesses, King & Sons, Aldebaran and Ostojic, they all got about \$10m each to do that project and we ended up with a very good project.

The bitumen road opened up for a lot of people who were not actually aware of what was out there and as I said it is positive it is only 20 minutes from Palmerston. But, well not but, so the other aspect of that is an

at—this is I think Output 12, the Planning Commission is doing the land use plan work out there at Gunn Point at the moment, so they are consulting on that.

One of the other—with my environment portfolio as well is the, what is the term I am thinking, of, they have done all the work so DEPWS have done all the work to look at that site around the biodiversity, around the water, and it has been some really interesting work with Mapping the Future. The Mapping the Future team in DEPWS had a very good look out there at the ground water, they have had a look at the salinity of the soil, and that has been useful for providing clear information to the Planning Commission around what is best where so if the soil is too saline obviously it is not a good place to be building infrastructure, the foundations would not survive or the concrete would not survive with the high salinity.

It is also about where to put agriculture if there is no water or low water use out there. Gunn Point is being planned at the moment. The Northern Territory Land Corporation, that—a lot of the land out there is their land holdings, you may have seen a planning notice just recently around they are looking at the moment there is a— or well there is a lot of campers that camp out there, they are looking at putting in a caretaker and also ablution blocks out there, so the tourists who come to town who like to camp out there and there has been a lot that are camped out, that camp out there in the dry will have ablution facilities but there will also be a caretaker out there because what we do see is a lot of people driving down the dunes there, the cliff face there, and causing damage to that, so that land use planning is continuing out there. In relation to Glyde point, no, there is no Defence or anybody else is not at this stage building a wharf. No, that is not on the agenda or I have not seen anything come across my desk. At this stage it is about the land use planning and the bitumen road. The planning commission are continuing to consult on that. I do not think there is much else I can tell you.

Mr MALEY: You mentioned that the roads opened things up. The roads out to Leaders Creek boat ramp and Saltwater Arm boat ramp are being used a lot more regularly now. Do you have a plan to upgrade or maintain them more than normal? Before you had to use a four-wheel drive and now you can get there in a corolla.

Ms LAWLER: I will pass back to roads. We all love fishing and it is close to Palmerston and Darwin with a bitumen road. I pass to Ms McCormick.

Ms McCORMICK: In terms of maintenance of roads where we have upgraded with an unsealed network nearby, we tend to increase our maintenance grades or re-sheeting of those roads because it encourages use once sealed.

Mr MALEY: Have you planned to do that to those particular roads? To Leaders Creek boat ramp and when you turn right to Saltwater Arm.

Mr KIRKMAN: Being a fisherman, I know that there has been quite a bit work already done to the Saltwater Arm piece of road. As Ms McCormick pointed out, there will be further works undertaken to ensure additional traffic can access those roads. If you would like more detail we would have to come back to you.

Mr MALEY: When I go fishing there next, I will check it out.

I am mindful of the time and have no further questions.

Mr CHAIR: That concludes consideration of Output 10.1.

Output 10.2 – Development Assessment Services

Mr CHAIR: The committee will now consider Output 10.2, Development Assessment Services. Are there any questions?

There being no questions concludes the consideration for Output 10.2.

Output 10.3 – Crown Land Estate

Mr CHAIR: The committee will now consider Output 10.3, Crown Land Estate. Are there any questions?

Mr MALEY: I have one question. What are the costs of the major review of the strategy for managing weeds on Crown land?

Ms LAWLER: I will pass to Ms Clifford regarding weed management on Crown land. I announced the new Gamba grass management plan today.

Ms CLIFFORD: Can you clarify the question? Was it the cost of the strategy that you are after?

Mr MALEY: Yes.

Ms CLIFFORD: The cost of the strategy was \$67,000 which included the management plan as well as the strategy.

Mr MALEY: What was the cost of releasing Crown land in Alice Springs to support the development of Kilgariff Estate Stage 2?

Ms LAWLER: Say that again.

Mr MALEY: What was the cost of releasing Crown land in Alice Springs to support the development of Kilgariff Estate Stage 2?

Ms LAWLER: That is a land development corporation. The NTG allocated \$4.1m to bring forward the development of Kilgariff Estate Stage 2. This will provide 87 residential lots in two sub stages.

Mr MALEY: How many historical Aboriginal land claims were progressed and settled in 2019–20?

Ms LAWLER: I will pass to the Deputy Chief Executive, Leah Clifford.

Ms CLIFFORD: The project has progressed in the 2019-20 land claims, including the Frances Well Land Claim number 64, Anthony Lagoon Land Claim number 74, Coomalie Land Claim number 182 and Ban Ban Land Claim number 238, Kakadu Land Claim, Canteen Creek number 130, and Cobourg Peninsula Regional Land Claim number 6.

Mr MALEY: When you say 'progressed' what does that mean?

Ms CLIFFORD: Regarding land claims, just to be clear, some of them are dealt with by this agency under DIPL and others by Chief Minister and Cabinet. In relation to land claims, as an estimation we are very respectful in all of our dealings. These negotiations and discussions can go on for some time.

Sometimes, when we say 'progressed' we, as an agency, are often asked to coordinate matters of detriment across government and private, which we do, which feeds into the land claim process.

Obviously, once those land claims are heard and the federal minister makes a determination, there is a lot of ongoing actions that might be required. It could be things like survey, fencing, subdivision—a range of administrative actions associated with the land claims once a decision is made.

Mr MALEY: In relation to the Larrakia cultural centre. As you are aware, the Larrakia Development Corporation secured funding to build the Larrakia cultural centre. It is projected to generate \$48m in gross regional product. With an in-principle agreement reached in February 2020, can the minister inform where we are at in relation to that land transfer?

Ms LAWLER: Those discussions are being led by the Department of the Chief Minister and Cabinet, so that is not my portfolio. At the end process, I will be the person who does the sign-off. I cannot update you on the progress of that.

Mr MALEY: You cannot tell us what the details of the land transfer agreement area? That is not your department?

Ms LAWLER: No, it is the Department of the Chief Minister and Cabinet.

Mr MALEY: No further questions.

Mr CHAIR: That concludes consideration of Output 10.3.

Output 10.4 – Lands Planning

Mr CHAIR: The committee will now consider Output 10.4, Lands Planning. Are there questions?

Mr MALEY: Minister, during the third round of planning reforms, what was the cost of holding the consultations workshops across the Territory?

Ms LAWLER: I will pass to the Deputy Chief Executive. Before I do, again, you were at the UDIA function, I think it was last Friday night, where the Planning Institute Awards awarded recognition to the planning area of DIPL. I was very pleased. Also—he is not here—Doug Lesh got a fellow award from the Planning Institute. That is recognition of a job well done. I acknowledge the outstanding work that was done for that planning reform in our last term of government. It was done carefully and very well and is a very good example of how you consult. I will pass to the Deputy Chief Executive to give those figures.

Ms CLIFFORD: The Stage 3 consultations were \$69,082.

Mr MALEY: Minister, in relation to the city of Weddell, can you give me an update in relation to how that is going?

Ms LAWLER: Yes. First I will do the top level picture and then I will pass to the Deputy CE. Weddell—I am trying to remember the figures. Until we see a greater increase in the population in the greater Darwin area—we probably need to see 250,000 people before we would develop the city of Weddell.

The next stages for us relates to Holtze and Kowandi. When looking at land supply, that is where we are going next. Weddell is further down the track, but that being said, we are doing work at Middle Arm which is in close proximity.

I will pass to the Deputy Chief Executive for a run down on the operational matters occurring out there.

Ms CLIFFORD: Weddell is on our longer term forecast in terms of our future land supply program. The immediate growth front that we are focusing on is closing out on Palmerston and moving into Holtze and Kowandi before heading to Weddell.

The minister mentioned Middle Arm and Weddell being in close proximity. When we do our infrastructure investigations it will form part of that picture. In terms of Weddell, there has been work done in the past for future planning of this city. That information has informed a gap analysis where our technical officers have looked at a range of studies that have been done. In order to progress studies for Weddell we are reviewing all of those and working towards doing baseline studies that will inform any future release.

With land release, we need to be mindful of currency of information. By the time we go through land investigations into infrastructure investigations to our master planning, concept design and detailed design the information on land capability needs to be current. We are keeping an eye on the studies which have been done before. We are also mindful that when we do our project plan it is going to come down to the timing and sequencing of when we do the next studies.

For Weddell, some of the baseline studies—the future planning talked about a population of 100,000. Our forecast are often around planning for a population horizon. In terms of planning we can look at planning for populations either by timing or need. In the Territory we do it based on need which the planning commission has a big role in. We work closely with the planning commission.

In terms of progressing Weddell, we need to progress towards doing a subregional land use plan for the area. They are conversations we will have with the planning commission in order to progress the work in the future. But, as the minister said, our focus at the moment is preparing for the next growth front which will be Holtze and Kowandi.

The committee suspended.

Mr CHAIR: Thank you everybody and welcome back. We are currently on Output 10.4, Lands and Planning. Are there any questions?

Mr MALEY: I have a question in relation to Flightpath Road in Berrimah. In May 2019, the government awarded a \$6.2m contract in relation to construct the 800 metre road. When was the decision made to use taxpayers' money to make that sub-division, noting that there is no new industrial developments on that site?

Ms LAWLER: I will pass to the Chief Executive on that one but some of the work that we have done as a government is around new sub-division guidelines. Flightpath Road provides an entrance of a busy road, Amy Johnson, into the Berrimah North Estate. That Berrimah North, as you are probably aware, has a whole heap of various industries. It is not just one landholder; it is a number of landholders. There is residential as well. I will pass to Andrew Kirkman, the Chief Executive, to answer.

Mr KIRKMAN: As the minister pointed out, Member for Nelson, there is a number of landowners along that road. It is not unusual for government to support industrial, commercial and residential land development by undertaking head works-type infrastructure. This is what I would call head works because it is not to be used by any one developer; it is used by multiple developers to open up access to that part of the Berrimah North development.

Mr MALEY: Why was it done so soon after the development was done by a private contractor?

Ms LAWLER: The Berrimah North Area Plan was gazetted in 2014, supporting further development of this locality for residential and industrial land uses. Development of land within the Berrimah North Area Plan and surrounding developments triggers large infrastructure upgrades. To ensure those reach their full potential, they need to have access.

The Berrimah North Area Plan was gazetted in 2014. That was just a flow-through.

Mr MALEY: Minister, when you say gazetted, does that mean when it started or when it was finished and titles issued?

Ms LAWLER: That was when titles were issued. I am looking at the Deputy Chief Executive. Gazettes is when the titles are issued. Yes.

Ms CLIFFORD: The Berrimah North Area Plan was work that was obviously part of the land development process where we start to identify what the land is capable of having done. As the minister mentioned, it was identified for the purposes she outlined.

When the Berrimah North Area Plan is gazetted it becomes part of the Planning Scheme which guides future development of the Territory.

Mr MALEY: That was in 2014, was it, minister?

Ms LAWLER: Yes, Member for Nelson.

Mr MALEY: Then, in 2019 there was a new road put in—800 metres—which is Flightpath Road? Is that correct, minister?

Ms LAWLER: In 2019-20 DIPL had a program, yes, to construct Flightpath Road.

Mr MALEY: May 2019?

Ms LAWLER: I will pass to the Chief Executive.

Mr KIRKMAN: Yes, Flightpath Road was completed on 11 July 2020.

Mr MALEY: The tender was released in May 2019?

Mr KIRKMAN: No, I think the commencement was actually April 2019 for that project which was awarded to Allan King and Sons.

Mr MALEY: Did the original developer make any contribution to that road?

Ms LAWLER: My understanding is that some of the contribution was some land. That was allocated. I have answered these questions in Question Time last term of government. I have a memory of this. I will go back to it.

There were three entrances to subdivisions at the same time. One you may be aware of is Tulagi Road. That intersection had NT government, Palmerston council and Bunnings putting some dollars in. At Northcrest

and the intersection at Knuckey Lagoon and what is now Pan Que Boulevard on the Stuart Highway had the developer and the federal government putting money in. Then, Flightpath Road had one of the developers putting some land allocation into that.

When you build new subdivisions, the impact is of benefit to more than just one landholder. If there are multiple landholders, that is when you look at options of how that will be worked through.

Mr MALEY: No further questions.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR: That concludes consideration of Output 10.4 – sorry, Member for Arafura, we will not conclude just yet.

Mr COSTA: The Territory Economic Recover Commission highlighted the need for the Territory to become the easiest place in Australia to do business. Can the minister outline how planning reform will cut red tape and support government's economic recovery?

Ms LAWLER: Yes, it is one of our focuses for government on how we can cut red tape. The planning approval process and reforms we have done have been very beneficial. There has been a streamlining of processes, but I will pass to the Deputy Chief Executive to provide some more detail. One of the things we introduced was a 90-day time frame from receipt of a report from the NT Planning Commission for the ministerial decision, ensuring rezoning applications provide greater certainty for industry and communities. I have a 90-day time frame around making sure that work is done. I will pass to the Deputy Chief Executive to run through some of those things that have occurred.

Ms CLIFFORD: Through consultations, and there was quite an extensive consultation period on planning reform, it all centred around better transparency, having better consultation on planning, and better planning and development outcomes. As the minister said, part of the improvements that we made to the system was in relation to planning scheme amendments and introducing a 90-day period for which the minister to make a determination on those, which he have not had previously. Some of the other improvements included revising notifications to owners so that people are aware of development applications that are happening in their suburbs. We enhanced our online, our ILA system, which is our Integrated Land Information system, which is the basis that we use for everything in Lands and Planning. It is also part of the Torrens title system and links through to the Land Titles Office. It is part of the ILA's enhancements that we did, we expanded the number of applications that developers could put online and it forms part of our end-to-end process for titles and lodgement, so that certainly assisted in that process.

We have also simplified the development application process and the planning scheme to move away from the discretionary category that we had in the planning scheme for different land uses, and introduced a merit-and-impact assessable approach to planning, which is considered best practice. One of the things, and we have had very good feedback from industry on that. The merit approach is more about tick-box planning where if you look at the planning scheme as it is now, as a part of the reforms, it will show what is merit- and what is impact-assessable, and essentially with merit you would go through and meet the criteria, and Section 51 of the act. If there was one that you could not meet you would essentially focus on that as part of your planning application. So rather than having to address all of the criteria which you had to do before, we have streamlined it and made it sharper and focused on that.

In terms of impact assessable, it is certainly a new category that we have introduced. Again, this one is looking around the intent of the zoning. So when you are applying for an application or your development approval you are looking at the intent of the zoning and applying it in that respect. Probably one of the things that I should mention is, as part of planning reform and this particular reform builds on our 2015 score card where we were rated number one nationally for planning. And very much this approach is proceeding— well, is best practice for planning, and as the minister mentioned very privileged that it won an award at the UDIA.

There are also other things we have made as part of planning reform, is having specialist advisors to the development consent authority that they can call on if they need. I think the other thing to highlight with all of this, too, is the emphasis on strategic planning, which he had not had as strongly before, and now that the planning scheme allows for that as well. I think that is probably most of the enhancements, I think.

Ms LAWLER: I am proud of the work that has been done by the department.

Mr CHAIR: Thank you. No further questions? That concludes consideration of Output 10.4.

Output 10.5 – Building Advisory Services

Mr CHAIR: We will proceed to Output 10.5, Building Advisory Services. Are there any questions? No questions? That concludes consideration of Output 10.5.

Output 10.6 – Land Information

Mr CHAIR: The committee will now consider Output 10.6, Land Information. Are there any questions? That concludes consideration of Output 10.6 and the Output Group 10.

OUTPUT GROUP 11.0 – LOGISTICS INFRASTRUCTURE AND SERVICES

Output 11.1 – Passenger Transport

Mr CHAIR: We will now move on to consider Output Group 11 in Logistics Infrastructure and Services, Output 11.1, Passenger Transport. Are there any questions? No questions? That concludes the Consideration of Output 11.1.

Output 11.2 – Registration and Licensing

Mr CHAIR: We will now consider Output 11.2, Registration and Licensing. Are there any questions?

Mr EDGINGTON: I often hear that the MVR office is closed in Tennant Creek. Why is that, and what is being done to improve the service, especially for residents in regional and remote areas?

Ms LAWLER: I will pass that operational question to the general manager, Louise McCormick.

Ms MCCORMICK: Thanks minister, we have one staff member in the Tennant Creek office, and unfortunately she has had some health issues. We have been looking at providing some support from our Alice Springs region, and my regional director from Alice Springs has met with the Tennant Creek staff member on several occasions to address the Tennant Creek office there. But in terms of providing regional and remote services, we have instigated recently a pastoralist assistance line where they can actually go there to look at doing all their transactions in one hit. We are also organising transport inspectors to go out to stations to inspect their vehicles for compliance checks and those sorts of things.

Mr EDGINGTON: My understanding was the initial intention of moving that office to the DIPL building was that there would be some multi-skilled staff that would be able to fill in exactly during these circumstances. Can you advise what happened there?

Ms MCCORMICK: We did look at that across the region, and some of the skillsets that are actually required for Motor Vehicle Registration have a regulatory role and have to have a fairly vast knowledge of legislation and all the regulation that sits around it. The staff that we have thought would be able to be multi-skilled—our project administrators, and that is a different role where you are project focused and handling all the financial side of things. So the training component that goes with Motor Vehicle Registry staff meant that we could not multi-skill. We are still looking at how we could provide more services, but it was more difficult than we thought it would be initially.

Mr EDGINGTON: Minister is there a timeframe to resolve this problem in Tennant Creek

Ms LAWLER: I would also like to add that Australia Post also can provide a processed licence card replacement, interstate licence transfer centre, NT and update contact details, but as I said, I will leave this operational matter with Louise McCormick.

Ms MCCORMICK: Thank you for that. So, Australia Post does help us provide a lot more officers, other than we could do or cost us a lot more across the Territory. So that is one option that the minister had talked about. The minister also in her opening statement also did make reference to MVR for business online, so you are able to do a lot of those transactions online. Even a pastoralist in a very remote station can do all of their transactions online now. So we are still reforming, and we will still try to improve services.

Mr EDGINGTON: Is there an intention to increase the staff at the Motor Vehicle Registry to overcome these problems in the future?

Mr KIRKMAN: We will definitely look to see what cross-skilling we can do, and that does work in some of our other offices from time to time. I guess what is important to note is as Ms McCormick has pointed out, is

that Australia Post can do just about everything that can be done in an MVR office. So that is one of our 14 outlets across the Territory that has that enhanced capability. They can issue licences, they can do registrations, and they can do a whole lot more. But we will absolutely endeavour to make sure that MVR office in the Tennant Creek DIPL office remains open as much as it can.

Mr EDGINGTON: I must say that the staff member there is doing a great job. We certainly need some support there.

Mr CHAIR: That concludes consideration of Output 11.2.

Output 11.3 – Road Safety and Compliance

Mr CHAIR: The committee will now consider Output 11.3, Road Safety and Compliance. Are there any questions?

There being no questions concludes consideration of Output 11.3.

Output 11.4 – Transport Planning and Delivery

Mr CHAIR: The committee will now consider Output 11.4, Transport Planning and Delivery. Are there any questions?

Mr EDGINGTON: Remote airstrips, Ampilatwatja and Alekarenge, have been calling for their airstrips to be sealed for some time. Is there any funding available to seal the airstrips in those locations?

Ms LAWLER: I will pass to Ms McCormick to respond.

Ms McCORMICK: Alekarenge—you will have to remind me of the second one you meant—airstrip is on our forward works program. It has been for some time and we are about to do some of the initial design work to upgrade the airstrip.

What was the second one, sorry?

Mr EDGINGTON: The second one was Ampilatwatja.

Ms McCORMICK: Ampilatwatja is not on the forward works program, but we have been doing upgrades through our minor new works program for Ampilatwatja. We have been getting funding under the Regional Aviation Access Programme which is an Australian Government program. They fund 50% of the work so we have done minor new works but not a full upgrade. The Alekarenge is a forwards work inclusion.

Mrs WORDEN: Being on the forward works program, what does that mean in terms of a time frame of having the work completed?

Ms LAWLER: We will take that question on notice.

Question on Notice No 4.19

Mr CHAIR: Member for Barkly, please restate the question for the record.

Mr EDGINGTON: Alekarenge is on the forward works program. What is the time frame for Alekarenge airstrip to be sealed?

Mr CHAIR: Minister, do you accept the question?

Ms LAWLER: Yes.

Mr CHAIR: The question asked by the Member for Barkly of the minister has been allocated number 4.19.

Mr EDGINGTON: Will you add the Ampilatwatja airstrip to your upgrade programs so that it can be sealed?

Ms LAWLER: I will allow the department to have a look at that. They need to do the work around priorities and would look at numbers, closeness of other airstrips and other work. I do not make my decisions based on a question at estimates. The decisions are made through research and evidence. I will allow the department to do that work. They can provide an update regarding Ampilatwatja.

I love Ampilatwatja, it is a beautiful community. I have some good friends out there.

Mr EDGINGTON: What time frame will that investigation be carried out to determine whether it should be on the upgrade list?

Ms LAWLER: I will allow the department to work through the process regarding Ampilatwatja airstrip. I am sure they will let you know. They can write to you when—as I said there are lots of airstrips in the Territory that need to be bituminised and upgraded. At some stage in the future they can inform you when the work has been done.

Mr EDGINGTON: I have no further questions.

Mr COSTA: Many Territorians and visitors travel along the Arnhem Highway however, during the wet season the Adelaide River flood plains can cut access for residents, tourists and pastoralists in the area. What work has this government undertaken to improve access along the Arnhem Highway? How is this investment benefiting Territorians?

Ms LAWLER: This is some work that I have been out and had a look at a couple of times. It is some really important work as you said. The Arnhem Highway is not just about getting tourists or locals out to Jabiru, or fishers out to Corroboree or out to Shady Camp or the Mary River, or any of those sorts of things. It is also an important route because we have those quarries out at Mt Bundy. There is rock and gravel, blue metal, things that come out of those quarries. The work on the Adelaide River floodplains is very, very important work for government.

The total program of the capital works is \$77.8m which is a substantial amount of work and the reason for that is it is going across a floodplain. There is something like 13 bridges that are being put in. That has been some great work out there by Advance Civil, a Territory company. Allan King & Sons have the road works and Advance Civil has the bridge works.

We are also looking at the Beatrice Hill early works, Stage Two. Stage One is the Adelaide River floodplain, the road and bridge work. Stage Two is the Beatrice Hill section. The people who travel along that, just before that little croc area—we always pull over and look for the little croc there—but it is an area that you have to travel slowly on because it is so rough. Over the years, it has just become rougher and rougher. There is some Stage Two early works there for Beatrice Hill, as well.

Once that work has finished, it will be very, very important work for people to get to Jabiru, tourists to get out to Jabiru, people to get out past into Arnhem Land through Oenpelli out that way, as well. There are so many important needs to make sure that that road is open for as long as possible.

I have been there a couple of times to have a look at the work. It is amazing work. If you are looking for somewhere to go on a Sunday afternoon for a drive, I suggest that you go out and have a bit of a look because it is a beautiful bit of road that has been built and a lot of dollars going into that road. Well done to Allan King & Sons and also to Advance Civil for those road works.

Mr CHAIR: That concludes consideration of Output 11.4.

Output 11.5 – Transport Assets

Mr CHAIR: We will now consider Output 11.5, Transport Assets. Are there any questions? No further questions. That concludes consideration of Output 11.5.

Output 11.6 – Strategy, Policy and Legislation

Mr CHAIR: We will now consider Output 11.6 – Strategy, Policy and Legislation. Are there any questions? There are no questions. That concludes consideration of Output 11.6 and the Output Group 11.

OUTPUT GROUP 12.0 – NORTHERN TERRITORY PLANNING COMMISSION
Output 12.1 – Northern Territory Planning Commission

Mr CHAIR: The committee will now proceed to Output Group 12, Northern Territory Planning Commission, Output 12.1, Northern Territory Planning Commission. Are there any questions?

Mr MALEY: I have a question but I am mindful of the time. I know that the minister wants to move on to Environment and so do we. We love the environment.

Ms LAWLER: So do I.

Mr CHAIR: Therefore, no questions. That concludes consideration of Output Group 12.

OUTPUT GROUP 13.0 – CORPORATE AND SHARED SERVICES
Output 13.1 – Corporate and Governance

Mr CHAIR: I will now call for questions relating to Output Group 13.0, Corporate and Shared Services, Output 13.1, Corporate and Governance. Are there any questions? We are flying through this now. No further questions. That concludes consideration of Output 13.1.

Output 13.2 – Shared Services Received

Mr CHAIR: The committee will now consider Output 13.2, Shared Services Received. Are there any questions? That concludes consideration of Output 13.2 and of the Output Group 13.

Are there any non-output specific budget-related questions? There are no questions. Therefore, that concludes consideration of outputs relating to the Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Logistics.

Minister, on behalf of the committee, I would like to thank the officials, your staff and anyone else who has helped out to provide advice to you today.

Ms LAWLER: I would like to thank the officials as well. I am proud to have a good infrastructure department. Thank you very much and to the planning commission for being here.

Mr CHAIR: Thank you, Mr Kirkman, to you and your team. Have a good evening.

Ladies and gentleman, we will take a quick two or three minute break while they reset the room. Thank you very much.

DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENT, PARKS AND WATER SECURITY

Mr CHAIR: We are back for Estimates Committee, Environment and Water Security. Minister Lawler, I invite you to introduce the officials accompanying you and to make an opening statement regarding the portfolios of environment and water security.

Ms LAWLER: It is a pleasure to be the minister for the Department of Environment, Parks and Water Security.

I have Joanne Townsend, Chief Executive Officer; Alaric Fisher, Executive-Director Flora and Fauna; I also have Cynthia Loganathan, Chief Financial Officer in the backroom; and Colleen Bremner, Executive Director Bushfires NT; Christine Long, Executive Director Office of Water Security; Amy Dennison, Executive Director Environmental Regulations; Paul Purdon, Executive Director Environmental Assessment and Policy; and Luis Da Rocha, Executive Director Rangelands.

I am not going to read my introductory statement due to time; we can go straight in to questions.

I will say though, if you want to read a fantastic annual report, read the Department of Environment, Parks and Water Security's. It was the Environment of Natural Resources annual report. It is a beautiful and easy-to-read document. If you have not read it, do so.

I will not bother with an opening statement because we only have 20 minutes to discuss environment and it is an area that should have more than 20 minutes.

Mr CHAIR: Thank you, minister. Are there any questions relating to the portfolio of Environment and Water Security?

Mrs HERSEY: Thank you. I appreciate that you have not read your statement. Can the minister outline a breakdown of how much of the \$500,000 for the Gamba Army is being spent on wages, spraying and communication?

Ms LAWLER: Thank you very much for the question. It is interesting because that \$500,000 is a grant to Territory NRM or Territory Natural Resource Management. The funding has gone from us to Territory NTM. Karen May is the CEO of Territory NRM. When that funding is expended we will get an acquittal, but at this stage that \$500,000 is Territory NRM's responsibility to administer.

I was there today. I ducked out early this morning to have a look at the spraying that was occurring at Casuarina Coastal Reserve. There are about 12 employees now. They are looking to have about 45 people employed. They will not be in a full-time role; it will be part-time, because it is so hot. It was damn hot out there today. They will be doing three or four bursts of spraying.

The breakdown of how that money is being spent will be Territory NTM's responsibility. They were using vehicles there. They are also looking to see if they can get access to, for example, a Bushfires vehicle or a Northern Territory Fire and Rescue Service vehicle because it is the Wet Season where they may not be used as much.

The actual breakdown of that I will leave to Territory NRM. We have allocated \$500,000 to the gamba army.

Mrs HERSEY: With 12 employees already there, are they full-time employees?

Ms LAWLER: No.

Mrs HERSEY: You said that they would be part-time, but there are up to 45 ...

Ms LAWLER: This project is one that was about COVID-19. It was about boots on the ground, employing people who may have been unemployed or under-employed because of the impact of COVID-19. As a government, we put in about \$6m across the board to address gamba grass. The gamba army, though, is one component of that.

Also today I announced the 2020 to 2030 gamba management plan that has been worked on and released. Those 12 employees are part-time. They have expressions of interest from about another 40. Territory NTM is working through that recruitment process. Nobody could spray or be in the sun for eight hours working on gamba grass full-time. This money and allocation is about attacking gamba, hitting it hard during the time before it seeds. They are out there. The management of people for the allocation is Territory NRM. I am sure Karen May would be very happy to catch up with you and have a conversation because she is very passionate about the work they are doing out there.

Mrs HERSEY: Can you outline how many hectares of gamba is expected to be sprayed with the \$500,000 for the gamba army funding, or is that all rests with Karen May? If that is the case, I would like a briefing with her.

Ms LAWLER: No, Territory NRM is a not-for-profit organisation that government has auspiced to run the gamba army program. The actual land mass is complicated and complex—and this is what the issues of addressing gamba is about. You have private landowners who have two, 10 or 20 hectare lots. It is their responsibility to address gamba on their property. We do the gap program where we give out free glysofate. Landowners can manage the spraying on their property.

We then have Crown lawn—that is DIPL, who staff has just been in here. They need to address gamba on Crown land. We have Parks and Wildlife, which is part of DEPWS as well. They need to address gamba on their estate. Then, it is on road verges, which is also DIPL's work.

I like to say it is everybody's business. The gamba army's work is spraying. We are focusing on the Casuarina Coastal Reserve and Litchfield and Charles Darwin National Parks, because they are the areas we think we can get in early, go hard and try to rein in the issue of gamba grass. It is hard to say the exact land allocation that will be addressed.

The other thing that the Gamba Army has done is they have identified groups or businesses, small businesses, that also do spraying, so if you are a land holder you will be able to have a list of people who you can access. Really the Gamba Army is probably a central part of a jigsaw puzzle on how we address Gamba, and it is one as I have said that all parties, whether your Government, federal government, NT Government, Local Government, Litchfield Council in there as well, Katherine Council, we all need to be a part of. But as I have said I could not facilitate a conversation with Karen May from Territory NRM as I said I am sure she would be very happy to have a conversation around the work that they are doing. They are very excited.

Mrs HERSEY: Thank you. Just mindful that slight farming background, \$500,000 in funding, with up to 45 people possibly going to employed even in a part-time capacity, does not leave a lot of money for actually spraying. I am just wondering how much spraying is actually going to get done, which is why I was asking how much area. That is not going to go very far at all.

Ms LAWLER: Yes, so as I said it is up to Territory NRM, but it is around people being employed part-time, and it is around using glyphosate, we know that, the equipment, possibly accessing vehicles from other sources so they do not have to pay higher costs for vehicles, but this is as I said only part—the Gamba Army is only one part of the equation. There are lots of other parts where a lot of dollars go into it, so all up there is about \$6m a year that goes into addressing the issue of gamba across the Northern Territory. I mean, the other one that I did not mention is the bushfires, through their fire mitigation unit as well, Rangers, so we give out grants to Rangers, Aboriginal Ranger grants, and so the rangers particularly in that Warradjan area out towards Kakadu, they are doing a lot of work around addressing gamba as well.

There are multiple groups, and the Gamba Army is but one component of that to address the issue of gamba.

Mrs HERSEY: No worries, thank you.

Ms LAWLER: I was going to say, I could pass to the Chief Executive, but let us move on because I want to get through some other questions.

Mrs HERSEY: No, look, just aware of time. Yes, I am same. Same, same. What extra funding has been provided to achieve KPIs outlined in the new Weed Management Plan for Gamba Grass 2022–2030 that is announced by you today, particularly the KPI that has been identified for completion over this financial year and next?

Ms LAWLER: A lot of this is about coordinating our response. I had a conversation, one of the best things was when I came in as minister I was minister for—and it was Environment, Natural Resources as well as Infrastructure, and so when I came in I was having conversations with gamba with the CE from DPL, I was having conversations around gamba with Jo Townsend here, and it dawned on me that there was lots happening but there was no coordination. Sometimes it is not about new money, it is about smarter, working smarter and that has been the clear instructions around the new gamba plan.

The new gamba plan—if you look at the previous plan—is much tighter, easier to read, really commits people to what they need to do, as you say those KPIs, and so it is about making sure the federal government is looking after national parks. It is about making sure that local government are, so whether that is Litchfield or Katherine council, Darwin City Council, are addressing issues of gamba on their land. The example I gave today, so we were out near the hospital, the old RDH there, there was some land that had gamba growing on that that was actually hospital land, and so we were all going well, and talking to Karen Mangan, she goes yes they are very keen to actually get rid of gamba on their land, but it was something almost set sometimes people are not actually aware of so to me the new strategic plan that we have is about pulling together, making sure that people who have responsibility deliver on those responsibilities. So if it is about crown land, if it is about road verges, making sure the contractors who have those tenders are very much focused on delivering on those outcomes.

Ms Townsend, would you like to add to that?

Ms TOWNSEND: The responsibility for weed management largely rests with the land owner or manager. We have chosen a new measure, compliance inspections, which is undertaken under the *Weeds Management Act*. This is largely because it is a large component of our weeds branch. We have also put in place through our new bushfires headquarters, a weed and fire mitigation unit. This brings together weed and fire expertise to target compliance efforts using that site as a base.

We have been able to secure some external funding through the Australian Government to support that activity, which is in addition to our own contribution. A big part of the new Gamba Grass Weed Management Plan is to work with landholders to be engaged in weed management. This is through our own weeds branch staff, the ranger grants program and coordinated activity across a number of government departments.

Mrs HERSEY: How much has been spent within Bushfires NT responding to wildfires within areas of Gamba infestations and, or fuelled by Gamba grass in the 2019–20 Top End fire seasons?

Ms LAWLER: That is a question that cannot be answered very clearly because if you are fighting a fire or back burning, sometimes it is around. There might be Gamba in one patch or large amounts of areas that have no Gamba. It is not a question that we could provide a sensible answer to, except to say that some of the fighting of fires in the Northern Territory is with fire. Some fires we see are due to back burning. If there was an infestation of Gamba then it could possibly be an area that was back burned.

It could also be the work they do for early burns. In the Territory we do fire mitigation work so that there is early burning. It may be that some of the burns we seek take place are burns that are early in the season and are to address some of the issues of Gamba. It would be difficult but I am happy to take something on notice because I am aware that the executive director is in the other room and we have five minutes left of question time.

There is not a clear or straightforward answer for that. One year it would be ...

Mrs HERSEY: It was specific to responding to wildfires within the areas? Not back burning. Do you have a figure?

Ms LAWLER: No, that is what I am saying. It would be difficult to map that but I am happy to take that on notice and the Executive Director of Bushfires NT can provide a response.

Mr CHAIR: Member for Katherine, would you like it taken on notice?

Mrs HERSEY: Yes.

Question on Notice No 4.20

Mr CHAIR: Member for Katherine, please restate the question for the record.

Mr EDINGTON: How much has been spent within Bushfires NT responding to wildfires within areas of Gamba infestations and, or fuelled by Gamba grass in the 2019–20 Top End fire seasons?

Mr CHAIR: Minister, do you accept the question?

Ms LAWLER: Yes.

Mr CHAIR: The question asked by the Member for Katherine of the minister has been allocated number 4.20.

Mr CHAIR: Are there any further questions?

Mrs HERSEY: What was the average time for an environmental approval for financial year 2019–20?

Ms LAWLER: Can you repeat that? Was it for environment management plans?

Mrs HERSEY: What was the average time for an environmental approval for financial year 2019–20?

Ms LAWLER: Yes, what kind? Are you talking about environment management plans?

Mrs HERSEY: Just environmental approvals—plans, yes, sorry!

Ms LAWLER: I have a statutory time frame that once it comes across my desk—I have always met that approval time.

I will pass to Ms Townsend.

Mrs HERSEY: What was the average timeframe?

Ms LAWLER: I will pass to Mr Fisher. It is a difficult one as well. Once I get an environmental approval, as minister, I sign that very quickly.

Mr FISHER: Because of the time, I will attempt to answer the questions briefly on behalf of my colleague. It is a complex question simply because there are many different sorts of environmental approvals ranging from consideration of an environmental impact statement—which is a very large piece of work—to an approval associated with, for example, a land clearing application.

It is probably not a meaningful thing to give a simple single average, but every environmental approval that the department undertakes. I imagine the only way we could do that is to break it down into different categories of approvals, if that is what you ask?

Mrs HERSEY: Okay, can I have that on notice, Mr Chair?

Question on Notice No 4.21

Mr CHAIR: Member for Katherine, can you please restate the question for the record?

Mrs HERSEY: What was the average time for an environmental approval plan for financial year 2019-20?

Mr CHAIR: Minister, do you accept the question.

Ms LAWLER: Yes, I accept the question.

Mr CHAIR: The Question on Notice asked by the Member for Katherine of the minister has been allocated number 4.21.

Mrs HERSEY: What was the average time frame for the approval of a petroleum exploration permit over the last three years?

Ms LAWLER: I will pass to the CE.

Ms TOWNSEND: The responsibility for issuing environment management plans under the Petroleum Environment Regulations became the responsibility of this department, but also the Minister for Environment, in February 2019.

Since that responsibility transferred to us, we have issued 16 EMPs under the Petroleum Environment Regulations.

There is a statutory time frame for those decisions of 90 days, which you can appreciate is a very tight time frame. Of the 16 that have been approved since February, 11 have been issued within the statutory time frame. Of the five that were not issued within the 90 days, two were subject to an AAPA clearance and were issued within 14 days of that AAPA clearance being issued. Two were held over from the previous administration arrangements under the former Department of Primary Industry and Resources. Obviously, they were not undertaken within 90 days. One was issued in 92 days.

Mrs HERSEY: Is there a framework for approval time frames, minister, under the new act to serve as a guideline for the aspirational length of time those should take.

Ms LAWLER: We just said that—90 days.

A member: What is an AAPA clearance?

Ms LAWLER: Aboriginal Areas Protection Authority—sacred site clearance for native titles.

Mrs HERSEY: How many applications for assessment have been made under the new *Environment Protection Act*?

Ms LAWLER: I will pass to Jo, the Chief Executive. The new Environment Protection Act came into—here is the man who should be answering this—place on 30 June.

Mr PURDON: Dropped me in it.

Ms LAWLER: Yes, the hot seat. Paul Purdon, Executive Director of Environmental Assessment and Policy is the guru

Mr PURDON: We have had five referrals under the *Environment Protection Act* since it commenced. Three of those have been accepted by the Northern Territory EPA. Two of those have not been accepted, with a request for further information.

Mrs HERSEY: How many applications, if any, minister, have been approved under the new *Environment Protection Act*?

Ms LAWLER: I will pass to Paul Purdon.

Mr PURDON: We have not had any applications approved because of the three referrals that have been accepted by the EPA. They are going through an environmental impact assessment process, or the EPA is making a decision on whether they need environmental impact assessment. So, there is some way to go before there is any decision on environmental approvals for those proposals.

Mr CHAIR: Members, Unfortunately, that concludes our time for the outputs relating to Environment and Water Security. Here today on behalf of the committee, I would like to thank you Minister Lawler, for appearing today, and all the officers who have assisted you in that process. Thank you to your staff and your team.

Ms LAWLER: Thank you Chair, and also thank you to the Department of Environment, Parks and Water Security for all the work you have done in preparing folders, and also staying back so late. Thank you very much.

Mr CHAIR: Thankyou everybody, that concludes the estimates hearings for today. Hearings will recommence Wednesday, tomorrow morning at 8am with questions for the Minister for Health. Thankyou everybody and Good evening.

The committee concluded.
