

The Estimates Committee convened at 8.30 am.

Mr CHAIR: Welcome, everyone. It has just gone 8.30 am. Welcome to the Tuesday 22 June Estimates Committee hearing where we will be examining Territory Families, Housing and Communities.

MINISTER WORDEN'S PORTFOLIOS

TERRITORY FAMILIES AND URBAN HOUSING DISABILITIES SPORT MULTICULTURAL AFFAIRS

DEPARTMENT OF TERRITORY FAMILIES, HOUSING AND COMMUNITIES

Mr CHAIR: I welcome you, Minister Worden, to today's hearing and invite you to introduce the officials accompanying you. Once you have done that I will invite you to make a brief opening statement, then call for questions relating to the statement. The committee will then consider any agency-related whole-of-government questions on budget and fiscal strategy before moving on to output-specific questions and finally non-output specific budget-related questions.

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

Before you make an opening statement, minister, I remind everyone, including you, that we have an opportunity to go in-camera. There is a large amount of sensitive information you may have. You can request to go in-camera, which means it becomes a private session and we will organise that. That is available during this committee hearing.

Mrs WORDEN: Mr Chair, good morning to everyone. I will introduce the members of the Territory Families, Housing and Community executive team, who appear with me today and will assist me to respond, as much as we can, to all of your questions. To my left is Mr Ken Davies, our Chief Executive Officer; Ms Nicole Hurwood, the Deputy Chief Executive Officer, Strategic and Enabling Services; and to my right Jeanette Kerr, Deputy Chief Executive Officer Families. We will be joined at some point by Mr Brent Warren, Deputy Chief Executive Officer Housing; Ms Sasha Dennis, Executive Director Sport and Active Recreations; and Ms Helena Wright, Executive Director Programs and Engagement. Up the back we have Mr Luke Twyford, General Manager Strategic Services; and Ms Kim Charles, Chief Financial Officer.

I begin today by acknowledging the Larrakia people as the traditional owners and custodians of the land on which we are meeting today. I pay my respects to elders past, present and emerging and recognise First Nations people here with us today.

It gives me great pleasure to speak of my portfolio responsibilities as Minister for Territory Families and Urban Housing, Disabilities, Sport and Multicultural Affairs. The Department of Territory Families, Housing and Communities was established only in 2020 as part of a major realignment of the public sector, with the aim of working smarter. The department delivers integrated holistic services, programs and initiatives to the people of the Territory. It is an agency that is charged with significant responsibilities to lead a massive agenda to effect generational change for the Territory.

Our investments are achieving results and getting better outcomes to support our vision of connected communities, thriving places and empowered Territorians. Every dollar directed to our children, families and communities is an investment into generational change and will ensure that Territorians have a home, live active lives, feel valued and included in our community and can access support when needed.

The department is an agency with a significant budget totalling \$1.1bn. Of this, the budget relating to my responsibilities of Territory Families, Urban Housing, Disabilities, Sport and Multicultural Affairs for 2021–22 is \$598m in operational funding and \$129.6m in infrastructure funding. Over \$274.3m of this is invested in supports for children, young people and families, including family support, child protection, out-of-home care, youth justice and domestic, family and sexual violence reduction services.

Supporting families early before they reach crisis is key to give them the skills to better manage challenges they may face. Recognising the importance of this work has seen \$22.5m allocated for family support to do

this work. In 2021–22, the government is allocating \$7.3m per annum to implement a new family support grant model. The new model increases engagement with regional service providers and will create an integrated and community-led family support model that aligns with Commonwealth investments and increases the role of Aboriginal organisations.

Through practice reforms, we are working collaboratively with families in communities. This is building trust in who we are and what we do. This is demonstrated in the increased calls to our FACES line. FACES stands for Family and Children Enquiry & Support. This service can be accessed by anyone in the community who is seeking advice on resources and services that can help, support and empower families and children. The increase in usage is a 19% increase compared to last year, demonstrating that more families are willing to work with us on a voluntary basis, with 743 family support cases opened in the year to date.

There was \$21.5m invested in the delivery of statutory child protection services. This funds skilled professional staff who work with families and children to investigation notifications of harm and neglect against children and young people and work with families to keep children safe. This workforce of dedicated staff has received 20,840 notifications and completed 5,458 child protection investigations.

This year 168 children have entered care as it was not considered safe for them to remain at home. There is no responsibility greater than raising happy, healthy children. It costs a lot to raise a child and, at 31 March 2021, 981 children were in the care of the Chief Executive Officer. There is \$121.2m allocated for the ongoing delivery of out-of-home care services to provide high quality care services to meet the unique and therapeutic needs of these children and young people in care.

Children should grow up with their families wherever it is safe to do so. To date, 110 children have reunified with their families. However, at 31 March 2021, 626 children will grow up in care until the age of 18 if they cannot be safely reunified. These children will stay in the care of our 575 valued foster and kinship carer households or in other placements best suited to their individual needs.

2021 represents a record \$71m investment in the youth justice system, which is an increase of \$1.8m. Of this funding, \$1m is allocated to youth services in Alice Springs, the expansion of victim-offender conferencing, implementation of community accountability boards and family responsibility agreements.

We are also investing \$0.5m to assist with programs to support additional after-hours youth engagement activities in Alice Springs town camps, providing opportunities for youth closer to their homes. There is a \$4.8m investment in fit-out for the Darwin youth justice centre and a further \$0.2m in ongoing funding to bring operating funding to the new Barkly youth justice facility in Tennant Creek to \$2m per annum.

I take this opportunity to remind everyone here that when we talk about kids today, who find themselves in the youth justice system, we cannot go past the frequent link to trauma, domestic, family and sexual violence. Domestic and family violence is a consistent indicator in the families that come to the attention of the child protection and criminal justice systems.

Current data shows us, nationally, of the women who experience domestic and family violence, more than 50% have children in their care. I highlight that \$13.1m of the \$26.6m investment for domestic, family and sexual violence reduction services will support 32 vital services to deliver services to women and children, predominantly escaping violence as well as deliver perpetrator intervention programs aimed at reforming offender behaviours.

Prevention is crucial and \$1m per annum supports organisations across the Territory to develop primary prevention initiatives that raise awareness of domestic and family violence and change individual and community attitudes towards violence.

Our staff cannot deliver best practice services if we do not invest in their skill development and learning. In 2021–22, \$2.6m is invested in the clinical practice team, which provides frontline staff with professional support and oversee the continued implementation of the Signs of Safety practice frameworks in child protection and youth justice. These practice frameworks involve the capability and competencies of our frontline staff to improve our respectful and transparent engagement with our clients.

I am proud to be the Minister for Disabilities, representing some of the most extraordinary Territorians, who celebrate ability, not disability. Our investment of almost \$114.9m primarily contributes to the National Disability Insurance Scheme. There are 3,906 Territorians with active NDIS support plans that demonstrate how people with disability can be supported to lead a quality of life of their choosing. One hundred and

seventy two children in out-of-home care have approved NDIS plans to support them to receive the services they require to meet their individual needs.

Our government has allocated \$4.7m for social inclusion. I am fortunate to share that responsibility portfolio with Hon Lauren Moss. This enables the coordination and management of activities and events that promote the value of diversity, inclusion and social connection and enables young people, women, people with disabilities, seniors and multicultural Territorians to engage in positive community participation.

We are fortunate to have a proud and vibrant multicultural community. To promote and celebrate our cultural diversity, \$1.3m has been expended on a multicultural grants program as at 31 March 2021, which has supported 98 events across the Northern Territory.

The role of sport and active recreation cannot be underestimated in supporting a vibrant community. The sports voucher scheme is a key initiative to promote active and healthy children. As at 31 March 2021, over \$3m has been spent on the scheme, which is inclusive of 33 remote communities. The Territory's band of committed, unsung sporting volunteers will be acknowledged at the one-off Northern Territory Regional Sports Volunteer Awards this year. The awards will cost \$160,000 and acknowledge the unsung volunteers, who kept their beloved clubs thriving and connected during the COVID-19 pandemic, in ceremonies in Alice Springs, Katherine, Darwin and Nhulunbuy. We are confident that the sports awards will make their comeback next year.

To increase sport and active recreation in remote communities, a total of 11 remote infrastructure projects, such as upgrades to ovals, sports fields and installation of lights, have now been completed in addition to five lighting up grades in urban and regional areas.

The world continues to live in the grip of COVID-19. Whilst Territorians have been fortunate to lead a relatively normal lifestyle, our \$45m investment for the emergency management welfare group recognises that we are here to provide high-quality support to those people travelling to and from hotspot areas and from international destinations. Given we are prone to floods and cyclones, this investment continues to also provide for the psychosocial supports and the immediate essential needs of individuals affected by emergencies through outreach, evacuation centres and welfare recovery centres.

Housing is fundamental to individual family and community wellbeing. Having a home that is safe and affordable is essential for social and economic participation. It is central to maintaining good physical and mental health, accessing education and enabling economic participation.

The 2021–22 budget demonstrates our strong commitment to supporting all Territorians to access housing that is safe, secure and affordable and includes \$95.9m in urban housing operational funding to provide eligible Territorians access to appropriate housing and social and affordable housing programs and tenancy support services.

Our government manages 5,959 urban public housing dwellings. This includes the provision of tenancy, repairs, maintenance and tenancy support to individuals, couples and families. Going forward, we are committed to changing the current housing model as we know it and in 2021–22 I look forward to the release of the community housing strategy, which will provide a roadmap to a new housing model for the next decade and beyond. The strategy will include a pipeline of strategic initiatives that will incentivise and attract non-government investment in social and affordable housing to provide the level of scale needed to support the growth and development of the community housing sector in the Northern Territory. This new strategic approach is supported by the plan for budget repair and unlocks new money into the Territory so that more community and affordable housing projects are possible.

A key recommendation of the Territory Economic Reconstruction Commission report, was to increase the capacity and establish a sustainable community housing industry to develop more affordable and available housing. We will meet this recommendation through the strategy.

This budget provides \$39m on the capital works program for John Stokes Square redevelopment at Nightcliff. That will include new urban dwellings and transitional housing. Over \$38.5m is provided for specialist homelessness services to support access to a range of accommodation options and support to access sustainable long-term accommodation. As at 31 March 2021, we allocated over \$26m in grant funding to 18 non-government providers for the delivery of 59 specialist homelessness services.

The 2021–22 budget includes \$20.8m in grants to key organisations to provide short-term accommodation options. One of these is the Yilli Rreung short stay accommodation service and facility at Batten Road in

Marrara. Since it opened over 2,500 clients have been accommodated; around 30% were families with children.

The co-designed service model led by Yilli Rreung Aboriginal Housing Corporation and Mission Australia is client-centred and based on service integration through a mixture of existing services and establishing new services to address unmet need and support crisis accommodation with dignity services for people who are homeless and sleeping rough.

The Batten Road facility is developing into a one-stop-shop. Service coordination, including specialist homelessness services as well as the other services such as mental health, alcohol and other drugs, domestic violence support, primary healthcare, education programs, Legal Aid, financial services and Department of Social Security services. When fully operational the Batten Road accommodation campus will use all 300 rooms at that facility.

Other homelessness funding has also been funding to assist 134 households into private housing through bond assistance loan schemes and to support 1,047 to sustain their tenancy. Budget 2021–22 also includes \$1.5m operational funding for the Tennant Creek Visitor park, which is in addition to the \$5m capital funding to develop it. This will provide a short-stay facility for visiting families and reduce overcrowding for Tennant Creek residents.

As at 31 December 2020, 7,492 Territorians had presented for specialist homelessness assistance; therefore, we are very pleased that the 2021–22 federal budget included \$124.7m over two years to support workers in the housing and homelessness sector under the Social Community Home Care and Disability Services Industry Award 2010 in the National Housing and Homelessness Agreement.

The budget is an investment in our people. Our workforce of 1,700 people, which is a headcount, are the backbone of our agency and they deliver high-quality, client-centred services. It is also an investment in good governance; strategic, legislative and practice reform to deliver contemporary evidence-based services. We also deliver appropriate infrastructure so we can deliver services in contemporary fit-for-purpose facilities.

Finally, I highlight the work being undertaken by the Department of Corporate and Digital Development to bring the new \$64.4m client service and management system, or the 'Care' system, to life. We spoke about that here last year. We are on track to deliver phase 1, the child protection and adoptions space, by mid-2022; and phase 2, the youth justice space, by late 2022 with the project fully completed by early 2023. The new system will enable our workforce to work more efficiently and effectively through enhanced information recording and sharing practices.

Mr CHAIR: Are there any questions relating to the minister's statement?

Mr BURGOYNE: Are there plans to raise the criminal age of responsibility?

Mrs WORDEN: It is a good question. I spoke about this about a month ago to a lot of your non-government sector in Alice Springs. At the moment the royal commission says 12. Our government is committed to 12 but there is a national discussion about 14 and we are allowing that discussion to progress because it would be foolish of us to raise the age to 12, then for it to move to 14 nationally. It is a flexible discussion. We accepted the intent of the royal commission, which stated 12; that is the current state of play.

Mr BURGOYNE: Are strategies being developed in case that happens so that Territory Families is able to support all the agencies that would be affected?

Mrs WORDEN: That is a very smart question, because if the age is moved from 10 to 12, we need the capacity for 10 and 11 year olds to do something alternative to having that responsibility and consequences which come with that. We are not undertaking the work to move to the age of 12, but should that decision be made, because it is our responsibility, we will ensure that the services and early interventions are in place for that cohort.

Mr BURGOYNE: Are there no time frames in place for changing the criminal age of responsibility?

Mrs WORDEN: No. That would be a decision for Cabinet. There is no paper before Cabinet, and I have no intention at this point in time of bringing that paper to Cabinet.

Mr BURGOYNE: The Care system, which you spoke about in your opening statement—are we able to get an update in regards to that? We were told last estimates that Liquidlogic won the tender.

Mrs WORDEN: That is correct.

Mr DAVIES: To date the expenditure on the project with Liquidlogic—of the \$64.4m we have spent \$13m on the development of the project. We have a group of very experienced practitioners working on the design of the Care system to ensure it collects all the information about families and children that we need to make sure it is fit for purpose. Extensive work is going on in co-operation with our partner, DCDD and Liquidlogic for the design of the program and the infrastructure around the Care system. We are confident we will have a world-class information system on children and families.

Mr BURGOYNE: Is that care system on track to meet its budget? Was it \$63m or \$64m that was set out?

Mr DAVIES: The budget is right on track. The project is being delivered on time and to budget expectations.

Mr BURGOYNE: I notice that youth engagement and youth justice was spoken about in the opening statement. Last estimates we were told that AFLNT was engaging through Territory Families to provide community work orders. Is that still occurring?

Mr DAVIES: The AFL it is not currently providing support for us on community work orders.

Mr BURGOYNE: It was previously, but are not doing that anymore?

Mr DAVIES: The AFL has been engaged in the youth justice system in terms of delivering programs inside youth justice facilities. We had some early engagement with the AFLNT about work to support young people who were on community work orders and that has not progressed at this point.

Mr BURGOYNE: Have there been any attempts to contact AFL in Alice Springs to provide similar community work orders?

Mr DAVIES: No, not at this stage.

Mr BURGOYNE: At the last estimates we knew that currently work orders exist, they are established and I assume they are continuing. How many young people through Territory Families, are completely working order programs in Alice Springs?

Mrs WORDEN: I will ask Jeanette to respond. We have lots of data. Our portfolios lend to lots of data. If you would allow us a bit of patience—as we are flipping between areas.

Mr BURGOYNE: Certainly, minister.

Ms KERR: At present there are no community work orders in Alice Springs.

Mr BURGOYNE: Currently no work orders in Alice Springs—is there a reason they are being undertaken in Darwin or Palmerston but not in Alice Springs?

Ms KERR: There is such a range of programs available to us now, in a range of different orders, that other options often come first.

Mr BURGOYNE: I hate to bring it up, but quite often we are brought back to the media release right before the last election which spoke about an increase in work orders and work programs. Where are we at with developing these work programs for Alice Springs seeing as there is a huge amount of young people engage in the youth justice system?

Mrs WORDEN: We have a broad range of programs, including:

- youth outreach and engagement teams
- early intervention youth camps
- the Back on Track program
- bail accommodation

- MacDonnell Regional Council, through a number of providers.

All have a footprint in Alice Springs. We also have:

- intensive youth support services
- community youth diversion
- community work orders.

We have capacity in Alice Springs through places like the Alice Springs Animal Shelter. Jeanette Kerr, Deputy Chief Executive Officer, says that at this point in time, there are not any, but there are a range of other programs as well as youth justice conferencing in and around Alice Springs, which young people will be on.

Mr BURGOYNE: But there are no work programs operating in Alice Springs?

Ms KERR: There are work programs, but we do not have a young person on a community work order.

Mr BURGOYNE: Have there been any in the last financial year?

Ms KERR: Not that I am aware of.

Mr BURGOYNE: I am just trying to understand. We were promised this quite a while ago. Is the department working towards a time when young people who have gotten on the wrong side of the law, will be able to undertake these work programs? What organisations are you engaging with so that this can take place?

Ms KERR: We have a multitude of agencies we work with in Alice Springs. Community work orders are an order from the courts. There is a large range of programs available to the courts, so the courts have not seen a need to use community work orders. That does not mean we do not do restorative practices with young people that look and feel like work orders.

Mr BURGOYNE: If I am a young person before the court, what programs are available to me in the space of diversion or are there other sorts of programs? I went to Saltbush and saw the bail assisted accommodation, but that really is not what I would call restorative programs. Where are the sorts of programs that a young person is court-ordered, takes part in a program in Alice Springs and, as a result, is hopefully rehabilitated?

Mrs WORDEN: The youth justice system has many layers. It is not as simple—are you enquiring about what alternatives there are for sentencing by the court? Or are you enquiring about pre-sentencing or pre-court diversion? Because that occurs. Pre-court diversion across the Territory is done by police. Although we provide the programs, police determine whether a young person will go to pre before they go before a court. There are also options for the court to sentence young people as an alternative to detention. Which area are you looking at? I just want some clarity, because we have broken up the figures into different areas.

Mr BURGOYNE: Last estimates we were told, by you, that the court-ordered programs:

... are the work orders. We are talking about expanding that program.

I am very interested in the expansion of court-ordered work programs; there has been a lot of talk about them. I referenced a media release from last year. I am really interested about when a young person comes before the court and the court's ability to sentence that person to a court-ordered work program—that has been spoken about for some time.

Mrs WORDEN: We take it that you are talking about alternatives to sentencing?

Mr BURGOYNE: Absolutely.

Mrs WORDEN: We have recently expanded the options available to the court in that space. We will continue to expand those options as we go through. I will ask Jeanette Kerr, the Deputy Chief Executive for Families to expand upon the options in that space once a court has made an order, as an alternative to detention.

Ms KERR: A range of programs can be used as an alternative. Back on Track is the premier program being used. In Central Australia that involves the Australian Childhood Foundation, Central Australian Aboriginal Congress and Jesuits Social Services. We also have a range of diversion programs; until very recently the

courts could recommend diversion back to them. The community work order programs can be done through our youth outreach and re-engagement team, Alice Springs Animal Shelter, Gap Youth and Community Centre and the Jesuit Social Services.

Mr BURGOYNE: If you consider that a work program how many young people have the YORETs engaged with in the last financial year, or to date in Alice Springs? I am trying to better understand the work they are doing.

Mrs WORDEN: The Back on Track is an expansive term, which has lots of programs underneath it. In Alice Springs, one of the groups that might deliver a Back on Track program is Congress. During my last meeting with Congress we talked about a young person who had gotten into trouble. They had not completed school and were not keen to go back to school. They were at an age where they could start to work. The program for that young person, in terms of support, was work—not just work—to give them independent living. They changed the family circumstances at the same time. That young person undertook a heap of work experience to secure a job going forward. The Back on Track program—that Jeanette will give us figures for—is so multi-layered. I invite you—the next time I am down we can organise to have a chat with Donna Ah Chee, who is doing extraordinary work.

Each of those young people would have a program tailored for them, for a specific outcome. It would depend on where they were disengaged and what type of offending. Each provider on the Back on Track program would work with that young person to get a better outcome in their lives. Whether that is the example I gave, were young person has to independently live because of their circumstances and, in order to do that, they need an economic participation so the focus is on getting them a job and doing the work through that.

That is the way this program works. It is with individuals; it is not group therapy or any of that sort of stuff. The Back on Track providers are very much tailoring an outcome based on an individual's circumstances. They worked very closely with the YORET, which would have been the referral point in the first place, but obviously have a responsibility under the court to ensure the young person stays on that program.

Mr DAVIES: Just to reassure you, the youth outreach service connects with police and the courts. There are extensive supports provided to youths in Alice Springs. We are working very closely with Congress; the Back on Track program is an integral part of that. We have other providers, Jesuits being another one that young people are referred to.

Regarding the general investment in youth programs in Alice Springs, they are extensive. Where we have court-ordered programs, they are properly supervised. There are community youth justice officers making sure that young people are sticking to the orders they have been given. We check up on young people and make sure that they are meeting their obligations.

The general work going on there is extensive. The fact we do not have any community work order programs that are court ordered at the moment is an issue that we will continue to work with courts on to make sure we have programs available for youths to go to in the community youth-order area. We have an extensive set of support services, and we have more work to do.

Ms KERR: As of 31 March, we have 22 young people on Back on Track in Alice Springs. In addition to that there have been 13 victim-offender family group conferences, year to date.

Mr BURGOYNE: That is through the Jesuits?

Ms KERR: Not just the Jesuits. They are the other providers. I do not have the Jesuits' number broken down by Alice Springs—there is in addition to that 13. I can find that for you. We have 39 people on supervised orders with the youth outreach and re-engagement community youth justice officers. They are supervised orders or good-behaviour orders, which will have conditions attached to them.

Mrs WORDEN: We have done all our figures for you to 31 March.

Mr BURGOYNE: That is for the financial year. When the YOREOs are working with those young people on supervised orders, are they ensuring that they are completing the orders? Do you have a level of people who go along all the time and complete them and those who do not?

Ms KERR: Yes, I can find that data for you. They have to complete—if it is a good behaviour order, then if there is any more trouble they are back to court. Likewise with a supervision order.

Mr BURGOYNE: That is where I am trying to drill down, just to work out how successful that program is. We know that 39 young people, under supervised orders with the YOREOs, undertook them. I am trying to understand how many completed them, because a small percentage perhaps did not.

Ms KERR: I can give you a breakdown of that: 81.5% of young people in the Territory successfully completed their good behaviour order; 73.5% successfully completed a suspended sentence order; and 71.4% a community work order in the Territory. In Alice Springs we have, year to date, 154 youth outreach statutory and voluntary cases.

Mr MONAGHAN: This is a fascinating area, and I am glad the Member for Braitling brought it up. In our community there is a lot of confusion—I need some clarity as this is a new area for me to understand. The Member for Braitling mentioned Saltbush and that these alternatives to detention—I am assuming that is one. I rather believe it is detention. Can you explain the difference?

Mrs WORDEN: The royal commission taught us a lot. Where young people under the age of 18 are concerned, in certain circumstances but not every circumstance, you need to look at alternatives to incarceration or detention. We have constructed a post-royal commission. My predecessor and the chief executive officer, Ken Davies, over four years worked extremely hard to take a very broken system—which resulted in a royal commission—and turned it around to put in multilayers.

You raised the Saltbush facility; we have them in Alice Springs and Darwin. That is one area that young people were failing to succeed in their bail. Bail is a privilege given by the court and the community that says we will give you an opportunity to be out; we will not put you in detention, but this is an opportunity. There could be different conditions attached to that bail. Sometimes it includes electronic monitoring or it can be voluntary to go to Saltbush in Alice Springs. If you are in Tennant Creek you can also go to Saltbush, as it is an alternative. Hopefully, once completed, the Barkly youth work camp will offer an opportunity for supported bail closer to home for people from in and around the Tennant Creek area.

Young people are encouraged to take up that option where a family situation—we use the term quite frequently—is contributing to the behaviours of a young person. Often a young person does not have a safe environment at home. Succeeding in bail can be much more challenging than just staying home. You need not to just give an environment that is safe, but one where young people can get some really positive aspects to their lives. That is what Saltbush offers.

There are a number of beds provided. It is voluntary. I occasionally hear the term used ‘absconding from Saltbush’. No, they do not abscond, because they are there voluntarily. The term is ‘they occasionally leave’. They are picked up if they do that. It is an opportunity for them to succeed. I will ask Jeanette, if she comfortable, to talk about some of the service delivery and approaches taken at Saltbush to support young people to achieve that bail outcome. We want them to succeed in bail so that when they go back before the court, the court can see that the young person has succeeded in their bail.

Ms KERR: There is complex range of services available in the youth value supported accommodation program in Alice Springs and Darwin. They are slightly different because there are slightly different cohorts. It includes education. In Alice Springs, for example, all of the young people are taken every day to school. Workers stay with them and they do a full day of school, generally. There is education outreach in Darwin as well. Some of the young people might be on a Back on Track program. The Australian Childhood Foundation partners with Saltbush and there are therapeutic specialists who come in and one is part of the program. Balanced Choice and other exercise programs go in, with football—there is a range of programs and they have a structured day in both facilities.

Mr BURGOYNE: Mr Davies, last year you said:

The community program that we are launching will involve youth justice officers and youth outreach officers. We will be running a program in Darwin. We are working with Palmerston City Council to determine some areas that need work. We will have the appropriate supervision with these young people.

What is the current status of those community programs in Darwin and Palmerston?

Mr DAVIES: Those community work order programs we talked about were to involve young people being escorted by youth justice officers into the community to do restorative work at identified locations. We were in the process of working through that with the local governments. COVID came along, which impacted our capacity to implement that program.

We are in the process of going through a recruitment program for additional community youth justice officers to get out and supervise kids. The minister has given approval for me to employ additional staff in that area. We are also in the process of running a recruitment program for youth justice officers to manage youths inside youth detention centres.

That is a work in progress; it was impacted by COVID. We have it on the agenda along with growing the program we have in place and are developing at Seven Emu Station, on the other side of Borroloola, along with the process of establishing the Barkly youth work camp. The tender has been let today. It is a \$2.7m build. There are additional funds that have been provided for the program. We are gearing up for this. It goes to the point that the minister advised. It is a comprehensive piece of work; to join it all up has been a work in progress. That is one element that unfortunately was held up by the COVID impact.

Mr CHAIR: Can we halt proceedings for a moment? I need the Member for Brainting to nominate as the substitute for Mr Yan, who has left. Otherwise we do not have a quorum for the estimates. Mr Burgoyne, do you nominate as a substitute for Mr Yan?

Mr BURGOYNE: Certainly, Mr Chair.

Mrs WORDEN: The chief executive has talked about quite a range of programs we have going. Our priority has been to make sure that there was an increase in programs for alternatives to detention. In the throes of that we realised the staffing ratios are very different when we take young people out into the community. That is why we are having to recruit more.

Prior to those comments last year, to give you some context, there has been some equipment already purchased so we are ready to step up when we can. It is just a matter of having the right staffing ratios and the ability to do that work. I think it is the same in Corrections when doing its community programs. It took a lot of time to get back to the community programs because we need that staffing ratio. We certainly do not want young people out unsupervised in the community; we know that would not meet expectations, so that is the hard part of that work.

The community accountability boards that we have spoken about with the raft of changes have come in the last few months. The work is beginning on those. Those groups of people will help determine the priorities for the alternatives and community restorative work. There is work going on.

Mr BURGOYNE: I appreciate that COVID has had a huge impact in everyone's lives over the last 12 months. We are talking since December last year. I am a little concerned that since we last spoke in December, we are now in the sixth month of 2021 and have no court-ordered community work programs in Alice Springs and the community programs that we spoke about at the last estimates that would be progressing in Darwin and Palmerston, have not begun either. Is my understanding correct?

Mrs WORDEN: To use your words, 'court ordered'—that is beyond the hands of Territory Families. That is the order that needs to come from the courts. The Deputy Chief Executive, Jeanette Kerr, has outlined to you the whole range of programs and the number of young people who are engaged in those programs in Alice Springs. We can focus on one, but what I am trying to give you a fuller understanding of is that is one small part. We are ready to go when we have enough staff. COVID had a big impact on that. It was one of those activities that was ready to go and it faltered.

We have a lot of activity happening across youth justice. We need to make sure we tread carefully and do it right. One of those processes that will inform exactly what you are talking about, the alternatives and to meet community expectations—I agree with you, I think the community does need to see young people out there engaging and getting rid of graffiti and those sorts of things. It is not as easy as just getting them out on a daily basis. They need to be properly supervised and there needs to be a priority.

The community accountability boards, which were part of the commitment we made in June last year—as part of a press release that you brought into estimates last year—are progressing really well. We put some information out in May. The community accountability boards will be in our major regions. We will be that group of people who says, 'Okay, what should be done here is community work and forming critical partnerships'. On those boards, we will have people from local businesses, community members, local councils, non-government sector and Aboriginal elders. They will provide us with the advice and recommendation regarding the design and management of community-based youth justice programs, including community work order programs. When an order is made, perhaps the work they do will guide our legal and justice in the programs they could order young people to do.

Mr BURGOYNE: I have a few questions on accountability boards coming up. Just to focus on what I was trying to get at before, we were talking about court-ordered programs in Alice Springs and the community programs that we spoke about in Darwin and in Palmerston. Just to be 100% clear, the referral pathway for young people into those work programs and community service options would be apprehension by police. It was spoken about. They are your early intervention options? It is so important at the moment. There are a lot of people in the community of Alice Springs—the need to get in there and intervene is often spoken about.

We are constantly hearing from this government about the need to keep young people out of detention. From listening to you on radio recently, we heard that the number of young people in detention has increased of late. That can, in some way, be attributed to the new legislation. But when we are talking about the community programs especially in Darwin and Palmerston that you said would be occurring, the referral pathway for young people into the work programs and community service options would be apprehension by police. Just to confirm, there has not been any young people who have been referred into those work programs by police because they are not currently up and running?

Mrs WORDEN: You are talking about police diversion. This is pre-court; it is a whole different area. Before a young person is sentenced by the court, the police make a decision. They will often discuss this with our team regarding the best outcome for that young person in pre-court diversion.

We provide the programs. Police put the young people in. There are programs across the Northern Territory that do community youth diversion. They are not court-ordered; they are community youth diversion. That is often through a case management approach. But this is before the young person has been sentenced to a community work order.

A range of organisations provide community youth diversion programs, including Bush Fit Mob, Danila Dilba, East Arnhem Regional Council, Kalano, MacDonnell Regional Council, Mala'la Health Service, Tennant Creek Mob Aboriginal Corporation, (inaudible), The Gap Youth Centre in Alice Springs and Community Services, Tiwi Islands Regional Council, Warlpiri Youth Development Aboriginal Corporation and Yugul Mangi.

That could be exactly what you are talking about—young people doing work in the community. We have put it in the hands of non-government organisations to provide the program for young people. That does not mean that young people who get in trouble are not engaging across our community in a whole range of areas.

I will ask Luke Twyford to come forward, because this has been his area as General Manager Strategic Services and he can explain this process for you. It is quite a complicated process with lots of layers. Back on Track can come into play in two different places. We have this huge range of providers aside from community work orders, which are court-ordered. If you will just indulge us for this moment to get some clarity regarding the system.

Mr TWYFORD: I understand that the question is basically the broad structure of the youth justice system. The pre-court diversion process and community youth justice program is led by police diversion decision-making.

At 31 March, there were 274 young people on community supervision orders. That is after a court case. Prior to that, there were 326 young people on police on diversion. Both are aiming at approximately a 10% increase compared to last year.

Back on Track has two elements—an eight to 10-year-olds for pre-crime, because they are not at the age of criminal responsibility and, when they occur, that is an early intervention case. Back on Track for 10 to 17-year-olds is an early intervention element for at-risk youth and a court-ordered element for people who have been to court. Similarly, our youth camps operate in an early intervention element where our youth outreach officers determine a young person will benefit from going to court; and where a court or a youth justice officer deems that a person, with a criminal case, would benefit from going to camp.

The complexity is that there is a number of programs, including diversion; Back on Track; community supervision; victim-offender conferencing; and camps, where we operate in the early intervention space and community, police, youth and justice officer referrals can lead a young person into the system. Similarly, those programs can operate from a court order or a matter being at court and a young person being referred. Equally, a young person can be on multiple programs at once.

It is highly likely that a young person, who has a court case, may be in a YORET case management pre-court program, has been on a camp and has been through a bail support accommodation facility at some point in their court matter. That creates a level of difficulty in compiling statistics on the success of each individual program and in tracking the young person through the system.

Obviously, with police data, capturing diversion decision-making and diversion success rates; Territory Families, Housing and Communities data system capturing youth outreach case management statistics; and court systems and the Attorney-General's department capturing bail and other decision-making—that will happen from a court.

Overall, the numbers of young people in community youth supervision is increasing by about 10% per annum—390 for the four-year last year and 326 young people as at 31 March. On a flat-line projection, that will be 434 young people by 30 June of this year. Therefore, an increase in community supervision orders. As at 30 March, a success rate for young people on those community-based orders of 73%.

Mr BURGOYNE: It has been my experience, when we are talking with people who work in this space, that unfortunately when a young person gets on the wrong side of the law there are quite often not enough options or programs available. We often say the youth has been recommended for diversion, but it does not explain how little diversion can be. It is important that people understand when someone is recommended for police diversion, what that actually means; in some cases, it is not a lot that a young person has to undertake.

Mr TWYFORD: Police diversion and community youth justice case management is a broad term and it will depend on the nature of the young person, their family situation, the offending and risk that they pose as, to what is included. For every diversion case and youth outreach re-engagement voluntary and statutory case, there is a case plan. That plan is developed by the professionals working with the family, the young person and other important adults in that young person's life, be that a school teacher or health practitioner. It would be that case plan which sets out the nature and details of that diversion case.

For some young people, it would involve quite intensive face-to-face meetings on a daily basis with the youth outreach officer. It may involve drug tests on a regular basis, compliance with the curfew and also talking to mum and dad or whoever is managing the household about what can be done to ensure compliance with the curfew. If the young person is in bail support accommodation, the diversion case work takes on a much bigger feature and becomes a structured day that the young person is expected to comply with.

In response to the question of what diversion is, it depends on the young person and is all based on case management of them and their individual situation.

Mr BURGOYNE: Could diversion be that a young person is recommended to have a face-to-face meeting, a victim conferencing, but if they do not want to attend, the family meets with the victim—could that be a form of diversion?

Mr TWYFORD: Not in the situation you just outlined. A diversion case could be a victim-offender conference, but if young person was not there, it would not qualify as being a successful completion. As we have seen through our recent law reforms that this government has led, failure to complete your diversion leads you to the youth justice court to have your matter heard.

Mrs WORDEN: That was one of the changes made earlier this year. That would be considered a non-completion and they would be back before the court. To be fair, what you have outlined—you want the family to be part of it, but you want the young person to make the choice about avoiding the path they are on. If they refuse to be part of that process—they cannot do that.

Regarding your numbers, in the youth outreach re-engagement teams, we have provision of that in seven locations. We have one provider for intensive youth support services and one for electronic monitoring. In early intervention youth camps, we have five providers; Back on Track, we have seven providers; bail accommodation, we have one and some of those will have services in multiple locations, particularly Back on Track. In the community diversion area we have 13 providers and in community work orders we have 22 providers.

It is not a lack of providers. We work with a lot of providers and non-government partners to provide that program.

Mr BURGOYNE: The family responsibility agreements have been spoken about a lot of late. How many family responsibility agreements have been brought into effect in this current financial year to date?

Mrs WORDEN: I am glad you are consistent, Member for Braintree, because it keeps us on our toes and we knew what we needed to prepare for you today.

As you know, we were very clear how the legislation from successive governments of every stripe—the previous legislation did not work. The two-step process of family responsibility agreements and then orders, failed. You could not go to court; it was very punitive. I am on the record as saying that the process, even though it was legislated for, failed.

The minister for Police indicated yesterday that it was gazetted on 14 May—the changes we enacted in the last sittings of parliament. We took the opportunity to change the family responsibility agreement part of the legislation two there just being ‘agreements’, but court-ordered agreements. It is a one-step process with a very big process before it. In my statements to the House I was very clear that the department needs to be very sure about how it was working with that family and that it was giving the family every support possible. If an order was put into place we would have to continue. We have a responsibility to that family to do everything to make them successful in the court-ordered family responsibility agreement.

In the last month, since that change, we have been working with about 10 families. Three of those families have proceeded to family group meetings to complete a family responsibility agreement. Remembering that we could have referrals from other agencies in this space—we have had one referral from an external agency. That is really good news. Overall, we have identified about 24 families that this will be a good mechanism for. The process to put together a family responsibility—we do not want to set people up to fail or give them something well beyond their capacity. We want success; the whole idea of this is success. I will ask Jeanette Kerr to expand a little more on the process.

Ms KERR: We have reviewed all of our current cases with a youth outreach and re-engagement team to look at families that would be suitable, and as the minister said, it is 24. It has been updated since the advice we gave to the minister a few days ago, and we now have 10 families that we are actively engaging with that have expressed an interest to be involved, and one family where the family responsibility agreement is commencing planning and drafting and family network meetings.

There is a defined process with an agreement that has to through family network meetings and getting the right people to the table, making sure there are no other complicating factors, such as domestic violence or mental health issues within the family, or alcohol abuse that would undermine the agreement. We also need to ensure that we are not currently working with the families in other ways, for example, Strengthening Families, family support or one of the external providers.

Mr BURGOYNE: With the work being done with those families, how are we going in relation to the compulsory participation in victim conferencing? Is that a part of the family responsibility agreements that you are working towards?

Ms KERR: You cannot have compulsory participation and victim-offender conferencing. It needs to be agreed to or consented to by the offender and the victim.

Mr BURGOYNE: It was spoken about at the last estimates—we are exploring compulsory participation and expanding that through our family responsibility agreements. If the victim is willing to take that up, can you force the perpetrator of the crime to take part in that process?

Ms KERR: No, you cannot.

Mrs WORDEN: To be fair, if a crime has occurred and the victim wants that process and the perpetrator says no, they stand in front of a court, which then makes a decision about whether they have some contrition or are apologetic for their behaviour. If they are not, it is the same for you and I in front of a court. If we show no remorse for what we have done then there is a different outcome from the court. We cannot predict what the court might do in its decision-making. They would end up in a submission before the court as part of the charges. If there is no remorse, it is taken into account, you would hope, by the courts. But that is not for us. We would ask and make clear the benefits of being part of restorative justice activities. It is really important and highly successful. The Jesuits do a 10-week program on restorative justice. Particularly in Alice Springs they have had a lot of success with young people in that process. If there is no remorse—it does not matter if they are an adult or a child.

Mr BURGOYNE: That is what I am trying to get at—we have seen success in this space. Can we make it an enforceable event where a young person does the wrong thing, there is victim conferencing, as has been proven to work, how can we not make it enforceable that that young person take part?

Mrs WORDEN: It has been proven to work where the person has genuine remorse. There is no point having a perpetrator in the room who is not genuinely remorseful and wants to go through a process that will help them onto a better pathway. You know that if someone does not want to be a participant in a process they are not there fully and not giving it their all.

Unfortunately, there will be some people who believe that is not something they want to do because they do not have remorse. The important thing is that where somebody does, we have a process in place and that it is encouraged. I am not saying that we are not encouraging young people; of course we encourage them to take up that opportunity. We provide it as an option because we know it is successful. Forcing an adult or a young person to be part of a process they do not believe will benefit them is very difficult.

Mr BURGOYNE: I do not think that, in a lot of cases, the young people understand the pain they cause to the businesspeople or the individuals in a lot of these instances. The reason that victim conferencing is so powerful is when you look into someone's eyes and see the pain you have caused, there is that remorse. You may not feel it initially but when you see the pain you caused and talk to that person—which is why I think it would be beneficial to make that enforceable. I guess I am asking whether it can be enforceable. You are saying that the young person may not want to do it, but can it be enforceable.

Ms KERR: The victim-offender conferencing has a very strong evidence base, but it is essential that the offender, as well as the victim, consents to it. If it was enforceable you would be faced with a situation where you are potentially causing more harm to the victim. We can do everything we can to encourage people to it. The consequences are that if you do not then it is before the court again. The victim can still have a voice in the process through victim impact statements and work we would do with Victims of Crime. Even where we have a conference and the victim does not consent, we can still proceed with representatives for the victim.

Mr BURGOYNE: I am just reading through exactly what was said last year:

We are working through whether we need legislative changes to make that happen. In this space we are exploring compulsory participation ...

That has not progressed because evidence shows that does not work.

Mrs WORDEN: You read the exact words. We are exploring it and we are not proceeding.

Mr BURGOYNE: You spoke about accountability boards. It was mentioned in previous estimates that Mr Warren had meetings with the Chamber of Commerce and Tourism Central Australia last year to work towards the establishment of community accountability boards and how that would tie in with work options for young people. How is that progressing?

Mrs WORDEN: I can give you an update on community accountability boards, and Mr Luke Twyford is joining us.

You are right; it is an avenue for local businesses, local governments and non-government organisations, as well as elders and community more broadly, to have their say on community-based youth justice to ensure that we as a government are attuned to community expectations. It is a mechanism for that contribution to be heard directly by government. Those partnerships with the community are critical. We made a decision that we need to embed that in our responses to youth justice.

We have landed on a preferred model and are looking for members out of local business owners, community members, non-government organisations, local councils and Aboriginal elders to give us that advice. We have 23 local businesses and non-government organisations engaged in working with our youth outreach and re-engagement team.

We previously identified some of the sectors and areas we would like to work with. They already provide us with intelligence on the type and form of work to be conducted. The community accountability boards will be more of a formalised way of that happening.

We have undertaken some design work and produced a draft terms of reference for a proposed implementation model. We already know where they will sit within our structure. It is our intention that during

June and July the bulk of this work will be under way. We need to do the next steps, which will be membership appointments through advertising and appointments made. That work will be started in the next four weeks. We will make a public call for members.

Member for Braitling, you are well connected in Alice Springs. You would have people who might be interested. There will be a board in Alice Springs. It is proposed at this stage to have bi-monthly meetings. Our first two will be in Darwin and Alice Springs. They are the easier ones for us to kick off with. We will be having a separate one in Palmerston. That work is well under way.

Mr BURGOYNE: We were hoping to see two up in the first half of this year. This was spoken about at last estimates. I guess we keep hearing 'we are close' and 'we are working on it.'

Mrs WORDEN: I have a couple of weeks left.

Mr BURGOYNE: A couple of weeks until we get to the middle of the year.

Mrs WORDEN: The work is well under way and those advertisements will go out soon and that process will be happening. We might miss that time line by about four weeks. I apologise for that but it is a lot of work and we have had a lot of things on our agenda over the last few months.

Mr BURGOYNE: We have not put out expressions of interest to join the community accountability boards?

Mrs WORDEN: No. I just said that we will be advertising very shortly. The issue is that we need the terms of reference right, where it will sit in the operational structure and the format. All that work has been done. The next thing is to advertise to bring the people on board and get the work started.

Mr BURGOYNE: How long do you expect that process to take?

Mrs WORDEN: We will hopefully be finalising over the next four weeks.

Mr BURGOYNE: Will anyone in the community be able to go onto these community accountability boards? Who are you looking at?

Mrs WORDEN: I said that we have a list of those. Mr Twyford has also correctly pointed out to me that there is a funding requirement for this to happen. We made an allowance in the budget, so on 1 July there is some money to support this process. That is another part of the puzzle. It is not just terms of reference. We need to make sure it is properly funded from the organisation.

I am always of the view that we need people on a committee who add to the committee with a broad range of experiences and perhaps a young voice. We will put it out to community members and see what comes back. The target audience is local business owners, community members, non-government organisations—those people who are perhaps providing some of our services—local councils and Aboriginal elders.

Mr BURGOYNE: Did I also hear you say you were working with 23 businesses across the Territory?

Mrs WORDEN: Yes, we do in our current structure.

Mr BURGOYNE: How many of those are located in Alice Springs?

Mrs WORDEN: I would like to give you some accuracy; are you okay for us to take that one on notice?

Mr BURGOYNE: That would be fantastic.

Question on Notice No 6.1

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

Mr BURGOYNE: In relation to the community accountability boards, how many businesses of the 23 mentioned are in Alice Springs and Darwin?

Mr CHAIR: Minister, do you accept the question?

Mrs WORDEN: Yes. It is not about current businesses engaged with community accountability boards because we do not have those up and running yet. It will be about the local businesses engaged currently working with our Youth Outreach and Re-Engagement Teams regarding community work.

Mr CHAIR: The question asked by the Member for Braiting has been allocated number 6.1.

Mr BURGOYNE: Last estimates we heard of organisations delivering camps, including the Warlpiri Youth Development Aboriginal Corporation and MacDonnell Regional Council delivering short-term camps on country. Are these still operational and occurring?

Mrs WORDEN: I said previously that we have a number of camps. For accuracy, I will ask someone in the agency, who is comfortable answering that.

Mr TWYFORD: Youth camps are still operating. There have been 123 participants last year to 30 June in early intervention and youth diversion camps and a further 84 young people in early intervention youth diversion camps this year to 31 March—roughly the same number.

Operation Flinders, which is a 10-day camp in South Australia, had eight participants. MacYouth, which is a two to three-night camp, has had 37 participants. CASSE, which is a one to five-day camp, has had four participants. B18 in the Darwin and Litchfield area, which has an extended intensive engagement process, has had 16 participants. Jarredimba Bayamuku Aboriginal Corporation in Borroloola had three participants in its five-month intensive program and a further 10 young people in the 10-day program. Balunu Foundation has had six participants.

Mr BURGOYNE: Just to confirm, 123—was that for the last year to date, or for the last financial year?

Mr TWYFORD: The 123 was from 1 July 2019 to 30 June 2020, which was last financial year, compared to 84 this financial year to date, to 31 March.

Mr BURGOYNE: Operation Flinders—did I hear only eight participants? How does that compare with the previous year?

Mr TWYFORD: The previous year, Operation Flinders was 10. It was provided predominantly from South Australia, as border closures impacted that.

Mr BURGOYNE: That makes sense. How many of those who attend the camps were referred by youth justice?

Mr TWYFORD: Every participant at a camp will have an assessment through a youth justice officer, team and process. The referrals may come from the community, courts, police or family.

Mrs LAMBLEY: The camps you have listed, some of which I have never heard of, are they privately owned or Northern Territory Government funded and operated?

Mrs WORDEN: We fund them, but they are not owned by us. It is engagement with non-government organisations to provide those specialist-type camps.

Mrs LAMBLEY: Do you fund them per person?

Mr DAVIES: In regard to our broader agency budget, 60% or 70% goes out in contractual and procurement arrangements with service providers. What we are doing with these camps is procuring a service, or it could be a grant process where we have given them a grant based on a submission they would have provided to us, with a set of deliverables regarding how they will support young people on camps.

Occasionally, we have had camps where youth justice officers accompany the young people. It depends on the circumstances. For Flinders, people travel interstate with the young people. All the young people who participate in these camps must have parent permission.

They are procured services. We work closely with the providers to make sure they are put together in a way that delivers the outcomes we need. We measure what they are doing and check that the camps are being provided properly.

Mrs LAMBLEY: Are any of these in Central Australia?

Mr DAVIES: Warlpiri Youth Development Aboriginal Corporation—WYDAC—which is the service in Central Australia, is at an outstation near Yuendumu. Operation Flinders is in South Australia, but MacYouth is the service provided by the MacDonnell Regional Council. CASSE is a central region service provider as well that works with young people.

Mrs LAMBLEY: There have been problems with these youth camps over the years. You would remember very clearly, Ken. Are they strictly regulated?

Mr DAVIES: The challenge you are referring to is that we had an issue with a purchased service in our facility at Loves Creek. It was a challenge for us out there because of the facility's water and isolation.

Mrs LAMBLEY: For once I am not talking about Loves Creek. But we can talk about Loves Creek.

Mr DAVIES: That was one that was a challenge for us and we had to move on from that. Generally, we have not had problems in the sense of poor supervision, kids leaving the camps or discipline-related issues. Usually the young people participating are there voluntarily and require parent permission.

We find the case management that follows on from the camps—given they are a one-off experience—is probably the most important part. It is what the young person comes out with and the case plan that follows them. That is particularly where our youth outreach teams are engaged to make sure the program is not just a one-off. It is picked up in a way where the commitments young people make on the camps are worked on.

Mrs WORDEN: CASSE stands for Creating a Safe and Supporting Environment. It works out of the Desert Knowledge Centre—that was where we had our last meeting.

Mrs LAMBLEY: Do you have any plans to establish a Northern Territory Government funded and operated youth camp like Loves Creek?

Mrs WORDEN: No, not at this stage. We are working with a provider to get more of a rolling camp situation so it is not at a point in time where we are waiting for the camp to start. That is our direction at the moment.

We have some very competent providers in this space that we are happy with. We will continue to work with them because you work with what you know will give a good outcome. B18 and Seven Emu Station have proved to be competent service providers. The Flinders Camp—originally, we would not go ahead with those this financial year. COVID gave us some uncertainty, but we chose—because they are so competent in that space and made a real impact on some young people—to stick with the service providers.

It is interesting because while we have very qualified staff in the areas we know, it is always good to have people who know exactly what they are doing in those spaces. There is a lot of rigour that goes into not only choosing those service providers in the first place, but also the follow up and checking—and also increasing their capacity over time—so we stick with the ones delivering well in a program supporting young people.

Mrs LAMBLEY: Are you seeking more providers in this space?

Mrs WORDEN: Not at this time. The step we took over the last month is to include the option for courts to also sentence young people to attend a camp. That is where our focus is at the moment.

It is worth mentioning the future of the Barkly work camp. There is a lot of investment in that space. While it is in the Barkly, it is a bit like Saltbush in Alice Springs and Darwin—the kids in that facility are not necessarily just from Alice Springs and Darwin. There are young people from Katherine, Tennant Creek and remote areas. The Barkly work camp will be ...

Mrs LAMBLEY: Is that not the prison? The Barkly work camp?

Mrs WORDEN: Absolutely not. It is a new project we are working on in Alice—it is through the Barkly Regional Deal.

Mrs LAMBLEY: Is that not what they call the prison in the Barkly, though?

Mrs WORDEN: No, it is not what we call the prison. There is an adult work camp. I am hoping we will come up with a local name, these things are ...

Mrs LAMBLEY: You said Barkly work camp and I am thinking you are sending the kids to the prison.

Mrs WORDEN: To define the two, the Barkly youth work camp. Eventually, hopefully, there will be a good strong local name. That will be a similar facility we will be rolling out for young people. They will be able to get the same programs as at B18 and other work camp providers. The emphasis is on the service provision.

Mr BURGOYNE: The youth hub in Alice Springs is often mentioned. I have many constituents who constantly talking to me in relation to it. What has happened with the review into the youth hub?

Mrs WORDEN: The youth hub review has been completed and we are working through the suggestions. In Budget 2021–22, we made a provision of \$500,000 to commence work. From 20 November 2020 to 31 March, we had close to 6,000 young people present at the hub, which includes almost 800 individuals. There was evidence that there was a slight decline in presentations to Gap Youth and Brown Street drop-in centres during that period.

Collectively, the total number of presentations to the three drop-in centres did not exceed total presentations in 2019–20, so not a huge number of new young people. When we broke it down and talked to the young people about where they came from, we learned that a lot were from town camps. That is why we have made that investment. There are some good spaces already established on town camps, with people working out of them, that we can enhance. Those initiatives are being funded.

We are opening it again over 24 hours a day for the school holidays.

Mr BURGOYNE: Has there been any community consultation in relation to opening that youth hub 24/7 over the school holidays? Could you give me the dates that will go back to a 24/7 youth hub?

Mrs WORDEN: It will be operating from this Friday, for three weeks—ask a person with a school-aged child, they know exactly when the holidays are. Is that helpful?

Mr BURGOYNE: Yes. I am sure you have been made aware of the level of antisocial behaviour that happens on Railway Terrace in Alice Springs. It has been brought to my attention by people who live on that street. What are you doing, moving forward, to reduce that level of antisocial behaviour that occurs late at night on Railway Terrace? It is a serious concern. Whilst I have been sitting here, a resident has called me; unfortunately these incidents seem to be increasing not decreasing. At the moment, the centre is only open Friday through to Sunday.

Mrs WORDEN: Today is Tuesday, so it is not open. Anything happening there today, you cannot attribute to the youth hub.

Mr BURGOYNE: Certainly, but they call me during the week to tell me about incidents. I have an email, if you would like me to read it out?

Mrs WORDEN: There is no need. As you are asking about what proactive work we are doing. I have said, we are investing in town camps. Hopefully, some of the numbers of young people will go there.

On consultation, on 17 June contact was made with the closest neighbours around the hub and arrangements are being made to meet out of hours to discuss a number of options to increase their privacy and hopefully alleviate some of their concerns. We will continue with courtesy visits to let them know that the hub will be operating again in the next school holidays. That work is happening during this week, probably while we are sitting here.

Those two non-government organisations I just mentioned before, the Gap and Brown Street, will continue to open during the school holidays. We used that first exercise last year and some really great things came out of that. We were able to get some data on where those young people came from. There was a big push on school attendance after that and I know, anecdotally, I am obviously not the Minister for Education, that a lot of those kids were re-enrolled in school or were tracked down to see where they were enrolled.

There was a lot of cross-government data gathered used over that time. That will obviously continue. There will be meaningful engagement but we are investing in town camps. A lot of the evidence that we got out of that was that town camps need to be a focus for us and we need to work proactively.

It is also pleasing that since that time the council has indicated a willingness to start doing some youth engagement activities of its own. That is where we are at. We will see where we are sitting post-school holidays for numbers. I understand the number of young people in Alice Springs on the street has fallen significantly. I understand that is often a seasonal thing because it is cold. Our youth outreach officers will continue that engagement work.

Mr BURGOYNE: When will the community centres in town camps be operational?

Mrs WORDEN: That investment of \$500,000 is in the 2021–22 Budget. We have no time line on that right now. It will vary from camp to camp and according to their readiness. I do not have any information with me about the state of facilities or capacity of staff to deliver at the moment. We have said we need to invest some funding into that area. That work will commence in the new financial year to get that going. I am happy to come back to you and let you know once we have some certainty.

Mr BURGOYNE: It is better understanding how that half-a-million dollars will be spent. How much do you expect to spend on upgrades to buildings and staffing? Will the people who go into those community centres be YORET staff who are already working at the youth hub that are then pushed out to the town camp community centres? I am just trying to work out how it will work.

Mrs WORDEN: We have work to do about that. It is new money in the coming financial year. I have advice that in late March, our department with Tangentyere Council to discuss an alternative hub model utilising community centres in town camps at Larapinta, Hidden Valley and Anthepe. We have offered support for operations by providing resources. It will vary from camp to camp according to their capacity. Tangentyere has advised that it needs some time to work through the governance with us. We will do that as a partnership. As was noted before, we get better outcomes when we partner with Aboriginal organisations when we are talking about predominantly Aboriginal young people. We need to make sure we get that right.

Mr BURGOYNE: When was that meeting with Tangentyere?

Mrs WORDEN: At the end of March.

Mr BURGOYNE: I may have been at that meeting; I am not sure.

Mrs LAMBLEY: You are looking at creating three youth centres on these town camps and keep the youth hub. Is that right?

Mrs WORDEN: That is yet to be determined. We need to see the effect of that before we determine it. We need to keep working with Gap and Brown Street to make sure they have the right capacity and are offering the right programs. That is the work we continue to do with them.

Mr BURGOYNE: Ilparpa camp was one, what were the other two mentioned?

Mrs WORDEN: Hidden Valley and Larapinta.

Mr BURGOYNE: When I worked with the bus services—that seems to be where a lot of the kids are coming from. Obviously good work has happened there.

Mrs WORDEN: We are in agreement?

Mr BURGOYNE: I tell you what, that is marvellous. Do we have a time frame for when those town camp community centres will be operational?

Mrs WORDEN: You may have been at that meeting, but Tangentyere has indicated it needs time to work through that. I hate the term, ‘how long is a piece of string?’ But to get a model right—if we put a time on it like, four weeks’ time, you are forcing people to perhaps come up with something that is not right. We will continue to work with Tangentyere. The money is there; that is the most important thing we are resourcing. They know we want to work with them; there is a willingness to work with them. We need to get the governance model right; when that is right, it will start. I will let you know when that is happening.

Mr BURGOYNE: There are no time frames for having it operational by the end of the year?

Mrs WORDEN: I will not say that, because I will not put a time frame on something we are in the early stages of discussions. The NGO we want to work with, which has runs on the board, indicated that it needs time to work through that.

Mr BURGOYNE: The youth hub will be operational even after the school holidays indefinitely?

Mrs WORDEN: It will be 24 hours over the coming school holidays. We will continue to run it at the reduced hours after that, until we determine the best—we need these kids engaged in town camps. Once we see those numbers go down then we will reconsider.

Mr BURGOYNE: That review we spoke about—it is obvious that you have the review. Has it been completed?

Mrs WORDEN: Yes, I have.

Mr BURGOYNE: Were the serious concerns of the local people, who live in the area of Railway Terrace, considered when it comes to reopening the youth centre on a 24/7 basis over these school holidays.

Mrs WORDEN: They were factored in, because there has been consultation with them in the lead-up recently. They were considered during the review. There was agreement by residents, by and large, that a drop-in centre service was needed. That was somewhat problematic for them. They agreed that the location of the service was inappropriate for a 24-hour service. That has all been taken into account ...

Mr BURGOYNE: The residents have been completely ignored?

Mrs WORDEN: No, they have not been ignored. Us investing in the town camp model and making sure there is enough—we have an increased security presence there. We have been talking to them about ways that we can improve their privacy and ensure relationships are kept strong. That is how we have been working with them.

Mr BURGOYNE: You mentioned increased security. There are two security guards there? That is my understanding. Will there be additional security guards over these school holidays?

Mrs WORDEN: We would need to check that. For the record, I am very comfortable—these facilities need to go somewhere. We put the hub together as a response to listening to the people of Alice Springs indicating there were too many young people in town. That response gave us data and a clear indication of the number of young people who were out in Alice Springs. It engaged those young people in positive services. I have been there; Member for Braitling, you have also been there.

As a government, we have to look at those activities and learn from them. That is what we are doing. We are moving through and engaging with local people on how we can lessen the impact on them and what the alternatives are. It is clear that we are funding new activities. We know, through the bus service data as well, that a lot of the young people are from town camps. Let us see what happens during these school holidays and where the work on town camps leads us. Let us learn, which is what we have done through this process.

There is not one response to everything. We have very good relationships and ongoing discussions with the other two services. We are looking to make sure that they are providing the right activities for young people. My observation is that very different cohorts of young people go to both services. Brown Street is not seeing the same young people as the Gap. We need to work with them to attract other young people and ensure that the transport service is meeting the needs as well.

It is a process. We are not just sitting on our hands and saying, 'Oh, let's just leave the youth hub in the city and forget the neighbours'. I do not want that picture painted at all. Our staff are working hard with the neighbours to make sure there is little or no impact on them as we work to make sure we can engage young people, whether it is in town camps, in town or at the other youth centres.

Mr BURGOYNE: Are the bus services allowed to drop children at the youth hub? It is my understanding that has not been the case. They are not allowed to drop children there. They are allowed to take them home but they are not allowed to take them to the youth hub. Is that your understanding?

Mrs WORDEN: We need to check that. They do take young people home. You are right about that. I also know that they bring young people back in. We heard that—it was probably one of my first trips to Alice

Springs—young people were being taken home and then making their own way back in or that services were picking them up.

I was present when there was a call through on the radio to one of our YOREOs who was on patrol that evening to say that the bus was bringing a group of 35 back from the Gap Youth Centre. They were closing and they were bringing them back into town to the youth hub there. We will double-check whether or not they are bringing them back in. My firsthand experience was that the bus service was bringing young people into the youth hub at the closing time of the other two services.

Mr BURGOYNE: In regard to the Brown Street and the Gap Youth Centre, you said that they experienced a slight drop off. Has there been any consultation with those organisations to provide more services to them so they can then cater for the kids who attend the youth hub—and close the youth hub? I know from having conversations with them, they were, at times frustrated that there is a competing service.

Mrs WORDEN: We need to be clear that the reason that the hub in town started, is that those kids were in town. They were not making their way across to the Gap or to Brown Street. They just were not. This was in response to the voices of Alice Springs telling us—and our own observations. Your observations as well, Member for Braiiling—that young people were on the street. That means they were not in the other two services.

There has been a slight decline but there could be other reasons for that. We are always working with our service providers to make sure that they have the right programs. I have been to both services. They have very engaged staff. They are always looking at new ways to make their facilities more attractive. The Gap has some restrictions on its capability; it is quite a small facility. It provides a computer program that the others do not have. They are always looking at providing something that will attract a particular group of young people. They have done that successfully over time—for example the computer program, some physical activity or the dinner service.

We are always working with our service providers. We fund them to provide a service. It is up to them, in some ways, to have some flexibility in what they are providing in order to support the cohort of young people and attract new ones.

Mr BURGOYNE: Does Territory Families have figures that show an increase in crime in the CBD in relation to the days the youth hub was operating over Christmas?

Mrs WORDEN: That crime data is police. We do not collect crime data; we provide services to young people in the youth space and to young people when they might be starting to fall foul of the law. That is our role; it is not to collect crime stats. You could have asked the Police minister that question.

Mr BURGOYNE: You receive data in relation to the number of young people who are on the street at night. You mentioned it before. That would come from your patrols of the CBD at night.

Mrs WORDEN: I will ask Mr Twyford to provide some commentary on that. Having been out a number of times with our patrols—they do not walk around with a counting mechanism in their hands, like at the entry to a club or something; they engage with young people. It is very clear from your personal observations whether there is an increase of young people about. The bus service also provide some of that information.

From my observations on my first trip before the hub was opened, there was a lot of young people out and about. Most of them are just out and about. I engaged with quite a number of them and they were saying that either their homes were not safe or they were bored. My last observations were a significant decrease in young people on the streets in Alice Springs at the moment. On chatting to our patrols still going out night after night, they have seen a marked decrease in the number of young people walking around the CBD.

Mr TWYFORD: We do not have crime rates for the CBD. I have apprehensions by region, but that will not be the same in response to that. I believe the Police minister provided them yesterday.

We do not have a data system that would capture youth on the street in Alice Springs. We have the statistics the minister has provided for attendance at the hub. The two other youth services would be collecting their activity data and providing that to us in a paper-based format quarterly. We have a level of intelligence where we can look at the service delivery of the people we are funding, but that is not the same as being aware of who is on the street and not attending our services.

The evaluation that has been conducted and the work with the community is trying to balance what we see in our contract management service system from our own youth outreach re-engagement statistics—the number of youths we are working with and what intel we might have as case managers of where those young people are. We are doing that cost-benefit analysis on how to tweak the system to invest in the areas that would lead to a reduction in youths on the street.

Mrs WORDEN: Are you still asking questions on the opening statement or did you want to go to output by output at some point? I am not trying to tell you how to run your day.

Mr BURGOYNE: Do not worry, I am keeping my eye on the time. I am aware of data being collected. I know the contract is through DCM. I am wondering whether Territory Families receive that data so that then you can better understand, 'Right, these are the number of young people on the street at night'. That is what I am trying to work out. Is DCM talking to Territory Families or not?

Mrs WORDEN: This is an operational question between agencies; I will ask the chief executive to respond.

Mr DAVIES: Yes, we are a member of co-ord. We have a senior officer appointed, Julie Anderson in Alice Springs, who participates in all of the co-ord meetings. There are regular reports at that meeting put in by various government departments. We meet with police locally, weekly and daily through the youth outreach service, and we are taking on board the data that we get from Talice security. There is really good co-ordination and information sharing going on. In terms of the broader work, we work with police on Operation Lunar and so on.

We make sure that we have an eye to the numbers, where the spikes are and on the regions when we get an influx of young people who may come in from the Utopia region or from the western side. It depends on what is going on. The data is freely shared amongst senior officials in Alice Springs.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR: As we are approaching 10.30 am we will have a short comfort break.

The committee suspended.

Mr CHAIR: Welcome back to estimates. We are taking questions on the minister's opening statement.

Mr BURGOYNE: Following up on what we were going over before, are you able to share the numbers that DCM has in relation to the number of youths on the streets at night in Alice Springs?

Mrs WORDEN: I will ask Jeanette Kerr to respond to that question.

Ms KERR: That data is supplied monthly at the regional co-ord in Alice Springs with all the service providers from Talice as well as operational antisocial behaviour and crime data and youth data. It is used at a problem-solving forum in that location. We do not have possession of that data; it would be with DCM, as the contract managers.

Mr BURGOYNE: Are you able to take the question on notice and get the data for us?

Mrs WORDEN: Can you tell me what the specific question is? At the moment it is just about young people on the streets of Alice Springs.

Mr BURGOYNE: That is right. I am concerned about the number of young people on the streets at night in Alice Springs. I am trying to ascertain how many young people—I understand there are rough numbers taken in regard to that, and I want to understand for myself how many people are on the street at night in Alice Springs.

Mrs WORDEN: I am comfortable taking that on notice, with the caveat that it is not our data you are asking for. As long as it is able to be shared, we will share it.

Question on Notice No 6.2

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

Mr BURGOYNE: Are we able to get the estimated number of youths on the street at night since 20 November 2020 to the most current data you have in 2021, month on month.

Mrs WORDEN: Is there a time frame when you say 'at night'?

Mr BURGOYNE: Effectively, how many youths are on the street in Alice Springs at night from 20 November 2020 to the most recent data you have, month on month?

Mr CHAIR: Minister, do you accept the question?

Mrs WORDEN: Yes, with the caveat that it is not our data. If we are able to share it, we will.

Mr CHAIR: The question asked by the Member for Braitingling has been allocated the number 6.2.

Answer to Question on Notice No 6.1

Mrs WORDEN: Mr Chair, I have a response to the first question we took on notice, which was question 6.1.

The question asked how many businesses of the 23 mentioned are in Alice Springs and Darwin, and how many are in Darwin in relation to community accountability boards. I clarified that question, saying with local businesses currently engaged with YOREOs. The answer to that question is that the Youth Outreach and Re-Engagement Teams work with the following businesses in Darwin, Palmerston and Alice Springs.

In Darwin and Palmerston they work with five. Those organisations are the NT Industry Training Bureau, YouthWorX NT, Larrakia Nation, the Youth Mill, Palmerston Regional Basketball Association and McMinn Lagoon Reserve.

In Alice Springs the agency works with a further five businesses. They are the Alice Springs Animal Shelter, Gap Youth and Community Centre, Riding for the Disabled, St Vincent de Paul and the Youth Outreach and Re-engagement Team.

I am happy to table the full response.

Mrs LAMBLEY: Going back to the review of the youth hub, you suggested I might see a copy in the May sittings. Do you intend to make that report publicly available?

Mrs WORDEN: It would be FOI, but I am happy to give you a copy. I have one here if you would like it.

I table the youth drop-in centre report for the Member for Araluen.

Mrs LAMBLEY: I am speechless, thank you very much. You get my vote for the most amenable, helpful minister during budget estimates hearings.

Mrs WORDEN: If the Member for Araluen lived in Sanderson she would vote for me. Thank you.

Mrs LAMBLEY: Because you are being nice to me; that is why. How much did that report cost?

Mrs WORDEN: It was an internal review. We did not contract anyone to do that; it was within our normal budget.

Mrs LAMBLEY: You talked about your role as Minister for Disabilities, which I think is a great honour. I was the Minister for Disability Services some time ago. From the information provided publicly by National Disability Services in 2020, just prior to the election, we know that almost 21,000 Territorians have a disability. Only 15% of those people are supported by the NDIS and we have a very low utilisation of NDIS funding with 56% under-utilisation. Half of these people are Aboriginal living in remote and very remote areas. What are you doing to get more people on the NDIS and ensure that the NT fully utilises our NDIS funding?

Mrs WORDEN: That will be the question on the day. When I first became the Minister for Disabilities within Territory Families, I thought the bulk of this would be done by the NDIS and we were a partner in that. That does not turn out to be so. It is a very fluid environment—and working collaboratively with not just the NDIS but a very broad and growing service sector. I am really pleased that our Chief Executive has a big focus

internally where kids are in care—we have 172 children in our own care—that they have NDIS support packages. Some of that work has also occurred in our youth detention centres.

The internal stuff we have been doing—year to date we are growing those numbers across the Northern Territory. In 2019–20 we had 3,428 young people who had approved plans. That number year to date is 3,906. That is the 31 March figure. We are continuing to grow that number. They are not just young people but the broader disability sector. As you said we contribute that funding to the national level.

What you are talking about is thin markets. That is the term that I have had to come to terms with. It is used extensively around the disability sector. It is very difficult for a service provider to provide a service where there are perhaps one or two participants in a remote setting. A lot of that service to date has been fly-in fly-out. The NDIS is doing thin-market trials. They have one happening in Ngukurr at the moment. They are trying to get as many participants on the NDIS so they can provide to that service market.

There are factors with accommodation that we are acutely aware of. For example, the MJD Foundation has a footprint in Groote Eylandt and it is an ongoing conversation between us, them and the land councils about providing enough accommodation to get staff. There are layers of challenges that the Northern Territory faces—perhaps other jurisdictions other than Queensland and Western Australia. We have commonalities with them on thin markets and service provision. You need a service provider to go out and do the assessments. Some of that can be done through the health service. They can provide that assessment.

There is a broader discussion federally about moving to independent assessors. There is some resistance to that. We are strongly participating at the national level about what that would look like. There is a thought that an independent assessor would be required to fly out to some of our more remote areas so we might get more people onto the disability scheme. Those are ongoing discussions at the national level. We are participating rigorously.

There has been a change of the federal Disability Services minister and we had to reset that relationship and all the states and territories are having a broad discussion.

We have stated our case, it is more expensive to provide those services in the Northern Territory, even Darwin, Palmerston and Alice Springs. It is the biggest growing service sector across the Northern Territory. In parliament recently, we changed the legislation to ensure that there are worker screening processes in place. It is a fast-growing service sector in the Northern Territory and economically it presents an opportunity.

I have some figures on where our participants are located. In the Barkly 162, Central Australia 591, Darwin remote 367, Darwin urban 2,251, East Arnhem 184, Katherine 188 and in other areas 104. There are 627 registered active NDIS providers, but the market could be much bigger than that.

Mr TWYFORD: Broadly, of those 627 active providers in the last quarter, 259 have received a payment, which is a signal that they are actively out there. We are slightly concerned and would like to see that number lift. On 1 July our NDIS Worker Screening scheme will come into effect and will be managed through SFNT. That is an opportunity for us to be engaging with our provider...

Mrs LAMBLEY: What is SFNT?

Mr TWYFORD: Safe NT, the police area which runs our Ochre Card, Working with Children, and will also be commencing the NDIS Worker Screening scheme. It presents an opportunity for us to work with our sector providers and talk to them about their current reach and capability.

More generally, the Commonwealth is about to release its National Disability Strategy, which has a national focus on how to lift disability services and the quality of services across our country. Associated with that, our Disability Advisory Committee in the Northern Territory is looking at how the national strategy will provide a greater opportunity for us to work with the community, as well as our sector, to ensure that people with a disability in the Northern Territory are able to access services at an equitable and sustainable level.

Mrs WORDEN: I met with my advisory committee yesterday, which is predominantly made up of people with a lived experience. We recently invited a member from the MJD Foundation to the board and Susan Burns from the NDS. Their major body of work at the moment is developing an NT disability strategy. They will also review the NT *Disability Services Act* and assist us with our response to the royal commission and the regulations. They are an enthusiastic group working hard on that strategy.

Before you ask about the timing of the strategy, there was a view that it would be done by the end of the year. I am not keen on 'you have to get it done by the end of the year' because you may get a strategy that does not encompass everything needed. They are a good, methodical group, led by Chris Blackham-Davison, a deaf man in our community. They are working through the strategy to ensure we have every sector and hopefully they will come up with some good recommendations on how we can continue to get more people onto the NDIS. That is the challenge. It is almost a business challenge in the end. It is about ensuring we get that footprint ...

Mrs LAMBLEY: Can I get you to clarify? The figures you mentioned at the front of your response—3,906—is that all people with a disability package for this year?

Mrs WORDEN: That was last year 2019–20.

Mrs LAMBLEY: But all Territorians with a disability package?

Mrs WORDEN: In 2019–20 we had 3,428 who were active participants with a plan. At the moment in the year-to-date we have 3,906, so that number is growing.

Mrs LAMBLEY: Adults and children?

Mrs WORDEN: Yes, adults and children. We need to keep that number growing, but there is a second part you alluded to. It is not just what they have in the package, it is about making sure they can spend it here and you need providers for that.

The other component of that is SDA housing. Often participants are assessed as specialist disability accommodation and have a proportion of that in their package. It can be quite a large amount of money to facilitate them renting or even purchasing a home that meets and supports their needs.

I ask the chief executive to provide some commentary about the way we are approaching that to make sure there are more SDA options available.

Mr DAVIES: We are working closely with the providers to make sure we have new accommodation coming online. Part of that process is working with DIPL to identify land available that can be transferred to SDA providers on the basis of them then being able to construct accommodation which gives them tenure and security over the assets being built. We work very closely with the sector to drive the increased access and availability of SDA accommodation.

Mrs LAMBLEY: What does the S stand for?

Mr DAVIES: Supported.

Mrs LAMBLEY: Disability?

Mr DAVIES: Accommodation, yes.

Mrs WORDEN: As opposed to the old model which was SIL. That stands for supported independent living. There will still be that, but there is a preference now for SDA housing versus SIL housing.

Mr YAN: Travelling around the remote areas of my electorate, there are a lot of questions raised about NDIS capability in the bush areas. I understand the thin market concept. I have a number of communities and people in those communities wanting to develop and drive an NDIS system in their communities. The minute they get to the paperwork and all the bits and pieces, it is all too hard. What can government do to assist those individuals or organisations remotely to navigate the NDIS application process and make it easier?

Mrs WORDEN: That is a really good question because it falls into the thin market area. It is exactly right. Local Aboriginal organisations and even individuals—it can be a huge driver. I have a statistic here that with 172 children in care with an approved NDIS plan, the value of their plans is \$9.45m. It can be a good, strong economic driver in the Northern Territory. You are very right and it is a good question.

I ask the chief executive to provide you with feedback on how our agency can assist in that space.

Mr DAVIES: A very good question and one that is exercising us a lot, is how we grow the capacity of local Aboriginal enterprises and organisations to provide services locally.

I reflect on a visit I had to Papunya where I found someone with a disability who was in a chair. She used to be an assistant teacher who worked with me a long time ago and she needed better support than she was getting when I talked to her out there.

Charles Darwin University has been given some funding to set up a training program for support disability providers. That is part of a budget commitment made by the Australian Government to support the university to provide training programs for specialist disability services. Regarding training we are working very closely with the Department of Tourism, Industry and Trade on training programs for people in the disability sector.

We are expanding the Territory Families, Housing and Communities regional footprints so that where there is a big school, a police station and a health clinic, our intention is to have a Families office. We will then be able to roll-up our sleeves for the communities locally, provide better assistance and better support to the programs we have on the ground and work with the NDS—National Disability Services—to grow the local footprint of providers in remote areas.

That will take time but it is the absolute intention. It is the advantage of having a big Families agency, which has Disabilities in it. We will be able to focus on getting providers there who can provide services and support the aboriginal organisations that find the paperwork so cumbersome.

Mr YAN: There is a will in those communities to be able to deliver these services, but to them it is a minefield. I am meeting with Sue next week, to talk about this very topic and how we can improve and implement NDIS providers into those communities. That is imperative in those communities; they are lacking in services. We need to be able to assist individuals and organisations to navigate the NDIS framework to start providing services out there. Not only do people with disabilities need that service, it becomes an income stream into those communities.

Mr DAVIES: Spot on. We are also working with local governments on the infrastructure. Footpaths are an example of where people, who are being assisted with their mobility—being able to get to and from the store on something that is like a footpath. There is infrastructure that goes with this.

Regarding the potential for jobs and economic growth, this is a huge opportunity. We want to get to where people are able to care for their own people, locally.

Mr MONAGHAN: Does the new housing legislation support the disability sector and accessibility?

Mrs WORDEN: Absolutely. I am not the minister for building things. A couple of months back they changed nationally and agreed to the silver level across the industry, nationally, that things like doorways would be altered in the new builds—I think, from my recollection—to be wide enough for wheelchairs and those sorts of modifications. It is smart.

There was some goodwill nationally by every state and territory to take that on board. It is really pleasing. I believe it is all for new builds, not retrofitting. They naturally go into the *Planning Act*. That is a really good outcome.

That triggers me to say that some of the works with the community housing strategy we are embarking on, there are some considerations. Some of the models—the chief executive, Mr Brent Warren and I travelled to Adelaide to see some of the new housing models there. That is the beauty of having a broad footprint for our agency, including Disability and Housing. There are opportunities we will leverage in the future that could accommodate new disability housing along with housing for seniors and disadvantaged people all in the one social housing development and private investment.

That is definitely a consideration. It is one of the very nice things about having this very broad agency with a remit across Disabilities, Housing and Territory Families. It is a really good fit.

Mr DAVIES: The other part of this, of course, is the remote housing footprint. With the Room to Breathe program, extensive negotiations are held at the family level where there is an occupant in a household who has a disability. With that program, we are able to work with families on modifications to the housing asset to make sure that there are things like wheelchair access and ramps that are needed, and so on.

That is part of the work we are doing with the Anindilyakwa Land Council at Angurugu and Umbakumba on MJD, and at Millingimbi as well. There are a lot of synergies here. When you have a big agency joined up like this, you are not jumping agency barriers to get things done.

Minister Paech as well is really exercised on this whole area, particularly on the opportunities for jobs, growth and improved housing assets.

Mr COSTA: Since we are talking about NDIS in remote communities, can homelands have access to this program?

Mrs WORDEN: Absolutely. Everybody across Australia is entitled to have access to the program. Some of the issues were raised by the Member for Araluen previously. It is not necessarily about people getting on the program; that is an assessment process that can be undertaken by a service provider. It is the provision of services. Our real challenge is to get those services into remote areas or where people are living remote can have some modifications undertaken so their life is made easier. It really depends on the individual case. Yes, everybody is entitled to be on the NDIS if they are found eligible.

Mr COSTA: I have travelled to some of those remote outstations in West Arnhem. The Member for Namatjira has some outstations as well. I have seen firsthand where there are people there who need that support, especially when you have elderly people living in a three-bedroom house and they have to walk nearly 200 metres to 300 metres to a toilet because they have no toilet blocks or wet areas in the house.

Mrs WORDEN: It is a bit of a crossover there, because that is aged services, which is provisioned by the Commonwealth Government. However, age is not necessarily a disability. A disability is assessed in a different way. If you have a chronic illness that is not often considered a disability, you might have something like a stroke and the residual limitations on your activities and how you function could end up as a disability. It is a range of things that have to happen in the assessment process.

You might want to ask Minister Paech tomorrow because I know he is very interested in the area of homelands and the provision of appropriate housing.

Mr BURGOPYNE: I will throw a curve ball, minister, because I love curve balls. This goes across a number of sectors too, particularly in the disability sector. Usually we also see in the bush lots of people want to be involved in working within this sector, whether it be disability, health or aged. The barrier to getting people out in these communities to work in this sector is the Ochre Card. A lot of people are not able to get an Ochre Card because when the criminal history check is done it goes back so far and you may have had a minor offence for a DV or ag-assault 10 or 15 years ago and that precludes an individual from getting an Ochre Card.

This is needs to be considered by government, specifically for disabilities, but also other areas within government, to have staff to work out in communities.

Is it something that you, minister, could work with the AG to look at, to be able to maybe review this legislation so that we can get workers out in these communities who want to work in the industry but cannot because they are precluded because of the Ochre Card?

Mrs WORDEN: I will make more of a broad policy response and will invite Mr Twyford to provide you with some of the context on the worker screening process, which has just been before the parliament. Essentially the Ochre Card provides a level of national standard that is required. It is what it is. In any industry when dealing with people with a vulnerability you would not want to be lessening the standards. I personally am not interested in following it up, simply because it is about standards.

Mr TWYFORD: Your question was about the Ochre Card which is a scheme that has been in place for a number of years under the *Care and Protection Act*, and it is focused on child safety. Each jurisdiction had developed its own worker screening scheme for child safety independently and then as a result of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse's drive for national consistency occurred and each jurisdiction agreed and committed to align its child protection or child safety Ochre Cards in the standards that apply to anyone working with children.

The comments you made about people with criminal histories being excluded emerges as a myth from time to time, and it is very important for the community to know that there is only a small defined list of disqualifying criminal offences that would preclude you from having an Ochre Card, and they are generally around child sexual exploitation or sexual exploitation in your past as a perpetrator. Any other criminal history is part of the evidence brief that goes to the board, or the screen authority in SAFE NT who meet monthly and sometimes fortnightly based on their workload to do an independent assessment on each application. Someone with past criminal history that is not related to sexual abuse or exploitation can be assessed and

receive an Ochre Card, and it is important that people do not feel like they should never apply because of something in their past that is not a disqualifying offence.

Separately, the NDIS scheme has introduced its own worker screening scheme with slightly different quality standards. Noting that the workforces and clientele they serve are different. Our NDIS Worker Screening Scheme starts proper on 1 July this year. The legislation is nationally consistent and the government has determined to make SAFE NT the screening authority for NDIS worker screening so we have the same skilled operators and the same processes with online application assessments against the legislative criteria, then the professional assessment on the risk this person poses.

It is fair to say that there is a distinction between what is on your paper file, as something that has occurred in the past and your current level of risk. It is about that information informing a professional judgement and a professional assessment. That is the skillset SAFE NT has and is developing. Our department is supporting SAFE NT with funding and the secondment of staff through the start-up phase of the NDIS Worker Screening Scheme, and we expect and anticipate that the applications are already on their way, will be formally received on 1 July when the scheme commences and will be processed speedily after that date.

Mr YAN: I was not speaking about anything to do with children, because in the Territory we have used the Ochre Card, or that assessment level, to screen workers for what is specifically classed as vulnerable people, which may be the aged or disability. In my previous role we had people who wanted to work in the aged-care sector, who we tried to get Ochre Cards for, but because of a specific crim history that had nothing to do with child sex offences or anything like that, but an ag-assault—a number of people fell into this bucket—were not able to get their Ochre Card and, thus, were not able to be trained to be able to work in, say, the aged-care system. We have used the same screening tool for disability services. I know that we are changing that but will we apply the same stuff as we do for the Ochre Card, which is specifically for children, to people working with aged or disability? It sounds as if we are. I would be correct in saying that.

Mr TWYFORD: It is the same process of application and the same mental model, in that the professional is determining, 'does this person present as a fit and proper person, able to provide a safe level of service delivery to a vulnerable person?'. But there are very different legal systems and the disqualifying offences in the Care and Protection Ochre Card are not the disqualifying offences necessarily in the NDIS worker-screening law. Both involve criminal history checks and looking at spent convictions but the ultimate test relates to whether this person is a fit and proper person able to provide safety and, conversely, whether this person poses any unsafe risk to a vulnerable person.

Mr YAN: I agree. I am interested to see how it works moving into the future, because I know that has been a barrier to getting people working in that industry where we desperately need them, particularly in our bush areas. It is not so much of an issue in town. It certainly is out bush.

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

Mr CHAIR: The committee will now consider the estimates and proposed expenditure contained in the Appropriation Bill 2020–2021 that relates to the Department of Territory Families, Housing and Communities. 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 GROUP 1.0 – FAMILIES Output 1.1 – Family Support

Mr CHAIR: The committee will now move onto Output Group 1.0, Families, Output 1.1, Family Support. Are there any questions?

Mr BURGOYNE: Minister, there is a new initiative announced in your budget output of \$1m listed as a new initiative. What portion of that is going to the 24-hour drop-in service in Alice Springs?

Mrs WORDEN: Just to clarify, are you asking about what proportion to the youth hub?

Mr BURGOYNE: That is correct.

Mrs WORDEN: That would be that \$500,000 for town camps?

Mr TWYFORD: The youth hub plus town camps.

Mrs WORDEN: Yes. It is \$500,000 of the \$1m. There are three other components in that funding: expanding the victim offender conferencing, implement community accountability boards and introduce the family responsibility agreements. There is some funding for the other side but the \$500,000 is what we have quarantined for the youth space.

Mr BURGOYNE: It is not \$500,000 for the youth hub, \$500,000 for the town camps program. There are other things in there.

Mrs WORDEN: The youth hub is already funded. This is the movement of the \$1m and \$500,000 of that is for the town camps, not youth hubs.

Mr BURGOYNE: Budget highlights include \$7m allocated to family support service grants. You mentioned some of the people who received those grants earlier. What services are being provided by those providers?

Ms KERR: That is family support grants. The new budget measures we are going out with for \$7.2m per annum, \$36m over five years. It is Arafura \$506,520; Barkly \$578,880; Greater Darwin region \$2.46m; Arnhem \$578,880; Central Australia \$1.881m; Big Rivers Katherine \$530,000 and Big Rivers remote \$700,000.

Mr BURGOYNE: Do you have a list of the providers?

Ms KERR: Yes. This family support grant round is under procurement so it has not been finalised yet.

Mr BURGOYNE: That is the allocation per region?

Ms KERR: Yes.

Mr BURGOYNE: There is a substantial increase in the number of family support cases commenced in the reporting period. What do you attribute this to?

Mrs WORDEN: I said in my opening statement that families are coming to trust us and trusting us earlier. I think we are providing the right supports at those times. People are aware of those supports.

Mr TWYFORD: The minister is correct. We are receiving direct contact from family members at a rate that we have not experienced before. Our FACES hotline was created following the royal commission and government's investment in early intervention in the family support portfolio commenced in 2018–19. We received 2,100 contacts in that first year after some pretty extensive public communication campaigns. Last year that number reduced to 1,661. This year to 31 March we had 1,758 contacts, which is already above last year's figure and on track to be around 2,500. That is roughly a 20% increase in families contacting us and asking for help.

That speaks to the way our child protection workforce has shifted to a care and protection workforce and a care team methodology where people are engaging with the system to strengthen their ability to care for children. Equally our non-government organisation partners and other government departments are aware of the connected service system and are referring and encouraging families to come to us.

That has resulted in an increase in family support cases commenced. The same three years: 848 in 2018–19, 779 in 2019–20 and this year to 31 March 743. We are on track to achieve 1,000 new family support cases this financial year. Part of that process as well speaks to our remote footprint and having Aboriginal staff employed by our department and the Commonwealth in remote areas referring to our case management system in formal ways. Previously that work either did not occur or was occurring informally outside the reporting and recording system.

Our partnership with the NIAA and the Department of Social Services on child and family centres, the remote child safety program and other programmatic responses that DSS funds in remote areas have been much better wired together, particularly by the work of the tripartite forum and the leadership of both governments and the responsible ministers. Following the Deloitte review and the royal commission that said there are good programs that are not working together, we invested a lot of energy and effort to make sure our workforces are collectively pulling in the same direction. The current efforts in the tripartite forum to make a 10-year generational strategy following the Productivity Commission review are all building a foundation where this operational connection is occurring.

Mr DAVIES: In progressing with the reunification of young children who are in care back into families, part of what we are doing includes post-care support for families as well, which has led to a bigger take-up in the FACES area. When a child is returned to a family, we work with the family to make sure the child is appropriately looked after and cared for. They are also picked up on and incorporated in the numbers.

Mr BURGOYNE: Where is the FACES team located?

Mrs WORDEN: That is operational. I have two experts at the table who can give you that response.

Ms KERR: They are located with the central intake team in Parap. FACES is a call centre for early intervention. Families and services can make direct contact for support without coming into the child protection system. The hotline for the child protection system is in the central intake area. From those phone calls they can refer to FACES for support and additional outsourced services when they do not meet the threshold to come in to system in an intake.

Mr BURGOYNE: There are obviously a lot of calls to that hotline; what percentage of calls go unanswered?

Ms KERR: There is 11.8% call-back rate.

Mr BURGOYNE: Is it that 11.8% of people leave a message because they cannot get through? What percentage of those, when they are called back, are reached? Are you reaching everyone?

Ms KERR: It is not that they leave a message because they cannot get through; there is an option for a call-back rather than waiting on the line. We keep trying for three or four days to contact the person on their nominated number or the number connected to their call.

Mr BURGOYNE: What percentage of the people who you try to contact for three to four days are not contactable?

Ms KERR: I could not specifically tell you that from the system.

Mr DAVIES: There are referrals that come in from professional notifiers. We have referrals from police, health professionals, teachers and it can be done online. In regard to the call-back service, it is a recorded service, so we have the capacity to monitor what we are doing.

To give you feedback on FACES, in regard to the consultation that happens on that line, the average length is about eight minutes or so. That is a fairly long time, and that has increased as the service has taken hold and people are seeking advice. I have been in there when they have been taking calls; some of the calls come from grandparents as well as mums and dads.

It is quite a unique service that is provided. The professionals do a fantastic job of listening and caring for people. The call-back service—if a call is abandoned, we do everything we can to follow up. We are in receipt of over 20,000 referrals a year. It is a 24-hour service and there are over 30 full-time operators in the service, operating full-time for central intake and FACES.

Mrs WORDEN: Overall there is a high volume of calls coming through. The most important number for me is how long people are waiting. Some take the option to be called back, but that is something I wanted to highlight. In 2018–19 people might have waited more than two minutes. This year to date, it is 1.18 minutes of waiting. The average length of call time is over eight minutes. People getting an investment are having quite a long, extensive discussion in those times. That is quite significant in numbers.

Mr BURGOYNE: That FACES hotline is Monday to Friday?

Ms KERR: The hotline is 24/7, 365 days a year. FACES specifically is 8 am to 8 pm.

Mr BURGOYNE: Minister, how many referrals do you get—people calling police and then police referring them on to the FACES hotline or pass that information along? Does that occur quite frequently?

Mr TWYFORD: FACES is there for a voluntary service for people to seek help. If a police member has encouraged a family to ring, we would just record that as the family calling; we would not necessarily know who has encouraged them to call. When we get to the child protection hotline, there is a breakdown of the government departments that are referring people to us for a child protection matter.

Mrs WORDEN: We will give you some of the data.

Mr BURGOYNE: Thank, you, I appreciate that.

Mr TWYFORD: Regarding the child protection hotline, of the 20,840 phone calls 45.5% is from police, 16% from school personnel, 11.2% from hospitals and health centres, 6.7% from non-government organisations, just under 5% from our departmental workforce, 3% parents and guardians, 2.5% other health personnel, 2% other relatives and then it drops to percentages that are below 1% for friends and neighbours, anonymous, medical practitioners and childcare personnel. Interestingly, and of note, 0.1% of our notifications come from the child and 0.1% from siblings of a child worried about their sibling.

Mrs WORDEN: We have jumped an output there too, just to clarify. That is the child protection hotline, not the FACES hotline.

Mr BURGOYNE: I was getting a bit confused there, because we had 2,500 for FACES and then we were talking about 20,000.

Mrs WORDEN: We are in the family support output at the moment. We were talking about FACES. That is about family support and that early intervention and support. The data we gave you there was just for child protection notifications.

Mr CHAIR: That concludes Output 1.1.

Output 1.2 – Child Protection

Mr CHAIR: The committee will now consider Output 1.2, Child Protection. Are there any questions?

Mr BURGOYNE: The number of children receiving child protection services has risen by more than 250 compared with the previous year, to almost 6,000. What do you attribute as the cause of such a high number?

Mrs WORDEN: Where are you getting that number from?

Mr BURGOYNE: I saw it before. I am just searching for it. I am happy to see that the child protection notifications received have increased from 25,500, budgeted to 27,000. What do you attribute that to?

Mrs WORDEN: In 2019–20, child protection notifications received were 25,500 and year to date, to 31 March, was only 20,840.

Mr BURGOYNE: You have an estimate of 27,000?

Mrs WORDEN: We are estimating. Year to date, as at 31 March, was 20,840—I think those figures are done quarterly. Could you wait a moment and we will proportion that?

Mr BURGOYNE: Certainly, a lot of numbers flying around!

Mr TWYFORD: You get a figure of 27,786.

Mrs WORDEN: That is a projected number, 20,840, as at 31 March.

Mr BURGOYNE: That is a big increase on previous years. The same question applies, what do you attribute this to? There are obviously a lot of young people and child protection notifications.

Mrs WORDEN: Over the last 12 months, and this is not new to anyone, due to COVID-19 there has been a rise nationally and locally in domestic and family violence. A proportion of those notifications sadly come from COVID. In my opening statement I talked about 30% of women who presented have children and that was a contributing factor. The Territory went through a time when it was important that we encouraged people to make notifications; it was mandatory, which was good.

Mr TWYFORD: Over the course of the last year, there have been increases in child protection notifications, investigations finalised and substantiations. That was off the back of three financial years of a reduction, which was significant. At the time of the royal commission, we were experiencing 17% per annum increases

in all child protection indicators. Nationally, we are one of the few jurisdictions, if not the only jurisdiction, which had a drop in child protection service delivery services, or need for services, over the last three years.

The increase is present this year. It comes after a year of less capability and capacity and potentially the need for child protection services as a result of biosecurity borders and other things that were happening in the 2020 calendar year. Overall, our rates of notification investigations substantiation are within the bandwidth of the national average, when you look at the report on government services. Over a long-term trend, they are in alignment with our experience of level of need in the Northern Territory.

If I focus specifically on notifications, we had a stabilisation after that rapid 17% growth year-on-year, which provided us a level of space to put in place improved practice as well as improved systems. Adopting the one-child one-case policy has slowed down the speed with which matters are coming in, which gives our workforce time to process the case and the human in front of them in a more meaningful way. That has picked up over the last two years and the case numbers and caseloads are reducing as we continue to have a throughput of that historic trend.

Whilst this year's figures are increasing, they are not at the point where they would have been had we not had the downward trend over the last three years. They are within the bandwidth of the national average.

Mr BURGOYNE: Speaking about the bandwidth of the national average, according to the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare the number of Territory children per 1,000 who suffered abuse and neglect in 2019-20 was almost triple the national average.

Mr TWYFORD: Previously it was well above that. Following the royal commission and the reforms and increasing family support services, we have had roughly 2,000 substantiation cases per annum. Four years ago we were at roughly 2,500. This year we are on track if you were to trend line it. It is very difficult to trend line something like substantiated child abuse cases, so year to date it is 1,481 and projected that would be 1,974, which is still below 2,000 cases. You are correct that it is three times the national average and when you look at the demographics of the Northern Territory that would not be unusual.

Mr BURGOYNE: We have child protection investigations substantiated budgeted for 1,200 and estimated for 1,300. You just mentioned another figure that was much higher. What was that?

Mr TWYFORD: Year to date child protection matters substantiated—1,481.

Mr BURGOYNE: You are expecting that to be how high?

Mr TWYFORD: The projection of substantiated cases is difficult. It does not normally lend itself to a trend line but if you were to trend line that three-quarter figure for a final quarter, it would result in 1,974.

Mr BURGOYNE: Which is well above the estimated figure.

Mr TWYFORD: Yes.

Mr BURGOYNE: Is the department seriously worried about these child protection figures? Obviously we are seeing something growing out of proportion. The estimate has obviously been revised and we are still—as you say, it is very hard to track these things. We are already above the estimate for this financial year.

Mrs WORDEN: Regarding 'are we concerned'—of course we are concerned for every child who has a notification that is substantiated. Our practice has shown that prior to COVID we were on a good trajectory. We are one of the few jurisdictions to do that. That is due to system reform over four years. I fully expect that we will get back to that trajectory post this period.

The figures we have are to 31 March. We will obviously be looking at those figures as they become apparent. As Mr Twyford said, it is very difficult to put that out on a trajectory because up until March we were still probably much more affected by the pandemic than we are now. We will be looking at those figures as they come forward at the end of the financial year.

Mr BURGOYNE: You are budgeting for those figures to drop back down to 1,100 for this next financial year. What is your department doing to ensure that you reduce child protection investigations that are substantiated? Obviously we do not want those young people subjected to that sort of ...

Mrs WORDEN: Absolutely. For me that is an operational question. I will ask Jeanette Kerr to provide some responses about what we are doing.

Ms KERR: The number of notifications have gone up and therefore the number of investigations and substantiations. The substantiations are generally a proportion of the investigations. Our information and research indicates that it is largely connected to the things the Police Commissioner was talking about yesterday in relation to increases in crime and alcohol with the COVID response and welfare payments. The increase in substantiations is directly related to the increases in family support and strengthening families' cases. While harm or the risk of harm has been substantiated, the work then goes into working with families to keep children safe at home.

We have a very low rate of re-substantiation within 12 months, which I believe is the lowest nationally. We also are the only jurisdiction to have decreasing numbers of children in out-of-home care. It is the huge investment up front in family support. Family network meetings and the practice reform we are doing is keeping kids safer at home, despite an increase in notifications caused by external factors.

Mr BURGOYNE: With the increase in substantiated investigations, how many youths has each case manager been responsible for? That must have blown out. Have you been recruiting to deal with that?

Ms KERR: Across the Territory the average case load is in the vicinity of 22. It can change month on month and according to work priorities. It is the lowest we have had in many years. Part of that is good throughput and reducing red tape, but it is also a matter of us having less families returning into the system due to practice reform.

Mr BURGOYNE: What is the total number of case managers?

Mr TWYFORD: As at 31 March there were 127 child protection professionals, with 2,077 cases assigned, resulting in average case load of 18.07 per staff member. That compares to an average case load at the end of last financial year of 19.1; the year prior to that it was 24.8.

Mr BURGOYNE: What is the turnover of case managers in the department? How many have left in the last financial year to date?

Mrs WORDEN: We have more broad figures around turnover of staff across the agency. We did not break it down specifically to one classification of staff members. Are you happy for me to take that on notice, because that may have to be a manual count?

Question on Notice No 6.3

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

Mr BURGOYNE: Year to date, how many case managers have left the department?

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR: Minister, do you accept the question?

Mrs WORDEN: Yes.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR: The question asked by the Member for Braitling has been allocated the number 6.3.

Mr BURGOYNE: How many staff have taken stress leave, and what is the average time of that leave?

Mrs WORDEN: Is that the whole agency?

Mr BURGOYNE: It is case managers, but I am happy to take the whole of ...

Mrs WORDEN: Give us one moment to locate them; I think I have seen those figures. I would like to ask the chief executive to respond to put it in context, it is operational.

Mr DAVIES: Member for Braitling, could you ask the question again please?

Mr BURGOYNE: How many staff have taken stress leave, and what is the average time of that leave? If you have it for case managers that would be fantastic, but if you only have it more broadly I am happy to accept that.

Mr DAVIES: In terms of mental stress we have had 20 open claims across the whole agency. This is a staff of 1,600 people—20 across the agency who are on mental stress. In terms of these open claims this is the information that I have.

Mr BURGOYNE: Do you have the year to date on how many people have taken stress leave this financial year to date?

Mr DAVIES: I do not have the year to date but I will try to chase that. We will have to take that on notice.

Question on Notice No 6.4

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR: Member for Braitling, can you please restate the question for the record?

Mr BURGOYNE: In the year to date to 31 March 2021, how many staff have taken stress leave and what is the average time of that leave?

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR: Minister, do you accept the question?

Mrs WORDEN: Yes, we do.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR: The question asked by the Member for Braitling has been allocated the number 6.4.

Mr BURGOYNE: How many primary aged children are currently not attending school in Alice Springs who are known to Territory Families?

Mrs WORDEN: Are you talking about kids in care?

Mr BURGOYNE: Kids who are in care, yes.

Mr DAVIES: It is a similar answer to last year. Of the 980-odd young people in care, there are about 800 who are school-aged. In terms of localised numbers of young people not attending school, it is still a manual transaction process. I would need to take that on notice. The care system we are developing will enable us to get in-time data. It is still not available to us, but if the young person is in care and they are not attending school, there are case managers who monitor this and it would be of concern to us. I am happy to take it on notice so we can get the data for you.

Mr BURGOYNE: I will say in my question that it is by region, so it makes it a breakdown.

Mrs WORDEN: I will be very clear that it would be a condition of the child being in care that they—if they are of school age—attend school. If they are not, it would be a matter for the case manager. It is a requirement of the agency—when care arrangements are in place formally with our agency—that those kids attend school.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR: Can you please restate the question for the record?

Mr BURGOYNE: How many primary aged children in the care of Territory Families are currently not attending school in Northern Territory and are you able to break that down by region?

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR: Minister, do you accept the question?

Mrs WORDEN: We might seek further clarification, sorry. We need to get the question right, because, as the chief executive indicated, this is likely to be a manual count. We do not have a sophisticated system just yet which would enable us to draw on that. It is a match between the Department of Education and ourselves.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR: What is the clarification?

Mr DAVIES: I think the question is: how many young people are enrolled and attending schools? We will have young people who are enrolled in school. At a point in time—we will try to do this for 30 March—but

they may not be attending because they are ill or with family elsewhere. The issue is the number of young people who are enrolled; then there is the issue of attending. It is a complex process, but we will have a go at this. If you are asking how many are attending on a specific day, that will be a challenge.

Question on Notice No 6.5

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

Mr BURGOYNE: How many primary-aged children, who are in the care of Territory Families, are enrolled and attending school on a regular basis?

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR: Minister, do you accept the question?

Mrs WORDEN: I do on the premise that it will be a point-in-time data, as of 31 March 2021. It will be a manual count between us and the Department of Education and may take some time to pull together.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR: The question asked by the Member for Braitling has been allocated the number 6.5.

Mr BURGOYNE: How many children under the care of the chief executive are not attending school? I feel we will encompass that in the question that was just asked.

Mrs WORDEN: That is the same question.

Mr BURGOYNE: How many children, if any, have been removed from school by Territory Families without the permission of their foster carers or without their knowledge?

Mrs WORDEN: I would guess that number to be zero.

Mr DAVIES: Case workers work with schools. When a child is taken from a school, it is usually about an issue of safety and the need for an intervention. Regarding foster carers not knowing that information, I find that pretty unlikely. We are happy to have a look at that and see if we can get some data. Jeanette, you might want to contribute there.

Ms KERR: Member for Braitling, the only circumstance I can imagine where that would happen is where there are allegations in regard to the care by the foster carer.

Mr BURGOYNE: Are you happy to take that question on notice? Because I am sure it is in there. We had a report and I want to chase up and make sure that is not occurring. Are you happy to take that question?

Mrs WORDEN: Do you want to elaborate? Are you talking about a specific case where there are allegations of a child being removed from school without the permission of a foster carer?

Mr BURGOYNE: I am saying that this question would not be here unless it related to something. I do not know the full scope. If you are able to take the question on notice, you can get back to me if it has happened.

Mrs WORDEN: My concern is that it might be about a particular family. That child protection data or information is very sensitive. I would not be comfortable providing that to a third party. That is not meant to be disparaging to you, Member for Braitling.

If you have concerns about a specific child protection activity, estimates is probably not the time to raise that concern. We get information through our office regularly about different circumstances. It is not always exactly as it is portrayed. I am very uncomfortable to talk in estimates about an event that may or may not have occurred in this space. With all due respect, I am not prepared to take that question.

Mr BURGOYNE: Certainly, minister. All I am asking for is a number. I do not want to go into any specifics. With all due respect, yes, it is about how many children have been removed from school by Territory Families without the permission of their foster carers or without their knowledge. If the number is zero, that is fine. If you take the question on notice and the number is one, then one is all we will get. If it is happening on a regular basis, that should also be reported on.

Mrs WORDEN: What is important is that those children, whilst they might be with a foster carer, are still in the care of the chief executive officer. Any decision to remove a child in the circumstances you are portraying

would mean a serious allegation. I will restate that I am not prepared to talk about particular child protection matters in estimates. I am not prepared to give out numbers, so I am not prepared to take that question.

If there is an allegation, my office, the chief executive officer or anybody sitting at the table today is prepared to have that discussion offline with you in a separate setting. If you are alleging the department walks in and takes children without notifying a foster carer, then my answer would be zero.

Mr BURGOYNE: Okay. The answer you are giving to that question is zero? How many children have been removed from school by ...

Mrs WORDEN: Unless there were circumstances that are not appropriate to be discussed today. Those discussions should be taken offline.

Mr BURGOYNE: Fair enough. According to the Territory Families policy of case management of children in the CEO's care:

At a minimum, a Case Manager must have meaningful face-to-face contact with each child they case manage once every six weeks, or arrange for an appropriate third party to have face-to-face contact.

Are Territory Families case managers meeting this requirement?

Ms KERR: In 82% of the cases, the six-week threshold has been met in terms of meaningful face-to-face contact. There has been third-party contact for others. Some of the challenges include that we have a number of children interstate, so face-to-face contact has been challenging with the inability to travel interstate, but we use third parties such as interstate child protection agencies or video calls to do some of that. There are some occasions where, due to remote travel for mobility, we have missed the six-week deadline.

Mr BURGOYNE: How is that measured and how often are checks conducted on the frequency of contact?

Mr TWYFORD: The computer system that the child protection workforce uses—CCIS—measures this performance KPI. A child protection worker will visit a child and create a service event, and record that service event as a face-to-face contact. That will automatically flow into our data warehouse. Once a month we extract and report that as a data quality level of integrity, which means our executive would review that. Our child protection team leader, or office manager, would be able to see fortnightly data, or more regular data, through the CCIS system.

The fortnightly team meetings would be where they monitor which children are in out-of-home care and which case managers are having face-to-face contact, then our executive level and those outside the child protection team could see a monthly report on the compliance with that measure.

Mr BURGOYNE: Just to confirm, in 82% of cases it is being met. In the remaining 18% where it is not happening, what happens if the case managers are not meeting this requirement?

Ms KERR: There is a number of things that can be done and are being done. It is not necessarily that the 18% are not being met in all cases. For example, Mr Twyford mentioned that when a face-to-face contact occurs there is a service event, which is a specific technical tick box in the system. We find with new staff coming on board that it often takes a while for them to understand the technicalities of the system. That is not ticked all of the time. When we say that 82% of boxes are being ticked, in reality it will be a little higher. With the interstate face-to-face contact, which we cannot do, we have other measures such as video calls or third parties.

When we have difficulty locating people, particularly in remote areas, where there are mobility issues or issues with cultural events or sorry business, and we cannot do face to face or the family have gone interstate for a holiday and there is a COVID lockdown, for example, we will go to other parties in the community to confirm if there is any concern for safety.

We have a number of children who have been with their carers for many years, and if they have not been visited we will not start ringing the school to check that they are safe because we know they are in a long-term, stable placement.

Mr BURGOYNE: You spoke about 'managed interstate'—do you have a case managers located interstate who interact with youths in the Northern Territory? How many case managers are located interstate?

Ms KERR: They are not Territory Families case managers; it is our partner agency. There is an interstate liaison protocol, and they do case work on our behalf and vice versa.

Mrs WORDEN: I will be a huge dampener, but I think we are in the wrong output. I think we are talking about out-of-home care when we were still on child protection. The Member for Araluen might be wondering where we are at. I am happy to move to the out-of-home care output, if that is all right.

Mr BURGOYNE: I am moving through case managers and child protection. You said that in some instances the case managers are not meeting that, do those children get moved to another case manager or if they had been with a certain case manager for a long enough time do you just continue them on, even if they are not meeting that requirement?

Mr TWYFORD: There is not a precise answer to that question. Children in out-of-home care need stability in their lives given where they have come from and what they have experienced. Our primary policy position is to maintain stability wherever possible. That would go to a case manager with a strong relationship with that child maintaining that relationship.

In the Northern Territory things pose challenges to that, including distance, workforce retention and the child's own wishes and experience. Essentially the monitoring of face-to-face contact on a fortnightly or monthly basis is there as a protection around practice. Ms Kerr has already led to a point that it is often about the quality of the relationship more than the frequency of face-to-face contact.

Where you have a 15-year-old with a very strong relationship with a case manager or an Aboriginal case worker who knows the case manager, they may be communicating by text, social media, telephone or other means regularly that would not necessitate a face-to-face contact occurring precisely every 42 days.

The practice of being a case manager in a social work field goes more to the quality of the relationship, the ability to put eyes on when there is a worry and to have an honest conversation about safety and trust, how life is and what your future is. That is what our team leaders, managers and directors in the child protection workforce would be looking at, not necessarily the metric of you are 24-hours over the due date of a face-to-face contact.

The signs of safety practice model that has been rolled out has improved our ability to look at the quality of practice and quality outcomes over and above managing by key performance indicators, if I put it that way.

Mr BURGOYNE: Does the department know how many case managers you are currently employing?

Mrs WORDEN: There are 127.

Mr BURGOYNE: I think we got that number before. Are there any vacancies?

Mrs WORDEN: I would think in a workforce of 127 occasionally you might have vacancies. Do you want us to check at a point in time the 31 March how many there might have been?

Mr BURGOYNE: Yes.

Mrs WORDEN: In such a big area where there are so many professionals, you will always have vacancies.

Mr BURGOYNE: Absolutely. If it is one or two, that is fine. If there are 30 vacancies, that would be a worry.

Mrs WORDEN: We can take that on notice and hopefully get an answer to that pretty quickly.

Question on Notice No 6.6

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

Mr BURGOYNE: In relation to case managers, how vacancies are there currently?

Mrs WORDEN: As at 31 March.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR: Minister, do you accept the question?

Mrs WORDEN: Yes.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR: The question asked by the Member for Braitling has been allocated number 6.6.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR: That concludes consideration of Output 1.2.

Output 1.3 – Out of Home Care

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR: The committee will now consider Output 1.3, Out-of-home care. Are there any questions?

Mr BURGOYNE: What is the breakdown in age groups of the children in out-of-home care?

Mrs WORDEN: The figures for children in out-of-home care as at 31 March 2021 are: aged 18, six; aged 17, 61; aged 16, 58; aged 15, 53; aged 14, 65; aged 13, 78; aged 12, 64; aged 11, 81; aged 10, 57; aged nine, 59; aged eight, 60; aged seven 46; aged six, 57; aged five, 52; aged four, 54; aged three, 50; aged two, 37; aged one, 27; and under one, 16.

Mr BURGOYNE: Has there been an increase or decrease in the number of children in out-of-home care?

Mrs WORDEN: There is a decrease. We will give you some statistics. There are a lot of figures we have prepared for you, but to ensure you get the right ones, I will ask Mr Twyford to provide them.

Mr TWYFORD: As at 31 March, there were 981 children in out-of-home care, which is down from 30 June 2020 at 1,026. The year prior to that it was 1,054 and prior to that it was 1,061. It has been reducing each year. This year in particular, there is an overall reduction from 1,026 to 981.

Mrs WORDEN: We are the only jurisdiction nationally that is seeing a downward trend in these figures.

Mrs WORDEN: The overall number of children in out-of-home care is driven by the entries and exits. Year to date there have been 168 young people entering out-of-home care, whereas for the previous year, there were 226; the year prior to that, 248; and the year prior to that, 297. We have come from a system four years ago that was having close to 350–400 young people entering care each year, to this year having 168 in the first three quarters.

Mrs LAMBLEY: For clarification, the figure you gave for this year is up to 31 March, not a full year?

Mr TWYFORD: Not yet.

Mrs LAMBLEY: Nine hundred and eighty one is ...

Mrs WORDEN: This is not like other figures, this is the actual point in time how many kids are in care. That number is falling. It is difficult to extrapolate and say we are on a trajectory.

Mrs LAMBLEY: Nine hundred and eighty one is for nine months; and 1,026 was for 12 months?

Mrs WORDEN: I will ask Mr Twyford to give you more context on that. This is not a figure that changes; it is highly likely on the trajectory to go down.

Mr TWYFORD: It is not a cumulative total, it is the count of all the young people who are in care on any given day. On 30 June 2020 there were 1,026 and on 31 March there were 981 ...

Mrs LAMBLEY: I see what you mean.

Mr TWYFORD: The vast majority of those 981 would have been children in care who were counted in the 1,026, noting only 168 are new to the system in the last nine months.

Mrs LAMBLEY: That is a drop of 6% or something like that; that is good.

Mr BURGOYNE: In relation to the residences, are they private rentals or does the government own the premises of out-of-home care?

Mrs WORDEN: I think you are talking about placement types. I will ask Mr Davies to respond.

Mr DAVIES: We procure services for agencies to support the young people, they are not owned by us. They are residences that might be hired to house young people. We have two main providers in the intensive residential care area: CASPA and Life Without Barriers. In total there are: in the northern region, 12 young people in three houses; in the greater Darwin region, 33 young people in 12 houses; and in the southern region and seven young people in four houses. That is a total of 52 young people in 19 houses in residential care. The houses can be a combination of rented accommodation direct by the providers or they may be industry housing where we allocate them under an industry housing model to provide the house.

Mr BURGOYNE: What level of supervision is provided to those living in out-of-home care? Does it depend on the individual or do you have a set number per child?

Mr DAVIES: In intensive residential care services, a 24-hours-a-day service is provided. The number of young people supervised, and the ratio, will be depend on their case needs, but it is a 24-hour service for and they are supervised in that way.

Mr BURGOYNE: Can youths on bail reside in these homes?

Mr DAVIES: Yes, if they are referred by a court. In the same way that youths are referred on bail back to their own residences where the young person is in care—in the care of the chief executive is the same thing.

Mr BURGOYNE: If a youth is under the care and protection of Territory Families and breaches their bail, does the protection arm of the agency report to the youth and justice arm of the agency?

Mrs WORDEN: You are muddying the waters between child protection, out-of-home care and youth justice. We are very clear that, on a day-to-day basis, they are different operational arms. Can you repeat the question? We are one very joined-up agency. The good thing about the broader agency, particularly with Housing and Disabilities, is that we have the ability to cross.

Mr BURGOYNE: If a youth who is under the care and protection of Territory Families breaches their bail, does the protection arm of the agency report the youth to the justice arm of the agency?

Mr DAVIES: It goes to what the minister stated in relation to the agency and how it is formatted. The deputy chief executive in charge of Families—that is the child protection arm and the youth justice arm—is Jeanette Kerr. By virtue of bringing those two areas together we look after the safety side of it and the court-ordered processes of youth detention and bail in a holistic way. I will get her to answer exactly what happens when that event occurs.

Ms KERR: In the event that a young person is in care and in the youth justice system on bail, if there is an identified breach it will generally be the youth justice officers who first become aware. If there is a substantive of another offence committed, they have breached and police have identified that, they are on electronic monitoring or have left supported bail accommodation, it will be the community youth justice officer, or on-call community youth justice officer, who immediately knows that. They will inform the care and protection side.

If there were events that the care and protection case manager became aware of, which amounted to breaches of bail, they would be required to share that with the community youth justice officer because they are part of the same care team. That would involve a range of people working with the young person.

Mr BURGOYNE: Do you have a number of instances where that has occurred?

Ms KERR: No, I could not tell you that.

Mr BURGOYNE: There have been complaints received that crime spikes in areas where out-of-home care homes are established. What happens when complaints are received?

Mrs WORDEN: I am not the Police minister. There were allegations that you may be alluding to, in the rural area a while back. It was proven that the perpetrators were not in our care house. You are asking about specific allegations in specific houses. In the first instance, there is a police response and that would be whether it was a care house, a private house or any other sort of house. If offending has occurred, that would be a police response and I am not the Police minister.

Mr BURGOYNE: Does Territory Families receive complaints in relation to these homes?

Ms KERR: We get complaints from neighbours at times, where there is a residential care house. We follow up either through the minister's office—but generally we follow up in person. On Sunday I met with the neighbours of Yirra House in Darwin. We try to get the exact details of what the issues are, then work with them and the care provider to resolve them. We put priority on the providers to manage the young people in the house. The care team involves them; the community youth justice officer, if there is one; the police; and the case manager. They all work together. We pride ourselves on giving face-to-face personal service to the community.

Mr BURGOYNE: Is there a specific number of complaints that have to be received before any action is taken?

Mrs WORDEN: One is enough to respond.

Mr BURGOYNE: How many out-of-home care homes have had to move or relocate for whatever reason in this last financial year?

Mrs WORDEN: For this particular reason of complaints?

Mr BURGOYNE: For whatever reason. I am interested. There might be a lot of reasons you might relocate.

Mrs WORDEN: There are. In my electorate there was one in a particular area. Their rental agreement ran out and they had to relocate because the owner wanted to move back, as they were coming back to the Northern Territory. There is a range of reasons they would move.

Remember that there will be a range of reasons houses have relocated. Often a provider might keep a house but move the young people rather than the house. Knowing a number of houses specifically that have moved or closed, or whatever, might not give you what you are looking for. It is very dynamic. There are over 50 houses across the Northern Territory at any moment.

The lease ran out locally and they had to find another one. I knew about that because it is such a tight rental market, it was extremely difficult for them to find a place. We had several inquiries over the last six to 12 months where the industry has found it difficult to find a house and came to us to assist them in finding something. I am not quite sure what it is you are seeking because it will be a response in a pure form number.

Mr BURGOYNE: I understand. If you are happy to take the question on notice, I can get the data and come back to you later.

Mrs WORDEN: Can you be very specific when you ask that question on notice? We might have to put some qualifiers in the information we give back to you about relocations.

Question on Notice No 6.7

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

Mr BURGOYNE: How many out-of-home care homes have had to move or relocate, for whatever reason, in 2020–21 this year so far, or to 31 March 2021?

Mr CHAIR: Minister, do you accept the question?

Mrs WORDEN: Yes we do.

Mr CHAIR: The question asked by the Member for Braitling has been allocated number 6.7.

Mr BURGOYNE: How many Aboriginal children have been removed from home in the reporting period?

Mrs WORDEN: There are 168 in total, but we do not have the breakdown as to whether or not they are Indigenous. We keep the information about the placement of young people with Aboriginal families.

Mr BURGOYNE: That was my next question. How many of those kids were placed in kinship care? How many were placed elsewhere?

Mrs WORDEN: I can give you a percentage.

Mr BURGOYNE: Of the 168?

Mrs WORDEN: The number of Aboriginal children placed with an Aboriginal carer is 34% as of 31 March 2021. That is 223 young people placed in kinship care as of 31 March 2021.

Mr BURGOYNE: Is that for the financial year or is it a collective figure?

Mrs WORDEN: At that point in time there were 223 young Indigenous children living with Aboriginal carers.

Mr BURGOYNE: You do not have the amount who went on in the last financial year?

Mrs WORDEN: What do you mean, 'went on'? How many entered care?

Mr BURGOYNE: Yes, entered care.

Mrs WORDEN: No, we only keep a proportion.

Mr BURGOYNE: A collective figure?

Mrs WORDEN: Yes, it is sitting at 34%. During COVID we were quite ambitious with kinship care. We want to see that number increase, but it means we have to work with families to get them to the capacity to take on those young people. There are standards for all our carers, regardless. COVID presented quite a challenge for us in getting more Aboriginal kinship carers, but we continue to work on that area.

Mr BURGOYNE: I am interested in you saying that you are working toward more kinship carers. Can you outline the evidence base you are working which says that young Aboriginal people in kinship care have better outcomes? I am always asked by foster carers to ask why the department seems to be moving so fiercely in that direction.

Mrs WORDEN: There is a lot of evidence in this space, but I will ask the Deputy Chief Executive, Jeanette Kerr, to respond specifically.

Ms KERR: There is overwhelming evidence—and it is not just in relation to Aboriginal children—that children do much better when they stay with family, whether that is in a kin arrangement or with their parents.

As it specifically relates to Aboriginal children, the best place to look at the evidence base is the SNAICC website. Even within our agency we have an Aboriginal practice leaders group of Aboriginal professionals who give us really robust guidance on this. Dr Fejo-King is a national expert in kinship care. She is also part of our oversight committee for placements and clinical governance.

Mr BURGOYNE: How many children have transitioned out of foster or kinship care and been reunified with their family?

Mrs WORDEN: Children who exited care was 220. Of those, 100 returned to family.

Mr BURGOYNE: How many children transitioned out of foster care and into kinship care and came back into child protection within the last 12 months?

Mrs WORDEN: That data is not captured in what we have.

Mr BURGOYNE: If you are happy to take that on notice, it would be good.

Question on Notice No 6.8

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

Mr BURGOYNE: How many children who transitioned out of foster care and into kinship care or reunified came back to child protection within the last 12 months?

Mr CHAIR: Minister, do you accept the question?

Mrs WORDEN: Back into care, rather than child protection, is that correct? Yes, I am happy to take the question.

Mr CHAIR: The question asked by the Member for Braiting is allocated the number 6.8.

Mr BURGOYNE: Do you have the number of children who were put into kinship care, who came back to foster care?

Mrs WORDEN: We do not have that level of minutia. We are happy to take that on notice.

Question on Notice No 6.9

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

Mr BURGOYNE: Do you have the number of children in the last financial year who were put into kinship care, who then returned to foster care?

Mr CHAIR: Minister, do you accept the question?

Mrs WORDEN: Yes.

Mr CHAIR: The question asked by the Member for Braiting is allocated the number 6.9.

Mr BURGOYNE: How long after a child is put into care do they receive a health assessment?

Ms KERR: Depending on the reasons the young person came into care—would necessitate the need for urgency or otherwise of a health assessment. For example, if they came in for neglect issues, potential for injuries, sexual abuse or neglect, it would be immediate. If they came in without any apparent health issues, injuries or otherwise, it may be after a while, because there is a range of trauma factors that are very unsettling. We look to make the child safe and comfortable before we pursue that.

Mr BURGOYNE: What checks are conducted when the child returns to kinship, and where is the evidence of those checks?

Ms KERR: If a child goes to a kinship carer and they are still in the care of the CE, it would be the same. It would be a minimum requirement of six-weekly meaningful contact. However, that is after stabilisation. In the initial stages contact and visiting would be much more often.

Mr BURGOYNE: You monitor that in the same way that you monitor face to face?

Ms KERR: Yes. When there is an initial transition it is much more intensive because we are working with the family and the child to support placement.

Mrs WORDEN: Can we also just be clear that kinship care is a name we give to young people in the care of family members but the same standards are required; they are still a kid in care.

Mr BURGOYNE: I have often heard of kinship—family is often very diverse with different cultures. How close a family does it have to be to be declared kinship? Do you have an outline of what has to occur before it can be called kinship?

Mr TWYFORD: The term 'kinship' is used in a couple of different contexts. In the sense of the care and protection system, we have recognised foster carers and recognised kinship carers as two distinct placement types under outplacement regulations, but they are held to the same standard and approval assessment recruitment rules apply. The differentiation is a foster carer who was previously unknown to the child, and the kinship carer is, under the broad definition of family, known to the child prior to their entry to care.

The most common is grandmother, aunt or uncle—generally a blood relative, noting the cultural overlay in the Northern Territory. Our workforce has become much more adept at genograms and the use of Aboriginal cultural security advisers, elders and organisations.

The Tangentyere model of Children Safe, Family Together speaks very strongly to the correct definition of kinship care in a child protection space. The department adopted that three years ago. That has led to some on-the-ground practice differentiation. We do not require the same forms for a foster carer application as we do for a kinship carer application. But the assessment decision-making and the criteria by which someone becomes approved is the same.

When we talk about reunification, or reunifying a child out-of-home care to their family, we call that family reunification. Occasionally, people refer to that as return to kin or return to kinship but that is distinct and different to a kinship carer. A kinship carer in our system is formally assessed and accredited through the legislation and the regulations that apply.

Mr BURGOYNE: How much are you currently spending on advertising for carers?

Ms KERR: In terms of advertising for carers of different types, we have a partnership with the Foster and Kinship Carer Association of the Northern Territory, which receives \$870,000 in funding per year to do advocacy for carers, training and attraction for carers. In addition, most of our spend is internal within budget and our staff.

We are doing a social media campaign to attract carers at the moment. That has had a soft launch. We have had 44 carers reach out to the department. We will put ads in the paper and that is pretty much it, in terms of advertising. We find that word-of-mouth is the best form attracting carers.

Mr BURGOYNE: Has Territory Families paid for cinema advertising to attract carers or would that have been through Foster and Kinship Carer Association of the Northern Territory?

Ms KERR: If there has been cinema advertising for foster and kinship carers, it would be the Foster and Kinship Carer Association. If there is advertising for other types of carers, that would be the organisation that provides that care but not Territory Families.

Mr CHAIR: That concludes consideration of Output 1.3.

Output 1.4 – Youth Justice

Mr CHAIR: The committee will now consider Output 1.4, Youth Justice. Are there any questions?

Mr BURGOYNE: Minister, we submitted written questions about the safety of staff at Don Dale that went unanswered and overdue for more than 50 days. It was only after we issued a media release highlighting the delay that we finally got answers another six days later.

We finally know that between 1 January 2021 and 9 April 2021, there was a total of 83 assaults by youth detainees on youth justice officers at Don Dale. This is a shocking number with an assault on an officer being an almost daily occurrence. There were 83 assaults in 99 days and this does not include the figures for Alice Springs Youth Detention Centre. How many assaults on youth justice officers have there been since 9 April until today?

Mrs WORDEN: I will ask Jeanette Kerr to respond in a moment. I will put into context, as we are heading into this area, that this type of work for our officers clearly comes with risk. How we manage that risk is what is important. The cohort of young people that are often—not all—in our youth detention centres are there for a reason.

As an overlay, I want that to be known. We are not talking about primary school; we are talking about a detention centre and young people are there for a reason. With that in mind regarding the figures you have asked about—I apologise for the delay in that response. I take responsibility for those sorts of things. We will try to do better in getting you the data on time. Often it is not just as easy as pulling information. We want to give you the right data.

Ms KERR: I need to start off by apologising. The dates in the answer to Written Question 106 were wrong. We discovered that yesterday as we were going through the data packs. The numbers you were given were

at that point in time for that period but from 1 July 2020. It is grossly over-inflated. When I saw that I was really alarmed. The actual data that has come out of our business reporting tools is that assault detainee on employee with injury this year to date is 12, assault detainee on employee no injury 29. That is at Don Dale Youth Detention Centre.

Mr BURGOYNE: What was the 12 for the year to date?

Ms KERR: The 12 is at Don Dale, assault detainee on employee with injury.

Mr BURGOYNE: Do we have the same numbers for Alice Springs?

Ms KERR: Yes. For Alice Springs: assault with injury detainee on employee is 11 for the year to date; assault no injury detainee on employee is 20 year to date. That is a total of 56.

Mr BURGOYNE: That is 56 total year to date. What date are those numbers current to?

Ms KERR: It is 31 March. Sorry, that is 72 in total in nine months. Year to date.

Mrs LAMBLEY: The figures that you gave in response to the written questions were wrong? These are the right ones now?

Mrs WORDEN: Yes. I just want to indicate that there are some heavily traumatised young people in our care facilities. Our position is that aggressive behaviour is unacceptable and not tolerated. We have worked hard to ensure the system is reformed. One of the most important pieces of information in this space is that unlike prior to the royal commission, there have been no police interventions at the centre—no callouts for them.

The youth justice officers are highly trained to respond in these situations and the young people are in there for a reason. It is our job to make sure we help them whilst they are in detention. It is a good indicator that the police have not been called out to manage a situation in any of our detention centres since our reforms.

Mr BURGOYNE: Are you happy to table those numbers. We are talking about year to date—31 March. Are you happy to table the numbers so that we have a clear view?

Mrs WORDEN: I am happy to ask Jeanette to restate them for Hansard very clearly. A lot of our papers have—because we work through data coming through they have obviously done a lot of work and picked up the error. I apologise for that as well.

Mr BURGOYNE: I think we all just want clarity.

Mrs WORDEN: For clarity, I will ask Jeanette Kerr, the Deputy Chief Executive, to read out those statistics very clearly for you so we are all on the same page.

Ms KERR: Year to date to 31 March there have been a total of 72 assaults, detainee on employee, at youth detention centres. Of those assaults, 41 occurred at Don Dale Youth Detention Centre and 31 at Alice Springs Youth Detention Centre. Of those at Don Dale Youth Detention Centre, 12 were assaults resulting in injury and 29 were assaults with no injury. At Alice Springs Youth Detention Centre, 11 were assaults with injury and 31 were assaults without injury.

I add that none of these were level one incidents—which is a serious physical assault—and in all cases assaults on employees are reported to police.

Mr BURGOYNE: Sorry, I do not mean to be a stickler—11 with injury in Alice Springs and I believe you meant to say 20 without injury, which totals 31 ...

Ms KERR: Yes.

Mr BURGOYNE: You said 31 without injury.

Ms KERR: Sorry, yes, you are correct.

Mr BURGOYNE: Not a problem at all. What constitutes no injury?

Ms KERR: No injury is no physical injury whatsoever.

Mr BURGOYNE: That could be a detainee urinating on someone. That would be an assault but it would not be a physical injury?

Ms KERR: That is right.

Mr BURGOYNE: Do you have the detainee-on-detainee assaults?

Mrs WORDEN: Yes, we do. I will ask Jeanette Kerry to respond.

Ms KERR: At Don Dale Youth Detention Centre, year to 31 March, assault injury, detainee on detainee, is six and assault no injury, detainee on detainee, is 50. At Alice Springs Youth Detention Centre, assault injury, detainee on detainee, is four and assault no injury, detainee on detainee, is eight.

Mr BURGOYNE: Of those assaults, how many were reported to police?

Ms KERR: All assaults in the detention centres are reported to police.

Mr BURGOYNE: Including the ones that are no injury?

Ms KERR: Yes.

Mr BURGOYNE: How many resulted in charges being laid against those detainees?

Ms KERR: Once we report it to police, it is then up to the police to investigate. It is a matter for the individual youth justice officer who is the victim of the crime to determine the way they want to go forward. I cannot give you how many of those resulted in criminal charges.

Mr BURGOYNE: How many of those assaults involved the use of weapons?

Mrs WORDEN: It is not a category for reporting.

Mr BURGOYNE: You would not know how many?

Mrs WORDEN: You would have to review every case in order to work it out from each report. To work that out it would be a manual count.

Mr BURGOYNE: Are you happy to take the question on notice, minister?

Mrs WORDEN: For the spirit of what we are undertaking here today, sure, I will take the question on notice, but I am not quite sure that it relates to the budget for starters. If you would like, we will go back and spend lots of staff hours looking at it case-by-case basis about who might have had a weapon. The definition of a weapon is pretty broad.

Question on Notice No 6.10

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

Mr BURGOYNE: Minister, of the assaults on youth justice officer, how many, year to 31 March, involved the use of weapons?

Mr CHAIR: Minister, do you accept the question?

Mrs WORDEN: Yes.

Mr CHAIR: The question asked by the Member for Braitling has been allocated number 6.10.

Mr BURGOYNE: Of the incidents we just heard about, how many individual detainees were responsible for these assaults?

Mrs WORDEN: I will take that on notice.

Question on Notice No 6.11

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

Mr BURGOYNE: Minister, year to 31 March, how many detainees were responsible for these assaults?

Mr CHAIR: Minister, do you accept the question?

Mrs WORDEN: Yes.

Mr CHAIR: The question asked by the Member for Braitling has been allocated number 6.11.

Mr BURGOYNE: How many days absences have there been due to youth justice officers being assaulted or injured?

Mrs WORDEN: Are you talking about staff members?

Mr BURGOYNE: Yes, how many staff members have not been able to attend work due to ...

Mrs WORDEN: That would have to be a manual calculation. We will have to take that on notice.

Question on Notice No 6.12

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

Mr BURGOYNE: How many collective days absences have there been due to youth justice officers being assaulted or injured?

Mr CHAIR: Minister, do you accept the question?

Mrs WORDEN: Yes.

Mr CHAIR: The question asked by the Member for Braitling has been allocated the number 6.12.

Mr BURGOYNE: We understand that in terms of protective equipment, staff currently have face shields, gloves and fluid suits to protect them from spitting and urine, but as of June/July 2021 staff will have an array of riot-type protective gear available. Does this reflect the ongoing dangers to staff in youth justice?

Mrs WORDEN: We gave you a response in the change of that equipment under Written Question 106, but I will ask Mr Davies, to provide a further response. We want youth justice officers to be as safe as possible, particularly during times in volatile work environments.

Mr DAVIES: Yes, this is part of our work we have done around WH&S and making sure that our youth justice officers are properly equipped to intervene where necessary with young people. Part of the induction process is a seven-week training program for youth justice officers, then there are further programs on training and the use of equipment. This is through a group called Maybo. They are trained to use these supports in places where they need to for personal protection. The whole design of the approach is to minimise harm to everybody involved.

From our perspective this is part of ensuring that our workforce has the right tools in the right environment to ensure that they can intervene and support young people and stop critical incidents occurring. Hence, the allocation of the equipment and the additional shields. The turtle human shields are wrap-around shields that are child-friendly where you can encase somebody. You are not in there striking them but pulling them up and enclosing them so that they cannot react with their arms and legs. That is the design and the aim is to make sure they are properly protected to deliver the work they need to do with young people in critical incidents and are well supported by a comprehensive training program that is certified.

Mr YAN: I know a little about the training provided and I am aware of the Maybo training, which is specifically about de-escalation and movement away from an incident. My recollection did not involve the use of any riot-type equipment in that training. Has the training packaged changed?

Mr DAVIES: De-escalation is stage one of this process. Sometimes de-escalation will not work, so we need people in there, given some of the incidents that have occurred, with the right tools to intervene for the safety of everybody. This is a stage two provision. It is about giving our youth justice officers the tools to intervene where they need to keep young people and themselves safe. De-escalation is the first phase, definitely. A lot of work is done on making sure that is the first stage. But if they need to go to a second stage, the tools for the workforce need to be there.

Mr YAN: I agree wholeheartedly, Mr Davies, that the staff need the tools to do their jobs. I go back to my question which was about the Maybo training. The Maybo training was specific back in the day. My understanding is it did not include the use of specific equipment. Has that package changed to include the use of equipment?

Mr DAVIES: The answer is yes, Member for Namatjira.

Ms KERR: The Maybo training we are using has a range of packages. One package is the de-escalation, then there is creating distance, then the actual defensive tactics. The package in relation to this equipment is being co-designed and developed for us by Maybo. It aligns with all of our other use-of-force responses.

Mr BURGOYNE: Are you able to outline some of the most serious injuries suffered by youth justice officers or detainees in those assaults that occurred in the last financial year?

Mrs WORDEN: I am not quite sure how it relates to the budget, unfortunately. I encourage you to seek a briefing if there are some specific concerns. I am not sure of the benefit to the budget talking about specific cases that occur in the course of the duties of staff and whether this is the right forum for that.

Ms KERR: I could get you the numbers of staff who have required medical treatment. There has been none that I am aware of that have required hospital stays, except for perhaps overnight.

Mrs WORDEN: Are you looking for specific incidents or descriptions of injuries or ...

Mr BURGOYNE: It is all right, minister, I appreciate that. I think Ms Kerr has covered it, thank you.

The additional gear that will be purchased includes puncture-proof vests. Is this to protect against stabbing incidents? This is what I am trying to get at—what these youth justice officers have to deal with on a daily basis. It is obviously a very challenging environment. We already asked how many of the assaults detailed previously were regarding an edged weapon. It is in regard to this additional gear. You said it was mainly preventable. Is it as a result of those sorts of incidents occurring?

Mrs WORDEN: My presumption, as a lay person, is that a puncture-proof vest's purpose is exactly what it is—to stop that sort of injury. I can see where you are building to in your line of questioning. I am glad to hear you say that it is a particularly difficult and challenging environment for staff to work in. That is why we give them the best training we can and the equipment, should things escalate, to protect not just themselves but also the detainee.

Ms KERR: My advice is that any assaults we have had that involved an attempt of puncturing involved pens and pencils, as opposed to edged weapons.

Mr BURGOYNE: My understanding is that the \$12m originally allocated for the Alice Spring Youth Justice Centre has blown out to \$24m. From a Territory Families' point of view, can you explain why this occurred?

Mrs WORDEN: With the machinery of government changes, the building program went to the minister for Infrastructure. For a broader response, when I became the minister, it was a two-stage process. I requested that it become a one-stage process to minimise disruption and that was consented to, so it became a bigger program. That program is now managed by DIPL. You received the stage two stuff early.

Mr BURGOYNE: Is the \$4.8m for the Don Dale fit-out part of a new Don Dale construction or is this directed at the refurbishments of the current facility?

Mrs WORDEN: Could you give me the specific reference where you are finding that \$4.8m figure?

Mr BURGOYNE: I believe it was released in a media release.

Mrs WORDEN: That is the new Darwin youth justice facility? We are not calling it Don Dale. It is \$59.2m for the build and \$4.8m for the fit-out for the new build.

Mr BURGOYNE: The \$4.8m is to refurbish the existing facility.

Mrs WORDEN: No. I just said that \$4.8m is the fit-out for the new Darwin youth justice facility.

Mr BURGOYNE: Minister, what do you get for that \$4.8m fit-out? You construct the building and then what? You spend \$4.8m fitting it out, is that ...

Mrs WORDEN: I presume that is things like beds, kitchens and CCTV but that is a question you would have needed to ask the minister for Infrastructure.

Mr BURGOYNE: Do you have a time frame for when that construction of the new facility will be completed?

Mrs WORDEN: Yes, the end of 2022/early 2023.

Mr BURGOYNE: Where is the progress on the development of the Barkly Youth Camp mentioned earlier?

Mrs WORDEN: I will ask the chief executive officer to give you a good update on that program.

Mr DAVIES: The tender for design and construction of the new youth accommodation facility closed on 17 March. The tender has been announced. The successful tenderer—we had a budget of \$3.5m. I understand that the build will be approximately \$2.8m. I need to check this with DIPL again going by the minister's feedback—some of the remaining money will be used to service the site and put in the infrastructure, such as water and power. The actual build for the project will be about \$2.8m as has been announced today.

Mr BURGOYNE: Regarding the construction, has anything started?

Mr DAVIES: The tender for constructing the infrastructure has now been finalised and we are targeting for completion either later this year or early next year. I gave a commitment, in an earlier briefing to the Member for Araluen that we will try and get the program which will operate in that facility, going by the end of this year. It will not be able to fit straight into this facility, but we will have a program on the ground that will start to be delivered to young people who are referred to the Barkly youth program.

Mrs LAMBLEY: How much did it cost to set up the establishment of the youth hub?

Mrs WORDEN: The Alice Springs youth hub in town, that we did in response last year?

Mrs WORDEN: I will ask the chief executive as he has the details and a lot was done internally.

Mr DAVIES: Everyone rolled up their sleeves on this, including our youth justice workforce and child protection workforce.

Mr CHAIR: Sorry Mr Davies, the time has gone 1.00 pm. We will break for lunch.

The committee suspended.

Mr CHAIR: Welcome back everyone. The Member for Araluen was asking a question about the cost of the setup of the youth hub in Alice Springs. Mr Davies, sorry I interrupted you but, as the Member for Namatjira illustrated after we had gone to recess, if you do not have a set time—what happens in a game of sport, do we keep playing? No, we stop when the time runs out.

Mr DAVIES: Member for Araluen, you asked how much the youth outreach and re-engagement hub cost in terms of its operations. It started on 21 November 2020 and to date, in terms of running the operation, given that we staffed it using existing personnel from across the Territory Families team, we have spent \$183,000,247 for operation from that start date through to 31 March 2021.

Mrs LAMBLEY: A part of the plan for Alice Springs was called Breaking the Cycle of Youth Crime plan which was allocated \$5m. Was any of that money spent on the youth hub?

Mr DAVIES: No. With this money, we reprioritised our own resources internally to fund the operation of it.

Mrs LAMBLEY: Has Territory Families used any of that money, the \$5m, towards the Breaking the Cycle of Youth Crime plan?

Mr DAVIES: In terms of Breaking the Cycle of Youth Crime initiatives for Alice Springs—the expanded hours program for Tangentyere included a night patrol, drop-in centres, more mobile closed circuit television cameras, increased numbers of school compliance engagement officers and introduction of an Aboriginal youth outreach service comprised of senior Aboriginal outreach workers. Not all of those fit within our agency's program but we did commit to \$1.2m for an additional seven positions for the Youth Outreach and Re-Engagement Team and those officers, with night-time officers, who provide the outreach services for young people on the street seven nights per week. That is where a fair majority of that funding went to.

Mrs LAMBLEY: The \$1.2m came out of the Breaking the Cycle of Youth Crime funding to pay for the seven officers?

Mr DAVIES: Yes, for the night outreach officers.

Mrs LAMBLEY: They are not YOREOs?

Mr DAVIES: They are YOREOs; we call them youth engagement night officers. It is the same mix but they operate on a night roster.

Mr BURGOYNE: Young people under community-based supervision is a measure that will commence on 1 July 2021. Is this measure replacing something else or a brand-new measure?

Mrs WORDEN: Could I get you to repeat that?

Mr BURGOYNE: Young people under community-based supervision is a measure that will commence on 1 July 2021. Is this measure replacing something else or a brand-new measure?

Mrs WORDEN: Yes, it is a new measure.

Mr BURGOYNE: What will fall within this category?

Mrs WORDEN: I will ask Mr Twyford to respond.

Mr TWYFORD: The youth justice system is comprised of many elements and many overlap. The definition of community youth justice is covering everything except for youth detention. Young people in community youth justice will be those in diversion, on bail, attending any early element of Back on Track or youth camps. It is a community youth justice umbrella and within that community supervision is any of the young people who have an order to be supervised by the court.

Mr BURGOYNE: Why was this new measure introduced?

Mr TWYFORD: It provides an overarching measure that highlights how the different elements of the youth justice system are working together. We have questions and performance indicators that go to the program level of all the young people who are on Back on Track—what is their reoffending rate? How many reoffend within six or 12 months? There is then a separate question about a different program.

When the young people are—in the main—in many programs at the same time over the same time period, it gets very hard to articulate the overall success of the youth justice system and the overall benefit realisation of the investment in the youth justice system.

This measure is attempting to put all community youth supervision orders into the one bucket and then measure the success of the elements that make up that bucket. In our annual, public and internal reporting, we will still be putting those programmatic outcome measures and performance indicators. This measure was designed and chosen because it provides a whole-of-system perspective that aligns to the government's investment in the youth justice system.

Mr CHAIR: That concludes the consideration of Output 1.4.

Output 1.5 – Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence

Mr CHAIR: The committee will now consider Output 1.5, Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence. Are there any questions?

Mr BURGOYNE: It was acknowledged by the Chief Minister that funding for domestic violence is at 2018 levels and has not been increased in line with CPI. Why has there been no increase since 2018?

Mrs WORDEN: Over time that budget has consistently been retained. Increases have come in through national partnership agreements with the federal government and we are in the throes of negotiating one of those at the moment. It is my full intent in the future to take in a request for further funding. When you request further funding as a minister, it is really important you request it for a specific outcome.

We are particularly interested in what works in the prevention space, but we have to know what that will look like, which partners would deliver it and what the cost would be, for me to take and progress that through a budget Cabinet submission. In the next round of funding that is what we will be seeking.

Does that make sense? I only came in to this role late last year. The Cabinet round for budget had already commenced and then we go to Cabinet in May. We are well prepared now and know where our intent and focus has been. The funding in this space is specifically for action plan one, which sits under the framework. We are moving now to action plan two, which is being devised at the moment.

I ask Helena Wright, who has joined us here today, to talk more about action plan two. Those action plans drive where funding needs to go and how much is needed. We are in that space at the moment. It is not just about putting up your hand and saying, 'I want a couple of hundred thousand dollars, or a million dollars, here'.

We need to make sure we have the partnerships in place for that and are well-informed through our partnerships nationally about where it is best placed to do that. We are in those consultations at the moment. I will get Helena Wright to speak more to that and introduce herself for the first time.

Ms WRIGHT: Good afternoon, I am Helena Wright, Executive Director for Programs and Engagement. There has been additional funding applied to action plan one of our 10-year domestic, family and sexual violence reduction framework. That has gone to improving our prevention initiatives; enhanced grants for our specialist services, which have enabled us to provide flexible support packages for them is of domestic and family violence; practice support for our domestic and family violence organisations, including refuges and women's safe houses; and providing stronger out reach capacity, particularly for our regional and remote services.

In regard to action plan two, we are working with our cross-agency working group, which is a governance group comprising specialist sector representatives—CEOs of domestic and family violence services as well as women's legal services, for example Central Australian Women's Legal Service is represented. We are now working through the priorities for action plan two. The focus will be on consolidating and embedding the work we have done over the past three years. That will go out for consultation through NTCOSS, which will be our lead agency to engage with the sector and other stakeholders across the NT more broadly.

Mr BURGOYNE: Are you able to give me a to-date—to 31 March, if possible—figure that has been spent in relation to domestic, family and sexual violence? I note that some of those revised figures seem to change as we go along.

Mrs WORDEN: What revised figures are you referring to?

Mr BURGOYNE: On page 149 of BP3 we can see that with domestic, family and sexual violence it is revised up to \$28m, and then for the 2021–22 budget period it is \$26m. I am wondering what the current spend is for domestic, family and sexual violence for the current financial year.

Mrs WORDEN: We expended, as of 31 March, \$22.692m. We estimate that it will be \$28.722m. That is because of the additional federal government money that came in. There is the third tranche of federal funding—the COVID payments that would have gone out after 31 March. By the end of this financial year we will have fully expended our budget in this area. A lot of it goes straight out to our partners, and the money

we had coming in from our national partnership throughout COVID to respond to the increase in numbers has all gone out the door.

Mr BURGOYNE: That is the reason for the decrease in the 2021–22 figure of almost \$2.2m?

Mrs WORDEN: That is absolutely correct. We had a budget estimate; we then had the additional money coming through COVID, which we did not anticipate; and we will have a final expenditure figure.

Mr BURGOYNE: Will any money that is not spent in this financial year be rolled over to 2021–22?

Mrs WORDEN: It would be, but we are on the record saying that we have expended all the money in this area. Most of our money in this area goes to our partners delivering services on the ground.

Mr BURGOYNE: On 23 May 2018, Tennant Creek was promised \$450,000 to develop an integrated specialist domestic, family and sexual violence hub. On page eight of the domestic violence strategy is the promise that it would be delivered in 2018. Where is it and what is the reason for the delay?

Ms WRIGHT: Work on the Tennant Creek and Barkly regional hub continues. Since the time of the announcement, we have employed a regional domestic, family and sexual violence coordinator, who has been working with the community on establishing the hub. The employment of the coordinator was based on a service review of the Tennant Creek Women's Refuge and a service system review of the regional domestic, family and sexual violence service system.

To date, there have been a number of workshops with community representation and leadership about what a hub might look like for the Barkly region. We are looking to see how we could employ a local Aboriginal woman from the region to further facilitate our community engagement.

Mr BURGOYNE: With the atrocious sexual assaults in Tennant Creek, the figures seem to continuously be going up. Has this been given priority in regard to that? Obviously, there is a lot of planning work that has to happen. Is this being worked on as a matter of priority?

Mrs WORDEN: Absolutely. Sadly, as we have indicated previously, COVID had an effect, not just in Tennant Creek but across the Northern Territory and Australia. It is a priority for us.

Mr BURGOYNE: Are you able to provide what domestic, family and sexual violence reduction services are provided by Territory Families?

Mrs WORDEN: Across the Northern Territory?

Mr BURGOYNE: Yes.

Mrs WORDEN: I could tell you women's safe houses. Is that what you are after?

Mr BURGOYNE: That would be a good place to start, thank you.

Mrs WORDEN: Territory Families operates women's safe houses in Angurugu, Kalkarindji, Lajamanu, Maningrida, Ngukurr, Peppimenarti, Ramingining, Wugularr, Wurrumiyanga, Yarralin, Yuendumu, Ti Tree and Ntaria/Hermannsburg.

Mr BURGOYNE: What is the number of beds in the safe houses and are they always full? I am trying to gauge whether there is a requirement or need for future safe houses and a need for an increase.

Mrs WORDEN: We have numbers of clients versus beds.

Mr BURGOYNE: That is a good place to start.

Mrs WORDEN: For Angurugu, there were 39 clients with 25 accompanying children; in Kalkarindji, there were 101 clients with 122 accompanying children; in Lajamanu, 26 with 37 accompanying children; in Maningrida there were 23 with 13 accompanying children; in Ngukurr there were 60 with 69 accompanying children; in Ramingining there were 12 with nine accompanying children; in Wugularr there were 91 with 127 accompanying children; Wurrumiyanga was 24 with 18 accompanying children; Yarralin 26 with 31 children; Yuendumu 17 with 25 children; Ti Tree 10 with 12 children; and Hermannsburg 11 with 11 children.

Mr BURGOYNE: That is over the financial year?

Mrs WORDEN: That was from 1 July 2020 to 31 March 2021. In total, there were 440 and 499 accompanying children.

Mr BURGOYNE: Do you know how many beds are available at that Ntaria safe house?

Mr DAVIES: I have visited that facility. It is a demountable facility that has a covered area in the middle where there is a play area and a unique area for young kids and children. There are toilets, showers and a sleeping space. There are at least two or three sleeping spaces in there for the families. It is a demountable piece of infrastructure, but there is definitely space there for three families.

Mrs WORDEN: I will add to the previous question. I neglected to say that there are an additional 10 women's refuges operation non-government organisations in Darwin, Nhulunbuy, Katherine, Tennant Creek and Alice Springs. Cumulatively, the figure of clients provided with crisis accommodation due to domestic, family and sexual violence over the period I indicated to you before, is 5,722.

Mr BURGOYNE: Are you able to tell me which organisations received funding from the Northern Territory Government to deliver legal assistance relating to family violence matters for victims of family violence?

Mrs WORDEN: I will get Helena Wright to provide you with some context for that because I do not believe we directly fund any.

Ms WRIGHT: Our women's legal services that provide support to women experiencing domestic and family violence are funded through the Commonwealth to the Attorney-General and Justice department. Our department has provided funding to them through our project-based funding in the past, for example, through our prevention grants. But their core funding comes from the Attorney-General and Justice department.

Mrs WORDEN: They get some from the Commonwealth, too.

Ms WRIGHT: Yes, that is right.

Mrs WORDEN: Mr Chair, I can provide a response to a written question that I took on notice earlier.

Answer to Question on Notice No 6.8

Mrs WORDEN: Mr Chair, the question was year to date to 31 March 2021, how many children transitioned out of foster care, then came back into care over that period. From 1 July 2020 to 31 March 2021, four children in foster care exited the care of the CEO and subsequently re-entered care within that period. I will table that paper.

Mr CHAIR: That concludes consideration of Output 1.5.

Output 1.6 is the responsibility of another minister. That concludes consideration of Output Group 1.0.

OUTPUT GROUP 2.0 – HOUSING Output 2.1 – Homelessness Services

Mr CHAIR: The committee will now proceed to Output Group 2.0, Housing, Output 2.1, Homelessness Services. Are there any questions?

Mr BURGOYNE: Minister, the budget for homelessness services is \$38.5m. I am always interested in how many beds we are getting for who are homeless for that \$38.5m. I think it is important to understand how much is being chewed up in delivering the service and how much is actually being delivered to get people off the streets and into a safe place.

Mrs WORDEN: We often use different terminology in our reporting. Are you asking how many people are accessing specialist homelessness services? Year to date, as of 31 March, is 4,020. That is Territorians accessing specialist homelessness services and that is a new measure that we brought in this year. Your timing for asking that question might be perfect.

Mr CHAIR: That concludes consideration of Output 2.1.

Output 2.2 – Urban Housing

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

Mr BURGOYNE: Minister, we have details of an individual who has online and via telephone made numerous reports of antisocial behaviour in a Territory housing residence and nothing has been done. When the family moved into the residence, the immediate neighbours were letterboxed a flyer with a number they could call if they experienced any issues. They have been using this number and also call the police each time there is an issue and there are no improvements.

They have also called child services many times. These people have been in your office and Minister Manison's office. They met with you on 19 May. Why has your department not acted on these complaints?

Mrs WORDEN: I completely refute the question. I will not speak today about a particular matter. Having come from Housing and been part of the public housing safety strategy from its inception I know exactly the way it works. Information has been communicated on a regular basis to those complainants. Action has been taken and there is action pending. I will not talk about that at estimates.

Mr BURGOYNE: The housing stock across the Northern Territory—and Alice Springs especially—when it comes to Housing, are you able to give me a break down of how many additional homes were brought into the public housing service over the last financial year.

Mrs WORDEN: We do not just public housing, we deliver social headleases as well. We also have industry housing, community housing and affordable rental housing depending on what is available and the needs of the applicant. Available urban public houses in 2019–20 there were 4,714; as 31 March there were 4,723.

Mr MONAGHAN: Can you outline the work that is currently underway to ensure that public housing supply for some of the most disadvantaged Territorians is fit for purpose and appropriate, in particular Shiers Street in my electorate of Fong Lim.

Mrs WORDEN: It is a great question. I am on the record saying that our current model is not fit for purpose. We are moving to a new model. You would be aware of that. We have been to the site a number of times and discussed the future of it. The Territory Economic Reconstruction Commission is keen for us to do a project in and around Darwin, of which Shiers Street is being considered. Member for Araluen, there is a project being delivered in Alice Springs.

Community housing providers give us more bang for our buck, because they do not pay any GST on new builds and they are able to attract NHFIC and NAIF funding and Commonwealth rent assistance, which brings more money into the Northern Territory.

As I indicated in my opening statement, the strategy will come later this year, which will guide us for 10 years and Shiers Street will form part of that process. We are planning to redevelop Shiers Street. It does not mean knock down. The current format of Shiers Streets where there is a lot of public housing all together is a failed and old model. It is not done anywhere else in the world like that anymore.

We will redevelop that site. We do not know what that will look like yet, because we have to go through a process where we work possibly through a private developer or the community housing sector. We do not yet know, as there is a process to go through. Some of the stuff we saw when the chief executive officer and Mr Brent Warren and I travelled to Adelaide were alternatives to public housing and how that can unlock a host of things, including disability, seniors' housing and private housing in the one development.

It will transform—I am 100% certain that whatever we do, including Shier Street and our site in Alice Springs, will kick off a really exciting time and increase our public housing stock.

Mr BURGOYNE: On the public housing stock, do you have the numbers for Alice Springs for 2019?

Mrs WORDEN: In 2019 we had 774 urban public housing dwellings. As at 31 March there were 781.

Mr BURGOYNE: How many of those 781 are vacant?

Mrs WORDEN: I will put some context on vacancies. Some want to make it look like—there our vacancies for a range of reasons and we are recalibrating that. The figures next year will look different, because at the moment if a house will be sold off or redeveloped it is counted—it might sit there for a long time before being sold off then it counts as days vacant. The minute a decision is being made on whether it will be sold off, it will no longer be counted in our vacancies. Because it is not a real vacancy; it is not vacant because we will house a family there.

That is some of the work we will do. If a house is vacant for 12 months before it is disposed of because it is beyond economic repair, is not safe to house a family and we have decided that it is not useful—it might be part of a de-densification program, it is important that it does not blow out what looks like a vacancy date.

Mr WARREN: As of 31 March 2021, there were 50 unoccupied properties in Alice Springs. That is a point-in-time figure. It is important to note that as each house becomes vacant there is a process of inspecting it for damage, refurbishing if necessary and then reallocating it.

Mr BURGOYNE: I am really interested in this, as I have worked in this space before, when it comes to maintenance and the rest of it. If the houses damage due to fire or something else, how long does it take for the department to decide that it will sell or refurbish it? It is frustrating, when we drive around our electorates and see houses vacant for extended periods of time. I understand the decisions have to be made. How long does that process take?

Mrs WORDEN: We are looking to improve that system. You make a very valid point. I will ask Mr Warren to provide some context to what you are asking. Maybe we need to put up a sign that says, 'This site has been marked for redevelopment', or something along those lines. Because I do get it, which is why I am saying that we need to recalibrate what is existing stock that is viable for a family in the future, not just having longer periods of time waiting for disposal added in.

Mr WARREN: In a normal situation, if a tenant vacates a house, tenancy staff do an exit inspection. They do a visual observation of the condition of the house. If there is obvious tenant damage they will start processes to recover funds from the tenant or have them involved in paying for the repairs. Following that we have a property maintenance officer inspect and identify specific work that needs to be handed out to a trades organisation to repair. That initial check should take about a week, then we go to our contractors for normal repairs and maintenance and place a work order.

In Alice Springs we have had some issues with being able to get a volume of work through contractors who appear to be quite busy with work at the moment and are potentially struggling with their own capacity issues. We place a work order with the contractors on the panel.

If there is more significant damage—you referenced, for example, a house that has had a fire—that requires a more significant review. It needs to be identified whether it is structurally sound to make a decision about whether the works required to bring it up to standard make economic sense. If it is still potentially salvageable, but is of a significant expense, it may require an executive decision about whether or not that can be funded in the financial year. You can appreciate we are trying to maximise the number of houses we can turn over.

When a house is beyond economic repair, we can and do make decisions to sell it. We have publicly advised that 20 properties have been identified across the Territory that we are in the process of selling.

Mr BURGOYNE: In Alice Springs, of the 50 unoccupied, how many are beyond economic repair?

Mr WARREN: There are three properties listed for sale in the new financial year. I would have to take on notice the detail about the exact point in time that the other houses are in the cycle.

Mrs WORDEN: To qualify, there are only three that have been assessed for disposal.

Mr BURGOYNE: How many of the 50 unoccupied in Alice Springs have been vacant for over 12 months?

Mrs WORDEN: We will take that question on notice.

Question on Notice No 6.13

Mr CHAIR: Member for Braitling, please repeat the question for the record.

Mr BURGOYNE: How many of the 50 unoccupied public houses in Alice Springs have been vacant for over 12 months?

Mr CHAIR: Minister, do you accept the question?

Mrs WORDEN: Yes. I only have an average across the whole.

Mr CHAIR: The question asked by the Member for Braitingling has been allocated number 6.13.

Mr YAN: The Member for Araluen will know this, because it is in her electorate. I speak of this one from experience. There is a house—it is either number three or number five Ashwin Street—that has probably been vacant now for five, six, maybe seven years. How do you explain that?

Mrs WORDEN: If you want to give a specific address, we are happy to look at it and get back to you in the next few minutes about whether it might be on our disposal list.

Mr YAN: It is either number three or number five Ashwin Street in Alice Springs. It has been vacant for at least eight years that I am aware of. There are people squatting in it currently.

Mrs LAMBLEY: Yes, there are. It has been a problem. It is right next to the Mokari flats, where we have enough problems.

Mrs WORDEN: Rather than take that on notice, we will just get back to you after we have seen whether it is one that is going for disposal. If it is, that process has already commenced. We will confirm it. If you want to move on, we will come back to it.

Mr BURGOYNE: How many of the unoccupied public housing stock are there across the Northern Territory?

Mrs WORDEN: There are 174 as at 31 March.

Mr BURGOYNE: What is the current waiting time for public housing in Alice Springs?

Mrs WORDEN: For general or priority?

Mr BURGOYNE: General.

Mrs WORDEN: I think it is done in days—882.

Mr BURGOYNE: How many people are on the waiting list for general public housing in Alice Springs?

Mrs WORDEN: We do not have that figure. We might have to take that on notice.

Question on Notice No 6.14

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

Mr BURGOYNE: What is the number of people on the waiting list for public housing in Alice Springs?

Mr CHAIR: Minister, do you accept the question?

Mrs WORDEN: Yes. I will also add that wait lists, from time to time, need cleaning up because people do not necessarily keep their information up to date. From time to time the agency goes through an exercise of what they call 'cleaning up the wait list' in order to ensure—is that numbers of people.

Mr CHAIR: The question asked by the Member for Braitingling has been allocated the number 6.14.

Mrs WORDEN: My mistake. The number of people on the general wait list as at 31 March 2021 is 882—that is the number of people not days.

Mrs LAMBLEY: Applicants?

Mrs WORDEN: The number of people at a point of time who are listed on a wait list. It does not mean it is entirely correct because not everyone takes themselves off—people move interstate, situations change and people no longer need housing. Every now and then the agency has to go through and cleanse that list. From my experience, it is intensive, contacting everyone, sending letters out asking if they are still on the wait list. The priority wait list tends to be more accurate by its nature that people are more in need. People also move in and out of remote. It is a fluid list and it is at a point in time.

Mr BURGOYNE: The 882 people on the wait list, is that just in Alice Springs?

Mrs WORDEN: Correct.

Mr BURGOYNE: They wait an average of 209 days to get into public housing. Is that correct?

Mrs WORDEN: That is the turnaround time for a house. I will get you the figure.

Mr BURGOYNE: Would you like to take that on notice?

Mrs WORDEN: Yes, please. Before we take that on notice, apparently it is all published online.

Mrs LAMBLEY: What was the question you asked before?

Mr BURGOYNE: People on the waiting list was question 6.14 and that was 882 in Alice Springs.

Mrs WORDEN: Yes. That is the general wait list and the other question was how long they are on the wait list. I believe that we published that figure online.

Mrs WORDEN: It is four to six years for a one-bedroom and six to eight years for a three-bedroom.

Mr CHAIR: We will delete that question on the record.

Mrs LAMBLEY: My one question has been answered by the minister and that was about what she intends to do with the 'banes of my life' in terms of public housing, the Mokari flats and the Keith Lawrie flats.

Mrs WORDEN: I have been to both and the public housing safety officers came with me to the Keith Lawrie flats. I am well aware of the issues. It falls into that category of 'unfit for modern standards' we have on public housing. We know that is a problem; we need to modernise what we are doing in that space and it is our intention to do that.

Mr BURGOYNE: The people on the waiting list for Darwin, Katherine, Tennant Creek and Palmerston—do you have those areas?

Mrs WORDEN: Yes. As of 31 March there are 317 in Katherine on the general waiting list; in greater Darwin, which is Darwin and Casuarina, there are 1,114; in Palmerston, 447; in Tennant Creek, 149; and in Nhulunbuy we have 119 people.

Mr BURGOYNE: Do you have an average wait time? You said before that those are on the Internet. How many calls are being received by the maintenance call centre?

Mrs WORDEN: We do not have that data with us, but we can take that question on notice.

Question on Notice No 6.15

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

Mr BURGOYNE: How many calls are being received by the maintenance call centre?

Mr CHAIR: Minister, do you accept the question?

Mrs WORDEN: To qualify, that is for the whole of the Northern Territory?

Mr BURGOYNE: Yes.

Mrs WORDEN: Yes, I am happy to take that question.

Mr CHAIR: The question asked by the Member for Braitling is allocated the number 6.15.

Mr BURGOYNE: There is \$1.758m allocated to upgrades to housing complexes. Please provide the details of which complexes will be upgraded with these funds. Do you have a list of complexes that will be upgraded in the next financial year?

Mrs WORDEN: That is still under planning; it has not yet been determined. It is our hope that under the strategy some of those complexes will sit with community housing providers, so some of that may be as part of negotiations to make sure they are upgraded to a standard for us to ensure they can give good service provision after that point.

Mr BURGOYNE: How many evictions have there been in the past 12 months in public and urban housing?

Mrs WORDEN: Absolutely none, due to COVID. You will be aware that the restrictions prohibit us from making people homeless in that time. As a public housing provider, we were not exempt from that.

Mr BURGOYNE: What is happening with the red card system? Is that still in place and people who have done the wrong thing cannot be evicted? Will that carryover to a time when that changes?

Mrs WORDEN: The red card system is still very much in place. I will ask Mr Warren to give you more context.

Mr WARREN: The red card policy is definitely still in place. When we receive complaints from members of the public and conduct an investigation, if we can validate and substantiate the issue complained about, a red card point can be awarded. Red card points can be and are used to support eviction proceedings, if necessary.

COVID restrictions are no longer preventing us from using the NTCAT to take the eviction proceedings if we need to.

Mr BURGOYNE: But currently you could evict someone under that system.

Mr WARREN: That is correct. We have five matters before the NTCAT at the moment.

Mr BURGOYNE: How was it decided when the housing safety officers will attend an incident?

Mrs WORDEN: That is determined depending on the contact and depends on the nature of what is occurring. Obviously, some matters require a police presence or can have a public housing safety officer present.

Public housing safety officers came into being as a response to lower-level activity where police often did not attend, or if they did, it took away from their primary focus. Public housing safety officers only work until 2.30 am. After that time, it is a response by police. Some of it is police tasking and some are calls to the public housing safety hotline. It depends on the nature of the incident as to whether they respond or not, or whether they are on call.

Mr BURGOYNE: Do you have a number of instances where a housing safety officer had to attend and then incidents where police were required to attend?

Mrs WORDEN: I ask Mr Brent Warren to respond to that. Also, 3 Ashwin is on our divestment list. It will be sold. That is in response to the earlier question. We did not put that on notice, I just said I would bring it back to the committee as soon as I could find it out.

Mr BURGOYNE: Are you going to sell it?

Mrs WORDEN: It is on the divestment list; it will be sold.

Mr WARREN: Member for Braitling, your question was about public housing safety officers?

Mr BURGOYNE: Yes, and how many of those incidents were police required to respond?

Mr WARREN: We attended 5,709 occasions that were reported to us by members of the public. We did our own proactive attendance another 1,803 times at locations across the Territory. I cannot give you a breakdown of which of those incidents might have required police to attend, but we cooperate with police in each location and the police do dispatches to some of those incidents as a first response. I am not sure our data system allows us to give you that kind of linkage.

Mr BURGOYNE: That is okay. Are you able to break that 5,709 figure down into regions?

Mrs WORDEN: We can. If you want to give us that question on notice, we can provide that to you—hang on one moment. I am pretty sure we have that. Sorry, you wanted what?

Mr BURGOYNE: By region, the attendance by public housing safety officers.

Mrs WORDEN: We have the number of complaints received in each region.

Mr BURGOYNE: Yes, that will do.

Mrs WORDEN: If a complaint was made, there would be a response, whether it is at the time or a follow up the next day. These are all to 31 March 2021:

- Alice Springs—complaints received to public housing safety was 281 and to police was 291
- Katherine—complaints to the public housing safety hotline was 140 and 66 to police for the same period
- greater Darwin, including Casuarina—there was 1,739 and complaints to police was 1,061
- Palmerston—complaints to the housing hotline was 872 and complaints received by police was 694
- Tennant Creek—18 to the public housing safety hotline and six to police
- Nhulunbuy—one
- none for police.

To put some context to those figures, you often get three complaints about the same incident—you might get a complaint from police the next day because they were called out, but you also may have one from the public housing safety hotline.

Mr BURGOYNE: How many tenants have been transferred in the last financial year? They may not have been evicted, but have been transferred.

Mrs WORDEN: Territory-wide?

Mr BURGOYNE: If you have the breakdown, yes.

Mrs WORDEN: We call it a relocation. As of 31 March, 49 tenants were relocated for a range of reasons. That could be to be closer to medical services and those sorts of things, or it could be transferred according to their entitlement. They may have had children who have left home, so they are no longer entitled to a three-bedroom home.

Mr BURGOYNE: How often does the department assist with rent assistance?

Mrs WORDEN: All public housing tenants would be on a discounted rent because of the nature of the property. Do you mean bond assistance? That is a program.

Mr BURGOYNE: My apologies. The question is: how often does the department do a rent assessment?

Mrs WORDEN: My belief is that it is done annually. Each year.

Mr CHAIR: That concludes consideration of Output 2.2.

Outputs 2.3, 2.4, 2.5 and 2.6 are the responsibility of another minister. That concludes consideration of Output Group 2.0.

OUTPUT GROUP 3.0 – COMMUNITIES
Output 3.3 – Sport and Active Recreation

Mr CHAIR: The committee will now proceed to Output Group 3.0, Communities, noting that Outputs 3.1 and 3.2 are the responsibility of other ministers. Therefore, we will move to Output 3.3, Sport and Active Recreation. Are there any questions in the final three minutes?

Mr BURGOYNE: Minister, how much is your government contributing to the stadium of dreams?

Mrs WORDEN: Do you mean the \$300m proposal?

Mr BURGOYNE: That is the one.

Mrs WORDEN: At this point in time, nothing. I will clarify that and tell you that there has not been an approach. There have been no discussions. It is currently the dream of the AFLNT.

Mr BURGOYNE: To date, has the Gunner Labor government played any role in the design process?

Mrs WORDEN: Zero.

Mrs WORDEN: Mr Chair, I can provide an answer to a question taken on notice.

Answer to Question on Notice No 6.7

Mrs WORDEN: The question was, year to date 31 March 2021, how many out-of-care homes had to move or relocate for whatever reason. Two residential care homes have had to move, one in Leanyer and one in Moil. The agency took this decision due to neighbourhood complaints.

I will table that response.

Mr BURGOYNE: With the cancellation of the AFL games that were meant to take place in the Territory, what happens with the funds that the Territory government gives to those football clubs? Are they trying to reschedule to come back or does it roll over?

Mrs WORDEN: That is managed by Major Events and not me; it does not sit with me.

Mr BURGOYNE: Has your department done any research into the Northern Territory getting its own AFL team?

Mrs WORDEN: A number of years ago, prior to COVID-19 in 2018, we funded a feasibility study, which the AFLNT did. That is our funding to date.

Mr Chair, I have another response to a written question.

Answer to Question on Notice No 6.12

Mrs WORDEN: The question was, year to date 31 March 2021, how many collective days absences there been due to youth justice officers being assaulted or injured. When submitting an application for personal leave, staff are not obligated to enter the reason for their leave. Therefore, it is not possible to determine how many staff absences correlate to staff assaults. It has also been confirmed that this level of information cannot be retrieved from the Work Health and Safety reporting system.

Mr CHAIR: Minister and honourable members, that concludes consideration of Territory Families, Housing and Communities.

The committee will now consider the Department of Corporate and Digital Development.

Minister, on behalf of the committee, I thank you and your officers—Mr Davies and your team. Thank you, Ms Dennis, for joining us late.

Mrs WORDEN: Mr Chair, I also put on the record that estimates is always a very labour-intensive time for agencies. I really appreciate the time that our agency has taken. All the staff members have worked enormous amounts of hours to prepare us for today. Thank you.

Mrs LAMBLEY: Thank you, minister. Thank you, executives.

Mr CHAIR: We will have a short break as we change over.

The committee suspended.

Mr CHAIR: Welcome back to estimates hearings. We will now be questioning the Department of Corporate and Digital Development with Minister Kirby from 2.30 pm until 7 pm. We will probably have a comfort break or two at some stage this afternoon.

MINISTER KIRBY'S PORTFOLIOS

CORPORATE AND DIGITAL DEVELOPMENT

DEPARTMENT OF CORPORATE AND DIGITAL DEVELOPMENT

Mr CHAIR: Minister, I welcome you to today's hearing and invite you to introduce the officials accompanying you. I will then invite you to make a brief opening statement. Then I will call for questions relating to the statement. The committee will consider any agency-related whole-of-government questions on budget and fiscal strategy before moving on output-specific questions and finally non-output specific budget-related questions.

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

Mr KIRBY: Mr Chair, I welcome Kathleen Robinson, Chief Executive of the Department of Corporate and Digital Development; and Ms Chris Hosking, Deputy Chief Executive of Digital Services of the department.

The Department of Corporate and Digital Development, DCDD, delivers shared corporate services and digital solutions to agencies across government. DCDD operates enterprises-wide to deliver centralised support services, effectively leveraging scale and enabling other agencies to focus on their core business. In addition, DCDD has responsibility for two government business decisions, being NT Fleet and the Data Centre Services.

The department continues to take on stronger digital roles extending from supporting government agencies to digital tools that support the community.

COVID-19 highlighted how essential reliable telecommunications, connectivity and digital solutions are. DCDD maintains a key behind-the-scenes role to help frontline agencies maintain their requirements. This work includes developing the COVID-19 compliance digital solutions and establishing and maintaining The Territory Check In app. The Territory Check In app has been used over 4.6 million times since November 2020 and is proving reliable and easy to use, making it popular with businesses and customers alike.

Another important example is the Can-do Territory portal designed and implemented by a team of local ICT experts working in conjunction with DCDD. The Can-do portal allows businesses and individuals to apply online for licences, permits and making the process of dealing with government more streamlined and transparent.

The new portal commenced as a prototype in February this year. It has been welcomed by local businesses with more than 1,020 applications lodged so far. Through the portal, people can apply online to start a cafe, a restaurant or a retail business. Businesses can renew their food licence, apply for liquor licences and apply for a trade waste permit as well.

The second release of the Can-do portal in May 2021 introduced online transactions for special event liquor licence applications. These licences comprise over 70% of the liquor licence applications annually. The portal will continue to expand over time integrating more online applications and making it easier for citizens and businesses to access information, lodge and track and online forms and transact digitally with the Territory government. The Can-do portal is a key recommendation from the Territory Economic Reconstruction Commission report to make the Territory one of the easiest places to do business.

A range of digital initiatives have been identified to advance the Territory economy with a focus on establishing Darwin as the digital gateway to Asia and growing the local digital economy. DCDD is actively contributing to the digital initiatives as part of the comprehensive package to advance the Territory economy. DCD's digital initiatives are framed around government priorities and the Digital Territory strategy. The strategy is the first of its kind for the Territory; it sets out the Territory's digital directions to increase digital capability and jobs, build a modern connected and vibrant digital economy with improved services to Territorians.

The strategy is supported by annual action plans with the 2021 plan highlighting 65 digital actions. Actions are progressing with public reporting on the Digital Territory website. DCDD is managing on behalf of agencies, major digital transformation programs that will support frontline service delivery across health, policing and child protection.

Through the 'A plan for budget repair' report, DCDD was assigned substantial additional functions in 2019 significantly increasing the department's remit. The Corporate Services reform program is the most significant corporate reform in government since the original DCIS was formed back in 1998. This is a large-scale multiyear program transitioning corporate and digital services across the NT Government into a centralised and standardised delivery model. The program is progressing as planned, with the initial centralisation phase completed and functions consolidated in an enterprise model. Work is now under way to identify ways to standardise business processes and improve services.

The NTG is continuing to focus on improving access to telecommunication services across remote areas of the Territory to provide much-needed connectivity for all Territorians. Expanding telecommunication services across the Territory will benefit the Territory economy and our remote residence through helping to bridge the digital divide in the bush, enhance health and education services, encourage local businesses and improve traveller safety.

We are more than happy to answer questions from the committee relating to the 2021–22 budget for the Department of Corporate and Digital Development. I highlight that they have a large remit. They cover a lot of areas. They do not necessarily have policy oversight of some of the areas, so I am more than happy to clarify—if we get too far into the detail of an area that sits in another group we are more than happy to clarify that along the way. We will answer as many questions as we can.

Mr CHAIR: Thank you, Minister Kirby. Are there any questions relating to the opening statement?

Mr YAN: I thank the public servants, who are here today to assist the minister and all the public servants within your agency who have done a substantial amount of work in preparing for estimates today.

Minister, you spoke about the digital gateway, which has been mentioned number of times over recent months, what further work has been done on the digital gateway to develop and to progress it to fruition?

Mr KIRBY: There is a range of projects that will increase our connectivity with countries to our north. They are exciting projects and they are progressing. There is work across the board being done. I will hand to Kathleen to explain where they are up to. With the projects we have coming up and some of the large solar projects, our connectivity to the north will be a focus on us in the years to come.

Ms ROBINSON: Some of the projects we are working on are in conjunction with a number of other agencies, particularly Chief Minister and Cabinet and DITT.

There are projects such as the Terabit Territory program, which is increasing the capacity between us, Adelaide, Sydney and Melbourne, significantly increasing up to 20 gigabytes capacity. The commercial data centre, where the expression of interest was done in 2020, is facilitating commercial data centre operations centre in the Territory. It also has links to international fibre connectivity projects. Most of those are managed through the private sector and its facilitative advisory role. Our role is the technical information on digital connectivity.

Mr YAN: There were trips undertaken, either last year or the year before—pre-COVID, I suppose. Some meetings overseas were about developing this digital gateway. It has been ongoing for some time. Have we achieved anything so far as far as the digital gateway goes?

Ms ROBINSON: I understand that the commercial data centre project is close but that is a Department of the Chief Minister and Cabinet project. I would need to let them comment on that.

Through the Terabit Territory with Vocus, they are looking at extension between their Australia-Singapore cable. That will connect the fibre that lines up between Darwin and Port Hedland to their fibre that runs from Perth to Singapore. I understand that is progressing and when it comes to fruition, we will have our first international direct link to Darwin.

Mr YAN: I understand a substantial amount of work has taken place within DCDD, with the machinery of government changes recently. How many additional staff have transitioned across from external agencies within the DCDD, in the reporting period?

Mr KIRBY: There has been a massive amount of work in recent history, with the machinery of government changes. There will have been a host of funding and FTEs who came across to sit under DCDD. I think your question related to external to department?

Mr YAN: How many people have transitioned from other agencies into DCD? This has a significant effect on all the budgets for the other agencies, because there has been movement from their agencies into DCDD. How many people have transitioned out of their parent agency—which might have been AGD—to DCD?

Mr KIRBY: My understanding is that it is around 580 people who have transferred into DCDD through machinery of government changes.

Mr YAN: I speak from experience within government for many years; I have been part of machinery of government changes and where services are taken from one area and centralised. Has consideration been given to developing service level agreements between DCDD and the agencies that you service?

Ms ROBINSON: The way we have dealt with that is through a similar process we had with DCIS when it expanded. We have an enterprise services framework, which is a substantial document that sits over the top. It talks about all of the principles, roles and responsibilities, how we do our escalations, the governance models and how the whole arrangement between us and the agencies is managed.

Under that we have specific service statements on all of the different service lines we have. There are around 38 of them. They articulate the services we provide, what we will deliver, the expectations and standards of our service, what is required from agencies, what is out of scope and how it all operates. We have found, with the variety of clients we have, the model which enables us to be quite flexible if services change has worked the best.

Mr YAN: Do you have service statements for all the agencies you are servicing through the various streams you need to provide service for?

Ms ROBINSON: Yes, we do.

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

Mr CHAIR: The committee will now proceed to consider the estimates and proposed expenditure contained in the Appropriation Bill 2021–22 that relates the Department of Corporate and Digital Development. 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 GROUP 1.0 – CORPORATE SUPPORT DEVELOPMENT

Output 1.1 – Workforce Services

Mr CHAIR: The committee will now move on to Output Group 1.0, Corporate Support Development, Output Group 1.1, Workforce Services. Are there any questions?

Mr YAN: What compliance reporting strategies have been developed or implemented for NTG payroll systems, considering we have had some issues recently?

Mr KIRBY: I understand the breadth of your question. You are talking about compliance, as in reporting back for exact payroll issues?

Mr YAN: Yes, we had reports from the Auditor-General about some errors that occurred with superannuation payments and occasionally there are issues with payroll. What are the compliance reporting strategies that have been implemented to make sure those systems are working correctly?

Mr KIRBY: The payroll system that operates across government is an extremely complex system. I remember from my time within government agencies, as I am sure you do, that there are times we encourage employees to check their payroll and certificates to make sure everything is in order. At some stage along the process there are humans involved, inputting that data, and there are opportunities for errors. We have done a mountain of work to implement strategies and compliances to make sure we close those gaps as much as we possibly can.

Ms ROBINSON: We have a governance oversight committee that monitors a range of actions examining our payroll compliance, which includes the Commissioner for Public Employment, the Commissioner for Superannuation and the Department of Corporate and Digital Development representatives.

We monitor across a range of activities, including reviewing all those audit recommendations and our progress in delivering those. We have set up an assurance program that is a rolling program of examining employee entitlements and looking at different EA provisions, which is an ongoing arrangement. We have all our standard checks and balances and arrangements internally; our PIPS control audit that the Auditor-General does; additional reviews on our allowances and those sort of arrangements; and additional reporting through our governance committee. We have strengthened in a range of areas, including our standard operating procedures, which are being reviewed and revised as well.

Mr YAN: How often does that committee meet?

Ms ROBINSON: I could not be 100% sure. I would say monthly, if not more frequently.

Mr YAN: I ask these questions specifically, because the Auditor-General recommended that a number of strategies be put in place post the issue with superannuation, which affected quite a number of public servants—some in the positive and some in the negative. It took a considerable amount of work to either pay out or recover those funds. The Auditor-General made some recommendations specifically about that. How far has DCDD gone, or manage to get, in implementing the recommendations of the Auditor-General in relation to superannuation payments?

Mr KIRBY: You are right. There 15 overarching recommendations, initially. This is probably one of those outputs where some of this will sit directly with DCDD, for obvious reasons. If it gets more into an operational space that involves the Commissioner for Public Employment, we will get the opportunity to work through that. I am sure Kathleen can give an update of where DCDD is up to with its recommendations and improvements.

Ms ROBINSON: Yes, the Auditor-General's report was 15 recommendations. We have implemented about two-thirds of those and are actively working on the remainder. A couple are due to finish in the next few weeks. We are close to finishing them. There are a couple of others that are ongoing and we are working through. We are liaising closely and working with Treasury and the Commissioner for Public Employment.

The Auditor-General is conducting another audit on us and auditing our progress in the development of our actions against those recommendations. I am expecting another report in a couple of weeks, which will give an independent review of her assessment on how we are going in implementing those and, potentially, will have further recommendations for us to consider as well.

Mr YAN: Yes, the Auditor-General is very thorough. Trust me, she is very good at her job.

What changes, if any, have been implemented to payroll compliance reporting to reduce the risk and processing efforts within the department?

Mr KIRBY: The processing of payroll across the Northern Territory Government, is extremely complex, from processing the payroll of people in this room to blue collar workers, people who do unscheduled overtime

and a range of different shift arrangements. It is extremely complex. It is something that, in my time at Power and Water, they used to work extremely hard at making sure they could keep on top of.

Ms ROBINSON: We have automated where we can, produced exception reports and introduced additional checking and processes. We have a business development unit inside payroll, which we have restructured and expanded, turning it into quality assurance process checking to reduce the risks. There is not a lot we can do to reduce the risk with the complexity of the payroll. We just have to get stronger and better at our internal checking processes.

Mr YAN: Does DCDD maintain a register or account of complaints processes relating to payroll? For example, if a public servant has an issue with their pay and contacts DCDD or payroll to have it fixed, does the agency record the number of those complaints?

Mr KIRBY: As with a range of different things, some of those complaints will come directly to the agency. The agency may need to pass them on for certain reasons. If they are more complex it might involve a third party, whether that is the commissioner, the superannuation commission or anybody else, depending on how complex the concerns are.

Ms ROBINSON: We have a system which records all of the requests coming to our payroll area as well as other areas, and we manage that. If someone contacts our payroll area to query a payroll amount or complain about something, that will flow through our request system and we will manage and answer that. We do not identify it as a query or complaint. If you want to make a specific complaint about any of our services, we have another mechanism to do that. We get very few complaints through that other mechanism. We manage most of our service delivery issues at the service delivery point.

Mr YAN: If we are talking about developing or implementing compliance checks for improvements, there has to be a way to measure and check those improvements. That would be one of the mechanisms, I suppose. Do you go back and look at the data month by month or year by year on those requests to see if your implementation or performance measures are working?

Ms ROBINSON: Yes, we monitor our data to see how responsive we are and how many requests we can fix on first contact, how long it takes us, how many of them have significant issues versus wanting to check on their pay for the next fortnight. We look for trends in the data if things are popping up in a particular area that might be an indicator of something. We track significant KPIs internally as well, with different transaction types, our balances and where we need to look for any of those trends as early as we can find them.

Mr YAN: On the data you collect on performance measures, do you make that publicly available? Does it go in a report anywhere?

Ms ROBINSON: Most of it is internal and used for our internal management purposes. Some of it is made public as part of our KPIs and is reported in our annual report.

Mr MONAGHAN: It is probably critical of every sector I am hearing about future workforce—it relates to your traineeship program. Can you update on how that is going? This could be critical going forward.

Mr KIRBY: Trainees, apprentices and the labour market across the board in the Northern Territory has been a hot topic—not just in the Territory, as those labour market issues are prevalent across the board in the country. We have a range of programs that have been put together to encourage people—I think it will be an industry that booms in the future.

Previously we mentioned data centres, connectivity to our north and the opportunities that will come up. We have had a range of big projects on the go in the Northern Territory recently. I will get some exact detail from Kathleen about the trainee programs, because it is important for people to understand what opportunities there are for young Territorians or those who have been in the industry for a while and think the digital industry is a way they would like to progress in the future.

Ms ROBINSON: As at 31 March we had 109 trainees working in different areas across government that we are managing through our DCDD programs. Additionally DCDD has been working closely with the local digital industry to do our cross-sectoral traineeship program. That is one we are very close to getting under way, which is for people to work in multiple private sector entities in different parts of our local digital industry and spend time in government to learn what it is like on both sides. They learn all the different facets of the digital industry and the different careers and roles they could do.

We are also working in conjunction with the Office of the Commissioner for Public Employment and the departments of Education; and Industry, Tourism and Trade on starting a body of work to look at career pathways in government. That would be broader than trainees; it would include apprentices, graduates and other things as well. It is to look at the different ways we can bring people in and how to make it a better experience and get better outcomes from. It is in the early days, but has really promising potential.

Mr MONAGHAN: Critical to that data future, are the current 109 in that pathway—sorry, I might have misunderstood.

Ms ROBINSON: They are all sorts of different traineeships across government.

Mr CHAIR: That concludes consideration of Output 1.1.

Output 1.2 – Employment Services

Mr CHAIR: The committee will now call for questions on Output 1.2, Employment Services.

Mr YAN: What does it cost to deliver the NT Government jobs online service?

Mr KIRBY: Which part of the service are you are after.

Mr YAN: The cost to deliver the NT Government jobs online service—the webpage, or whatever you might call it, or the portal.

Mr KIRBY: I understand. We will get you that specific information. It does a power of work through its ...

Ms ROBINSON: I do not have the specific costs with me, but it would be a minimal amount.

Mr YAN: Am I able to take that on notice, because I have a follow-up question that goes with it?

Question on Notice No 7.1

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

Mr YAN: Minister, what does it cost to deliver the NT Government jobs portal for government?

Mr CHAIR: Minister, do you accept the question?

Mr KIRBY: Yes.

Mr CHAIR: The question asked by the Member for Namatjira has been allocated the number 7.1.

Mr YAN: How many jobs have been advertised by this portal in the reporting period?

Mr KIRBY: The recruitment services in the online portal managers over 4,800 recruitment actions per year.

Mr CHAIR: That concludes consideration of Output 1.2.

Output 1.3 – Procurement Services

Mr CHAIR: The committee will now consider Output 1.3, Procurement Services. Are there any questions?

Mr YAN: How many applications were made to purchase goods and services outside the Northern Territory in the 2020–21 reporting period?

Mr KIRBY: We have done a power of work to make sure agencies make as many purchases as possible within the Territory. I will double check with the department if that is data we have available or whether it will be specific agency data.

I will go through some of the information we have and I am happy to elaborate if that does not cover the query that you have. There were 262 single acquisition contracts awarded to Territory enterprise with an

additional 28 Territory enterprise contractors awarded under multiple award contracts representing 70% of total facilitated contract awards. We have some specific detail that goes to that, if it is of assistance.

Mr BURGOYNE: Minister, I do not think that is quite what I was after. I was after how many applications were made to purchase goods and services outside the NT for the 2020–21 reporting period.

Mr KIRBY: I am not sure we have that specific data with us.

Mr YAN: I am happy to take that on notice, Minister.

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

Mr KIRBY: Sorry, Member for Namatjira. We are just clarifying if that is agency data that we may not be able to draw that data from within DCDD, anyway.

Ms ROBINSON: Yes, that is right. We do not have it.

Mr KIRBY: Each agency would need to be asked that question. That information does not come back to DCDD from each agency.

Mr YAN: Does DCDD not oversee all procurement actions, even for the various agencies?

Ms ROBINSON: We oversee and facilitate procurement actions for agencies with the exception of the infrastructure programs and procurement through the Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Logistics. We have the procurement and data on the procurement actions we have overseen. I am not sure that we have ones about specific things where people have gone for something in particular interstate.

Mr YAN: That opens the question about procurement services and who is managing them right now. I understand about DIPL and looking after its own stuff because it is managing projects and other agencies' money. You are saying that DCDD has oversight of procurement for agencies, but only certain procurement and some agencies still look after their own stuff, or you do not have data on it.

Ms ROBINSON: We would have data on procurement actions that we undertake for agencies. If I use the example of my own agency, we undertake a wide-range of procurements and quite a lot of ICT procurement in that. A reasonable amount of that would be for things like software agreements and licences and things which are with interstate providers or global providers. We will do a normal NT procurement process for that, which we may then engage with a vendor from interstate or overseas. If that is what you are looking for, we can provide that data.

Mr YAN: Minister, the reason I ask the question is, that as part of the MOG changes, a number of procurement professionals or procurement parts of agencies have been moved out of those agencies across to DCDD. To me, that says that procurement actions of that agency are now being, in some way, managed through DCDD. If that is so, where does the data sit as far as, say, those applications as a point in fact?

Mr KIRBY: In some pretty broad terms, we can give detail on contracts that are awarded and how the dissemination between Territory and interstate occurs, if that is the information you asked for?

Mr YAN: I was specifically asking about applications made to purchase goods and services outside the NT. I am happy to take the data you manage for the agencies you have been working with and I might send written questions to other agencies to see how that will look overall.

Ms ROBINSON: We can provide the data based on whether the business that was awarded the contract is a Territory enterprise or not.

Question on Notice No 7.2

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

Mr YAN: I will change the question minister, because it gels with what Ms Robinson said. How many contracts were awarded to purchase goods and services with a breakdown of Territory business and non-Territory business, excluding DIPL?

Mr CHAIR: Minister, do you accept the question?

Mr KIRBY: Yes. There is some detail we will work through about what specifics we can get. We are happy to supply as much information as we can.

Mr CHAIR: The question asked by the Member for Namatjira has been allocated the number 7.2.

Mr YAN: My second question is about the applications and how many exemptions were approved, but you will not be able to provide any detail on that either. I will send written questions to the various agencies. How many audits were conducted into procurement actions in the reporting period?

Ms ROBINSON: In DCDD, we have audits that would encompass procurement, such as our end-of-year reviews from the Auditor-General and annual compliance audits. We have a value for territory assurance audit process and we report the information to the Buy Local Industry Advocate, which is an internal independent audit process. We have not had any other specific audits related to a targeted procurement matter.

Mr YAN: You have three large audits that you report back to other agencies but no specific audits into procurement actions. If the procurement people from different agencies have been amalgamated under MOG into DCDD, they would have been performing audit actions on procurement back in their agencies. Who now is performing the audit actions on procurement into those agencies?

Ms ROBINSON: Those agencies will have the same requirements, as we do, to have the value for territory assurance audit conducted and they would be managing that through their internal audit program arrangements. In DCDD we contract that out so we can have independence; a number of the other agencies would as well. They will get data from us and look at the processes we go through and we are required to provide support with those audits to provide the information. They are reported back to the agencies.

Mr KIRBY: We have just received a message from the CE of DITT. He has some information he will be able to provide for tier two and above contracts and procurements.

Ms BOOTHBY: The December 2020 report published by the Buy Local Advocate raised multiple concerns. What changes have you implemented since the report was released, or have you thrown this report in the bin like the Chief Minister does?

Mr MONAGHAN: A point of order! I ask the member to restate her question so it does not include imputation or insult under Standing Order 109.

Mr CHAIR: Member for Brennan, can you please restate the question?

Ms BOOTHBY: Sorry, Member for Fong Lim. He may not have thrown it in the bin but he certainly put it in the top drawer and did not look at it again.

Mr MONAGHAN: A point of order! It is very late in the afternoon to be doing this, but that still to me includes an imputation or an insult to the Chief Minister.

Ms BOOTHBY: Minister, the December 2020 report published by the Buy Local Advocate raised multiple concerns extremely important to Territory business, what changes have been implemented since the report was released?

Mr KIRBY: I understand and appreciate your question, which sits under the business portfolio with DIT so we are happy to answer the questions relating to the Buy Local Advocate in that portfolio output.

Ms BOOTHBY: I have a number of Buy Local questions, minister, will you commit to answering them in the Business and Innovation output?

Mr KIRBY: Certainly.

Mr YAN: I am still trying to comprehend and come to terms with the MOG changes with procurement, particularly with procurement people moving. I have a question about procurement that Northern Territory Police has done. I take it that DCDD will not be able to answer that question?

Mr KIRBY: As Kathleen explained earlier regarding infrastructure procurement, we are not directly involved with some of those contracts at all, and until we hear the detail of the query we are not going to be able to give much advice.

Mr YAN: The question is about CCTV technology in Alice Springs. Police recently tendered the installation of CCTV technology, including design, supply, installation, testing, commissioning, repair and maintenance across the Territory, including Alice Springs. The CCTV trailer is currently in use by police. Whilst maintained by Territory businesses, they are sourced from interstate, when technology is available in the Territory. As part of the procurement oversight by DCDD, how would this comply with NTG procurement processes?

Ms ROBINSON: It may help if I outline our role in procurement services, which is to facilitate and support the agencies in their procurement. At all stages the agency remains in control and determines their needs and they exercise the delegations and make the decisions. An agency will decide it wants something and we work with them to develop the RFT documentation to make sure we have the correct. We manage the taking it out to market process, forming the tender assessment panel and making sure all of the documentation and compliance requirements are met. The agency will lead the tender assessment panel and they will be actively involved in deciding the award of that procurement. An agency delegate will approve the decision.

We provide advice on requirements and compliance and all the process steps that need to happen to make sure that is done. Once that decision is made, we make sure all of the necessary advice and updates are happening. It goes on websites, gets advice—unsuccessful. Advice and arrangements are made for debriefs and all the things needed to make sure it happens—and get the contract awarded and in place.

We have participated in that procurement in that context. The decision about a successful respondent will be part of that particular tender assessment. It would require Police to address the issues—if there are any—with that one.

Mr YAN: That answers quite a few questions for me. I will be able to let people know.

Mr CHAIR: That concludes consideration of Output 1.3.

Output 1.4 – Information Management Services

Mr CHAIR: We will now move to Output 1.4, Information Management Services. Are there any questions?

Mr YAN: What system changes and improvements have been implemented to the government's records management systems and what has this cost?

Mr KIRBY: I will pass to Kathleen for some of the intricate detail. Records management and oversight of that is a constantly-evolving feast, with how the digital world is moving. There are a number of programs on a number of projects that are about how we exchange and record information. It is something we will dice with a lot into the future about safe storage of information and how that is kept going forward.

Ms ROBINSON: Our primary records management system is Territory Records Manager, TRM. We need to maintain and support that system and keep it workable for us. We periodically upgrade it, but it was a number of years ago since the last upgrade. I am not aware that we have any current active upgrade projects.

Mr MONAGHAN: I have a question on TRM. I recently migrated across from the other agencies with the MOG coming across. Even the transfer of the physical records, I am assuming, came across. I am very cautious, with the number of digital intrusions we have across the world at the moment. What is put in place to ensure individuals' information is secure and protected?

Mr KIRBY: I understand the Territory does not get missed by the opportunities some people take to try to get into our systems. We are very lucky to have a great group and crew of people who do a lot of frontline work to try to make sure those systems are not entered into inappropriately. Some of those opportunities that present themselves we will not talk about in detail today. I will see if Kathleen can provide more detail about exactly the processes we go through to make sure that information is correctly stored and looked after.

Ms ROBINSON: We have a range of caveats and controls across TRM, mostly for user access controls to manage the security. As part of our machinery of government changes, we need to pay a lot of attention to the changes required, so that people only access the records that are appropriate for them. We have a significant array of audit reporting capability in TRM as well to be able to check that the people accessing the

records are the appropriate people. We can make all of that available to agencies as well. It is not anything over and above our normal processes, but all of that toolset is available to use.

Mr MONAGHAN: It has not been complicated by the migration of those—or is it just business as usual in that space?

Ms ROBINSON: It is complicated by the machinery of government. As you imagine, we do a lot of machinery of government changes. This will sound like a brag, but the Northern Territory Government's record in managing machinery of government changes far outstrips anything I have seen in our ability to get things converted from agency A to agency B in a very short space of time. Generally, we can achieve it in under two months. If you talk to people in other states you will see a very different number. The one area that takes an awful lot longer than that is TRM. It is just how it is constructed and the work that has to go into working through the different records requirements takes a much longer period of time.

Mr YAN: How have you been able to rectify the issues across the various departments that have not been able to access their own records due to some of those machinery of government changes? What does it cost in man hours?

Mr KIRBY: We will not have a cost to that. I am not sure if Kathleen will have any information about them in the queries that we process as an agency. It is difficult to put specifics on man hours for that.

Ms ROBINSON: We have new service management tools we are putting in as part of our corporate services reform program. We are getting more information available to us in terms of managing requests across our service lines, which includes our information management service. For the period September 2020 to March 2021 we managed 10,000 requests. That would be across a full spectrum, not just the machinery of government issues, but a whole range of requests about files, file structures and records management requirements.

Mr YAN: With the machinery of government changes, licensing cannot access its TRM records since it moved out of AGD. It is a cause for concern for agencies that need access to specific records, particularly as it relates to licensing.

How many data breaches have been recorded by the department in relation to TRM?

Mr KIRBY: My understanding is specifically related to TRM. We have not had any data breaches. Some of the specifics about particular programs and data breaches would be difficult information to get. It is zero data breaches for TRM itself.

Mr YAN: Have we had any data breaches across the rest of NTG's IT platforms?

Mr KIRBY: I will take advice about how deeply we can discuss that.

Mr HOSKING: In terms of our IT systems and digital platforms for data breaches, the answer is zero.

Mr CHAIR: That concludes consideration of Output 1.4.

Output 1.5 – Finance Services

Mr CHAIR: The committee will now consider Output 1.5, Finance Services. Are there any questions?

Mr YAN: How many training sessions has the finance services division delivered to other government agencies to assist them to better manage their financial resources?

Mr KIRBY: Are you talking about training services from the central body out to each agency?

Mr YAN: Yes.

Mr KIRBY: We have information on how much financial training is run centrally, but do not have that with us.

Mr YAN: Can you take that on notice?

Question on Notice No 7.3

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

Mr YAN: How many training sessions has the finance services division delivered to other government agencies to assist them to better manage their financial resources?

Mr CHAIR: Minister, do you accept the question?

Mr KIRBY: Yes.

Mr CHAIR: The question asked by the Member for Namatjira is allocated the number 7.3.

Mr CHAIR: That concludes consideration of Output 1.5.

Output 1.6 – Property Leasing Services

Mr CHAIR: We will now proceed to Output 1.6, Property Leasing Services. Are there any questions?

Mr YAN: Can you explain why the budget for property leasing services increased by \$2m?

Mr KIRBY: It is a significant portion of money that we allocate to property leasing. We knew through machinery of government that we would get some questions on this. It is an extremely complex role to manage leasing arrangements and make sure all the payments are made on time. For specific information, I will hand to Kathleen for a detailed explanation.

Ms ROBINSON: It is a combination of a few things. It is adjustments to our records through the Australian Accounting Standard AASB 16 leasing arrangements about reflecting liabilities and assets; it is leasing portfolio changes for agencies, where agencies are seeking more leased property; and it is partially offset by a reduction in the budget parameters for indexation in the property portfolio.

Mr CHAIR: That concludes consideration of Output 1.6.

Output 1.7 – Vehicle Management Services

Mr CHAIR: I will now ask for questions on Output 1.7, Vehicle Management Services. Are there any questions?

Mr YAN: How is the Vehicle Management Services output different to the budget statement for NT Fleet?

Mr KIRBY: There are some complexities in regard to differences between those figures.

Ms ROBINSON: NT Fleet is a government business division that is part of a separate budget entity linked to our agency and has been for many years. In the corporate services reform changes that happened in 2019–20, one of the corporate support functions that was handed to our department is in fleet services, we call it vehicle management services so that we can distinguish it.

It was not all agencies that had them, but a number of agencies had internal support functions to manage things like fuel cards, vehicle replacement, information coming up, pool vehicles and their agencies and things like that. Fleet is on one side of the equation and the vehicle services supporting the agencies are on the other side.

Mr YAN: Can you provide a breakdown on what that budget line is—\$869,000? What is included specifically in that total?

Mr KIRBY: That budget breakdown predominantly relates to staff.

Mr YAN: Those staff are located within DCDD, or are they in other agencies—I would not say outsourced or co-located, but living somewhere else?

Mr KIRBY: No, they do all sit under DCDD.

Mr YAN: How many FTEs does that equate to, the \$869,000?

Mr KIRBY: We are reasonably sure it is eight, but we can double check that figure and get back to you.

Mr YAN: If you could, please. I have no further questions on that output. If you can provide the FTE count, that would be wonderful.

Mr CHAIR: You can do that in due course, minister?

Mr KIRBY: Yes.

Mr CHAIR: That concludes consideration of Output 1.7 and the Output Group 1.0.

OUTPUT GROUP 2.0 – DIGITAL GOVERNMENT DEVELOPMENT Output 2.1 – ICT Network Services

Mr CHAIR: We will now proceed to Output Group 2.0, Digital Government Development, Output 2.1, ICT Network Services. Are there any questions?

Mr YAN: The Network Services budget output has decreased by \$3.5m. Are you able to explain that decrease?

Mr KIRBY: The ICT services is a complex area. A lot is involved in that. For the specifics on the line item in the budget and any changes associated that I will hand to Kathleen.

Ms HURWOOD: Are you talking about the change in 2021?

Mr YAN: The change from the 2020–21 revised budget and 2021–22 budget. The revised is \$39.377m and the budget for 2021–22 is \$37.973m.

Ms HURWOOD: It is a combination of two main things. One was a project we had to do in the ICT service management toolset, which was in 2021, that has not continued into the next year. That creates a movement. The other one is part of a requirement for ongoing efficiencies through the root-and-branch review done in 2019.

Mr YAN: That total difference—are you able to provide a breakdown of that. If there is a project completion, that is X amount and what forms your efficiency dividend as part of that saving?

Ms HURWOOD: I would have to get the information on the project details specifically. The efficiency related to the root-and-branch review is \$900,000.

Mr YAN: If I deduct \$900,000 from \$3.5m I end up with \$2.6m.

Ms HURWOOD: There will be other numbers, including our operation efficiency dividend of 1% and things like that.

Mr YAN: Do any of the contracts engaged to provide ICT services use fly-in fly-out employees to work in your agency?

Mr KIRBY: We try to concentrate on—as much as we possibly can—using intra-Territory. We have had a range of large projects over the last few years, which involved bringing in some expertise. But for specifics on the network services and whether we have people coming from interstate, I will take advice on that.

Mr HOSKING: You are asking about the use of ICT resources and if we use FIFOs. The answer is no. We have a policy of not using FIFO resources in either our major ICT contracts or our projects. We occasionally need to contract services from interstate, where expertise is not available in the Territory. But there is no use of FIFO.

Mr YAN: Just to make sure that we have it right. Do any of the contractors engaged to provide ICT services to NTG use fly-in fly-out—you are saying no?

Mr HOSKING: Absolutely.

Mr MONAGHAN: Can I follow on from that? Does that include your panel of contractors?

Mr HOSKING: Yes, it does. Most of our major initiatives are resourced through our panel contract for those sorts of specialist resources. We have quite a strong policy position of engaging through local Territory suppliers. We would only go to a non-Territory enterprise if we cannot source that expertise locally. We do not engage in a FIFO construct.

Mr MONAGHAN: What is your quantum of panel contractors?

Mr HOSKING: Contractors in terms of resources?

Mr MONAGHAN: The numbers on the panel, yes.

Mr HOSKING: There are about close to 100 businesses on the panel contract ...

Mr MONAGHAN: Gee, we have improved up here.

Mr HOSKING: In actual resources on the ground engaged across all of our major contracts, it fluctuates. At the moment, we are at a significant high because our projects are in full flight. There would be, across our projects and business-as-usual activities, about 400 contractors working in the Territory.

Mr YAN: My favourite subject is the Banned Drinker Register. What is the funding this year for the BDR and can you explain what is covered by those costs?

Mr KIRBY: There is support from DCDD for the Banned Drinker Register. In the IT space we will dig out some specifics about the exact amount of support. There is some project-type work and upgrades that are happening there as well.

Mr HOSKING: DCDD supports the technology components of the Banned Drinker Register, so I can only speak to the budget allocation in respect of the IT components. For the reporting period, it is \$2.1m.

Mr YAN: That covers the IT side, not the infrastructure side of the BDR?

Mr HOSKING: That cost includes the computers and scanners in the retail liquor outlets. The IT system that sits behind it and the support for the software for vendors and technical support. It pretty much covers all the elements of the IT, but not the regulatory enforcement or policy.

Mr YAN: Are you able to provide any detail on the number of FTEs required to support the BDR in your agency? Or do you have multiple FTEs covering it?

Mr HOSKING: We do not have a dedicated number of FTEs who support the BDR. The BDR is supported out of one of our IT systems teams that supports the portfolio of agencies. It is a component of a number of different people's jobs.

The technical support for the BDR is outsourced to a local Territory IT company. The support for the software programming changes and those sorts of things are done by a local Territory business. We do the administrative support for the BDR, allocating user permissions for administrators and those sorts of things. We also manage the refresh of the infrastructure when it needs to be replaced.

Mr MONAGHAN: In the rollout of that new BDR technology—you talked about the refreshes—how will that reduce the footprint in the takeaway outlets in the Territory?

Mr HOSKING: The hardware refresh is in the final stages of planning at the moment. We have not started executing that. We have some programming changes to improve the underlying system that are in the final stages of being tested at the moment. There is a need to refresh the scanning hardware in the licensed liquor outlets over the second half of this year. We anticipate that that will deliver some improvements, but we are still in the final testing stages of that.

Mr YAN: What is the current outage rate for BDR equipment? What happens for the retailer when the BDR machines go down or do not operate?

Mr KIRBY: They are able to manually input data if they have to. I understand that for the business involved it would be a time-consuming operation, compared to just scanning somebody's licence. We try to ensure those instances are minimal. I am not sure if Chris has data of how often that has happened, but it does not happen on too many occasions.

Mr HOSKING: During the reporting period, we have not had any unscheduled outages of the BDR system, per se. Having an impact at the bottle shop, for example, could result from an Internet connectivity issue in that local region or a failure of the device in the shop. We manage the support for those devices in the liquor outlet. If one was to fail, we replace it, as we would with any computer piece of equipment within the Northern Territory Government network. We have not had a systemic outage or failure of the BDR during this period.

Mr YAN: How many point-of-sale scanner failures have we had in the reporting period and how many had to be replaced?

Mr KIRBY: There is an ongoing program of upgrading as new licences come out, which provide an extra level of complexity. We are always looking to make things easier for people at the point of sale. There is work happening with some hardware and software to make things easier, with the new licences and digital licences.

Mr HOSKING: In terms of failures of specific pieces of hardware, I do not have that information with me but I can take the question on notice and get it quite quickly.

Question on Notice No 7.4

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

Mr YAN: How many point of sale scanner failures have happened in the reporting period and how many have had to be replaced?

Mr CHAIR: Minister, do you accept the question?

Mr KIRBY: Yes.

Mr CHAIR: The question asked by the Member for Namatjira has been allocated the number 7.4.

Mr YAN: Minister, you touched on this before about the scanner failures and the requirement for retailers to have to input stuff manually. Are businesses compensated for any loss in trade due to those issues? All of a sudden, if a business has a line-up and the machines are down, they have to manually input data. People are not going to hang around, they will go elsewhere and get their alcohol. Is there compensation for those businesses who have failed equipment and required to manually input data?

Mr KIRBY: I am happy to take advice from the department, if they know or have heard anything different than I have. I heard of specific one-off instances when machines have failed and businesses have commented on the extra time to get sales processed. I have not heard of incidences where people have lost significant amounts of business. I have not had anyone come to our office seeking compensation.

If the department knows any individual instances when someone has lost access to the machine for a period of time, I am happy for them to update the committee.

Mr HOSKING: I am not aware that any businesses have sought compensation for lost revenue. If that was the case it is a question that would probably need to be put to Licensing NT, as that would likely be where the claim would be made as the policy for the Banned Drinker Register is held in that agency. From our perspective, in terms of supply the BDR technology, we have not received any claims for compensation.

Mr CHAIR: Is it possible to outline, for the committee, the process for the manual processing of a licence? Is it like when credit cards came in and you used that old clunky 'chunk-chunk'?

Mr KIRBY: My understanding is that if there is an Internet failure and people need to manually fill that in, then that is exactly as it sounds. People have to handwrite the details of somebody's licence. If it is a new licence that people are having trouble with—there have been a few different ways inserting pieces of paper

behind so that the hologram does not present a problem. Chris might have more specific detail on how people get around that.

Mr HOSKING: In the event someone was unable to scan, if the scanner was not performing properly or if the licence is not placed as it needs to be, the bottle shop attendant can simply put in the person's name and licence number and it will make the call to the BDR system and give them a pass or fail, depending on whether they are on the register or not. It is as simple as keying in a name and a licence number.

Mr CHAIR: That would not take that long.

Mr HOSKING: Under 60 seconds.

Mrs LAMBLEY: There has been a bit of trouble with new licences, I hear.

Mr KIRBY: That is one of the programs we are working through with some software and, hopefully, some hardware as well, which will alleviate that. Credit goes to the old scanners and to the people from the department who were shrewd enough a number of years ago not to throw the old machines out when they were disbanded, but to put them away somewhere. They have been used again. They are the same machines that are still operating to this day. You are right. The new licences have caused some issues because of the makeup of the licence. There are some ways people are trying to get around it. We are very hopeful that we will have a solution for in the future.

Before we move to the next output, Mr Chair, I can clarify that we have eight fleet staff working, as we suspected, in that area.

Mr CHAIR: That concludes consideration of Output 2.1.

Output 2.2 – Agency Business Systems and Support Services

Mr CHAIR: The committee will now consider Output 2.2, Agency Business Systems and Support Services. Are there any questions?

Mr YAN: Minister, how is the SerPro, the promised replacement project for Northern Territory Police, Fire and Emergency Services, progressing?

Mr KIRBY: Coming in as minister and learning the projects that DCDD has on their books and how they have worked through those—I guess we only need to look to our right and your left to see some of the projects that DCDD have been very heavily involved in for a number of years. SerPro is one that is extremely important. They have been doing a sterling job working their way through that.

Mr HOSKING: The project is on track in terms of scope, schedule and budget. The new SerPro system will be completed towards the end of this calendar year and we move into our final testing. We are scheduled to deploy the new system across the Territory in the first quarter of next calendar year. We are on track to deliver that and are working very closely with the Police department to manage that implementation.

Mr YAN: As a follow-on to that, there was \$45m over four years budgeted for this project. I note that Mr Hosking said that you are on time and, apparently, on budget. How much is being spent so far? Are there any budget revisions expected?

Mr KIRBY: Yes. We have spent just over 50% of that, \$24.5m to date, as at 31 March 2021. As we mentioned, it remains within budget.

Mr YAN: When speaking to Minister Worden about some Territory Families stuff and we were discussing loss of hours due to incidents in youth detention, she stated that they are unable to get the data out of the Work Health and Safety reporting system. I can speak from experience of utilising the Work Health and Safety reporting system; it is a bit of a nightmare. What work have you done so far to improve that system and, specifically to the point Minister Worden raised, why are you not able to pull the reports out of that system for an agency looking at lost-time incidents?

Mr KIRBY: Are you talking about in work place health and safety reporting system?

Mr YAN: It is a Work Health and Safety reporting system that I believe is managed by DCDD.

Mr KIRBY: Your query is around each agency getting access to that?

Mr YAN: Being able to provide appropriate reports. Minister Worden said she was unable to provide a report on lost time due to work place incidents, and it was about issues in youth detention because the system could not provide that report.

Mr KIRBY: Chris just explained that he has a reasonable understanding of the questions that were raised and the answer given. I will ask him to explain in a little more detail.

Mr HOSKING: The system has been migrated to a new version. It was originally run on our premises on a server in a relatively old configuration and the vendor has moved the system into a cloud-based solution so we migrated to that new version of the system.

I was listening to Minister Worden's appearance at estimates this afternoon. My understanding of the statement she made was related to the way the information was captured regarding the youth detention workers and what was recorded in terms of the reason. I have to take the question on notice for determining whether it is the way that information is captured and recorded, or the way the system codifies it, because it may be the way the absence is being captured that it does not provide the answer. Whether that is an IT issue with the system I need to take that on notice and clarify.

Mr YAN: I have worked with that system extensively at the management level and you have to put the reason for the injury or illness and it has all the dropdown menus. One would like to—and I hate to use the word—assume that you would be able to plug in a specific thing for an agency or a workplace and produce a report, because the reports help the workplace improve their work health and safety measures. It is very hard to improve if you do not know what is going on. That is the problem I have seen with that system; work places cannot get the data they need.

Mr HOSKING: There is a reporting ability in the system. Whether that is closely matched enough to the way the data is codified to produce a meaningful report, I would have to take that element of the question on notice. I know the system you are referring to. I am not a regular user of it, so I could not ...

Mr YAN: Excuse me, Mr Hosking, you do not want to be.

Mr HOSKING: I think we all know the one we are talking about. I am happy to take the question on notice and come back to clarify for you, whether it is actually a system capability issue or the way that the data is actually being captured.

Question on Notice No 7.5

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

Mr YAN: Can you please provide detail on why the FIGTREE system cannot provide reports on specific injuries or illnesses within agencies or workplaces, so that they can better improve their work health and safety outcomes?

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR: Minister, do you accept the question?

Mr KIRBY: Yes.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR: The question asked by the Member for Namatjira has been allocated the number 7.5.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR: We will take a comfort stop for three minutes.

The committee suspended.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR: Welcome back. That concludes consideration of Output 2.2.

Output 2.3 – Across-government Systems and Support Services

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR: The committee will now move to Output 2.3, Across-government Systems and Support Services. Are there any questions.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR: That concludes consideration of Output 2.3.

Output 2.4 – Digital Projects

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR: We will now proceed to Output 2.4, Digital Projects. Are there any questions?

Mr YAN: In your opening statement about the 65 (inaudible – microphone off) actions in 21.2 on the Digital Territory strategy. What is the budget? Do you have a budget line?

Mr KIRBY: I will pass to Kathleen to answer that.

Ms ROBINSON: We do not have a specific budget line for the strategy. It contains a number of actions, which are run through multiple other budget lines. For example, our major ICT projects are in there as part of the actions we are delivering with their own separate budgets.

Mr YAN: You are saying that those digital actions are managed in-house under current budget.

Minister, what has been the cost for The Territory Check In app?

Mr KIRBY: As I mentioned in my opening statement, even in recent months, or from the end of last year—\$4.6m. It gives me an opportunity to congratulate Chris and his team on the work they have done. I know from going interstate that you very rarely get a one-stop shop like this is. Other people have given me feedback as well—that they have come up from interstate and found it extremely easy to use, being able to check multiple people in on the one app. It has been a very powerful tool for us to use to keep us all safe. I thank them all for all their hard work getting that together.

Mr HOSKING: There is not one straight-out acquisition cost for the app; it was comprised of a number of elements. We collaborated with the ACT Health Department to share the intellectual property for the design of the app, because they use a very similar one in the ACT. We have a number of operating costs within our own budget that support the day-to-day operation of it.

I do not have the cost in front of me, but the cost to establish it was quite moderate. Most of that work was done by existing resources within our agency. There is a monthly operating cost to make the app available to Territorians. I would have to take that on notice to be sure I have all the input costs captured for you and give a full answer. I just do not have that detail in front of me this afternoon.

Question on Notice No 7.6

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

Mr YAN: What are the costs associated with The Territory Check In app?

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR: Minister, do you accept the question?

Mr KIRBY: Yes, certainly.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR: The question asked by the Member for Namatjira has been allocated number 7.6.

Mr YAN: Why has the Digital Projects budget output decreased by over \$8.5m?

Mr KIRBY: There are complex explanations, post-machinery of government, about how this money is moved around. I will get Kathleen to shed some light on that.

Ms ROBINSON: That digital project line tends to move a reasonable amount. Primarily it is two things. One is changes in the time frame of our digital projects. If something is working to a different time line and the

costing needs to move to another financial year, you will see the movement happening from one financial year to the other. The other element that tends to change them periodically is when the projects are reviewed and expenditure is reclassified between operational and capital. You will see in our capital and output appropriation, numbers will move appreciably as well.

Mr YAN: I note the capital has changed as well so that probably answers my second question.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR: Can you just talk about the Can-do Territory (inaudible – microphone off)?

Mr KIRBY: It is a welcome addition to the Territory's business landscape. There has been over 1,000 individual applications or applications of that portal. It gives people the opportunity for food registration and basic alcohol licence applications. To date, there have been 1,023 submissions lodged through the portal.

The second release in May, to cover those special events—whether it is the Bangtail Muster down the track or something like the Glenti, which we have had recently, the majority are run by volunteer staff. Traditionally a big chunk of their work is to get through all of the approvals. To specifically have the ability, within this portal, to do 73% of those types of liquor licence applications has been a welcome addition.

Traffic to the food and liquor licence application pages has increased substantially over the last few months. People are starting to learn more about it. It will be upgraded and eventually we would love to have a lot of government services running through a site like this where you can track online and see where your application is up to.

We have spoken to a range of businesspeople who had other businesses open, used it and spoke glowingly about it. Conversely, people who already opened businesses just before it came out said that they wished it was available when they had to go through the very paper-based processes we used to have. We are extremely thankful to the people who did the hard work with that and are sure it will make our businesses very thankful in the future.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR: That concludes consideration of Output 2.4.

Output 2.5 – Data Services

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR: The committee will now consider Output 2.5 Data Services. Are there any questions?

Mr YAN: I have no questions.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR: That concludes consideration of Output 2.5.

Output 2.6 – Digital Communications

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR: The committee will now consider Output 2.6 Digital Communications. Are there any questions?

Mr YAN: There is no 4G coverage at King Ash Bay near Borroloola. Are there any plans in place to install a phone tower at King Ash Bay?

Mr KIRBY: It is an understatement to say that regional connectivity is one of the primary functions that Digital and Corporate Development deals with—a power of work that goes on. We are probably one of the few jurisdictions that has to work really closely with Telstra as a major provider and with the federal government for funding in improvements for remote areas of the Northern Territory.

There has been great work done to improve services over in the Tiwi Islands recently. We had the opportunity to get the Telstra boss there a few months ago. He is a regular visitor to the Northern Territory and is aware of how important connectivity is across the Territory. As for whether we have a specific plan in place for that area, I will hand over to Kathleen.

Ms ROBINSON: The current co-investment programs we have for telecommunications in remote communities do not include King Ash Bay.

Mrs LAMBLEY: The broadband and NBN connectivity in the rural area of Alice Springs is very bad. On the weekend of Finke, on the Saturday, I was unable to download the *NT News* all day. I just could not do it. A

lot of people live in the rural area of Alice Springs south of the Gap. I dare say many thousands of people have shocking connectivity of broadband. Are there any plans you know of to address that?

Mr KIRBY: In my short time as minister we have been to Alice Springs a couple of times. On the most recent visit we spoke to business owners in that area just on the outer of Alice Springs. They explain some of the difficulties they run into. I can only imagine how bad it would get on a weekend like Finke.

Ms ROBINSON: The National Broadband Network, NBN Co, looks after broadband. We have a strong advocacy role with NBN Co; we meet regularly and advocate a lot for increased and improved coverage in the Northern Territory. Our coverage profile is quite different to other jurisdictions and we put the effort into encouraging NBN Co to improve the standard of connectivity and all the centres possible.

In relation to Alice Springs, NBN Co recently came out with a new investment program—around \$4.5bn was announced in the Northern Territory. That includes upgrading to fibre to the premises connections for 11,000 residents in Alice Springs. I am not sure exactly where they are. Living in the Darwin rural area myself, and understanding connectivity issues, I am not 100% sure it would be in the Alice Springs rural area—maybe some other suburbs; I do not know the specific residents. A group of people in Alice Springs will get better connectivity through that program, and we will continue advocacy with NBN Co to encourage that to happen more broadly in the NT.

Mrs LAMBLEY: How would we find out where those 11,000 are?

Ms ROBINSON: I will follow that up and find out. It is probably available, I just do not know of the top of my head where it is.

Mrs LAMBLEY: Could you send it through to me?

Ms ROBINSON: If we can get the information from NBN Co, and assuming we can, we can certainly pass it on.

Mr COSTA: In regard to the Tiwi Islands—the minister mentioned the recent upgrades there—the upgrades are good, but there is one problem we have, which is the connectivity. Milikapiti is still on 3G, and the data is very slow.

Is there any feedback in regard to Cahills Crossing in West Arnhem? It is important that we have some type of telecommunications network, especially with crocs at the crossing and people fishing there.

Mr KIRBY: You are right, understanding that the communication is considerably better on the Tiwi Islands than it would have been. Andy Penn and I had to duck outside of the council building to do interviews on the day we were over there celebrating that we had improved connectivity.

There will continually be a lot of work to do. Milikapiti and Cahill's Crossing in the East Arnhem area is somewhere where we will continue to do a lot of work. There are some projects being completed at the moment. I will get some of that detail from Kathleen.

Ms ROBINSON: Telstra is separately progressing a project to improve the service at Milikapiti and upgrade that. It is not run through us, so I do not have many details on it.

In relation to Cahill's Crossing, that is one of the sites in Telstra's remote current investment program. Telstra is doing a feasibility study—it may already have been completed—on the right solution for that site. You should see activity on that within the next few months.

Mr COSTA: I appreciate your work, Kathleen, thank you.

Mrs LAMBLEY: Either way, that comment you made then, minister, may end up in Bushranger. When you think about it and hear stories like that, it is like we are living in a third world, when we do not have connectivity to broadband at times. It is a big area. How much of your time are you investing into advocating on behalf of Territorians? You have a lot on your plate, but this is critical, is it not?

Mr KIRBY: It certainly is a critical area and takes up a significant portion of what we do. Most other jurisdictions across the nation are co-investing either with Telstra or the federal government and it is not something they have to worry about. It is because of the expanse of distance and our capacity to invest in

every one of those projects on our own. We have to rely on assistance from the people at Telstra and from the federal government.

We have done some work with some local companies to substantially improve it and make sure we have cables across to the Tiwi Islands, so the reliance on satellite provisions or radio technology has significantly improved.

I am happy for either Chris or Kathleen to give an update, because the amount of work going on is remarkable. It will continue to improve. At the moment we know that Telstra invests heavily in the Northern Territory. It opened an Indigenous call centre just across the road recently. It was also hit with a reasonably heavy fine, about which we wrote to the federal Treasurer trying to plead with him to get that money—instead of it being invested back into the federal Treasurer, invest it into remote programs to include upgrading telecommunication systems for remote Territorians. Unfortunately, we did not hear back from him about that.

Ms ROBINSON: Regarding telecommunications and advocacy, it is a small unit within my department. We have some people with significant expertise in the area. It is something we devote a lot of effort to. I anticipate, in rough numbers, about 75%-plus of our ministerial traffic relates to telecommunications. It is the vast majority of our correspondence and communications. We closely monitor what is going on. We participate in every federal inquiry that I am aware of, making NTG submissions and representation. We meet very regularly with Telstra, Vocus and NBN Co. We put as much energy as we are able to encourage and present the Northern Territory's views.

If you spoke to any of those, they would say that they have a very good appreciation of the Northern Territory context. Our environment—as you picked up before—is not commercially viable, so we have to run arguments that relate to social benefits and social justice rather than commercial arguments for arrangements with the telcos.

We run multiple projects. We have been working with Telstra on co-investment programs since about 2009. It is something in the order of \$43m put into those projects over that period of time. As a result there are now modern telecommunication facilities at around 40 to 50 communities that were not previously connected to the national network.

Mrs LAMBLEY: I do not know if you would have this figure, but what proportion of the NT has less than optimal Internet connection?

Ms ROBINSON: You will recall that I mentioned earlier about our profile being different to other jurisdictions? I have to make sure I have the exact figures here. The intention for the NBN was that urban centres would get fibre. There is a fixed wireless footprint and a satellite for outside of areas they can service through fibre and wireless. At a national level, that satellite footprint is either 4% or 6%, I just have to check that number. In the Northern Territory 29% of our population service by satellite.

Mr KIRBY: Since these co-investment programs started, 43 communities have been connected and another dozen are in train at the moment.

Mrs LAMBLEY: How many are left over after that?

Ms ROBINSON: Hundreds.

Mrs LAMBLEY: That is the thin edge of the wedge, really.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR: That concludes consideration of Output 2.6.

Output 2.7 – Digital Connectivity and Strategy

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR: The committee will now proceed to Output 2.7, Digital Connectivity and Strategy. Are there any questions?

Mr YAN: In the last discussion you answered most of my questions, which is great. What budget has been outlaid for the NTG-Telstra remote telecommunications co-investment program for 2021–22?

Mr KIRBY: We did answer a few of your questions on co-investment. I will get the exact figure from Kathleen.

Ms ROBINSON: It is a \$14m over four years. It is \$4m in 2021–22.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR: That concludes consideration of Output 2.7, Output Group 2.0.

OUTPUT GROUP 3.0 – CORPORATE AND SHARED SERVICES
Output 3.1 – Corporate and Governance

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR: We will now proceed to Output Group 3.0, Corporate and Shared Services, Output 3.1, Corporate and Governance. Are there any questions?

Mr YAN: How many executive contracts does the agency have? Can you provide a breakdown by level and cost? I am happy to take that question on notice, minister.

Mr KIRBY: We will see how much of that information we have. We have a lot of the positions highlighted but we may not have costs associated with that highlighted.

Mr YAN: I can find the cost for the positions myself.

Mr KIRBY: We have 46 executive contracts: 28 ECO1; 14 ECO2; one ECO3; two ECO4; and one ECO6.

Mr YAN: Has the number of executive contract officers increased or decreased since the last financial reporting period?

Mr KIRBY: It has decreased.

Mr YAN: What was the level of ECOs in the last reporting period?

Mr KIRBY: There were 49, I believe.

Mr YAN: What ICT systems are due for replacement or upgrading?

Mr KIRBY: I will have Mr Hosking provide an update on the projects or systems to be upgraded in the future.

Mr HOSKING: The DCDD has a number of projects in flight where we are replacing major IT systems on behalf of agencies. We are leading replacement projects in the areas of clinical systems for health, the SerPro system for police that we spoke of previously, a new child protection and youth justice system for Territory Families, Housing and Communities, a new digital court solution for the justice department, the Can-do Territory portal and we are in the final stages of tender assessment for a new online booking system for Parks. We have a number of other systems in planned replacement programs. It is a fairly long list, I can go through them if you like but those are the major ones we are engaged in.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR: That concludes consideration of Output 3.1.

Output 3.2 – Shared Services Received

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR: The committee will now proceed to Output 3.2, Shared Services Received. Are there any questions?

That concludes consideration of Output 3.2.

Output 3.3 – Shared Services Provided

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR: The committee will now proceed to Output 3.3, Shared Services Provided. Are there any questions?

That concludes consideration of Output 3.3 and Output Group 3.

Are there any non-output specific budget-related questions?

That concludes consideration of outputs related to the Department of Corporate and Digital Development. On behalf of the committee I thank the officers who assisted the minister today.

NT FLEET

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR: We can now move onto the NT Fleet business line. Are there any questions for the minister on NT Fleet?

That concludes consideration of the NT Fleet. I thank the officials who assisted the minister today.

DATA CENTRE SERVICES

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR: The committee will now consider the Data Centre Services business line. Minister, I invite you to make a statement on the Data Centre Services.

Mr KIRBY: I do not have a prepared statement. It would be remiss of me not to congratulate everybody who has been involved in the moving of the data centre. It has been a problem that has been a noose or an anchor around the Northern Territory Government for some time. People who have been intricately involved with the public service have known for some time there were concerns about the services contained within the Chan building. For the project to be completed in the time line it has been, and as professionally as it has been, warrants commendation for the people involved—not just the beautiful green space we now see out the window alongside of us.

I was amazed, when I had the opportunity to visit the new data centre, by how cleanly, clearly and clinically it is operated. The figures that Chris explained to us on the day about—by upgrading equipment and air conditioning it decreased costs of running the facility because it is new equipment. I will let Chris elaborate on that topic.

Mr HOSKING: The NT Government was doing its computing in the Chan Building since the 1970s when we first started doing computing. The project to establish the new data centre at Millner was a \$15m undertaking. I am pleased to say that it was delivered \$1m under budget. We worked to a hard deadline to be out of there by March 2020, which we made with about a week to spare. Every piece of computing, network connectivity, telephony, the whole lot all shoots back to the data centre. It is the centre of the universe for all of our IT and connectivity.

We are in a new facility and it shores up the NT Government's computing footprint for decades. It has allowed us to re-purpose that real estate from an average-looking old building to some nice green lawn. It is great to have it completed. It will see us well into the future. It was a fantastic effort by a bunch of people from different agencies, who I will not be able to name today. It is worth noting that this is the first time we are meeting as a committee and the building is no longer there.

Mrs LAMBLEY: Minister, are we able to have a tour of the new data centre?

Mr KIRBY: If people are interested to have a look—we obviously do not advertise a great deal about it given the sensitivity of the equipment that runs there. I am sure Chris and his team are proud of it.

Mrs ROBINSON: There are some security requirements we need to be careful of, but we are more than happy—there are people there who are very proud to show it off.

Mr HOSKING: There is an induction process and you will need sensible shoes, but other than that it is pretty straightforward.

Mrs LAMBLEY: I am there; let me know.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR: I concur about the demolition of that building as my previous company was involved in the structural demolition and planning of it. It is a wonderful achievement to move to a far more appropriate centre.

Mr YAN: I also offer my congratulations to the team on moving the data centre. It has also shored-up services in Alice Springs, which at times were particularly intermittent for government agencies there. I know the amount of work it took to move that facility. Being involved in some IT migration work myself, I understand the complexity and congratulations to the team.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR: Being no other questions that concludes consideration of the Data Centre Services business line.

Mr KIRBY: Mr Chair, perhaps before we formally close off, Kathleen has handed me an answer to question 7.2 that we took on notice. I am happy to answer the question from the perspective of this department.

Answer to Question on Notice No 7.2

Mr KIRBY: For procurement managed on behalf of agencies—from 1 July 2020 to 31 March 2021 there were 437 in total, with 314 of those contracts awarded to Territory enterprises and 123 awarded to non-Territory enterprises.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR: That concludes consideration of the Data Centre Services business line. On behalf of the committee I thank the Corporate and Digital Development agency staff, who provided advice today.

Mr KIRBY: I thank the DCDD team. They do a power of work and are quiet achievers. They work in the background and oversee a lot of what goes on across the Northern Territory, particularly relating to the public sector. A range of projects are operating and have been on our books for a period of time. They are tracking on time and on budget—the complexities of dealing with SerPro programs, to moving the entire data centre for the Northern Territory Government and to some of the other very sensitive nature that they deal with.

It would be remiss of me not to thank everybody involved for any of the data solutions they put together in such a short period of time during COVID and will continue to do into the future. I sincerely thank them for all of their hard work and would be pleased if they could pass on my thanks to their staff.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR: We will have a changeover of staff now and so take a short three-minute break while this occurs. I ask the Corporate and Digital Development agency staff to leave promptly so that we can admit Industry, Tourism and Trade staff. Thank you everybody.

The committee suspended.

**SMALL BUSINESS
JOBS AND TRAINING**

DEPARTMENT OF TOURISM, INDUSTRY AND TRADE

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR: Minister, I invite you to introduce the officials accompanying you and make an opening statement regarding your portfolios of Small Business and Jobs and Training.

Mr KIRBY: Mr Deputy Chair, I have with me today Shaun Drabsch, Chief Executive Officer of the Department of Industry, Tourism and Trade. He is no stranger to this committee. I also have Catherine White, General Manager Business and Workforce; and Joanna Frankenfeld, Chief Financial Officer. We have not worried about putting an opening statement together and are more than happy to move straight into the important business of answering people's questions.

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

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR: The committee will now consider the estimates of proposed expenditure contained in the Appropriation (2021–2022) Bill as they relate to Small Business and Jobs and Training. Are there any agency-related whole-of-government questions on budget and fiscal strategy?

Ms BOOTHBY: Minister, your portfolio of Veterans' Affairs does not have any budget outputs or associated department allocation or resources that can be found. Are you dipping into the Defence Industries budget under a different portfolio or are you doing nothing?

Mr KIRBY: That is an interesting way to start. I can clarify that a lot of the funding, as in the \$5m that the federal government invested into the Northern Territory for Veterans' Affairs and their wellbeing—we will work closely with the federal government and its ministers to make sure we get the best outcome for those people.

Any finances involved for Veterans' Affairs in the Northern Australia Development output are contained and are not separately published, which is why there may be some confusion. The budget variation for Veterans'

Affairs sits within the Northern Australia Development Market Engagement and Trade output in the whole-of-agency briefing number two. It sits within the portfolio brief of Minister Manison.

Ms BOOTHBY: Will you be able to answer any of the Veterans' Affairs questions that we have for you today?

Mr KIRBY: I am more than happy to answer as many questions as we can, because we want to be as helpful as we can put all the very polite questions we get about veterans.

Ms BOOTHBY: Wonderful. What is the actual expenditure in Veterans' Affairs for 2020–21? What will it be in 2021–22?

Mr KIRBY: My recollection of the Veterans' Affairs is that we have two full-time staff who work in the area. There are a number of programs that they run, including study tours. We have a peak body of volunteers who meet to decide the functions and to make sure that veterans are being supported and represented in the best way possible.

Ms BOOTHBY: Minister, do you have the actual expenditure for Veterans' Affairs?

Mr KIRBY: There is not a line item in the budget itself. As we explained, it does not sit with me. It sits with Minister Manison. We will take that on notice and see if we can find out the expenditure for Veterans' Affairs over the course of the year.

Question on Notice No 7.7

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

Ms BOOTHBY: What is the actual expenditure in Veterans' Affairs for 2020–21? What will it be in 2021–22?

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR: Minister, do you accept the question?

Mr KIRBY: Yes.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR: The question asked by the Member for Brennan has been allocated the number 7.7.

Ms BOOTHBY: Minister, you mentioned the peak body of volunteers. Is this your minister's advisory council for Veterans' Affairs or is that different?

Mr KIRBY: No, that is the Veterans' Affairs committee that I was referring to.

Ms BOOTHBY: Apparently there are some vacancies on that council and the terms of reference have changed since you have become the Minister for Veterans' Affairs, meaning that Cabinet approval is needed to appoint such people to the council. Why has this changed?

Mr KIRBY: We recently worked to update the people who sit on the Veterans' Affairs Advisory Council. We take it extremely seriously. The majority of the committees and councils that we have across the Northern Territory Government—we take recommendations to Cabinet as a part of our normal processes.

Ms BOOTHBY: How many Veterans' Affairs Ministerial Advisory Council meetings have you attended of this year?

Mr KIRBY: I attended one of those meetings early in my tenure and will continue to attend as many of those meetings as I possibly can. One of the valuable things I have learned in the Veterans space is that it is not always at the formal meetings where you get information and a solid feeling for what is going right or wrong.

There are a range of veterans who meet outside of the formal meetings. We have taken some medical people from facilities to talk to people and veterans in smaller groups. It has proven extremely successful. The federal minister Darren Chester has always made himself available. On his visits to Darwin this year for the Bombing of Darwin and for ANZAC Day, I have had the pleasure of meeting with him and progressing veterans' issues through those avenues.

Ms BOOTHBY: Does the Veterans' Affairs Ministerial Advisory Council have minutes which are publicly available? Do you take recommendations from the advisory group or do you take them from the informal sessions you referred to?

Mr KIRBY: The question was whether there are formal minutes?

Ms BOOTHBY: That is correct. Are they publicly available? Do you take recommendations from those meetings or do you use the informal sessions you spoke about for recommendations?

Mr KIRBY: I will start with the last part of the question first. As far as taking advice from the council, yes, we take advice from all the peak bodies we set up. As far as their formal minutes and whether they are publicly available, I will have to get some information to find out if they are available publicly to rank and file members of the public.

Question on Notice No 7.8

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

Ms BOOTHBY: Are the Veterans' Affairs Ministerial Advisory Council minutes publicly available?

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR: Minister, do you accept the question?

Mr KIRBY: Yes.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR: The question asked by the Member for Brennan has been allocated number 7.8.

Ms BOOTHBY: Your portfolio of Recreational Fishing does not have any budget output or associated department allocation or resources that I can find. Are you dipping into the Fisheries budget under a different portfolio or are you doing nothing?

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR: I remind the Member for Brennan the question should not have imputation. Please rephrase your question—I suggest just the last bit.

Ms BOOTHBY: Your portfolio of Recreational Fishing does not have any budget output or associated department allocation or resources that I can find. Can I ask you some questions about Recreational Fishing in this output please?

Mr KIRBY: Yes, certainly.

Ms BOOTHBY: In December 2019, AFANT received \$100,000 in funding from Recreational Fishing grant schemes to construct an access route through Manbulloo Station to a spot on the Katherine River known locally as 50K Hole. Where are negotiations at with the landowner? When will this new access route be constructed and the grant funds be paid?

Mr KIRBY: One of your comments at the start was about funding allocations. The allocation for roadworks to be done will sit with DIPL. We run a number of projects—boat ramps, boat ramp upgrades and projects like that. I do not have information in front of me about Manbulloo Station, if you would like to spell out ...

Ms BOOTHBY: That is right. A recreational fishing grant was awarded to AFANT for \$100,000 to construct an access route through Manbulloo Station to a spot on the Katherine River known as 50K Hole. Where are negotiations at with the landowner of Manbulloo Station? When will this access route be constructed?

Mr KIRBY: I will get you to restate the question and we will take that on notice.

Question on Notice No 7.9

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

Ms BOOTHBY: In December 2019, AFANT received \$100,000 in funding from the Recreational Fishing Grant Scheme to construct an access route through Manbulloo Station to a spot on the Katherine River

known as 50K Hole. Where are negotiations at with the landowner? When will the new access route be constructed and grant funds paid?

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR: Minister, do you accept the question?

Mr KIRBY: Yes.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR: The question asked by the Member for Brennan has been allocated number 7.9.

Ms BOOTHBY: What discussions by you, as Minister for Recreational Fishing, have been held regarding negotiations between government and the Northern Land Council on its proposed new permit system for recreational fishing on coastal waters across the Top End?

Mr KIRBY: I will try to be clear in this, given that it was previously my portfolio of Primary Industry. I have been involved in a number of discussions. I was fortunate to attend Katherine earlier on, it might have been 2019, to sign the heads of agreement between the Northern Land Council, peak fishing bodies and the Northern Territory Government to commit to a way forward.

Since the more recent Northern Territory election, the formal negotiations—if we want to term it that way—for Blue Mud Bay—which these permits align to—sits with the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs. I am aware how some of those are tracking. We continue to push on and advocate on behalf of recreational fishers to continue to get permits and available access to as many rec fishing spots as possible, while respecting the rights of the traditional owners—federal court cases laid out those decisions many years ago.

The operational nature of these discussions will now sit with the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs. If there are specific questions on funding or outputs we may need to direct you to that minister.

Ms BOOTHBY: Two weeks before the 2020 Northern Territory election you alluded to this, also. Your Chief Minister announced that you had reached an agreement with the NLC, which had committed to permit-free fishing until December 2022 in exchange for \$10m in taxpayers' money. How much of this \$10m has been given to the NLC to date? Given that the agreement you reached has not been honoured, will the remainder of the \$10m still be paid to the NLC?

Mr KIRBY: As I mentioned, those detailed financial questions now sit with the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs. The questions will have to be directed to her for answers on exactly what funding has progressed.

Ms BOOTHBY: Can you help me with what output that is, please?

Mr KIRBY: I can clarify that it is not in one of my outputs.

Ms BOOTHBY: I understand that Minister Uibo is on tomorrow, but is there a specific output?

Mr COSTA: Output 8.1, Aboriginal Affairs.

Ms BOOTHBY: Thank you, I will make sure she gets that question.

Are you committed to reducing red tape for business, small and not so small, or just Dan Murphy's?

Mr KIRBY: We have committed to reducing red tape for businesses across the Northern Territory.

Ms BOOTHBY: Which small businesses will benefit from the red tape reduction changes you plan to implement?

Mr KIRBY: There is already a range of businesses that are benefiting. We expressed in a previous output group that a number of businesses have already used the Can-do portal. Any business that gets the opportunity to renew food or liquor licenses will now have the capacity to go through that Can-do portal. There will be hundreds of Territory businesses that have already used that, and hundreds more in the future will get the opportunity to use it. There will be a suite of measures tied up within that.

We are doing a range of things. There is a range of new systems that we will implement to make sure people can access and apply online, as we detailed in those previous outputs—to make doing business in the Territory much more streamlined.

Ms BOOTHBY: You mention food and liquor licences, and the Can-do portal to make it easier for them, but there are other business industries—you talk about a suite of measures in this new online system. Can you explain what other small businesses, outside of food and liquor, will benefit from?

Mr KIRBY: The next iteration, as I spoke about with DCDD, implemented throughout the course of this year was for about 70% of their short-term liquor applications for events and issues. In future, whether it is getting to the stage where people's white cards can be run through the Can-do portal—there is a range of other trade applications that we will look at doing into the future. There is a range of applications outside of the Can-do portal that I will get Shaun to run through.

Mr DRABSCH: The department's responsibility under the TERC recommendations is to undertake a program of comprehensive regulatory reform, with regulatory mapping across a range of sectors. This will affect not only the largest businesses, such as mines and so forth, but also many of the small businesses that operate in the extractives industry. That is one example, but there are a number of processes with retail goods suppliers; there are transport services and so forth, and we will be investigating the regulatory arrangements that set within their, coordinating with other agencies and pursuing a program of red tape reduction.

Often it does not go so much to the red tape but how regulation is appropriately applied and the processes and systems that government applies in administering the regulations. That is an ongoing program of work that we are undertaking as part of the Territory Economic Reconstruction program.

Ms BOOTHBY: Who are you consulting to implement these changes?

Mr DRABSCH: We are consulting with a broad range of stakeholders, industry groups and individual industries. We draw feedback from our Small Business Champions and other industry officers based in Darwin and our regional offices throughout the Territory.

Ms BOOTHBY: What is the time frame for these changes to be implemented?

Mr DRABSCH: There is a comprehensive program of reforms which started with liquor and hospitality—tightening the processes and pursuing the target of 30-day approvals where possible. When it involves community consultation or other processes, it takes longer for regulatory approvals. In terms of the precise detail of each of the individual initiatives we make announcements on that on a regular basis of the activities that we are undertaking. I can provide further information on that if you require.

Ms BOOTHBY: That is okay, thank you. The December 2020 report published by the Buy Local Advocate raised multiple concerns. What changes have been implemented since the report was released?

Mr KIRBY: There has been a range of initiatives through the Value for Territory and procurement. I will ask Shaun to speak about the local plan, compliance and the report.

Mr DRABSCH: The Buy Local Advocate has issued now three annual reports, one earlier this year for which we provided a detailed response to the Buy Local Advocate. He raised a range of issues regarding the administration and procurement processes, the attention to contract management, attention to local content, the capability of procurement staff, the assessment of tenders and the reporting back of outcomes of tenders to bidders that were unsuccessful—quite a comprehensive range of recommendations which we have responded in detail. The Buy Local Advocate is also a member of the Procurement Review Board of which I am the Deputy Chair. Three other CEOs are members of that board, including Ms Robinson who was here earlier today.

As a result of the dialogue we have been having with the Buy Local Advocate over his tenure we developed a range of changes to policy reform measures and, critically, the establishment of what is now called the Value for Territory Assessment Framework. That is a detailed framework where we identify the key criteria which occur in a procurement. We apply suggested weightings to them and there is a 30% weighting for local content, but also importantly to help procurement practitioners across agencies and in the Department of Corporate and Digital Development and DIPL to give them guidance about common language to set the questions for tenders so that tenderers have consistent language to interpret and best respond in their applications. Importantly that it is a modular system which can be adjusted for the range of procurements which occur from civil contracts to ICT contracts to consultancy services more generally.

There is a sort of mix and match process where there are standard questions locked in according to the context of each procurement. An important part of that process is to come up with that approach and the

policy, which is in the process of finalisation through government processes. Then there will be the important process of training and educating our practitioners across the agencies, all those involved in procurement, to have an understanding of the key principles of procurement and the new systems and processes, which will hopefully make their job easier and the procurement process much more efficient.

Ms BOOTHBY: All of the recommendations that the Buy Local Advocate put forward, and Mr Drabsch has explained, all tie back into this Value for Territory Assessment Framework, am I right? This is in the finalisation stages, so what time frame do we expect to see something coming forward and changing in that framework, and is it something that needs legislative changes as well?

Mr KIRBY: We are in the Buy Local Industry Advocate at 9.22 now ...

Ms BOOTHBY: You said I could speak to the Buy Local questions.

Mr KIRBY: I am checking which output we are in.

Ms BOOTHBY: It is the Business and Innovation output. I attempted to ask these questions under the Corporate and Digital Development output, which was Procurement Services. You suggested you would commit to answering the Buy Local questions under the Business and Innovation output.

Mr KIRBY: I want to confirm we have no more questions in 8.1?

Ms BOOTHBY: No, I definitely have more questions.

Mr KIRBY: Can I ask the Chair that we clearly spell out which output group we are working through?

Mr CHAIR: We are still at agency-related whole-of-government questions on budget and fiscal strategy. The next outputs, which were 6.0 and 7.0 were the responsibility of other ministers. Then there is Output Group 8.0. We are still before the output groups.

Ms BOOTHBY: You would like for me to ask the Buy Local Advocate questions I have under 8.1?

Mr KIRBY: I am spelling out that we are addressing questions highlighted or are an output of 9.2.

Ms BOOTHBY: Beautiful. I shall wait until we go to that output.

Mr CHAIR: Under industry development.

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

Output Groups 6.0 and 7.0 are the responsibility of other ministers.

OUTPUT GROUP 8.0 – BUSINESS, INNOVATION AND WORKFORCE

Output 8.1 – Business and Innovation NT

Mr CHAIR: The committee will now move on to Output Group 8.0, Business, Innovation and Workforce, Output Group 8.1, Business Innovation NT. Are there any questions?

Ms BOOTHBY: Your government's COVID stimulus you described as all-time limited, and the budgets are reducing in this space. Are we not still living in a global pandemic? Why are you reducing support, yet not providing other certainties to allow small businesses and innovation to prosper?

Mr KIRBY: The funds we put together for those grants to keep businesses afloat through the course of last year have done the job they were intended to do. If you move around the Territory now, you can see that, yes, while—I am not sure at what stage in the future we can say we are not going to be dealing with COVID. The grants were to assist people to move forward or tread water and hold ground; to innovate and change direction if they needed to change; to give them an opportunity to be on solid ground to move forward from. That is why we the Territory is in the position we are in now; so many businesses have been able to do well.

There is no need for us to continue to fund grants that keep businesses afloat. Our focus has turned now to get more staff for people because they are that busy. The Territory is going that well. It is pretty clear and explanatory the Territory is not in position it was 12 months ago. We have done extremely well and these

grants did an amazing job of keeping people afloat and giving them the opportunity to transform their business if needed. We are in a different space now.

Ms BOOTHBY: Do small businesses talk to you about the impact of crime?

Mr KIRBY: We talk to businesses pretty much every day. I have the luxury of living in this beautiful seat and as soon as I walk out the door I will be talking to small businesspeople. We have also done trips to Alice Springs and up and down the track. Under this portfolio we have small business champions who speak to businesspeople every day of the week and we do a range of meetings, either with peak bodies or targeted round tables with small businesses. At different times there will be conversations about crime that come up.

The best way to explain it to the committee is that we spent about four days in Alice Springs recently. We are aware of the concerns in a place like Alice Springs. But hand on heart, it was not until the last day we were there, that somebody raised crime problems there. Their concerns were more about labour market and trying to ensure they had access to a sustainable work crew to be able to give people time off because they were busier than expected over the Christmas break. Obviously, the start of the Dry Season has proved to be very busy and profitable for them. I am being honest when I say that their primary focus was not on crime.

Ms BOOTHBY: What do you tell them when they speak to you about crime, to demonstrate what you, as the Minister for Small Business, are doing about the impact of the crime crisis?

Mr KIRBY: There is a range of different things. It would depend on where that conversation is held—in the Darwin CBD, in Alice Springs or a small community. If it is in a smaller community, the conversation might be more about policing or Territory Families and the wraparound services they provide—that we heard so well put by Minister Worden earlier today—to make sure people have opportunities and other interests.

If I speak from a Darwin city perspective, in 2016 when we came in, we knew that this needed to be a whole-of-government process—from lighting and activating the CBD; Alcohol Secure and Biz Secure programs to make sure people had access to those types of programs if they needed them; more policing and working with council to make sure that council rangers were doing the best jobs they could; working with council to have extra funding for putting on private security through the city to make sure that spaces were lit up and activated; and CCTV.

From a local perspective around the Darwin CBD, most people know that it is much better lit now and there is much more CCTV. People have had better access to Biz Secure and Alcohol Secure programs if they needed them, when they were open. Biz Secure is still open for people to access if they need to. Discussions with small business are extremely wide-ranging, depending on what their queries might be.

Ms BOOTHBY: Do you lobby your ministerial colleagues to push for change for the small businesses across the Territory, including in the smaller regions, who are victims of crime?

Mr KIRBY: We have a very good Cabinet, which works collaboratively together. The minister for Territory Families might take part and lead some of those discussions. The minister for Police might lead some of those discussions. As the Minister for Small Business, sometimes I take the lead on those discussions as well. Yes, everyone is involved.

Ms BOOTHBY: You mentioned that on your recent trip to Alice Springs, the impact of crime was one of the last things they raised. Are you saying that with all the work you are doing, small businesses are now accepting that they continue to be victims of crime?

Mr KIRBY: No.

Ms BOOTHBY: The Biz Secure grants have been extended, but also reduced by \$4m in this latest budget, yet crime statistics across the Territory are at all-time highs. Why has it decreased?

Mr KIRBY: We have allocated over \$2m going forward for Biz Secure. There have been a range of businesses that have already taken up either Alcohol Secure or Biz Secure in the past. We have a very strong budget allocation towards that this year. We will continue to work with those businesses to make sure they get all the help they need.

Ms BOOTHBY: Is there a reduction of \$4m in this latest budget?

Mr KIRBY: I will have Mr Drabsch talk through some of those details.

Mr DRABSCH: As the minister said, the proposed expenditure for 2021–21 is \$2.059m under Biz Secure. In the previous budget there was \$4.5m but the actual amount spent was \$6.115m and \$300,000 on Alcohol Secure. The demand for that support intensified as part of the attention to the stimulus programs. Anticipated demand going into 2021–22 is \$2m and we will monitor that program as applications come through.

Ms BOOTHBY: If there is an increased demand for that type of grant, will you increase the budget?

Mr KIRBY: They will be considerations of Cabinet. There are mid-year reviews and processes in place for those decisions to be made. That is what we did last year.

Ms BOOTHBY: Would it not make more sense to stop the offending against businesses rather than blaming the businesses for not being secure enough?

Mr KIRBY: The Police minister spoke yesterday in detail, along with the Police Commissioner, about all the measures, training and new police to ensure we keep break-ins and any of those things to a minimum.

Ms BOOTHBY: As the Minister for Small Business do you believe that you and your government are doing everything you can to protect small businesses against crime?

Mr KIRBY: As the Minister for Small Business, I believe that I have the ear of Cabinet and everybody within Cabinet is doing the best they can. The Minister for Territory Families and Urban Housing and the Police minister have explained the extent they have gone to over the last six to 12 months and are looking forward to the next six to 12 months. I believe that we have done a lot better than governments before us.

Ms BOOTHBY: Are you saying that an increase of 36% in alcohol-related assaults across the Territory is the best you can do and that you are doing everything in your power compared to previous governments? I add that you were the previous government.

Mr CHAIR: Member for Brennan, just a reminder about imputations in questions.

Mr KIRBY: In relation to property crimes we are talking about here and Biz Secure, which falls under my remit, we have an 18.4% decrease and an 8.8% decrease across the board. Property offences are down by 18.4%. I suggest that our programs are assisting.

Ms BOOTHBY: Just to be clear, you agree that your programs are working and that you do not take on board that alcohol-related assaults affect and impact small businesses, given that they happen right out the front of small businesses every day?

Mr KIRBY: No, I do not agree with your statement.

Ms BOOTHBY: Why did you limit the industries that could apply for the Work Stay Play Program? You could have included the construction industry or other small businesses that do not fall under tourism and hospitality and are struggling to find staff.

Mr KIRBY: The Work Stay Play Program is something that we developed in conjunction with the peak bodies. In talking to hospitality and tourism operators, we needed to understand the grief that they have been through over the last 12 months—I am not suggesting that other businesses have not been through real issues with COVID.

Our plan with the Work Stay Play Program and the \$2m allocated to it was to make sure that, for a succinct period of time, we gave all of businesses the best opportunity possible to attract workers to the Northern Territory and to those industries. That has now been taken up by other states—to attract workers in those portfolio areas and industries. It is not a Northern Territory-specific problem; it is a problem around the nation.

During the Dry Season in the Northern Territory we will attract a lot of people here who cannot travel overseas. We wanted to give our hospitality and tourism people as much assistance as we possibly could.

Ms BOOTHBY: Can you clarify how many of those grant packages you paid out for that program?

Mr KIRBY: The Work Stay Play initiative was designed to assist bringing people to the Northern Territory. It pays out once people have been employed and been through the first payroll cycle. With that business—there is quite an inertia around this. It has only been open for six or seven weeks. Just under 100 businesses

registered and just under 40 workers have been approved. We have a range of other approvals that are in train, but it takes some time for them to get here and on the payroll and for that payroll to be submitted. Then the business must submit to be reimbursed the \$1,500.

Ms BOOTHBY: Given that it has been operating for six or seven weeks in the peak of our Dry Season and 100 businesses have registered, even if it was 10 employees they were able to attract this money, that is a thousand people who, potentially, in these next few weeks could take this up, is it not true that there are 7,000 vacant positions in tourism and hospitality across the Territory? So far is that a success or failure?

Mr KIRBY: That was quoted by another peak body. We have had other peak bodies mentioned different figures to us. To be honest, if we get to the stage you are talking about—1,000 workers—on Darwin Cup weekend and all of the events around that time, if we have 1,000 extra workers throughout the Top End, the industry will be extremely grateful for that.

Ms BOOTHBY: If 7,000 is not the figure, what is the figure?

Mr KIRBY: That is somebody else's figure, I cannot tell you that.

Ms BOOTHBY: You do not know what that is?

Mr KIRBY: I cannot tell you what their figure is.

Ms BOOTHBY: Do you know how many positions we are looking to fill over this bumper Dry Season?

Mr KIRBY: A range of businesses—I will not go into naming them. There is a range of people who we deal with from the peak bodies saying that, at the moment, they do not need anybody. They are going okay. A range of other businesses—particularly tourism businesses I know—if they had qualified staff would take them up, because they have had a busier than expected Wet Season and the catapult out of—and the start of the Dry Season in the Top End has meant they have been unable to give some of their workers a rest as they would like to do. They are extremely busy. They are finding a range of different ways—some of the apprentice fairs that we went to up and down the track were extremely successful.

It is not just about the packages we put together to attract people from interstate. We have a range of opportunities—we have just finished the apprentice fairs and there was really good engagement. Businesses came to speak with young Territorians who had just moved to the Territory and had not been involved in the hospitality or tourism industries but took the opportunity to find out how and when they could be.

Tourism businesses are sharing workers at the moment to get themselves through, making sure there are as many tours as they can do. I do not have the intricate numbers in front of me about how many workers each business is short.

Ms BOOTHBY: You advocated against Darwin City Council's reintroduction of the alfresco dining fees. The Lord Mayor, Kon Vatskalis, has announced that he will put a 12-month moratorium on those fees. On your Facebook page you said that for the council to think this is a good time to reinstate alfresco dining fees is a complete misreading of the situation most businesses find themselves in. Given that small businesses run on the smell of an oily rag, can you please explain when is a good time for small businesses to be hit with more fees?

Mr KIRBY: As the Small Business minister, I will advocate for that not to be the case as long as we can.

Ms BOOTHBY: You will continue to advocate and make sure that moratorium stays for more than 12 months?

Mr KIRBY: I will do my best in this role to advocate on behalf of small businesses.

Mr CHAIR: You are asking for an expression of opinion or to announce a new policy, which is not within Standing Order 109.

Minister, are there skilled migration policies as well in workforce—is there a skilled migration program?

Ms BOOTHBY: That is in the next output, Chair.

Mr CHAIR: Member for Brennan, I like the way you said 'Chair', thank you. Minister, is there a skilled migration program around workforce?

Mr KIRBY: Particularly outside of skilled migration, with regard to student visas we were advocating to Minister Hawke. We wrote to him and, thankfully, some changes were made. People up and down the track are extremely thankful that young students can now work more hours as long as they are keeping up with their studies. For young people to be able to work more hours in businesses has been a welcome addition.

In regard to skilled migration, we do not control the international borders. The number of people we can get in from overseas will be constricted for some time going forward, but we will continue to advocate and try to get as many skilled workers as we can.

That is not the only thing we are doing. We have record apprentice numbers and fantastic trainee numbers. I am than happy to talk about them later on in that output.

Ms BOOTHBY: Am I able to ask some Buy Local questions now?

Mr KIRBY: My comment before was that we have a specific output—9.2 is industry development.

Ms BOOTHBY: Are you saying that Buy Local sits specifically sits under that output?

Mr KIRBY: Yes.

Ms BOOTHBY: I will wait until that time.

The Home Improvement Scheme was introduced as a COVID stimulus measure. The deadline for completion of works was extended twice. Would you admit that this was your lack of business acumen and understanding of how business actually operates, which meant you put tradies in a precarious situation of scrambling and potentially missing out on needed jobs?

Mr KIRBY: No, I do not agree with that comment. The Home Improvement Scheme and the improvements we have made to that is one of the most successful schemes we have put out—if you spoke to anybody in the Northern Territory last year. It encouraged people to spend and complemented private dollars with investment dollars. There were so many businesses we went to that employed more people and were as busy as they had ever been in the middle of a pandemic. I am proud of that program and more than happy to defend what we have done with that.

Ms BOOTHBY: Will you be continuing anything like that in this next 12 months?

Mr KIRBY: Our focus now has squarely become to help businesses as much as we possibly can with labour issues and any other concerns they have. There has been a good uptake of those programs when we did go through them. There were 19,500 applications received for the Home Improvement Scheme. The estimated value of the works was around \$150m with an estimated economic impact of \$250m. The work we did with a range of different grants was to assist businesses to stay on their feet, to adapt and be able to rebound out of COVID-19. Our focus is now shifting into labour market and ensuring we have as many young Territorians in jobs as we possibly can and any other assistance that industry comes to see us about.

Mr CHAIR: That concludes consideration of Output 8.1.

Output 8.2 – Workforce NT

Mr CHAIR: We now move to Output 8.2, Workforce NT. Are there any questions?

Ms BOOTHBY: Minister, you were spruiking since after the NT was locked down that we are the comeback capital. Given you knew it was going to be a bumper Dry Season what did you do to ensure businesses had the staff needed and why did it take so long to implement those measures?

Mr KIRBY: This is not simply a Northern Territory matter. The Northern Territory has known for quite some time, better than a lot of other states and territories, the amount we rely on overseas workers and student visa workers. We have done a lot of work in trying to ensure the federal government does not move visa workers out of Northern Territory at the moment. You can imagine that is an extremely frustrating space for a business to be in, to know that one of their workers may be moved back to a COVID-ravaged area and put their business at risk.

Did we do everything we could to keep business afloat last year? Absolutely. Could anybody predict how sharply we would be able to rebound out of this pandemic? I do not think anybody could have predicted that. Have we done everything we possibly can to train as many young Territorians—whether that be traditional apprentices or new trades at the International College of Advance Education that put through a range of people who will hopefully enter into the hospitality industry? We will continue to work with them to put as many people through those programs as we can. We have been up and down the track doing apprentice fairs and writing to federal ministers to ensure we get better opportunities for people to either work more hours or more flexible visa arrangements. I reject the premise that we have not done enough.

Ms BOOTHBY: Minister, you mentioned that you have been working to keep skilled migrants here. How many skilled migrants were due to return to their homes and are still here in the Territory due to your efforts?

Mr KIRBY: That is information we would be able to track down but do not have available in front of the committee today. If it pleases the Member for Brennan we are happy to take that as a question on notice.

Question on Notice No 7.10

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

Ms BOOTHBY: How many skilled migrants were due to return to their homes and are now staying in the Territory?

Mr CHAIR: Minister, do you accept the question?

Mr KIRBY: Yes.

Mr CHAIR: The question asked by the Member for Brennan has been allocated the number 7.10.

Ms BOOTHBY: Minister, on page 99 of Budget Paper No 3 for 2021–22 there is a budgeted increase of \$150,000 for skills, migration and visa processing fees. Is this number due to an expected increase in the number of applications or a rise in the cost of the fees?

Mr KIRBY: I am happy for Catherine to explain the details of the change.

Ms WHITE: Last year we introduced a fee for online processing of visas. We were the only jurisdiction that did not have a fee at that time, so this is the first year we have collected the fees. We were able to reach the nominated cap of applicants coming in.

Ms BOOTHBY: There has been \$1.7m committed for a new training centre for aged care at CDU. That is less than half the budget you spent on stage one of the playground at Myilly Point. How committed are you to training Territorians in quality facilities that do not even match up to an overpriced playground?

Mr KIRBY: We have been to CDU with the new vice-chancellor and seen the block of land that is already being prepared for the facility. It is an industry that we struggle to recruit people for and need to continually train our own through the Northern Territory. I commend everyone involved because it is a wonderful initiative.

Ms BOOTHBY: Is \$1.7m enough for a training centre for aged care at CDU, if it is so important?

Mr KIRBY: Yes, that is what has been allocated. In conversations with everyone and at the rapid pace that it was progressing, there were no concerns of a shortfall in funding.

Ms BOOTHBY: You claim that the new training centre for aged care being built at CDU will create 70 jobs during the construction phase—this sounds more like your government's creative accounting as identified by the Auditor-General. How did you come up with the figure of 70 jobs? Does this include short-term and casual jobs that might only last one or two days on site?

Mr KIRBY: Through advice from a combination of CDU and the people involved in the construction—we were not a part of putting those figures together, but as with any construction job there is a massive flow-on in jobs and they branch out broadly. We are happy to be putting the much-needed training facility together knowing that it will benefit Territorians in the future.

Ms BOOTHBY: Of those 70 jobs you are predicting will be created, does that include the short-term and casual jobs that might only last for one or two days?

Mr KIRBY: There would be a range of statistics that people use to pull those figures together, a range of people who would be on that site for a long time and a range of jobs that are supported which may not even be on-site but are providing assistance or materials. It is not something I could offer an opinion on.

Ms BOOTHBY: You are not sure how you came to the figure of 70 jobs?

Mr KIRBY: My understanding is that 70 jobs was an estimate that would have been done in conjunction with CDU with reliance upon the technical nature of what they were doing and the construction companies involved. I would have to seek clarification from CDU. We were not involved in putting those figures together.

Ms BOOTHBY: That is okay, minister, I do not want to waste the CDU's time.

The additional Christmas and New Year public holidays that your government introduced in 2016 has been in place now for a number of years. How are you measuring if this policy is successful?

Mr KIRBY: People working on those public holidays are now being paid penalty rates. That would imply that the policy is being adhered to.

Ms BOOTHBY: Is it successful based on what you have just said—that people are now getting penalty rates?

Mr KIRBY: I am not sure what measure of success you are expecting me to apply to it.

Ms BOOTHBY: I am asking how you are measuring the policy to see whether it is successful.

Mr KIRBY: We have enacted that people are entitled to the entitlement. If people are being paid penalty rates, then that entitlement has been actioned.

Ms BOOTHBY: You will not be measuring whether it is a success or a failure?

Mr KIRBY: It is an employment entitlement.

Ms BOOTHBY: What has been the impact of this policy decision on small businesses?

Mr KIRBY: We speak with small businesses on a regular basis and understand that for some small businesses, if they have the capacity to pay extra, it will enhance their capabilities of keeping their employees and keeping people in the Northern Territory. As Minister for Small Business, I can honestly say that I do not have people raising those concerns with me on a daily basis.

Ms BOOTHBY: Not even when you are visiting the regions and smaller centres?

Mr KIRBY: I can honestly say that we make business visits to all of the CBD businesses. We doorknock businesses regularly. I talk to people every day. We meet with peak bodies when we go up and down the track and get feedback from different ministers at every meeting we attend. I can honestly say that nobody has raised it with me.

Ms BOOTHBY: Why has your government cut the Workforce NT budget by \$12m? Your budget paper notes that it is due to a finalisation of time-limited skills and training grants. Can you explain this and provide full details of the cuts?

Mr KIRBY: A range of one-off funding had been finalised.

Ms WHITE: The Northern Territory invests more in VET than other jurisdictions per capita. We worked very hard to put a lot of vocational education and training out. We have the highest participation rate of jurisdictions. This year we had limited funding of JobTrainer of \$4.5m, which we matched with our future skills funding. We had funding from the Australian Government for critical skills and reskilling of \$500,000.

We had a couple of programs that bolstered our budget somewhat last year. We have had a reduction in the budget and are working very hard to make sure we maintain our highest participation rate in active vocational

education and training across the whole Territory. We are in the process of negotiating a new agreement with the Commonwealth Government, which is a far more attractive funding arrangement.

Ms BOOTHBY: Do you have details of that attractive funding arrangement for the next financial year?

Ms WHITE: The National Partnership Agreement is still in negotiation, so we do not have anything that we can share at the moment.

Ms BOOTHBY: Has any time line been given to you about those negotiations?

Mr KIRBY: We are working through that. On a weekly basis our office is clarifying and working through the details. It is an extremely complex space. I thank Cathy, Tracy and all of the hard-working staff. It is difficult to explain to people based on the east coast exactly what it costs to provide training in the Northern Territory, where we essentially fund the lion's share of people's apprenticeships and traineeships—when we go to Groote Eylandt or the Tiwi Islands and places like that, they can get free courses that cost \$12,000 to \$20,000 to try to get people to attend. That is because of the remote locations and people will not necessarily be able to run courses unless there are a certain amount of people. The costs involved in trying to get that amount of people there—it is a complex and difficult space to work in.

I am extremely fortunate; I did a couple of apprenticeships. I will be pushing as hard as I can to get as many Territorians better funding, so we have the opportunity to provide wraparound services. If we can improve people's literacy and numeracy throughout the Northern Territory, it is an absolute game changer for us. We will be working very hard to help the federal government understand the complexities of what we are up against. Hopefully negotiations on the funding deal will be finalised over the next few months. It is difficult to put an exact time line on it.

Mr CHAIR: Do you have any current numbers on apprenticeships? We have been talking about a lack of staff, but do you have numbers on the pipeline of apprenticeships?

Mr KIRBY: We have very similar apprentice numbers to what we had during the INPEX boom. That was a \$40bn-odd project—if you think about the amount of apprentices involved not only with the companies on-site but the wraparound services provided through Northern Territory companies.

We have a massive focus on training our own. As at 31 March 2021, we increased from 3,850 compared to 3,195 at the same time last year. That is the largest number of apprentices and trainees in training since 2013 and nearly 50% of those are in key areas like traditional trades that we are very short on.

When we received some of the federal training assistance programs through—and that was with the previous minister Michaelia Cash, who did some great work. She understood that offering traineeships through local governments out in remote communities—if we made a hard and fast local rule that local governments could not access any of those we might have harmed the capacity of people in remote locations to take them on. Thankfully, we were able to get sensible decisions made. We commend the federal government for its investment in the skills and training space and will continue to work hard with it.

Ms BOOTHBY: Was the failed Territory Jobs Hub replaced by the Territory Jobs Board and why is it only specific to tourism and hospitality jobs now?

Ms WHITE: We stood up the Territory Jobs Board immediately when COVID hit and started to limit travel. We needed to quickly find ways of reskilling workers who were found redundant instantly—or if we are looking at flight attendants. We needed a way—and we stood it up over 48 hours very quickly to deal with those redundant workers, immediately matching up with jobs where there was an increase. It was very successful for its purpose, which was the immediate reskilling and moving of people from jobs impacted by COVID. At the height of it there were 4,000 job seekers and about 500 businesses engaged.

It came to a natural close when normal recruitment channels, such as Facebook and SEEK, were starting to take over again. That is why it closed; that was not necessarily related to the current jobs board. Again, with hospitality and tourism that was seen as an urgent need and we needed a quick fix—literally as quickly as we could to deal with that urgently. It was somewhat unexpected for that sector to be hit so quickly. We stood up a quick jobs board, which is essentially a notice board that is pointing people to your general recruitment channels as well. There is lots of Facebook and SEEK—lots of different things. That is the relation.

Ms BOOTHBY: Are they two separate systems?

Ms WHITE: Yes. The Jobs Hub, which was stood up during COVID has closed and the Jobs Board is a temporary quick fix as we try and find people to service the Darwin Cup.

Ms BOOTHBY: Why could you not use the Jobs Hub for the Jobs Board purposes? Are there different technologies?

Ms WHITE: Part of the issue was that an interstate company set that up and we had come to the end of that contract. As you know we are committed to buying local so we were looking for a local solution.

Mr CHAIR: That conclude consideration of Output 8.2. Output 8.3 is the responsibility of another minister and therefore that concludes consideration of Output Group 8.0.

OUTPUT GROUP 9.0 – INDUSTRY AND ECONOMIC ANALYSIS

Output 9.2 – Industry Development

Mr CHAIR: We now proceed to Output Group 9.0, Industry and Economic Analysis. Output 9.1 is the responsibility of another minister, therefore Output 9.2, Industry Development. Are there any questions?

Ms BOOTHBY: Minister, have you received any complaints relating to the Buy Local Advocate and, if so, who made these complaints?

Mr KIRBY: I am not aware of any complaints that have come to the department or office. I understand the robust nature of that position, but we have not had any formal complaints come to us.

Ms BOOTHBY: How does the Procurement Review Board operate and what is its objective?

Mr DRABSCH: The Procurement Review Board is comprised of chief executives, an independent Chair, the Buy Local Advocate and a couple of representatives of industry. It meets on a quarterly basis. There are three-hour meetings and quite a comprehensive agenda.

It looks at procurement policy issues, such as local content and the development of a Value for Territory Assessment Framework. We also undertake reviews of appeals against procurement decisions that are made, such as if a bid is considered inadmissible for reasons of whether it a CAL certification or not. It is an ongoing out-of-session consideration that the members of the PRB undertake on a regular basis. They are its core functions: providing advice to government in relation to procurement policy on an ongoing basis.

Ms BOOTHBY: Mr Drabsch mentioned the Chair was independent—is the board independent given the board is largely made up of members who are executives of the Northern Territory Government departments who are also responsible for procurement?

Mr DRABSCH: The agencies represented on the PRB are primarily engaged in the procurement activities, such as DCDD; my department, which is responsible for procurement policy reporting to the minister for procurement; the Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Logistics, which undertakes the vast bulk of procurement activity.

Ms BOOTHBY: Is it really independent given so many of the NTG executives are on that board?

Mr DRABSCH: It is an advisory board and the Chair is independent and there are four members who are drawn from industry. Kevin Peters, who is on the ICN is also a member. There are four government representatives and four industry representatives and an independent Chair, so the majority of members are independent of government.

Ms BOOTHBY: Are the minutes publicly available?

Mr DRABSCH: No.

Ms BOOTHBY: You take minutes?

Mr DRABSCH: Yes, there are minutes of the meetings.

Ms BOOTHBY: Why are they not publicly available?

Mr DRABSCH: They deal with comprehensive policy issues, many of which are subject to Cabinet consideration and may be commercial-in-confidence.

Ms BOOTHBY: What improvements have been made to agencies to work toward the Buy Local Plan objectives?

Mr DRABSCH: We have fundamentally transformed and enhanced our local content policy. We are coming up with clear criteria for what constitutes a Territory business, for example. That can be applied across a range of sectors with different characteristics which constitute Territoriality. That will culminate in the development of the Value for Territory Assessment Framework, which is in the last stages.

We are developing and integrating it into online systems, which our procurement practitioners across agencies can apply the content of the Value for Territory Assessment Framework—the questions and so forth and methodology. We have been consulting with industry groups and the Buy Local Advocate—in relation to that—as well as the PRB and are hoping to get that online soon.

Ms BOOTHBY: What are Territory businesses telling you about the procurement processes by NTG?

Mr KIRBY: We have discussions with a lot of Territory businesses. It would be fair to say that from my own experience when INPEX was coming out of the ground—I had a great deal of experience in the industry at the time—there was a lot of frustration in making sure that Territory businesses had the best access to Territory money and had the best opportunity to be involved in Territory projects.

Most Territory businesses that we speak with acknowledge there have been significant improvements made. When those acknowledgements are made, we note that there is still a way to go; the cue is not in the rack. We will continue to work closely on this with peak bodies and businesses to make sure that every dollar spent in the Territory has the best chance of staying here.

Mr DRABSCH: Particularly with a focus on local content and in light of the questions the Member for Namatjira was asking earlier in the day of DCDD in terms of the balance of Territory businesses that won contracts, we generally hit the target of 80% of contracts being awarded to Territory businesses. So far this year it is 77.27% and last year it was 81%.

For the major agency—just in the number of contracts—the key agency of total contracts awarded of \$1.07bn, \$628m of that was in the Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Logistics and their dealings with some 805 contracts. Of those, 95.9% of those were awarded to Territory businesses and 99.25% of the value of those contracts was awarded to Territory businesses.

We are getting close to where we would like to be to ensure that Territory businesses have the best opportunity to participate in the expenditure of Territory taxpayers' money. Inevitably, there will be some projects and activities which cannot be undertaken by Territory businesses but we have a clear policy encouraging government departments, in particular, to engage with the industry capability network database—which has 4,500 businesses—to check if Territory businesses have the capability to respond to a tender offer. That is an obligation of all agencies.

Mr CHAIR: To confirm, did you say that 77% of local businesses are awarded the contracts but that 99% of the quantum of the value of the contracts—or did I mishear that?

Mr DRABSCH: Of the total number of contracts awarded to the 31 May, there were 1,105 contracts of a total of 1,430, which is 77.27%—that is the number of contracts. The 99% is in terms of the value of contracts awarded by DIPL—\$623m of a total \$628m was awarded to Territory businesses.

Mr CHAIR: That concludes consideration of Output 9.2 and Output Group 9.

Output Group 10 and Output Group 11 are the responsibility of other ministers.

OUTPUT GROUP 12.0 – CORPORATE AND SHARED SERVICES

Output 12.1 – Corporate and Governance

Mr CHAIR: The committee will now move onto Output Group 12.0, Corporate and Shared Services, Output Group 12.1, Corporate and Governance. Are there any questions?

That concludes consideration of Output 12.1.

Output 12.2 – Shared Services Received

Mr CHAIR: The committee will now consider Output 12.2, Shared Services Received. Are there any questions?

That concludes consideration of Output 12.2 and Output Group 12.0.

That concludes consideration of outputs related to Small Business and Jobs and Training. On behalf of the committee, minister, I thank you and Mr Drabsch and his officials who have provided advice to the minister today.

We will now take a short break and after that the committee will consider the Office of the Commissioner for Public Employment.

Mr KIRBY: I also thank our very hard-working department people. They punch well above their weight. They have done a mountain of work over the last year or so, particularly related to the grants. We are looking forward to training more Territorians and making sure we can get as many people into apprenticeship and traineeship opportunities as we possibly can. We very much thank them for all of their hard work.

The committee suspended.

PUBLIC EMPLOYMENT

DEPARTMENT OF THE CHIEF MINISTER AND CABINET

OUTPUT GROUP 13.0 – OFFICE OF THE COMMISSIONER FOR PUBLIC EMPLOYMENT

Mr CHAIR: Welcome back, everyone. We will resume with the Office of the Commissioner for Public Employment, with Minister Kirby.

Minister, I invite you to introduce the officials accompanying you and make an opening statement regarding the Office of the Commissioner for Public Employment.

Mr KIRBY: Mr Chair, it is my pleasure to introduce Vicki Telfer, the Commissioner for Public Employment; Libby Doney, Director Strategic Workforce Planning and Development; and Cheryl Winstanley, Director Employee Relations. I thank them for all of the hard work they do across the NTPS. I will continue if you are happy for me to continue with the statement.

The Office of the Commissioner for Public Employment is responsible for managing the legislative employment arrangements for the Northern Territory public service relating to employment policy, strategic workforce planning development, appeals and grievance reviews and Aboriginal employment strategies. The office also administers the Northern Territory's *Long Service Leave Act 1981* and *Public Holidays Act 1981*, affecting the broader Northern Territory community.

As part of the recent machinery of government changes, the office was transferred into the Department of the Chief Minister and Cabinet as an independent office and is now identified as an output group of the Chief Minister and Cabinet in the 2020–21 budget, with four standalone outputs.

This year and into next year, responsibilities of the office include developing and implementing a five-year strategic plan for public service designed to build and shape whole-of-sector leadership, management and workforce planning capability; developing and implementing the new 2021 to 2025 Aboriginal employment and career development strategy. The previous strategy expired in 2020 and the new strategy was developed in consultation with employees and agencies across the sector.

The strategy will continue to work towards a global target of 16% Aboriginal employment and 10% participation in target in senior roles. The strategy will focus on six focus areas, with targets being attraction, retention, leadership, culture and remote locations and conducting the People Matter survey for public servants to gain an understanding of their perceptions about how well they think their agency is performing across a range of employment activities, including employee engagement, satisfaction, productivity, attraction and retention.

A total of 46% or 9,581 Northern Territory public servants responded to the survey, consistent with the participation rate for the 2018 polls survey. The result of this survey will contribute to development of the five-year strategic plan and will assist agencies to develop a road map to focus their efforts on performance improvement, devise relevant workforce development initiatives commencing negotiations for seven of the 13 public sector enterprise agreements from the first quarter of 2021, which is a significant undertaking, particularly within the current fiscal climate.

These agreements are the NTPS general agreement, the teachers and assistant teacher's agreement, fire and rescue service, Power and Water, Jacana, correctional officers and the medical officer agreement. Negotiations for the new agreements are being led by the Commissioner for Public Employment and conducted in good faith in accordance with the NTPS bargaining policy 2021 to 2024. The OCPE will continue its good work in building inclusion and diversity in the public service. Currently 1.5% of public servants identify as having a disability and Aboriginal employment is sitting at 10.5% with representation in senior and exec roles at 5.7%.

Under the disability and employment program for the public service there are currently 15 participants, three are undertaking traineeships, four have secured further employment on completion of their contracts under the program and seven are continuing on to a second year under the program.

Events such as Hands Up for Inclusion Week, which is managed and coordinated by the office, continue to educate people about the importance of having an inclusive and diverse workforce. This successful event received highly commended awards for the category Excellence in Strategy that improves access and inclusion at the 2019 NT National Disability and Inclusion Awards. The office also contributes to the recognition of service milestones for NTPS employees across the Territory. The annual Chief Minister's awards for excellence in the NT public service recognise the extensive contributions of public servants to the Territory's COVID-19 response and continues to maintain the Territory's reputation as one of the safest places to be.

I acknowledge the Commissioner for Public Employment and all of her hard working, albeit small and dedicated team, which does a mountain of work. We look forward to answering all your questions as best we possibly can.

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

Mr YAN: If we are going to answer all of my questions we may be here a bit longer than 7 o'clock, minister.

Mr CHAIR: Member for Namatjira, we have learned that I am a stickler for time. We will be concluding at 7.00 pm. You have the call.

Mr YAN: Thank you, Vicki Telfer, and your team for staying back tonight to answer a few questions before we finish up in 25 minutes.

Minister, you spoke about the strategic plan, we have had a number of discussions and it was raised by the Chief Minister last week regarding CEOs. There was a lot of discussion about the debt ceiling. We received a briefing on the debt ceiling the other day and were told that responsibility for the COVID conduct around CEOs is with OCPE. Can you advise me why that is?

Mr KIRBY: Employment matters sit with the Commissioner for Public Employment. As explained, it is a code. It is an employment matter that sits under our jurisdiction, which is why it sits with us.

Mr YAN: The code of conduct we are discussing that sits with OCPE, and we are talking about CEOs—this is the existing NTPS Code of Conduct and not something else that has been developed?

Mr KIRBY: I will get Vicki to answer that in a little more detail.

Ms TELFER: The code of conduct in existence will become Part A and all public servants, whether they are CEOs or anyone throughout the public service will be required to abide by it. Because the code of conduct contains a number of matters, it was felt best placed that we put the CEO-specific section attached to that, so I will shortly be issuing a new Part to the Code of Conduct that will only apply to chief executive officers. They will also be required to comply with Part A, which is the normal parts of the code of conduct.

Mr YAN: Effectively, we have our current code of conduct, which is for all NTPS employees, and now we have Part B, which will be specific to CEOs. Is there a draft version of the code of conduct available?

Mr KIRBY: Not as yet. It is being finalised.

Mr YAN: On 16 April 2019 a media statement was issued, which said that government will implement tough new accountability measures for senior staff and consequences for poor performance. What are these new measures, what is the accountability and will they be covered in the new Part B of the code of conduct?

Mr KIRBY: Can I clarify, are you talking to the broader code of conduct?

Mr YAN: No. I am talking to the new amendments that specifically relate to CEOs.

Ms TELFER: Part B of the code of conduct, which will be issued prior to 1 July, has a number of provisions relating to the fiscal management that CEOs and others are required to comply with. The other types of matters within the code of conduct are quite robust. CEOs and others have been required to live within their means, and the disciplinary matters that might apply are covered through that code of conduct.

Mr YAN: The new code of conduct, Part B, outlines what the accountability measures, or consequences, are for CEOs should they not meet their budgetary requirements or performance requirements. Is that correct?

Ms TELFER: Not quite. The code of conduct specifies what behaviours are required. It is then up to the employer, or the person who has issued a contract for that person, to decide what consequences there might be if the code of conduct is breached. We specify the behaviours, then there is a separate process for what the consequences would be if the code of conduct is breached. That could include a range of things, as they do to any employee. It could be that findings are unsubstantiated and could range from a caution or a warning to dismissal.

Mr YAN: For my own knowledge, are you able to expand on what the new Part B—the specific parts—will target for CEOs? You just outlined a couple of things, is there anything else apart from those items—the CEOs—that we have not covered you?

Ms TELFER: Primarily it is the fiscal management of their agencies and the responsibilities under that. Part A of the code of conduct covers other matters and behaviours. As they issue the new code of conduct before 1 July, I will also be alerting people to the fact we will be reviewing the code of conduct over the next few months to ensure it is contemporary and that it covers all desired behaviours we want. We will be refreshing all of the code of conduct that everyone, including CEOs, needs to comply with.

Mr YAN: Are you able to advise me who was consulted in the development of Part B of the code of conduct?

Mr KIRBY: That was purely and simply a Cabinet decision on the back of the financial position to make sure we had the rigour in place we wanted.

Mr YAN: Cabinet developed Part B of the code of conduct. Did Cabinet not seek legal advice or advice from OCPE or other bodies with expertise in this area to develop Part B of this code of conduct?

Mr KIRBY: We sought advice from the Commissioner for Public Employment, and legal advice, but it was a Cabinet decision.

Mr YAN: Was that legal advice was sought internally from the Solicitor for the Northern Territory or elsewhere?

Mr KIRBY: It was the Solicitor for the Northern Territory.

Mr YAN: For Part B of the code of conduct and the specific items relating to CEOs, I take it that the things in this Part B will be legally binding. Will any parts of this new change, or this new piece of the code of conduct, be legislated or will the CEOs or minister determine what mechanisms will enact Part B of this code of conduct?

Mr KIRBY: It will be covered in their contract. I will get the commissioner to explain in more detail.

Ms TELFER: There are a couple of things. The first one is that, as the minister said, all executive contract officers, including chief executive officers, have to comply with what is in their contract. That includes the

code of conduct. That is one of the reasons it is important to link the desired behaviours and the rules to the code of conduct. The other thing is that the code of conduct is subordinate legislation that I have powers to make, so it will be done as part of our employment construction and will be gazetted.

Mr YAN: In saying that, the new Part B contracts will be reflective of that. Does that mean our existing executive officers will be getting new contracts and will this relate to their existing contracts?

Ms TELFER: It relates to their current contract's code of conduct. That is open to amendment from time to time. It is part of the current contract they need to comply with. It is another excellent reason we are linking what we require for financial management and accountability through the code of conduct.

Mr YAN: I am going to—it is not really a hypothetical—ask how you would manage the application of this code of conduct. The CEO can manage the code of conduct down through their management line for the executive officers. Who would manage that code of conduct and any breaches for the CEO of an agency?

Sorry, Ms Telfer, I am only using you as an example, as you are the CEO of the entire agency. You would manage those below you, who would look after you in your position should there be a breach?

Ms TELFER: A point of clarification, I am not a CEO. I am the Commissioner for Public Employment. If there was a breach of the code of conduct in relation to my behaviour or an alleged breach, that would be investigated by the Chief Executive Officer of the Department of the Chief Minister and Cabinet. Findings would be made and if they were substantiated, there would be consequences flowing from that. It would be a normal process that applies to anyone in the public service, that is, there would be allegations and an investigation, natural justice, procedural fairness and anything substantiated would have a consequence attached to it.

Mr YAN: Thank you, Ms Telfer. That is exactly what I was after.

Ms TELFER: I should add that the Chief Executive Officer of the Department of the Chief Minister and Cabinet may not thank me for that answer.

Mr YAN: I was getting to that and that is what I was trying to determine—if a CEO of an agency, who is the head of that agency, allegedly breaches then it would be the CEO of the Chief Minister's office who would manage that breach rather than a minister making a decision. Would that be correct?

Mr KIRBY: We all answer to someone.

Ms TELFER: That is how it works at the moment. It would be a matter of whether or not—if it was Part A it might come to me as the Commissioner for Public Employment to do an investigation. Generally, it would go through to the CEO of the Department of the Chief Minister and Cabinet—a fair process but one that is articulated.

Mr YAN: I know that you are the boss for every public servant. I remember that.

Ms TELFER: If I might clarify, I am the legal employer, not the boss, of every public servant.

Mr YAN: Of course, it said there would be penalties put in place for CEOs who oversee a breach of agency budgets—which we have spoken about and the various penalties. Would there be any penalty applied to a minister whose CEO has breached the ceiling?

Mr KIRBY: That would be a matter for the Chief Minister and Cabinet to make up their minds. Under the Westminster system if you lose faith in government then so be it—or of Cabinet—but that will not be tied up as part of the code of conduct.

Mr YAN: There were penalties under the *Financial Management Act 1995* for agency heads who breached budgets. Can you tell me why you removed those? Why will your code of conduct be more effective?

Mr KIRBY: Our understanding is that the introduction of the new code of conduct does not negate any of the conditions that were in place.

Mr YAN: The previous *Financial Management Act*, which had penalties for breaching budgets, were removed and the new code of conduct outlines other penalties?

Mr KIRBY: I am happy to seek advice about that. The *Financial Management Act* does not sit underneath us, so I am happy to seek advice on that.

Mr YAN: We will put that on notice, Mr Chair.

Question on Notice No 7.11

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

Mr YAN: There were penalties under the *Financial Management Act 1995* for agency heads who breached budgets. Why have these been removed and why will your new code of conduct be more effective?

Mr CHAIR: Minister, do you accept the question?

Mr KIRBY: Yes.

Mr CHAIR: The question asked by the Member for Namatjira is allocated the number 7.11.

Mr YAN: This is covered in an output, but you touched on it in your opening statement. This is about the People Matter survey. The latest NT survey was conducted again this year, and I congratulate the participants for undertaking this large body of work. What impact do you believe uncertainty and fear in regard to COVID-19 may have had on the answers provided?

Mr KIRBY: It is quite a subjective question. To understand if COVID-19 had any impact on individuals and the way they may have answered any questions—through 2020, as much as the Northern Territory fared quite well through COVID-19, we felt implications from it. People worked from home and a range of things happened. Whether that contributed to people making different decisions or answering questions differently might be a matter for the next survey—to ask them if they have any substantial differences, if our world has returned to normal by then.

Some of the key indicators, if we have had a reasonably similar number of people respond, do not give an indication that they may have chosen a particular answer to a question because COVID-19 made them nervous. There may be other matters—I will seek some clarification. I will get the commissioner to speak to that, as there were some queries about flexibility in answers we got back.

Ms TELFER: We did not ask any specific questions about COVID as far as whether it made it easier or better. We looked at engagement scores. The overall engagement index for the NTPS was 65%, which is where it was in 2018, so that is an excellent outcome. We thought it would be reduced.

We asked a question about whether or not anybody had been reassigned or experienced a significant change in work priorities as a result of COVID-19. Of the people who answered that, there was very little difference in their engagement score. The biggest impacts were whether or not people have access to flexible work culture in their culture, in their workplace.

Mr YAN: I have taken part in a number of surveys—46% is slightly less than half of the workforce—it would be nice to get some better numbers. I will leave that, there are obviously some strategies there that OCPE can work around for the next survey. Concerning to me, and as a former public sector employee, is that more than a third of the respondents would not recommend the Northern Territory public service as a great place to work. Can you explain why that is?

Mr KIRBY: I will respond as best as I can, given it is quite a subjective question.

Mr YAN: A third of respondents would not recommend NTPS as a great place to work. Unfortunately that is not subjective it is fact.

Mr KIRBY: Yes, I understand that. To ask me as minister, why those people made that decision is the subjective part. I agree with you wholeheartedly that it would be great to see more people involved in surveys like this. It is where we get a lot of our information; we are happy to hear some of it and are surprised by some of it.

Our engagement numbers were similar to the 2018 survey, so we obviously have a body of work to do to improve that. I am not sure if the commissioner has any other information about employee experiences that might contextualise what we are talking about with people moving forward.

Ms TELFER: We do these surveys to understand how we can improve the employee experience. The results you mention are one of many factors. But there are also some fantastic results about employee experience: 93% of our employees believe the work they do is important; and 80% believe in the purpose and objectives of the organisation. Whether or not someone thinks it is a great place to work would be about a range of different matters.

One of things my office wanted to look at was employee voice and the role of senior managers. We know we have some work to do there and that has an impact on how people feel. We received some amazingly good results and when we look at 'people feel the work they do is important', that to us is a great sign of success in the work that we are doing in the Northern Territory public service.

Mr YAN: Of the survey respondents, 422 said they submitted a formal complaint regarding a bullying incident they had experienced. Does that collate with the data that you have?

Mr KIRBY: I understand what you are saying, those statistics I found disturbing. I found, like most people who have worked their way through the public sector, you spend a lot of time ensuring your workplace is free of bullying and harassment and is a welcoming workplace for people to come to—for women to come into—and to ensure it is a place that people genuinely feel safe at. There is a range of things we will do on the back of that. I am happy for the commissioner to engage on that but I wanted to commend the commissioner.

A range of questions were put forward and quite often some those questions are skirted over or left out of surveys. They very deliberately asked some tough questions they knew they might get some tough answers to. Our responsibility as government is to make sure we do the right thing with that information.

Ms TELFER: I will go back, if I might, one further question. You asked a question about whether I would recommend my organisation is a great place to work. I think you said 33% of people would not recommend it. The figures are: 61% of employees said that they would recommend the organisation as a great place to work; 10% said they would not; and 23% are sitting in the neutral zone. We have a look at these results and look at the neutral zone. It is an area where we can do a lot of work to improve results. I thought I should make sure that point was clear.

On the bullying and whether or not it is reported, it is one of great concern, not just to the minister but also to me as the commissioner. We will be doing a lot more work over the next few months. I point out, though, that those figures are not a measure of bullying. They are an issue of reporting. We want to make sure we have workplaces that are safe, where people can raise issues and get their voice heard.

Mr CHAIR: Thank you, commissioner. As the time has clicked over to 7 pm, that concludes consideration of all output groups relating to the Office of the Public Employment Commissioner. On behalf of the committee, minister, I thank you and Ms Telfer and your officers for coming in this evening. I know there has been a power of work done behind the scenes. Thank you very much.

That concludes the estimates hearing today. We will recommence tomorrow, Wednesday morning at 8.30 am with questions for the Attorney-General and Minister for Justice.

Mr KIRBY: Mr Chair, I thank the commissioner and her hard-working team. It was a very busy year last year to make sure public servants could continue their hard work across the Northern Territory. She would have seen some things that you would not expect to happen in the public service. It obviously happened last year. As a nice reward this year, she gets a mountain of enterprise agreements to negotiate and will be stepping through every facet of that.

I thank her hard-working team. I thank the committee for all your hard work. All of you ladies and gents do a lot of work behind the scenes to get information ready and make sure we make the best use of our time.

Happy birthday for yesterday, Mr Chair.

Mr CHAIR: Thank you, minister. Good evening, everyone and good night. See you tomorrow morning.

The committee concluded.
