

The Estimates Committee convened at 8.30 am.

MINISTER PRICE'S PORTFOLIOS

DEPARTMENT OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND COMMUNITY SERVICES

Madam CHAIR: Good morning, everyone. Welcome to week two of the 2016 estimates hearings. This morning we have Minister Price. We will go to 11.30 pm. This afternoon we have Minister Styles. Good morning, Minister Price. If you would like to introduce the officials accompanying you.

Mrs PRICE: Good morning, Madam Chair. I would like to introduce Mr Mike Chiodo, Chief Executive of the Department of Local Government and Community Services; Ms Noelene Swanson, Deputy Chief Executive; and Ms Wati Kerta, the department's Chief Financial Officer who are joining me at the table this morning.

The Department of Local and Government and Community Services consists of complementary programs that focus on building stronger regions and remote communities. I am very proud of the outcomes the Department of Local Government and Community Services has delivered, and what we, as a Country Liberals government, have achieved. In my department we have achieved an Aboriginal employment rate of 52%. We have worked hard to improve the lives of regional and remote Territorians, and brought the voice back to the bush. I will inform you of some of these achievements.

Indigenous Essential Services cover 72 remote Indigenous communities and 66 nearby homelands. In 2015-16 the total value of the Indigenous Essential Services program, including the grant and revenue from sales, is estimated at \$114m. Indigenous Essential Services are delivered under contract by Indigenous Essential Services Pty Ltd, a subsidiary of Power and Water.

This year we have seen the commencement of the Solar Energy Transformation Program, or SETuP, which is a long-term strategy for the installation of diesel/solar hybrid technology facilities in over 30 remote communities across the Territory. Under the SETuP the Northern Territory and Australian governments are jointly investing \$55m into the remote community electricity supplies. The target of SETuP is to reduce diesel consumption by 15%, saving approximately three million litres of diesel per year over the 25-year life of the program. Site works are currently well in advance with construction of solar arrays in the first 10 communities.

Energy efficiency is being promoted in remote Indigenous communities through programs to assist households with more efficient energy use. The \$12.5m Manymak Energy Efficiency Project was completed in December 2015 and has helped more than 400 households in East Arnhem communities to reduce their daily power usage. The success of this program in Manymak has largely been due to 93 locally-employed Aboriginal energy workers who delivered energy efficiency education to residents. This resulted in many households receiving energy-efficient retrofits under the program.

The program for the assessment and removal of medium-risk asbestos material from non-Northern Territory government community buildings in remote Indigenous communities throughout the Territory has been very successful. Assessments have been completed in 73 remote communities and medium-risk asbestos-containing materials have been removed from 44 communities. A total of 27 m² of asbestos containing material has been removed from public-owned assets. A total of 141 men and six women have been employed in asbestos removal works within their communities.

On behalf of the Jabiru Town Development Authority my department coordinated critical electricity, water and sewerage infrastructure based in Jabiru to the value of \$1.6m. The Jabiru electricity supply now has the networking capacity to provide security against power outages across the whole town.

My department also has responsibility for negotiating leases over parcels of land occupied by Northern Territory government infrastructure in remote communities. It monitors new infrastructure projects to make sure planned developments of adequate essential services capacity and leases are secured to underpin the investment.

Following successful negotiation with the Australian government for more than \$40m, the department is currently implementing a comprehensive remote land planning model that will be consistent with mainstream land administration and linked to the mainstream systems. This important work will see development-ready communities across the Territory. This funding will assist Aboriginal Territorians generate income and social benefits through effective and sustainable management of their land.

The homelands program was previously funded by the Australian government through the National Partnership Agreement on Stronger Futures. Since August 2015 the Territory became responsible for the homelands program. This government will continue our commitment of supporting homelands residents. This financial year the department ~~administer~~~~administered~~ more than \$43m in grants for service providers for homelands and town camps, including \$14m over four years for Homeland Extra Allowance program.

A total of 36 service providers have participated in this program since its implementation. This financial year more than \$60m will be contributed to maintaining a safe environment for residents in remote homelands and \$8m in home maintenance funding will support residents in remote localities in 2074 dwellings. Through the Homelands Extra Allowance we have funded 2042 eligible applications - that is just under \$40m - since July 2013. A further \$4m in grants will provide a range of capital improvements to remote homelands for solar upgrades, ablution blocks, septic systems and improvements to water infrastructure, as well as upgrading airstrip and barge landings and a range of essential capital equipment.

The NT jobs package has led to an increase in Aboriginal employment with 136 full-time equivalent positions engaged to deliver positive outcomes on homelands. The NT government has continued to fund this important program since Australian government funding ceased in June 2015.

The refurbishment program in Elliott is another fine example of this government's commitment to creating economic development opportunities and developing local businesses. Elliott has shamefully been forgotten about, along with Alpara, when it comes to much-needed support. I have made it my business to ensure that these communities do not miss out anymore. I have prioritised such appalling living conditions as not acceptable anymore and we are delivering - \$3m has been provided to carry our refurbishments to 35 homes in the north and south Elliott town camps and Marlinja. Local Aboriginal business, PPP Contracting, has completed eight houses under the functional refurbishment program and more are under way.

From a strategic perspective it is critical that there is a sound understanding of the condition of housing stock and other assets that we are repairing and maintaining in homelands and town camps. In September 2014 the Australian and Northern Territory governments formed a partnership to conduct an assets and access review of homelands in the Territory. The Centre for Appropriate Technology was engaged to conduct the review. The review assessed the status of 400 homelands infrastructure, its usage and service arrangements and provided a vital report for informing future investment in the Territory's homelands and outstations. The final report provided a comprehensive overview of the review and data on the condition of homelands infrastructure and has now been available to the Northern Territory government for analysis.

The report identified that investment in homelands over the last 30 years has been beneficial in improving the health and wellbeing of residents, as well as providing a guide to future investment of opportunities. Residents in two-thirds of the homelands actively contribute to the maintenance of infrastructure and have a very strong sense of shared responsibility and self-reliance. The benefits of solar power across the homelands and outstations were also identified as an important factor in ongoing sustainability. In general, overcrowding was not identified as a significant problem, but was identified in 42 communities. The results of the review will also be publicly available in the coming weeks.

Since the Northern Territory National Emergency Response, there has been a lack of consistency in approach to town camps, particularly in relation to leasing and infrastructure funding. A lack of understanding of the town camp complexities is constraining progress, despite significant efforts being put into supporting town camps. At the Public Accounts Committee, you heard Mike Chiodo say that a more effective town camps approach is required and we are commencing with a comprehensive independent review of town camps ...

Madam CHAIR: Excuse me, Minister. The opening statements are confined to five minutes by agreement by the Legislative Assembly. I wondered if you have much more to go.

Mrs PRICE: Yes, I have.

Madam CHAIR: Would you like to table the statement?

Mrs PRICE: Can I just read a few more? Then I can table the rest if I run out of ...

Madam CHAIR: Okay. You have been going for 11 minutes now, so ...

Mrs PRICE: Very well. The review will assess the 43 funded town camps with reference to land tenure status, housing asset condition, existing infrastructure condition, economic opportunities, home ownership and the capacity of leaseholders to take responsibility for obligations under relevant legislation and funding agreements.

Approximately 35 000 Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory speak an Indigenous language at home. The Territory is one of the most linguistically diverse regions globally, due to the diversity of Aboriginal and overseas languages spoken throughout the Territory. The Aboriginal Interpreter Service facilitates effective cross-cultural communication between service providers and Aboriginal people who do not speak English as a first language. The Aboriginal Interpreter Service has more than 300 registered interpreters, making it one of the largest employers of Aboriginal people in Australia. The Aboriginal Interpreter Service won the Fitzgerald Justice Award - after being nominated in the NT Human Rights Awards for 2015 - for its contribution in the development of the plain English police caution in 18 Aboriginal languages. The caution was three years in the making and was launched early in 2015.

Aboriginal people have continuously called for a much greater say on their housing needs as well as more public and private investment in communities. This government has listened and we are now working towards establishing an independent statutory body that will operate as a not-for-profit business with a ial appointed independent board. The Northern Territory government will work in partnership with Aboriginal people and key stakeholders to establish the remote housing development authority by July 2017.

When Tropical Cyclones Lam and Nathan devastated the Arnhem Land community of Galiwinku, 81 houses sustained major damage in the cyclones. Given the urgency for accommodation and the need for local employment opportunities it was agreed with the Galiwinku Dilak leadership group that 40 houses would be fast-tracked, with another 40 new houses built on a slower path, maximising training and employment on local business development. This has resulted in the delivery of community-led designs for the replacement of 40 houses at Galiwinku under the slow build program.

Madam CHAIR: Do you have much more to go, Minister?

Mrs PRICE: Yes, I have.

Madam CHAIR: All right. I might get you to table it and we will start with ...

Mrs PRICE: I will just read this in closing.

Madam CHAIR: All right.

Mrs PRICE: Madam Chair, it has been a productive year for the Department of Local Government and Community Services and I thank the departmental staff for all their hard work.

Madam CHAIR: Thank you, Minister. Are there any questions on the Minister's statement?

Mr McCARTHY: Yes, Madam Chair. Minister, you talked about the removal of asbestos. I followed - with interest during the last year - the statements that you have made in the House. In relation to the removal of asbestos, Minister, where is it being disposed of?

Mrs PRICE: Member for Barkly, I will ask Noelene to answer that question for you.

Ms SWANSON: It is being transported out of communities and disposed in registered asbestos disposal areas. For example, in Darwin; it is being transported to Darwin or relevant other sites that are registered for asbestos disposal.

Mr McCARTHY: Do you have a cost around the disposal of the asbestos?

Ms SWANSON: Not for the 27 000 m² - off the top of my head - that has been removed. It is information that could be made available if required.

Mr McCARTHY: That would be good if we could get an idea of cost. I can remember work with the previous government in trying to establish a regional asbestos disposal facility. We did not have any luck with landing that before government changed in 2012. I know the City of Darwin council was not accepting any asbestos that did not come from their municipality. Have those issues been resolved? Do we have a regional facility and does the City of Darwin accept asbestos from the bush?

Mr CHIODO: Mike Chiodo, Chief Executive of Local Government and Community Services. Member for Barkly, the situation with Darwin council and its asbestos location stands as it was. However, we have been working with the recently-created Alice Springs tip. In effect, there will be an asbestos dumping site as part of that tip. We are negotiating with them to ensure we can use it for Central Australian deposits.

Mr McCARTHY: Thank you. In relation to Elliott, has there been asbestos removed in the refurbishments of the eight houses?

Mrs PRICE: Not at this stage.

Mr McCARTHY: Is asbestos going to Alice Springs currently stored somewhere?

Mr CHIODO: Through the Minister and the Chair, as Noelene responded to earlier, there are two facilities that are available. If it is removed in the north then it comes within the boundaries of Darwin, we utilise that, otherwise it is stored within containers. We have an arrangement where it can be shipped to dumping facilities in South Australia, which has been a part of the program.

Mr McCARTHY: Sure, I remember that being the case previously. If the department was willing to supply costs around that it would be interesting to understand how that is managed.

Mrs PRICE: Yes, we can provide that for you, member for Barkly.

Question on Notice No 6.1

Madam CHAIR: Is that a question on notice? Would you restate the question, member for Barkly?

Mr McCARTHY: Could the department share the costs for the removal and disposal of asbestos as tabled in the Minister's opening statement?

Madam CHAIR: Do you accept the question, Minister?

Mrs PRICE: Yes.

Madam CHAIR: The question asked by the member for Barkly of the Minister has been allocated the number 6.1.

Mr WOOD: Madam Chair, could I just ask a question on asbestos if the member for Barkly is finished? In relation to asbestos removal, especially in the top end of Arnhem Land, has some asbestos been dumped locally?

Mr CHIODO: No.

Mr WOOD: What about Elcho Island?

Mr CHIODO: I cannot answer that question at the moment. I would have to take that on notice.

Question on Notice No 6.2

Madam CHAIR: Could you restate the question for the record please, member for Nelson.

Mr WOOD: Minister, could you find out whether any asbestos was dumped on Elcho Island?

Madam CHAIR: Do you accept the question, Minister?

Mrs PRICE: Yes.

Madam CHAIR: The member for Nelson has asked a question to the Minister and that question will be given number 6.2.

Mr CHIODO: Madam Chair, I am sorry, my deputy does have a response to that question.

Ms SWANSON: If it relates to recent works in relation to reparation from Cyclone Lam and Cyclone Nathan, no, it has not been dumped locally; it has been sealed in containers and removed from the island.

Mr WOOD: Do you know if asbestos was dumped or left on the island before that?

Mr CHIODO: I am sorry, member for Nelson, over what period of time? We can speak, as the Deputy Chief Executive has, in relation to Galiwinku and Cyclones Nathan and Lam and the steps that we have taken, but historically I would have some difficulty in responding to that question.

Mr WOOD: Can I leave that question as it is then and you could respond?

Mr CHIODO: Sure. Could I reiterate what period of time we are talking about?

Mr WOOD: I would say within the last five years.

Mr CHIODO: Okay.

Madam CHAIR: Just for the record, we will include that time frame in the question.

Madam CHAIR: Are there any more questions on the statement?

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

Madam CHAIR: We will move on to consider the estimates of proposed expenditure contained in the Appropriation Bill 2016-17 as they relate to the Department of Local Government and Community Services. Are there any agency-related whole-of-government questions on budget and fiscal strategy?

Mr McCARTHY: Madam Chair, I ask the Minister will he be tabling the answers to the opposition's global written questions?

Mrs PRICE: Member for Barkly, I am happy to read them for you, but I will not be tabling them.

Mr McCARTHY: Then if you could just respond to the questions orally here, rather than reading what looks like quite an extensive document ...

Mrs PRICE: These are my answers that I am holding in my hands, for the outputs.

Mr McCARTHY: Are you happy to table them so we can get on with it?

Mrs PRICE: No, I will read them.

Mr McCARTHY: All right. Minister, let us go through them. Can you provide the costs of advertising and communications in 2015-16 in each agency authority, please?

Mrs PRICE: For the Local Government and Community Services Remote Engagement and Coordination Strategy, \$6370 was spent on a strategy to guide and inform the NTG staff and others on the complexities of engaging and consulting with people in remote communities.

Aboriginal Affairs Strategy, Office of Aboriginal Affairs – \$11 955 was spent and the total campaign advertising expenses were \$24 372.

Corporate Communication Services are provided through a shared service model from the Department of Housing. We would have to wait for the Department of Housing's response.

Mr McCARTHY: Thank you, Minister. In the agencies we are talking about here, which are Local Government and Community Services, how many staff are responsible for communications and advertising?

Mr CHIODO: Member for Barkly, the Department of Local Government and Community Services has provided services for communications through the Department of Housing, so it is in fact a communications hub. You would need to ask that question of the Department of Housing.

Mr McCARTHY: Thank you, Mr Chiodo. Minister, can you provide the detail and cost of any government advertising that features the image or the voice of the Chief Minister?

Mrs PRICE: Member for Barkly, the Chief Minister's reply was that there were none.

Mr McCARTHY: Can you please provide the costs and the number of all consultancies undertaken by the agency?

Mrs PRICE: For the financial year from 1 July to 31 March 2016 the Department of Local Government and Community Services procured a total of 63 consultancies, totalling \$922 983. Within the above total, two consultancies were associated with communications. One was Tanya Nasa Consulting Services for the development of the report for the First Circles Emerging Leaders inaugural Cabinet meeting, which was valued at \$9000. The other was Aboriginal Broadcasting Australia for the development of campaign materials for the Aboriginal Fair Strategy. Contract awarded was \$30 550. No invoices have been received for the payment.

Ms FYLES: Did both those go to tender?

Mr CHIODO: The answer to that is no.

Ms FYLES: Was a certificate of exemption issued?

Mr CHIODO: That is correct.

Ms FYLES: For both those tenders?

Mr CHIODO: No, for Tanya Nasa Consulting Services, in effect sitting within the tier that it does, was approved by me.

Ms FYLES: What about the \$30 500 for the Aboriginal Affairs?

Mr CHIODO: Same. It was below the \$50 000 mark so it was approved by me.

Ms FYLES: Okay. Minister, in relation to that Aboriginal Affairs program, what was the other costs associated with that campaign? If \$30 500 was spent on the consultancy for it, what were the other costs in advertising, preparation, graphic design, etcetera?

Mrs PRICE: The \$30 550 covers the whole lot.

Ms FYLES: So, the cost of placing ads, preparation ...

Mr CHIODO: This was a very specific campaign with the ABA. It was not a matter of placing ads, it was campaign materials for the strategy. The voice-overs were done through the Aboriginal Broadcasting Australia.

Ms FYLES: Okay. This was separate to the Facebook campaign we have seen with the Aboriginal Affairs Facebook page?

Mr CHIODO: I believe the member for Nightcliff is aware that the Facebook campaign was a campaign run out of the office of the Chief Minister, not the department nor this Minister.

Ms FYLES: Okay, I am clarifying that. Even though it is a similar name, it is two separate campaigns?

Mr CHIODO: Sorry, this similarity in names was ...

Ms FYLES: We are talking about Aboriginal Affairs consultancy and there is a Facebook page Aboriginal Affairs NT. I am clarifying.

Mr CHIODO: I reiterate that the Facebook page was at the Office of Chief Minister, not of the department. The similarity in names exists within Indigenous Affairs across Australia.

Ms FYLES: I am clarifying my question, Minister. In that Aboriginal Affairs NT Facebook campaign we saw run, there were no costs within this government agency?

Mrs PRICE: No, I believe what my CE is saying is correct. They are two separate Aboriginal Affairs entities here.

Ms FYLES: So, I am correct in my assumption that the Aboriginal Affairs NT Facebook campaign we saw ...

Mrs PRICE: That is totally different from this consultancy.

Ms FYLES: Okay. So, there were no costs within this agency?

Mrs PRICE: No, none.

Ms FYLES: Okay. I wanted to clarify that, thank you. I appreciate that.

Mr McCARTHY: Minister, how many staff in each agency authority detailed by FTE, permanent part-time contract, temporary contract, frontline staffers, FTE as a percentage of the agency and FTE and percentage of identified Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff? Are you happy to table that part of the response? It was submitted as a written question.

Mrs PRICE: Member for Barkly, I can read through this quickly. The Department of Local Government and Community Services, as at 31 March 2016, has 236.3 full-time equivalent staff, 21 paid part-time employees and 26 temporary contract employees. You can then refer the question to the Minister for Public Employment, as he will be on later.

Mr McCARTHY: Thank you, Minister. Minister, how many staff members at the ECO1 level and above are detailed?

Mrs PRICE: ECO1, there are 10; ECO2 there are three; ECO3 there are two; and EO5 there is one.

Mr McCARTHY: Thank you Minister. Minister, how many staff resigned in 2015-16 to date and what is that as a percentage of the agencies total staff?

Mrs PRICE: Which output, member for Barkly?

Mr McCARTHY: Local Government and Community Services. We are talking whole-of-government area, Minister.

Mrs PRICE: I would like to refer the question to the Minister for Public Employment.

Mr McCARTHY: Minister, were any staff members made redundant in 2015-16?

Mrs PRICE: Yes, in respect of redundancies, there were no forced redundancies in 2015-16. In other redundancies - I reiterate - refer the question to the Minister for Public Employment.

Mr McCARTHY: Minister, any staff terminated in 2015-16?

Mrs PRICE: The Department of Local Government and Community Services as at 31 March 2016 had one termination of employment.

Mr McCARTHY: Can you provide the total cost of travel in each agency and authority, broken down into international, interstate and intrastate please?

Mrs PRICE: Yes, for financial year from 1 July to 31 March 2016 the Department of Local Government and Community Services paid \$1 148 731 in travel costs and it is broken down as: international nil; interstate \$176 224; intrastate \$972 506.

Mr McCARTHY: Minister, are you happy to provide the itinerary of the persons and the costs of travel for each interstate trip?

Mrs PRICE: Member for Barkly, I can take that on notice.

Question on Notice No 6.3

Madam CHAIR: Could you please restate the question for the record, member for Barkly.

Mr McCARTHY: In the case of interstate travel, please provide the itinerary, persons and costs involved in each travel trip.

Madam CHAIR: Do you accept the question, Minister?

Mrs PRICE: Yes.

Madam CHAIR: The question asked of the Minister by the member for Barkly is number 6.3.

Mr McCARTHY: Minister, can you provide the details and costs of all travel undertaken by you, as a Minister, that was paid for by the agency or authority, including travel on charter aircraft?

Mrs PRICE: Member for Barkly, to my knowledge I have not had Local Government and Community Services pay for any charter flights for me.

Mr McCARTHY: Thank you, Minister. I was trying to get a gauge on what it would cost because - I tell you what - I am over driving, I really am. Anyway, thank you, Minister.

Mrs PRICE: Tell me about it! Driving is hard; we both have big electorates.

Mr McCARTHY: Yes. Can you provide the details and costs of all hospitality expenditure undertaken in the agency or authority? Can you indicate the events that were held on behalf of the Minister, or events which the Minister attended?

Mrs PRICE: For the financial year from 1 July to 31 March 2016, the Department of Local Government and Community Services paid \$8445 in hospitality and entertainment expenses. Hospitality and entertainment can cover expenses such as food, drink, recreation venue hire, associated accommodation and travel, morning teas and lunches. Some of the places that were visited included a Pirlangimpi visit that cost \$81, staff morning tea and lunch \$100, Urapuntja Council lunch was \$132, Office of Women's Policy workshop Pirlangimpi \$441 and Office of Aboriginal Affairs launch \$525. They are the ones associated with me.

Mr McCARTHY: Thank you, Minister. Can you please detail all boards and advisory bodies in your agencies and indicate boards and advisory bodies where the chair and/or members attract remuneration?

Mrs PRICE: The Local Government Disciplinary Committee was established under section 80 of the *Local Government Act*. The Disciplinary Committee deals with complaints made against any member of a council, local board, local authority or council committee for an alleged breach of council's code of conduct. A disciplinary committee must be constituted by three members, one from each of the three classes of appointed eligible members, namely a legal practitioner nominated by the Attorney-General or a person nominated by me as the Minister for Local Government and Community Services and a person who has been nominated by the Local Government Association of the Northern Territory. The Department of Local Government and Community Services provides secretariat services to the Disciplinary Committee. Twenty-two people have been appointed by the Minister for Local Government and Community Services as people eligible to be members of a Local Government Disciplinary Committee. When the department receives a complaint to the Disciplinary Committee alleging that an elected member has breached the council's code of conduct, the department forms a disciplinary committee from the pool of eligible members.

The Northern Territory Grants Commission is established under section 4 of the *Local Government Grants Commission Act*. The commission is responsible for making recommendations to the Minister concerning the distribution of Commonwealth government financial assistance grants, and under the *Commonwealth's Local Government (Financial Assistance) Act* to local government councils. The commission consists of four members. One is an independent chair appointed by the Minister. One member represents the interests of municipal councils. One represents the interests of regional or shire councils and the fourth

member is the Chief Executive of the Department of Local Government and Community Services or his/her nominee. They are the ones that are with the local government boards and advisory bodies.

Mr McCARTHY: Thank you, Minister. Can you provide the total cost of each board and advisory body, detail how often each board or advisory body met in 2015-16, the list of membership of those boards and the amounts paid to members in 2015-16? It could be tabled. These were written questions, Minister.

Mrs PRICE: Members of the Local Government Disciplinary Committee are remunerated for considering and determining a complaint. Members of the committee who are also public servants are not remunerated. Since 1 July 2015 the Local Government Disciplinary Committee incurred expenditure of \$8251.

As at 31 March 2016 the Northern Territory Grants Commission incurred expenditure of \$279 176.

Mr McCARTHY: Minister, could you table a list of the membership of those boards?

Mrs PRICE: Member for Barkly, the Local Government Disciplinary Committee eligible members are as follows.

The Legal Practitioners nominated by the Attorney-General were Gabrielle Martin, Ruth Bremner, Andrew George, Bruce Taylor, David Baldry. Members nominated by the Minister were Ian Summers, Josephine McGill, Steven Edgington, Darren Johnson, Bruce Fyfe, Cindy Lee McDonald. The members nominated by the Local Government Association of the Northern Territory were Garry Lambert, Damien Ryan, Alan McKay, Fay Miller, Robert Elix, Chansey Paech, Stuart Duncan, Geoffrey Carter, Judith Cole, Peter Klee and Ralph Blythe.

The Northern Territory Grants Commission – Bob Beadman is the Chairman, Damien Ryan is a commissioner, Steven Hennessey is a commissioner, and David Willing is the *ex officio* commissioner.

Mr McCARTHY: Can you detail the statutory or legislative fees and charges levied by your agency or authority, the revenue raised, and whether any of these fees or charges were increased in Budget 2016-17.

Mrs PRICE: The Department of Local Government and Community Services raised total fees and charges revenue of \$2 653 770 from 1 July 2015 to 31 March 2016. It is broken down as: Aboriginal Interpreter Service, \$661 476; Interpreting and Translating Service NT, \$104 990; Local Government, \$1 887 304. The Department of Local Government and Community Services did not increase any fees and charges in Budget 2016-17.

Mr McCARTHY: How many internal audits and financial investigations were conducted in each agency in 2015-16?

Mrs PRICE: The Department of Local Government and Community Services, as at 31 March 2016, has undertaken three internal audit activities and also responded to the Department of the Chief Minister's six-monthly audit of travel compliance and the audit of Latitude Travel transactions. No financial investigations were conducted.

Mr McCARTHY: And no fraud anomalies or breaches?

Mrs PRICE: That is correct.

Mr McCARTHY: Can you please detail the cost in 2015-16 of legal services provided by legal firms to each agency and authority for which you are responsible?

Mrs PRICE: As at 31 March 2016 the total cost of legal services provided by private legal firms to the agency was \$12 110.

Mr McCARTHY: Would you please advise what grant, program, project and operational funding, if any, will be provided to non-government and external organisations, including contractors, this financial year and what funding will be provided in 2016-17.

Mrs PRICE: For the financial year from 1 July 2015 to 31 March 2016 the Department of Local Government and Community Services paid grants and operational funding totalling \$31 295 782 to non-government and external organisations. Where non-government organisations rely on contractors,

funding is provided to NGOs and is included in the following figures. The program outline is: the Homelands Extra Allowance is \$4.04m; housing maintenance services program is \$3 831 465; housing and infrastructure investment, Elliott \$450 000; municipal and essential services, homelands is \$9 493 001; municipal and essential services jobs package was \$3 394 437; municipal and essential services town camps was over \$1 729 436; Office of Men's Policy grant program \$49 250; Office of Women's Policy \$46 200; Ilpye Ilpye project \$843 664; asbestos removal program was \$5 412 921; First Circle Engagement grant program was \$3712; Remote Aboriginal Economic Development Fund \$129 200; Community Champions program \$432 250; Local Government Grants program was \$249 222; Local Government Grants program for the Australia Day Awards was \$3000; Local Government Grants was \$1.224 024. The budget amounts are yet to be allocated in 2016-17.

Mr McCARTHY: Thank you, Minister.

Ms FYLES: Minister, another question on the opening statement. We did not get to hear your whole statement and it has not been tabled. As the Minister for Statehood, how has that been progressing?

Mrs PRICE: It is not in this output.

Ms FYLES: But, as the Minister, in your opening statement ...

Mrs PRICE: We are waiting for that output on statehood.

Ms FYLES: Can you clarify with me which output that will come under?

Mrs PRICE: That is later on today.

Ms FYLES: Yes. I just want to make sure I do not miss the opportunity to ask questions, that is all.

Mrs PRICE: I believe there is Housing after this, Madam Chair? After Parks and Wildlife.

Ms FYLES: You are happy to take some questions on statehood then?

Mrs PRICE: That is correct. When it is appropriate.

Ms FYLES: Thank you.

Madam CHAIR: Are there any more whole-of-government questions on budget and fiscal strategies?

Mr WOOD: Just a clarification. If I was to ask about procurement in Housing, where would that fit in? Does that fit under governance? I need to know when to ask the question on procurement about Housing.

Mr CHIODO: Sorry, member for Nelson. That is the Department of Housing.

Mr WOOD: That is right. But we are looking at the whole and I need to get a clarification early. I am not asking a question about it.

Mr CHIODO: I am sorry.

Mr WOOD: I need to know where it would come in so I do not miss it. Would it come in under Output 12?

Madam CHAIR: Member for Nelson, given that these officials are from Local Government and Community Services, they are probably unable to answer that question. We might wait until we get to Housing to clarify when the Minister will answer questions on Housing ...

Mr WOOD: I thought Mike would be able to answer. He can answer everything. There were some broader questions in what the Minister was ...

Madam CHAIR: ... to take some pressure off the already-pressured officials.

Mr WOOD: The member for Barkly was asking some fairly broad questions.

Madam CHAIR: Yes. A reasonable question but we will wait until we are on Housing.

Mr WOOD: Do not let me forget mine.

Madam CHAIR: Okay, so if there are no more whole-of-government questions, we will conclude that section.

OUTPUT GROUP 1.0 – REGIONAL SERVICES
Output 1.1 – Indigenous Essential Services

Madam CHAIR: The committee will now proceed to Output Group 1.0, Regional Services and Output 1.1, Indigenous Essential Services. Are there any questions?

Mr McCARTHY: Madam Chair, I have questions in Output 1.0 Regional Services before we move to Indigenous Essential Services.

Madam CHAIR: Okay if you would like to – that is not an output group in my paper, but if the Minister is willing to take the question just generally on Regional Services, 1.0? Yes? Thanks, Minister.

Mrs PRICE: Madam Chair, I would like to stick to the outputs.

Madam CHAIR: Number 1.0 is not technically an output group; it is the heading for a group, so that is fair enough. You can ask the question and if the Minister does not want to answer - it is an output group, but then there are subsections under the group.

Mr McCARTHY: Yes, thank you, Madam Chair. Minister, it is important work. Can you provide an update on the work of the Land Tenure Unit in the department, developing a methodology that can create a planning method for remote communities?

Mr WOOD: That might be a Output 1.2 question.

Mr McCARTHY: Do not get tricky, member for Nelson.

Mrs PRICE: Okay, member for Barkly. My Department of Local Government and Community Services is making significant progress in securing government infrastructure with long-term leases. We now have long-term leases on over 974 parcels of land occupied by government infrastructure and 58 community housing leases which represents approximately 4000 parcels of land occupied by remote public housing. My department is the central coordinating point for all Northern Territory agencies to secure these leases which will underpin investment and construction of much-needed infrastructure.

My department is also managing a \$7m three-year rolling program for cadastral survey plans to be prepared in 50 remote communities. The cadastral surveys will formalise land boundaries which are a vital component for a land administration framework that will support economic development and home ownership.

Mr McCARTHY: Thank you, Minister. In relation to airstrips and barge landings, how is that progressing with lands councils?

Mr CHIODO: Through the Chair, member for Barkly, the Department of Transport carries the responsibilities for airstrips and barge landings and that question should be asked of them. We act as a client provider service. The direct question needs to go to the Department of Transport.

Mr WOOD: Could I just ask on that? Do any local government councils maintain and control barge landings and airstrips?

Mr CHIODO: Yes, they do.

Mr WOOD: Does that make the question the member asked more relevant to those airstrips and barge landings?

Mr CHIODO: Again, that arrangement is between the appropriate local government and the Department of Transport, so it would be a service level agreement that is negotiated between the two of them.

Mr McCARTHY: Thanks, Mr Chiodo. Minister, how is the work progressing with lands councils and the local government authority on this new methodology?

Mrs PRICE: I would like to stick to the outputs, if I can, Madam Chair:

Madam CHAIR: Okay. These issues should be accounted for within the output groups; that is how it is designed. We will move on to where we were before which was Output 1.1, Indigenous Essential Services. Are there any questions?

Mr McCARTHY: Yes, Madam Chair. To clarify, Minister, the Administrative Arrangement Orders continue to name you as the Minister responsible for coordination of funding of essential services to remote Indigenous communities not serviced by Commonwealth programs. Yes? Budget Paper No 3 continues to list you, Minister Price, as the Minister responsible for the \$75.7m spent on Indigenous Essential Services. Yes? So we are all clear on that?

Are you concerned that following on from the structural separation of the Power and Water Corporation and their subsidiary Indigenous Essential Services which provides power, water and sewerage services to remote communities, that you are responsible for, is unable to provide an annual report for 2014-15?

Mrs PRICE: Member for Barkly, that is a question for Power and Water.

Mr McCARTHY: Minister, the annual report for 2014-15 has not appeared so there are no financial statements audited or on the public record for Indigenous Essential Services. How are you dealing with that situation as the Minister responsible?

Mrs PRICE: I will have my CE answer that for you to clarify it.

Mr CHIODO: Member for Barkly, the arrangements have not altered in relation to the transition of grant funding from our department to Indigenous Essential Services Pty Ltd. There are regular meetings between Power and Water Corporation or IES Pty Ltd and our department at an operational level. Although they have not been capable of providing an audited financial statement at this point, we are comfortable with the progress of the delivery of our grant component of IES, but that is only part of IES Pty Ltd. So any other questions in relation to that matter would need to be directed to Power and Water Corporation.

Mr McCARTHY: Thank you, Mr Chiodo. Minister, in your agency, how will that affect the production of your annual reports?

Mrs PRICE: Member for Barkly, that is your opinion. I am here to provide you with the facts. We all work together.

Mr McCARTHY: The fact of producing an annual report - you are missing some substantial financial information. How will that affect your department?

Mr CHIODO: Member for Barkly, in the preparation of our report it is the transfer of the funding that would be recorded through the budget. The transfer of the funding occurs at the beginning of the financial year and the acquittal for that is what we would be reporting on. The transfer of funding - in other words the annual report out of Power and Water - would have no impact on our ability to provide an annual report for our component.

Mr McCARTHY: Thank you, Mr Chiodo. Minister, Budget Paper No 3 shows that the budget for Indigenous Essential Services has increased from \$75m in 2015-16 to nearly \$89m in 2016-17. We cannot see what the Power and Water Corporation is saying about that. Could you provide some more detail on what that extra funding is for?

Mrs PRICE: Member for Barkly, I will direct that question to Wati.

Ms KERTA: Wati Kerta, Chief Financial Officer. That increase in expenditure between 2015-16 and 2016-17 - is that what you are referring to?

Mr McCARTHY: Yes.

Ms KERTA: That is in relation to the increase in IES capital works projects. That is the reason for that increase.

Mr McCARTHY: So you got the money but you do not have the detail on how you will expend it yet?

Ms KERTA: It is for a capital works project. There is a list of capital works projects that were approved. It was identified in our budget papers.

Mr McCARTHY: Last year we were advised that the revenue from IES was \$41m. What is that forecast to be in 2016-17?

Mr CHIODO: That is a question for IES Pty Ltd. It is dependent on a large number of variable factors - as you are aware, member for Barkly - including diesel costs and others, and with the rollout of the solar program. That is purely and simply an IES Pty Ltd and Power and Water Corporation question.

Mr McCARTHY: Thank you, Mr Chiodo. Minister, Budget Paper No 3 suggests that there is 75% customer satisfaction with Indigenous Essential Services. How long has it been since a review of the methodology that is used to reach that conclusion?

Mrs PRICE: Member for Barkly, that question should be directed at Power and Water for the details. You will have that opportunity later in the week.

Mr McCARTHY: Were you concerned about the findings in the 2015 Ombudsman's Report into the problems with power meter repairs and power supply at Wadeye, especially the unreasonable delay in repairing damaged meters and restoring power to households? What have you done in ensuring the Ombudsman's recommendations have been addressed?

Mrs PRICE: Member for Barkly, I reiterate, that question should be directed to Power and Water.

Ms FYLES: But, as Minister for Indigenous Essential Services – it is an Ombudsman's recommendation. Does your department have no carriage for any of the Ombudsman's recommendations?

Mr CHIODO: Member for Nightcliff, Wadeye is not an Indigenous Essential Services community. It is an on-grid community; therefore, it is a Power and Water Corporation responsibility.

Ms FYLES: Okay, within the Ombudsman's recommendations there were no recommendations under the Minister's carriage?

Mr CHIODO: Not for Indigenous Essential Services. That was specific to Wadeye and the issues associated with that community, which is not an Indigenous Essential Services community.

Mr McCARTHY: Thank you, Mr Chiodo. That is it for that section for me, Madam Chair.

Madam CHAIR: Any other questions for Output 1.1?

Mr WOOD: One broad question. Can Indigenous essential services be put out for tender?

Mr CHIODO: From a capital works program point of view, if there is an agreed capital project between our agency and Power and Water Corporation, they can specifically be put out to tender. Normally that would be done by Power and Water Corporation. So if your question is can the Department of Local Government and Community Services put specific projects out to tender for Indigenous essential services, it would depend on the project. But, yes, from a capital works program it can.

From the repairs and maintenance or asset management funding, which is a direct grant to IES Pty Ltd, all tenders for that would be dealt with by IES Pty Ltd. So, the answer is yes, it can, but it is done by Power and Water Corporation.

Mr WOOD: I suppose I am also asking the bigger question – if we are looking at competition as the government is doing and it is allowing other companies to come into the provision of electricity in the Northern Territory, could another company put a bid in to provide power, water and sewerage maintenance operations for all those communities?

Mr CHIODO: The simple answer is yes, it could.

Mr WOOD: Has anyone asked the question or put in a bid for an alternative supply?

Mrs PRICE: No, not that we are aware of. But, are you interested?

Mr WOOD: Well, I can fit a light globe, but after that, no. That is all, thanks.

Madam CHAIR: That concludes consideration of Output 1.1.

Output 1.2 – Remote Infrastructure Coordination

Madam CHAIR: I will now call for questions on Output 1.2, Remote Infrastructure Coordination. Are there any questions?

Mr McCARTHY: Budget Paper No 3 reports an increase in budget from \$7.45m in 2015-16 to \$40.8m for remote infrastructure coordination. Can you explain the basis for the change and give us details about that considerable increase?

Mrs PRICE: Thank you, member for Barkly. I will get my Chief Financial Officer Wati to answer that.

Ms KERTA: Member for Barkly, in relation to the increase for the remote infrastructure coordination program, a lot of it is largely to certain projects in 2015-16 being carried over into 2016-17. So, that is one basis of it. The other one is some increase in funding that was received this financial year by a transfer from – sorry, it was largely in relation to the land tenure leasing arrangements.

Mr McCARTHY: Do you have a list of the revote projects that have been carried over into the 2016-17 financial year, and their values?

Mrs PRICE: Member for Barkly, we will have to take that on notice.

Question on Notice No 6.4

Madam CHAIR: Could you restate the question please, member for Barkly?

Mr McCARTHY: In relation to the significant budget increase for remote infrastructure coordination, could you provide a list of revoted projects from 2015-16 into the 2016-17 financial year?

Madam CHAIR: Do you accept the question, Minister?

Mrs PRICE: Yes.

Madam CHAIR: The question asked by the member for Barkly of the Minister has been allocated number 6.4.

Mr CHIODO: I am sorry, Madam Chair, I ask for a clarification. Member for Barkly, in infrastructure coordination, you quoted a figure of \$7.454m, which was the budget figure, but it was predicated by an estimate for 2016 of \$23.444m. So, we are looking at the difference between the \$23.4m and the \$40m - is that correct?

Mr McCARTHY: Yes, I am looking at the difference to try to get an explanation

Mr CHIODO: That is fine.

Mr McCARTHY: I am interested in those projects that have continued over into the financial year. Could we have an explanation of that relationship to the land tenure arrangements that were established?

Mr CHIODO: The Land Tenure Unit has had a transfer of funds. If I take a step back, the Remote Infrastructure Coordination is not just fixed infrastructure projects. The Land Tenure Unit sits within the Remote Infrastructure Coordination. The logic of the exercise is that they look after the Indigenous essential services component, land tenure and some infrastructure projects because of the obvious nexus between the three to effect appropriate delivery.

The Land Tenure Unit, as you saw earlier, has carried responsibility for projects such as the cadastral project, which was in excess of \$7m on its own and has been going for over a three-year period. It has also taken over responsibility moving forward the negotiations with the NLC and the CLC and other land councils for township leases and the possibility of township leases. That has led to a transfer of funds from

Department of Chief Minister, which is where it originally sat, over to our department. What the Minister was specifically relating to was the transfer of those funds as the increased responsibility has fallen into our department.

Mr McCARTHY: Thank you, Mr Chiodo.

Mr WOOD: On this – Output 1.2?

Mr McCARTHY: I have more, but I thought you wanted a question on the back of that.

Mr WOOD: No, it was answered by Mr Chiodo.

Mr McCARTHY: Minister, with regional councils withdrawing from provision of morgue services, what arrangements have been negotiated for management of the new Commonwealth-funded morgue facilities?

Mrs PRICE: Member for Barkly, that comes under Output 3.1. I will be able to answer that question for you in that output.

Mr McCARTHY: Output 3.1, Minister?

Mrs PRICE: Yes.

Mr McCARTHY: Thank you. Can you provide an updated list of all remote infrastructure projects being coordinated by your agency, showing the description of work, value of work, contractor undertaking the work and the status of each project?

Mrs PRICE: Member for Barkly, what does that include exactly?

Mr McCARTHY: Remote infrastructure projects currently coordinated by your agency. We are interested in the work, the value of the work, the contractor.

Mr CHIODO: Member for Barkly, we would need to take that question on notice. However, I make the point that part of what we spoke about earlier was a large series of projects that are coordinated out of that group in homelands. Are we talking about major projects or capital works projects? Or are we talking about a listing of all projects in homelands, remote communities and all locations throughout the NT?

We are happy to do it, but that would take a substantive amount of time and a breakdown of the funding has already been provided as it is given to service providers in those communities. That was done earlier by the Minister.

Mr McCARTHY: Should we then agree on projects over \$100 000?

Mr CHIODO: That would be between you and the Minister, member for Barkly.

Mr McCARTHY: Minister, would you be happy to look at projects over \$100 000?

Mr CHIODO: Would that be capital projects, member for Barkly?

Mr McCARTHY: Yes.

Question on Notice No 6.5

Madam CHAIR: Could you please restate the question for the record, member for Barkly.

Mr McCARTHY: Can you provide an updated list of all remote infrastructure capital projects over \$100 000 coordinated by your agency showing the description of work, the value of work, the contractor undertaking the work and the status of each project?

Madam CHAIR: Minister, do you accept the question? Is the detail sufficient?

Mrs PRICE: Yes.

Madam CHAIR: The question asked by the member for Barkly of the Minister has been allocated number 6.5.

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

Mr WOOD: Thank you Madam Chair. A couple of questions. In relation to Budget Paper No 3, page 272, in regard to items 'Remote towns where all Territory Government infrastructure is secured with long-term tenure arrangements', and 'Remote Communities where remote public housing leases are in place', I understand the figures given are cumulative figures, but they are still down on what was expected from the previous budget to what happened. Could you give a reason why you did not reach the budget forecast?

Mrs PRICE: I will ask Wati to answer that question for you, member for Nelson.

Ms KERTA: Member for Nelson, can you clarify your question? Were you referring to the KPIs?

Mr WOOD: Under Remote Infrastructure Coordination on page 272, yes, the KPIs. The 2015-16 Budget was for 73 long-term tenure arrangements for remote towns and remote communities. Public housing leases was 104. But in fact the number was 59 for remote towns and 87 for remote communities. Why did you not reach the targets that you were intending to?

Ms KERTA: In 2014-15 that was calculated including the secured and agreed leases. The measures that we put in 2015-16 and 2016-17 were only including the secured leases. So there is a difference in the methodology.

Mr WOOD: Would it be better to put those figures - for us pure mortals - the actual number of leases you have and the ones you are still applying for? I would be asking how many more leases are required and if there is a holdup in those leases, what is the reason for those holdups?

Ms KERTA: Yes.

Mr WOOD: So, maybe next year we could have totals

Mrs PRICE: I was just going to say, that is why the methodology changed.

Mr WOOD: In my case, it might have changed backwards. Okay, I will move on. Are any five-year leases still existing, and if so – I am getting a shake of the head; you cannot have a shake of a head on *Hansard*.

Mrs PRICE: No.

Mr WOOD: All five-year leases have been finished, or has there been a new lease arrangement on those five-year leases?

Mr CHIODO: Through the Chair, all the five-year leases, which were Australian government leases, have expired.

Mr WOOD: What happened after their expiration?

Mr CHIODO: They have reverted to month by month. We are talking about housing leases in particular. It is part of the program the Land Tenure Unit is now looking at in conjunction with the Department of Housing and the Commonwealth government.

Mr WOOD: Are there reasons they cannot get a longer-term lease? The traditional owner is not willing to lease any further?

Ms SWANSON: Through the Chair, in some instances long-term leases have been secured across a range of communities in the north and south from 20 years to 40 years. In other instances some of those leases are still being negotiated at this point in time while communities decide which way they want to go. There is a variety of leasing tenure arrangements across the Territory, some held by NTG, some held by the Australian government and subleased to the Northern Territory government.

Mr WOOD: Have any communities said they do not want a lease?

Ms SWANSON: Yes, there are a number of communities that have said they do not want a lease.

Mr WOOD: Do they have public housing on those non-existent leases?

Ms SWANSON: Where there is no lease in place, there is no ability to have public housing in place either. There needs to be a lease for there to be public housing.

Mr WOOD: Is there any NTG infrastructure on those non-existent leases?

Ms SWANSON: Can I clarify this? There were two things you may have been asking me, I want to make sure I am giving you the right response.

There are leases that have gone in under - this will be something Housing will be able to better complete and provide more detail on. There are public housing leases that have been negotiated and have also been rejected. There are other infrastructure leases that have been negotiated through the Land Tenure Unit - whether it is for a police station or others - that are in place in those other communities.

Mr WOOD: All right, I will ask some more questions in Housing which is a more suitable time.

Madam CHAIR: Okay, are there any other questions on Output 1.2?

Mr WOOD: Hang on, I will have a quick check. I do not know whether this is the right place to put that question. You mentioned the review in your opening statement. I thought it had relation to output – sorry, I will go to Output 1.3.

Madam CHAIR: That concludes consideration of Output 1.2.

Output 1.3 – Homelands, Outstations and Town Camps

Madam CHAIR: The committee will now proceed to Output 1.3, Homelands, Outstations and Town Camps. Are there any questions?

Mr McCARTHY: I am interested in homeland capital grants in the last 12 months. Would you be able to provide a list of those grants over the last 12 months?

Mr CHIODO: Through Madam Chair, that was capital grants?

Mr McCARTHY: Yes, capital grants.

Mrs PRICE: Member for Barkly, I will take that on notice.

Question on Notice No 6.6

Madam CHAIR: Could you please restate the question for the record, member for Barkly.

Mr McCARTHY: Can you provide a list of all homeland capital grants in the last 12 months please?

Madam CHAIR: Do you accept the question, Minister?

Mrs PRICE: Yes.

Madam CHAIR: That question asked by the member for Barkly of the Minister has been allocated number 6.6.

Mr McCARTHY: Minister, the federal government has transferred \$154.8m to the Northern Territory government to take on full responsibility for delivering municipal and essential services in remote Indigenous communities. That represents the balance of Commonwealth funds intended to fund municipal and essential services in NT homelands and outstations through the 2020-21 and 2021-22 under the Stronger Futures NPA.

Have those funds been quarantined and restricted for use on NT homelands and outstations exclusively?

Mrs PRICE: Member for Barkly, the Country Liberals government is continuing its commitment to support our most remote Territorians, and that includes Aboriginal homelands and outstations. I recently announced in the budget funding allocated to continue all programs. We are not in the business of closing down any outstations, we are in the business of building the bush. I will hand over to my CE.

Mr CHIODO: Member for Barkly, the ongoing commitment to \$21.3m per annum, of which \$155m represented a discounted amount, was originally negotiated in 2012 for Stronger Futures. Two things have taken place. The \$155m has been provided for both remote homelands and outstations spend, and an ongoing commitment has been made by budget Cabinet in forward estimates to continue the \$21.3m for the life of that original agreement.

Mr McCARTHY: Thank you, Mr Chiodo. Minister, if we can continue that conversation with your Chief Executive, has there been any expenditure and any identified commitments to projects yet?

Mr CHIODO: The font is a little small; I am sorry, member for Barkly. At this stage commitments have been made to municipal and essential services of \$21.3m. That has come out of the \$155m for this financial year. A total of \$500 000 has been committed to the Elliott remote infrastructure projects, Arlpara infrastructure projects \$6m, and capital projects within essential services to the value of \$23m - a total of \$50.8m.

Mr McCARTHY: So between Arlpara and Elliott, about \$9m committed out of that federal funding?

Mr CHIODO: No. The figures I have just quoted would equate between Arlpara and Elliott to \$6.5m.

Mr McCARTHY: Out of that \$154.8m over the forward years? Yes?

Mr CHIODO: Sorry?

Mr McCARTHY: So that is out of the Commonwealth grant over forward years?

Mr CHIODO: Yes, it is.

Mr McCARTHY: And that is housing in Elliott and Arlpara?

Mr CHIODO: It is the repairs and maintenance program for the houses in the Elliott town camps. That is the \$500 000 plus an ongoing commitment in 2016-17.

Mr McCARTHY: In Elliott, how does that break down between Gurungu, as an identified outstation or homeland, and Wilyuku in the south with a different land tenure arrangement?

Mr CHIODO: All town camps have different land tenure arrangements and have had for a substantive period of time, which is why we are going through the town camp review and the PAC review took place. It does not make any difference to our allocation of funding to specific housing maintenance and it has not for the last considerable period of time.

Mr McCARTHY: I will not ask about that considerable period of time, but it is refreshing news. Thank you, Mr Chiodo.

Minister, over 120 homelands have already been defunded by the CLP government. How will the NT's deteriorating financial position impact on funds available for homelands and outstations?

Mrs PRICE: I will get Wati to answer that, member for Barkly.

Ms KERTA: Member for Barkly, we have not unfunded 120 communities. The question may have related to last year in relation to the changing in the methodology of funding to the different communities. I believe that is the answer to that question.

Mr McCARTHY: We agree that 120 have had no funds allocated because of a change in methodology? Minister, how do you plan on dealing with tightening fiscal issues in the future?

Mrs PRICE: Which 120 homelands might they be?

Mr McCARTHY: That is what I could ask you, Minister. I do not have access to those particulars, but we have been watching over the years. In the Barkly, for instance, out of 29 outstations there are about 20 now that are not being funded. I cannot give you the list off the top of my head, but I am sure you have access to that information.

Ms SWANSON: Member for Barkly, the change in methodology was through a regular survey that goes out to our homeland providers and our visiting staff. It was identified that there were a number of homelands where people were not residing. There were other homelands where people were permanently or seasonally residing, just moving off for short periods due to weather and other things where they are cut off.

It was about giving permission to the providers to spend where people are living rather than where people are not living, and to make more amenable use of that funding for where people are permanently residing, or residing for the majority of the year. It was that money just moved away from homelands where people were not permanently residing.

Mrs PRICE: I add that you and I know that there are outstations in our electorates where people are not living. They go out on weekends and visit. I know in my region there are 15 homelands with just four people living in them, but people still regard them as their homelands and do whatever is necessary - visit, use those homelands even if they are not funded for school camps. But they still tend to be used by my people. We have not forgotten them, they still exist, to my knowledge.

Mr McCARTHY: Yes, Minister, the infrastructure is still there. Thank you and the Deputy CE, because I am interested in fiscal management and that is a defined strategy about how you are managing a tightening fiscal situation. It is good to know that and process that about policy.

In what we are talking about, do you see that there is likely to be more homelands that will not be funded, that the methodology will shift to those populated homelands in this financial year coming?

Mr CHIODO: If I could take a step back. I do not believe that 124 was the complete figure, member for Barkly. What has been in place in the Department of Local Government and Community Services over the last 18 months is we worked with service providers to establish the homelands that either have - as the Deputy Chief Executive said - permanent accommodation, transitional accommodation or zero accommodation.

So, the answer to that question is hypothetical in nature. Our response would be that we would continue to survey all existing homelands and outstations, including the ones that were originally reported as having no one residing in them, to ensure that any outstation that has people residing in it is funded. So, you are right in relation to the fiscal process and the management of those funds. It is a methodology in an attempt to ensure that a limited amount of funding can be spent where it is most needed.

Mr McCARTHY: Yes, and the reverse of that, Mr Chiodo, is that many people come to me and request support to re-establish homelands. Does this process also accommodate those communities?

Mr CHIODO: Through the Chair, yes it does, member for Barkly. Each request of that nature is considered by the department. Our normal process would be that our technical officers who carry the infield or frontline responsibility for performing that evaluation would check the bona fides of the request and also work with the service provider to establish how real the permanent occupancy or transitional occupancy is. A decision is then predicated by that information.

Mr McCARTHY: That is reassuring. As I said, we work with our constituency. Minister, you would be aware that the water infrastructure is definitely one of the most challenging issues to get people re-established. Minister, is it true that water infrastructure has been looked at and work progressed on those outstations that follow the corridor of the proposed gas pipeline from Tennant Creek to Mount Isa?

Mrs PRICE: Which output might that be in?

Mr McCARTHY: We are talking about homelands and outstations, Minister. We have identified a methodology, we have established that there is a process for people to get support to revisit and relocate on the homelands. There was a question from the Barkly: is it true that there has been a string of homelands along that proposed gas pipeline that have had water infrastructure upgraded recently?

Mrs PRICE: If I am one of those people who had this big gas pipeline being put through my land, I would want to go and put my homeland next to it because all the services would be provided because of the maintenance. So, why not? There is an opportunity there and people would want to set up their outstations along that corridor. If there are companies out there who have the money to provide the infrastructure, why not?

Mr McCARTHY: That is right, Minister. You have picked up on the point and the conversation. Has the government prioritised any of those outstations on that corridor?

Mrs PRICE: No.

Mr McCARTHY: Okay, Minister. We agree, though, that it is a good idea? Are you looking at that, Minister?

Mrs PRICE: It is up to people out there who would like to set up their outstations, I guess. They would have to work with us and the service providers. We are prepared to help them.

Mr McCARTHY: I think we have established that it would be a priority area. Yes? I have people who have asked for this support. We have identified we can put that forward and we have agreed that would be a priority for government. Yes?

Mrs PRICE: By all means, we are happy to help people.

Mr McCARTHY: Of course, Minister. Thank you. Mutitjulu has been a recipient of the municipal essential services funds. What contribution is the Northern Territory government making to improve town infrastructure and essential services at Mutitjulu as part of town leasing negotiations?

Mrs PRICE: Yes, member for Barkly. I have been out to Mutitjulu four times this year to talk to the people about Mutitjulu community itself and how people are tired of it being called an outstation. They want it to become a proper functioning community. They are tired of listening to various government people talking about the policies and everything else rather than getting a head start on helping Mutitjulu people with their community to become a proper little township.

I have heard from Sammy Wilson, Harry Wilson, Giguldurr and all those old people who are frustrated with waiting for someone to say, 'Yes, let us do it tomorrow'. I have heard their pleas and listened to their voices and I agree with them. It is about time it becomes a community. We have been communicating with Senator Scullion and Parks and Wildlife people and the future looks good.

I will get Noelene to exaggerate on where we are heading, but it is looking positive for Mutitjulu. They are quite happy with what we are doing in regard to helping Mutitjulu become a community.

Mr WOOD: Did you say exaggerate or explain?

Mrs PRICE: Explain. Add to.

Ms SWANSON: Member for Barkly, there is a negotiation. Parks Australia, as you know, has been providing the infrastructure services out there in capital infrastructure and power and water and other things. Parks Australia is working with Indigenous Essential Services to upgrade that infrastructure to a point where it can be taken over by Indigenous Essential Services and they are funding that upgrade. The funding is coming from them and not the Northern Territory government into that space. When the Northern Territory government takes it on, it will become an ongoing liability for them. That negotiation is nearing completion now and there have been some upgrade works.

Mr McCARTHY: Thank you, and thank you, Minister. Can you provide more detail on the outstation and homelands review of service delivery fee contributions? What are the terms of reference? Who is doing the work? What is the costing? When will the report be available?

Mrs PRICE: The review of service delivery contribution fees is for homeland and town camps service providers which currently receive grant funding as a contribution towards repairs and maintenance of housing and essential services on homelands and town camps. Some residents have been contributing a fee, often referred to a rent, to supplement the cost of providing these services. This practice has been in place for over 10 years without any consistency across the Territory for levying and ~~ad~~Ministeradministering the fee.

Deloitte Australia was awarded a contract to conduct a review of service delivery contribution fees and a draft report has been presented, with the final report due in the near future. Deloitte has provided best practice guidelines for service providers to follow in developing service contribution arrangements for residents. That is where we are.

Mr McCARTHY: The opposition notes that the Australian government funding for municipal essential services and the Northern Territory Jobs Package ended in June 2015. Are there transition arrangements in place to support those people under that Jobs Package? Now the funding has ended, have many jobs been lost? Is there anything being done to secure jobs in that area?

Mr CHIODO: Through the Chair, a very specific decision was made by the Minister and the department to continue the NT Jobs Package. No jobs have been lost. When the funding from the Commonwealth ceased, the figure was 137 jobs. It remains at 137 jobs and it has been budgeted for in the next financial year.

Mr WOOD: Thank you, Mr Chiodo. Thank you, Minister. How many applications for funding under Homelands Extra have been refused over the last year because they failed to meet the program criteria?

Ms SWANSON: Member for Barkly, there has been a total of 180. Would you like me to go through the rationale and the reasons for that?

Mr McCARTHY: Do you have something you can table?

Ms SWANSON: No, I do not. I just have some scribbled notes and my handwriting is hardly legible to me, let alone others.

Mr McCARTHY: Sure.

Ms SWANSON: Six were withdrawn and there were 71 where homelands were not funded, as we previously discussed. One was an incomplete application. There were five where the income was too high - as you know there is a threshold limit. There were 84 that applied for work in public housing. There were five which received funding and eight that dipped out because the funding round completed, and they will be considered in the following financial year.

Mr McCARTHY: Thank you.

Madam CHAIR: We will break in five minutes for morning tea.

Mr McCARTHY: Thank you, Madam Chair. I will get through this – and the member for Nelson, hopefully.

How many homelands and outstations have approached the department for support in relation to water supply and quality issues?

Mrs PRICE: Member for Barkly, I will get Noelene Swanson, my Deputy Chief Executive, to give you that answer.

Ms SWANSON: As Mr Chiodo spoke about, we have technical officers who recently reviewed water supply with the providers. We also have just completed the asset and access review - which is a very hard thing to say - and we have the raw data in from that. We are going through it and looking at where there are points of tension with water supply and quality. No homeland has approached us directly as a one to one on that because we are dealing with it on a day-to-day basis.

Mr McCARTHY: Sure, thank you. Minister, what is the status of water supply arrangements at Whitegate community in Alice Springs?

Mrs PRICE: Member for Barkly, I am aware Whitegate is a town camp.

Mr McCARTHY: With some water challenges, Minister. Has there been any movement in that space?

Mrs PRICE: The last time Whitegate had issues with water was with Lhere Artepe, the corporation looking after that town camp and providing truck water for that ...

Mr McCARTHY: That is ongoing?

Mrs PRICE: That is ongoing with Lhere Artepe.

Mr McCARTHY: They are trucking in water?

Mrs PRICE: Yes.

Mr McCARTHY: Minister, in your announcement about reviewing town camps to improve living conditions and administrative arrangements, the media release said the review would be completed by mid-September. Has anyone been appointed to do the work and how much has been budgeted for that review?

Ms SWANSON: We are in the process of finalising the tender process now. We have gone out to an expression of interest, An expression of interest has been received in the select tender with those tenderers. We have a budget of about \$2.5m.

Mr CHIODO: I can add to that, member for Barkly. An interim report was due in September, not the finalisation of the review. The interim report is very much on track as part of the assessment process as well. The project will take considerably longer than September.

Mr McCARTHY: Thank you, Mr Chiodo. I figured that. Thank you, Madam Chair.

Madam CHAIR: We will break for 10 minutes and come back at 10.25 am.

The committee suspended.

Madam CHAIR: Welcome back. We are on to Output 1.3, Homelands, Outstations and Town Camps for the Department of Local Government and Community Services. Member for Nelson, I understand you have some questions.

Mr WOOD: I do, thank you, Madam Chair. To follow on from the review the member for Barkly was talking about, Minister, which I will be very happy to see bring in some positive outcomes. There was a review that started earlier in this term of office that seemed to disappear into the unknown areas of government. Is it possible to see the tender documents for the review so I know what whoever wins the review is required to do and the extent of the review?

One of the issues that concerns me about the town communities in my area is governance. Until you work out the governance for these places, you do not have a way forward. Is it possible to see the tender documents for the review?

Mr CHIODO: It was a public tender, member for Nelson. They were readily available. We are going through the assessment process now. But we can make those available too.

Mr WOOD: That would be good. It is easier than me trying to chase up a tender that is closed.

Mr CHIODO: That is a good point.

Madam CHAIR: Do you want to take that on notice?

Mr WOOD: All right.

Question on Notice No 6.7

Madam CHAIR: Restate the request, please.

Mr WOOD: Minister, could you provide us with the tender documents in relation to the town communities' review?

Madam CHAIR: Do you accept the questions, Minister?

Mrs PRICE: Yes.

Madam CHAIR: The member for Nelson has asked the Minister a question which has been allocated number 6.7.

Mr WOOD: Minister, in relation to One Mile Dam, is there any threat of that lease changing since the passing of one of the senior people who looked after the One Mile Dam?

Mrs PRICE: Which is One Mile Dam? Is it the one that is close by here?

Mr WOOD: Yes. It is the old railway dam community.

Mrs PRICE: We know the issues of town camps have been around for a long time. What you have highlighted today will be picked up in the review.

Mr WOOD: Will the review look at the plans for Bagot? Some years ago University of Melbourne - I stand to be corrected - did some quite substantial plans for the possible redevelopment of Bagot. I am wondering what happened to those plans. Is there any move by government in that area to follow up on what the Melbourne university did?

Mrs PRICE: Yes, the review will assess the 43 funded town camps with reference to land tenure status and the condition housing assets are in, existing infrastructure conditions, economic opportunities, home ownership and the capacity of leaseholders to take responsibility for obligations under relevant legislation and funding agreements. Yes, Bagot will be one of those town camps.

Mr WOOD: You mentioned leaseholders. In the case of some of those such as One Mile, 15 Mile and Knuckey, the leaseholder does not have any money or much responsibility because they basically do not have the ability to do anything. So, what ...

Mrs PRICE: As I mentioned earlier, that will all be picked up in the review.

Mr WOOD: All right.

Mrs PRICE: I encourage you to have your say as well, Gerry.

Mr WOOD: I hope they give us a call because in the first review I asked if I could be an observer and was denied that. I found that a little sad because I feel we have to do something. I have places in my electorate that are woeful and a disgrace. I am not saying everybody there is woeful or that everything is a disgrace, but parts of those communities are not what you would expect in this day and age. I hope something positive comes out of this.

Is Bagot still under administration?

Mr CHIODO: My understanding is that it is still currently under administration. That is correct.

Mr WOOD: Do they work through your department in relation to the future of Bagot returning to its previous administration?

Mr CHIODO: No, they do not. The administrators are appointed, in this case, by the Registrar of Associations.

Mr WOOD: On page 272 of Budget Paper No 3, it talks about service delivery standards that service providers have to meet. Is there anything that can tell me what those service delivery standards are? Is there a document or something?

Ms SWANSON: Yes, member for Nelson. An outline of those is available on our Internet site ...

Mr WOOD: Which I am getting used to.

Ms SWANSON: ... which I am more than happy to provide you a copy, if you so desire.

Mr WOOD: Madam Chair, could I put that question on notice?

Question on Notice No 6.8

Madam CHAIR: Could you restate the question please, member for Nelson.

Mr WOOD: Minister, could you please provide me a copy of the service delivery standards for town communities and homelands.

Madam CHAIR: You accept the question?

Mrs PRICE: Yes.

Madam CHAIR: The question asked by the member for Nelson of the Minister has been allocated THE number 6.8.

Mr WOOD: In the budget under Key Performance Indicators it says that the proportion of service providers meeting service delivery standards is 95%, and that has been the same since 2015-16 and is what is projected now. Who does that calculation? As I said, I see some places and I am not sure what standard they would meet. Who assesses that standard?

Ms SWANSON: Member for Nelson, the standard is addressed in two ways. There are technical officers who review the work undertaken to make sure it has been done in alignment with their agreement. The second is we have a financial team that also assesses the acquittals against those standards.

Mr WOOD: If those standards are not being met what is the next procedure?

Ms SWANSON: A compliance audit will then be put upon them. Technical officers will go in and work with them to bring them up to standard. If that is not the case, if they do not comply, then ultimately the funding agreement ceases and it is provided to someone else to deliver.

Mr WOOD: Is one of the problems with not meeting those service standards the issue? I am only referring to the places in my electorate which are leased by one body and houses are maintained by another body. Does that make it very difficult for your department to put the responsibility back to a particular group?

Mr CHIODO: Member for Nelson, yes, that is a part of it. You may recall that at the Public Accounts Committee a similar question was asked. I refer to my response then. Part of the reason for the review is to deal with - and myth is the wrong word - the level of misunderstanding as to who carries which responsibility.

I reiterate the service standards we are talking about apply to the specific funding that service provider is given, but that is only a part of the funding that should be spent in that town camp. The remainder of it sits with organisations such as ADF, which is the organisation you are referring to, where they carry a responsibility as the leaseholder to collect funds - whether they call it rents or contributions - and the management and expenditure of those funds is managed by ADF, not by the department. Two components: we can manage the service delivery standards for the funding that is provided to the service provider, but that is only a component of the level of funding that is supposed to be ~~administered~~ administered by ADF.

Mr WOOD: Good reason for a review. One of the issues that I remember came up about SIHIP was that people said there was too much money spent on administration. Do you have a similar issue with the amount of money that is part of the Homelands Extra Allowance? Have you any indication of how much of that money is taken up by administration?

Mr CHIODO: We restricted it to 8%. Very clearly having learnt the lessons of the past, we ensure that that is adhered to as part of the acquittals process as well.

Mr WOOD: Is there anything like a labour component? I am comparing that with the Department of Business's \$2000 grant they are giving people to do repairs and maintenance on houses - the one that has been announced during the election period. They have restricted the amount of that \$2000. I believe X amount can be for materials and the rest can be for labour.

Mr CHIODO: It is across the board 8%.

Mr WOOD: Including labour?

Mr CHIODO: Yes.

Ms SWANSON: Just to clarify that. It is 8% for straight administration of it. In the rest of the funding, depending on the work that is being undertaken, the majority may go to materials and a very small proportion to the labour to construct. Whereas in other incidents it might be a technical job that requires a high level of expertise - for example electrical work - with a smaller amount of materials charges.

Mr WOOD: All right. The other thing you mentioned - and I did not realise - you have a review of outstations and homelands. Is that correct? You have completed that review and it will be available soon publicly? What was the scope of that review?

Ms SWANSON: The scope of the review was very broad ranging. As the title said, it was about access and assets. It was a review of all the assets including water and other infrastructure there. There was also a review of access to services as well - not just road access but broader than that, such as whether they can get health services, education and other things. So, it was a very broad ranging in the information that has come back.

It included visits by the Centre for Appropriate Technology and interviews with local residents. They were very diligent as well, to the point that if there was no one there they tracked down the person and found them, often in another locations, so that they could complete the interviews. The data we have from it is fulsome. I tried to print it out; it is folders full. We are going through that data now.

Mr WOOD: That will be publicly available when you tick off? Did the review look at new homes, or how new homes could be built in outstations? I imagine a fair number of homes were built under the ATSIC period. I gather under SIHIP and the NPARIH program outstations and homelands are not counted as places where new homes will be provided. Are there any plans or has anything been looked at in relation to whether houses can be provided on outstations?

Mrs PRICE: No. A new house has not been built on any outstation as yet. There will not be. They is no funding to build new houses like ATSIC days on outstations. This is a question I hear from people when I visit communities. They want to know, 'When are we getting our new houses built?' Sorry, we put a stop to that.

Mr WOOD: That is right. But people could, if they wanted to, build their own house?

Mrs PRICE: They can build their own houses, yes.

Mr WOOD: All right, we might get into that when we hit the housing side of things. Okay, that is all the questions I have, Madam Chair, on that section.

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

OUTPUT GROUP 2.0 – LANGUAGE SERVICES

Output 2.1 - Language Services

Madam CHAIR: The committee will now proceed to Output Group 2.0, Language Services, Output 2.1, Language Services. Are there are questions?

Mr McCARTHY: Yes, Madam Chair. Minister, what changes have occurred in the past 12 months in the staffing of remote officers of the Aboriginal Interpreter Service?

Mr CHIODO: In all locations except Tennant Creek, member for Barkly, there have been no changes. The change that has taken place in Tennant Creek is that Rebecca Moore, who was the interpreter there as her main job function, has, on application, transferred to the Office of Aboriginal Affairs. She is now operating out of the Tennant Creek office for the department, as opposed to the Aboriginal Interpreter Service Officer there.

Mr McCARTHY: Can you tell us about any new activities or contracts that have been made between the AIS and other Northern Territory government agencies to improve cross-cultural communication among the government staff involved in remote service delivery?

Mrs PRICE: Member for Barkly, 26 Aboriginal interpreters attended the Language and Law Conference. The conference focused on the importance of interpreters in the legal system and promoted understanding best practice and development protocols for the courts.

A cross-border program of Aboriginal interpreting services is delivered in South Australia and Western Australian. There are 24 Aboriginal interpreters employed. This program continues to promote and develop interpreting services across jurisdictions.

I do not know if you aware but ABC News Project has daily bulletins in three Aboriginal languages. This allows Aboriginal residents of remote communities to hear bulletins in an Aboriginal language on a daily basis for the first time.

An initiative of recruitment and training - this is another area we are exploring - of Arabic interpreters was mitigated by the potential demand for interpreters. As from July 2015 to the end of March 2016, the Aboriginal Interpreter Service delivered 91 Working with Interpreter training sessions to Commonwealth and state governments and non-government organisations with a total of 1047 participants attending.

The Aboriginal Interpreter Service, as I said earlier in my speech, won the Fitzgerald Justice Award after being nominated in the Northern Territory Human Rights Awards for 2015 for its contribution in the development of the Plain English Police Caution. The caution was three years in the making and was launched earlier in 2015. The caution has been recorded in 18 Aboriginal languages and loaded onto iPads for police to communicate with Aboriginal people so they understand their rights in the law when being interviewed by police. The award was presented on 10 December 2015 at the Supreme Court in Darwin by Father Frank Brennan.

Mr McCARTHY: Thank you, Minister. That is a good news story - over 1000 public officials. You might be interested in Tennant Creek one of the NGOs has started a language and culture course and has had 71 enrolled from the town of Tennant Creek. You can see there is a lot of interest in cross-cultural understanding.

What is the current status of Commonwealth funding to the AIS under the Remote Aboriginal Investment Partnership Agreement and when does the current funding expire?

Mrs PRICE: The Interpreting and Translating Service of the Northern Territory is funded by the Northern Territory government, with fees for service charged to the Commonwealth government. Interpreting undertaken on behalf of refugees and asylum seekers is funded by the Commonwealth government. The Aboriginal Interpreter Service is funded through a combination of the Northern Territory government funding, Commonwealth funding and fee-for-service revenue. The current agreement is a one-year agreement.

The Interpreting and Translating Service of the NT, the program appropriation is ...

Mr CHIODO: The Aboriginal Interpreter Service Agreement was negotiated as part of Stronger Futures. It is ongoing and in fact will continue until 2021.

Mr McCARTHY: Thank you, Minister. In the language services area that completes my questions.

Madam CHAIR: Member for Nelson, do you have any questions?

Mr WOOD: Just one question thank you, Madam Chair. It says that you spent \$8.1m on interpreter services. On page 277 of the budget it says you received \$916 000, which I presume is money that has been paid for those services. Who pays for the services and why, in relation to how much is spent, does so little come back for the use of those services?

Mr CHIODO: Member for Nelson, the majority of the funding, as I was just saying, comes through the Stronger Futures program which is Commonwealth funded, and therefore is not a fee-for-service component. The components that are fee-for-service are other negotiated arrangements, for example with South Australian governments, and minimal charge back to some government agencies for specific services that come outside of the original agreements that were established. The money collected through fee for service is always substantially lower than the Commonwealth-funded overall program.

Mr WOOD: Who pockets the \$916 000?

Mr CHIODO: That funding is utilised to pay for casual interpreters through the agency.

Mr WOOD: Is that done with permission from the Commonwealth? If the Commonwealth provided the money ...

Mr CHIODO: They are well aware of the process.

Mr WOOD: Okay, thanks.

Madam CHAIR: That concludes consideration of Output Group 2.0.

OUTPUT GROUP 3.0 – STRATEGY AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT **Output 3.1 – Community Development**

Madam CHAIR: The committee will now proceed to Output Group 3.0, Strategy and Community Development, Output 3.1 Community Development. Are there any questions?

Mr McCARTHY: Minister, in May this year you joined the Chief Minister in announcing \$700 000 of grants for 12 projects under the Regional Aboriginal Economic Development Fund. Can you help me with why the success related to nearly half of the funds going to just three projects in the electorate of Stuart? Did you have a role in approving any of those grants?

Mrs PRICE: Member for Barkly, I think that question should have been directed to the Chief Minister because it comes under Office of Aboriginal Affairs.

Mr McCARTHY: Did you have any role, Minister, in the approval process?

Mrs PRICE: No.

Mr McCARTHY: I was looking for some tips about how to win grants because, obviously, Stuart is a winner.

Mrs PRICE: Because I work hard.

Mr McCARTHY: Answer – working hard. Thank you.

Mr WOOD: You got closer to Treasury.

Mr McCARTHY: Minister, last week the Chief Minister said the responsibility for development of the remote infrastructure information system sat in your department, and there is appropriation of \$700 000 budgeted to upgrade the system. Can you tell the committee what new features are being developed as part of the upgrade?

Mrs PRICE: Member for Barkly, my Department of Local Government and Community Services is currently working on a remote information and coordination system. It is a three-year project and will be a centralised access point for information relating to remote communities across the Territory. The system has three main elements: a central database for containing and assessing a broad range of community information; an integrated system and process for recording, tracking and reporting on community raised concerns and priorities; and a publicly accessible web-based interface. The public interface will be an updated version of the widely recognised BushTel site. The system also aims to support other initiatives such as the Office of Aboriginal Affairs' Community Champions Program, First Circles and the Remote Engagement and Coordination Strategy.

Mr McCARTHY: How will a citizen in the bush access that publicly available information?

Mr CHIODO: Member for Barkly, the information coordination system does not go live until after 1 July. As long as they have access to a computer they will be able to go to our Intranet site and gain access to remote information coordination. There will be security levels because of some of the information that will be contained in it, but the intent is to make all information including a five-year investment plan for each remote community readily available to industry and all interested stakeholders, including community members.

All members of the panel and everyone else will have access to the remote information coordination system, which is a database which has been our pleasure to start to put together using an existing platform, rather than trying to devise a new platform, which was the BushTel. That simply will provide the opportunity for anyone to go in and gather information on a specific community, whether it be infrastructure, existing services, stakeholders, Indigenous businesses and who the TOs are for the relevant community, etcetera.

Mrs PRICE: This is what it looks like. That is Galiwinku. It will be made easier for people who are new to the Territory to find out what Galiwinku has. It will be accessible.

Madam CHAIR: Are there any more questions on Community Development?

Mr WOOD: Minister, they have allocated \$5.25m for bakeries. How much of that money is from the Commonwealth? Can I put a range of questions you might be able to answer all at once? Who will train the bakers? Who will operate the bakeries? Which communities have been selected to have a bakery?

I must admit it is a bit like groundhog day for someone who has lived out bush for a long time, where we had bakeries and then they disappeared. Now they are coming back which is a good thing, but it would be good to have the details.

Mrs PRICE: Bakery cafés in communities ...

Mr WOOD: Are cafés included? That is something I had not heard.

Mr CHIODO: That is what we call them.

Mrs PRICE: That is what we call it.

Mr WOOD: A bakery is a bakery.

Mrs PRICE: The Northern Territory government is committed to infrastructure investment across remote communities and to foster sustainable remote economic development in conjunction with the Australian government. We are funding the establishment of bakery cafés in 21 remote Aboriginal communities across the Northern Territory. An investment of \$7.35m will create jobs and sustainable businesses.

The Australian government has already funded three bakeries that are up and running at Hermannsburg, Papunya and Yuendumu. I have been to the bakeries and I had food there that is really nice - lamingtons and pies especially at Yuendumu. It is good. I have visited Yuendumu and Hermannsburg and they are working. The community is happy with that. In Yuendumu, fresh bread is provided to the school and to the old people's program. They are looking at making it healthier as well. They have been successfully operating for 12 months.

Three bakeries in Timber Creek, Beswick and Ngukurr are in the final planning stages with contracts to be signed shortly with Outback Stores which will operate them.

Additionally, a tender was recently advertised for 15 bakeries to be fully funded by the Northern Territory government and assessment is under way on tenders received. These will be located in Elliott, Galiwinku, Gunbalanya, Kalkarindji, Kaltukatjara, Kintore, Lajamanu, Maningrida, Numbulwar, Peppimenarti, Tennant Creek, Umbakumba, Utopia and Wurrumiyanga. The bakeries will provide Aboriginal people in remote communities with improved food choices. For the first time they will be able to buy freshly-baked bread and other products. They will provide diversified training and employment opportunities and improved cash flow, profitability and sustainability for community-owned stores in communities.

All of the 21 communities that will have bakeries strongly support the projects my department has been delivering. These bakeries will also contribute to our Territory tourism by offering better products and services in remote communities. I am proud of this great initiative in the bush. It will bring more jobs and training for Aboriginal people in remote communities.

Mr WOOD: You mentioned Outback Stores. Is that the main manager of all these bakeries or is it individuals or Aboriginal organisations running them?

Mrs PRICE: They vary by locations.

Mr WOOD: Could an individual own a bakery or do they come under an association of some sort?

Mr CHIODO: Member for Nelson, the process is that we are placing bakeries within existing stores. It is a place-based approach. Outback Stores and ALPA, for example, would be the major owner of stores within remote communities. The expectation would be that they form a part of that store.

Mr WOOD: So, this \$7.55m is the combined amount?

Mr CHIODO: Yes, it is.

Mr WOOD: It does not show - in the highlights, it just says \$5.25m for bakeries. It is more than that?

Mr CHIODO: No, the breakdown, member for Nelson, is: the Northern Territory government has provided \$3.5m over two years - \$2.8 in 2015-2016 and \$700 000 in 2016-17 – and the Australian government has provided \$1.75m for the 2016-17 financial year. That makes the total of \$5.25m.

Previous commitments by the Northern Territory and Australian governments for the three bakeries the Minister previously mentioned are already operating. They came out of the operating accounts of the Commonwealth and the Department of Business and that was \$2.1m between the two.

Mr WOOD: It is a great thing. I want to know if there will be enough money. You cannot just put a bakery at the end of a store, you have to build a purpose-built facility if you are be cooking, especially where you have ovens and things like that. There are health requirements. Will these be in addition to the store? Is there enough money for the capital expenditure that is required?

Mr CHIODO: The simple answer to that is yes.

Mr WOOD: I will be looking forward to having a good reason now to stop at Elliott. One thing you might also consider is that, if you are looking from a tourist point of view, anyone who has travelled down south knows that if there is a good bakery in any community tourists will stop there. It will be good to see how it goes.

Mrs PRICE: Member for Nelson, I recommended they put a bakery in Elliott because it is a great location. I am trying to encourage the Sandy sisters to take part in that. It will be a great opportunity for the community.

Mr WOOD: From my memory, there is still a shop and an old service station that was once running and is not running anymore. Maybe that is a good place for it.

Quickly, I might need some assistance with this. In your budget highlights on page 269 of Budget Paper No 3, the very last item - I do not know where this fits so I had better ask you now – it says there is \$10m Commonwealth funding over two years for the establishment of Northern Territory transitional accommodation for people exiting prison who have a job on release. Is that a Housing issue or a Community Development issue?

Mr CHIODO: No, it is a partnership between ourselves and Department of Corrections, Minister – I mean, member for Nelson.

Mr WOOD: Never quite got that, working on it.

Mr CHIODO: I am sure you are. Because of our community services role and through the Minister we have taken on a much stronger role in, as you can see - Office of Men, Office of Women and the justice

program - we are working with the corrections department to identify two locations for transitional accommodation for prisoners who are moving from incarceration back into the community.

Mr WOOD: Do you know what the siting of this accommodation will be?

Mr CHIODO: We are working through that with the Commonwealth and the department of corrections at this stage. I could not nominate where they will be yet. One south and one north, is the intent.

Mr WOOD: I am interested to see what happens, in case I am not asking in the right place. When I looked up Strategy and Community Development under the Output Groups and Outcomes section of your budget - which I believe we are in - is that correct?

Madam CHAIR: Yes, Community Development.

Mr WOOD: It says in that section of the budget:

Improved social, economic and cultural outcomes for women and men through the implementation of gender-specific policies and services.

If we are talking about men's and women's policy, does it come here?

Mr CHIODO: It is within Output 3.2, Strategy. You will see there that 3.2.2, 2.3 and 2.4, etcetera, deal with those specific issues.

Mr WOOD: All right, I am with you. That is all the questions I have. Thank you.

Madam CHAIR: That concludes consideration Output 3.1, Community Development. The committee will now proceed to Output 3.2, Strategy. Are there questions?

Mr McCARTHY: Madam Chair, I have last one on Output 3.1 – I was referred by the Minister – on morgues in Community Development. Is that okay?

Madam CHAIR: Yes. Would you state the question please?

Mr McCARTHY: Minister, it was the one where you referred me to Output 3.1. With regional councils withdrawing from the provision of morgue services, what arrangements have been negotiated for the management of new Commonwealth-funded morgue facilities? What is the current timetable for completion of the new morgue facilities?

Mrs PRICE: Yes, member for Barkly. All morgues are scheduled to be either built or upgraded by the end of this year. There have been many planning matters to address to undertake the works. Some were power issues and governance and others have been land tenure issues on which we have been working with appropriate land councils.

Mr McCARTHY: Thank you, Minister.

Madam CHAIR: Member for Nelson.

Mr WOOD: I need clarification. I was looking at the Department of Business at some stage to look at their contract processes. When I looked at their website it said for remote contracting policy go to the Department of Local Government and Community Services. I went to the Department of Local Government and Community Services and I read off their targets they have listed there: employment and business development programs. I went to the bottom and it said, 'Contact details Office of Aboriginal Affairs or Procurement NT'.

If I was to ask a question about remote employment, it is not in this part of the discussions, or it is not the Department of Local Government and Community Services? It is a bit confusing to know where that fits.

Mr CHIODO: Through the Chair, member for Nelson. If we are referring to the remote contracting and procurement policy, that is a part of the Aboriginal Affairs strategy and it sits with the Office of Aboriginal Affairs.

The Office of Aboriginal Affairs sits within the Department of Local Government and Community Services but comes under the auspices of the Minister for Indigenous Affairs, who is the Chief Minister. We went through that process, from memory, last Thursday.

Mr WOOD: Yes. I am not blaming you, but it needs a bit more. From the point of view of tracking it, it does not clearly say it is part of the Department of Aboriginal Affairs, or Procurement NT. It just puts you in it and then you do not find out until you get to the bottom of the page that you have to go further if you want ...

Mr CHIODO: I will speak to the Department of Business and we will deal with our two Intranet sites.

Mr WOOD: Okay, thanks.

Madam CHAIR: That concludes consideration of Output 3.1 in Output Group 3.0.

Output 3.2 – Strategy

Madam CHAIR: The committee will now proceed to Output 3.2, Strategy. Are there any questions?

Ms FYLES: Yes, thank you Madam Chair. Minister, Budget Paper No 3 outlines that a KPI for this output as 'The number of individuals and organisations assisted with grants'. How did you come up with that as a KPI? These questions all relate to Women's Policy.

Mrs PRICE: Member for Nightcliff, I will get my Deputy Chief Executive, Noelene Swanson, to answer that for you.

Ms SWANSON: As you know, the Women's Policy is just that. It is a policy unit and it ~~administer~~ grants as a part of its responsibility. The measure speaks for itself. It is about the justification of how the grants are allocated and how many it was allocated against. I thought it was the easiest measure in financial measurement under that output.

Ms FYLES: You did not think having a KPI that goes to return on investment would have been a better measure, not just activity?

Ms SWANSON: Because of the diversity of the grants - they are not limited to just one small thing, they are provided under the breadth of the Women's Policy framework as well. The identification of value for money in that instance would be very difficult to measure.

Ms FYLES: Minister, on Thursday it seems the government hastily announced that the Domestic Violence Directorate would be transitioning to the Department of Local Government and Community Services. In response to a question about why this has occurred, the Minister answered, 'Because Minister Bess Price has expressed an interest in it'. When did you express an interest in delivering the whole-of-government agenda for domestic violence and when was that decision made?

Mrs PRICE: I have always been interested in taking over that policy because I am very much the kind of person who wants to make sure it works. It was planned that Minister Elferink would hand it over to my Department of Women's Policy. It will bring together all the contemporary programs within Women's Policy.

Ms FYLES: When was that decision made?

Mr CHIODO: Member for Nightcliff, there has been joint ~~Ministerial~~ responsibility for the Domestic Violence Directorate since its inception. In effect, both Chief Executives – me and the Chief Executive of the Attorney-General's department – in all Cabinet submissions and policy decisions would sign off on the paperwork. That was since the outset.

The original plan that was discussed at the inception of the group was that, in its initial phases, whilst it was being strategically established and a policy position established, it would sit within the Attorney-General's department. Once it reached a broader implementation phase it would transfer over to the Department of Local Government and Community Services and join the obvious nexus that exists between Men's Policy, Women's Policy and a number of services that come out of the Domestic Violence Directorate.

Ms FYLES: Minister, what functions across whole-of-government will be transferring into your Department of Local Government and Community Services to deliver domestic violence services? What is the staff budget associated with the transfer that will take place on 1 July 2016?

Mr CHIODO: In relation to the Domestic Violence Directorate, the transfer of staff and operational funding is still a process we are going through with the Department of the Attorney-General. The transfer does not take place until 1 July and I am not in a position to provide the exact figures at this stage.

Ms FYLES: Minister, there are staff coming from both the Departments of the Attorney-General and DCF, as I understand it. Considering 1 July is next week, do you not think there should be a bit more detail available?

Mr CHIODO: The discussions with both of those departments are still taking place in relation to the exact transfer. In relation to the Department of Children and Families, the one we are specifically speaking about is the directorate and it has not been finalised yet. We are working through it at the moment. The section 35 transfer from department to department by Chief Executives have been signed. However, as I said, the final number of personnel and funding is still going through that transition.

Ms FYLES: Minister, would you not agree that it looks like a hasty decision because as I understand it there are 59 positions from DCF transferring over. That is what the Attorney-General confirmed. Considering 1 July is next week, it is not something that is weeks or months off.

Mr CONLAN: A point of order, Madam Chair! The Chief Executive has answered that question quite appropriately.

Ms FYLES: Minister, you do not have any further comment?

Mr CONLAN: I am satisfied, as a member of the committee, with that answer.

Madam CHAIR: The Minister can answer the question.

Mrs PRICE: I feel my CE has answered that question.

Ms FYLES: It highlights that it is a hasty decision. We are talking about something next week and a number of staff.

Thursday's media release stated the intention to move the function to a more frontline agency. It appears the intention is to locate the functions under Women's Policy, but Women's Policy is not a frontline delivery arm of the Department of Local Government and Community Services. Can you advise how this will benefit the implementation of the Northern Territory and national framework?

Ms SWANSON: Member for Nightcliff, it is about bringing together complementary services. It is about bringing the service delivery function along with the policymaking arms as well, ensuring that policy that has been developed is able to be implemented in a service delivery front. Bringing in the directorate, which has a broad range of services that it funds, through domestic violence, and bringing across, through a negotiated process, the Safe Houses program as well, means they are all complementing one another. So, they can actually work more collegially together without the artificial barriers of different agencies being put in place.

Ms FYLES: Minister, the Office of Women's Policy, on page 4 of its framework, clearly indicates that it is a policy advice and support unit, not delivery. Can you advise how these changes you announced last Thursday will benefit implementation in the Northern Territory?

Mrs PRICE: Member for Nightcliff, I feel that question has been answered, through the Chair.

Ms FYLES: I do not think we have had a satisfactory answer. We are talking about a policy advice and support unit, yet you made a decision last week that it will deliver frontline services. I am questioning how it will deliver those frontline services and you are not able to respond.

Mr CONLAN: A point of order, Madam Chair! The Chief Executive has answered that. It is a matter of interpretation whether or not you think it is satisfactory, member for Nightcliff.

Ms FYLES: We have not had one single piece of advice on how it will be implemented across the Territory.

Mr CHIODO: Member for Nightcliff, I am happy to add to what I said earlier. The Office of Women's Policy is one component of the broader agency which is the Department of Local Government and Community Services. There is also the Office of Men's Policy and a broad frontline function that goes across the Department of Local Government and Community Services. This will be added by the transfer of the directorate and women's shelters and safe houses.

As the Minister and my deputy said, it is the obvious relationship between all of those services and the ability of our agency to have frontline troops that can support, including the staff that will transfer over who are currently working in the communities, in particular in women's shelters. Our knowledge and ability to manage those types of personnel in those circumstances, including the national framework, has been very much a part of women's policy and men's policy which my Deputy Chief Executive has been involved in for the last 12 to 18 months. That is clearly why it is coming over to our department.

Ms FYLES: Minister, we have specialist Indigenous critical intervention and outreach services across the Territory. Will they now be in your department?

Mrs PRICE: Member for Nightcliff, it will not change anything, it will just strengthen it more.

Ms FYLES: Minister, you are saying right now that it will not change anything, yet last week we received a media release indicating that we would see change. I am asking questions about what we will see in delivery. Will your department be taking responsibility for the specialist Indigenous critical intervention and outreach services?

Mrs PRICE: No.

Ms FYLES: That is a no. You are not sure, or definitely a no?

Mrs PRICE: Definitely no. Madam Chair, we have answered that question. Can we go to the next output?

Ms FYLES: Minister, these are important questions. As you stated last week in your media release, you have carriage of this responsibility and it is more than appropriate to be asking questions.

Madam CHAIR: It is up to you, Minister, if you answer them, but the member for Nightcliff can ask ...

Mrs PRICE: I have answered them.

Madam CHAIR: ... the questions; that is the process. As long as they vary, she is entitled to ask the questions. You are entitled to answer them the way you choose.

Mrs PRICE: We have answered them. My Chief Executive and my Deputy Chief Executive have answered those questions.

Madam CHAIR: Do you have any other questions, member for Nightcliff.

Ms FYLES: I have numerous questions. Minister, you are not prepared to talk about the services that will be delivered across the Territory in Indigenous communities and town camps to reduce the incidence and impact of domestic violence? You are not able to provide any detail here today?

Ms SWANSON: Member for Nightcliff, as you know, the services have not yet transferred. They will be effectively transferring the directorate service from 1 July. In relation to what has been provided this year from both of those service delivery areas, you would have to direct the specifics of those services to them, for this year.

Ms FYLES: We have 1 July not very far away, next week, and the Minister is not able to provide detail. I will move on with my questioning. I turn to the policy framework for Northern Territory women that was released last year. Minister, has the sexual violence strategy been finalised as outlined in this police framework that was released late last year?

Ms PRICE: Member for Nightcliff, I will have my Deputy Chief Executive, Noelene Swanson, answer that for you.

Ms SWANSON: Member for Nightcliff, the strategy has not yet been finalised.

Ms FYLES: Is there any time frame on when that strategy will be finalised?

Ms SWANSON: Not at this moment in time, but in the coming months it will be.

Ms FYLES: Minister, is that something that your department is still working on?

Mrs PRICE: Well, if Noelene is saying it is being worked on, it is worked on.

Ms FYLES: It is a question for you, Minister. Are you aware of where this document is at within your own department?

Mrs PRICE: That question has been answered by my Deputy Executive.

Ms FYLES: I take that you are not aware of where this document is at?

Mr CONLAN: A point of order, Madam Chair! Do not take that. The Minister has clearly stated that she is aware that the document is in progress through her Deputy Chief Executive. So, for the record, I ask that you do not take that as a no. The Minister has answered the question through her Deputy Chief Executive, which she is entitled to do.

Ms FYLES: Minister, the Office of Women's Policy's engagement of government and community organisations is to encourage young mothers to stay in education. Can you provide detail around this?

Ms SWANSON: Member for Nightcliff, as you know, we work closely with other agencies, including the Education department, to support them in their policy development and their delivery in that area. For detail I suggest you refer to the Department of Education for how they are supporting young mums to remain in education.

Ms FYLES: It clearly states in this policy document which the Minister has carriage of – you are not able to list any NGOs that have been engaged to encourage young mothers to stay in education?

Ms SWANSON: Member for Nightcliff, I strongly suggest you refer that to the Department of Education to answer that question. We support them with the policy direction and in the development of their own internal policies to enable that to be the case.

Ms FYLES: Minister, can you advise the number of women on government boards and committees?

Mrs PRICE: Member for Nightcliff, that sits under Department of the Chief Minister.

Ms FYLES: Minister, I am not receiving answers to some questions because I am being told that they sit within different agencies. Yet a whole-of-government approach - which is absolutely the responsibility for this framework and you for women's policy - you are not able to answer that question?

Mrs PRICE: Madam Chair, I feel we have answered all those questions the member for Nightcliff has been asking.

Ms FYLES: I have asked a very specific question Minister on the number of women on government boards and committees. You are not able to provide any details, any elaboration on what is happening in your agency of the Office of Women's Policy?

Mrs PRICE: As I have reiterated, that sits under the Department of Chief Minister, Madam Chair.

Madam CHAIR: So, the answer is no.

Mr CONLAN: A point of order, Madam Chair! The answer is that it sits with the Department of Chief Minister; it is not no. The answer can be found within the Department of the Chief Minister. Seeing we have already had the Chief Minister here perhaps, member for Nightcliff, you could seek an alternative briefing with DCM.

Ms FYLES: I feel this question, like many I have asked – the front page of your document, page 4, outlines that the office provides advice across government relation to issues affecting women and advocates across

the Northern Territory - data to be collected and reported. This is data that is to do with what the Office of Women's Policy was set up for, Minister. I assume you would hold data on the number of women on government boards and committees.

Ms SWANSON: Member for Nightcliff, as you know the framework was released in April 2015. We have been putting together an evaluation framework and collecting data since then against each of the focus areas within the document. Some of the information that is collected would include membership on government boards. That would be information we would be gathering now and putting together in the evaluation framework.

Ms FYLES: This report produced by the Office of Women's Policy clearly states it undertakes gender analysis of policies and programs to understand whether its proposed or existing policies and programs deliver equally beneficial outcomes for women and men. Minister, are you able to talk about some of the projects that the Office of Women's Policy has taken in this area so we can see exactly what might be happening there?

Mrs PRICE: Member for Nightcliff, I tabled the policy in parliament not long ago. There is an opportunity there for you to have access to it. The Office of Women's Policy ...

Ms FYLES: Minister, I am talking to the document that you tabled in parliament. I am asking a question off that. I am asking you what programs ...

Mrs PRICE: Yes. I am reading to you what we do and what we have as well.

Ms FYLES: I have that in front of me as well, but I am asking you what analysis has taken place? What policies and what programs to date has the office taken part in?

Mrs PRICE: Let me go through this and I will let you know what Women's Policy's achievements and issues are. My Office of Women's Policy provides me with policy advice on issues affecting Territory women, concentrating on four key focus areas of action: women's safety, women's health and wellbeing, economic security and leadership and participation. The Office of Women's Policy provides leadership across government in ensuring gender equality and that Territory women are considered in government policy and programs through community engagement representing the Northern Territory on national boards and working groups, together with well-established grants programs. The Office of Women's Policy is committed to advancing the social, political, economic and civil status of women across the Territory.

Ms FYLES: Minister, I appreciate that. I am asking you specifically what policies and programs ...

Mrs PRICE: I would like to go on to talk about what has happened since we have had this. We now have the Northern Territory Women's Consultative Council which is a great idea for all women in the Territory. There is a variety of women on that council. It is a great opportunity for the Northern Territory. This shows how serious we are about listening to women and their issues.

Ms FYLES: When did you establish that consultative council, Minister?

Mrs PRICE: Did you not hear me in parliament when I announced it?

Ms FYLES: I am asking you specifically what date that Women's Consultative Council was established.

Ms SWANSON: It was established in the last month and is planning on meeting. It is having its first meeting next week. That meeting is taking place at Ross River. When the expressions of interest went out for it we were overwhelmed with over 70 responses from across the Territory. It was quite remarkable. Responses were from high level leaders in business right through to remote community leaders. For the Minister to select a group that was representative from across the community was a very difficult task indeed.

Ms FYLES: When did you first call for expressions of interest in that consultative council, Minister?

Ms SWANSON: It was about two months ago from memory, member for Nightcliff. I would have to check the actual date it was released.

Ms FYLES: Minister, why did it take over three-and-a-half years to establish that Northern Territory Women's Consultative Council? It seems a little cynical in the months leading up to an election that we

suddenly see expressions called for and a council formed, when you have been the Minister and government has been in for a number of years.

Mrs PRICE: It is a great opportunity regardless of it being the year of the election. It is a great opportunity for women of the Territory to have this body where they can all talk about the issues of women of the Northern Territory. Yes, it has been a long time coming, but it is happening now and we are having our first meeting next week. That is a good news story.

Ms FYLES: Minister, in early 2014 a report was commissioned by Professor Caroline de Costa and was produced at the request of the then Minister for Health, Robyn Lambley, recommending amendments to the *Medical Services Act* to bring legislation up to par with other jurisdictions. A further report was commissioned by the Department of Health on this issue under the CLP government in 2015.

I note that the policy framework for NT women, found on the Office of Women's Policy's website, provides on page 11:

... the need for policy and program approaches that respond to the different requirements of women and men and that some health issues are unique to, more common, or more serious for women. These include sexual and reproductive health (including family planning) ...

I note that there is a section dedicated to 'Ensuring equity of access to health services for all Northern Territory Women'.

Access to abortion and family planning services issues acutely impact on remote Indigenous women who are least able to access hospital services in major regional centres. Why did you not, as the Minister for Women's Policy, introduce a bill to reform the *Medical Services Act* in 2014 or 2015? How much did these reports cost and will you make these reports publicly available?

Mrs PRICE: Member for Nightcliff, I did not do those reports; it was the Department of Health.

Ms FYLES: As the Minister for Women's Policy, have you seen those reports?

Mrs PRICE: I have not.

Ms FYLES: Would you undertake to make those reports available?

Mrs PRICE: It sits under the Department of Health.

Ms FYLES: Minister, women's health and wellbeing is quite a significant part of that framework. There are a number of pages with reference to it. It is one of the key responsibilities of the Office of Women's Policy. Did you refer the *Medical Services Act* to the Office of Women's Policy?

Minister, this is a question for you. As Minister, did you refer the *Medical Services Act* that was presented to parliament?

Mrs PRICE: I will ask Noelene Swanson to answer you, member for Nightcliff.

Ms FYLES: Minister, it is a question for you. Did you refer ...

Mrs PRICE: I will get Noelene Swanson to answer that question for you, member for Nightcliff.

Ms SWANSON: Could you repeat the question please, member for Nightcliff?

Ms FYLES: As Deputy Chief Executive, was the *Medical Services Act* referred to you by the Minister – the act that was presented to parliament late last year?

Ms SWANSON: Are you asking if it was referred to us to provide advice to the Minister?

Ms FYLES: Was it referred at all, by the Minister, to your agency?

Ms SWANSON: The Minister provided us with that and others to provide advice.

Ms FYLES: It is a very specific question. Did the Minister refer the *Medical Services Act*, presented late last year to the Northern Territory parliament, to the Office of Women's Policy?

Ms SWANSON: I would have to go and check that. From memory I could not tell you, member for Nightcliff.

Ms FYLES: Minister, perhaps I could ask you a question ...

Madam CHAIR: Minister, will you take that question on notice?

Mrs PRICE: Yes.

Question on Notice No 6.9

Madam CHAIR: Restate the question, please, member for Nightcliff.

Ms FYLES: Was amendment to the *Medical Services Act*, as presented to parliament late last year, referred to the department by the Minister?

Madam CHAIR: This is the amendment to the *Medical Service Act* by the member for Goyder? Is that correct?

Ms FYLES: Correct, Madam Chair.

Madam CHAIR: Do you accept the question, Minister?

Mrs PRICE: I will take that on notice, Madam Chair.

Madam CHAIR: The question asked by the member for Nightcliff of the Minister has been allocated the number 6.9

Ms FYLES: Minister, I will ask you again, did you refer the amendment to the *Medical Services Act* to the Office of Women's Policy for advice, considering it fits into their framework?

Mrs PRICE: Member for Nightcliff, I have answered that clearly for you. Madam Chair ...

Mr CONLAN: The Minister has answered the question and she has taken it on notice. Member for Nightcliff, perhaps you can enlighten me what this has to do with the Appropriation Bill of 2016-17?

Madam CHAIR: Member for Greatorex, we are not here to question the questions. I understand that you might have some objections to some of the consideration ...

Mr CONLAN: The questions need to be related to the Appropriation (2016-2017) Bill and I feel we are widely off topic here ...

Madam CHAIR: I am satisfied they relate. You interpret that very broadly as chair.

Mr CONLAN: And so do you, I am afraid, Madam Chair. But if we could keep questions to the Appropriation (2016-2017) Bill, please.

Madam CHAIR: I am satisfied with the nature of the questioning. It is up to you, Minister, if you answer it. I am satisfied that there is enough variation in what the member is asking.

Mrs PRICE: It is just going round and round.

Madam CHAIR: Do you have any more questions, member for Nightcliff?

Ms FYLES: I do, Madam Chair. As the Minister for Women's Policy you did not speak on this act when it was presented before the parliament. You are unsure whether you referred this significant debate to the Office of Women's Policy. Do you support the advancement of women's rights, equality and fairness, particularly in relation to health?

Mrs PRICE: Member for Nightcliff, as you know, the RU486 bill is being debated through the parliament process ...

Mr CONLAN: A point of order, Madam Chair! Again, this is a policy question. It has nothing to do with the Appropriation Bill of 2016-17.

Madam CHAIR: There is somewhat of a grey area here. We are talking about the Office of Women's Policy ...

Mr CONLAN: It is not a grey area, it is black and white. This is about a policy – a motion that was presented to parliament a couple of months ago. It has nothing to do with the Appropriation Bill of 2016-17 and I ask that you bring the questioning to order or ...

Ms FYLES: It is a very specific question. The Office of Women's Policy works closely and collaboratively with the Women's Health Strategy Unit to improve health outcomes across the Territory.

Mr CONLAN: ... Minister, you proceed to move on and not answer the question.

Madam CHAIR: Can we have one person talking at a time. Member for Greatorex, have you finished?

Mr CONLAN: Yes.

Madam CHAIR: Member for Nightcliff, you wanted to respond to the member for Greatorex, is that correct?

Ms FYLES: I feel that the Office of Women's Policy works closely and collaboratively with the Women's Health Strategy Unit to progress improvements in health outcomes for Northern Territory women. These are important questions. They are very much focused to the Minister for Women's Policy about the Office of Women's Policy. She was unable to speak in parliament on that. I am asking her whether she referred the bill to her agency - which, looking at its framework which was only just released which the Minister has presented to the community, I find it astounding that she is unable to answer these questions.

Mrs PRICE: Madam Chair, I have taken that question on board. Okay?

Madam CHAIR: Okay. Can you ask another question, member for Nightcliff? I will give you some latitude. We are talking about the Office of Women's Policy. You said before that your brief includes examining policies of a broad range relating to women, including women's health issues. This is the focus of that question just asked. Could you move on, member for Nightcliff?

Ms FYLES: Minister, the department is clearly set up to provide policy advice. I have been unable to gain any examples, apart from broad-brush-stroke words today. I was unable to be given any information of what NGOs and community organisations are being supported. Are you able to provide specific examples of where advice has been provided?

Mrs PRICE: Madam Chair, the national plan to reduce violence against women and their children aims to achieve a significant and sustained reduction in levels of violence against women and their children across Australia to be delivered through four three-year action plans.

The second action plan moving ahead runs from 2013 to 2016 and contains 26 practical actions that all governments agree are critical if we are to move ahead in improving women's safety. The second action plan was developed in partnership with Commonwealth, state and territory governments and in consultation with a broad range of non-government stakeholders.

The plan identifies five national priorities and 26 practical actions to be undertaken by state and territories and builds on the foundations laid by the first action plan. The five national priorities of the second action plan are: driving whole-of-community action to prevent violence; understanding diverse experiences of violence; supporting innovative services and integrated systems; improving perpetrator interventions; and continue to build the evidence base.

My department's Office of Women's Policy provides direct input and represents the Northern Territory government on the second action plan implementation executive group.

The second action plan also strengthens links with other national reforms to provide a holistic approach including the National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children, homelessness, the National Partnership Agreement on Remote Indigenous Housing, income management, National Indigenous Law and Justice Framework, National Disability Strategy, national settlement framework, settlement services and women refugees, national work to address female genital mutilation, National Action Plan to Combat Human Trafficking and Slavery.

The Northern Territory developed its jurisdictional implementation plan with the Northern Territory Domestic and Family Violence Reduction Strategy: Safety is Everyone's Right.

Activities are under way to inform the development of the third action plan. While a second action plan has focused on women from diverse backgrounds such as Indigenous women, remote women, culturally and linguistically diverse women and women with a disability, I have lobbied strongly and successfully to ensure the third action plan which is under development will have Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as a national priority.

The Office of Women's Policy has membership on the Board of Directors of Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety and pays financial membership of \$15 450 per year. This amount is worked out on a per-capita basis. The office is also a member of Our Watch, the foundation for the prevention of violence against women and their children, and provides membership of \$11 741. This amount is worked out on a per-capita basis as well.

Ms FYLES: Minister, I appreciate that broad statement. Are you able to outline any outcomes we can see that have been implemented in the Territory, rather than broad statements across different policy areas?

Ms SWANSON: The outcomes you will be able through the Office of Women's Policy have been through the grants that have been allocated and specific policies that have been influenced and developed within agencies including education and health.

Ms FYLES: So, when I ask the question around the Office of Women's Policy engagement of government and community organisations to stay in education, I was not able to be given a response? Can you see my frustration? I am asking questions specifically and I am not receiving any responses. Anyway, in the interest of time I will move on.

Minister, it is expected that the Indigenous Males Advisory Committee will meet twice this year. What is expected to be achieved in two meetings for a whole-of-government men's policy?

Mr CHIODO: The Indigenous Males Advisory Committee is one component of the Office of Men's Policy. What is expected to come out of the IMAC is that the members of the Indigenous Male Advisory Committee have made some very specific recommendations that were included in our budget commitments for the year. We intend to ensure that those commitments are met. I reiterate the IMAC is only a part of the Office of Men's Policy, not the entire policy program.

Ms FYLES: Do we have any detail of what is expected to be achieved within those two meetings, Minister?

Mrs PRICE: Member for Nightcliff, we have achieved a lot with our government. We have had the Office of Women's Policy and Office of Men's Policy that we have achieved in the four years that we have been in government. What have you done for men in your time as a government in the 11 years that you were in?

Ms FYLES: I am not the Minister, you are. I am asking what you have done in those two meetings for a whole-of-government men's policy approach.

Mrs PRICE: We have done a lot more than Labor did for men out there. I will say the Office of Men's Policy, the Department of Local Government and Community Services is waiting for confirmation of accreditation as a White Ribbon workplace. This is the nationally recognised accreditation which will confirm that the department has demonstrated effective leadership, resources allocation, communication, HR policy development and training to create a safe and more respectful workplace.

The Office of Men's Policy has a strong focus on community safety through its partnership with the NO MORE Campaign. The Office of Men's Policy also supports the government's commitment to reducing domestic and family violence through the Safety is Everyone's Right strategy. The Office of Men's Policy is working towards hosting a law and culture conference to recognise the great work Indigenous men are

doing in sharing stories of success, focusing on strengthening the capacity of men to address family violence in their communities.

Additionally, we have secured \$150 000 over the next four years for grant funding under the Indigenous Male Advisory Council. This key recommendation of the Indigenous Male Advisory Council will ensure that programs and projects supporting men in our community can continue.

The Office of Men's Policy has developed a strong partnership with the Neighbourhood Activity Centre at Sanderson Middle School. Through this partnership, the Office of Men's Policy is directly supporting community engagement activities focusing on health and wellbeing, men's leadership and mentoring young boys into adulthood.

Madam CHAIR: Are there any more questions on Strategy, Output 3.2?

Mr WOOD: I am going to ask a bloke's question for a change. Minister, I received an e-mail this week from a gentleman whose concerns were that whilst he has no complaints about the amount of promotion that is done for women's health through breast cancer campaigns and all those sorts of things, he feels that in the Territory especially campaigns about male health are lagging behind. He is not saying they are not there. I know some of those campaigns.

One aspect is what is the men's policy unit doing to try to promote men's health and get it on an equal footing with some of the issues regarding women's health? Prostate cancer is still a major killer of men. The other issue - you perhaps cannot answer this but may be able to follow it up - is he felt that when he went to hospital his concerns about his health did not receive as much consideration as a woman who was also in the hospital. He felt there was a little unevenness in the way he was treated. In fact, after waiting for quite a while he ended up taking himself to Queensland for a biopsy. That may or may not be true, but I am wondering whether they are some of the issues that could be looked at by the Office of Men's Policy. This gentleman has written quite a detailed e-mail which I think he has sent to a number of other people. Is that the sort of thing the Office of Men's Policy can look at?

Mr CHIODO: Through the chair, member for Nelson. Clearly the initial emphasis - and if I could make the point, this is the only government in Australia that has an Office of Men's Policy.

Mr WOOD: I am very pleased they do.

Mr CHIODO: It was an important point. The other aspect is that the concentration at this stage has been mainly in the domestic violence area. The intent is to move on beyond that. Part of the response in relation to the Indigenous Male Advisory Committee is that they help to set some of the priorities for the Office of Men's Policy.

To answer your question, obviously I cannot speak about that individual case. We have concentrated specifically on domestic violence initially. We intend to progress that beyond domestic violence and into health matters. Again, the role of the Office of Men's Policy is not that different to the Office of Women's Policy, which is to ensure the voice of groups like the Indigenous Male Advisory Committee is made obvious to those agencies that have the responsibility for delivering the specific policies and programs, whether they be associated with health or domestic violence or any of a number of other issues that exist out there. We are talking about a staff of three.

The short answer to your question is yes, health is the next area that we will go into. Initially, the emphasis has definitely been the domestic violence component. One of the areas we are looking at, at the moment, is the establishment of men's sheds, for lack of a better term, in a number of communities.

Mr WOOD: That is the national term.

Mr CHIODO: No, the national term is more to do with Men's Sheds, where I could go on the weekend and build something rather than stay in the apartment and prepare for estimates. The men's sheds we are talking about is to create an environment. In a number of communities we have women's shelters and safety houses. What is lacking, in many instances, is a location for men to go to an environment where - we are speaking about a community that may be 75 to 100 people and a DVO may have been taken out, so the complexity then exists of where the individual can go.

We are trying to develop a program through the Office of Men's Policy of creating an environment that works on educating males on the impact of their actions within that a community. Health will be the next step but at the moment we are concentrating on DV.

Mr WOOD: Minister, I would be wary of trying to mix up Men's Sheds with men's ...

Mr CHIODO: Well, call it something else then.

Mr WOOD: That is right, but the Men's Shed program is very good. There is a real need for men who are lonely or struggling as they get older in life. It is a place they can go. I hope those two things would not get mixed up.

Minister, if that is the case, would you mind if I table this e-mail for you? Maybe you could pass it on to the Office of Men's Policy so it can see what this gentleman's concerns were, and perhaps it could give a response at some other time, if that is okay?

Mrs PRICE: Yes, we will take that.

Mr WOOD: Thank you.

Madam CHAIR: Are there any more questions on Output 3.2, Strategy? If not that concludes consideration of Output 3.2 and Output Group 3.0.

OUTPUT GROUP 4.0 – LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND REGIONS **Output 4.1 – Policy and Legislation**

Madam CHAIR: The Committee will now proceed to Output Group 4, Local Government and Regions, Output 4.1, Policy and Legislation. Are there any questions?

Answers to Questions on Notice Nos 6.1 and 6.7

Mrs PRICE: Madam Chair, we have answers to questions.

Madam CHAIR: Would you like to table them? Thank you very much, Minister.

Mrs PRICE: Yes, we will table them.

Madam CHAIR: Do you have the numbers?

Mr CHIODO: Yes, 6.1 and 6.7.

Mr McCARTHY: Minister, specifically what arrangements are in place for further consultation in relation to the conditional rating of pastoral and extractive mineral leases?

Mrs PRICE: I will ask David Willing, Executive Director Local Government, to answer that for you.

Mr WILLING: David Willing, Executive Director Local Government. At this stage there has been very limited consultation with – is this regarding pastoral or mining sector?

Mr McCARTHY: Pastoral and extraction.

Mr WILLING: Pastoral conditional rates. The conditional rating model has not changed pretty much since 2008 and methodology has remained the same through those years. The rates have also remained pretty much the same during that period.

Mr McCARTHY: And the new methodology is being developed?

Mr WILLING: No, at this stage no new methodology has been developed. Each year the Minister has to declare what the conditional rates are and that is done generally in April of each year. That has occurred since 2008 in April each year with very limited change.

Mr McCARTHY: Thank you. Minister, are you considering any financial support for remote councils to meet new requirements or expectations of the department in relation to remote cemeteries?

Mrs PRICE: Yes, member for Barkly. Following extensive consultation, new legislation is proposed that covers new categories of cemeteries in the Territory on Aboriginal land, minimum standards for management of cemeteries and allows contemporary burial practices and cremations.

The Country Liberals allocated \$300 000 grant funding for 2016-17 to establish a register for all remote public cemeteries. You and I are aware there has not been anything like this done before. In Aboriginal communities people are buried and they are not registered. I have been to funerals where people see these graves, but they do not have anybody who has registered where people have been buried.

I also took it upon myself to insist that we have a *Cemeteries Act* because of the conditions and the situation communities are in. I will endeavour to make sure we provide funding through Local Government to make sure of the *Cemeteries Act*.

Budget 2016-17 provides additional funding of \$307 000 to support regional cemeteries. The funding will assist regional councils to establish and develop, for each cemetery within their council area, policies and processes, cemetery plans, signage and burial registers. The funding also will assist councils to provide training to staff regarding legislative requirements, and where necessary assist with grave identification, survey and fence work.

Mr McCARTHY: I will have to skip through a lot of this quickly, and for one section we will have to write to you. Madam Chair, that is it for me in that section.

Mr WOOD: My question is in relation to the Vic Daly and West Daly Regional Councils. You can tell me whether they fit in here. It says in the budget they received \$2.5m in budget assistance grants.

Mr McCARTHY: That is Output 4.2, member for Nelson.

Mr WOOD: Is it? What is the government doing about non-incorporated land in the Northern Territory? Is there a policy? What is the policy on non-incorporated land in the Northern Territory?

Mr WILLING: The large amount of unincorporated land in the Territory covers Cox Peninsula and is surrounded by Belyuen, Coomalie and Wagait existing councils in those areas. There has ...

Mr WOOD: And East Arm.

Mr WILLING: And Dundee. That is right. Also some in the Douglas Daly area and out at Marrakai, out towards the West Arnhem border.

There has been an advisory group that has been operating for about a year now which consists of Belyuen, Coomalie and Wagait councils. The Dundee Progress Association has also been attending as an observer. Those three councils and Dundee Progress Association are working towards options for local government in the vicinity of their councils. They are also looking at boundary expansions, the possibility of even establishing a new council.

They put up a recent proposal for Belyuen and Coomalie to amalgamate, along with some unincorporated land which included the Kenbi land claim area.

Mr WOOD: Belyuen and Coomalie?

Mr WILLING: Yes.

Mr WOOD: Long way apart, but anyway, yes.

Mr WILLING: The Litchfield National Park separates them, I guess. That was also included in their proposal. Because of Kenbi settling, the proposal was deferred until that was finalised. Now that has been finalised they are talking to Wagait as well now, and will come back with some options for the Minister to look at post the Territory election.

Mr WOOD: I knew it would be post the Territory election.

Mr WILLING: It is a long time until a local government election.

Mr WOOD: But anyway, this has been going on for a very long time. Has any discussions been held with the new Litchfield Council, which is relatively in the middle?

Mr WILLING: Yes, that is right. I have had a conversation with the CEO of Litchfield Council and the Mayor. I have also spoken with Top Rock on the issue of unincorporated land around those areas. Litchfield, although not part of the advisory group, is also considering whether or not it will participate in some kind of boundary changes in the future.

Mr WOOD: My last question on this. Will the department look at not only the viability of those changes, but also the practical implications of providing services which have to be taken through another council to provide those services?

Mr WILLING: All of that would be looked at once the options are tabled to us.

Mr WOOD: Yes, okay, thank you.

Madam CHAIR: Do we have any more questions under Policy and Legislation? That concludes Output 4.1.

Output 4.2 – Sustainability and Compliance

Madam CHAIR: We will now call for questions on Output 4.2, Sustainability and Compliance. Are there any questions?

Mr McCARTHY: Yes, Madam Chair. Minister, what has been the cost of consultants engaged to assist with official management of the following councils over the past 12 months: Belyuen Council, Litchfield Council, Tiwi Regional Council and Barkly Regional Council? How much of the costs have been, or are to be, recouped from these councils?

Mrs PRICE: Member for Barkly, I will take that on notice.

Question on Notice No 6.10

Madam CHAIR: Could you restate the question please, member for Barkly.

Mr McCARTHY: Minister, what has been the cost of consultants engaged to assist with the official management of the Belyuen Council, Litchfield Council, Tiwi Regional Council and Barkly Regional Council over the past 12 months and how much of the costs have been, or are to be, recouped from these councils?

Madam CHAIR: Do you accept the question? Clarification?

Mr CHIODO: A point of clarification, Barkly Regional Council

Mr McCARTHY: Consultants.

Mr CHIODO: In relation to administration, you said. Barkly has not been in administration.

Mr McCARTHY: Have any consultants been appointed to support in financial matters?

Mr CHIODO: My point is, I was asking for clarification on the exact parameters of the question.

Mr McCARTHY: Absolutely, Mr Chiodo. The others are quite clear. If the Barkly Regional Council has an appropriation for support – that would be good.

Madam CHAIR: Would you put that in the question?

Mr McCARTHY: We can leave that in the question and the answer might come back nil for Barkly Regional Council.

Mr CHIODO: I am happy to respond to the Barkly component of that question now and it is nil. So the question on notice, I guess, would then be any consultants for the councils that you nominated as being under or previously under administration. Is that correct?

Mr McCARTHY: Costs and if the costs will be recouped.

Mr CHIODO: Yes, we will take that question on notice.

Madam CHAIR: Do you accept the question, Minister?

Mrs PRICE: Yes.

Madam CHAIR: The question asked by the member for Barkly of the Minister has been allocated the number 6.10.

Mr McCARTHY: Minister, Budget Paper No 3 outlines an investment of \$2.5m to provide further budget assistant grants to the Victoria Daly and West Daly Regional Councils. For the sake of clarity, is that \$2.5m for each council or is to be shared between the two councils?

Mrs PRICE: In April 2013, Cabinet directed the Department of Local Government and Regions, as it was then, to undertake assessments of current and alternative boundaries and associated costs. The department undertook consultations across the Northern Territory, including 279 meetings in communities during initial consultations and 87 meetings in communities during council boundary consultations. Based on the results of consultations the department commenced work on the restructuring of the Vic Daly Regional Council and creating a new regional council in the West Daly region.

In preparation for the establishment of the West Daly Regional Council the department established a transition committee with representatives from the Victoria and West Daly areas, the Local Government Association of the Northern Territory, the member for Nelson, the Australian government and the NT government. Transition committee meetings were held over a six-month period and agreed on 52 recommendations for implementation resulting in the commencement of the new West Daly Regional Council and boundary change of the Victoria Daly Regional Council on 1 July 2014.

An official launch ceremony was held at Peppimenarti on 12 July 2014, including traditional dancing and swearing-in of the mayor and councillors. The new Chief Executive Officer of the West Daly Regional Council was recruited under the direction of LGANT. The selection panel members included the mayor, councillors, LGANT, and department representatives. The six-month transition process was completed smoothly and there were no major disruptions to service delivery in either council area. For the West Daly Regional Council all employees transferred voluntarily and agencies, services, contracts ...

Mr McCARTHY: Madam Chair, for the sake of time – Minister, for the constituents who are very interested in this, is that \$2.5m in Budget 2016-17 to be shared between West Daly and Victoria Daly or is \$2.5m each?

Mrs PRICE: Member for Barkly, for 2016-17 additional funding of \$2.5m was approved for a special purpose budget assistance grant for the Victoria Daly and West Daly Regional Councils. An allocation of this amount between the two councils will be offered based on the councils' budget and need. A condition of the grants was that each council must identify and implement strategies that either increase income or reduce cost in outer years to remove any need for additional financial support. The department has continued to work closely with both councils and regularly monitors both their financial positions.

Mr McCARTHY: Minister, did I hear that correctly? It is to be shared between the two councils?

Mrs PRICE: Yes.

Mr McCARTHY: Thank you, Minister. Minister, why did the West Daly council receive no share of the special purpose grants that were announced at the recent LGANT conference? What is the department doing in supporting West Daly council with grant applications?

Mrs PRICE: Member for Barkly, they did not apply for any of the special purpose grants.

Mr McCARTHY: What is the department doing in supporting them in their grant applications?

Mr CHIODO: Member for Barkly, particularly with West Daly, we have worked closely with the councillors and the administration through the compliance unit and out of the Department of Local Government and our regional staff in identifying any projects. At this stage they did not in any way identify any special purpose grants. They were concentrating on delivering the grants that had been provided to them as part of their operational funding.

Mr McCARTHY: Thank you, Mr Chiodo.

Mr WOOD: Following on from that, Minister, were there any problems with the administration of the West Daly shire earlier this year? Was that part of the reasons, perhaps, some of these things like the special purpose grants were not done?

Mr CHIODO: No specific problems, member for Nelson. I am not sure what you are referring to. Is there was something specific?

Mr WOOD: I had heard earlier this year that some of the staff had left and there had been some issues in relation to some administration matters in regard to West Daly. I do not know whether that was true or not and whether that was part of the problems that were associated with not having a special purpose grant.

Mr CHIODO: I will deal with them as separate questions. There have been changeovers in staff at West Daly as there have been in a number of regional councils. The answer to that as far as the special purpose grants goes is that, no; I do not believe that would have had a direct impact. It is more a clear understanding. We have provided ongoing support to them. It was a necessity to deliver the projects and the funding they had already been given rather than identifying additional projects.

Mr WOOD: It is a while since I was on the committee – I got to two meetings and the rest all lined up with Assembly meetings. Where is the final headquarters for West Daly shire?

Mr CHIODO: It is currently situated in Wadeye.

Mr WOOD: That is where it will stay?

Mr CHIODO: That is a decision of council. There was intent to move some of the services to Peppimenarti, and that is an ongoing process for the shire.

Mr WOOD: Was that \$2.5m assistance grant because both councils were under financial stress, especially Vic Daly?

Mr WILLING: There are some legacy pressures on both councils, particularly on Vic Daly, with fixed costs – things like extended leasing of buildings where they do not necessarily need a building of that size anymore because they have reduced the number of staff. But because they are locked into term leases they need to continue to pay costs. That is just one example of some of the fixed costs they are trying to work through.

The amount of support they require has been reducing and we expect that to continue to reduce in the coming 12 months.

Mr WOOD: Were any of these issues picked up in the original discussions about splitting the shire? Was a viability study done to say if you split these shires you will end up with some financial difficulties simply because they are not as viable as they were before?

Mr CHIODO: Member for Nelson, I would need to take that question on notice. It unfortunately predates me, my minister and the Executive Director for Local Government.

Mr WOOD: I will let that one go if it predates you.

Madam CHAIR: You do not want to put that on notice?

Mr WOOD: No. The question I will ask is in relation to the Litchfield Council review. The member for Barkly mentioned it. Was there a cost to the government for that review? Was there also a cost to sacking the council and putting an administrator in place? There are two questions there. What was the cost of the review, and what was the cost of putting an administrator in?

Mr WILLING: All the review work, as you put it, was done out of normal operating costs of the department through the compliance area. The costs associated with having an official manager in place are borne by council. During that period elected members are suspended the majority of that cost is transferred from the allowances they would normally receive. It goes towards funding the official manager.

The official manager, however, is not necessarily a full-time role. Initially, for about the first four weeks, it was full-time for Mr Crawley, but after that it became a part-time role. He was partly funded by the department and still had a role in the department.

Mr WOOD: In relation to the review – I know you will not release it, Minister, although you could have a censored version of it ...

Mrs PRICE interjecting.

Mr WOOD: Yes, I know. What should be public are the recommendations of that review. Have those recommendations been acted upon?

Mr WILLING: It is the responsibility of council to act on those recommendations. While we had an official manager in place they worked through a lot of those issues that he identified early on, which were largely around governance and financial management. A lot of that was worked through with the CEO. When the new CEO was brought on board an action plan was put together by the Litchfield Council, and the new councillors and new CEO are working through all of that.

Mr WOOD: Did your department take any role in any notification that there may have been some improper procedures in the council's operations that needed to be either looked at officially – through either police investigation or some internal investigation? Did any of that happen?

Mr WILLING: Yes, it did. There were some things that were referred. I do not believe I should comment any further on what they are because there is an ongoing investigation occurring at the moment.

Mr WOOD: Okay. Quickly then, you have an \$800 000 review of local authorities. You have issued this document. Is this an ongoing version of this Local Government Regional Management Plan, or a completely new review? If it is a new review what are the reasons for having a review?

Mr WILLING: Sorry, can I clarify the question? Is that a review of the *Local Government Act* or ...

Mr WOOD: In your Budget Highlights, there is \$0.8m for the review of local authorities.

Mr WILLING: Yes.

Mr WOOD: I presume that is councils.

Mrs PRICE: Member for Nelson, yes, local authorities have been established in 63 remote communities within the nine regional councils and are holding regular meetings. They comprise of six to 14 appointed members and relevant regional council elected members. Local authority members were appointed following an open invitation for community residents to nominate. Regional councils make the final appointments. This method aligns with the regional governance working group's recommendations for the establishment of local authorities. The same process is still being applied when member vacancies arise.

All local authorities have established boundaries, appointed members and selected a chairperson and deputy chairperson. Some local authorities have experienced a number of failed meetings due to a lack of a quorum. When this happens meetings are rescheduled to a more suitable time. As at the end of April 2016 there were 520 members of local authorities who have been appointed from local communities across the Territory and 88% are Indigenous.

In addition, there are 95 elected regional council members who participate as members of the local authority in their respective wards. As at the end of April 2016 local authorities had held 509 meetings.

Mr WOOD: Minister, what is the basis of the review - in summary?

Mrs PRICE: Review of the ...

Mr WOOD: Yes, what is the reason for the review?

Mr CHIODO: Member for Nelson, two purposes – one, by the very nature of the processes, from the outset there were some locations where we had difficulties in ensuring we achieved quorum. Two, it is a review to ensure the cost to councils are being met appropriately and the effectiveness of local authorities.

The third part of the review is to ensure that we are clear that the message from councils down to local authorities is getting through. We want to be just as certain that the messaging from local authorities back to councils and us are getting through. They are the three basic criteria. But it is ongoing. We consider that review of the entire local authority methodology would be ongoing.

Mr WOOD: A last question. This is probably my cynical question for the day. There was \$5m given out for local authority priority projects, I believe, at the AGM at Jabiru. Of course, this would have nothing to do with an election year. Minister, would you have \$5m to give to local authority priority projects next year?

Mrs PRICE: Member for Nelson, it is ongoing funding.

Mr WOOD: Good. Thank you.

Madam CHAIR: That concludes consideration of Output 4.2.

Output 4.3 – Strategic Projects and Regions

Madam CHAIR: We will move on to Output 4.3, Strategic Projects and Regions. Are there any questions?

Mr McCARTHY: Yes, Madam Chair. Minister, because I have to share time with the opposition team, is it okay if I submit the rest of my questions on the Local Government and Community Services appropriations to you in a written form?

Mrs PRICE: Yes.

Mr McCARTHY: Thank you, Minister. Thank you, Madam Chair.

Madam CHAIR: That concludes consideration of Output 4.3 and Output Group 4.0.

I note that questions relating to Output Group 5, Office of Aboriginal Affairs, were answered by the Chief Minister as the Minister for Indigenous Affairs on Wednesday 15 June.

OUTPUT GROUP 6.0 – CORPORATE AND GOVERNANCE

Output 6.1 – Corporate and Governance

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

Mr WOOD: I have one question. Page 62 of your annual report talks about a review that might have been in relation to procurement. I will raise that question in the housing section of Corporate Governance -that may be better.

Mr CHIODO: It depends which procurement, member for Nelson.

Mr WOOD: Housing procurement.

Mr CHIODO: Okay. Housing maintenance programs - perhaps to help out - in homelands and outstations in town camps where there is no public housing we provide funding to service providers for some housing maintenance. That is done through a grants process.

If you are speaking about housing maintenance or any other costs associated with public housing, then that is correct, that is a question for the Department of Housing.

Mr WOOD: I will get clarification on that. On page 62 of your annual report, there is a section which is in response to risk management and audits. One of those is in relation to procurement. It says there are some issues in regard to that and you are getting the Department of Business to undertake some presentations. I can move that question to housing, because it is where it is more specific, rather than local government. Thank you.

Madam CHAIR: That concludes consideration of Output Group 6.0.

Non-Output Specific Budget-Related Questions

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

That concludes consideration of outputs relating to the Department of Community Services. On behalf on the committee, I thank departmental officers for attending. Thank you very much.

We will break for lunch, which is at 12.30 pm – we have six or seven minutes to go. We will come back and go to Aboriginal Areas Protection Authority at 1 pm.

Answer to Question on Notice No 6.10

Mr CHIODO: Madam Chair, we have one more response to a question on notice, which was 6.10.

Madam CHAIR: Thank you very much. That has been tabled.

The committee suspended.

ABORIGINAL AREAS PROTECTION AUTHORITY

Madam CHAIR: Welcome back everyone. We will start again with the Aboriginal Areas Protection Authority. Minister, I invite you to introduce the officials accompanying you and if you wish to make an opening statement regarding the Aboriginal Areas Protection Authority - just for five minutes. Thank you very much.

Mrs PRICE: Thank you, Madam Chair. I thank the committee for the opportunity to make an opening statement and I welcome your questions. I would like to introduce those at the table with me, the Chief Executive of the Aboriginal Areas Protection Authority, Dr Ben Scambray; Director of Corporate Services, Maurice Sacilotto; and to my right, Matthew Dean, Manager Special Projects.

The Aboriginal Areas Protection Authority is a statutory body established under the *Northern Territory Aboriginal Sacred Sites Act* in 1989. The authority provides an important regulatory function to preserve cultural values in the Northern Territory while maintaining a balance with the economic and social aspirations of all Territorians. The Sacred Sites Act balances the protection of sacred sites with the use of development of land or sea across the Territory. The Aboriginal Areas Protection Authority is a small organisation that provides an expansive service in urban and remote regions. Through primary field work the authority respectfully consults with the Aboriginal custodians to understand the heritage and stories of the land and record information about sacred sites and custodianship. The consultations serve to negotiate the means by which land users or developers can proceed with projects, while managing their risk liabilities in relation to sacred sites.

On 4 September 2014, the Joint Select Committee on Northern Australia released its final report *Pivot North Inquiry into the Development of Northern Australia*. The report contains priority recommendations that target the development of infrastructure, including major roads that are critical to the economic and social development of northern Australia. Major projects identified in Pivot North include the sealing of the Tanami Road.

I am pleased to add that the authority, in September 2015, completed an authority certificate in Central Australia to provide clear advice on sacred sites in relation to upgrade and sealing for the entire Tanami Road, stretching from Alice Springs to Halls Creek. The Tanami Road stretches just over 1000 km making this a substantial project for the authority, but they completed it in less than three months. The success of this project is a reflection of the good working relationship the authority has established with the Department of Infrastructure and the positive and internal improvements the authority has made to its processing of authority certificate applications.

Mining plus tourism and agriculture enterprises are key planks for the Northern Territory economy. The development of sustainable business and economic opportunities for all Territorians is a policy priority for this Country Liberals government.

The work of the Aboriginal Areas Protection Authority recognises the economic growth priorities of the Northern Territory. In September 2015, the authority issued an authority certificate for the \$1.45bn Sea Dragon Prawn Farm Project proposed for Legune Station. The project was awarded major project status by the Northern Territory government in July 2015 and is expected to develop 10 000 ha of land through its regulatory functions.

The authority continues to support its service users in progressing proposals in relation to infrastructure development, mining, housing, social projects, tourism, agriculture, Defence and more.

Under the Sacred Sites Act anyone proposing to use or work on land in the Northern Territory may apply to the authority for an authority certificate. This will determine in the planning stages if there are any restrictions or conditions at or near the location of their proposed activities. Although voluntary, authority certificates provide certainty and balance. It is both an effective risk management tool for developers and a site protection measure for Aboriginal custodians.

In 2015-16 the issuing of an authority certificates to support the delivery of National Broadband Network infrastructure is a major achievement. In the context of regional economic development in the Northern Territory, including plans and projects for northern Australian development, access to premium-grade communications is critical for productivity in growing digital economy.

In August 2015 the final authority certificates were issued for Alice Springs and Katherine to clear errors for the NBN installation schedule. This completes the work of the authority with NBN which has seen authority certificates issued for the whole townships of Katherine, Nhulunbuy, Tennant Creek and Alice Springs as well as the Darwin hinterland. The research work undertaken for the NBN rollout also enabled the authority to bring its records in these areas up to date, providing an ongoing benefit for future projects in town locations.

A total of 178 applications for authority certificates were submitted in the nine months to 31 March 2016 and 190 authority certificates were issued in the same period. I am very pleased to talk more of authority's 2015-16 project highlights. The number of authority certificates were issued to protect multiple sacred sites for works designed to improve the visitor experience for locals and tourists. These projects include: works to boat ramps and nearby facilities at Bee Horse Creek, Dundee Beach and Batten Road; maintenance and upgrade works at Litchfield National Park; construction of a Todd River walkway from Tuncks Road to Stott Terrace; upgrade of Mataranka thermal pool; upgrade of Kings Canyon visitor area, Watarrka National Park; repair and maintenance of walking tracks at Ormiston Gorge; construction of walking track shelters along Larapinta Trail, West MacDonnell National Park; construction upgrade at George Brown Darwin Botanical Gardens; renewal of infrastructure services and facilities within Black Jungle, Lambells Lagoon management area and Holmes Jungle Nature Park; construction of a netball stadium in Alice Springs; and upgrade of Arunga Park Speedway, Alice Springs.

Authority certificates which provide certainty of the presence of sacred sites for mineral exploration and geological mapping and survey work were issued in Yuendumu hinterland, Sandover, Darwin and Arnhem Land regions ...

Madam CHAIR: You have exceeded five minutes. You are probably closer to eight minutes.

Mrs PRICE: Do you want me to close it? Yes, okay.

All right I take this opportunity at the estimates hearing to thank the Chief Executive and the staff of the authority for their work in protecting sacred sites and supporting the economic development goals of the Northern Territory.

Madam CHAIR: Thank you, Minister. Are there any questions on the Minister's statement?

Ms FYLES: Madam Chair, the opposition did have numerous questions, but in the interest of time we will table those as written questions. We thank the staff for their time and energy for being here today.

Madam CHAIR: Member for Nelson.

Mr WOOD: I have a question.

Madam CHAIR: We will just throw it open, given that the opposition members do not have any questions, irrespective of output groups. How many questions do you have?

Mr WOOD: Just one.

Madam CHAIR: Okay.

Mr WOOD: It will be easily answered. They have nearly fallen over.

Madam CHAIR: Last week we did not even get to some portfolios.

Mr WOOD: I cannot let them get away with this over all those years. I gather, Minister, there has had a review of the Sacred Sites Authority Act. I am interested to know what the results of that review were and what changes could we expect to the act?

Mrs PRICE: Yes, member for Nelson. The background to the review is that in October 2014 the Council of Australian Governments held its 38th meeting. At this meeting Queensland, Western Australia and the Northern Territory agreed to urgently investigate Indigenous land administration and use. The investigation is looking at ways in which economic prosperity can be improved for traditional owners, particularly in attracting private sector investment and finance for development.

As a result of this commitment, the Department of Chief Minister established a working group with the brief Pursuing Economic Development on Indigenous Land, known as the PEDIL. This group is now known as the Aboriginal Land Strategic Policy, or ALSP, team. As part of its work the group has commissioned a review of the *Northern Territory Aboriginal Sacred Sites Act 1989*.

The purpose of the review is to investigate the extent to which the act supports economic development in the Northern Territory and how to strengthen protection for sacred sites. It is examining the scope and operation of the act as well as the strategic and day-to-day operations of the Aboriginal Areas Protection Authority. A review of the act has not been undertaken for 25 years. During this period there has been considerable economic, political and social development in the Territory. To ensure the act remains effective in achieving its purpose it is necessary to undertake a full review of the scope and operations of the act, as well as the daily operations of the authority.

PriceWaterhouseCoopers Indigenous Consulting was appointed to undertake the review and has consulted widely with key stakeholders across the Territory, as well as staff and board members from the authority. The review represents an opportunity to provide the best possible system to ensure protection of sacred sites, as well as ensuring development for all the people of the Northern Territory. The Department of the Chief Minister has carriage of the review and, as this matter is before Cabinet, I cannot comment further. However, some news will be coming soon.

Mr WOOD: In relation to the sacred sites authority's role, do you think it needs to continually promote its work from the point of view of making sure business does not do something it should not? A little like Telstra's program to make sure you do not dig before you find out what is under the ground. Do you need some type of program like that on a continual basis - the Territory has lots of new people arriving all the time - so they are aware that there are issues to be aware of, especially when out bush?

Mr SCAMBARY: Ben Scambary, Chief Executive Officer. The public profile of the act and its provisions could improve. However, the framework is already there that whilst the act is voluntary in its nature, it is an offence to damage any sacred sites. All sacred sites in the Territory - whether we know about them or not - are protected.

Mr WOOD: Are we the only ones with a sacred site authority in Australia?

Mr SCAMBARY: Yes, as such. It is quite unique Australia-wide. In most states the protection of ethnographic sites is incorporated within broader heritage legislation.

Mr WOOD: I know that some contractors have been prosecuted. Does that come under your authority?

Mr SCAMBARY: Yes. We ~~adMinisteradminister~~ the offence provisions in the act. If people breach the offence provisions we have the authority to prosecute.

Mr WOOD: The program I was talking about before was Dial Before You Dig. I did not know if you might have a similar program for making sure people are aware, especially for new contractors. You only have to look at the number plates and the names around; there are obviously many interstate people up here who use backhoes, frontend loaders and that sort of thing.

Mr SCAMBARY: Typically the work we do is by the time people such as contractors or subcontractors are involved. They are usually associated with a larger project, often through government agencies. The processes we have through government are pretty good for making sure information about the sacred sites is disseminated.

Mr WOOD: When the tender is put out, is there anything there which reminds people if they are looking at doing this job they have to check?

Mr SCAMBARY: Usually.

Mr WOOD: All right.

Mrs PRICE: Member for Nelson, AAPA, the Aboriginal Areas Protection Authority, has developed good relationships with a number of government agencies and businesses to ensure the efficient and effective resolution of sacred site issues. Over a number of years the authority has worked closely with the National Broadband Network to ensure the smooth rollout of broadband network in Alice Springs, Tennant Creek, Katherine, Nhulunbuy and in Darwin regions. This level of collaboration has resulted in numerous authority certificates being issued in a timely manner and NBN staff being well informed on how to work around sacred sites through jointly-arranged toolbox training sessions.

The authority has also developed a close working relationship with the Department of Infrastructure resulting in more efficient and timely authority certificates. This relationship has included improved capacity to clarify issues on-site during authorities' consultation processes with Aboriginal custodians and has resulted in significant time being saved in the overall application process for the Department of Infrastructure.

The authority continues to work with other agencies and businesses to facilitate efficient processing of applications and to provide good and reliable advice on sacred sites,

Mr WOOD: Thanks, Minister. That is all the questions I have.

Madam CHAIR: That concludes consideration of all outputs relating to the Aboriginal Areas Protection Authority. I thank the officials who have come all this way to be with us today. Thank you very much.

After a five-minute break, the committee will move on to consider outputs relating to the Department of Housing.

The committee suspended.

DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING

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

Mrs PRICE: Madam Chair, I would like to introduce the public officials from the Department of Housing who are attending the committee proceedings with me today: Ms Leah Clifford, the Chief Executive Officer; Jim Bamber, the Deputy Chief Executive Officer; and Mr Ken Tinkham, Chief Financial Officer. I may also call on the following staff from the Department of Housing: Mr Andrew Clapham, General Manager, Strategic Governance and Supply; Ms Karen Elligett, Executive Director, Corporate Services; Mr Phil Luck, Executive Director, Contract Implementation; and Mr Lawson Broad, Executive Director, Housing Supply.

This has been a year of achievement in Housing. We have delivered new houses, new ideas and new and better systems. I am proud to present the outcome of everyone's hard work to the committee. First, the government has released HousingActionNT, its new housing strategy. HousingActionNT is the only plan for urban, regional and remote housing over the next five years. The government recognises safe, secure and affordable housing is fundamental to the wellbeing of Territorians. It helps people to raise healthy

families, undertake work and social activities and engage with their community. HousingActionNT is a forward-thinking, innovative strategy that is guiding the government's response to housing over the next five years.

The strategy review was announced in June last year and there have been extensive consultations to get us to this point. In remote areas, we will be spending \$350m to build 380 new houses and over 1000 upgrades over the next two years to help reduce overcrowding and help to solve the housing shortage that has been left by previous governments. This is in addition to the 475 new houses, 501 rebuilds and 847 upgrades that have already been completed in remote communities as at 31 March by this Country Liberals government. In fact, we have been particularly busy in remote communities: 72 new dwellings are under construction or have been constructed; another 165 existing dwellings have been upgraded this year; 157 are due to be completed by 30 June; and another 180 are on the way.

In urban and regional areas, the government has allocated an unprecedented \$140m in new spending over the next five years for social housing, which will result in more than 300 new houses and over 2500 housing upgrades or replacements.

The government is also developing a new client-centric approach to tenants. It is about supporting tenants to stay in their home and helping them progress through the housing continuum. We are also investing in renewing the public housing stock to ensure it is matched to need. There has been chronic underinvestment in housing by previous governments and that is being corrected by the HousingActionNT strategy.

I am also pleased to report that all the work so far has involved high levels of local Aboriginal employment. In fact, the Adam Giles Country Liberals government has achieved 39% Aboriginal employment on capital works projects. For housing maintenance contracts and tenancy management contracts this government is currently achieving 63% and 61% Aboriginal employment respectively - so we are creating real jobs in the community.

I also draw to the committee's attention the government's recent initiative in cracking down on unruly public housing tenants. We have acted decisively in introducing several tough new responses to antisocial behaviour which is being committed by a minority of public housing tenants in urban areas. These initiatives include a six-month minimum probation period for all new housing tenancy management and a red card rule which halves the demerit points - now it is six points - needed to trigger an eviction process against a tenant. These measures are designed to ensure that those in public housing respect their taxpayer-funded home. While we will always continue to support our tenants as much as we can, it cannot be at the expense of safety and security of the community.

In our support for tenants and vulnerable Territorians, \$18.9m in grant funding has been provided this financial year to 60 non-government organisations for homelessness services, supported accommodation and homelessness prevention services. This reflects the government's commitment to reducing homelessness. This will increase to over \$21m next year.

This government is reducing the number of people waiting for public housing. This has been achieved because of greater efficiency in many areas of the Department of Housing, as well as introduction of innovative initiatives such as head leasing. My government is focused on getting houses back into stock and has reduced turnaround times from 98 days to 74 days, which is a decrease of 24 days. This of course has a flow-on effect of boosting the occupancy rate by 2 percentage points to 94%.

Today I am pleased to announce a request for proposals process for property owners across the Territory to lease their properties for use as social housing. This is also part of our housing strategy HousingActionNT that provides for an additional 250 social housing head lease properties over five years. These properties are in addition to the 73 already negotiated, including 45 dwellings that have been delivered across the Territory in the past financial year. The Department of Housing will head lease these properties and then sublease them to eligible tenants providing new social housing opportunities when demand is high. The request for proposals process opens tomorrow and closes 22 July.

The government is continuing its program of renewing and rebuilding urban public housing across the Territory. Infill development will see existing public housing sites, which are the higher land-use potential, released for commercial development. In return, the Department of Housing receives a property or properties within the new development. Infill development allows for renewal of public housing, more efficient use of public housing sites, better suits tenant's needs, reduces repairs and maintenance costs associated with ageing stock and benefits the economy through increase construction activity.

The Department of Housing is releasing a request for proposals to develop six public housing sites across Palmerston, Katherine, Tennant Creek and Alice Springs. This request for proposals process opens tomorrow and closes Friday 5 August. As I said, this is the way to renew and increase public housing stock that is better suited to needs, with no additional capital cost.

Through infill development we are reducing public housing density and complementing our diverse communities.

Finally, this government has also been active in assisting people into private rental market with a number of bond assistant loans increasing by 45%. So far this year, 261 Territorians have taken up these loans to enter the private rental market. This has helped reduce the wait list which stands at 3280 applicants, 441 fewer than at the same time last year.

As you can see, this has been a year of achievements in Housing. I thank and congratulate the Department of Housing and its entire staff for their dedication and hard work. I thank the committee for the opportunity to address it today and welcome questions.

Madam CHAIR: Thank you, Minister. Are there any questions relating to the Minister's statement?

Ms MOSS: I would like to start by getting some more detail around the HousingActionNT Strategy. Overall, I am keen to understand how much additional money is being put in to back this strategy. Minister, can you please break down the strategy into homelessness, supported accommodation, social housing, affordable rental and private rental?

Mrs PRICE: HousingActionNT provides \$140m in new additional funding to support our social housing future over the next five years. Over the next financial year of 2016-17 a total of \$54.3m will be expended, with \$34.5m in funding for existing capital works and repairs and maintenance programs and \$19.8m to fund the following new initiatives: \$1.2m to fund 50 social housing head leases; \$3m in additional repairs and maintenance; \$1m for the homelessness innovation fund; \$0.25m to fund a scoping study for visitor parks in greater Darwin and Katherine; \$0.8m in additional minor new works; \$3.85m to build at least seven new dwellings in targeted locations; \$5.2m to demolish and rebuild 13 dwellings that have reached the end of their usefulness; \$2m to build new houses in Elliott and Kalkarindji; \$1.5m to fund the rejuvenation of complexes in Moulden, Karama and Larapinta; and an additional \$1m towards an accelerated upgrade program that will see approximately 600 dwellings upgraded over 2016-17.

That is a total of \$19.8m in new initiatives that will fund an increase in new and replacement houses, support the homelessness sector, and speed up the maintenance and upgrades of our existing housing stock to ensure the portfolio is fit for purpose in the right location and with the right number of bedrooms to meet demand.

Ms MOSS: Can I clarify that it was \$19.8m that you just outline. Is that additional funds above the planned budget?

Mrs PRICE: Yes, member for Casuarina, it is additional funding.

Ms MOSS: So the total of additional funding is the \$19.8m?

Mrs PRICE: Yes, it is \$19.8m to fund the new initiatives.

Ms MOSS: You touched on the money set aside for scoping out more visitor accommodation in Darwin and Katherine. Has this work begun and how far along is it?

Mrs PRICE: It is due to start on 1 July. This has come about because of the consultations.

Ms MOSS: Is there a time frame for that scoping project?

Ms CLIFFORD: Leah Clifford, Chief Executive Officer of the Department of Housing. The \$250 000 the Minister mentioned for the visitor parks came out of the consultation process on the housing strategy. The funding will commence on 1 July, which is the new financial year. Part of our process will be to scope out a project development plan and proceed to do those studies in consultation with the NGO sector and the community.

Ms MOSS: What is the time frame for completing the scoping project?

Ms CLIFFORD: The funding is allocated over 12 months, but we are committed to working as quickly as we can in putting the time frames together and hitting the ground running on that. Some internal work was already done on this following the consultations to get an understanding of what is required with project development, so we will be in a position to move very quickly. But the funding is for the 12 months.

Ms MOSS: In regard to the \$1m you have talked about for the homelessness and housing innovation fund, can you explain how you intend to operate this fund?

Mrs PRICE: Yes, member for Casuarina, we will call for expressions of interest.

Ms MOSS: Are there any other terms of reference, criteria or overarching strategies on how that innovation fund will work?

Ms CLIFFORD: The innovation fund also came about as a direct result of the consultations. One of the things we heard very loud and clear during the consultation process was that the NGO sector wanted broader parameters to explore more innovative ideas in dealing with homelessness and supported accommodation outside of the existing grant funding, which the Minister mentioned in her opening statement had increased to \$21m.

We already have staff in our grants team who have been looking at it and starting to commence discussions with the sector. We also have as part of the housing strategy a working group that will come together with the NGO sector to seek their input into those terms of reference, and calling the expressions of interest process.

Ms MOSS: A similar question to the previous topic, Minister. What is the time frame for the EOI process for working out the terms of reference? When will this be an operational fund?

Ms CLIFFORD: Part of the development of the terms of reference needs to involve the NGO sector which we are very keen to do and want to move quickly on. We want to put a good terms of reference together in consultation with them. The funding is for this year, so we already have a team in place which will provide that secretariat service, get those meetings happening and get the terms of reference prepared. We are hoping towards the end of August that would all be finalised.

Equally, we are looking at the NGO sector, or representatives thereof, to assist in providing recommendations through to the Minister on the outcome of that innovation grant process.

Ms MOSS: Minister, is there an overarching homelessness strategy that is driving this work?

Mrs PRICE: Yes, member for Casuarina. It is this - HousingActionNT 2016. It has urban and regional in it. That gives you an idea of what it will look like. I can give you a copy if you would like.

Ms MOSS: I have one on me. I am looking for more detail about the actual homelessness aspect within the housing action strategy. It is a useful document about the direction of the government, absolutely. But in detail, I imagine there must be a homelessness strategy that sits alongside the urban, remote and regional housing strategy. I am interested to see if there was an additional strategy that is based on the issue of homelessness, given how large the issue is in the Northern Territory.

Mrs PRICE: Member for Casuarina, this is the strategy. This gives us an indication of where we are going with homelessness. It is all in here.

Ms MOSS: Okay. Your commitment in the housing strategy document is to establish a joined-up and integrated one-stop-shop with the non-government sector. Minister, can you please explain your statements regarding integrated service delivery. What are you planning? Is this approach new? Is this not how you have been operating all along?

Mrs PRICE: Member for Casuarina, it is a new way of doing things within Housing. We are engaging with the NGOs and it will be focused on clients. We have had discussions with NGOs. Yes, it is a better way of looking at homelessness and other difficulties that people face with homelessness.

Ms MOSS: Minister, in 2015-16 to date, what grants have been provided to support services associated with homelessness and supported accommodation?

Mrs PRICE: Member for Casuarina, the grant funding allocations for 1 July 2015 to 30 June 2016 was – I can go through organisation by organisation and give you their service names, the service descriptions, the funding source, the funding allocation and expenditure. With Anglicare – this is all Darwin – there is the Youth Housing Options Pathways and ...

Ms MOSS: Minister, would you be willing to table the document, in the interests of time?

Mrs PRICE: I would prefer reading it all because it is important that you get to hear what we are funding ...

Ms FYLES: It is quite a detailed document, Minister.

Mrs PRICE: ... and who the NGOs are that we are ...

Ms FYLES: Minister, we also get it if it is tabled. Are you sure you cannot table it just ...

Mrs PRICE: I want to read some of it. You asked for the NGOs.

Madam CHAIR: It is your call, Minister.

Ms FYLES: How many pages is it, Minister, that you are proposing to read?

Mrs PRICE: There are 16 NGOs and there are six pages.

Ms FYLES: It would be much easier if you could just table it.

Mrs PRICE: In Darwin there is the Youth Housing Options and Pathways Program (YHOPP); the Youth Accommodation and Support Services, Palmerston & Rural; the Youth Accommodation and Support Services, Darwin Crerar Road managed and supported accommodation which all comes under Anglicare NT; CatholicCare NT has the Tenancy Support Program; Council for Aboriginal Alcohol Program Services is funded for homeless and outreach service; Darwin Aboriginal and Islander Women's Shelter, transitional housing units; Darwin Christian Ministries has Crerar Road managed accommodation; for Larrakia Nation Aboriginal Corporation we fund a tenancy support program; with Mission Australia we fund the Spin 180 youth homelessness program; the other one is supported accommodation in Darwin - Tenancy support program in Darwin and Katherine ...

Ms FYLES: Minister, as you are insisting on reading the organisations, are you able to provide the amount that they are funded as you read it.

Mrs PRICE: Do you want me to start at the beginning?

Ms FYLES: If you are willing to provide the amount.

Mrs PRICE: All right, I will start at the beginning and go through it all again.

Ms FYLES: We can obviously get the organisations from the annual report.

Mrs PRICE: Yes, I will do it:

- The funding allocation for Youth Housing Options Pathways, it is Commonwealth funded and it is \$368 165 expenditure as at 31 March 2016.
- The Youth Accommodation and Support Service, Palmerston and Rural, the funding allocation was \$132 849; the expenditure as at 31 March was \$119 564.
- The Youth Accommodation and Support Service in Darwin was \$239 995; the expenditure as of 31 March was \$215 995.
- Tenancy Support Program Darwin, the funding was \$489 529; expenditure as at 31 March 2016 was \$293 718.
- The Crerar Road Management and Supported Accommodation funding allocation was \$828 687; expenditure as of 31 March 2016 was \$497 212.

- CatholicCare NT Tenancy Support Program, funding allocation was \$444 348; the expenditure as of 31 March 2016 was \$399 913.
- Council for Aboriginal Alcohol Programs Services, the homelessness and outreach service, funding allocation was \$91 232; expenditure as at 31 March 2016 was \$82 109.
- The Darwin Aboriginal and Islander Women's Shelter transitional housing units, the funding allocation for them was \$236 678; expenditure as at 31 March 2016 was \$213 010.
- Darwin Christian Ministries, Crerar Road Managed Accommodation funding allocation was \$588 328; expenditure as of 31 March was \$529 495.
- Larrakia National Aboriginal Corporation Tenancy Support Program funding allocation was \$379 992; the expenditure as of 31 March 2016 was \$227 995.
- Mission Australia Spin 180 Youth Homelessness Program funding allocation was \$288 226; expenditure as of 31 March 2016 was \$172 936.
- Supported Accommodation, Darwin funding allocation was \$184 083; the expenditure as of 31 March 2016 was \$110 450.
- Tenancy Support Program Darwin and Katherine, funding allocation was \$623 049; expenditure as of 31 March 2016 was \$373 829.
- Northern Territory Shelter homelessness project officer and regional forums - their funding allocation was \$161 922; expenditure as of 31 March 2016 was \$97 195.
- NT Shelter peak housing body funding was \$350 570; expenditure as of 31 March 2016 was \$210 351.
- Shelter Me community service accommodation directory, funding for hosting maintenance was \$20 000 and expenditure as of 31 March 2016 was \$12 000.
- The no interest loans scheme funding allocation was \$128 992; expenditure as of 31 March was \$116 093. That was under Somerville Community Services.
- Palmerston community accommodation service funding allocation was \$256 669 and expenditure as of 31 March 2016 was \$231 002.
- Somerville's family counselling program funding allocation was \$121 053 and expenditure as of 31 March was \$108 947 ...

Mr WOOD: Excuse me, Madam Chair; is that about it?

Mrs PRICE: No, I am going to keep going; let me finish this page.

Mr WOOD: A point of order! This is a Public Accounts Committee and we are limited in time. Also, relevance. If you could possibly either table it or give us a summary – it will bore me to tears listening to those figures because they do not mean anything to me when read out. If it was in a list I could perhaps ask you questions about it, but I cannot retain that information.

Mrs PRICE: I will give you a summary.

Ms MOSS: Could you just table the document?

Mrs PRICE: I will give you a summary, Madam Chair. I have the summary here.

Of the \$18.9m allocated in 2015-16 for grant funding to Territorians who are homeless or at risk of homelessness, \$8.480m has been allocated to crisis and short-term managed and transitional accommodation services; \$5.444m has been allocated to tenancy support programs and other case management services; \$0.53m has been allocated as peak funding to support the housing and homelessness services sector; and \$4.45m has been allocated to services that directly respond to youth.

Madam CHAIR: So that is it, Minister?

Mrs PRICE: Yes.

Madam CHAIR: Thank you. Are there any other questions? Maybe make them more specific if you do not want those long responses.

Ms MOSS: Yes. Minister, you referred to the wait list. I understand in estimates last year it was 3303, and you said this time around it was 3280. How do you think that was achieved? Has there been an audit of the waiting list that has seen that decrease?

Mrs PRICE: Madam Chair, are we still asking questions on the opening statement?

Madam CHAIR: Yes, we are.

Mrs PRICE: I will refer that question to my CEO, Leah Clifford.

Ms CLIFFORD: In regard to the wait list, over the last 12 months we have made a very considered effort to look at our benchmarks, reporting and key deliverables. As part of our operational requirements I have instigated desktop reporting and monthly program meetings, which includes detailed analysis of wait lists and wait times, and all of those key aspects of providing public housing. There has been a considerable reduction in our wait list. We do not do spot audits; we do constant checks of our wait list as part of our normal course of delivering our business. We do it across all regions as part of our everyday program. We have made a concerted effort to look at providing services across the housing continuum, from homelessness to supported accommodation, social housing, into affordable rental, private rental and home ownership.

As the Minister mentioned in her opening statement, part of our success has been the ability to work with people who are presenting as applicants and to transfer them to alternative types of accommodation where they meet eligibility requirements - for example, into affordable rental.

This year, as the Minister mentioned, we have also increased by 45% the allocation of our bond assistance loans, which has helped 261 applicants or thereabouts access our bond scheme to access private rental. Also we have seen an increase in our loans in our home build initiatives.

Ms MOSS: Okay, thank you. I want to make sure I have those figures right. It was 3303 at this time last year and 3280 this year, a reduction of 23 people off that wait list. Minister, I am taking on board that you are talking about considerable differences in the wait list. I do not know that 23 is considerable. Any decrease is good, but I want to make sure I have those numbers correct.

Mrs PRICE: Member for Casuarina, I can read this out for you. The total number of applicants on the urban public housing wait list at 31 March 2016 was: in Alice Springs, the number of applicants on the wait list was 670 which is less than March 2015 when there were 672 applicants ...

Ms FYLES: So in March 2016 we had 670 for Alice Springs?

Mrs PRICE: Yes.

Ms FYLES: In March 2015 we had 672?

Mrs PRICE: For Alice Springs.

Ms FYLES: You are saying that is less? To me, that is two more people on the wait list.

Mrs PRICE: Let me go through the list and it will tell you exactly how it looks by the end of 2016 in all the centres.

In 2015 as at 31 March: for Casuarina, Darwin there were 1825; in 2016 as at 31 March there are now 1478 ...

Ms FYLES: Sorry, Minister, what was the figure for 2015 on that?

Mrs PRICE: In 2015 there were 1825.

Ms MOSS: To confirm, Minister, overall it was a total of 3303 last year and this year it is 3280.

Mrs PRICE: Overall on 31 March 2015 there were 3721 applicants. As of 31 March 2016, we now have 3280.

Ms FYLES: Minister, in your opening statement you said 3280, and last year we know we had 3303. We are going off the figure from estimates last year, we are not ...

Ms CLIFFORD: The figure the Minister is providing you is correct. It is the March figure. There was a comment made at estimates last year that we had seen a slight reduction for the May figures. That is both for active and the deferred wait lists. Of course, if we move to the active wait list, the numbers drop even further.

Ms FYLES: We are trying to clarify because people come to our electorate offices quite regularly who are on the wait list for housing. They have been on the wait list for two, three or four years. The figure last year from estimates was 3303. In the Minister's opening statement she made reference to a figure of 3280 people on the wait list, which is 23 people fewer than last year, which is not a significant reduction.

Mrs PRICE: These are the correct numbers - as I can see in front of me - from last year: from 31 March 2015 to 31 March 2016 there were 3721 applicants and now this year we have 3280 applicants.

Ms FYLES: But, Minister, in your opening statement a few moments ago you made reference to 3280 being on the wait list for Territory Housing. We are just going off your statement that you gave us only a few minutes ago.

Mrs PRICE: Yes, this is this year, 2016.

Ms FYLES: The statement, Minister, that you just read to us - maybe you want to refer back to your notes from a few moments ago. But you read out to us in your opening statement a figure of 3280 people.

Mrs PRICE: Yes, that is for this year, 2016.

Ms FYLES: That is not significantly lower because last year we had 3303 people on the wait list.

Mrs PRICE: No, according to our list, last year's list of applicants was 3721.

Ms MOSS: But, with respect, Minister, in estimates last year it said, 'We have seen from March to May a drop from 3721 to 3303'. That is from estimates in May last year. But we can move on because I have another question in relation to ...

Mrs PRICE: Member for Casuarina, we are comparing May figures to March figures with this calculation.

Ms FYLES: If you could table the documents maybe we could try to work our way through it, but we probably need to move on.

Mrs PRICE: This is from March to March, Madam Chair.

Ms MOSS: Do you have a more updated number?

Ms FYLES: What was the figure you read in estimates last year, Minister, because that is the figure we are going off - from estimates last year where you said...?

Mrs PRICE: The number is clearly 3721.

Ms MOSS: At March last year, which dropped to 3303 in May. Is there a more up-to-date figure on the list?

Mr BAMBER: Jim Bamber, Deputy Chief Executive, Housing. The 3303 referred to the May figures and we mentioned that at the estimates ...

Ms FYLES: We are asking what the May figure is now.

Mr BAMBER: Sorry, yes. Our May figures are now 3223, which includes active and deferred applicants.

Ms MOSS: So, just to confirm - 3223 at May.

Mr BAMBER: Correct, at 30 May 2016.

Ms MOSS: That makes a lot more sense in hearing there has been a significant decrease, because there was not a significant decrease with the other two figures, as you can ...

Ms FYLES: If you compared March last year to May this year you could claim that, but to compare figure on figure it is a bit unrealistic. Anyway we will move on to ...

Ms CLIFFORD: Excuse me, I can add to that. The wait list and wait times for public housing is constantly changing almost daily. We see a high level of turnover of stock of about 50 to 70 per month. Every day we do the calculations and monitor our data. There are fluctuations depending. The confusion has come in because of comparing the May with the March. That May figure is the latest that we have produced as of a couple of days ago.

Ms MOSS: Thank you, I appreciate the clarification. In relation to the wait list there have been written questions submitted and a letter written to seek advice in relation to the wait times by months. As at 31 March 2016 what were the wait times by months, region and dwelling type?

Mrs PRICE: The wait times are currently calculated on the basis of one plus one, minus one - that has been in place for many years. I do not have any confidence in the validity of the current model to accurately reflect the wait time for public housing.

Ms FYLES: Minister, just to pick you up on that point, you do not have any confidence in the figures you are about to read us?

Mrs PRICE: Just let me finish this and then you can ask that question after this.

Madam CHAIR: It is your call.

Mrs PRICE: The plus one, minus one model means the applications are accepted by date. Housing allocations may not be based on the time frame. This is for various reasons. In Alice Springs, I believe nobody has waited for the period of the wait time from the plus one to minus one model lists. The current model says that the wait time in Alice Springs is 8.1 years, but that is not the real reflection of how long people have waited. I believe nobody has waited that required period of time.

The CEO of Housing might be able to explain a bit more on how that works.

Ms FYLES: Could we just provide the figures? You can break it down into priority housing.

Ms CLIFFORD: Thank you, through the Chair. The public housing wait list times across the Territory are as follows:

- For Alice Springs a one bedroom non-pensioner is 97 months; a pensioner for one bedroom is 73 months; for a two bedroom it is 67 months; and for a three bedroom 74 months.
- For Darwin and Casuarina a one bedroom non-pensioner is 97 months; a pensioner 101 months for the one bedroom; a two bedroom is 72 months; three bedrooms is 64 months.
- For Palmerston one bedroom non-pensioner 90 months; one bedroom pensioner 78 months; two bedroom 50 months; three bedroom 42 months.
- For Katherine one bedroom non-pensioner is 73 months; for a pensioner 68 months; for a two bedroom 58 months; for a three bedroom 59 months.
- For Nhulunbuy a one bedroom non-pensioner is 88 months; there is none for pensioner one bedroom; 104 months for a two bedroom; 66 months for a three bedroom.
- For Tennant Creek a one bedroom for a non-pensioner is 124 months; for a pensioner 87 months; for a two bedroom 80 months and for a three bedroom 110 months.

On average across the Territory we have seen a marginal increase of about four months.

As the Minister mentioned, one of our concerns with this method of calculation is it is based upon a plus one, minus one methodology where we accept applications by date. We do not necessarily allocate according to date, and there could be a range of reasons for that. For example, we could offer an applicant a house in a location they do not want and as a result of that it skews our data. Our data team has provided and has been looking at more accurate ways we can reflect our data. We have also looked at other jurisdictions to see how they report it for wait times. In other jurisdictions, there is no consistency in how it is reported. In the plus one, minus one, we tend to see that it is based on a ratchet-up effect and it does not give a true indication to our clients, tenants or potential tenants about what the actual wait time is.

Jim Bamber, the Deputy Chief Executive, will explain this.

Mr BAMBER: Thank you. As the CEO explained, we have been paying a lot of attention to the wait list and to wait times because this is an obvious area of focus. One of the anomalies that we identified - and I will use the Alice Springs one bedroom as an example. With Alice Springs one bedrooms, we allocated 17 applicants this year. When we looked at how long they had been waiting and how long the remainder of applicants have been waiting, it was nowhere near the calculated 8.1 years or 97 months. The calculation says it will be 97 months to wait, which is about eight years. We have broken it down on a time graph here, which you might have difficulty seeing.

The longest wait for a person was five-and-a-half years. So it just scales right down. Only 25 people have waited more than two years. Only four people have waited for more than four years. The prediction was 8.1 years before someone gets housed in that Alice Springs one-bedroom, which is nowhere near the case, not at the rate we are allocating. We had an issue with that calculation.

Mr WOOD: When the opposition was in government the previous opposition was going crook at something that was not accurate, the same issue. This issue has been going on for years ...

Mrs PRICE: No, member for Nelson. We are simply highlighting the discrepancy that is being asked about.

Mr WOOD: I know. Year in and year out this debate has been happening. When you were in opposition and they were in government, you were clobbering them about these waiting lists, and I understand that. Today we hear that maybe these waiting lists were never accurate in the first place. It would be good to hear that things are not as bad as they have been made out to be.

Mrs PRICE: I have confidence in my staff in Housing.

Mr BAMBER: As Ms Clifford has explained, there is a ratcheting effect. I can give you some examples – again, we went right into this.

Here is allocating – again, you will not be able to see it – three allocation events in a period. If in one month no one is allocated, it ratchets by a month, year in year out. It just ratchets by a month. If in a year, the way this calculation has been set up – it has been set up since the mid-2000s, I think – one applicant was housed who had waited 40 months, but the calculation of the time was 25 months. So guess what? It ratchets by a month anyway, despite the fact an allocation was made.

Another couple of months go by before another allocation is made. By then the wait time has ratcheted up a month at a time to 28 months. The next person who is housed only waited 25 months, which is less than 28 months. It actually goes down, so it drops it by a month for the first time.

There was another event, when we looked at this case study, where three individuals are housed in one month who had waited less than 20 months. The calculation only dropped by one month, so you have this ratcheting effect, year on year. It might not have been so noticeable in the early years of the calculation, but as time goes on it gets worse and worse. It is particularly exacerbated for small turnover, small numbers like Nhulunbuy, Tennant Creek and, to a lesser extent, Alice Springs and Katherine.

We are looking at this and seeing that the time frames predicted are not matching what we are seeing and what the realistic wait times will be for these applicants, because the bulk of these applicants range from a month through to – there is two years - and that is the bulk of the 176. Only 25 of them have waited for more than two years and only four of them have waited for more than four years, yet the calculation says it is 8.1 years.

Mr WOOD: The question would be why one person has waited four years.

Mr BAMBER: Yes, and we drilled into that. We have referenced active and deferred applicants. We have applicants who are on the wait list but they are sitting in gaol for five to 10 years. They are not housed ...

Mr WOOD: They are housed. They are in public housing.

Mr BAMBER: They are, but they do not need a house at this stage. They are still on the wait list. They will come back on and then be back at the same point. We have really drilled into ...

Mr WOOD: If what you are saying is correct, you need to either do something drastic about publishing – I have your public waiting times on here from last year. I am the same as the two members over there who are asked about public waiting lists. I look them up and people are horrified. You are saying those figures are not a true indication of the waiting times?

Mr BAMBER: Especially for the smaller centres with lower turnover.

Mr WOOD: That is possibly right. When you read these out I was comparing them with 2015, and the only big changes I saw were in Nhulunbuy. They were so great that I saw no change in Darwin, Casuarina and Alice Springs – it went up. So when it went down in Nhulunbuy, it made it look like overall you had improved things. But on these figures it does not appear to. Now you have added another layer of complexity to it saying these are not ...

Mr BAMBER: We are trying to simplify it. When we looked at the wait times it did not make sense. What we were seeing did not gel with what the calculations were saying, which is why we have looked into it.

Ms MOSS: Minister, going off that line of questioning. We have been asking for these figures for a long time now. We are not the only ones who have been asking for the updated figures, others have been as well. It is interesting to get answers to written questions saying, 'We are currently reviewing the numbers but they will be published shortly', because they are always published annually. Then, we do not hear anything for months.

I am interested in the priority wait list. How many applicants are currently on the priority wait list? What is the average wait time in months for people who are on the priority wait list? I am sure we all have constituents who need to access housing through the priority wait list.

Mrs PRICE: Are we still on my statement or have we moved onto outputs?

Madam CHAIR: No, we are still on the statement.

Mrs PRICE: Member for Casuarina, I will ask my CEO to answer that question please.

Ms CLIFFORD: We only run a single integrated wait list of priority and general applicants and transfers. We made up to about 490 dwelling allocations for the period of time from 1 July 2015 to 31 March, which gives you an indication of the number of properties that are coming in and out of stock at any one time ...

Ms FYLES: Perhaps we could simplify the question. We know that as of 30 June 2015 there were 687 people on the priority wait list. What was the figure - I understand we have not reached 30 June, but to 31 March – of people who are on that priority wait list?

Ms CLIFFORD: We had 636 priority applicants with 189 or thereabouts housed.

Ms FYLES: What was the average wait time for somebody on the priority list to get into a property in Darwin?

Ms CLIFFORD: We do not record wait times for priority. We tend to record them, as we have read out through the list, for regions and by bedroom.

Ms MOSS: Minister, does that there is no recording of data of how long it takes people who are considered a priority within the housing system? Are there targets for time frames? Are you looking to reach a target to house somebody on the priority list in a certain length of time? How are you capturing that data? There must be some information somewhere about how long this is taking, given that these are Territorians on priority wait lists?

Ms CLIFFORD: Because it is an integrated wait list and we do not separate out the categories, the process we adopt from a tenancy perspective is to review the applications that are coming in. For priority applicants the process and the policy requires them to submit supporting documentation. Our tenancy managers and officers deal with those on a case-by-case basis so we can house people as quickly as we can, for those who need it most.

Ms MOSS: I am still interested in whether there is any data that can tell us how long, on average, it is taking the Department of Housing to house applicants on the priority wait list. It is really important.

Mrs PRICE: We have answered that question.

Ms MOSS: You have given us not times whatever.

Ms FYLES: For example, there is a gentleman in my electorate who has been on the priority waiting list for four-and-a-half years. You cannot give us any data on how long he should expect to wait. All we get is a response that people have letters of support.

Mrs PRICE: If that is the problem, I will take that on notice.

Ms FYLES: Well, no, we are trying to look at general themes across the Territory.

Mrs PRICE: No, I will take that one on notice.

Ms FYLES: Minister, we have 636 people across the Territory ...

Mrs PRICE: I will take it on notice, Madam Chair.

Question on Notice No 6.11

Madam CHAIR: Could you please restate the question for the record, member for Nightcliff?

Ms FYLES: There was not a question, Madam Chair. We are talking about 636 Territorians who are on the priority wait list across the Territory. We are local members who deal with these people. We need to indicate to them what time frames they might expect to be on that wait list and we cannot get any answers here today.

Madam CHAIR: The Minister just went through the time, the waiting list. Is that correct? I heard you do that?

Ms CLIFFORD: That is correct.

Madam CHAIR: Okay, what is the question?

Ms FYLES: For the general list, Madam Chair. We are what the time frame is for somebody on a priority wait list?

Madam CHAIR: Have you provided the priority wait list?

Mrs PRICE: My CEO has provided the answer and I have said we will take the rest of the question on notice.

Ms MOSS: I seek a point of clarification. If the numbers that have been provided today - taking 97 months in Alice Springs, as an example, for a one-bedroom, non-pensioner - that also includes people who are on the priority wait list. I am interested in whether or not you can separate that - the people who are on the general waiting list for public housing from the people who are in a range of different circumstances that would make them eligible to be a priority. I find it very surprising that the Department of Housing would not be able to tell us just an average length of time for somebody to be put into a house when they are considered eligible for priority housing.

Mrs PRICE: Madam Chair, I will take that on notice.

Madam CHAIR: Could you please restate that question again for the record, member for Casuarina?

Ms MOSS: Please can you provide the average length of time people are waiting for dwellings on the priority wait list.

Madam CHAIR: Minister, do you accept the question?

Mrs PRICE: Yes.

Madam CHAIR: Thanks, Minister. The question asked by the member for Casuarina of the Minister has been allocated number 6.11.

Madam CHAIR: More questions? Plenty?

Ms MOSS: Yes, thank you. Minister, in your opening statement you also referred to replenishing and refreshing public housing stock. In reference to John Stokes Square, which you obviously made an announcement about recently, everyone agrees that it is something that needs to be done in upgrading that site. But the announcement came in the same week as the decision by Sunbuild not to pursue its residential development in the same area, based on a lack of interest in residential sales.

I understand there is always a demand for public housing - as we have just been talking about, it is quite evident – but how many units will be private in the complex? What other components are involved in the redevelopment, and how do you expect to sell them?

Mrs PRICE: Member for Casuarina, 47 Progress Drive, Nightcliff, known as John Stokes Square, is an 18 000 km²...

Mr WOOD: Is it metres squared or kilometres squared?

Mrs PRICE: Metres squared, sorry, 18 000 m². I am thinking of my electorate now.

... which currently contains 75 aged public housing dwellings. On 11 March 2016, I approved the release of John Stokes Square site for redevelopment through a public competitive process. Redevelopment of this site aligns with the outcomes identified under the HousingActionNT and the draft mid-suburbs area plan.

On 16 June 2016 I publicly announced the call for expressions of interest for redevelopment of John Stokes Square.

The proposed redevelopment has potential to include residential properties, commercial and retail spaces and community and open spaces. The same number of public housing properties will be rebuilt in the redevelopment. The department's preference replacement of social housing dwellings is for one-bedroom dwellings that meet AS4299 Class C, which provides minimum residential dwelling design guidelines to enable access and mobility for people with a disability or restricted mobility.

The expressions of interest close on 15 July 2016 following assessment of any proposals received. Shortlisted proponents will be invited to prepare detailed proposals for government's consideration. Tenants will be relocated at an appropriate time to coincide with the redevelopment. Tenants will have the opportunity to nominate their preferred location and this will be taken into account when allocating alternative accommodation. The Department of Housing will pay for all moving and service reconnection costs.

Ms MOSS: Minister, how many of the units will be private within the complex?

Mrs PRICE: Member for Casuarina, it is an EOI process.

Mr WOOD: Which means?

Mrs PRICE: I cannot really give you the details yet.

Mr WOOD: There are no guidelines from the government as to what they are expecting, or is it purely up to the developer to run the show?

Ms CLIFFORD: Through the Chair, the John Stokes Square redevelopment the Minister announced is calling for expressions of interest for the development of the site. There are 75 units, as the Minister mentioned, and the EOI process requires the 75 in return for public housing. We obviously cannot pre-empt the outcome of that expressions of interest process, the configuration or the makeup of the development of the site. It follows off the back of the Darwin mid-suburbs Planning Commission exercise which had identified this site and potential uses. The expressions of interest, as the Minister mentioned, close on 15 July.

Ms MOSS: What other complexes do you intend to upgrade? You talked about a range of different regions that will be having upgrades. What other complexes do you intend to upgrade and when?

Mrs PRICE: There is \$1.5m that I have allocated for rejuvenating Karama, Larapinta and Moulden. They are the other three.

Ms FYLES: Minister, what is the status of the land at the John Stokes site?

Ms CLIFFORD: Through the Chair, it is freehold title to the Department of Housing.

Ms FYLES: There are no caveats or anything that it has to have public housing on that site?

Ms CLIFFORD: No, not that I am aware of.

Mr WOOD: Do you know what the zoning is? It is important, especially if you are using it for ordinary residential housing.

Ms CLIFFORD: It has an MR zoning.

Mr WOOD: So it is open for any sort of residential development within that zone.

I have a question in relation to John Stokes. People have told me that people have been moved out to Coolalinga. Some housing has subsidised rent out there. Are people being moved to Coolalinga from public housing in Darwin?

Ms CLIFFORD: The units you are referring to at Coolalinga are part of the Real Housing for Growth program. We provide potential applicants with the different housing options that are available across the housing continuum, including Real Housing for Growth properties. If they are eligible they can take those up. I could not comment on public housing people who have directly taken that up. We give people that advice and provide them with those options.

Mr WOOD: People are saying that people have been moved from public housing in Darwin out to Coolalinga because there were some empty units there. I was just finding out whether that was the case.

Ms CLIFFORD: Member for Nelson, we have not made it mandatory for people to move from public housing into Real Housing for Growth. Real Housing for Growth has eligibility criteria in relation to taking those tenancies up. It is another way for people to move towards more housing independence, which is something we strive for as part of our housing continuum and housing strategy.

Mrs PRICE: We have spent enough time on my statement. Can we move on to the outputs?

Ms FYLES: Minister, we ask the questions.

Madam CHAIR: Excuse me. It is at the discretion of the panel what questions are asked and where they go with the output groups. If you could just bear with ...

Mrs PRICE: Do you know how long, how much longer we are going to be?

Madam CHAIR: No, in fact we could end up staying here all afternoon if it is the decision of the members of the panel, which is not a good decision, but that is the way this process is. We will just see what transpires.

Mr WOOD: The opposition has asked questions of the government since the first thing this morning.

Mrs PRICE: That is okay.

Ms MOSS: In addition to the other questions on John Stokes Square, last year I asked a question on the impact on wait times of relocating the tenants from public housing at Kurringal for the redevelopment there. What do you anticipate will be the impact on the wait list? How many tenants need to be relocated? What work is being done to minimise the impacts on the wait list for others who are currently waiting?

Ms CLIFFORD: The relocation of tenants as part of any development is obviously very important. We will work very closely at the time the tenants need to transfer. Similar to what was undertaken for Kurringal, we work with the tenants to transfer them to an area of their choice. As part of the housing strategy and HousingActionNT, we have announced the 250 head leases over the five-year period, which the Minister spoke about.

These head leases, of which we are targeting 50 this year, will obviously provide a level of flexibility in re-tenanting and tenanting where we need to. In regard to the development, we cannot pre-empt at this point, given that it is an expression of interest, what the development time frames or any of that will be at this time. The developers will have to go through approval processes, getting their building permits and any planning requirements they need in place. We cannot pre-empt it at this stage in what those development time frames would be. But as we have done for Kurringal, we will work very closely with our tenants to transfer them.

Ms MOSS: Are those 250 head leases additional to current stock?

Ms CLIFFORD: The 250 head leases are additional over the five-year period as part of HousingActionNT. In addition to the head leases, HousingActionNT also has a number of other initiatives associated with commercial infill development, building new houses, replacing houses and doing a considerable number of upgrades.

Ms MOSS: In relation to the urban low-density infill, there were 60 sites identified through the strategy. Where are those sites and what funds have been dedicated over what time frame to implementing that part of the strategy?

Mrs PRICE: Member for Casuarina, the delivery of new public housing through commercial infill development is a key component of the housing strategy and will deliver 16 new public housing dwellings over the next five years.

Commercial infill development involves identification of dwellings that are of an appropriate size, location and zoning for redevelopment to achieve a higher level of density. These sites will be released to market for development by the private sector with a requirement that the Department of Housing will receive a new dwelling or dwellings to the value of the land and the developer will retain the remainder of the new dwellings. I am putting out an EOI tomorrow which will be announced tomorrow.

Ms MOSS: Minister, are you be able tell me where those sites are? Are they in Darwin, Palmerston or Katherine?

Mrs PRICE: There are 14 in Alice Springs, 28 in Casuarina Darwin, 25 in Palmerston, three in Katherine, nine in Nhulunbuy and 26 in Tennant Creek - overall, 60.

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Ms MOSS: Thank you. What funds has the government dedicated to implement the strategy?

Ms CLIFFORD: This is a new and innovative approach to providing public housing. It is a new commercial infill proposal which the Minister spoke of. The request for proposals will be announced tomorrow, as the Minister mentioned. The importance of this approach to providing public housing is that it is a purely commercial transaction. As part of that, we will release it to the market and get proposals back. The idea is that we would get a public house in return for the value of the land and the dwelling. The benefits of this is that there is no capital up-front funding that is required. It is purely a commercial initiative in amongst a range of other initiatives in HousingActionNT which we spoke of - the head-leasing, the new builds and the redevelopment of sites.

Ms MOSS: What was the time frame for that component of the strategy?

Ms CLIFFORD: The 60 dwellings that the Minister mentioned are over the five-year period for the commercial infill sites. The first round we will release for 2016-17 will, obviously, be announced tomorrow and then be rolled out through the 2016-17 period for the first 12 months.

Mr WOOD: Could I just ask the value of the land? The government owns the land that these private developers are going to build your units on. Is that correct?

Ms CLIFFORD: Thank you, member for Nelson. Yes, that is correct.

Mr WOOD: I imagine if it is land at Nightcliff it would be an extremely valuable piece of land. Will that be taken into account, because it is government land and it is quite a high value? Who will do the auditing of this process to make sure it is very clear and transparent?

Ms CLIFFORD: We would get the market valuations, similar to how we operate in other agencies. So, we would obtain those valuations. I cannot comment on whether we have the most recent up-to-date ones as we speak. But for all of our processes that involve commercial transactions or otherwise in the department, including John Stokes, we always engage probity auditors to oversee the process.

Mr WOOD: But, you are selling Crown land. There is a process for selling Crown land and it is now overlaid with expressions of interest for development of that land. Do the guidelines for the sale of Crown land still apply in this case?

Ms CLIFFORD: There is a distinguishing point here of the land tenure. The land tenure, in these instances relating to public housing, is freehold title to the department, as distinct from Crown land.

Mr WOOD: The department is the Crown, is it not? It is part of government.

Ms CLIFFORD: Correct, but it is freehold title to the Chief Executive Officer, Housing. I am thinking more in terms of my lands background and Crown land and land tenure in that regard. But to address your concerns, as we have continued today when we have done things like social housing, head leasing and all of that, we engage a probity auditor to oversee the process and report on it accordingly.

Mr WOOD: You are saying if the land belongs to the Department of Housing it does not come under the same rules as Crown land when it is sold? You are making a distinction about whether the rules that apply to the sale of Crown land apply to land the department has under its own name. Is that correct?

Mr CONLAN: That is the point though, Gerry ...

Mr WOOD: I have not heard that.

Mr CONLAN: ... housing needs land to develop housing, so it empowers the Chief Executive Officer.

Mr WOOD: When you are selling that land to a private developer, then these issues need to up front and clear.

Ms CLIFFORD: Yes, sure. I was making the distinction that, obviously, Crown land is subject to the legislative framework on the *Crown Lands Act*, whereas dealing in freehold public housing title comes under the *Housing Act*. Irrespective of that, as I mentioned in having good governance and rigour around the processes we do - and having worked in lands for a number of years - we engage probity auditors to oversee all of that process.

Mr WOOD: Thank you.

Ms FYLES: I know of a block in Nightcliff that has sat empty for over three years. So, blocks like that will be sold off?

Mr CONLAN: You might need to be a little more specific, member for Nightcliff. What block?

Ms FYLES: All Territory Housing properties that have sat empty for over three years will now be ...

Mrs PRICE: Do you know the address?

Ms FYLES: I do.

Mrs PRICE: Can you elaborate?

Ms FYLES: It is a general question. We have properties in our ...

Mr CONLAN: It might be just a little too general for the CEO and the Minister to make an assessment on that block. Are they all going to be ...

Ms FYLES: You are talking about selling off public housing assets, so properties that have potentially sat empty for a period of time will now be sold?

Mr CONLAN: No, that is a little too broad.

Madam CHAIR: Member for Grotorex, people do not need your comments.

Mr CONLAN: No, I am entitled to make comment as a member of the committee, for goodness sake. That is the first time.

Mrs PRICE: We just need to know which address, member for Nightcliff. If you tell us the address then we might be able to elaborate on ...

Ms FYLES: I guess we will get the full details tomorrow, but it is ironic ...

Mrs PRICE: ... what is happening with that vacant block.

Ms FYLES: It is ironic. We are here today asking questions, and then tomorrow there will be an announcement. We have been told there will be something tomorrow and we are all guessing at it. We are talking about selling off public land and public housing properties. I know some properties, particularly in my community, are quite aged because they were the first Territory Housing properties some 40 years ago. It is important to have that diversity in our communities. We are asking for details about these blocks that will be sold off.

Mr CONLAN: Can I ask a question on the back of that then, Minister? Would it be fair to say that you need a bit more detail from the member for Nightcliff to answer that question in any sort of specifics? It is quite broad.

Madam CHAIR: Could you answer the member for Nightcliff's question and then if the member for Grotorex has a question you can answer that separately.

Mrs PRICE: What I was going to say just then, Madam Chair, is that if we knew where these properties were – I would like the member for Nightcliff to enlighten us about where they are, then we would be able to check where it is and provide you with an answer.

Madam CHAIR: Can you restate the question, member for Nightcliff without ...

Ms FYLES: We are hearing that there is an announcement tomorrow and we are assuming properties will be sold off tomorrow.

Madam CHAIR: So the question is what are the properties ...

Ms FYLES: Can the Minister give us more details on selling off Territory Housing properties?

Mr CONLAN: The question is based on assumption and hearsay, Madam Chair ...

Ms FYLES: Well, the Minister just made reference to an announcement.

Mr CONLAN: There are no specifics or detail around the question whatsoever.

Mrs PRICE: We are not announcing the sale of land; we are just putting out an expression of interest.

Madam CHAIR: Would you like to ask another question, member for Nightcliff?

Ms FYLES: We will wait. I get that John Stokes is a separate issue. It is just that the Minister alluded to an announcement tomorrow, so we will wait until tomorrow. I know there are a number of questions and we are running out of time.

Madam CHAIR: Are there any other questions on the statement?

Ms MOSS: Yes, Madam Chair. Minister, where do you intend to build your additional 60 dwellings that are mentioned in the Housing Action Strategy in targeted urban areas, and over which time frame?

Mrs PRICE: Member for Casuarina, could you repeat that question, please?

Ms MOSS: Where do you intend to build the additional 60 dwellings in urban locations, and over what time frame?

Mrs PRICE: The delivery of additional public housing is an essential component of the housing strategy. We will provide 60 new dwellings over the next five years through a rolling capital works program. The ongoing capital works program supports a staged delivery of new dwellings in the Northern Territory urban regional centres. Locations are based upon need, available land and other regional dynamics.

The 2015-16 capital works program will see 22 dwellings completed by August 2016. The 2016-17 capital works program will deliver a further 10 additional dwellings in Palmerston, Katherine and Tennant Creek. Financially in 2015-16, \$7.8m is available for the delivery of the 22 dwellings. In 2016-17 the funding provided is part of the \$20.2m rolling capital works program.

Ms MOSS: Thank you, Minister. If we could move on to the national partnership agreement. You talked about the \$350m for remote housing. How much money is the Northern Territory government putting towards NPARIH-funded housing programs in 2016-17?

Mrs PRICE: It is \$350m funding of federal monies, member for Casuarina.

Ms MOSS: Sorry, to confirm, it is all Commonwealth money? There is no Northern Territory government money being allocated to also support those NPARIH-funded housing programs?

Mrs PRICE: You are aware that NPARIH is a national Commonwealth/state-funded program.

Ms MOSS: Yes, I completely understand that, Minister. I am interested in what money the Northern Territory government is contributing to these housing programs. Maybe to simplify, what housing does the Northern Territory government fund in remote areas?

Mrs PRICE: The \$350m is Commonwealth-funded money, which has been there for the last two years for NPARIH. Yes, it is all Commonwealth funded.

Ms MOSS: Minister, will there be any Northern Territory government money put towards funding housing in remote areas in 2016-17?

Mrs PRICE: All remote housing is a Commonwealth-funded program.

Ms MOSS: So, the answer is there is no money planned for 2016-17 from the Northern Territory government to deliver houses in remote areas. That is pretty surprising given the need that exists in remote areas. Can you please advise me of how much, in Australian government funds, is allocated to the Stronger Futures funding for housing in 2016-17?

Ms CLIFFORD: The funding in terms of – sorry, can I just get that question again.

Ms MOSS: How much Australian government funds is allocated to Stronger Futures funding for housing in 2016-17?

Ms CLIFFORD: The national partnership on Stronger Futures, as part of the new negotiations, is now the Remote Australia Strategy. That strategy documentation outlines the payments associated with the program for the last two years to 30 June 2018. From memory, it is about \$93m over the next two years, or thereabouts.

Ms MOSS: Thank you. Minister, in relation to remote housing and the repairs and maintenance, which has been a big topic of discussion over the last six months. How many communities or individuals are suing your agency for failure to deliver repairs and maintenance?

Mrs PRICE: Sorry, Lauren, could you repeat the question?

Ms MOSS: How many communities or individuals are suing your agency for failure to deliver repairs and maintenance?

Mrs PRICE: Member for Casuarina, that is not in the opening statement, but at the moment nobody is suing us.

Madam CHAIR: Could you confine your questions to the statement, member for Casuarina?

Ms MOSS: We were talking about achievements in remote housing. It is an important issue in remote housing. I want to ask some questions about that aspect of the opening statement. Can I ask another question in relation to that, given that achievements in remote housing were heralded at the beginning?

Mrs PRICE: Is it in the opening statement?

Ms MOSS: You talked about remote housing delivery in your opening statement, Minister. It is an important part of remote housing delivery. I am interested in how many law suits the agency is currently involved in.

Mr CONLAN: The Minister just answered that.

Madam CHAIR: None.

Mr CONLAN: It was not in the opening statement.

Ms MOSS: Housing delivery was. Minister, if I can ask ...

Madam CHAIR: Would you like to take the question on notice?

Mrs PRICE: Yes, I will take it on notice.

Question on Notice No 6.12

Madam CHAIR: Could you please restate the question for the record, member for Casuarina.

Ms MOSS: How many law suits is the agency currently involved in?

Madam CHAIR: Do you accept the question, Minister?

Mrs PRICE: Yes.

Madam CHAIR: The question asked by the member for Casuarina of the Minister has been allocated number 6.12.

Madam CHAIR: Are there any other questions on the statement?

Ms MOSS: I have a couple more, Madam Chair. In relation to the remote housing service delivery, how many requests for emergency and non-urgent maintenance tasks do you currently hold by community?

Mrs PRICE: I will have to take that on notice.

Question on Notice No 6.13

Madam CHAIR: Could you please restate the question, member for Casuarina.

Ms MOSS: How many requests for emergency and non-urgent maintenance tasks do you currently hold by community?

Madam CHAIR: Do you accept the question, Minister?

Mrs PRICE: Yes.

Madam CHAIR: The question asked by the member for Casuarina of the Minister has been allocated number 6.13.

Ms MOSS: Minister, there were a number of global questions that were provided in advance. Are you willing to table the answers to those?

Madam CHAIR: We only have an hour to conclude with Housing and to go on to Parks and Wildlife. We are being pushed for time now. It is your call, Minister.

Mrs PRICE: That is not part of the opening statement.

Ms MOSS: The member for Nelson has questions.

Madam CHAIR: Member for Nelson, questions on the opening statement?

Mr WOOD: No, I do not have any questions on the opening statement, but I have questions.

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

Madam CHAIR: We will move on to consider the estimates of proposed expenditure contained in the Appropriation (2016-2017) Bill as they relate to the Department of Housing. Are there any agency-related whole-of-government questions on budget and fiscal strategies?

Ms MOSS: Yes, Madam Chair, to repeat that question. There were some global questions that were put to the Minister in advance. I am wondering if the Minister would be willing to table those answers?

Mrs PRICE: No.

Madam CHAIR: Are there any other whole-of-government questions on budget and fiscal strategies? That concludes consideration of agency-related whole-of-government questions on budget and fiscal strategies.

OUTPUT GROUP 11.0 – HOUSING SERVICES **Output 11.1 – Housing Strategic Governance and Supply**

Madam CHAIR: We will now go to Output Group 11.0, Housing Services, Output 11.1, Housing Strategic Governance and Supply. Are there any questions?

Ms MOSS: I will ask one, knowing the member for Nelson also has questions. I have heaps I will put into writing to the Minister, but I have one more I want to ask. How many repairs and maintenance jobs are currently on the list? What is the average length of time to attend to a repairs and maintenance job in the last financial year in remote housing?

Mrs PRICE: Madam Chair, that is in our next output questions.

Mr WOOD: I have one question in this section and some questions later for procurement. Minister, it says in your budget that there is \$4.5m over three years to develop a remote Indigenous home purchase strategy. Why do you need three years to develop such a strategy? Did you not have a strategy before?

Ms CLIFFORD: The \$4.5m was funding allocated over a number of years. This year there is \$1.5m allocated in the budget to progress remote home ownership, as part of that \$4.5m.

Mr WOOD: I want to progress home ownership, but it says it is a strategy. Obviously, I need something to say that we have spent money and worked out a strategy. So, what is the strategy, or has it not been developed yet?

Ms CLIFFORD: The strategy predates my time as Chief Executive in Housing. The department ~~administer~~ ~~administers~~ a strategy, a remote home ownership program. The program operates in a number of communities at the moment; there are five: Wurrumiyanga, Milikapiti, Umbakumba, Angurugu and Milyakburra. The \$1.5m in the 2016-17 budget is to support the continuation of this remote home ownership program.

Mr WOOD: I suppose a little addition. Is it successful because this issue has been around a number of years, especially at Wurrumiyanga, where they started. There have not been many reports back to say whether private home ownership on Aboriginal land been successful. Is it something that is moving ahead?

Mrs PRICE: There are two more we are actively working with at the moment,

Mr WOOD: I might write and ask for a bit more information about that. Thanks, Madam Chair.

Madam CHAIR: That concludes consideration of Output 11.1.

Output 11.2 - Housing Services Delivery

Madam CHAIR: We will go on to Output 11.2, Housing Services Delivery. Are there any questions?

Ms MOSS: I will ask that one that I had asked in the incorrect output. Do you have repair and maintenance waiting lists? How many tasks are currently on the list? What was the average length of time to attend to a repairs and maintenance job in the last financial year?

Ms CLIFFORD: We record all of our maintenance requests that come into the department, whether it is remote areas, town camps or urban properties. We have a process internally of recording those, monitoring them, auditing them and following up on those.

During the course of the last 12 months we have been very active in keeping on top of all the repairs and maintenance requests. I do not have the information here on all of those maintenance requests, but it is something that we pay strict attention to. Under the *Residential Tenancies Act*, as you are probably aware, we have obligations as a public housing landlord to make sure our properties are safe, secure and habitable. For any urgent repairs we have four-hour turnaround times and it progresses from there. We monitor it, audit it and make sure we are meeting those time frames.

Ms MOSS: Okay. To confirm, Minister. We do not have the information about how many tasks are currently on the list, or the average length of time to attend to repairs and maintenance job in the last financial year?

Mrs PRICE: Could you repeat that question for me again.

Ms MOSS: Taking on board what Ms Clifford was saying about attending to the list. I want to know whether there is information about how many tasks are currently on the list and what the average length of time was to attend to repairs and maintenance job in the last financial year.

Mrs PRICE: Madam Chair, I will take that on notice.

Question on Notice No 6.14

Madam CHAIR: Could you please restate the question for the record, member for Casuarina.

Ms MOSS: How many tasks are currently on the repairs and maintenance waiting list and what was the average length of time to attend to a repairs and maintenance jobs in the last financial year?

Madam CHAIR: Minister, do you accept the question?

Mrs PRICE: Yes.

Madam CHAIR: The question asked by the member for Casuarina of the Minister has been allocated number 6.14

Madam CHAIR: Any more questions, member for Casuarina?

Ms MOSS: I am happy to put them in writing.

Mr WOOD: My procurement question comes under this section because they deal with delivery of capital works and maintenance programs. My question is in relation to procurement and I have raised this issue previously.

Does the Department of Housing have in its documents for the construction of NPARIH houses, the specific requirements to use various proprietary branded items such as a specific brand of paint, louvre, window or door locks? I refer to one of your schedules, which is a coating system schedule which requires two brands of paint to be used.

Mrs PRICE: I will ask Phil to come up to the table. He will be able to provide us some answers for the member for Nelson.

Mr LUCK: Phil Luck, Executive Director Department of Housing. Member for Nelson, yes, we have about 140 items on our schedule of materials.

Mr WOOD: Do you have any items that are specifically named, rather than given a general Australian standard that is normally required?

Mr LUCK: Yes, we do. In accordance with the procurement directions we name them, but only as a performance equivalent. They are not an exclusive item.

Mr WOOD: Okay. I will come to that. If I looked at this document here, this coating system schedule, it simply says 'Wattyl paint'. I have spoken to some contractors who are told they had to use Wattyl paint. We know there is an Australian standard equivalent to that, so why is the Australian standard not the requirement rather than a specific paint brand?

Mr LUCK: Usually because that performance specification is too difficult for a lot of contractors. I am not trying to put contractors down. The naming of a product allows the contractor to go to that manufacturer and identify what the performance standard is, and then identify an equivalent product in the marketplace if they wish.

The reason we do not give performance standards at the moment is because, in the case of a paint product, there could be a multiple number of performance standards - whether we are doing internal, external, UV, and it just goes on. In order to name all the performance standards we also have to name all the application rates, and the document becomes way too voluminous. In accordance with the procurement directions we are allowed to name a brand only for the basis of identifying an equivalent in the marketplace and not to exclusively require that brand.

If anyone has been told it must be that brand, it is incorrect.

Mr WOOD: It says under the Procurement Direction P04 that defining supplies of a brand name is discouraged, and any reference to a brand name needs to be clearly and sufficiently justified. It also says:

If reference is made to a brand name, this reference should only be to describe the standard or scope of Supplies to be procured (for example 'Supplies to the standard of brand xyz or equivalent').

If I was to pick this up – it does not say or 'equivalent' it says 'Wattyl paint'. Do you have something that shows that this product is not specified as the only product to be used? Is there some document you had to produce which would tell contractors that this was not the only brand of paint you had to use?

Mr LUCK: Member for Nelson, that is specifically stated in the conditions of contract within the request for tender. It quite specifically states, if a proprietary item is named, what the conditions of naming of that proprietary item are and how they are to be treated.

Mr WOOD: Is that document public?

Mr LUCK: That goes out with the request for tender when it is released.

Mr WOOD: Is it possible to see a copy of one of the tender documents showing that?

Mr LUCK: More than happy to do so. There are standard conditions of contract produced by the Department of Business which we attach to all our requests for tender.

Mr WOOD: Could the Minister supply a tender document showing how those specific items that are listed also show that a contractor can use an equivalent? Would that be fair enough?

Have products been specified which do not meet the requirements of accepted government technical assessment processes, such as the use of paint approval schemes or the requirements of the National Construction Code, such as compliance with Australian standards?

Madam CHAIR: Member for Nelson, did you ask a question before? You asked two in a row.

Mr WOOD: Yes, I beg your pardon. I should have stopped. I should have asked you to accept the questions. My apologies.

Madam CHAIR: You need to restate the question.

Mr WOOD: I joined two questions, sorry.

Question on Notice No 6.15

Madam CHAIR: Can you restate the question you are putting on notice?

Mr WOOD: Could the Minister provide documents which show that when a contractor is tendering they know, where a specific proprietary item is mentioned, that there is not a requirement to use that proprietary item?

Madam CHAIR: Do you accept the question, Minister?

Mrs PRICE: Yes.

Madam CHAIR: The question asked by the member for Nelson of the Minister has been allocated number 6.15.

Madam CHAIR: If you would like to ask more questions, member for Nelson, please continue.

Mr WOOD: There is also a National Construction Code under which you would need to get dispensation if you were using a product in relation to a specific proprietary brand. Is that correct?

Mr LUCK: No, it is not. Under the National Construction Code, if you intend to use a system other than that which is defined in the Building Code, you must apply for a Deemed to Comply, but it does not specifically go to branded items.

Mr WOOD: Are you saying that by using the name Wattyl – as you know, we have the argument between Breezway louvre company and Diamond Louvres at present, because you require Breezway louvres to be used in Aboriginal housing and not Diamond louvres. Do you have to give a reason why only those brands can be used? Are you saying, as you said previously, someone can use an equivalent product because that is what is allowed? My understanding is that you will not allow Diamond louvres to be used on Aboriginal housing. My understanding from talking to contractors was Wattyl paint was the only paint to be used. Was there not some legal action taken with a contractor about using a different brand of paint?

Mr LUCK: No. If we are using a product which is Australian Standard, we can name a product which is of a higher standard if we wish. If a contractor can identify a product that will equal the performance standard of the product we have named, we will accept it. In the case of the products you are talking about, we were unable to find that the products they had available at the time met the standards we were seeking, or they could not provide us with enough evidence to say that they met the standards.

In the case of any other product, any purchaser can define the performance standard they wish for whatever it is they are constructing or purchasing. Providing it meets the code and it is above the Australian Standard then there is no need to apply for any Deemed to Comply through the NCC or BCA.

Mr WOOD: Is there an Australian Standard for louvre equipment of any sort - galleries, locking equipment?

Mr LUCK: I would have to check. I believe there is. In regard to performance standards, usually what happens is you get NADA certified laboratory testing on a certain product. In Australia, we prefer NADA certified evidence to say that it meets those performance standards. That is usually what we require. So, in the case of Wattyl or anything else, there will usually be specified Australian certification to say what standard it meets. All we ask is that the contractor provides us with evidence that their alternative product can equal or outperform those certified standard requirements we want. But they have to have good valid Australian certification for that.

Mr WOOD: Is that not unfair? Your job is not to put a proprietary brand. What I see from reading all these documents is under the National Construction Code and our own Northern Territory procurement code we rarely should be using names of products. We should be using a standard, then the contractor can fit in with that standard. If it is paint, I have seen the paint standards - I know you said inside or outside. Obviously, there will be paint standards for inside and outside.

Do you not leave yourself open to questions of why you are favouring a brand of anything, when the best thing for you to do - and that is why we have a procurement code and a national code - is to get away from using brands and just set the standard. Those people have to make sure that when they buy paint the manufacturer can show that paint fits the Australian Standard for that reason.

Mr LUCK: Yes, I accept what you are saying. But when you consider that in the construction of a house there are some 2000 or more elements involved, it then becomes very cumbersome for a contractor to pore over more than 2000 performance standards if you did a performance specification.

The naming of proprietary items should be avoided wherever possible. That is what the procurement directions tell us. But it is a common practice in the industry to do that for simplification. In the case of where we might do 100 houses, we will probably attract contractors who have that capability to do that analysis. In the case of where we are building a single house in a remote community, it is unlikely that we will attract contractors who have the time and make the effort to pore through those performance standards on more than 2000 items to understand what it is we want. We quite clearly state an equivalent will be acceptable, but the equivalent has to be evidenced.

Mr WOOD: I know we are running out of time. As you would know the case is not about one house, it is about two companies which both provide louvre equipment for houses in the Northern Territory. One company, Diamond Louvres, can supply staff housing, but cannot supply Aboriginal housing.

We had a meeting – I do not know whether I brought the meeting documents with me here – late last year which the CEO of the Department of Infrastructure attended. He said he thought that company should be allowed to use its product. If the CEO of the Department of Infrastructure said that company should be able to use its product, I wonder why its product is still not being used? We had a meeting; I think it was on 14 December.

Mr LUCK: In answer to your question, we have developed a set of design guidelines. The design guidelines go beyond products. It goes beyond how simply we can repair products in the community, how we can provide a quick turnaround on repairs and maintenance.

With the two products you are talking about, the Diamond Louvre product does not allow us that same level of flexibility as the other product we have named in the proprietary item system. In looking at our design guidelines and taking it beyond the product to the repairs and maintenance cycle and how we deliver the whole Indigenous repairs and maintenance program, for quick turnaround for supply of goods and services, it is the other product that gives us all that flexibility.

When we name the product, it is not just about the Australian performance standard of how many times you can open and close it, it is about whether or not the handles get broken off, the lockable sashes get broken off and how they can be replaced in a community.

In the product that you are talking about, that has not been proven to us. We are asking for the Australian certification on the performance, the equivalent under our design guidelines, and we have not been able to satisfy that.

We believe that the amount of pressure that something like a set of louvre galleries goes under in the remote public housing is not the same amount of pressure that a government employee housing is put to, mainly because, in places like government employee housing, most of the houses have air conditioning and the opening and closing of window entrances is a lot lower. There is a difference in performance

standards between the government employee housing and the remote housing, mainly because of the level of overcrowding and the continuous use of those window openings.

Mr WOOD: My final question. At that meeting we had in December, the department said it would review its procurement procedures and have a report out early this year. We are now nearly in the middle of the year. Has that report been done?

Ms CLIFFORD: If I can clarify, member for Nelson, was this in relation to the performance guidelines?

Mr WOOD: It was in relation to, basically the schedule that says that Breezeway louvre systems are the ones that the department is recommending be used. The company Diamond Louvres has been trying to discuss this for over 12 months. I said I would raise it at estimates. I would love to know whether the department would at least sit and talk with the managing director - because I am not an expert on louvre galleries either. But, the other thing is at that meeting in December it was promised that there would be a review out early this year. I am not sure what has happened to that review.

Ms CLIFFORD: My recollection of the meeting is that it was in relation to establishing performance guidelines which are providing more broad criteria around the type of products to be used, or design outcomes that we would be looking for. That work is in progress. A draft report is expected with us shortly, for us to review, to provide the Minister with the report for consideration.

Mr WOOD: It says here, 'There will be a revision of the guidelines and that will be available in the new year'. That is a very broad new year. Would the department be willing to discuss this issue with the company face-to-face? As I said, I am not the expert on this issue, but I have promised the company that I would raise it because they have concerns that they cannot do any business in the Territory and they do business in Queensland.

Mr LUCK: Member for Nelson, we would be more than happy to speak to the company. We have spoken to the company approximately 18 months to two years ago, I think it was. We went through quite an extensive process of seeking information about their product and how that product would perform against our design guidelines. We are more than happy to speak to the company again. If the company alters its product to address the issues that the design guidelines wants to address, then there is absolutely no reason why that company cannot supply. At the moment, we do not see how that product meets the performance standard that we are looking for.

Mr WOOD: Okay. Thank you for that.

Mr CONLAN: I have a question if that is okay, Madam Chair. By way of comparison with this discussion about repairs and maintenance and getting houses back to a liveable and an appropriate standard. Minister, can you tell the committee how many social housing dwellings there are now compared to this time in 2012?

Madam CHAIR: Would you like to take that on notice, Minister? We are running out of time.

Ms MANISON: We have lots of Parks and Wildlife and Statehood questions coming up Minister - not much time.

Mrs PRICE: I will take that on notice.

Question on Notice No 6.16

Madam CHAIR: Could you please restate the question for the record, member for Greateorex.

Mr CONLAN: Minister, can you please tell the committee how many social housing dwellings there are now compared to this time in 2012?

Madam CHAIR: Minister, do you accept the question?

Mrs PRICE: Yes.

Madam CHAIR: The question asked by the member for Greateorex of the Minister has been allocated number 6.16.

Madam CHAIR: Are there any more questions on Housing Services Delivery, Output 11.2?

Ms MOSS: I am happy to put them in writing, Madam Chair.

Madam CHAIR: That concludes consideration of Output 11.2.

OUTPUT GROUP 12.0 – CORPORATE AND GOVERNANCE
Output 12.1 – Corporate and Governance

Madam CHAIR: The committee will now proceed to Output Group 12.0, Corporate and Governance, Output 12.1, Corporate and Governance. Are there any questions?

Are there any non-output specific budget related questions?

If not, that concludes consideration of outputs relating to the Department of Housing. On behalf of the committee I thank departmental officers who attended today.

NT HOME OWNERSHIP

OUTPUT GROUP 13.0 – NT HOME OWNERSHIP BUSINESS LINE

Madam CHAIR: The committee will now proceed to Output Group 13.0, NT Home Ownership. Are there any questions?

Do you have questions, member for Greatorex, on the NT Home Ownership Business Line?

Mr WOOD: I will move on.

Madam CHAIR: That concludes consideration of Output Group 13.0.

Madam CHAIR: The committee will now proceed to Parks and Wildlife.

Answer to Question on Notice No 6.12

Mrs PRICE: Madam Chair, I have a reply for Question on Notice No 6.12.

Madam CHAIR: Okay.

Madam CHAIR: There are no law suits and no current law suits.

Mrs PRICE: Can I have a five minute break?

Madam CHAIR: Okay. Convene as soon as you can.

The committee suspended.

PARKS AND WILDLIFE COMMISSION OF THE NT

Madam CHAIR: Welcome back, everyone. We are now moving on to the Parks and Wildlife Commission of the Northern Territory. Minister Price, I invite you to introduce the officials accompanying you and to make an opening statement regarding the Parks and Wildlife Commission of the Northern Territory.

Mrs PRICE: Thank you, Madam Chair. I am joined today by Mr Andrew Bridges, Chief Executive Officer for Parks and Wildlife Commission of the Northern Territory and Ms Susan Kirkman, Executive Director Corporate Services, Department of Land Resource Management.

The Parks and Wildlife Commission oversees the management, protection and care of the 87 national parks and reserves throughout the Northern Territory. These parks encompass 47 000 km² of land, which includes some of the Territory's most majestic, natural, cultural, historical and recreational assets. These spectacular sites are located in urban, rural and remote areas, making them accessible to all Territorians.

Parks and reserves play a very important role in ensuring the ongoing sustainability and maintenance of our environment so it can continue to provide current and future generations with clean water, air, food and other invaluable resources. No price can be placed on these critical environmental products and services. It is essential that we continue to work towards protecting our natural systems for the health and wellbeing of Territorians, now and into the future.

Parks are increasingly being recognised for the very significant social value they provide to the community, that is, people who spend time outdoors tend to show enhanced physical and emotional wellbeing. These people tend to be more connected with their community, demonstrate greater resilience and have lowered stress levels. Children who spend time in green spaces display improved development and learning, while elderly people tend to display greater social connectivity.

Clearly, while it is possible to put a dollar figure on the economic value parks provide to our tourism industry, it is not possible to put a dollar figure on the true value of the Territory's parks and reserves. They are invaluable.

Our parks and reserves play a crucial role in ensuring the Territory's social, environmental and economic future. By investing resources, recognising the commercial reality and promoting the social value of parks and reserves, the value of our parks and reserves has grown. These are all initiatives I have implemented as the Minister for Parks and Wildlife.

Under the Country Liberals, parks and reserves have become more accessible to the community and their value continues to increase in the eyes of the community. The Country Liberals believe parks are for people in the community, and when the parks and reserves prosper the Territory prospers.

During 2015 to 31 March 2016 visitor numbers reported to major parks and reserves increased for the second consecutive year, with an increase of visitors of 1.25% across the Territory. Visitor numbers to major Top End parks and reserves increased by about 1%, while Central Australia increased by 2.9%. Our parks provide the perfect platform for investment and tourism development.

Labor's past inaction on our parks and reserves has been shameful. If there is ever another Territory Labor government we know it would lock up our parks and reserves. Labor's failure in our parks will leave the tourism industry in disarray with falling visitor numbers again if Labor ever gets a hold.

The number of tour operator permits and concessions granted on parks this year was 152. While the Country Liberals continued record investment into parks, we look forward to this number increasing next year as projects come online from the 2014 expression of interest for commercial tourism development within parks and reserves. This process received considerable interest from the wider community, encouraging investment and business opportunities in our parks which ensures the ongoing prosperity into the future.

Of the 46 shortlisted projects, seven have already been implemented and 20 are in the consultation phase with traditional owners, as they are proposed on jointly-managed parks. These applications provide exciting opportunities for local Indigenous people. Under the Country Liberals local businesses are more confident and are more willing to invest in our parks and reserves as more tourism success stories are realised. This direct relationship assists in ongoing protection and management of parks and reserves as their value in the eyes of the community and business sector increases.

It is a shame, when listening to Labor's budget reply, there was not one mention of investment into our parks and reserves.

This financial year over \$20m in capital works funding was provided to Casuarina Coastal Reserve and to Litchfield National Park. This funding will see the development of new and reinvigorated infrastructure facilities. This will not only cater to a larger number of visitors to these parks but will also ensure that visitors will continue to enjoy these parks in coming years. Such works are critical for catering for an increasing population promoting the Territory as a significant tourism destination and supporting the Territory lifestyle that so many families have come to enjoy. These works are expected to be finished by August 2016.

Developing more adventure tourism activities in our parks and reserves is a response to a changing tourism industry with visitors seeking adventure. Next financial year we look forward to opening a tree-top experience at Howard Springs Nature Park - next year, Gerry ...

Madam CHAIR: Minister, your five minutes is up. I am going to be a little brutal with this because we have only have 20 minutes to go.

Mrs PRICE: No, I will just go straight to the end of the page.

Ms MANISON: Cut to the chase.

Mrs PRICE: I know I will cut to the chase.

Ms MANISON: Good work, Minister.

Mrs PRICE: I now take this opportunity to thank every member of the commission for their professionalism and dedication to ensuring effective management of our parks and reserves. In conclusion, I welcome questions that relate to the output groups associated with my Parks and Wildlife portfolio.

Madam CHAIR: Are there any questions on the Minister's opening statement?

Ms MANISON: Thank you, Madam Chair. I completely agree with the Minister that our parks are precious to Territorians. We welcome investment in the parks to make them accessible to people, but also ensuring that we protect the environment and the biodiversity.

Minister, I will be very short today. I have a lot of questions. Most of the questions I will not be able to get to will be put in writing. You are also the Minister for Statehood. After last year we are very keen to get an update on where things are with Statehood, from your perspective as the Minister for Statehood.

Going to the opening statement, I will go to one of your key budget announcements in the area of Parks and Wildlife to do with the \$20m of capital investment for sky walks. You mentioned the expression of interest process going back in 2014. With regard to the \$10m you have allocated to the sky walk at Nitmiluk Gorge, where did that idea come from? Was that one of the expressions of interest that came back when you called for them in 2014? What consultation has taken place with the Nitmiluk Board of Management and traditional owners?

Mrs PRICE: Thank you, member for Wanguri. Yes, we did consult with the Jawoyn traditional owners. We had our parks people communicate information to one of the Jawoyn board members and she was grateful that this new initiative was being thought of. They think it is a great asset they will have for Katherine. It is something that is different that will attract more tourism into their town. We are looking forward to working with the Jawoyn Aboriginal Corporation. The interest is there and they are all delighted.

Ms MANISON: Thank you, Minister, but my question was: was that one of the expressions of interest that came back from the 2014 process? How did the idea come to fruition? Did you speak to traditional owners and the board of management prior to the announcement and the decision by Cabinet, or was it made afterwards?

Mrs PRICE: I spoke to the traditional owners. Lisa Mumbin is the chair, and she is very excited.

Ms MANISON: When did that happen, Minister?

Mrs PRICE: When was this?

Ms MANISON: When was she first notified?

Mrs PRICE: I do not remember, but I did talk to her and with one of our staff ...

Ms MANISON: Was that prior to the decision by Cabinet or ...

Mrs PRICE: No, no.

Ms MANISON: ... after the budget announcement or ...

Mrs PRICE: This has been talked about, a couple of months, yes.

Ms MANISON: Given we are now a good solid month after the budget - Budget Cabinet makes decisions around February/March ...

Mrs PRICE: I will get the exact time frame if you want it. I will get that to you.

Ms MANISON: Where did the idea come from, Minister?

Mrs PRICE: It was an idea that should be trialled. It is all about attracting tourism into the Northern Territory and ...

Ms MANISON: It was an idea that stemmed from the board of management of the park? It did not come from the 2014 expression of interest process? Where did the idea come from?

Mrs PRICE: It did not come from the expression of interest, but Jawoyn has been looking at ways of being more creative to attract more tourists into their town. This is another way of Jawoyn getting involved and attracting more tourism into Katherine.

Ms MANISON: Okay.

Mrs PRICE: Lisa Mumbin, who is the chair, is happy. She agreed; I spoke to her and she is happy.

Ms MANISON: But after the decision was made and the money was allocated?

Mrs PRICE: The point is that she was and Jawoyn are happy.

Ms MANISON: Given that the Jawoyn were not part of that initial discussion for the idea, you are going to consult with them afterwards?

Mrs PRICE: You can go and ask Jawoyn yourself to find out from them if they are happy or not. There are consultations happening all the time, and ongoing.

Ms MANISON: Minister, there is \$20m in the budget, and there has been discussion of a second skywalk-type experience. Where are you looking to place that second skywalk experience?

Mrs PRICE: At the moment, we are looking at working with Jawoyn, and hopefully we are ...

Ms MANISON: So, that is the first one.

Mrs PRICE: That is the first one, yes.

Ms MANISON: Is the second one ...

Mrs PRICE: Let me finish.

Ms MANISON: Sorry, Minister.

Mrs PRICE: We are working with Jawoyn to get the information out there, to get Jawoyn board members to hear and see for themselves what it will look like. Our staff from parks are talking to various board members. The second one we are looking at maybe developing in Watarrka.

Ms MANISON: Thank you.

Mrs PRICE: But, we are still talking with the board members.

Ms MANISON: Thank you, Minister. I have questions that I would also like to get to - but I appreciate I only have 15 minutes - around Casuarina Coastal Reserve erosion, Berry Springs and the water management - especially given the issues that we have with water bores and management there at the moment. But I know the member for Nelson has a question as well and I am keen to get to Statehood. So, thank you very much to the staff in their preparations from Parks and Wildlife.

We will be submitting quite a few written questions to follow up because it is important that we continue to scrutinise Parks and Wildlife, because it is such an important area, to make sure that data is on the record for future years and forever. We might be in government next year.

Madam CHAIR: Minister, would you mind if we just threw it open? We have a time restriction. Could I ask if there are any questions without going through the output groups?

Mrs PRICE: Yes.

Madam CHAIR: Are there any questions?

Mr CONLAN: I have several.

Mr WOOD: I know we are short on time and I look forward to the entanglement, or whatever you call it, going through the park. The question I try to ask each year is: can you give me a list over the last five years of visitor numbers to all the parks? I am a fan of our parks, believe it or not. I just love our parks. I hope we can keep encouraging people to use them.

A second question in relation to Territory Wildlife Park. I believe this is happening but I will probably need confirmation. Are you bringing back some of the animals that were part of the attraction some years ago like the banteng, the buffalo and some of the kangaroos? Are they coming back to the park?

Mrs PRICE: Sorry. Where is this to?

Mr WOOD: The Territory Wildlife Park. Some years ago you took out some of those. I believe they are an important part of the tourist industry. They might not have been native to the Top End but they were animals that had been in the Northern Territory for many years - the buffalo, the banteng, some of the kangaroos and other animals. Are they being brought back to the Territory Wildlife Park?

Mrs PRICE: The first question, visitor numbers. I have a list here.

Mr WOOD: Five years?

Mrs PRICE: Yes, from 2011.

Mr WOOD: Could we table that?

Mrs PRICE: They are on the website.

Mr WOOD: Sometimes five years is not always shown.

Mrs PRICE: They are on the website.

Mr WOOD: All right. I will leave it at that. I asked about those animals coming back to the Territory Wildlife Park.

Mrs PRICE: In 2016-17 again the budget includes \$761 000 for minor new works at the Territory Wildlife Park and the Alice Springs Desert Park. These are the proposed developments: \$250 000 to redevelop large animal pens at Territory Wildlife Park. This is Stage one of a project to reinstate the vacant large animal exhibit to enhance visitor experience. By providing viewing of large animals including Parks' recent crocodile, Graham, buffalo, the banteng, wallabies and emus in a safe and natural setting. Yes, of course. We are setting that aside.

Mr WOOD: That is great. It will revitalise it, along with the loop road being sealed. It will be good for it. All right, we do not have much time there.

Mr CONLAN: Minister, when the government was first elected in 2012 it came out very strong on parks with an emphasis and a nuance on tourism and marrying the two together. Are you able to enlighten the committee as to how those election commitments and those election promises with regards to parks were travelling particularly over the last 12 months, but anything over the last couple of years.

Ms MANISON: Minister, it would be great to get to Statehood after this.

Mrs PRICE: Sorry. Is it an election commitment about which you are asking?

Mr CONLAN: Yes.

Mrs PRICE: This government made an election commitment to provide greater access to national parks and camping grounds. The commission is continuing to provide greater access to parks and reserves. I will provide you with some of the key highlights. This year, Berry Springs Nature Park was opened up to the public two weeks earlier than it normally does. This is the earliest it has been open in the past five years. Rangers put in the extra effort to ensure visitors could enjoy the springs over the Anzac Day long weekend.

During 2015 to 31 March 2016, visitor numbers to major reported parks and reserves increased for the second consecutive year with an increase of visitors of 1.25% across the Northern Territory. Visitor numbers to major Top End parks and reserves increased by around 1% while Central Australia increased by 2.9%. Four joint management plans became operational in 2015-16 ...

Ms MANISON: Excuse me, Madam Chair. I appreciate the Minister has some very important information she is going through, and I can see two pages of some very fine writing ...

Mrs PRICE: This will not take me long.

Ms MANISON: Is it possible for her to table that information from the point of getting to Statehood?

Mrs PRICE: I will read quickly. If you let me finish I will get it over and done with.

Four joint management plans became operational in 2015-16. These are Mary River National Park Joint Management Plan, Napwerte/Ewaninga Conservation Reserve, Yeperenye, Emily and Jesse Gaps Nature Parks, Iytwelepenty/Davenport Range National Park and Casuarina Coastal Reserve. A major focus on each of these plans was to increase access for visitors to these parks.

In 2015-16 a total budget of \$33.37m was allocated to maintain and upgrade facilities and infrastructure in parks and reserves to attract more visitors and provide greater access. Major improvements include \$10.43m allocated to enhance visitor experience at Litchfield National Park and \$10.68m allocated to enhance the visit experience at Casuarina Coastal Reserve. Such works are critical for catering to an increasing population, promoting the Territory as a significant tourism destination and supporting the Territory lifestyle that so many families have come to see.

Our parks provide the perfect platform for commercial and tourism development. The number of tour operator permits and concessions granted on these parks, as I said, is 152. I look forward to this number increasing next year as projects come on line from 2014 expressions of interest for commercial tourism development within parks and reserves. This process received considerable interest from the wider community, encouraging investment and business opportunities in our parks, which ensures their ongoing prosperity in the future, providing diverse experiences such as unique remote walking experiences in Litchfield Park, scenic flights in Charles Darwin National Park, heli-fishing tours in Judbarra/Gregory National Park, and a high-ropes adventure course in Howard Springs Nature Park to name a few. All aim to increase the use of parks and reserves.

Recreational hunting is an important pastime in the Territory. Lambells Lagoon hunting area has been expanded to provide additional areas for waterfowl hunting in the 2016 hunting season, while improvements are being made to Harrison Dam and Shoal Bay to enhance the experience of these locations.

New opportunities for hunters from accredited hunting organisations commence, with hunters now able to assist the commission with pest management in Litchfield National Park, Black Jungle Conservation Reserve, Mary River National Park and Judbarra. These initiatives have been coupled with the introduction of new five-year hunting permits in 2015, which focused on streamlining the application process for all hunters.

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

Mr CONLAN: Yes, just a couple more.

Ms MANISON: Member for Greatorex, you know there is just over five minutes left. We have some important questions about Statehood. You can put those questions in writing.

Mr CONLAN: And so may you, member for Wanguri.

Ms MANISON: It looks at the moment as if you are trying to block me from asking any questions about Statehood.

Mr CONLAN: I would like to ask ...

Ms MANISON: It looks like you are obstructing me trying to ask these questions...

Mr CONLAN: Just another couple of questions, Madam Chair, if that is okay?

Ms MANISON: You are chewing into time, member for Greatorex. You know there is just over five minutes left.

Mr WOOD: Member for Greatorex, you are filling in time ...

Mr CONLAN: I have another couple of questions and I would like to the Minister. Is it the will of the committee to deprive a government member of the committee from asking the Minister questions?

Mr WOOD: Since you asked the question, probably yes.

Ms MANISON: It is very clear that given that estimates is process generally driven by ...

Mr CONLAN: Is that the course of action?

Ms MANISON: ... scrutiny of government - a government member is asking another government Minister questions when you know we have questions about Statehood ...

Mr WOOD: You nearly had a repeat of the opening statement then. The Howard Springs Nature Park was ...

Madam CHAIR: What is the view of the committee? Do we want the member for Greatorex to ask his government questions?

Mr CONLAN: Or will the committee going to gag ...

Ms MANISON: You are trying to gag us from asking questions about Statehood. You are chewing into time, you know that.

Mr CONLAN: I am simply asking questions, which I have the right to do.

Madam CHAIR: Member for Greatorex, would you agree to ask one question and then we will move on to Statehood?

Mr CONLAN: I have a number of questions here, but all right. Minister, as you know, our urban recreational areas are very important to the Northern Territory, especially to locals, but to tourists and they are attracting tourism. That emphasis is on tourism and tying tourism and parks together.

One of our key urban recreational areas in the Darwin region is the George Brown Botanic Gardens. I was wondering if you could tell the committee what new experiences have become available under your watch as Minister for Parks and Wildlife, and let us know whether or not there has been an increase in visitor numbers as a result of some of those new experiences?

Ms MANISON: Any chance we could put that answer on notice, Minister, so we can get to Statehood?

Mrs PRICE: It is a great story.

Ms MANISON: I agree 100%, but it is important for Territorians to hear your perspective, as the Minister for Statehood ...

Mrs PRICE: It will not take me long to read this.

Madam CHAIR: It is your prerogative, Minister.

Mrs PRICE: I will read this.

Mr WOOD: One could argue with gagging, with five minutes for Statehood.

Ms MANISON: Absolutely. Trying to fill up time to try to stop us asking questions about Statehood ...

Mrs PRICE: This is great news ...

Ms MANISON: ... because we saw what happened last year.

Madam CHAIR: Member for Wanguri, can you let the Minister answer the question.

Mrs PRICE: This is great news ...

Mr WOOD: The member is pleading innocence.

Mrs PRICE: You do not want to hear the great news, Gerry?

Mr WOOD: I am ...

Madam CHAIR: We all would like to hear your answer, Minister.

Mrs PRICE: Thank you, Madam Chair. In 2014-15 the George Brown Darwin Botanic Gardens had 348 200 visitors, which is fantastic, as it is in the centre of Darwin. The number of visits to the George Brown Darwin Botanic Gardens recorded between July 2015 and March 2016 was 275 000, which is an increase of 9% compared to the same period in the previous year, which was 250 000.

The gardens has continued to provide new experiences such as: new monthly moonlight movies film nights during the Dry Season aimed at providing family entertainment in a unique outdoor destination; monthly Territory-made markets which draw thousands of people for a fun-filled Sunday in the gardens; a school holiday fun program which attracted approximately 3000 participants over two days during the October and April school holidays; an inaugural open day and workshops held by the Snake Bean Community Gardens; photography exhibition in the Eco House gallery held by the Canadian High Commission; Playtime in the Gardens activities for young children runs fortnightly during the Dry Season on Wednesday morning; an Eco House art exhibition with local photographer Leon Blignault continues to draw visitors and is included on cruise ship itineraries; and opening of the new Madagascar garden.

They are all new themes that are happening at the George Brown botanical gardens, Madam Chair. It is a great opportunity for families to come and enjoy what we have in the centre of Darwin. I recommend to people who have families to go along and take part in it.

Madam CHAIR: Are there any more questions on Parks and Wildlife Commission of the Northern Territory? I thank the officials who joined us this afternoon.

STATEHOOD

Madam CHAIR: We will move on to Statehood in the two-and-a-half minutes remaining. Would you like to make your opening statement, Minister, on statehood and introduce your officials?

Mrs PRICE: Thank you, Madam Chair ...

Madam CHAIR: Minister, I am going to interrupt you. It is now 4 pm. Thank you for your time. The time has expired.

Mrs PRICE: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Madam CHAIR: Thank you very much for joining us today before the estimates hearing, and thank you to your officials.

We will break for 10 minutes and be back with Minister Styles at 4.10 pm.

The committee suspended.

MINISTER STYLES' PORTFOLIOS

DEPARTMENT OF BUSINESS

Madam CHAIR: Welcome to Minister Styles and his departmental officials from the Department of Business. I welcome you to today's hearings and invite you, Minister, to introduce the officials accompanying you.

Mr STYLES: Thank you, Madam Chair. To my left is Andy Cowan, the Deputy Chief Executive of the Department of Business; to my right is Michael Tennant, the Chief Executive Officer of the Department of Business; and on his right is the Chief Financial Officer, Lisa Strohfeldt.

Madam CHAIR: Minister, I will invite you to make an opening statement of no more than five minutes. I will then call for questions relating to the statement. The committee will then consider any whole-of-government budget and fiscal strategy-related questions before moving on to output-specific questions, and finally non-output specific budget-related questions. I will invite the shadow Minister to ask their questions first, followed by committee members. Finally, other participating members may ask questions. The committee has agreed that other members may join in on a line of questioning pursued by a shadow Minister rather than waiting for the end of the shadow's questioning on the output.

Minister, would you like to make an opening statement?

Mr STYLES: I would, Madam Chair. If you will excuse me I will speak rather quickly to this because it is just a tad longer than five minutes. Please excuse me if I speak rapidly.

The Northern Territory is going through a time of transition as we diversify our economy, following a period of once-in-a-lifetime growth. As Minister for Business, I am committed to supporting our local businesses. The business sector is a key contributor not only to our economy, but to our community. Business creates jobs and opportunities for individuals to grow their skills. It provides goods and services to the public and other businesses, and supports various community cultural and sporting activities.

The work of the Department of Business is focused on ensuring the Northern Territory is the best place to work and do business by driving the right environment for business, industry and workers. This includes policy settings that make it easier for business to get on with doing business, government procurement policy which maximises opportunity for local businesses, reducing unnecessary red tape that constrains businesses from getting on and doing what they do best.

The Buy Local Plan announced in December 2015 is a comprehensive suite of changes to our procurement framework and the most progressive reform to date. Buy Local is a critical element of the Northern Territory government's value-for-money procurement framework. The plan seeks to ensure the largest possible proportion of every dollar spent by the Territory government is retained within the Northern Territory and delivers benefits to our economy and community.

The first changes were implemented in December this year and included an increase in the mandatory minimum waiting for local content from between 20% and 25% in the construction area to 30%. An introduction to the mandatory requirement to include an NT enterprise in all quotations is estimated to be worth up to \$100 000.

The second round of changes in April 2016 established a Local Benefit Advisory Panel and introduced local benefit commitments in contracts with an estimated value of \$100 000 or greater.

The Home Improvement Scheme follows on from our Buy Local Plan and continues our commitment to supporting local small businesses. Tradies and Territory homeowner/occupiers are making the most of the benefits offered by the Northern Territory government's \$20m Home Improvement Scheme, with registrations continuing to grow daily.

The take-up by tradies and Territory homeowners alike has been phenomenal, especially when you consider that we are still nine days short of the original start date for the scheme. We fast-tracked the initiative by almost a month due to its overwhelming popularity, and it is already working for tradies and homeowners. So far 877 tradies have applied to register under the Home Improvement Scheme; 695 tradie registrations have been processed successfully and are on the website; 106 tradie applications are processed pending requests for further information; 76 tradie applications pending assessment; 352 homeowner vouchers applications received; and 55 homeowner vouchers applications proceeded and approved.

Setting the right environment for business in the Northern Territory also means making ourselves as attractive for investment as possible to grow key industries and support new ones. With so much business being done about connections, we have doubled the opportunities for businesses to showcase themselves and make the connections that will take their work to the next level.

We have built on the momentum created by October Business Month by establishing Open Territory, a program of events between March and May providing businesses with the opportunities to connect locally, nationally and with our northern neighbours.

Developing Territory businesses and industries to start, run and grow during 2015-16, the Department of Business supported the Northern Territory businesses and workers by providing grants, advice, workshops, information sessions, licence approvals, training support and workforce growth support. Between July 2015 and March 2016 the Territory Business Centre had 117 007 business contacts and transactions, up from 101 185 in the previous year. These included 8227 digital licences, 9037 NT WorkSafe licences, 815 Licensing NT licences, 17 622 calls to the call centre, 3489 online transactions and 35 155 general inquiries ...

Ms MANISON: Excuse me, Madam Chair. There is lots of great information here, Minister. I am very flexible with the Minister going over the five minutes so he has the time to read it out at a more relaxed pace.

Mr STYLES: I can slow down, if you wish.

Madam CHAIR: Perhaps if you slow down a little.

Mr WOOD: Just pretend you are Tiger Brennan Drive.

Members interjecting.

Mr STYLES: I was trying to get it in in five minutes.

Mr WOOD: No, the 60 km/h is all right.

Mr STYLES: I am very happy to slow down, Madam Chair.

Madam CHAIR: Thank you for trying to do that, Minister.

Mr STYLES: The Department of Business offers a range of services and programs to help Territorians start and then grow their own businesses through a network of Territory Business Centres and business development officers throughout the Territory. Business development officers provide access to a range of grants and assistance including the Business Growth Program which offers financial assistance to engage suitably qualified consultants to deliver business improvement strategies. In 2015-16, the Business Growth Program had provided 135 business with more than \$797 000 in grants, with a further \$755 000 committed to another 124 businesses.

The Smarter Business Solutions program's grant budget allocated in 2015-16 is \$400 000 and \$334 000 in grants has already been provided to 30 businesses by March this year. Forty-one small to medium Indigenous enterprises have shared in grant funding of \$732 000 under the Indigenous Business Development in 2015-16, and a further 18 entities have been committed to receive support to the value of \$155 000. Businesses can get tailored advice and support to access these and other Department of Business programs through the department's business development officers who work directly with businesses one-on-one.

In the past financial year, we have added another five business development officers to this Territory-wide network of support staff, bringing the total number to 24 who are active in all regions of the Territory from bases in Darwin, Alice Springs, Tennant Creek, Katherine and Nhulunbuy.

The department has further strengthened its commitment to the regions by opening Pop-Up Territory Business Centres in the Tiwi Islands, Borroloola and Maningrida in 2015, providing a range of business-focused services. We further built on this commitment by delivering Boosting Business in the Bush workshops across 14 champion communities in 2015, attended by 123 participants. Ten people were selected to attend a boot camp supported by the Department of Business in Darwin earlier this year.

In 2015-16, the Department of Business assisted 35 businesses and organisations to grow their workforce, placing 262 Aboriginal people in jobs and supporting 93 to enhance their careers. A further 34 businesses have benefited from labour coordination projects to help them access a local Aboriginal workforce.

In 2015 the Department of Business held a record-breaking October Business Month, delivering 183 business events across the Northern Territory which attracted more than 9300 people.

This year, we responded to that appetite for business events by launching the inaugural Open Territory program of events, showcasing business capability in the Northern Territory and to highlight trade and investment opportunities through a series of domestic and international events. This program was a huge success, delivering 154 events around the Territory to more than 59 000 people.

Simply doing business in the Territory through balanced regulation means the department has continued to reform the agenda it kicked off in 2014, identifying and eliminating unnecessary red tape through internal and legislative reform. Deloitte estimated the cost of ~~ad~~Minister~~administer~~ing and complying with rules and regulations in the Northern Territory was approximately \$4bn per annum, representing a considerable barrier to growth and investment in the Northern Territory economy. Eliminating unnecessary red tape removes the debilitating administrative requirements faced by small businesses which have limited resources to deal with them, something very important to the private sector dominated by small business.

Last July we launched the red tap reduction strategy and since, we have been reducing paperwork and compliance costs by extending licence terms, moving transactions online and removing unnecessary red tape. Since September 2012, over 270 red tape initiatives have been completed or are under way across government. In April this year, the Red Tape Reduction (Miscellaneous Amendments) Bill 2016 passed through parliament. This legislation will reduce compliance costs for approximately 500 real estate agents, 150 commercial and private agents, 105 auctioneers, 30 liquor wholesalers and 300 businesses in retail, tourism and hospitality sectors that require a tobacco retail licence. It extends licence terms from one year to an option of one, three or five years.

The red tape abolition squad is coordinating the implementation of reforms across government to reduce regulatory costs including extending licence terms, moving transactions on mining, increasing information sharing in collaboration between agencies to reduce duplication in centralising licensing databases and reducing reporting requirements.

In March this year, we released the review of the NT automotive industry, which confirms self-regulation as the best approach for vehicle repairers and addressed some of the concerns raised by the sale of TIO. The department will also continue procurement reforms to streamline processes and make it easier to do business with government.

Building on the work done reviewing work health and safety legislation to reduce red tape for Northern Territory businesses and workers, NT WorkSafe has developed a pilot small business safety program designed to empower small and medium businesses in the NT to manage their own work, health and safety processes. The Small Business Safety Program is an opt-in program which allows businesses to request the assistance of small business safety advisers to help them make a systematic approach to managing work health and safety in their workplace.

The Northern Territory government will now have greater resources to continue popular initiatives such as the Small Business Safety Advisors program and other initiatives improving work, health and safety in the Territory, utilising revenue generated through insurers.

The *Return to Work Act* which commenced in 2015 requires insurers and self-insurers to contribute to the operating costs of NT WorkSafe. The requirement has generated an additional \$670 000 in the 2015-16 financial year and will provide an additional \$980 000 for NT WorkSafe in the 2016-17 financial year. This

is fantastic news for Territory businesses as it will allow NT WorkSafe to provide greater assistance in ensuring the health and safety of work places and employees.

Previously, the Territory was the only jurisdiction in Australia where costs associated with administration and provision of work health and safety and workers compensation advice were not met - either partially or wholly - from premium payments.

It was initially expected that contributions would total \$1.17m in additional revenue. The total amount in 2015-16 amounted to \$2.34m and that is expected to increase to \$2.65m in the current financial year and ongoing. The act stipulates that the revenue is spent on administration costs for proceedings or mediation and costs in relation to NT WorkSafe's functions in promoting work health and safety.

The revenue so far will be utilised to modernise NT WorkSafe's ICT systems, develop an online training program for personal injury management, fund the administration cost and staffing of the Small Business Safety Advisors program, allow NT WorkSafe to employ a training coordinator to coordinate targeted training and fund additional leadership staff positions within worker's compensation and commissioning and advisory teams.

The Department of Business continues to deliver a balanced policy of regulatory framework that supports industry, business and community needs.

The Community Benefit Fund budget increased to an estimated \$11.071m in 2015-16 as a result of contributions by NT casinos. As a result, the number of major grant rounds has increased from one to four and so far in 2015-16 \$2.675m has been awarded. The number of small grant rounds has gone from two to four and the maximum grant amount has doubled from \$5000 to \$10 000. So far, in 2015-16, \$1m has been awarded.

The new quick grant round has also been established to provide grants prior to the next scheduled notification date. This is \$562 000 available at short notice.

This financial year, \$1.846m has gone towards gambling remuneration programs aimed at limiting gambling-related harm and \$281 000 has gone towards gambling research.

In 2015-16, we delivered on our commitment to support the racing industry, contributing a total of \$400 000 towards the Turf Club underpass including \$250 000 in direct funding and \$150 000 relocated from the workers compensation reserve, with the Turf Club also contributing \$400 000. Territorians have been enjoying a safer track since the underpass opened in March this year.

Attracting new investment to the Northern Territory and connecting Northern Territory businesses with national and international opportunities is a priority for this government. At March 2016, export of goods totalled \$5.1bn with primary export products continuing to be oil and gas, minerals, ores and livestock.

For the same period, imports were \$4.4bn, maintaining a trade surplus with our largest trade partners being Japan, China and Thailand. The Northern Territory government this year launched the Asian Engagement Trade Investment Strategy to leverage the Northern Territory's position, exploit further trade and investment opportunities and broaden engagement with the Asian region. As part of the new model for the NT overseas representation we have announced and recruited representatives in Indonesia and Singapore to support the interests of government, business and the wider community on the ground in Asia and promote the Northern Territory's political, economic and cultural relationships in that region.

This financial year, the Office of Asian Engagement, Trade and Investment have promoted the Northern Territory as a preferred location for investment through: completing 71 inbound and 17 outbound delegations; leading the Northern Territory's involvement in the development of a trilateral economic cooperation framework between Australia, Indonesia and Timor-Leste; reconnecting the NT government with a Brunei-Indonesian-Malaysian-Philippines East ASEAN Growth Area, or BIMP-EAGA as it is known; hosting delegations in Darwin in November 2015 and April 2016; hosting the NT and Timor-Leste Bilateral ~~Ministerial~~ Ministerial Forum in Darwin in April 2016, the first such meeting since 2011; coordinating and assisting ~~Ministerial~~ Ministerial missions to Vietnam, China, Japan, Kuala Lumpur and Taiwan and facilitating the Australian government's North Australia Investment Forum in November 2015; managing the Territory's training system to meet the Territory's current and future needs.

The Territory labour market remains tight characterised by high participation and low unemployment. While this continues to be good news for Territorians and the local workforce we also acknowledge that there is a

challenge for some businesses. One of the key roles of the Department of Business is to develop the capability labour market through appropriate training and educational opportunities.

For the 2015-16 year, 1554 new apprentice and trainee training contracts were registered across all regions of the Territory, with 982 in Darwin, 302 in Alice Springs, 122 in Katherine, 85 in East Arnhem, 46 in Barkly and 17 in West Arnhem. At 15 April 2015, 3675 apprentices and trainees were in training across the Territory. Of these, half are in traditional trade occupations, one-third are women and a quarter are Indigenous. The Northern Territory completion rate for apprentices and trainees is currently 49.4%.

Where our local school workforce does not exist, Migration NT works to: support NT businesses through a range of activities including promoting the Northern Territory as a destination to work, live, invest and study; promoting hard-to-fill job vacancies through its national and international workforce attraction program; advocating for national migration policy changes that reflect the needs of businesses operating in the Territory; and endorsing and nominating applications for skilled overseas workers in a range of skilled migration programs.

The department has achieved a lot this year, Madam Chair. I acknowledge the dedication and hard work of the 360 employees who come to work each day committed to driving the right environment for business, industry and workers.

Madam CHAIR: I think you just gave the longest opening statement of all the Ministers. It looked like it was going to be the shortest, but it turned out to be the longest.

Mr STYLES: I could have talked a lot faster.

Madam CHAIR: Thank you very much, Minister.

Ms MANISON: I much prefer it to be at that pace, Minister.

Mr WOOD: We need to know the definition of the word 'tad'. It is not a word I have heard used before like that. You said it would be a tad longer. Is it possible to have that statement tabled because I would like to read it?

Madam CHAIR: It will be in *Hansard* tonight.

Mr WOOD: If we could get it tabled, we could ask some questions as there were a lot of figures in there. The member for ...

Mr STYLES: If you ask the questions, Gerry, I will give you the answers.

Mr WOOD: The problem is I have to see where I will get the questions from, as you have given us an update we cannot always get from the budget papers.

Mr STYLES: There are all sorts of bits and pieces in there.

Mr WOOD: I am sure you have not been scribbling on your notes you have been given by your adviser ...

Mr STYLES: I have already scribbled on it and changed it, Gerry, since we started. I have cut it back.

Madam CHAIR: So the answer is no. Are there any questions relating to the opening statement?

Mr WOOD: There was a 20-minute statement. If you think we can keep all that in our heads, you are doing well.

Madam CHAIR: It was 16 minutes. Are there any questions on the opening statement?

Ms MANISON: There are a lot of different areas within the Business portfolio, as you know. Many different people have responsibilities here so I would be fine to go straight into the Business portfolio.

Madam CHAIR: Any questions on the opening statement, member for Nelson?

Mr WOOD: I cannot remember what he said.

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

Madam CHAIR: Okay, the committee will now consider the estimates of proposed expenditure contained in the Appropriation (2016-2017) Bill as they relate to the Department of Business. Are there any agency-related whole-of-government questions on budget and fiscal strategies?

Ms MANISON: Yes, Madam Chair. First for the Minister, as he knows and as we have asked every member so far, we have submitted a global range of pretty standard questions around full-time employment, grants, contracts, travel and so forth. Some Ministers have chosen to table that up front to allow for greater scrutiny, other Ministers have wanted us to ask the questions. Minister, would you be able to table those responses to the global questions?

Mr STYLES: No, I have a whole lot of stuff written here.

Ms MANISON: That is a shame, Minister, because it allows for greater scrutiny of the performance of the department and the expenditure ...

Mr WOOD: There is a lot of anti-tabling going on this week.

Mr STYLES: When you go through these, Gerry, and you read them you make notes. I make a lot of notes as prompts for a range of things.

Ms MANISON: It was submitted about a month ago, mind you, but we will move forward. Speaking to the output – we are at Output Group 1.0, Madam Chair?

Madam CHAIR: Yes, we are.

Ms MANISON: It is important to gain a better understanding about your priorities as the Minister for Business and how you are directing your department to engage with businesses. It is very important to tap into what we are seeing in the Northern Territory economy at the moment.

You spoke in your opening statement about a transition period. We all want to see business going well in the NT, and for that to happen we need a good economy ticking over.

Mr STYLES: I agree.

Ms MANISON: We need to ask you some questions about the economy and how the Business department has been working within these conditions to support Territory businesses. Do you accept that businesses are doing it tough in the Northern Territory? For example, last week we saw Neil Summers, a highly-respected successful developer, stop his unit development plan in Coconut Grove. We have seen some other examples of concerns in the economy of late. Do you accept that the Territory's employment situation is much worse at the moment than this time last year?

Mr STYLES: Well, there are a couple of questions there. The employment situation is worse. I know many people have been put off because of your policy of a gas moratorium. I know 200 jobs were lost recently in relation to that. I am aware that Neil Summers has put a stop on his building at Nightcliff. There are people in relation to building – there is a plan, and this is where I ask the opposition to look at a plan.

When you get something the size of INPEX – these things do not come along very often and over the next 10 years they will not come along anywhere else in the world in relation to greenfield sites. When you look at a project that size, somewhere between US\$34bn and US\$39bn depending on who you talk to, you need a plan.

When that starts to come off – and people have mentioned the INPEX cliff - provided we follow the plan to develop the gas industry we have been working on for the last 49 years in the Northern Territory, we expand that and you start getting situations where we are negotiating with people trying to get a petrochemical plant here. If you talk to various people they will tell you that there are about 6000 jobs involved in that. The multiplier effect to that, when you start getting downstream processing and producing feedstock for others, is another 18 000 jobs. This is all part of the plan in relation to what is happening.

We have a situation where, until the election is over, people have stopped investing. I talk to people on a regular basis who tell me they will not invest until they see the outcome of the Northern Territory election.

To be quite frank, if the CLP is re-elected they will invest in gas – there are billions of dollars sitting there. If the other side is elected then it may go somewhere else.

When the ALP was in government, the then Chief Minister, Paul Henderson, Mr Vatskalis and I think Mr McCarthy all supported the fracking of shale gas. We are not talking about coal seam gas. You gave out permits to 96% of the Northern Territory to go off and explore.

Many people who have come up here, based on that information and the fact that there is bipartisan support for that, and invested money here thinking that will happen. In February, they found that the opposition said, 'We will have this moratorium'. The word 'five' entered into the situation - it was not finished - but we are making the assumption that it is a five-year moratorium. That has killed a lot of investment. In one company there was a 200 person job loss as a result of them pushing the stop button. When that happens, you have to try to maintain confidence in a place.

People are making decisions based on whether or not one side will now change the rules. In the previous ALP government there was one set of rules, then they changed the rules and said, 'We will not allow this, we will have a fracking moratorium until you look at the science.'

This is an important aspect of what is happening in the Northern Territory at the moment. There is a plan that when INPEX comes off, the gas picks up. That is why we are looking at the gas pipeline between Tennant Creek across to Mount Isa. There is an opportunity to look at domestic supplies. There are thousands of jobs involved and billions of dollars of investment sitting on this decision. When you look at our opportunities to supply domestic gas, the ridiculous thing about this whole issue of whether or not we stop gas - Gerry McCarthy, the member for Barkly, confirmed in April in the House that you guys will shut the gas industry down, because it very clearly states in your policy ...

Ms MANISON: Which is rubbish, Minister.

Mr STYLES: No, no, it very clearly states in your policy - and I will get it for you and bring it down after the break and table it. It is your policy that you will stop issuing extraction licences, exploration and extraction during the period of the moratorium. That is very clear. I have asked you guys twice in parliament to say that I am wrong. You have not. It is clear in your policy. I have a copy of the statement and I will bring it down and table it for you so you can have a look at it.

Immediately you said that, there was one company that just stopped their investment. That is somewhere between \$300bn and \$500bn this year they would have spent. New South Wales will run out of gas in a couple of years, maybe less. I do not know what it will do to keep its industries going. New South Wales may find itself in a position that if the Northern Territory is not providing gas to the state, it may have to import gas. That would be a ridiculous situation in this country where we - probably around 2020 from offshore wells and through Queensland - will be the only place in the world where we are the largest exporter of gas but we are importing it for domestic supply.

We already know that Queensland and South Australia are now courting these gas companies, asking them to come to Queensland and South Australia. I wonder why the opposition - in relation to business if you want to create jobs and economic development - would not look at the science, as your colleagues have in Queensland and South Australia, and say, 'We have looked at the science. We are not stopping our fracking of shale gas ...' – not coal seam gas. 'We are not stopping our shale gas production'. They are now courting the Northern Territory gas people to go to Queensland and South Australia. What an absurd situation, for people in the Northern Territory to support something like that.

I am here to support jobs for Territorians, for my kids, my grandkids and everyone else's kids and everyone else who is in that industry. If you do shut it down as a result of what you have said in parliament, then I fear for the future of the Northern Territory.

Ms MANISON: Okay, Minister, thank you for that. I point out that the moratorium was in place from February 2015. There are a few other factors that may be influencing investment in gas, such as perhaps the world oil prices. How many wells will be fracked next year? What is the reality? How big is this, in your mind? Can we go back to the point where – I want to keep asking you about ...

Mr STYLES: I will bring the stuff down to rebut that.

Ms MANISON: ... employment growth because you have to look back at this historically and look at how the government has performed over the last few years. We know there has been a lot of instability within

the government. But, Minister, I want you to look at the employment growth that was predicted in the Territory. If you look at last year's budget papers in 2015-16, the government predicted employment growth would be at 1.5% growth in 2014-15 and 1.5% in 2015-16 and 0.7% in 2016-17. Then when it turns out employment growth back in 2014 was actually minus-0.6% - a loss of jobs rather than growth - it is predicted to be at 1.5% in 2015-16 and then dropping off to 0.3% in 2016-17.

This is a quote directly from the Manpower national survey:

Northern Territory

Job seekers can expect the weakest hiring climate since the region was first measured in the survey in Quarter 2 2004, according to employers who report a Net Employment Outlook of -1%. The outlook is also the first negative forecast for the region. Hiring prospects decline by six percentage points quarter-over-quarter and are 15 percentage points weaker year-over-year.

You agree that it is tough for business out there at the moment and employment figures have weakened. In your previous response you spoke about the post-INPEX construction phase. Everybody could see that from a country mile away; it was well-known that that was happening. You also said last year, from a government perspective, that everything was fine in the economy. Then, we have seen a sudden run to a Boosting Our Economy package and the opposition welcomes investment. Why did the government not get onto this situation sooner?

Mr STYLES: There are a couple of statements I would like to deal with. Your first statement in relation to the oil prices in the world and to gas. Australia is very well placed in the gas industry. There is one in 10 projects in the world likely to succeed. I am happy to give you a copy of this. If you look at this - I do not know whether the people watching can see it - there are all these gas boats here and this is Australia out in front. There is a reason for that.

First, our outlook in the gas industry is really positive. You may not get this. There is a guy named Geoffrey Cann from Deloitte who is a world expert on this, and if you ever get an opportunity, it is good to go to his presentation. I am happy to send you a copy of the PowerPoint presentation he gave recently at the Petroleum Club NT.

There are no new greenfields attracting investment in the near future, so those that have the ability to expand in the world - and especially in Australia - are the ones that will go ahead. Only one in 10 LNG plants will proceed beyond the planning stages. Only Australia currently has the capacity to expand. Gladstone LNG will probably double in size. You have INPEX sitting out here with two trains and the capacity to put another five in. These are the places where your gas will go. This is the place where people will drill for gas. INPEX's offshore reserves is 30 trillion cubic feet. We probably have in the Beetaloo Basin in Central Australia about 260 trillion cubic feet. That is enough to last us and our export for the next 200 to 400 years.

Gas is not only used for power generation. Half the stuff in this room - your computers, the microphones in front of us, and the pencil that I am using - comes out of plastics that come from gas. Onshore gas means that people like INPEX will put in extra trains. When people put in those extra trains, people like Dow Corporation or Mitsui may come here and build a petrochemical plant. Then the downstream processing of that brings thousands and thousands of jobs into the Northern Territory.

This issue of the gas is important. We have a plan. Sure, there has been a downturn in the mining industry and the whole of Australia is feeling that, but when you look at where we sit, we are equal third in Australia economically and are leaders in construction. They are not our figures; they are the ABS figures. Look at what is going on around Australia. If you listened to the radio yesterday on ABC radio, there are people in Townsville who are screaming for jobs and investment. Here we are, looking down the barrel of being able to generate investment in the Northern Territory and create jobs for our kids. These are tens of thousands of jobs we are talking about, it is not just 500 or 600 jobs.

When you look at the ability to expand INPEX and ConocoPhillips with onshore gas and then process that onshore gas, the services needed are in transport, shore-based services, the logistics, utilities, maintenance, inspection repairs and the steel construction. Had we had the drilling happening - because people in the gas industry have stopped - the people in the steel fabrication industries here, which have been struggling, may not be in such a challenging situation.

When Michael Gunner, the Leader of the Opposition, made that statement in February everybody hit the panic button and pushed the stop button. Of course you will have people who are struggling out there at the moment. We are doing what we can. We have put another \$100m in up until 30 June to try to boost our economy and keep the cash flow going. Hopefully, after the next election we will still have a gas industry, and not burning diesel down in Alice Springs, Yulara and Tennant Creek. We will also be looking at perhaps doing a deal with Dow or Mitsui to get a petrochemical plant here, and that will be thousands of jobs for Territorians.

Ms MANISON: Thank you, Minister. Turning back to some of the issues we have in the economy at present, I refer you to page 85 of the *Northern Territory Economy* budget book and the chart on employment in key industries. The table reflects economic activity and employment in key industries from 2014-15, where we saw the minus-0.6% in employment growth. It notes a minus-15.6% reduction in mining, manufacturing and employment, a minus-2% in construction employment, minus-7.7% in employment wholesale and retail trade and an overall minus-1.3% in employment. Out of six categories there was a negative employment in four of them. These figures show that the Territory was going backwards in a number of industries, starting in 2014-15.

Why did your government insist all the way through 2015 that business was doing well and – as your own advertising campaign said – that it was on track in the Territory? How could you miss these warning signs? Have you missed the opportunity to better support businesses during this downturn?

Mr STYLES: Before I go to that, I would like to table your policy document from February where it clearly states that:

Considering all factors associated with the development of an onshore shale gas industry and the timeframe needed to comprehensively review the science ...

Mr VOWLES: You are sounding like a mining lobbyist here, Minister.

... Territory Labor will implement a moratorium covering all unconventional gas prospecting exploration and extraction activities that will continue until the expiration of or the completion of ...

Mr VOWLES: There was an oversupply of LNG and the market has fallen through.

Ms MANISON: There was a moratorium in place before then, Minister.

Mr VOWLES: We would like to get to the questions.

Ms MANISON: Minister, would you like to come back to my question about all these warning signs in 2015 and it being on track ...

Mr STYLES: I am happy to come back to the question. I just wanted to get that in there.

Madam CHAIR: Thank you, Minister.

Mr STYLES: Thank you.

Ms MANISON: ... apparently, and where we are now? Could you have better prepared, as the Minister for Business, with your agency to prepare for this economic downturn?

Mr STYLES: The Northern Territory remains one of the strongest labour markets in Australia. In May 2016 the Northern Territory's trend labour force participation rate was 74.8%, which is the highest rate of the jurisdictions in Australia. The Northern Territory's trend unemployment rate for May 2016 was 4.1%, a decrease of 0.1% and a percentage point from April 2016, and the second lowest rate in all jurisdictions. If you look around Australia we are travelling better than most.

The national trend unemployment rate was unchanged at 5.7% in May 2016. Nationally at a 5% unemployment rate the economy is considered to be in full employment. The Northern Territory has been operating at below 5% unemployment since October 2013. This would suggest that the NT is either operating at full employment or the underemployment rate at which the NT is considered to be in full employment is lower than nationally.

If you go through and look at year-on-year percentages: public administration safety has increased by 2.1%; construction 6.1%; education and training 2.1%; retail trade 1.8%; accommodation and food services 17.9% - all to do with 34% increase in national tourism figures; transport and postal had a slight decrease; mining is up by 1%; manufacturing and wholesale trade – the list just goes on. You can keep talking about some things in relation to employment figures. When you look at ...

Ms MANISON: Minister, we are talking about employment figures from your budget books in 2014-15, with all those warning signs. We saw the Boosting Our Economy package come through in 2016, within this calendar year, when those warning signs were there. We were bombarded with \$0.5m advertising campaign telling everyone everything was on track.

Could more have been done, from your government's perspective, particularly supporting businesses from your agency's perspective, given those warning signs around employment?

Mr STYLES: The situation is this: the gross state product at 2014-15 was 10.5%. That was a very high figure. It was the best in the world, but it was due to the INPEX stuff.

We are sitting at a gross state product at \$22.5bn, which is obviously driven by increased private and public sector investment activity and growth in household consumption. I will look at some of these figures – I will come back to a point I would like to make in relation to this, but I will give you some of the information I have here. The Department of Treasury and Finance forecast the NT economy to grow by 2.1% in 2015-16. That reflected a decline in private investment from record levels, partially offset by the strengthening of public consumption and improving net trade balance.

NT economy growth is expected to moderate in 2016-17 to 1.5% growth, driven by further declines in private investment and partially offset by strengthening public investment. Growth is expected to strengthen from 2017-18, which is 5% in 2017-18 and 4.1% in 2018-19, reflecting the commencement of the production and exports of LNG from the INPEX LNG plant.

Deloitte Access Economics' forecast for March 2016 is the Northern Territory's annual economic growth will average about 3.2% between 2015 and 2019-20. It is the second highest growth rate in Australia. As I said yesterday on the radio, there were people in Queensland who had bought homes around the coal towns for \$965 000 a couple of years ago, and were crying because it went for \$95 000 at auction yesterday.

When you look at what is going on around Australia, the Northern Territory has been managed quite well, which is why we are sitting at number three across the picture and in construction we are sitting at number one. We have also noticed, because of the situation down south and coming off the mining boom, we have interstate companies turning up here, trying to keep people on their books, undercutting local business. That is why we have the Buy Local Plan. We are about trying to build and maintain local capability and capacity, and increase our Northern Territory economy and make sure the money stays here.

In a holistic sense, you do not just put \$100m into the economy, you have to target it and make sure it goes to the right people. The Home Improvement Scheme is targeted at mums and dads industries, small businesses, tradies, painters, sparkies, tilers, chippies – all of those people. It is not just about throwing money out there and hoping it fixes the problem. It is targeted and you have to make sure you get it out to the right people in a timely manner.

Ms MANISON: Minister, we need to see money flow through the local businesses, which flows well into my next question. You mentioned the steel fabrication manufacturers earlier. That was an industry where we were taken on a bus tour to see their operations through the Chamber of Commerce not too long ago. I have to say it was quite a sad trip, in many ways, to see how tough those local businesses were doing.

I understand the government was taken on a similar tour some time before, and several of those businesses have shut since, I have been advised. We are talking about M & J Welding, with about 10 staff have gone, PDQ Enterprises has lost about 20 staff; RAS, 20 staff; TDS, 25 staff; Oil, Mining and Gas, 10 staff; Kaffir Industries, 10 staff; Architectural Fabrication, three staff; GAT Welding, three staff; and about two weeks ago we heard about EC&E closing, and they had about 50 staff 18 months ago and been reduced down to about 15.

They worked in a diverse range of sections across the Territory. Many of them were working in construction here, for example. One thing they continued to say through that tour was that they did not feel government had been listening to them; they had been telling them for some time about those warning

signs and had been making it loud and clear that they did not feel that the Buy Local procurement policies were working with the intended effect. Many of them were seeing work go interstate or overseas, and that policy was not flowing through to support them.

Given the steel manufacturers and fabricators had spoken to the government about this sometime last year or perhaps very early this year, why did it take so long to act on this?

Mr STYLES: With the Buy Local campaign we spent a long time consulting industry and talking to them. You just do not talk to a couple of people and then knock a policy up. You have encouraged the government to consult widely in the past, so we have consulted widely. There are people down south who are struggling. Businesses want to keep their employees on. If they have a bit of fat in the balance sheet they are taking a loss just to keep their people employed.

In the construction industry, we upped the local content weighting to 30% and reduced the price weighting from 40% down to 35%. We have given the locals a big boost. Not all the steel manufacturers are suffering. There are a number who are suffering, but equally there are people out there doing quite well in the steel fabrication industry.

When you take away the incentive – there are a number of companies and I have spoken to some of these people, who have indicated to me they are not sure what will happen in the future. The gas industry in the Northern Territory would have been their saviour, but if the opposition shuts the gas – if you win the election ...

Ms MANISON: We spoke to one business that was specifically dedicated to gas. We went out to about six different business, very broad in the delivery of what they do ...

Mr STYLES: If you ...

Ms MANISON: As you know, onshore gas is in a period of exploration at the moment, so it would be quite some time before you would see any serious commercial investment.

Mr STYLES: I hate to correct you, but there are gas fields that can be tapped into immediately. They are providing gas through to Alice Springs, Tennant Creek and Yulara. You can increase the production out of those wells very quickly if you choose to.

When you say you are in a period of exploration ...

Ms MANISON: Minister, we were talking to a many diverse steel manufacturing businesses as well.

Mr STYLES: Yes, and I have been talking to many diverse steel manufacturers as well. You made a statement that we were in the exploration stage. No, there are companies which have shut down exploration and drilling. Those drill rigs have now left the Northern Territory and gone elsewhere.

Queensland and South Australia are drilling. Those rigs have gone interstate to Labor-held states which are now courting the gas people here to go to Queensland and South Australia. That is the reality of what is happening. That is jobs going out of the Territory into the Labor states of Queensland and South Australia.

When you talk about the diverse range of people in the steel manufacturing industry, there is a total downturn in Australia. You have people coming up here, which is why we looked. We knew this would probably happen, which is why we have the Buy Local campaign. We looked at the local development value-add that you had and tried to tweak that. It was not working. We had to go back to the drawing board and develop something new, which was the Buy Local.

The ACCC says you cannot shut the gate, so I am assuming you are aware of that. You cannot lock the gate at the Northern Territory borders and tell everyone else to keep out, but you can build local capacity and capability. That is something the government has been very aware of. When we talked to some of the people – and I have spoken to them; we have probably been talking to some of the same people – they told me that when you go out there, there are people who are in oil and gas who are now going into different areas and competing with people who traditionally were not going into general fabrication. Everyone out there is trying to get as much work as they can. What we are trying to do is make sure that as many Territorians as possible get that work.

The Northern Territory gross domestic products are approaching about \$24bn. We are about \$6.5bn of that; about 25% of the economy of the Northern Territory. We can influence and dictate what happens and where that money needs to be spent through our tender processes and our contracts arrangements. But we cannot dictate what private enterprise does. It is a question for private enterprise as to what they are doing with interstate people.

The other thing the government has done, the prison was a PPP. Once governments go to PPPs you can lose control of who you will use. But with the designer construct model the government decided on in relation to Palmerston Regional Hospital, we keep control of who works, who gets the jobs and the steel fabrication on that site. We are quite proud that we kept the jobs here in the Northern Territory. Even though LendLease is probably one of the most experienced builders of hospitals in Australia - I think they are on about number 147 hospitals ...

Mr WOOD: Sitzler could do a good job.

Mr STYLES: Sorry?

Mr WOOD: They have built some ...

Mr STYLES: We had this discussion in parliament, Gerry.

Mr WOOD: I just thought I would mention it; you mentioned a lot of things there.

Mr STYLES: Yes, no harm in mentioning it again. You want to make sure the people who are overseeing designing of hospitals in particular, have expertise in this area. Sitzler is a good company, no doubt ...

Mr WOOD: They can read a plan, yes, they are very good.

Mr STYLES: The Minister and department Chief Executive Officers undertook a tour of local steel fabricators. This is going back to 2 January. I do not know when yours was, but ours was on 2 January.

Ms MANISON: A lot later than that, Minister.

Mr STYLES: We were talking to them to get first-hand understanding of the issues being faced by them. That is where you start to look at where you target the Boosting our Economy package, because you do not just do that overnight either. We were already working on that last year to make sure we get it right. Then you target it. You have to go back through DoI. You have to look at what projects you will concentrate on to make sure you put as much money through the local fabrication workshops as you can.

When you talk about getting work for them, you have to go through the procuring agencies. Admittedly, the Department of Infrastructure has a lot. We looked at where we would have maximum bang for buck in relation to steel fabrication, and that is where a lot of that Boosting Our Economy work has gone.

Mr VOWLES: Minister, to confirm that, all the steel for the Palmerston hospital is sourced from local companies?

Mr STYLES: The steel manufacturing that I am aware of, at this point, is all local.

Mr VOWLES: Are you confirming that it is all local?

Mr STYLES: At this stage.

Mr VOWLES: The steel, all the fabrications, all local companies?

Mr STYLES: My understanding is that it is all – there is 100% local content on the site. That was the last figure I had.

Ms MANISON: Thank you, Minister. Can I continue or do you need to update that answer?

Mr STYLES: It is in DoI's portfolio, but my understanding is it is 100%. That is the last figure that I saw a few weeks ago.

Ms MANISON: Okay, thank you, Minister.

Staying on the theme of infrastructure investment and the decisions that you have made as a government to invest in infrastructure at a time where we are seeing that there are real downturns in the economy. We agree about the importance of infrastructure investment, it is something that is very important to do. I want to ask you that they about your government's future plans with that infrastructure investment.

I refer you to Budget Paper No 2 on page 86, the purchase of non-financial assets. With regard to the forward estimates for capital and minor new works expenditure, taking out the repairs and maintenance expenditure, if you look to this specific growth you will see the planned expenditure for this financial year coming up, in cash, in capital works for 2016-17 is \$1.4bn, which is something your government has spoken a lot about in the delivery of your budget.

However, in 2017-18 this then is cut by \$500m down to \$974m. It gets worse in 2018-19 where you see a further cut of \$300m down to \$653m, and then you get the budget into surplus in 2019-20 and there is a further cut of \$50m.

That is the pathway your government has plotted forward when it comes to capital infrastructure expenditure and it shows that after the next two years you will cut 50% out of capital works, which can impact business and jobs. As the Minister for Business, and working as part of a Cabinet team towards that capital investment, did you do any modelling about the impact of that big step down on local business and jobs and the impact that could have in the Territory?

Mr STYLES: For the details of what you are talking about, you need to go back to the Treasurer. He has all those figures at his fingertips. I do not have them. I do have what government is doing in relation to assisting small business. There is a range of things we do to support small business with our business development officers. When you look at it, 94% of people in the Northern Territory are employed by small- and medium-size enterprises. We are out there doing a whole lot more developing Northern Territory businesses and industries with the Start, Run and Grow Program, simplifying the way to do business, managing the NT's training system to meet the Territory's current and future skills needs. When you ask where we are going, we are trying to maximise jobs.

My job as the Minister for Employment and Training, as opposed to Business is to make sure we can maximise people's jobs by working through some of that. I am sure you have some questions about that when we get to that output group.

Attracting new investment is one of the best things we can do for the Northern Territory. I am a great believer that our future is in the gas industry and the downstream processing of gas. There are thousands and thousands of jobs and billions of dollars of investment. The best thing you can do to people is give them a job, but if you do not have investment or a climate where people want to come and invest, then what do you have? You have downturns, and sadly that is what we might be looking at if we do not have a gas industry. That is why in the parliament, here and everywhere I can, I encourage you guys to rethink your position on gas that we have been doing for nearly 50 years here. That is when you come down to strategic policy in relation to what is going on, but ...

Ms MANISON: Minister, as part of the development of the budget from the Department of Business perspective – considering you have Employment and Training as well, as you said – when you look at those major capital infrastructure investments, you have the packages out there at the moment to stimulate local infrastructure investment and flow-on effects to local business. When you have a forecast of a steep stepping out of infrastructure investment, do you do much work, from your department's perspective, in ensuring that you properly look at the possible flow-on effects to jobs and local businesses?

Mr STYLES: As I explained earlier, we know we are coming off INPEX. We had planned that with all the exploration and the commitments by gas companies to look at what is happening in the Territory and to get the gas up and flowing across to the eastern seaboard in two years' time. When there is a downturn the government should try to increase its capital works program. But in a couple of years' time the government needs to pull up because private enterprise will come in and fill that gap.

That there are billions of dollars of investment in the gas industry is not something I have plucked out of the sky; there are billions of dollars to spend. When things pick up with the private sector – maybe it is a philosophical difference, but governments do not make money; we spend it. It is private enterprise that makes money and generates wealth. We facilitate it and make sure in facilitating that the community is looked after and we have all our social obligations. If you set up the right facilitation and environment where people can have confidence to come here and spend billions of dollars, it will create jobs.

Once you start to do that, government and the taxpayer can back off a little and make sure private enterprise picks up. Therefore, we can reduce the debt we inherited and make sure the economy keeps going. It is a plan – how far do you want me to go in relation to the plan?

Ms MANISON: Minister, one thing that has an impact on local business is population. It is an important issue in the Northern Territory and we are seeing somewhat of a decline. Last year Treasury predicted in 2014-15 that the population growth would be at 0.9% and it reached 0.1%. They went on to predict a population growth of 1.8% for 2015-16 and this year's budget books have it predicted at 0.6%. Last year they predicted population growth in 2016-17 would be at 1% and now it is at 1%. Is this likely to be achieved given what we have seen in the last few years?

There was a lot of debate the other day between the Leader of the Opposition and the Treasurer about population growth and what is driving it. It is very clear from the population figures that the increase is driven by births, as opposed to people coming to the Territory.

We know the Department of Business plays a key role in promoting Territory business to the rest of the nation and overseas. With the population figures in decline, what is the department doing to attract more workers, more adults, to the Territory to work here and call this place home?

Mr STYLES: A number of these things should have gone to the Treasurer, but I am happy to comment on some of them.

Ms MANISON: We want your business perspective of the work they do to promote Territory business ...

Mr STYLES: Let us talk about population growth. How do you increase population? You have to get an economic growth pattern going. When you look at the mining – I know that iron ore is back at around about \$70 per tonne at the moment – we have had huge downturn in Australia. What else is there to create jobs and economic development in the Northern Territory? The biggest one we have is the onshore gas industry, which has the potential to be huge for Territorians.

Our government's plan is to drive economic growth in the Northern Territory. Perhaps I could outline the medium- to longer-term strategic directions and priorities. Basically, we are looking at unlocking northern Australia's economic potential, including the Northern Territory's ability to become the gateway to Asia, and Asia to Australia. When you look at what Darwin will become, apart from the gas industry, you are looking at the leasing of the port. As a result of the leasing of the port we have had people from Rizhao, which is a town in Shandong where Lambridge owns the largest privately-owned port in China.

Zhou Xiaoping, in April 2015, told the then federal Minister for Trade, Andrew Robb, that he sees three maritime hubs in this part of the world: Hong Kong; Singapore; and Darwin. That was very interesting because Andrew Robb spoke to him about that. The Chinese intend to make Darwin a hub for distribution into Australia. There are lots of reasons they want to do that.

Port Jackson Partners went around the world seeking people to lease our port. The other thing people reading this or listening may not understand is Territory taxpayers own 20% of the leasing company. We have people on the board so we know what is happening in that company.

Here are jobs, a distribution centre and the railway line. When you get Landbridge working with Rizhao, Hong Kong and the Chinese people, you have Japan, Taiwan, Thailand, Vietnam and Singapore sending products of high value, low volume through Darwin.

Then look at the rail system. The reason they have done the feasibility study of the railway line from Tennant Creek to Mount Isa is to connect up the entry to the eastern seaboard down through Brisbane and Sydney, via Tennant Creek to Mount Isa, connecting into the national rail network. This is about creating jobs. Look at the amount of money that will be spent to simply build the railway line and then to operate it. It is the same with the gas pipeline that will run from Tennant Creek to Mount Isa; it is about getting product into the domestic market which will create jobs for Territorians.

In relation to getting that gas out of the ground in the Northern Territory and to NSW so they can maintain their economic development, Deloitte tells us royalties of up to \$430m a year will come in. We have already committed that to go into education for scholarships for Territory kids. People who may wish to reskill can apply for scholarships. From memory, the Education budget was about \$965m this year. You get to the stage where you are putting hundreds of millions of dollars extra into education.

We want to make it the knowledge state, but that is all predicated on the royalties from onshore gas that come to the Northern Territory, as opposed to the royalties from offshore gas that go to the federal government. We are trying to get kids in the Territory to get those high-valued jobs, to maintain their presence here, to build families and make sure they have the opportunities we can afford them by being the knowledge state.

When you start looking at the trade coming from Asia into Australia, it is not only that but the reverse trade. Those who understand business know that when you are dealing with letters of credit, all sorts of financial arrangements, everyone is looking for that competitive edge. You can get that by becoming more efficient and effective. To do that we have to build the railway line from Tennant Creek to Mount Isa, get the ships in and do what Landbridge is doing, which is put another kilometre of quay line in, refrigerator container access points and build a cold storage shed for aggregation of product from northern Australia. We are very keen to work with the port and other operators and shipping companies to make sure we can get product out of northern Australia.

There is also the capacity to build a railway line - which we are also looking at - from Kununurra across to Katherine to join up so that Darwin becomes the peak of the axis for northern Australia. We will become the quickest place to get product out of Australia into Asia. In the days where everyone is chasing the competitive advantage and saving the cent out of the dollar, that is the difference between making a profit and perhaps not.

We are about facilitating that growth. When we talk about jobs, the best thing we can do is get on and make sure we get an onshore gas industry, the railway lines between Tennant Creek and Mount Isa, Kununurra through to Katherine, make sure we work with the port developers and shipping companies and continue what Department of Business does to support export initiatives. We have people who are getting financial and technical support for sending people overseas and increasing our ability to export products, not only from Darwin in the Northern Territory but also from northern Australia through Darwin. That is what we have to do to create jobs and that is how you increase population.

Ms MANISON: Thank you, Minister. A bit of housekeeping, Madam Chair. I am sorry to pull you back a bit from the start of the opening statement, but we spoke about the whole-of-government global questions. Because we will be constrained with time this evening because the Minister has a lot within his portfolios in some very important areas, such as Asian relations and engagement, as well as Employment and Training, and licensing - and the list goes on to OCPE and so forth.

If I have time to get to some of these questions about the things that otherwise probably reflect whole-of-agency, such as FTE numbers, grants, procurement and so forth, are you comfortable if I ask those in Output 4.0, Corporate and Governance, if I have time? I want to be sure of that. I do not want to be pulled back to say that I missed my opportunity at the start.

Mr STYLES: No, that is all right.

Ms MANISON: Thank you, Minister. Talking about business confidence – is that okay, Madam Chair?

Madam CHAIR: If it is fine with the Minister, it is fine with me.

Ms MANISON: Wonderful. Talking about business confidence, it is very important that we have good business confidence if we want to see growth within the economy. According to the March quarter of 2016, the latest Sensis Business Confidence Index, business confidence in the Northern Territory has slumped.

The Northern Territory had the third-lowest business confidence in Australia, at plus-27%. Expectations for the year ahead are at their lowest nationally in the Territory at minus-29%. In the NT, perception of the economy now is that it is slowing at 46% versus 2% who believe it is growing. Attitudes towards the Territory government policies showed 24% think they support, whereas 31% think they work against it, and it equalled a minus-7%.

Would you agree that was a pretty damning assessment of your government's economic and business policies at that time?

Mr STYLES: Let us talk about business confidence. When the opposition was in government - as they were prior to 2012 - supporting industry, with bipartisan support on INPEX and the gas industry and all the science that went with that - everyone was on board. Then you come to February this year, where you

people made an announcement of a policy at your February annual conference and then repeated it in parliament.

If you are an investor, you would think, 'Am I going to go to the Northern Territory now?' As I said earlier, there are billions of dollars of investment sitting there waiting to go. If I was an investor, I would be doing exactly the same thing. I would want to know what will happen in the Northern Territory. Of course, I would expect business confidence to be down; people have stopped doing things.

Let us talk about units. If you want to come here and get a unit, what will you do?

If people shut the gas industry down - and the opposition has indicated will look at all the water licences issued. You have Tropical Forestry Services in Katherine starting to ask, 'What will happen?' You will take the water licences back. They have spent hundreds of millions of dollars there already and then someone will say, 'Oh, we might take your water licences back'. It is a ridiculous situation. I will give you a driver's licence, you go and buy a nice car or a work ute and then after you buy that and invest it, I come along and say, 'Sorry, I am going to take your licence to drive that, so you cannot earn your living'. You would have to think that the people doing that were nuts. Where is the confidence that you give the community?

We also know that other people - in relation to water - Queensland is now courting our people in the Territory to go to Queensland, saying, 'We will give you whatever you want'. What is happening in the Territory? People from Queensland and South Australia are trying to get our gas investment and jobs. Now you have people from Queensland trying to get our water. And the opposition is saying, 'Oh, we will take those water licences off you', and Queensland saying, 'We will give you all the water you want' ...

Ms MANISON: Minister, we have also had one of the most unstable, dysfunctional, chaotic governments in the history of the Northern Territory, with a record amount of reshuffles. I think you are the eighth Deputy Chief Minister.

Mr STYLES: You can say whatever you like in relation to that. It is the results that count and ...

Ms MANISON: That does not help with business confidence and investment.

Mr STYLES: We are number one in construction in the country and number three economically. We have all sorts of good news stories and a plan to build the Territory and create jobs. It would appear that you have a plan to stop the gas industry, so there go billions of dollars and 6300 jobs. That is not my figure; that is Deloitte's figure. You made the threat of taking water licences back so people are not investing. Everyone stopped spending. That is the fear you create in the investment fraternity where they say, 'Let us just wait and see'. Everybody stops. That creates a whole bunch of situations.

The oil and gas supply and service opportunities for local businesses is about \$1bn operational expenditure annually and going forward. You need to have that certainty, but sadly we are now in a situation where, until 27 August, people have stopped investing and buying stuff here because they want to know whether it will go somewhere.

If you shut down the gas industry and the water industry and lot of other stuff, then people start saying, 'We will go to Queensland and invest there, or we will go to South Australia'. What happens to the Territory? People can laugh at it, but that is a real question that ...

Ms MANISON: I do not think anyone is laughing, that is for sure.

Mr VOWLES: With 16 reshuffles, three Chief Ministers ...

Mr STYLES: Let us talk about economics. Let us not worry – if you want to go down there, let us talk about the Opposition Leader and his three attempts to get the leadership ...

Mr VOWLES: You are talking about business confidence. They do not have any confidence if you cannot be together in the same room. Seriously!

Mr STYLES: He took three attempts to get the leadership ...

Mr WOOD: A point of order, Madam Chair!

Ms MANISON: Minister, is this where you really want to go?

Mr STYLES: Member if you want to go there, I am happy to go there.

Ms MANISON: Let us talk about the track record of the last CLP in the last term of government.

Mr WOOD: A point of order, Madam Chair!

Madam CHAIR: Member for Nelson, you would like to make a comment?

Mr WOOD: I am not sure what the state of our political affairs has to do with Business NT, unless it is to attract tourists to the Northern Territory to have a look at it?

Mr STYLES: Excuse me, Madam Chair, but I did not start that.

Mr WOOD: I did not say you did; I am just pulling it up.

Mr STYLES: It was the opposition members who raised this. When you start hitting on some raw nerves about economic development and jobs in the Territory and what is happening, they start to take it off down the path of, 'Oh, let us talk about your dysfunctional government'. Let us go back to the economics. Let us challenge the opposition, member for Nelson.

Mr WOOD: No, I ...

Mr STYLES: Let us ask them what they are doing about jobs and the destruction of jobs and investments.

Mr WOOD: Madam Chair, I am happy to talk about the economic development of the Northern Territory.

Mr STYLES: Excellent, me too.

Mr WOOD: I would love to hear a bit more about horticulture and tourism and some of those things as well.

Madam CHAIR: Well, you are here to ask the questions, member for Nelson.

Mr WOOD: I know, I have heard the gas ...

Ms MANISON: Member for Nelson, I am happy to hand over to you to ask a few questions.

Mr WOOD: It is okay; I have nearly been gassed out. All I have heard is gas, gas, gas, and I thought there is so much hot air going round here we could try horticulture, agriculture, and tourism.

Madam CHAIR: Thank you, member for Nelson. It might be useful to keep the political banter to a minimum and stick to the answers to the questions.

Mr STYLES: Excellent advice. Thank you, Madam Chair.

Ms MANISON: Member for Nelson, did you have questions for relating to Output Group 1.0 because, again, I am running well behind the time clock. Other members are wanting to ask questions in relation to other business portfolios.

Mr WOOD: I had a little question.

Ms MANISON: Please.

Mr WOOD: I remember something out of your long statement, Minister ...

Mr STYLES: Oh, thank you.

Mr WOOD: ... even though we are not talking about the statement now. You talked about the Pop-Up Business Centres. Could you explain a little about what they are, where they are situated and what the cost of running them is and who is employed in those Pop-Up Business Centres?

Mr STYLES: There are three of them so far: one on the Tiwi Islands at Wurrumiyanga, one at Borroloola and one at Maningrida. They are placed for our business development officers to work with people on a one-on-one experience for them. The Business in the Bush initiative we announced in May last year, I think, is a suite of programs and initiatives that is designed to strengthen business services provided by the Department of Business into regional and remote individual businesses, and generally communities across the Northern Territory.

We have identified a strategic need to make sure we can establish these Pop-Up Business Centres on communities to facilitate business. One of the most successful ones that happened as a result of these business development officers visiting was the outback bakeries. Are you familiar with outback bakeries?

Mr WOOD: We had the question today. We know that three exist but we know there is ...

Mr STYLES: And there is another 15 coming.

Madam CHAIR: Yes, we heard about that today from the Minister of Local Government ...

Mr STYLES: Excellent, oh good. I thought it was a great initiative to get businesses going out in the bush ...

Mr WOOD: Minister, that is good, and they will be run by Outback Stores or something. But do we have any Indigenous businesses you can let us know about? Some businesses may be out in Arnhem Land. One of my concerns is you have spoken about the big picture, the gas and all that, but unemployment in remote and regional communities is much higher than in the Darwin and Palmerston area. To me, that has always been a concern, which is why you have so many people on social security. What is your program to try to change that? You have been in the business for the last four years. Through your programs, are there Indigenous businesses operating successfully?

Mr STYLES: I will give you an example that I really love. It is of a lady by the name of Kathleen Buzzacott, an Aboriginal lady, who is a hairdresser. A lovely young lady, she has a couple of kids who are teenagers. She is probably heading towards middle age, but she looks very young. She was a hairdresser and wanted to start a business in relation to her art and her jewellery-making. She applied, as lots of other businesses do, for a grant through the Department of Business.

We gave her a \$30 000 grant to build a small shed, which had a concrete floor, tiles and an air conditioner. That is her studio where she sold her art from. She then got another \$6000 grant to get her son through some courses in relation to online marketing and websites. They now have a website; her son is employed in the online business, where they now are selling to the rest of the world. Her other son basically runs everything else in the business and does all the preparation for little bus tours. He does all the packing and marketing and gets it all out there.

So out of that \$36 000, as part of Business in the Bush, we have created four jobs. The woman has created a job for herself; her two sons work in the business with her and a new hairdresser is required.

Mr WOOD: Which community?

Mr STYLES: She is just out of Alice Springs.

When we look at the Indigenous Business Development Program – there are more examples. Go Wide Cattle Company – \$33 000 to support building an on-site meat processing facility to enable them to meet a niche market of locally produced beef products to the Northern Territory market. The expected official opening is in four to five weeks. There are plenty of examples.

When we came to government 42 people were working on contracts for government. I think there are 562 now, so that is more than a 1000% increase. We think we have done very well in that area given the length of time and some of the challenges we have had.

The Department of Business is out there in relation to rural and remote assistance, running programs. Even work health and safety – recently they have been to the top Arnhem Land, across to Nhulunbuy and right through that area, including Gunbalanya and Maningrida, talking to local businesses about work health and safety. It is about making sure these people have the same opportunities and access to the business support that someone in the city does. That is what we are trying to do; obviously it is more expensive to deliver it out there, but we are spending the money and getting out there.

These pop-up businesses in the community – take, for instance, the one on the Tiwi Islands. The Tiwi Land Council is a very proactive, business-orientated land council. They have the wood chipping industry and have asked government to look at trying to get investment on the islands. We have facilitated some roadworks there. They now have the tourism industry coming up – building and building – with the new ferry service over there. It is a reliable ferry service, bringing more tourists there. The art work has been sold, and so on.

There are examples all over the place with some of the fantastic things that are happening. Aboriginal people have shifted – I am sure, member for Nelson, you have seen the shift, even in the last five years from about 10 years ago, where the education level of people out there has risen. People want to be part of business; they do not want to sit down anymore. There may be a few people who choose to sit down, but, from my experience, the majority want to participate in business in the bush. That is why we have the Indigenous Business Development program, the Business in the Bush program and others, which are there to assist.

Madam CHAIR: The questions about the horse racing industry, can I ask them now? Is that appropriate – which output group is it?

Mr WOOD: That is getting into licensing.

Mr STYLES: Licensing NT, Output 3.1.

Madam CHAIR: Okay, 3.1.

Mr STYLES: If you do not get to ask them you can ask them in Corporate and Governance at the end, if you like.

Ms MANISON: That is a full category, is it, Minister? You have been very accommodating.

Mr STYLES: I am a nice person – just ask me and I will tell you.

Madam CHAIR: Thank you, Minister. We are still on questions relating to whole-of-government.

Ms MANISON: I am happy to move to Output 1.1, Madam Chair. We are in a race against the clock already.

Madam CHAIR: We will conclude whole-of-government questions.

OUTPUT GROUP 1.0 – BUSINESS AND INDUSTRY DEVELOPMENT SUPPORT **Output 1.1 – Business NT**

Madam CHAIR: We will now move to Output Group 1.0, Business and Industry Development Support, Output 1.1, Business NT. Are there any questions?

Ms MANISON: **Minister**, I want to know from the Business NT expenditure what specific funds are going into Indigenous economic development. How much?

Mr STYLES: Hang on a moment and I will get those figures for you. The business development grants of the Indigenous Business Development Program in 2014-15 were \$340 000. The grants provided to businesses as of 31 March was \$732 000. That went to 41 businesses, as opposed to 20 last year. A fair amount of effort has been put into Indigenous businesses and developing and assisting them. Grants committed but not yet expended to a further 16 businesses were \$108 309.

When you look at the programs and Aboriginal workforce participation – for instance, there are some great figures in the public service. The budget for the Indigenous Workforce Participation Initiatives Program was \$1.1m. There are 48 businesses supported, 262 people in jobs and 93 people with career enhancement outcomes.

For local jobs and traineeship programs funded by the Commonwealth, there was \$8m over four years from 2012 to 2016. There were 21 businesses supported, 35 trainees employed and the program is demonstrating a fantastic result of a 75% retention rate.

For Business in the Bush, there is \$450 000 over 2015-16 and 2016-17. That is going to five businesses and contracts are in place to achieve the target of 30 jobs. The Indigenous mobility grant funding was \$250 000 over 2015-16 and 2016-17, and those funds support the labour coordination projects of which there are three in the latest grant funding round. That is to support a mobilised workforce.

In 2015-16 Aboriginal workforce initiatives have supported 355 Aboriginal people in jobs and career enhancements, and 69 businesses and organisations benefited through the NT government's investment in Aboriginal employment.

There are some good outcomes. Take the politics out of it and it is great for Aboriginal people. It is a good result.

Mr WOOD: Will you keep going on that subject?

Ms MANISON: No, please go, Gerry.

Mr WOOD: One of the things I raised with the Chief Minister, and raised a number of times in parliament, was about trying to create employment and overcome some of the overcrowding in houses to get Aboriginal people building their own houses, not just being part of a contract run from Canberra. Have you looked at least at reviewing whether you can have communities building their own houses, not to the extent that we build them at the moment, great suburban copies, but decent houses that are suitable for the tropics, at a reasonable price, that would employ locals and would use local materials?

I am not just making it up, but if anyone lived at Daly River in the 1970s they would have seen a brick machine and they would have seen people building their own houses out of those bricks, and those houses are still standing. If you want to know how many floods they have been through – it is probably about 20, and that is the quality of houses they have built. Those people basically built their own community. We do not seem to have that anymore. We just have a government that puts out a contract; you employ people to work on the houses, the contract is finished and people do not have a job anymore, whereas if you had an ongoing housing program where people were actually building their own houses, you would keep constant employment in those communities.

Mr STYLES: I do not disagree with you. I assume you lived in Daly River in the 1970s.

Mr WOOD: My house is still standing.

Mr STYLES: Is your house still there?

Ms WOOD: Yes, and my Sidney Williams hut is still there, but that was a bit ...

Mr STYLES: One thing the government is very keen on is to actually do that. When we went through SIHIP we ended up, as a result of hundreds of millions of dollars spent, with fewer bedrooms than we started with. They were demolishing four-bedroom homes to build three ...

Mr WOOD: Can I just pull you up on that? Yes, that is right, but they had to replace houses that were unliveable.

Mr STYLES: That is true, but we should have had four-bedroom homes replacing four-bedroom homes, or five-bedroom homes.

Mr WOOD: We should have had cheaper designs.

Mr STYLES: You are right, and that is our Buy Local campaign all over again. What we are trying to do, because it is actually cheaper – if you get people in the Northern Territory to do the work it is cheaper. You do not want to be bringing people interstate to build these homes. In fact, you do not even want to be bringing them from Darwin out to some community if you can do that within the community. I think it is either Papunya or Yuendumu where they recently did some stuff there and a lot of houses were built. Of course, that is under another Minister's portfolio area, but I am happy to comment on it.

Of those six houses, the people who lived in those houses were the people who were building the other houses. Those houses are in perfect condition today. When you build your own home, as you well know, you look after it. If you have skin in the game, you look after these things.

When I was the Minister for Infrastructure I looked at a lot of options around how we could improve that. The Chief Minister, through the department of Aboriginal Affairs, and Minister Price, through Housing, are continually looking for good options that the Commonwealth will also agree to. That is a bit of an issue; if the Commonwealth wants that type of house built and has joint funding, you have to negotiate with them.

I absolutely agree with you, and this is why we go through the training. You have a number of Aboriginal employment agencies now training people. GTNT has a fantastic record of getting Aboriginal people jobs and apprenticeships, and keeping them right through.

I was at Maningrida recently; I cannot remember exactly when it was, but it was a while ago. There was a guy there and I think his name is Robert. On one of the trips I took to Maningrida I went out to the plane in the morning and there was a guy who had all his tools with him. He had a tool belt on and he looked like he was a sparky or someone going out there to work. There was also a refrigeration guy going out there on the same plane. I do not see the refrigeration guy going out there because Robert is now a fully-qualified refrigeration engineer. He will probably end up being one of the richest guys in Maningrida because he is fixing all the fridges and air conditioners; he is doing all the work in Maningrida. I heard from someone recently that he is looking at trying to put someone else on because he cannot keep up with the workload.

That means he will employ an Aboriginal apprentice and take them out there, someone from the local area. That is where we are headed; that is what we are trying to do. That is what Adam Giles has been working really hard on to get that local stuff – in one instance the remote bakery. The guy who ran the first bakery there had not worked for 20 years. He is an older guy and his kids, I believe, were struggling to find a job. They are all there at 4 am now, him and his two kids, and they run the bakery. What a fantastic outcome for Aboriginal people in a remote community. You do that with the electricians and plumbers. It is about getting these people trained, which is why we have these training programs and support in place, so we can get Aboriginal people to do exactly what you are talking about. If you have any ideas, I am happy to take any ideas at any time in relation to how we can achieve that more quickly.

Mr WOOD: I think that is where some of the money from TIO or the sale of the port should be invested, into those microeconomic projects.

Mr STYLES: In Galiwinku the Remote Housing Development Authority is building those things, and ALPA has placed 104 local people in jobs with 15 employers. What a fantastic outcome. They got a national award recently for their efforts in Arnhem Land. I am sure you are well aware of ALPA and what it does. It is a very successful organisation.

Mr WOOD: I think the issue, to some extent, in Aboriginal communities is that you also have places where no new houses are being built, because they are regarded as too small to be a community. They do not fall into the category of getting a house built, so some of those communities experience overcrowding. One of the ways of getting rid of the overcrowding and creating employment – I have been out to one of those places and there are blokes sitting around for half the day. They have a little bit of work to do so they clean up around the place, sit down for half the day, smoke a bit of ganja and not do a lot, yet there are opportunities there to create employment.

Read the opening statements in your annual report; Aboriginal employment is one of the key issues that we need to look at.

Mr STYLES: Absolutely.

Mr WOOD: My problem is – look at the big ones like gas and all that sort of stuff. I know you have told some good stories about bakeries and hairdressers, but it is a relatively low number of people compared to the number of people who are on social welfare. I think that is where the government has to try to target ways of getting people off social welfare and giving people pride.

If I take the example of Daly River – I know this question is going a bit longer that it should. Miriam Rose will tell you that she believes the suicide rate went up – it was probably non-existent before – when they lost their local government and when they were not given any housing money. If you have been to Daly River, you will know it is a beautiful place. It has not had any new houses built, so there was unemployment, which did not really exist there before because there was employment. There are other factors that benefit communities if government can keep this mini economic projects going, but I do not see that.

Mr STYLES: We have gone further than the previous CLP and ALP governments. When you look at the remote contracting policy and all of those contracts out there – a lot of them have been broken down. When I was the Minister for Infrastructure I started that process of breaking down a lot of those contracts into smaller contracts, bite-sized contracts, so local people could tender and get them. They have started. Look at the people at Timber Creek. They approached me and said, 'Look, we cannot do that big contract; we do not have the machinery. Can you break it into two or three?' We did that and they were successful in tendering, not only with local content but the value, because they all lived out there and did not have to worry about accommodation. They could go out and do all of that.

From there they will eventually do the whole Victoria Highway – with the slashing, let alone what they do in Bradshaw in relation to all that stuff. Provisional sum of getting Aboriginal people involved – because this is about training and building local capacity and capability not just in Aboriginal communities, but right across the Territory. We are trying to build capability and capacity. We are working hard in remote and regional Northern Territory to make sure you can build through our employment and training packages and Buy Local.

Look at what the Chief Minister has done in relation to the Remote Housing Development Authority; that is a new initiative. That is about doing exactly what you are talking about. I agree with the things you are saying in relation to making sure you do not have overcrowding. Again, I go back to the example of Papunya and Yuendumu. The houses those people built themselves are the best-kept houses in the community. It is about getting people involved.

Mr WOOD: If you want to keep those training skills – one of the big issues in the Territory is that so many people get qualifications which are not worth the paper they are printed on because there are no jobs for them, but they got a qualification. They got one for this and one for that, and they can put them on the wall, but if there are no jobs to apply that training to – what I am saying is those small housing projects that are continual mean that people with skills can keep using those skills.

The problem I have seen in many communities – I do not know how many times the Commonwealth has changed its programs in employment and training, and I think many Aboriginal people are sick of it.

Mr STYLES: With the change to Buy Local and the way I have changed the procurement process, what we have done as a government is look at this and say that from now on when you write a tender, if you say you will employ so many Aboriginal apprentices or Aboriginal people – you are talking about them writing something in the tender saying, 'We will employ all these Aboriginal people', and then they sit down, be at end of a broom, make cups of tea or hang the washing out, which was not part of their training.

What we do now when we write our tenders – if you want to win that tender, and if you say you will employ four Aboriginal apprentices, you have to employ them. Then if you employ someone to do something else, the requirement in the tender is then transferred into the contract. If you do not perform that you cannot just say, 'I will not do that now because I have changed my mind'. That is actually written into your contract. I have told people that if they see a tender and it needs to be rewritten, get back to us and we will make sure those sorts of things are written in there.

A lot of tenders go out from government. We cannot dictate what private enterprise does, but we certainly can do something. Look at the Community Champions program – the champion says, 'Right, we need to do exactly what you are talking about'. When that tender is written, the community champions, which are the CEOs of departments, have to come back and say to the people writing those tenders, 'Make sure you write in the tender that this has to happen'. If somebody does not want to do that, best they do not fill a tender form in or participate in a tender process.

When they say they will do that, we will hold them to account in the contract. As the Minister for Business, I am in charge of the contract police, so to speak. We make sure that if people say they will do it, they actually do it. If we find out that they do not, they are in breach of their contract.

A number of options are available to us. We are working on a pipeline of stuff going into various communities. This is also about diversifying our economy and making sure we do everything you are talking about and that we diversify not only the Northern Territory economy, but local economies. I believe you when you say that we cannot simply say we will build 50 houses in a community. What you want to do is build 10 houses a year over five years so the same people are building.

When the kids get up in the morning they see their parents get up and go to work, not just stay in bed. That is when you start getting kids to school; that is when you start getting that flow-on.

I think you probably know where I could take that argument; it is about how any community functions in the modern world.

Mr WOOD: Thank you.

Madam CHAIR: Are there any more questions on Business NT? That concludes consideration of Output 1.1.

Output 1.2 – Strategic Policy

Madam CHAIR: We will move on to Output 1.2, Strategic Policy. Are there any questions?

Ms MANISON: Minister, I have just one question in regard to strategic policy. You can see there has been a slight decline in the budget. Given it is a very important area, especially when we are in a time of economic downturn, why is that?

Mr STYLES: I will just get the figures.

Ms MANISON: It is not a huge decline in the scheme of things, but it is interesting to know.

Mr STYLES: Obviously a lot has been going on in relation to planning. All this stuff we are doing in communities, the whole change we experience, requires a varying amount. I do not have those figures in front of me at the moment so ...

Madam CHAIR: Would you like to take it on notice?

Mr STYLES: I will take it on notice.

Question on Notice No 7.1

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

Ms MANISON: Why has there been a slight decline in funding for strategic policy in 2016-17?

Madam CHAIR: The question asked by the Minister for Wanguri of the Minister has been allocated number 7.1.

Madam CHAIR: Are there any other questions on strategic policy?

Ms MANISON: I am fine to move to Output 1.3.

Madam CHAIR: Do you have any questions on Output 1.2, member for Nelson?

Mr WOOD: I thought I had one, but no. I just about covered them.

Madam CHAIR: Okay that concludes consideration of Output 1.2.

Output 1.3 – Red Tape Abolition Squad

Madam CHAIR: The committee will now consider Output 1.3, Red Tape Abolition Squad. Are there any questions?

Ms MANISON: Due to timeliness I am keen to move to Output 1.4, Madam Chair.

Madam CHAIR: Okay, any questions on Red Tape Abolition? Okay, that concludes Output 1.3.

Output 1.4 – Procurement NT

Madam CHAIR: The committee will now consider Output 1.4, Procurement NT. Are there any questions?

Ms MANISON: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Mr STYLES: Madam Chair, before we move into this, any chance of a comfort break?

Madam CHAIR: We are having a big comfort break at 7 pm, but if you like a comfort break sooner – five minutes? We come back at 6 pm.

The committee suspended.

Madam CHAIR: We will continue with Output 1.4, Procurement NT. Are there any questions?

Ms MANISON: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Minister, turning back to one of your previous answers – and something we have spoken about a bit tonight is procurement and ensuring we get maximum value for local businesses here in the Territory. I think we all agree that is critical.

From my experiences speaking to the steel manufacturers and fabricators, they felt that the flow-on effect, as well-intended as it often was – and what some businesses would put in their tenders to win the procurement – was not actually flowing through to businesses locally on the ground, and that it was not being policed very well from a Territory government perspective. What are you doing as an agency to ensure that when somebody wins a tender and says they will use local business that they are held accountable to that?

Mr STYLES: The situation in relation to procurement – about 90% of it travels through the Department of Infrastructure. Everything over \$100 000 has to go across the CEO's desk to make sure the Buy Local component is complied with. That is a pretty big job for the CE to go across those, but we have just made sure if people pick a tender up – and I have asked the people in industry. These people read tenders every day; if you pick a tender up and you think there is a bit of gap in it, we have a process where we are retraining people in relation to how tenders are written. We want to make sure the tenders are written correctly so the requirements of the tender can be transferred into a contractual arrangement and then we go through the contracts.

Everything over \$5m goes through the Local Benefit Advisory Panel, which is a group of Territorians who will look at the Buy Local aspect of it and make sure that if you say you will do this it is actually in there. The weighting in relation to steel construction and steel fabrication is 30% and that only applies to stuff through DoI. We obviously cannot control private enterprise. We can encourage them, but we cannot dictate to private enterprise where they get their steel made.

One of the problems we have is that we are running number one in construction in the country and everyone in the downturn from the rest of Australia wants to be here, which is why we seriously had to look at upping even the local benefit stuff from 25% to 30% in the steel manufacturing area. We are pushing the limits with the ACCC and we are happy to do that. I am happy to have the discussion with the ACCC. But it is about making sure our Buy Local Plan is implemented. There are people who read these things every day and I have said to them, 'If you see it, tell us, and try to do it before the tender closes because if it is clear that there is a loophole in the tender or someone has not written it correctly, we will pull it back in and rewrite it before it closes'.

Ms MANISON: The concern that I have heard is that when the tender is awarded and the work is going out, and people do not comply with what they had tendered for – aside from the tenders going over the desk of the Chief Executive of the Department of Infrastructure, what formal policing and auditing mechanisms are in place, as part of your Buy Local policy, to ensure that businesses not complying with tenderers, or with the Buy Local component committed to in their tender, are held accountable?

Mr STYLES: The situation there is that agencies will go to tender for a whole range of things. The contractual arrangements between the agency and whoever the supplier is – the agency needs to make sure that is all complied with. If it is not, and if someone finds out that so and so did this or did not do that, they need to come back to the agency. If they do not get a satisfactory result there they come to the Department of Business through the Procurement Review Board and we will look at the contract.

That is contractual arrangements. If you breach contract there are a number of facilities available to us. You can actually sue these people or cancel the contract. I am not an expert on contractual law, but through government solicitors we can look at that and ask, 'What are our options?' It is really about people

in agencies making sure that what is written in the contract is actually put out there. It is like anything else where, if you breach a contract, you will get into trouble in some way, shape or form.

Ms MANISON: Minister, in the last 12 months, from the Buy Local policy perspective or local weighting perspective, have there been any investigations and have there been any tenderers who have breached their local business commitments in the tenders of which they were awarded?

Mr STYLES: When you look at the new Buy Local campaign – the first change was implemented on 15 February this year. In relation to the second round of changes in April, we had the Buy Local advisory panel in place. The local benefit commitments in contracts over \$100 000 were put in place, as well as the local benefits across all tender evaluation criteria, and there was improved assessment. This also goes back to training. It is about training the people in the agencies and providing ongoing upskilling in that area, but, in relation to the numbers, I do not actually have an answer. I am happy to take that question on notice as to how many there have been. We will have to go back through the agencies and look who has had to have a go in relation to that. I will get that figure for you.

Ms MANISON: Thank you, Minister.

Question on Notice No 7.2

Madam SPEAKER: Could you restate the question please, member for Wanguri?

Ms MANISON: Given the changes of procurement policy, I will try to capture a bit of data for the last 12 months, if that is okay, Minister.

Mr STYLES: In relation to Buy Local it is basically from 15 February on. If you want a date ...

Ms MANISON: For this financial year to date, how many tenderers have been investigated for not abiding by the tender they were awarded, and how many of those fell within the new Buy Local conditions from post February? And how many have been found to have breached their tender commitments?

Mr STYLES: So in the current financial year from 1 July, you would like to know what has happened in relation to the previous local development value added, and then from 15 February what has happened since the first round of Buy Local was implemented through the tendering system. The second round of changes happened in April. In the answer we will give you what has happened over the last 12 months before February ...

Ms MANISON: A break down under each different scheme and the conditions.

Mr STYLES: ... then between February and April, and then from April on.

Ms MANISON: Thank you, Minister, I appreciate that it is not necessarily a straightforward question.

Madam CHAIR: So the member for Wanguri has asked the Minister a question, which is allocated number 7.2.

Madam CHAIR: Are there any more questions?

Ms MANISON: Minister, with regard to the board that has been established, which is limited to examining projects \$5m and above, why is \$5m the amount it has been set at?

Mr STYLES: Looking at the workload, we picked \$5m as a starting point because you want to make sure you can roll this out and people get used to it. The plan is that once the members are familiar with what they are doing, you drop that down. I would like to see it come down further and further, but, as with any implementation, we have to be a bit careful we do not overload these people in the initial stages. They have to look at what they are doing. We will look at all of those contracts and the moment we think we can get away with \$4m we will put it down to \$4m, and we will bring it down until there is a balance.

A lot of contracts go out from government; it is in the tens of thousands. You cannot say to people this is voluntary; there are some fees. Anyway, there are 20 of them; you do not want to have a few. There is a reserve list, but we will get them going through all those contracts; they are doing that as we speak.

Ms MANISON: How many staff are in Procurement NT within the Department of Business?

Mr STYLES: I will get that. I love this; there are 22.4 FTEs – full-time equivalents.

Ms MANISON: Thank you, Minister. How does that compare to the previous year?

Mr STYLES: As at 31 March 2016?

Ms MANISON: Yes. It is always interesting to have a comparison. I am happy to come back to that later on when you can get an answer from your agency. I am sure there will be people behind the scenes who can get that for you.

Mr STYLES: Yes, happy to do that.

Ms MANISON: Yes, we will come back to that later in the session.

Mr STYLES: I can probably give that to you now. In the 2014-15 year it was 17.96.

Ms MANISON: Thank you, Minister.

Mr STYLES: In the 2015-16 year it was 21.4.

Ms MANISON: Thank you.

Mr WOOD: Can I just a question on procurement, Minister? You might have heard today I had some questions to the Department of Housing in relation to a couple of issues where the department specifies a product rather than a standard. Without going over that again, one of the issues is in relation to louvre locking devices. There are two companies; one company is allowed to provide its product to the department and is used in Aboriginal housing, and there is a company which has operated in Queensland and provides the same mechanism for staff housing, but is not permitted to use – the department will not accept its locking device for Aboriginal housing.

I raised this issue earlier. I spoke about whether there is any chance of the owner of the company coming to talk to the Department of Housing. I have a feeling the owner of the company does not believe what was said in the *Hansard* today is correct. Is there a process where your department could act as a mediator? You are called Procurement NT; do you have overriding rules about making sure procurement codes, etcetera, are correctly enforced as required?

Mr STYLES: The Procurement Review Board has the role of overseeing the agencies to make sure they implement all government policies in accordance with what those policies are from time to time. I am sure if the person concerned – it sounds to me like that person has already contacted you.

Mr WOOD: I have been contacted for the last 12 months, as this has been going on a long time. There is some ill feeling between the contractor and the department. I wonder whether your department, being Procurement NT, could have a role to play in mediation; that is all.

Mr STYLES: I suggest that the person you are talking about contacts the Department of Business and talks to the procurement liaison officer. I am sure that person can follow that up and do whatever they need to do.

Mr WOOD: Does that person have a name? Or could he just contact you and ...

Mr STYLES: Phone 8999 5511, the good old government switchboard number, and ask for the procurement liaison officer. I am sure those people will connect it.

Mr WOOD: Okay, procurement liaison officer. I will try to find that out in the meantime.

Mr STYLES: We will hand you a note, Gerry.

Mr WOOD: All right. I would like to get it sorted. I do not want this going on forever. Thanks.

Madam CHAIR: That concludes questions for Output 1.4, Procurement NT.

Output 1.5 – Asian Engagement, Trade and Investment

Madam CHAIR: We will move on to Output 1.5, Asian Engagement, Trade and Investment. Are there any questions?

Mr VOWLES: Yes, Madam Chair. Minister, there has been an increase to this output which has been explained in the budget books as functional realignment between Business NT and Asian Engagement. Can you run me through this realignment, please?

Mr STYLES: That basically has been moved from the Department of the Chief Minister across to the Department of Business. All the functions of that agency now come under the Department of Business, as do the various associated responsibilities. The realignment reporting lines create greater synergy between and within the divisions to enhance the capacity of delivering Territory investment, industries, innovation and exports. It is an important aspect of what we are doing in relation to creating jobs and diversifying the Northern Territory economy. We strive to continue to deliver stronger services to the individual businesses.

Not-for-profit clients Migration NT and the Industry Development and Innovation Group were also moved from Business NT across to the Office of Asian Engagement, Trade and Investment. There are two new positions which have been created there, being the General Manager at the ECO2 level and a Business Manager at the AO6 level. One position of Coordinator of Visits at the AO4 level was redesigned ...

Mr VOWLES: On that, Minister, how many full-time employees – while you have those figures there in this output.

Mr STYLES: I will get that. There are 33.8 FTEs.

Mr VOWLES: Yes. ECOs?

Mr STYLES: There are three ECO1, one ECO2 and one ECO4.

Mr VOWLES: Thank you, Minister. You provided global figures – on international travel, can you provide me with information about specific Asian engagement and trade trips undertaken, with itineraries and total cost? I am happy for you to table them or just run through them.

Mr STYLES: You are looking for travel for the agency?

Mr VOWLES: Yes, for the agency.

Mr STYLES: There are three aspects of this; there is international, interstate and intrastate. The total staff travel for the agency was \$810 995 and is broken down to international travel of \$142 080, interstate travel of \$133 598 and intrastate travel of \$535 327.

Mr VOWLES: In regard to the international travel, are you able to supply the itineraries and each individual cost of those trips?

Mr STYLES: On the 7 July 2015 ...

Mr VOWLES: If you want to table them – or if you want to go through them it is fine as well.

Mr STYLES: I will whip through. The ones you are interested in, I will give you the complete breakdown if you wish. There was Mr Richard Foo from Darwin to Singapore; Mr Mark Bruny from Jakarta to Darwin for a job interview – he is our Indonesian representative ...

Mr VOWLES: What was the cost of those?

Mr STYLES: Mr Mark Bruny is now our Indonesian representative for the Northern Territory in Jakarta, and that travel was for a job interview for the Northern Territory representative office in Indonesia.

Moving along, Jodi Lea Kirstenfeldt from Darwin to Auckland to attend with the officers of the Department of Internal Affairs in Auckland regarding Skycity; Anthony Gerard O'Donohoe from Alice Springs to Auckland to attend the same meeting with the officers of the Department of Internal Affairs in Auckland ...

Mr VOWLES: There is nothing I am looking for specifically, Minister. I am just wondering if you can table those documents of international travels.

Mr STYLES: Chamber of Commerce, from Darwin to Guam – Jeff Stewart, exploratory trade mission to Guam.

Mr VOWLES: How much was that?

Mr STYLES: That was \$3968. Richard Foo went from Darwin to Singapore to participate in international skilled migration promotion, which IDP Singapore is starting in Australia and New Zealand; Jeff McAlister from Darwin to Fukuoka and Tokyo for the Australia Japan Business Co-operation Committee, which was held here in 2014, and we went there in 2015.

Mr VOWLES: I am happy to ask that in a written question after estimates if you do not table those documents, Minister.

Mr STYLES: All right, we will take that question on notice.

Question on Notice No 7.3

Madam CHAIR: Member for Johnston, could you repeat the question, please?

Mr VOWLES: Can the Minister provide me with all international travel itineraries and costs?

Madam CHAIR: Do you accept the question, Minister?

Mr STYLES: I do, thank you.

Madam CHAIR: The question asked of the Minister by the member for Johnston is allocated number 7.3.

Madam CHAIR: Any other questions on Asian Engagement, Trade and Investment?

Mr VOWLES: Yes, Madam Chair. Thank you for that, Minister. In your five-year plan for Asian Engagement, Trade and Investment you have four broad goals. I am keen to understand what you have in place to measure your outcome and goals. Each of these goals has measurements for success, but what I want to understand is what baseline data you are using to measure the success of this plan.

Mr STYLES: The strategy is about jobs. We all know that in June last year the federal government launched its *White Paper on Developing Northern Australia*. Our future and the debt reduction strategy of this company is to engage in Asia and get investment here. We all know that the secret to Australia's success, for many years, has been foreign direct investment; a large area of land with a small population – we need to find direct investment. We are, so I am told, the only stable Territory that has an actual Minister for Asian Engagement, which is very important to us because, when you look at our future, it is to our north not necessarily to our south. Engaging with Asia is a very high priority because, at the moment, especially when you look at the Asian Century, the foreign capital reserves are currently sitting in Asia. That is where we need to be, places like Japan, Taiwan, Hong Kong, China and Singapore, looking for capital.

When you look at the fund managers and the international investment – I think it would have been about four or five months ago that Singapore took over from Switzerland as the country managing the largest portfolios. We really need to be looking to our north. When you look at overall capacity – I will give you some examples in a moment, but this is about jobs, jobs, jobs for Territorians and, in the broader perspective, for the Australian people working across the northern part of Australia.

When you look at the top 40% of Australia – which we call northern Australia – and the billions of dollars of investment in agriculture, Defence and all that spend that is coming, the Territory is in a pretty good place. That is why I try to not ever be accused of talking the Territory down. It is full of entrepreneurial people. Our successes will be that the thousands of jobs that we have in the pipeline – excuse the pun – are coming for Territorians and for our kids and grandkids.

Let us talk about measuring the Territory's success. More Northern Territory businesses will be exporting. The measures are information from the Trade Support Scheme applications, Department of Business development office contacts and DOBCRM. The Northern Territory will export a greater range of goods

and services, including high value goods. Again, this is about downstream processing and creating the jobs that come from things like petrochemical plants and value adding to food products, stuff coming out of the top of Western Australia through the Northern Territory. It even goes down to goods and services, and international education.

These are the things that we can export very successfully not only to northern Asia, central Asia and Southeast Asia, but just to our immediate north. The eastern part of Indonesia, Papua New Guinea and the bottom of the Philippines are areas that are crucial to the ongoing development of the Northern Territory. When you look at some of the services, products, food, gas, energy security and food security, we have a lot to measure. You have to keep going in relation to the capacity building assistance of our near neighbours. Our near neighbours seek and appreciate the Northern Territory's assistance.

Look at what Timor-Leste is doing. The measures would be along the lines of the number and type of projects agreed to with our near neighbours and feedback from them. We are working with the Indonesians in relation to projects that are going on in Eastern Indonesia in relation to port developments and oil and gas developments. They are looking for food security as well as a whole range of dairy products. We are talking to people in our southern states about moving containers on trains back up north to be exported out of Darwin – perishables. Hong Kong, Singapore, Eastern Indonesia and even Papua New Guinea are all looking for the quick transportation of perishables.

When you start looking at the indicators – Northern Territory industries have a greater capacity and capability and a better position to tender for contracts. That is about the training we provide to these people and the assistance that DoB gives in relation to making sure these people are well-versed in what is required in our overseas markets. That also has to do with our trade exports schemes and the business development officers, who can work with these people to make sure they have the capacity to work in that area.

The ICN, Industry Capability Network Northern Territory, is about making sure businesses are registered with ICN and that they go through that process, so when people are looking for export partners they have websites to look at and people they can talk to. The list goes on and on. The other important thing in this area is inbound visits.

I learnt a long time ago that you have to build relationships with people. I was very fortunate as a child; I grew up with Chinese people in my home and understood a lot about building relationships with people from other countries. Asian people talk about their three cups of tea. They want their three cups of tea with you so they can get to know who you are. Relationships are really important. Sitting down, building relationships and sharing a meal is one of the most important things they can do to build that relationship. If you do not have a relationship, they will not do business with you. They have to be confident that you are who you say you are and not who you might pretend to be.

When you build these relationships – we have done outbound trips and we are now seeing the benefits of those outbound trips. We are now getting the inbound trips. There are plenty of people lining up who came here last year and want to come back. Some people have been back three times, looking at a whole range of options in relation to the development of northern Australia. There are people looking at cropping, aquaculture products and horticulture products. There are people looking at downstream processing of various products.

There are discussions going on, especially from Taiwan and Japan, in relation to moving product directly from the Northern Territory, value adding here and moving it directly into places like Thailand, Vietnam and China, not to export raw materials, but creating jobs here. We are talking to people about automated factories here. They are in a First World country with a great service and great access to world markets through the expansion of the port and the railway line, and the ability to get things built here and exported into China and Asia. It is a real situation. Obviously there are commercial-in-confidence issues with talking about what these people are planning, but there are opportunities there.

When we look at going to Asia and encouraging people – there are people who want, for instance, Northern Territory displays in theme parks in China. That is a really exciting move. They are currently finishing one in the US. We have spoken to them about putting a massive display in something that has between 85 000 and 100 000 people a day going through there. To me that is a pretty exciting development.

Mr VOWLES: Have we invested any money into that concept of the zoo, the Northern Territory display you were just talking about?

Mr STYLES: No, we have not invested any money in it apart from building the relationship with these people. They are keen on dealing with us and promoting the Northern Territory.

This is the sort of foreign investment that you want. Apart from the exchange of flora and fauna going across there, you get the tourism flow-on, people seeing what they can experience. We have some very unique stuff, as do others in the world. We have some fantastic, unique opportunities for tourists.

In the last financial year China sent out 100 million outbound tourists, and within five years or so they reckon it could be up to 250 million outbound tourists. We just want a portion of that.

When you start building those relationships – I know the Chief Minister is working on getting direct flights from China. We are looking at other countries, Taiwan for instance; they get a lot of people coming and going through Australia, more so than I realised until I started to investigate that some time ago. They are the sorts of things you get when you engage with Asia.

Sadly in 2001 most of those offices were closed down and people were made redundant. We are about rebuilding the offices there. So far we have representatives in Indonesia and Singapore and we are looking at Hong Kong and Japan. Slowly we will build up our representation in Asia.

One of the things we have to be conscience of, being the apex of the triangle of what we call northern Australia, is that because we sit in the apex, we need to be there. Other states which would like to lead the development of northern Australia are there as well. We are quite busy behind the scenes, looking for people to go to Hong Kong and Japan so that we have people on the ground.

One of the things I found was that when you travel there – and Ministers in the previous CLP government used to travel and engage in Asia far more than what occurred in the 12 years of Labor government – they will tell you that when you build those relationships those people will come here and consider investing. But if you do not build the relationships or spend the money and time on building those relationships, then you will not do business there. That is the bottom line.

Mr VOWLES: Thanks, Minister, for that detailed response. Do you have any baseline data measuring these outcomes?

Mr STYLES: In relation to ...

Mr VOWLES: What is your goal at the end of the five-year strategy?

Mr STYLES: The goals are to have export figures going up in relation to not only food, but professional services and international education. We are doing quite well at this point in international education, being led by the private sector. There is Charles Darwin University, which we partner with in relation to going to places like India or China. India is a fantastic growing market at the moment.

We are looking at a range of other things in relation to ICT hubs to encourage students to come here through international travel. Not only do they come and live here, but their parents and family come to visit. If you tap into the right market, people come here, buy units and invest in the Northern Territory. At some stage, some of them may even stay. If you have people becoming Territorians, that is how you build your population figures. If you have vibrant processing and industry here, you need people who have good qualifications in the areas of VET and higher education.

You measure it by jobs being created. It is about foreign direct investment and getting some of these big things off the ground, because from those big things many of the smaller things will pick up. That is not to say we are not talking to some of our local smaller businesses in town – mums' and dads' industries – which are exporting a range of products and services to our immediate north.

Mr VOWLES: Thank you very much, Minister. We are exporting a greater range of goods. Do we know what is being exported? Do you have a list of what is being exported out of the Northern Territory?

Mr STYLES: I know we exported about \$5.5bn worth of products and imported about \$4.1bn, so we have a good trade surplus. For the figures of what we are exporting, I would have to take that on notice to get you a breakdown of who has done what and exported what. It is not something I have at my fingertips. I am happy to take that on notice.

Question on Notice No 7.4

Madam SPEAKER: Could you restate the question, member for Johnston?

Mr VOWLES: Could the Minister please provide a list of current goods and services being exported?

Madam SPEAKER: Do you accept the question, Minister?

Mr STYLES: Yes, I do. Thanks.

Madam SPEAKER: The question asked by the member for Johnston of the Minister has been allocated number 7.4.

Madam CHAIR: Any further questions?

Mr VOWLES: Yes, Madam Chair. Enabler number one – ‘stronger relationships with a higher number of Asian partners’. We recently announced NT Labor’s intention to provide a spotlight on our relationship with India. We have done so because of the increasing numbers of Indian people living in the Territory. Therefore we want to enhance people’s relationships because of the growth and wealth of the Indian middle class. What measures has your government taken to build this relationship in the past, or what is it currently working on?

Mr STYLES: I have fantastic relationships with the two former consuls responsible for the Northern Territory. In fact, I am having have dinner with the High Commissioner of India on Sunday night. I have been to India on three occasions. You build relationships with people over there. I am fortunate because I am also the Minister for Multicultural Affairs. When you build the relationships with people here, one of the things we have an advantage of in the Northern Territory is that we are a smaller community. I know many of the key people in the multicultural community. You use those connections to make sure, through their family and friendship connections back in their home countries - not just India, but right across Asia, Europe and other countries - that you use those connections to increase relationship building. You also increase the capacity for people to do business. Through our export initiatives programs, you encourage those people to get hold of their relatives and friends internationally, and you get them to start doing the two-way trade.

I will give you an example of one person I know, but I will not use names. They have family in Timor-Leste, Singapore and Asia, and they have a fantastic two-way trade business going. I know a number of people who are in that predicament. So it is about making sure you have the relationships in place.

Charles Darwin University is involved with India; they have people over there on a regular basis. I was in negotiations with them and talks with them in relation to them sending a very senior person from CDU for an entire semester to India to work through various universities and institutions, and to get more students coming out here – pre-grad, post-grad, MBA students and PhD students – but we are also working with CDU and private investors on ICT hubs. We are discussing that because people who come here, especially from India, want to sit down and build, create and invent stuff, and they need the opportunities to do that. So we are working with a range of people to create that environment.

Mr VOWLES: Can I add to that, Minister? Around enabler number two, ‘Territory businesses will be more internationally competitive’, last year in estimates I asked for the number of Territory companies that have been supported by the Trade Support Scheme. Can you tell me what those numbers are, or who is being supported?

Mr STYLES: Yes, I will get those figures out for you.

Answer to Question on Notice No 7.4

Mr STYLES: I have now been handed the answer that you might be looking for in relation to the previous question we took on notice. That is, what are we exporting, who are we exporting to and who is exporting? In relation to what sort of export products we are exporting, Madam Chair, I can probably give the answer now.

Madam CHAIR: Thank you, Minister. Have you got a number attached to the question?

Mr STYLES: Question 7.4. This relates to who is exporting what and where. In 2014-15 the Northern Territory's top five goods – excluding services – export partners were Japan at \$2.7bn, representing 44% of exports; China was \$1.4bn, representing 22% of exports; Thailand was \$636m, representing 10% of exports.

Mr VOWLES: Is it \$409m for Indonesia and \$158m for Vietnam?

Mr STYLES: That is correct – 3%. The key exports included LNG, minerals, petroleum and live cattle. The Northern Territory's main export services were personal travel, excluding education, at \$303m, representing 40% of services exports; business travel was \$165m, representing 21% of services exports; and government services at \$121m, representing 15% of service exports.

Did you want any further breakdown than that?

Mr VOWLES: I was more looking for local companies who were – no, I am fine with that. I am comfortable with that. Thanks.

Mr WOOD: Do we have any trade with Taiwan?

Mr STYLES: Yes, we do. You would be surprised how interested Taiwanese are in relation to the development of northern Australia. We have had some delegations here recently in relation to their investment. They are one of the world's leaders in tropical medicine research so they may hopefully spend some money and develop some sort of facility here to work with their facilities back in Taiwan in relation to medical research. They have probably the highest number of students staying here and working. I think there are about 33 000 people working in the fruit picking industry in that area. There are a lot of Taiwanese students who come here and do this. We also hosted the Australia-Taiwan Business Council meeting here recently. There is a lot of interest from Taiwan.

Mr WOOD: Will those students be unlikely to come if the backpacker tax continues?

Mr STYLES: They like Australia and it is ...

Mr WOOD: For the pickings.

Mr STYLES: Not just for the pickings. They actually enjoy Australia as a country to study in and develop their English speaking skills. That is my information from the Taiwanese people. We discussed these sorts of issues with the Australia-Taiwan Business Council meeting here and they were very keen to get their students here because they like it. Their parents like Australia; they think it is a good place for their kids to study.

Mr WOOD: Okay, thanks.

Mr VOWLES: If I can just get back to my question.

Mr WOOD: I just thought I would give you a breather.

Mr VOWLES: I just want to go back to the number of companies supported by the Trade Support Scheme.

Mr STYLES: The Trade Support Scheme is a great scheme. It can offset up to 50% of export-related marketing costs. That includes airfares and accommodation, conference fees, website modifications and support costs associated with inbound buyers. It works two ways. Since inception it has helped over 400 NT business companies pursue their export endeavours. In the 2015-16 financial year to date, 62 applications were approved for financial assistance.

The scheme has assisted a range of NT basic supporters to pursue opportunities across Southeast Asia, the Indian subcontinent, Europe and North America. You can look at a couple of very successful companies which have received these grants. They have ...

Mr VOWLES: Can I just cut in there, Minister? Is that 62 ...

Mr STYLES: Applications were approved.

Mr VOWLES: Is that each business or can they do it numerous times? Or is it an application per business?

Mr STYLES: I do not know. The 62 applications were approved for financial assistance. I will take that on notice, if I can.

Question on Notice No 7.5

Madam CHAIR: Could you repeat the question, member for Johnston?

Mr VOWLES: Could the Minister please provide – out of the 62 applications, are they from businesses on numerous occasions ...

Mr STYLES: Multiple.

Mr VOWLES: Yes, are they multiple applications from businesses?

Madam CHAIR: Do you accept the question, Minister?

Mr STYLES: I do.

Madam CHAIR: The question asked by the member for Johnston of the Minister has been allocated the number 7.5.

Mr VOWLES: Is there a total cost of – is there a set amount, a maximum amount, you can give?

Mr STYLES: There is, depending on what it is. There is a budget estimate of \$350 000 and, as at 31 March, we have expended \$279 000 of that budget allocation.

Mr VOWLES: Thank you very much, Minister. That is the answer. Enabler three is about 'sustainable international transport links'. This is obviously very important. Do you have a logistics master plan for the Territory?

Mr STYLES: For?

Mr VOWLES: For the sustainable international transport links. Do we have a plan going into further enhancing our transport links into Asia? I know you have mentioned ...

Mr STYLES: The Department of Transport has a logistics plan. Looking at Asian engagement, trade and investment, once you get the engagement process and the investment going, the Department of Transport kicks in. Part of the overall plan is the leasing of the port. One of the things that governments do when they have a huge debt to repay – as we found, you have to look at what happens with investment. We enjoy our rating – Australia has an AAA rating – but one of the things we have to be very careful with and guard against is a reduction of that rating.

When you look at investment houses and governments – even when you go through Asia now, governments are insisting that when you are looking at bonds and things you can only invest in AAA rated countries. We are one of those. We have to be very careful in making sure we maintain that.

When you are looking at getting the investment into Australia – how you do that? Private investors can come in and spend hundreds of millions of dollars on our port. When you look at incoming dollars and earning export dollars, you look at things like the tens of millions of dollars they want to spend on our port facilities. We want to put another kilometre of quay line on the port. That will be great for the Territory because it means you can guarantee shipping services.

One of the things we were struggling with is that when governments borrow lots of money you lose your credit rating because you go further into debt. When you lease the port and get someone who is committed to investing money from the private sector, you can actually increase what we do in other areas. Again, governments should not be in the business of making lots of money; we are actually facilitating private enterprise to come in and develop.

We have attracted this investment into our port. When you are talking about logistics – I think I answered this before. We are about making sure we have the railway line facility between Tennant Creek and Mount Isa, and between Katherine and Kununurra, and it is about making sure the gas flows along the railway line, through the rail corridor.

When you start looking at what China wants to do in relation to making Darwin a distribution point – obviously the Department of Transport has a strategy, but Business has a strategy already, and you are starting to see the beginning of that strategy put into play. They develop the port, facilitate guaranteed weekly services between Darwin and various ports in Asia, and transfer throughout the world.

There are trans-shipping ports like Hong Kong and Singapore where, if you can guarantee to get product out on a particular day, that product will start to flow, especially in perishables, dairy products and things like that. That will all flow up through the railway line coming up to Darwin, then on smaller container ships to be transferred through to Singapore, Hong Kong and distribution points. They are the big-picture logistics that governments have to look at.

The other thing about logistics is getting people in and out of the place, such as with direct flights. The Chief Minister, through Tourism and his other major projects portfolios, is working on, and might be close to getting, direct flights out of Asia into the Northern Territory. Business people want direct flights, and when that happens and you start looking at people setting up downstream processing, you need to make sure they can get in and out of the place at will.

When you look at the international transport links that we are working on at the moment – the first thing we had to do was make sure we could expand the port and get someone who has access to a lot private money to be able to do that. Private enterprise is at work out there. You are seeing all the reefer points being expanded out there. About \$25m is being spent out at the port. There are facilities at the international cruise ship terminal. But when you look at the subregional economic corporation between our immediate neighbours, that being Indonesia and Timor-Leste, you get the logistics operating through there, which allows you to get economies of scale when you start running stuff back up the railway line.

We send a lot of stuff up and down the railway line now and we need to increase that capacity. There is room for extra capacity with loop lines and passing lanes built into the railway line, but once you get to a point where this trade really starts to go, you start looking at building a second railway line. Again, there will be jobs, maintenance, steel manufacture and the list goes on.

We had a meeting in Dili on 30 March. The forum focused on the transparent connectivity across air, sea and land routes. I was talking to someone the other day about extra air services in and out of Dili. The NT government-funded study on tourism trails in the subregions was well received by partners, and agreement was reached to conduct a pilot tour. The Landbridge Group investment in the Port of Darwin facilitates visits for Landbridge to look for further expansion of port facilities. I have mentioned some of that – the cold storage facilities which allow you to get into the development of northern Australia, along with food production – and it all goes to food security for various countries. It also goes to value adding here. As I said earlier, countries like Thailand and Japan already have distribution networks in places like Vietnam, Thailand and China. They want to use the logistics we are selling up here to transfer all those goods from Darwin directly through so they do not bypass. That is value adding here as opposed to value adding in Taiwan or Japan, for instance.

There is an increase of new participants in the sustainment of aviation services into the Northern Territory. We have held ~~Ministerial~~ Ministerial meetings. Every time I travel on behalf of the Chief Minister I talk of those things. We have regional meetings now being held here as part of Open Territory. We had the regional Chamber of Commerce meeting here. Nine countries were involved in that.

Logistics is a big item in relation to air and sea links, and getting products from Australia out to the world and vice versa – their products back into Australia – so there is a two-way trade.

Mr VOWLES: Thank you, Minister. Moving on, you have your Singapore and Indonesian representatives. You do not have one for China yet. Can you give us an update on about your representatives? You have a government representative in Singapore announced. You have somebody in Indonesia ...

Mr STYLES: Indonesia and Singapore.

Mr VOWLES: Yes. What about China?

Mr STYLES: The thinking at this stage – and we are still working on it – is that we will put someone in Hong Kong. One of the things you have to look at is that when we have products and a whole lot of other stuff, we can go to Beijing. But at the moment we are looking for foreign direct investment.

One of the things I ask people to realise is that China puts much of its foreign investment through Hong Kong. The reason they do that is Hong Kong operates on the British system of law. When you look at where investment money is around the world, it is a tried and true system which has fail-safes in it to protect investors and borrowers. The legal system in Hong Kong is ideal for investment.

I have spoken to people in Beijing and Hong Kong. I have also spoken to Australian representatives in relation to this matter. There is a school of thought that at this point in time, when you are looking for foreign direct investment – again these are subject to new budget allocations. We have two budgeted at the moment, one in Singapore and one in Indonesia. When we figure out exactly what we will do and how we will do it, we will get that new funding allocation operational and get someone there.

Just so you are aware, we operate on an Austrade model where we invite people into where Austrade is through the embassies, so there are synergies and they can work together and feed off one another. As I said, one of Asian Engagement, Trade and Investment's priorities is to get more investment into the Northern Territory. We are working on Australian investment, but where we need extra investment we are welcoming people to look at foreign direct investment. We have done for many years in this country.

Mr VOWLES: Moving on, what are the costs of those officers and contracts, the Indonesian and Singapore representatives of government?

Mr STYLES: It is roughly \$250 000 per office. We have a budget estimate of \$500 000 for those two.

Mr VOWLES: Are they contracts? Are they under a NT government employee or are they subcontractors, like Terry Mills in Indonesia was?

Mr STYLES: No, they are contract persons; it is a service level agreement with Austrade. The Singapore position was signed in January this year and the recruitment was finalised in April 2016 with the representative, Mr Anthony Cheng, and he started work on 11 May. Their job is to represent the Northern Territory's interest. We are actually ...

Mr VOWLES: How much are they earning? What is that position worth?

Mr STYLES: I think the total amount of the actual budget allocation is \$250 000. The arrangement is that we pay Austrade a set figure because they are in the country. They get the person there and the oncost – everything – is covered in the \$250 000. The model allows the NT government representatives access to all of Austrade's support in their computer network. The costs of overheads are all covered by Austrade. One of the reasons we have done it that way is that it is a much cheaper model. When we looked at various models and what it was costing us, we saw how we could reduce that and maintain our overseas representation.

If we want to lead the development of the Northern Territory, we need to be in those places, getting into Austrade and working with them. I have spoken to the Austrade people in Singapore, but I have not spoken to the Austrade people in Jakarta. Also, the High Commission in Singapore, along with others in that area, is a good model and it looks like it will work very well for us.

Madam SPEAKER: Minister, we might break for dinner for half an hour. We will come back and finish Output Group 1.5 after dinner, at 7.30 pm. Thank you very much.

The committee suspended.

Madam CHAIR: We will continue with questions on Output 1.5, Asian Engagement, Trade and Investment under the Department of Business. Are there any questions?

Mr WOOD: Minister, in relation to trade with Vietnam, have you had any contact with other departments regarding the issues surrounding the matter of cattle being mistreated in abattoirs and what effect that could have on our trade with Vietnam, especially the live cattle trade?

Mr STYLES: Not yet. My understanding is the Minister for Primary Industry and Trade is getting briefings on that matter.

Mr WOOD: Thank you.

Madam CHAIR: That concludes consideration of Output 1.5.

Output 1.6 – Office of the Chief Scientist

Madam CHAIR: We will move onto Output Group 1.6, Office of the Chief Scientist. Are there any questions?

Ms MANISON: Thank you, Madam Chair. Minister, we see that you have money in the budget to establish the position of Chief Scientist. It is something the Labor opposition supports as a worthwhile initiative. Can you please outline for us the selection recruitment process and when you expect this position to be filled?

Mr STYLES: That will depend on, first of all, who applies for it. We need to make sure we go through a rigorous process ...

Ms MANISON: It will be advertised? It will not be a handpicked person?

Mr STYLES: No, we will advertise for the appropriate person. As part of Knowledge Territory initiatives, the Northern Territory government will, for the first time, establish an office of the Chief Scientist and appoint a Chief Scientist for the Northern Territory. Other states have and we need to get on board in relation to some of the things the Chief Scientist does.

This will be a statutory appointment which will provide high-level independent advice to the Chief Minister, Ministers and chief executive officers of the Northern Territory government agencies on matters relating to all aspects of science and innovation.

Some of the key points we will highlight are that the Chief Scientist will work closely with business, industry, Charles Darwin University and other research and innovation organisations to ensure that NT businesses remain productive, efficient, sustainable, and most importantly, internationally competitive ...

Ms MANISON: Minister, can we just go back to guaranteeing that this will not be a handpicked appointment, as we have seen for other statutory officer positions that have happened under this government? Will it be an advertised process where there will be a robust interview and selection process to ensure we get the very best person to become our first Chief Scientist?

Mr STYLES: The establishment of this office will be overseen by an interagency steering and governance committee reporting to both the chief executive officers coordination and economic development committee, and the environment and natural resources standing committee, and provide input into the multiyear program of priorities for the Chief Scientist. The Chief Scientist will ensure we are well placed to compete for and leverage from other Commonwealth government funding.

My understanding is that it will be advertised; it will be a statutory appointment ...

Ms MANISON: When will that process be completed?

Mr STYLES: The budget for that comes in on 1 July. My understanding is the department is looking at the procedures on how we will go about that.

Ms MANISON: You are anticipating to have this recruited prior to the caretaker mode on 27 August, or would that be something that is still under way after that?

Mr STYLES: No. It will be under way for appointment before the end of this calendar year. It will not be done before caretaker mode.

Ms MANISON: It will not be rushed? It will not be a handpicked person parachuted into the job?

Mr STYLES: No.

Ms MANISON: Okay. Thank you for that commitment, Minister. An important question is, if it is a statutory officer, we want assurance about the independence of that position so they can do their job to give frank, fearless advice and direction to the government of the day. How will this happen? Will the Chief Scientist be free to provide advice when and as they see fit?

Mr STYLES: Yes, they will obviously. There is an interagency steering and governance committee reporting to both the chief executive officers coordination and economic development committee, and the environment and natural resources standing committee to provide input to the multiyear program, which are priorities of the Chief Scientist. The Chief Scientist will be able to comment on a whole range of issues.

Ms MANISON: With regards to those issues, the budget press release on 24 May lists that aquifers and groundwater will be two areas that the government may seek advice from the Chief Scientist on. Water licences and water have been quite an issue in this term of government. They are probably issues that have created a lot more debate than most of us anticipated before August 2012 – it has been a huge issue under this government. Will you commit to ensuring that the Chief Scientist does examine your government's decisions around the allocation of water and the science that was followed? We know that has been one point of contention, which was the science and research that was based on.

Mr STYLES: The contention has been there, but it is mainly coming from the opposition. Given the number of water licences that were sitting on the books when we came into government, there have been water licences issued. My understanding is that some people look like losing those water licences; they will be reviewed and taken off of people. There will be ongoing negotiations, I am sure, between everyone around the Territory in relation to water, water catchment, water storage, groundwater and a whole range of issues. I am sure the Chief Scientist will be looking at a lot of that, but they will also probably want to comment on the international acceptance of fracking of shale gas in the Northern Territory as well. That has been accepted by the world, so I imagine he would have a bit to say about that as well.

Ms MANISON: My question is about that water, Minister. Your government would commit to having the Chief Scientist look at water allocation and science behind that.

Mr STYLES: I think the Chief Scientist will be looking at a range of issues. What the Chief Scientist looks at from one year to the next will be governed not only by the Chief Scientist, but by the steering and governance committee reporting to the chief executive officers coordination and economic development committee, and the environment and natural resources standing committee. They will provide input into the multiyear program and priorities for the Chief Scientist, so a whole lot of stuff will be referred to the Chief Scientist, who can then comment on a range of issues.

Ms MANISON: Thank you, Minister.

Mr WOOD: I welcome the idea of having an office of the Chief Scientist because science is one of those things that seems to sometimes disappear off the radar these days. I think sometimes a lot of comment we have about various issues is not always based on science; it is based on ideology and sometimes things get lost when that happens. Would this Chief Scientist also have a role of promoting science, especially in our education facilities? I think that is certainly an area that we have special opportunities in the Northern Territory to develop.

Mr STYLES: Absolutely. I think the role of anyone in our community – I hope the Chief Scientist at some stage would be able to get around the Territory a bit, talk to PhD and undergrad students at university and do some sort of an education program in between lots of other things. The office of the Chief Scientist will not just be that; there will be support staff there as well. I am hoping there would be an education program because if you are looking at inspiring young people into getting into sciences and maths – STEM, Science Technology, Engineering and Mathematics – they are things that the Chief Scientist will probably be involved in in a fairly substantial way, but also in relation to education. I think the person, whoever it is, would be a leader in the field.

The Chief Scientist would also play a lead role in influencing Commonwealth initiatives such as the National Innovation and Science Agenda. When you look at what will happen in the development of northern Australia – a lot of science will be involved. Look at the horticulture and agriculture – not so much the Defence build-up – and all those things will require a high degree of science to be involved in it. One of the things this government has done from day one is operate on evidence-based decisions, not emotional or philosophical decisions. If this is a good thing for the Northern Territory, we should examine that and make sure we proceed with it.

I am sure the Chief Scientist will look at a whole range of issues, but in some instances where we have eminently qualified people who come to the Territory to report on a range of issues – one of the things is the fracking of shale gas. Nine of the Chief Scientist's counterparts from around the world were invited to Sydney in September last year to peer assess that. I hope the Chief Scientist here will be part of a group of people who go to various places and peer assess other Chief Scientists.

Chief Scientists have come from all over the world to peer assess Dr Alan Hawke, for instance. It is about making sure they have the ability to do so and the ability to influence research dollars. They basically go and sell the Northern Territory as a place for science, especially in relation to the development of northern Australia.

Mr WOOD: Will he get adequate funding to do this? The reason that I ask is that I recall – I think the person is still employed. I have met him – someone like the Government Architect. He is there but we do not hear that much about him. Not that I am blaming him, but he does not get that priority from the government. Will this Chief Scientist be in the forefront?

Mr STYLES: I would expect so, but I also expect that a lot of things happen which a lot of people may not take a great deal of interest in. I have spoken to the chief architect on a number of occasions in relation to many things, but they are there for advice to chief executive officers and governments to comment on a range of issues.

An audit has to be done right across the Territory because they develop science and innovation strategies. You want someone like the Chief Scientist to be able to have an input into that, lead debates and be available for advice to governments. People like those at Charles Darwin University can go to the Chief Scientist and get a feel for what that person may see. I hope they will be part of national conferences and even international conferences with what is going on.

We have a lot of innovative things going on. As I said before, I hope the Taiwanese bring part of their research on tropical medicine and work with Menzies School of Health Research. The Chief Scientist would be able to have a look at it, comment on it and advise governments as to what they can do to help facilitate that and what might be required.

You want people who are at the forefront of science – I am hoping the Chief Scientist will be a person of that calibre – to be able to influence the direction of government because they are there to do that. I hope they will have a whole range of different experiences and ideas as to where we go with STEM.

Mr WOOD: Thank you.

Madam CHAIR: Okay, that concludes consideration of Output 1.6 and Output Group 1. We will now move onto consider Output Group 2 – Training.

Mr STYLES: Madam chair, could I just give a couple of answers to the member for Nelson?

Madam CHAIR: Certainly, Minister.

Mr STYLES: In relation to the procurement liaison that you asked about, member for Nelson. I am very happy to give you the phone number for that person. It is 8999 5212, and the e-mail address is procurement.liaison@nt.gov.au.

Mr WOOD: Thank you.

Madam SPEAKER: What question number was that, sorry?

Mr WOOD: Did that get marked as a question?

Madam CHAIR: I am sorry; it was not taken on notice.

Mr STYLES: Okay, we should get the number for those. We need to do that at some stage.

Madam Chair, during the next break I will get the staff to get the question numbers from staff, if you like. Thank you.

Madam CHAIR: Thank you.

OUTPUT GROUP 2.0 – TRAINING
Output 2.1 – Training NT

Madam CHAIR: We will now move on to Output Group 2.0, Training, Output 2.1, Training NT. Are there any questions?

Mr McCARTHY: Minister, how many full-time equivalent staff are in the unit and how many executive contract officers?

Mr STYLES: The people who administer the vocational education and training system to ensure the programs are responsive and align to the needs of Territory business are something we are quite proud of. The needs of Northern Territory industries and workers – that meets the NT emerging skill shortages, as you are probably aware. The Department of Business oversees that list of school shortages. But in relation to staff by region and designation, as at 31 March 2016, there are 36.82 FTEs.

Mr McCARTHY: And the executive contract officers?

Mr STYLES: There are three executive contract officers there.

Mr McCARTHY: Thank you. How much of the budget is for grants programs, and can you provide the opposition with a breakdown of those grants by grant program, the amount allocated to the program and the recipients?

Mr STYLES: Is this for training?

Mr McCARTHY: Yes.

Mr STYLES: As at 31 March 2016, there is \$75.762m. Of that, employees consisted of \$2.968m. Under the heading of 'General' it is \$2.622m; the grants and subsidies total is \$70.172m; and then we drop down to student entitlements, which was \$27 000; apprenticeships were \$25.328m; general skills development for Territorians was \$37.505m; the Training of the Future Scheme was \$2000; Indigenous training was \$1.763m; and general support for events and initiatives was \$3.549m.

Do you want a breakdown of the \$70.17m expenditure?

Mr McCARTHY: It would be great to understand, Minister, the grant program, the amount allocated and the recipients.

Mr STYLES: The \$70.17m is split up into quite a number. I do not have it all here so I suggest we take that on notice and I will see if I can get it back to you before the end of estimates tonight. If not, we will take it as a question on notice.

Question on Notice No 7.6

Madam CHAIR: Could you please restate the question, member for Barkly.

Mr McCARTHY: Thank you, Madam Chair. Minister, can you provide a breakdown of the grants by grant program, amount allocated to the program and the recipients of those grants?

Madam CHAIR: Do you accept the question, Minister?

Mr STYLES: Yes, thank you.

Madam CHAIR: The question asked by the member for Barkly of the Minister is allocated the number 7.6.

Mr McCARTHY: Minister, how are the grant programs determined in the grant criteria?

Mr STYLES: It is an area of contestability. There is a certain amount which has been put out to be contestable between various organisations. RTOs, the private sector, Batchelor Institute and Charles Darwin can also apply for this contestability. My information states there is about \$37.5m, which goes to Charles Darwin University, Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education and other service providers.

That is down from \$41m in 2015-16. As of 31 March 2016 major capital equipment grant payments to CDU and Batchelor Institute totalling \$2.8m have not been processed.

Of the \$25.33m to train and support apprentices, trainees and employees, as at 31 March 2015, \$21.65m had been expended. At that time no payments had been made against the group training program, employer incentives or Workwear/Workgear Bonus Scheme, which were processed in that final quarter. There is an amount that is contestable. It is running at around about \$26m. That is now contestable between organisations and RTOs, and can include CDU and Batchelor Institute.

Mr McCARTHY: Minister, how many Territorians are in training as at 31 March 2016?

Mr STYLES: As at March 2016 there were 3617 apprentices and trainees in training. Half are in traditional trades; a quarter are Indigenous and about a third are female.

Mr McCARTHY: How does it compare with the same time last year, 31 March 2015?

Mr STYLES: On 31 March 2015 there were 3836 in training, compared to 3617 in March this year. In traditional trades, there were 1842, as opposed to 1827. There is a difference of about 15 there. Indigenous were 968 and 913 this year. In March 2015 there were 1158 females and 1095 this year. There were 2678 males in March 2015, and 2522 in March 2016.

Mr McCARTHY: Thank you, Minister. Do you have the comparisons on that table for 2014 and 2013?

Mr STYLES: No, I do not have it.

Mr McCARTHY: For 2014 maybe?

Mr STYLES: I will take that question on notice.

Question on Notice No 7.7

Madam CHAIR: Could you restate the question please, member for Barkly.

Mr McCARTHY: How many Territorians were in training as at 31 March 2014, and 31 March 2013?

Madam CHAIR: Do you accept the question, Minister?

Mr STYLES: Yes, thank you, Madam Chair.

Madam CHAIR: The question asked by the member for Barkly of the Minister has been allocated number 7.7.

Mr McCARTHY: In the initial figure of Territorians in training at 31 March 2016, how many were apprentices?

Mr STYLES: In 2015 the Northern Territory apprenticeships and trainees commenced went to 2185 from 2935 in 2014.

Mr McCARTHY: Sorry, Minister, I did not get that. How many were apprentices at 31 March 2016?

Mr STYLES: Do you want the split between apprentices and trainees?

Mr McCARTHY: I am just interested in the apprentices, Minister.

Mr STYLES: I have to take that on notice because I only have the number of apprentices and trainees. I can tell you that 1827 are in traditional trade occupations. That is what I have here, but if you want to know the actual breakdown I will take that on notice.

Mr McCARTHY: Well, it is information that we are interested in. So, Minister, if you are willing to take it on notice – I am interested in how many apprentices, and that is 31 March 2016, how it compares to the same

years. We are talking about 2015, 2014, 2013, and could you provide a breakdown, by trade, of those apprentices? That would be great information, if you are prepared to work on that and supply it, Minister.

Mr STYLES: Yes, we can do that, Madam Chair.

Question on Notice No 7.8

Madam CHAIR: Could you restate the question for the record please, member for Barkly?

Mr McCARTHY: Minister, in terms of Territorians at 31 March 2016, how many were apprentices? How does this number compare to the same time in 2015, 2014 and 2013? And can you please provide a breakdown by trade?

Madam CHAIR: Do you accept the question, Minister?

Mr STYLES: Yes, thank you, Madam Chair.

Madam CHAIR: The question asked by the member for Barkly of the Minister has been allocated the number 7.8.

Madam CHAIR: Do you have any more questions?

Mr McCARTHY: Thank you, Madam Chair. Minister, reading the budget papers, it is a concern. In Budget 2016-17 it shows significant drops in apprenticeships and traineeships. I figured that number would be calculated at 31 March. Apprentices and trainee commencements down by 600 and apprenticeship and traineeship completions down by 200 – can you explain to the opposition this significant decline in not only apprenticeships and traineeships, but the completions as well?

Mr STYLES: Member for Barkly, in 2015, the Northern Territory apprenticeships and trainees decreased to 2185 from 2935 in 2014. We do not have the final year national figures for 2015 yet, but they are consistent with national figures. School-based apprenticeships and traineeships commencements decreased from 2032 in 2014 to 165 in 2015. The National Centre for Vocational Education Research has reported a continued national decline in apprenticeship and trainee commencements, and attributes a proportion of this to a change in Australian government incentive arrangements.

Another contributing factor to the decline in apprenticeship and traineeship commencements can be associated with one employer who had 248 commencements in 2014 and had not commenced any other apprentices or trainees in 2015 or 2016. Of that 248 commenced in 2014, 48 are still active in training, 11 have withdrawn from training, 21 cancelled their training in 2014, 92 cancelled their training in 2015, and 76 completed. The completions from 2014 to 31 March 2015 were 844. From 2015 to 31 March 2016 we actually went up to 907 completions from 844 the previous year.

Mr McCARTHY: Thank you, Minister. They are interesting figures, and the analysis I am interested in is around any links to key trade areas. Are we losing apprentices in specific key trade areas? Do you analyse that and can you provide that information?

Mr STYLES: We can provide that information, but we do not have it in front of us at the moment.

Mr McCARTHY: So are you happy to ...

Mr STYLES: I will take that on notice.

Mr McCARTHY: Yes, thank you, Minister.

Question on Notice No 7.9

Madam CHAIR: Could you restate the question please, member for Barkly?

Mr McCARTHY: Minister, in your capacity as the Business Minister, can you provide the opposition with an analysis of the drop off in apprenticeships and traineeship commencements, and the drop off in apprenticeship and trainee completions linked to key Northern Territory industries?

Madam CHAIR: Do you accept the question, Minister?

Mr STYLES: Madam Chair, just for clarification, it actually comes under the Minister for Employment and Training, not Business. Do you want to swap that for Minister for Business or do you want to keep it in Employment and Training?

Mr McCARTHY: No, keep it in Employment and Training, Minister. Sorry.

Mr STYLES: That is all right, just for clarification.

Mr McCARTHY: Yes.

Madam CHAIR: Do you accept the question?

Mr STYLES: Yes, I do, Madam Chair.

Madam CHAIR: The question asked by the member for Barkly of the Minister has been allocated the number 7.9.

Mr McCARTHY: Thank you, Minister. In terms of this analysis I am specifically interested in apprenticeships and traineeships from the bush and whether there are links to what we are seeing as non-commencements and drop offs. Minister, can you identify specific programs that the department runs to attract apprenticeships and traineeships from the bush and regional and remote areas?

Mr STYLES: What has been reflected, especially from the bush, are the commencements in relation to the mining industry. We have seen quite a number of mines mothballed, which is a sad thing. We are seeing that right across Australia in the downward trend in apprenticeships. We work on getting more trades people and vocational education and training. That is why we want to transition to gas and the fracking of gas in the shale gas industry, because when you start looking at the sort of things you can have as a result of that, it is about the downstream processing.

When you look at keeping jobs in the bush – things like the pipeline from Tennant Creek to Mount Isa, which I am sure is of great interest to you, your electorate and the people employed there – it is about getting people in ongoing work. You start people as apprentices, and you have people working on these sorts of sites who start apprenticeships, but we need to keep them going. There needs to be an ongoing role for these people.

When you look at some of the things going on with agricultural development – all sorts of things need to be built for agriculture. Looking at the steel manufacturing industry – I will not go into the raft of things that you need, but there are apprenticeships available for Territorians in the ongoing plan to expand and diversify the economy. It is really important that we diversify the economy.

One of the things we have talked about so far is logistics. When you start building railway lines from Tennant Creek across to Mount Isa – there are apprenticeships there, but we need to keep that going. Looking at the logistics coming up from the southern states, and the interesting conversations I have had with people interstate about moving logistics – if we can actually do what Xi Jinping, the Chinese President, wants to do and make Darwin the distribution hub, there will be a second railway line. Not only is that about construction, but it is also about maintenance, the rolling stock and all that stuff that comes with our increase in trade. Once you get the extra kilometre of quay line – someone has to go out and build that and someone has to maintain it.

They are spending tens of millions of dollars putting in reefer points out at the port so they can get those refrigerated containers going. This is all about the plan to diversify the economy and make sure those jobs are there. That is how we actually increase apprenticeships.

People like those at GTNT, who take on apprentices and then put them into various positions – I think that is a great plan, and it has been very successful. I hope we continue to be jointly successful as a Territory, with people like GTNT and other people who take apprentices on and then place them, but we need that

continuity of work. It is about expanding things like Tropical Forestry Services in Katherine. There are another 200 or so jobs to come there, but we have to make sure they have that guaranteed access to the water they already have.

We need to make sure we have access to things like the onshore gas expansion. When you talk to people like those at ConocoPhillips and INPEX – they want onshore gas as a backup. That is essential to them. If they lose a pipeline out there and have to buy gas from other places in the world, that costs them a lot. They would rather invest the money here and keep building trains. We know that ConocoPhillips can build another train and that there is capacity on the INPEX site for four or five more trains.

I spoke earlier about what the prospects were for young people in the Territory. When you start doing that, it has to be maintained. I think the ongoing maintenance of some of this stuff is about \$1bn a year into our economy, predominantly in Darwin, but when you start to get pipelines, railway sidings, new mines opened up – and there is the Chandler Salt Mine in Alice Springs – a range of these things will require people from the VET sector to work in and maintain those mines. That is why we are working so hard to diversify the economy and make sure you get all the downstream processing, because to really move ahead we need a manufacturing base here. To do that we need electricity prices – we separated out Power and Water, so we have efficiencies there. When you start looking at jobs, it is about a very broad range of incentives.

The Shell Prelude project is another one – the floating gas plant. We have millions of dollars which will be spent through the Darwin economy on maintaining that project. They also have an apprenticeship program, which has been very successful. We have partnered with the Shell Prelude people – I think this is the second year in a row – and we have about 20 or 22 apprentices being put through with a grant from the Northern Territory government and from Shell, which has been very successful. I think the retention rate is about 98% in relation to those people in a range of VET schools. There is plenty going on, but it is about making sure the projects in the pipeline stay in the pipeline and come to fruition.

Mr McCARTHY: Thank you, Minister, and I appreciate your vision. I have been listening tonight with great interest to your vision about planning; however, the message I am getting from the regions – Alice Springs, Tennant Creek, Katherine and Nhulunbuy – is that it is the middle level of the economy, the repairs and maintenance, minor new works and small capital works that keep the local trade businesses employed. They are the businesses that take on the apprentices.

There has been a significant shift in policy settings in that area with the current government, which is why I am interested in this analysis. Policy development to get the regions working will be the business stimulus that employs apprentices.

Minister, I have another question here; do you have any information you could provide about how many people are in training from regional and remote areas in the Northern Territory?

Mr STYLES: You need people to invest, which is why in the previous output group we spoke about Asian engagement, trade and investment, and the attraction we need. You have to give people certainty. You have, for instance, one company – I will not use the company name – that planned to spend in excess of \$300m between February and June in the Northern Territory, doing all sorts of exploration work. Obviously there is maintenance work, and trucks and drilling rigs to be maintained, yet, sadly, they stopped. It is the example I used earlier, so I will stay on the same page.

That company employed about 140 people. They put off 140 – they actually employed more – but there are about 55 more due to come on with another associated company to continue to maintain all that. Those people did not get a job. You have to give certainty.

The Giles government has tried to have a plan, and we have a plan, so here we are. We have a plan and this is where we are going, but you have a different view. People and oppositions are entitled to have whatever view they want, but when you have a different view – investment companies are responsible to shareholders and have fiduciary duty as a board to make decisions about where they will spend their money, what they will spend it on, and the risk assessment they have to go through. When they come to a decision and say, 'We will just stop', it affects people today, and it did when the decision was made in February.

The ongoing flow-on effect of that is people may choose not to take apprentices on. I think that is very sad because there are people who have not only lost their jobs, but are not being put on. The maintenance on drilling rigs is quite high. That is all done locally. Around Centralia Australia there are drilling rigs and that is work for people in Tennant Creek and Alice Springs.

When you look apprenticeship numbers going down, apart from the mining downturn – and we have come off of that boom – people are now looking for jobs elsewhere. We have a plan about where they can go. We hope at some stage people might realise it is a good plan and we need to do it. I encourage the opposition to read the science in relation to gas. I encourage young people to look at GTNT, which is working with the Industry Capability Network NT – that is ICN NT – in relation to some of the other great stories about the Defence spend and the development of northern Australia in horticulture and aquaculture. If you look at those aquaculture farms – a lot of manufacturing has to be done with steel, aluminium and other construction material. That has to occur to make those farms work. I assume you have visited some of them. I hope you have, but, if you have not, it is good to visit. Look at the Humpty Doo barramundi farm and some of the prawn farms that are coming on line.

There is a lot of steel and other construction in making those things. We have worked very hard through Asian engagement, trade and investment on planning to roll this out and to get those investors to come here. The one thing they need is certainty, not just from government but opposition as well. This should be a collaborative approach. It used to be, but then you guys in opposition decided to change what you were doing in relation to moratoriums. We have a philosophical difference in where we are going. When you looking at maintaining jobs for our young people – they will not only come from the gas industry; they have to come out of things I have mentioned, such as Defence spending of about \$1bn, food production and security. In relation to energy security for our northern neighbours, we are hoping we can make that happen after the next election.

Mr McCARTHY: Thank you. Minister, we will get back to that question – if you have data. In a response, and I have been listening diligently all night, 2013-14 was when the onshore unconventional exploration programs for gas walked away from the Territory. We are talking big names like Hess, Falcon and Santos, which walked off its program and Tanumbirini Station, Armour Energy, Pangaea and Imperial Oil and Gas, which have no money for exploration and are out searching for it. This did not happen in 2016; it started happening in 2013. The industry has struggled.

This is my take because I live in a Toyota in these areas. The only company that is still active is Origin. That relates to a company with a retail base because they already have a good revenue stream that provides a bit of money for that continued exploration. There is a global story here. You are rather limiting when you keep trying to tie it to a one-word slogan. But that is beside the point.

What I am interested in is whether we have numbers for the regional and remote apprentices. I am serious about this policy setting and I believe you are too. When we saw the announcements about this economic stimulus package around schools – this gets the local tradies in Tennant Creek, Katherine, Nhulunbuy and Alice Springs working, and it gets companies into a fiscal position where they can take on an apprentice, if they have a vision for four years and can provide that sustainability and work to keep that apprentice. If you have some numbers, Minister, I am interested in them.

Mr STYLES: Member for Barkly, to deal with a couple of things you said. I encourage you to go online and look at Deloitte's website at Geoffrey Cann's work. He works for Deloitte and is considered to be one of the world's experts on gas. He was in Darwin recently at the Petroleum Club NT and gave a fantastic presentation on where we sit in Australia in relation to world gas.

You are right. Around the world people are proposing to build LNG plants. I am happy to inform you that only one in 10 of these LNG projects will proceed. That is because there are plenty of people around the world who have put in gas plants. One of the things Australia does – I will use one of his slides. I asked him if I can use these and he gave me permission when I went and got them from him.

I do not know if people are reading this, I cannot see. Look at all these projects over here – this is Australia out here. When you look at one in ten plants these days that have been on the books – the only plants that are going anywhere are the ones on brownfield sites. Australia is in the lead position because we actually have a lot of the infrastructure in place to expand. It is now very easy in Australia. In fact, Australia is in the best position in the world to expand on gas.

You have the possibility of Gladstone doubling in size in the next few years. There is a market for gas. Looking at Taiwan for instance, Taiwan is about to turn off all its nuclear reactors. So the gas market there will go through the roof. Look at the ability of INPEX; they have another four or five trains they can put in there. The power station will run it, but they are looking for onshore gas. If we can give them onshore gas the trains will come because the only place people will expand gas production – given that we can then have downstream processing through petrochemical plants. Places like Taiwan are looking for gas. Other countries are looking for gas. The gas is moving.

I do not want to go through this entire presentation, but I would encourage you to go online. His name is Geoffrey Cann and he works for Deloitte. I was astounded with his presentation, given that he is a real expert and operates all over the world. He will tell you that Australia is sitting pretty. We are in the best possible position. What he did point out is that New South Wales has an issue about gas; they are running out of gas so they are looking for it. We have gas in the Northern Territory that we can send over to them by increasing the size of our gas production.

Given that we are fracking our gas here, we can actually create extra jobs in Central Australia as there is drilling that needs to be done. There are a couple of names he mentioned. I do not want to mention anyone's name, but a couple of those companies still have money for exploration. I know that because I have been talking to someone. I will not mention names, but there are people out there who want to get on and explore the gas.

INPEX wants a supply and ConocoPhillips wants backfill, so they are all looking for onshore gas. What we need is the ability to get that to them. From that will come ongoing jobs of building pipelines, maintaining drill rigs, maintaining plants and equipment. There is a whole range of things like building platforms. Each one of those gas platforms they build is \$200m and they will build lots of them. They are only very small; they do not take up a lot, but they cost a lot to manufacture and get it in place, and then they have to be maintained. So there are jobs there.

All the wells they build are under our new regulations will have to be inspected every six months. You have people going around – there are more jobs there – in Toyotas driving around making sure that wells and capped wells are in good condition. So there is a whole range of expertise required through VET jobs to go out there and maintain that. This is where we create the jobs of the future; it is all part of it. I see a bright future for Territorians, provided we have a range of things, which includes Defence spending, agriculture, maintaining food security for our northern neighbours and energy security for our northern neighbours. That is really important to them at this point in time. Thousands and thousands of jobs and billions of dollars in investments creates jobs. That is what builds our population and that is what will be good for the Northern Territory.

Ms MANISON: Can I just point out, Minister – you have been talking about a Deloitte report and what not, when you are discussing fracking. We are here talking about employment and training opportunities and the economic downturn we are seeing in the Northern Territory, but also the fact we have seen a real downturn in the uptake of apprentices and trainees. That is something you hear from people on the ground, that businesses are not putting them on at the moment because of the issues out there in the economy. This evening, since we have started this session in business, you have been speaking about fracking as being the jobs right now, here – the be all and end all, the saviour that you are putting all your money on in the Territory economy right now.

Go back and look at the Deloitte Access Economics reports into the economic impact of shale and tight gas development in the Northern Territory from July 2013. When you look at where there might be any movement in tat jobs growth, we are not talking about – we are here in 2016. We are talking about 2021, and the questions we have been asking today are about the economic management of this government, the work you are doing at present and the fact we have seen warning signs from 2014-15 with the employment growth dipping – as we were speaking about earlier on – and the impacts that have flowed on to apprentices, trainees and so forth.

We want to see more immediate work to increase jobs in the Territory right now. I am just pointing out to you, Minister, that you keep saying these jobs are here right now. The fact is, when you look at the economic analysis around this from another Deloitte report – I do not know if this is the same one you are referring to – you see that jobs do not kick in there until at least 2020.

Mr STYLES: There are about eight of your statements I would like to respond to, if I can. You talk about mining; there has been a downturn in mining. All the people in that maintenance area are out looking for jobs everywhere else. That is across Australia. You have to understand that the whole economy in Australia in relation to mining has come off a boom.

I gave you an example from Townsville yesterday morning of a lady who is screaming out for investment and jobs. People this morning in the coal town in Queensland – I cannot think of the name of it at the moment. Two years ago houses were selling for over \$900 000, and they cannot get \$100 000 for them now. There is a massive downturn across the country and we are running number one for construction and number three – when you say the sky is falling in the Northern Territory, we are actually running a lot better than everywhere else. I understand why. You say I am talking about gas. Well, gas is a part of the future

of and the jobs in the Northern Territory, you are opposed to that. I hope the other things I have talked about, such as aquaculture, horticulture, plantation services and things like Defence spending – I hope you are not against that because I believe you are for that sort of stuff.

Ms MANISON: Absolutely not. We know Defence investment in the Territory has a long and proud history here and investment is very important. Not just our security, the whole nation's security.

Mr STYLES: I realise that, but what I am saying is that you say I am talking about gas; it is where we have a point of difference in relation to the billions of dollars ...

Ms MANISON: It is almost like it is a one-trick pony ...

Mr STYLES: No, it is not. It is where we have a difference.

Ms MANISON: ... from what we have heard through this debate tonight.

Mr STYLES: That is what I am pointing out and to the people listening and watching this; we have a good future in Defence spending for the next 20 years – about \$1bn a year. The money that will flow in from foreign direct investment in relation to horticulture, agriculture and the development of northern Australia – 17 million hectares – that is what we are actually working on in our Asian Engagement, Trade and Investment Strategy. Where we have a point of difference about billions of dollars – 6300 jobs is not something back from 2013.

The Deloitte report came out earlier this year. There is one in relation to the gas industry – 6300 jobs and billions of dollars for investment. The presentation by Geoffrey Cann was about six to eight weeks ago in Darwin. He has been across the world giving the same presentation to people in relation to gas. I am not saying gas is one shot in the locker; I am saying it is very much a point of difference between your policy and our policy, when you are happy to turn 6300 jobs away to South Australia and Queensland. It is not like they will not happen; they will happen. They will just happen in the Labor states of South Australia or Queensland. That is where the money and investment is going. We are now being courted by those people.

The gas people are telling us that Queensland is now saying, 'Come to Queensland'. This is our opportunity in the Territory. Someone is prepared to export to Queensland or South Australia, and that is what I object to. That is why I am actually pushing the point.

Mr McCARTHY: Thank you, Minister. I think there may have been some data around regional remote apprenticeships?

Mr STYLES: There is.

Mr McCARTHY: Thank you, Minister.

Mr STYLES: Member for Barkly, in 2015-16 the four funding streams placed 262 Aboriginal people in jobs, 93 to enhance their careers, and 35 businesses and organisations to grow their workforce. A further 34 businesses and organisations have benefited through labour coordination projects in order to access a local Aboriginal work force.

The four grant funding streams in 2015-16 are the Indigenous Workforce Participation Initiatives Program with \$1.1m; the Indigenous Employment Initiative with \$250 000; Indigenous mobility with \$100 000; and traineeships under the Commonwealth-funded local jobs program.

These funding streams were pooled in 2015-16 for a public grants round for initiatives that deliver sustainable jobs and/or labour coordination services. The approach simplified access for businesses by creating a single point of funding opportunity. The funding was oversubscribed by 51 applications that were received, with a total request of \$9.9m from an available funding pool of \$1.5m.

Seven businesses have been awarded grants to deliver initiatives, and the total value of the grants awarded was \$867 560 for 153 jobs. In relation to Aboriginal training, the key priority for the Northern Territory government is to increase the capacity and capability of Aboriginal Territorians to actively participate in the economy. The Indigenous Responsive Program provides funding to support tailored training activities that provide skills development for job opportunities which are linked to local projects and communities.

One of the things we have done very successfully is break down a number of large contracts into smaller contracts – for want of a better term, bite-sized contracts – so local people can get involved in it. I gave the member for Nelson an explanation earlier – before the dinner break, when someone else was sitting in your chair – of Timber Creek. When I was the Minister for Infrastructure I broke down some of the larger contracts into smaller bite sizes. Now you have Timber Creek people doing one; they share their equipment with people in Elliott. Elliott has one, so we are now building capacity and keeping the money in the community.

As a result of that, out of Timber Creek – and that is where the member of Nelson was talking about getting local people – they have a subdivision in their town site. They have a brick factory where they are making bricks and each of those people employed by the local Aboriginal organisation there is looking at building their own home. That is the key to get people into work – and, obviously, the role modelling of parents getting up in the morning and going to work. As you know, if that happens the kids are more likely to go to school.

There are all sorts of economic benefits not only for the people working there, but also the children coming through. They have some role models, and they are looking for jobs. Again, if we keep that going we can increase from about 42 – I think it was that when we took over government – to about 560 people involved in businesses in the bush.

The Indigenous Responsive Program has an annual budget of \$2.4m to support training for Aboriginal people. As of 31 March 2016 the expenditure was \$1.76m. The objectives of that program are to support training activities that deliver in regional and remote communities, leading to employment opportunities, increased work-ready skills of job seekers, and supporting upskilling activities for employees.

One of the things I think we will be successful in – and it is a start in some of the more remote communities – is the outback bakeries. What a fantastic opportunity for people. Again, I gave an example, which I will not go through again, about a guy who basically had not worked for 20 years. He now runs the bakery at one of these places and his two young sons work there as well. They have left school and have not had a job. Now, at 4.00 am they start baking and at 5.00 am the smell of fresh bread rolls through the community. They are doing very well.

The government is rolling out about 22 of those across 22 communities – it is the butcher, the baker, the candlestick maker application in these regional communities getting those regional economies going. You asked for some numbers. As of 31 March 2016 in the Darwin region – the location being Darwin, Palmerston, Milikapiti, Pirlangimpi, Wurrumiyanga, Port Melville, Wadeye and Fossil Head, there are people employed in programs there. In 2014-15 there were 23, 2014-15 participants were 360, and in 2015-16 the programs were 22 and 251.

In West Arnhem in 2014-15 there were five programs with 46. In 2015-16 there were seven programs with 68. At Galiwinku, Gapuwiyak, Milingimbi, Ramingining, Yirrkala, Nhulunbuy, Angurugu, in 2014-15 there were 10 programs and 111 participants; in 2015-16 there were 20 programs and 234 participants. In Katherine, Timber Creek, Bulla, Bulman and Minyerri, there were 16 programs in 2014-15 and 196 participants, which is now 11 programs in 2015-16 and 119 participants.

In Barkly, that is, Tennant Creek, Elliott, Ali Curung, Blue Bush, Canteen Creek, Kiana, and Borrooloola, there were 21 programs in 2014-16 and 193 participants. In 2015-16 there are 27 programs and 231 participants. In the Alice Springs area, at Lajamanu, Papunya, Santa Theresa, Ti Tree and Yuendumu, there were 18 programs in 2014-15 and 287 participants, and in 2015-16 there were 14 programs and 237 participants. In 2014-15 the total was 46 communities with 93 training programs overall and 1193 participants, and in 2015-16 there were 39 communities with 101 training programs and 1140 participants.

These training programs have continued despite the changes in the Australian government's employment service activities where the remote jobs and community programs have been replaced by the CDP program. The new program does not provide the same level of incentives for CDP providers to place job seekers into training programs or employment, but, while there are fewer programs delivered to CDP participants, programs are now targeting more upskilling training activities to support local businesses.

As the member for Nelson pointed out earlier, if we train people we can get them to build their own homes and industrial factories out there. We have introduced a remote contracting policy where we want people out there to build capability and capacity. When we took over government there were 42 people involved in businesses out there and now there are 562 in remote areas.

We have to work hard and make sure we continue that so it continues to grow. We see willingness in people to participate in programs and initiatives like Business in the Bush. There is also the policy on the provisional sum to drive real sustained jobs, and it is working. It is working in Alice Springs to the point where some people in sections of the community do not like the policy. As a government, we like it because Aboriginal people are being employed, remaining employed and building their skills and capacities so they can continue to grow their businesses in regional, rural and remote parts of the Northern Territory.

Mr McCARTHY: Thank you, Minister. It is good to have this debate and collect this information about policy development. The Labor opposition gives credit where credit is due. You hit on a good point. They are great numbers in the regions, so let us aim for sustainability. When you take contracts and break them down into bite-sized pieces – a bite-sized piece of a road reserve management contract over 36 months provides sustainability for the trainee. That turns from work ready to work experience to full-time employment. We give credit where credit is due and I appreciate what you are doing in that space.

Can you outline for me the role and functions of the training board, the membership of the board, and the annual cost of the operation of the board?

Mr STYLES: The board is an interim board, and it is called the Northern Territory Employment and Training Authority. It is an advisory board and was established outside the legislation in July 2014 by the then Minister for Employment and Training, pending a review of the Northern Territory Employment and Training Act. Some of the key issues that we looked at here were the interim Northern Territory Employment and Training Authority. NTETA advisory board was established to oversee the review of the Northern Territory Employment and Training Act, and to ensure the Northern Territory's vocational education and training policies and strategic priority settings met the expectations of NT government and that of industry.

Members were appointed directly by the then Minister for Employment and Training. Those members included Mr Andrew Bruyn, Mr Greg Ambrose-Pearce, Mr Gary Coleman, Mr Peter Barclay, Ms Karen Sheldon and Mr Wayne Kraft. The appointment of the current NT advisory board members expires on 30 June 2016.

The NTETA advisory board members are paid sitting fees. They are supported by the Training NT division of the Department of Business to carry out its functions and as at 31 March 2016 the NTETA advisory board had met seven times. The cost for the NTETA advisory board to 31 March 2016 is \$13 039. In overseeing that review of the Northern Territory Employment and Training Act, the NTETA advisory board endorsed the policy positions for the new act, which informed the drafting of the Training and Skills Development Bill.

The bill establishes the NT Training Commission; one of the NT Training Commission's functions is to provide high-level strategic advice to the Minister for the effective planning for vocational education and training in the Northern Territory. The Northern Territory Training Commission will replace NTETA advisory board when established, and the current NTETA advisory board members interested in being members of the NT Training Commission will need to nominate via the new nomination processes.

In relation to remuneration paid in 2015-16 it was \$8700, and total costs paid in 2015-16 to date is \$13 000.

Mr McCARTHY: Thank you, Minister. It is good to understand that transition process into the new legislation. Minister, can you outline for me the roles and functions of the training advisory councils?

Mr STYLES: In January 2016 Cabinet approved the establishment of a single new incorporated association to undertake the functions currently carried out by the six industry training advisory councils, more commonly known as ITACs. The decision was as a result of the review of the ITAC functions and the scope and industry coverage. The new organisation is called the Industry Skills Advisory Council of the Northern Territory, ISAC is the acronym, and it will be operational by 1 July 2016.

The current ITAC funding agreements expire on 30 June 2016 and the future Northern Territory government funding will be provided to the ISAC NT, which is the Industry Skills Advisory Council of the Northern Territory Incorporated, to carry out the functions currently undertaken by the industry training advisory councils, more commonly known as ITACs.

Cabinet also approved the redirection of \$2.42m of existing Department of Business funding to increase the capacity and capability of the new organisation, which includes an increase in staff numbers. The total annual budget for ISAC NT is \$3.42m from 2016-17 onwards. The Department of Business will enter into

an initial three-year service agreement with ISAC NT and the existing ITACs will make their own decisions as to whether or not they continue to operate past 30 June 2016. All staff at the ITACs will be offered positions in the new organisation. It will be their choice as to whether or not they accept the offer of employment. The governing board of ISAC NT is composed of chairs and deputy chairs for the current ITACs. The Chair of ISAC NT is independent of the existing ITACs and was appointed by the Chief Executive Officer of the Department of Business.

The Department of Business Training NT representative is also a member of the governing board, although they do not have any voting rights, but the position of general manager for ISAC NT has been advertised and, once appointed, the general manager will also be a non-voting member of the governing board. The NT government sponsored accommodation will continue to be provided to ISAC and other necessary activities to get ISAC operations under way.

That is where we are going there. There is a period of extensive consultation with the ITACs. Currently a number have combined – we have bought it down from a larger number down to a more manageable number. Everyone is on the same page. Everyone has agreed and everyone thinks it is a great idea so we have proceeded with it and it starts on 1 July.

Mr McCARTHY: Minister, is there an additional budget appropriation to run the new organisation or is that from within?

Mr STYLES: No, that is the \$3.4m. I think it is somewhere around that figure. What has happened is there is ...

Mr McCARTHY: That is not additional. That did not appear in Budget 2016-17 as additional.

Mr STYLES: No, that is all from within. What happens is the role – one of the things when we looked at the ITACs was about getting out to the regions. This is dear to your heart, I know. It is about getting these people out to do the scope of work they need to do in the regions to find out what is going on there and make sure they can assess what the needs are. That is why there is an increase in funding, so the ISAC can actually get out into the regions, find out what their needs are, meet those needs and make sure that training and the requirements that people in that industry in the regional and remote areas are taken care of. There is an increase in money to allow that to happen. That is part of the whole restructure.

When we spoke to the ITACs and when asked what the issues are and what we need to do better, they said one of the main reasons is to get out and do what you want, that is, to get out to the regions and make sure they are being serviced so young people or anyone who wants to change jobs or vocations can do so. That was important to us and I am sure it is important to you.

Mr McCARTHY: Thank you, Minister. Thank you for sharing and thank you to the public officials for that support. That is all the questions I have in that appropriation, Madam Chair.

Madam CHAIR: Are there any other questions for Training NT?

Mr WOOD: I was just wondering whether if I can make a comment; the Minister mentioned gas and he mentioned Deloitte.

Madam CHAIR: Only questions, member for Nelson. No comments.

Mr WOOD: Only questions. I looked up the Deloitte report and it says that we do not start getting much employment from the gas industry from ...

Ms MANISON: 2021?

Mr WOOD: We only get a bump there – 2023.

Ms MANISON: It is 2016 right now.

Mr WOOD: You do not get anything in 2016 because it is not on the list, but you will have a gap between where we are today and where Deloitte expects to get a start in employment. What are we doing in between now and when INPEX starts to fade away, and when do you think this gas scenario will start to pick up?

I am using this – you like to show me these things. The bottom line on this graph is 2020–23. It is nearly a flat-line graph.

Mr STYLES: When things like the Defence spending comes in – there is the Darwin port and there will probably be a large construction of job going on there. When you look at the development of horticulture, agriculture and the building of railway lines – these are the things we are trying to build. When you are talking about a more immediate stop – there are people who have literally stopped spending money in the Northern Territory and are waiting for the result of 27 August. You obviously have to build, but you also have to plan, like the training. We have the North Australian Centre for Oil and Gas facility at Charles Darwin University.

Have you been out there and looked at it? I highly recommend it. The equipment that is out there, which has been sponsored by the gas industry, is world class. I was absolutely amazed at what they actually have out there in relation to training our young people to get these high paid jobs that will flow. There are lag times and we are trying to cut that lag time down, but we will lose six months from when decisions were made in February by others to make sure they had their philosophical beliefs met. We have been trying to do that.

In the meantime we have pumped \$100m into Boosting our Economy. We targeted that at particular industries and people who are out to build, construct and make steel fabrication; anything with that in it is part of the \$100m. We have a record infrastructure budget coming out which, I think, is about \$1.74bn. They are the sorts of things governments can do, but we have to give industry, business and investors confidence so they will invest and know that they have some certainty over things.

Look at regional jobs, for instance, in Katherine. TFS, or Tropical Forestry Services, wants to build a new distillery plant down there for pharmaceutical-grade oils that come out of sandalwood. It is a massive plant. It is tens of millions of dollars to build the plant, and then they need people to run it. When you take the expansion from about 4000 ha through to about 10 000 ha, it is a high-intensity industry for people.

There are jobs there for people who may not want to go to university, but a lot of people down there are looking for jobs. This is one of those things where, when they are up to speed, they will employ anywhere up to about 500 people in Katherine. You are looking at nearly 10% of the population of Katherine. It is about 6000 or something at the moment, so you are just short of not only the working population in Katherine, but the whole population of Katherine.

We are looking at giving them certainty, and we have done so with water allocation, but that is in doubt now. The decisions to employ more people could be on hold. I am not in the board room of TFS, but I am hearing from industry that they are concerned about ongoing certainty of whether or not their investment is secure. That is not a good sign to be sending out to people.

We have good news stories in relation to Defence spending and people who want to invest in aquaculture and horticulture, and in relation to other activities that will involve foreign direct investment here in food security. They want energy security, but that is an interesting field at the moment. We will have to wait and see what happens at the election.

There is plenty going on that we are investing in. If you are looking at tourism jobs – domestic tourism is up 34%, which is a fantastic result for the Territory. Again, that is about jobs for our kids.

Mr WOOD: If you are looking at jobs – what is happening to the backpacker tax?

Mr STYLES: The backpacker tax – we have been at war with the federal government on this issue.

Mr WOOD: I know, but where is it at the moment? I was hoping a decision would be made before this election.

Mr STYLES: They have put a hold on it and are not doing anything in relation to it. They will look at it. I am sure they have run out of time in government to be able to do things. They are in caretaker mode, so I am waiting for the election to be over. Irrespective of who wins government, I know I will be writing to whoever the Minister is on day one to say, 'You need to be doing this, this and this'.

I think they are aware and they got the message. It has taken a while to get through a lot of the bureaucracy in relation to this, but in relation to the backpacker tax we are on the record as saying we want it gone. Just get rid of it. Canada and New Zealand are getting most of the backpackers. In relation to

application for visas, it costs about \$408 a year for one of these backpackers to apply for a visa to come to Australia. But go to Canada and it is about \$108 for two years, so people are voting with their feet. But this is a Commonwealth issue.

They are doing a review of it at the moment and we have sent plenty of correspondence to them in the past, and we will continue to send more in the future. The announcement has impacted negatively on backpackers coming here. I am like you – you live in the rural area and I have friends out there ...

Mr WOOD: Lucky the mangoes are not flowering on time this year. It might give you some respite.

Mr STYLES: Yes. When you look at getting the fruit off those trees – the other thing is that we are working very closely with the Seasonal Worker Program with Timor-Leste. We have people working over there. There are families who want to come here on a regular basis. We are trying to get those people to come here so they are here for the picking season and can then go back to Timor-Leste. That not only gets our fruit off, but also looks after our northern neighbours.

I do not know if you are aware of how closely we are working with Timor-Leste to get those people here. Some of those people come across and stay for 10 weeks to three months and earn sufficient money to go back and keep their families going for an entire year. In fact, some of them have gone back and started businesses using the money they have earned here, given that the average income for a Timor-Leste is about US\$60 a year. It is right down the bottom.

We are not only helping that family but helping Timor-Leste to help build business and keep them sustainable. If we can get them coming back, it fixes our problem in our rural areas and in Katherine with getting mango crops picked. We are also working with them in relation to training to get them up to speed in hospitality issues when they come here. They can work on visas here under the Seasonal Worker Program and then go home. Again, if they earn sufficient money during the Dry Season when we need them here, that will keep them going for an entire year. Just three months will keep an entire family ...

Mr WOOD: It is good, especially working with one of the poorest countries in the world. We have an obligation to do that as well, so it is great. That is all I have, Madam Chair.

Madam CHAIR: That concludes consideration of Output Group 2.0.

OUTPUT GROUP 3.0 – POLICY AND REGULATORY SUPPORT **Output 3.1 – Licensing NT**

Madam CHAIR: We will now consider Output Group 3.0, Policy and Regulatory Support, Output 3.1, Licensing NT. Are there any questions?

Ms MANISON: Thank you, Madam Chair. First, Minister, on behalf of my colleague, the member for Nightcliff – she has submitted a written question to you, number 493. Under Standing Order 114 you have 30 days in which to provide an answer. You have provided an answer; however, the answer says:

Thank you for your question.

I will ask the department to prepare all of the material you have asked for, to be ready to present at the Estimates Committee hearings, should you wish to ask at that time.

This will avoid unnecessary duplication of work for the department.

Minister, are you able to please provide answers to these two questions about takeaway alcohol licences?

Can you provide the number of takeaway licences since June 2012 by year and location? For those additional licences issued, can you provide the reason for the licence being issued?

Granted you have had a considerable amount of time, with prior notice of this written question, would you please provide that information and table that response for us so we can properly scrutinise it through this output group?

Mr STYLES: Thank you, member for Wanguri. There was a moratorium on all new takeaway liquor licences in place since 2006, which was not lifted until 11 June 2014. Accordingly, no new liquor licences were issued between those dates ...

Ms MANISON: June 2014?

Mr STYLES: Since 2006 to 11 June 2014.

Ms MANISON: You said 11 June 2014. Up until now, in line with the question ...

Mr STYLES: Hang on, I will finish the answer, if I may.

Ms MANISON: Thank you, Minister.

Mr STYLES: Accordingly, no new liquor licences were issued between those dates. As at 11 June 2014, there was a total of 298 takeaway liquor licences issued in the Territory.

Ms MANISON: Wow – 298!

Mr STYLES: As at 11 June 2014 ...

Ms MANISON: So that is not 298 new ...

Mr STYLES: No, not that ...

Ms MANISON: ... but 298 total in the Northern Territory?

Mr STYLES: There was a total of 298 takeaway liquor licences in the Northern Territory.

Ms MANISON: In 2006 what was the number prior to that ...

Mr STYLES: I do not know what prior to 2006 was, but I am saying ...

Ms MANISON: Surely, when you are in government, you know what the number was at 11 June 2014 when this commenced?

Mr STYLES: I just gave it to you – that was 298.

Mr WOOD: There was a moratorium; there should not have been any more.

Mr STYLES: Between 2006 when the Labor government put the moratorium in place and 11 June 2014 there were no takeaway licences issued.

Ms MANISON: You are saying the total number of takeaway liquor licences then was 298?

Mr STYLES: That is right. As at 11 June 2014 there was a total of 298 liquor licences issued in the Territory. That is what was on the books at that stage. Did you get that one?

Ms MANISON: Yes, thank you.

Mr STYLES: The total number of takeaway liquor licences issued since June 2012 is nine. In 2014 two licences were issued for venues in Berry Springs and at Marrakai. In 2015 four licences were issued to venues in Stuart Park, Coolalinga, Holtze and Rosebery. In 2016, three licences have been issued to date for venues in Palmerston, Darwin city and Bellamack. This represents an increase of 3% since June 2014.

Now, for your second question, 'For those additional licences issued, can you provide the reason for the licences being issued?' – all new takeaway liquor licence applications are assessed in accordance with the objects of the *Liquor Act* and the takeaway licence guideline issued by the former Northern Territory Licensing Commission in December 2014. Each of those above mentioned licences were found to meet those requirements.

Ms MANISON: Thank you, Minister, for providing that information to the Estimates Committee. Minister, is takeaway alcohol presently available from the Milikapiti social club?

Mr STYLES: I think it is. I am just checking. There are three on the Tiwi Islands, I think, but I am just checking to get you the correct answer. I recall reading that, but if you want to keep going, I will get that answer for you in a moment. They will pull it out somewhere.

Ms MANISON: And, if it is the case that takeaway alcohol is presently available from the Milikapiti social club, was this licence granted late last year?

Mr STYLES: I know there are some notes in here somewhere; I just have to pull them out.

Madam CHAIR: Do you want to take it on notice? You can respond later this evening.

Ms MANISON: I have a range of questions that follow on from that first question, Madam Chair, so I will put those on the record for the Minister.

Mr STYLES: If you want to, I am happy to take that as soon as we get it, even if it is in another output group.

Madam CHAIR: Do you want to ask him a bit later then. Is that okay?

Ms MANISON: If we do not have it by the end of the output group then I will put it on notice, thank you Minister.

Mr STYLES: Thank you.

Ms MANISON: Okay, Minister. I am advised that the government has commissioned a report called 'Managing alcohol consumption – a review of licenced social clubs in remote communities in the Northern Territory'. Minister, what were the terms of reference of this report?

Mr STYLES: Member for Wanguri, do you have a series of questions on that? If that is the case, we will take it on notice as I do not have the report here.

Ms MANISON: Well, Minister, has this report been delivered to government and is this a public report?

Mr STYLES: I will take all of that on notice and we will get back to you. We will try to pull it. We will take it on notice.

Ms MANISON: You have your department's staff here. Surely you would know. Does this report actually exist? 'Managing alcohol consumption – a review of licenced social clubs in remote communities in the Northern Territory.' Is this a body of work that the agency has engaged in?

Mr STYLES: We will just stop and pull it out, thanks.

Madam CHAIR: Well, it might be a good time to have a break. You guys can find your paperwork and we will come back.

Mr STYLES: That will be fine. We will take a break.

The committee suspended.

Madam CHAIR: We are on Output Group 3.0, Policy and Regulatory Support, Output 3.1, Licensing NT. Are there any questions?

Mr STYLES: Madam Chair, in relation to the question on the licence at Milikapiti. Yes, in October last year there was a limited trading licence where they were able to trade on Fridays, one day a week, and they have to sell light beer. It is a 12-month trial. It was a result of a very successful community consultation process. The community is supportive of it. It is working well; however, it will be reviewed in October this year to see how it is going.

Ms MANISON: Are there any takeaway alcohol provisions at the community, Minister, or is it just to drink and be served in a licensed venue?

Mr STYLES: My understanding is there is a limit per person and there are ...

Ms MANISON: Takeaway or just ...

Mr STYLES: Takeaway, yes.

Ms MANISON: Why was that figure not included in the initial takeaway licences you read out at the start of this session?

Mr STYLES: My understanding is that they are whole-of-government, whole-of-Territory figures so that is in those.

Ms MANISON: Are there any other takeaway licences that have been missed in the information you provided with the answer to written question 493, given we have missed Milikapiti?

Mr STYLES: My understanding is we have given you ...

Ms MANISON: Any other remote communities?

Mr STYLES: I will take that on notice, Madam Chair. I will go back and double check those numbers for you.

Question on Notice No 7.11

Madam CHAIR: Could you restate the question please, member for Wanguri.

Ms MANISON: I will restate the original question. Granted, we have already missed one takeaway licence. I will restate written question 493 to the Minister.

Can you provide the number of total takeaway alcohol licences since June 2012 by year and location? For those additional licences issued, which, as we know, came in from 11 June 2014, can you please provide the reason for the licences being issued? We know that in addition to the nine you read out at the start, it is 10 when you include Milikapiti as part of that, with their social club having a takeaway alcohol licence.

Mr STYLES: I accept that, Madam Chair.

Madam CHAIR: The question asked by the member for Wanguri of the Minister has been allocated the number 7.11.

Ms MANISON: Minister, you spoke about consultation as part of the consideration of granting a takeaway alcohol licence in October last year to Milikapiti social club. Who was consulted on the Tiwi Islands prior to that licence being granted?

Mr STYLES: I do not have the names of those people with me. I will have to take that on notice as well.

Ms MANISON: Thank you, Minister.

Question on Notice No 7.12

Madam CHAIR: Could you restate the question please, member for Wanguri.

Ms MANISON: Who was consulted on the Tiwi Islands prior to the takeaway licence at Milikapiti being granted?

Madam CHAIR: Do you accept the question, Minister?

Mr STYLES: Yes, I do. Thanks, Madam Chair.

Madam CHAIR: The question asked by the member for Wanguri of the Minister has been allocated the number 7.12.

Ms MANISON: With regard to this new takeaway alcohol licence at Milikapiti, is there ongoing monitoring of any impacts in the community as a result of the takeaway licence? What ongoing monitoring processes are in place? You said it will be reviewed in October, but it is clearly important over the 12 months that there is some ongoing monitoring.

Mr STYLES: Madam Chair, I am happy take that on notice with the other ones.

Ms MANISON: Thank you, Minister.

Question on Notice No 7.13

Madam SPEAKER: Could you restate the question, member for Wanguri.

Ms MANISON: What monitoring is in place at Milikapiti? Are there any social impacts as a result of the issuing of a takeaway licence there?

Madam SPEAKER: Do you accept the question, Minister?

Mr STYLES: I do. Thanks, Madam Chair.

Madam SPEAKER: The question asked by the member for Wanguri of the Minister has been allocated number 7.13.

Mr WOOD: On that same question.

Ms MANISON: Please, member for Nelson.

Mr WOOD: I have not heard about this licence for Milikapiti. Would I be right in saying there should have been – and I am not saying there was not – an advertisement in the paper. If there was an advertisement in the paper, do you know if there was a response from the community in relation to that advertisement?

Mr STYLES: My understanding, member for Nelson, is that there was extensive consultation with the community and that the community is fully supportive of what is going on in this trial. It is a 12-month trial, limited to light beer and only on Fridays. The community is actually trying to educate its members in relation to responsible consumption and also the responsible service of alcohol. I do not have the details as to what went in the paper, etcetera, but I am aware there was a trial and it had full community support.

Mr WOOD: I understand that and I also understand the history of alcohol on the islands. Unfortunately I used to live with it. I just did not know whether the processes still had to be gone through. I imagine if there is an alcohol licence in my area that it is advertised in the paper and people have time to comment. I am not saying the community did not participate in that discussion, but I did not know whether it was only an in-house version of having a licence rather than being done through the official processes.

Mr STYLES: I do not know the details of the process in front of me, but I am informed by those who conducted the whole process that the community was fully informed, fully consulted and are fully supportive of what is going on in relation to the trial.

Mr WOOD: So, would have there been a hearing through the Director-General?

Mr STYLES: I do not have the actual details in front of me, but if you want those details I am happy to provide them if you want.

Madam CHAIR: Would you like to put it on notice?

Mr WOOD: Yes please.

Question on Notice No 7.14

Madam CHAIR: Could you restate the question please, member for Nelson?

Mr WOOD: Minister, could you say whether the liquor licence for Milikapiti was advertised, and was the Director-General of Licensing involved in the consultation process?

Madam CHAIR: Do you accept the question Minister?

Mr STYLES: I do. Thank you, Madam Chair.

Madam CHAIR: The question asked by the member for Nelson of the Minister has been allocated the number 7.14.

Ms MANISON: Minister, prior to our break, I asked a question with regard to a report which, I have been advised, the government has commissioned called, 'Managing alcohol consumption – a review of licenced social clubs in remote communities in the Northern Territory'. I am keen to find out when this report was delivered to the government, and what the terms of reference to this report were.

Mr STYLES: My recollection is that it was presented at the end of 2015, has gone back to the department and there has been some to and fro. The department has come out with some recommendations for me to take to Cabinet. That is the current status of that report. It is not a public report; it is an internal report commissioned by the Department of Business.

Ms MANISON: Will it be released to the public? Is that the intention after it goes through Cabinet? This is a very important issue.

Mr STYLES: Certainly, the recommendations that come out will obviously go to Cabinet.

Ms MANISON: Surely around this issue there will be an expectation from the public to see the full report.

Mr STYLES: The report has been commissioned as an internal document, and often internal documents are written in such a way that they may not be, in that form, suitable to go to the public. There is a whole lot of stuff. You would be aware of that. You would get reports from time to time as opposition members that are not designed ...

Ms MANISON: This is not commercial-in-confidence information; this is really important social policy information.

Mr STYLES: It is, but when you are looking at a whole range of things and the way the report is written – it is designed as an internal document, not as something ready to go out to the public. That is what it was designed for. It is an internal document designed to inform the department and those in the department responsible for putting recommendations up to Cabinet. Cabinet has to discuss that, so I cannot predict what Cabinet may or may not do in relation what the contents of that report are.

Ms MANISON: Minister, the first draft went through in late last year. Did you say in November or December 2015?

Mr STYLES: It was the end of December 2015.

Ms MANISON: Who was working on that report for your department?

Mr STYLES: Licensing.

Ms MANISON: Licensing. Okay. Who has been consulted as part of the work on this report?

Mr STYLES: It was commissioned by the department. There are questions in relation to that report that I am not across. I have not fully read that report. It will come back to me with recommendations to go through to Cabinet. If you want the exact details I will take it on notice.

Ms MANISON: Minister, granted that you do have your departmental staff here and you being the Minister of the department, I am curious to find out why you commissioned the report.

Mr STYLES: To get information; that is why you commission a report. That is obvious, but the thing is when ...

Ms MANISON: The information around licensing social clubs and remote communities, is it about expansion?

Mr STYLES: If you are asking for an internal document to be produced and the report to be produced – it is written for internal consumption. The document is not actually written. Cabinet will decide as to whether or not that document goes out to the public. I am sure you understand from when you were adviser that you had reports coming in that were designed to be read by people internally. It has a lot of different language that you just cannot put out in the public arena because you can construe that sort of thing in 10 different ways. Documents that are put out for public consumption are written in a particular manner.

Are you suggesting to me that when you were a government adviser that every document you got went to the public? Is that what you are saying?

Ms MANISON: Minister, I am saying you are the Minister right now, in this government.

Mr STYLES: That is correct.

Ms MANISON: You have commissioned, through your department, a report into licensed social clubs in remote communities of the Northern Territory. We know alcohol consumption and the impacts of that in the Northern Territory are one of the absolute causes of misery and many issues throughout the Territory.

It will be a very topical report if you are to go forward and issue more licenses in social clubs out across the Northern Territory in remote communities. People want to see an evidence-based approach ...

Mr STYLES: I thank you are making assumptions as to what may or may not be in that report.

Ms MANISON: ... and they will also want to know what consultation has been done with communities.

Mr STYLES: What part of an internal report do you not understand? You keep asking me the same question; you do not like the answer. It is an internal report designed to advise the department on what recommendations they may or may not make to Cabinet as to which way we proceed with either a public report or any other report in anything that we do.

The thing is designed as an internal document. I hope you understand what an internal document is. You are demonstrating to me that you do not understand what an internal document is or the way it is written. If you understand what public documents are – if it is a public consumption document and they are written totally differently as opposed to an internal document ...

Ms MANISON: Can I put it to you this way, Minister. With your internal document that you are currently working on, has that been finalised? Do you have a final draft from what was submitted to you in December?

Mr STYLES: No, it has not been finalised yet.

Ms MANISON: Minister, if you are looking to change the licensing of social clubs out in remote communities then ...

Mr STYLES: Who said we are looking to change?

Ms MANISON: ... is it your intention to produce a report fit for public consumption detailing the evidence that you would be basing that decision on and the community consultation that you would be basing that decision on? Or will you just base it on an internal report that you never share with anybody about this very important topic?

Mr STYLES: Member for Wanguri, you are making a lot of assumptions about what may or may not happen. The situation is that Licensing NT is considering the contents of the internal report in regard to which way they will advise the Minister to advise Cabinet as to what we may or may not do. When you say we are considering change, you are assuming what may or may not be in that report.

Ms MANISON: I cannot imagine why you would not – you have commissioned a report; it certainly shows that there is some reasoning behind that. There must have been some intent.

Mr STYLES: We commissioned a report that looked at a range of options in relation to harm minimisation, supply and a whole range of things. That is designed to inform Licensing NT as to which way they might advise government to go. I would not for a moment think that is the end of it. Cabinet will consider various things and will make various recommendations, but until we get the recommendations from Licensing and take it to Cabinet, there is no decision at this point in time. You can sit there and make assumptions and assertions and do all sorts of things, it is an internal document.

Ms MANISON: Okay, Minister ...

Madam CHAIR: Could we move on and maybe ask a different question, member for Wanguri?

Ms MANISON: Yes, sorry, Madam Chair. I want to finish this question on this topic. As the Minister responsible for licensing, and the Minister who we heard from about the takeaway licences, is it your intention to issue more licences for social clubs in remote communities of the Northern Territory prior to caretaker mode in the Northern Territory? Is that what this what this report is for?

Mr STYLES: I do not know what will come up in the next few weeks to Cabinet, but I will not say anything about what I will or will not do, or what Cabinet will or will not do, because that is Cabinet's decision.

I cannot pre-empt what Cabinet decisions will or will not be. If you have a crystal ball then good luck, because I have not.

Ms MANISON: Thank you. I have a list of other questions that around licensing. Would you like me to ...

Mr WOOD: I might ask a question while you are on the topic of Bathurst Island. There was a promise, was there not, when the CLP came to government that it would allow full-strength beer at Wurrumiyanga. Has that promise been fulfilled or has common sense taken its place?

Mr STYLES: I heard people assert that decision had been made, but it certainly was not me. No one I know heard an assertion made by opponents to the member for – I certainly did not make any of those promises nor did I hear anyone talk to me about those promises being made.

Mr WOOD: Do you would just think it was just electioneering at the time?

Mr STYLES: I think it was opponents saying a bit of mischief, really.

Ms MANISON: Thank you, Madam Chair. Turning to the budget books, you indicate 29 alcohol management action plans are to be signed in 2015-16. Can you please provide a list of those?

Mr STYLES: Member for Wanguri, can you ask the question again? What information do you want?

Ms MANISON: Your budget books indicate 29 alcohol management plans are to be signed in 2015-16. Can you provide a list of those?

Mr STYLES: Yes. The communities with alcohol management plans, as of 10 May 2016 – the developing and redeveloping alcohol management plans are for Palmerston; Pirlangimpi; Milikapiti; Wurrumiyanga; Wurankuwu; Belyuen; Gunbalanya; Maningrida; Jabiru; Kakadu; Nhulunbuy; East Arnhem region; Yirrkala; Gunyangara; Groote Eylandt; Katherine; Binjari; (inaudible); Manyallaluk; Barunga; (inaudible); Ngukurr; Borroloola; Lajamanu; Kalkarindji and communities linked to Top Springs; Tennant Creek; Elliott; Ali Curung; Alice Springs ...

Ms MANISON: There are many; there are 29, Minister, so is it possible to table that information?

Mr STYLES: Not at this stage, because there is a whole bunch of other stuff.

Ms MANISON: My next question will be about the 35 that are forecast in the budget books.

Mr STYLES: I can give you a list of which ones they are.

Ms MANISON: Yes, that would be great.

Mr STYLES: We will take that. Is that a question on notice for the list?

Ms MANISON: Can I please put it on as part of asking in line with Budget Paper No 3, page 74, where you have Licensing NT alcohol management plans for community sign off? You had 2015-16 budget number of 29, then your forecast 35 for 2016-17.

Question on Notice No 7.15

Madam CHAIR: Could you please restate the question please, member for Wanguri.

Ms MANISON: Can the Minister please provide the communities that are to have alcohol management plans signed off in 2015-16, and the communities for which they are planning to have a further 35 alcohol management plans signed off for 2016-17?

Madam CHAIR: Do you accept the question, Minister?

Mr STYLES: I accept the question.

Madam CHAIR: The question asked by the member for Wanguri of the Minister has been allocated the number 7.15.

Ms MANISON: We have spoken about takeaway liquor licences being issued since that date in 2014. Are there any other takeaway liquor licences currently under consideration? If so, how many and where?

Mr STYLES: There is only one takeaway licence application under consideration at the moment, which is in Driver in Palmerston.

Ms MANISON: I have been informed that last year you advised there were 247 premises in the NT licensed to sell takeaway alcohol. Given the figure you have quoted tonight – I believe 298 plus the nine – do you have the figure you provided? Sorry, just checking because 247 was the figure that came up at estimates, yet the information that has been provided tonight was 298 at this time last year ...

Mr STYLES: I will get that figure checked.

Ms MANISON: Across the *Hansard* – because that would be pretty concerning if it has jumped from 247 to 298. I want to double check that figure, if that was stated last year at estimates.

Mr STYLES: I apologise. There appears to be an inconsistency in that figure. There is one figure that is on a briefing paper, but in relation to what I believe is now the correct briefing, there are currently 526 liquor licences in the Northern Territory, of which 254 allow takeaway sales.

Ms MANISON: Sorry, the number again, Minister was 526?

Mr STYLES: There are 526 liquor licences in the Northern Territory of which 254 allow takeaway sales. It would appear that 298 is incorrect.

Ms MANISON: Minister, what was the correct figure? What is the number of premises that are selling alcohol? Let us go back to the original question. Since 2012, what has been the increase of takeaway liquor licences in the NT? We now know the number at present is 254.

Mr STYLES: Sorry, you are saying since 2012? It was actually 11 June 2014 when the moratorium was taken off. So, between 2006 and 11 June 2014 there were no increases in takeaway.

Ms MANISON: Yes. Then what was the number at 2006 that had not changed until 2014?

While we are there, can we have the licence venue number too, since you have given us both the 526 and then the take away of 254?

Mr STYLES: Madam Chair, I have two conflicting numbers here, I think we will take that on notice and we will get back to you.

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Question on Notice No 7.16

Madam CHAIR: Could you repeat the question, member for Wanguri?

Ms MANISON: At August 2012, what was the number of takeaway liquor licences in the Northern Territory? What is the number of takeaway liquor licences as of June 2016? As of August 2012, what was the number of licenced venues? What is the number of licenced venues in the Northern Territory as of June 2016, or the nearest date?

Madam CHAIR: Do you accept the question, Minister?

Mr STYLES: I do, Madam Chair.

Madam CHAIR: The question asked by the member for Wanguri of the Minister will be number 7.16.

Ms MANISON: Minister with the takeaway liquor licences, is your government considering any buy-back arrangements for any of these licences?

Mr STYLES: When you say buy-back of the licence, are you talking about the nine issued since 11 June 2014 or any?

Ms MANISON: Anywhere.

Mr STYLES: Anywhere. No, I am not aware who anyone wants to sell back their licence. The Director-General, with the licensing inspectors and police, looks after compliance. No one is suggesting that we should take back any liquor licence. I imagine if anyone loses their liquor licence through not following the rules, regulations and laws then they lose their liquor licence, but I am not aware of anything where anyone wants to sell their liquor licence back.

Ms MANISON: Okay.

Mr STYLES: We do not buy them back at the moment. Nor are we considering buying them back, but one licence was surrendered and there were three cancelled due to the closure of businesses.

Ms MANISON: Just going back to the question I just put on notice – but just to let you know, Minister, for the sake of your secretariat out the back and your department people working hard behind the scenes. The question taken on notice last year at estimates from the member for Nightcliff was number 5.8 and that refers to, 'There are 247 premises in the NT licensed to sell takeaway alcohol', and it goes to the locations, and, 'There are 415 premises in the NT where you can drink alcohol at the establishment. This includes some of the 247 premises mentioned above, they are located as follows,' and it goes onto it.

So, 415 to 526 is quite a steep jump, a leap, so it would be good to see if you could possibly supply any comparable data this evening, but that is the reference point to where that information came from. Sorry, I was not clear in the first instance, Minister.

Mr WOOD: Can I just ask, Minister, is the website up to date? Because it says here under licensing regulation and alcohol strategy, premises licensed were 705. It breaks it up into all the areas of the Territory. That is just taken off the website now.

Mr STYLES: I will get those. Do you want those figures as well?

Mr WOOD: Well, I am just wondering whether it is the same confusion of exactly what the number is. This one lists every licence here. Yes, it would be good to get it accurate.

Mr STYLES: Do you want a copy of that as well?

Mr WOOD: Yes, please.

Ms MANISON: Minister, you discussed earlier in the output that Labor had a position on having a cap on takeaway liquor licences. Is that something you would be looking to do in the future or is it at the moment that every application is assessed? You are open to increasing the takeaway alcohol licences?

Mr STYLES: If you look at areas since 11 June 2014, over the last two years there have been nine extra licenses issued. It is not a huge increase when you look at increasing population and when you look at the population spread.

Ms MANISON: We are not 100% that it was nine yet.

Mr STYLES: There is a trial. The licence has not been issued and I suspect that is what it is.

Ms MANISON: Sorry, I did not realise. Is a trial different to a licence being issued?

Ms STYLES: I am getting that information for you but the issue is that we know – I have been told – that nine licences have been issued. I will check that for you and I will get back to you. I will get that information and clarify what it is so we all know.

In relation to increasing, when you put a cap on things and leave it there for years you do not allow for increase in changing demographics or increasing population. There are so many things the Director-General has to take into consideration. Look at catchment areas, distances people have to travel and what the people want when you go to public consultation in their area. Do you want to walk 4 km to your nearest establishment where you can get some entertainment of an evening or do you want to walk 300 m?

They are cases that you have to look at as case-by-case. You do not want to get to the point where you are oversaturated in a particular area of licenced premises, and that is something the Director-General has to take into consideration. The Director-General abides by the process and the process under the *Liquor Act* – there are certain things the Director-General has to take into consideration. I think the Director-General does a good job. He gets a lot of advice, does a lot of consultation and can make decisions based on evidence.

Ms MANISON: Thank you, Minister. How many premises have been subject to a complaint in 2015-16 regarding their licence?

Mr STYLES: Can you just give us moment; I am just checking to see if we have those numbers. Okay, we will take it on notice and try and get it to you before the end of the night.

Ms MANISON: Thank you, Minister.

Question on Notice No 7.17

Madam CHAIR: Can you restate the question, please, member for Wanguri?

Ms MANISON: How many licenced premises have been subject to complaint in 2015-16? What action was taken on these complaints, if any? Were any licensees subject to warnings or other action in 2015-16?

Madam CHAIR: Do you accept the question Minister?

Mr STYLES: I do.

Madam CHAIR: The question asked by the member for Wanguri of the Minister has been allocated the number 7.17.

Ms MANISON: Thank you, Madam Chair. Minister, how many full-time employees are in this area of the agency?

Mr STYLES: Which part of the agency?

Ms MANISON: Anyone who comes under Licensing NT.

Mr STYLES: Under Licensing NT there are 77.48 FTEs.

Ms MANISON: Thank you. On page 74 of Budget Paper No 3, it says about half the operational visits planned by the agency were not undertaken due to recruitment delays for licensing staff, so only 500 out of the 1000 planned visits were undertaken. Minister, what has happened here? What was the recruitment issue, and where was this problem?

Mr STYLES: With the change over from the liquor commission to the Director-General, there has been a restructure within Licensing in relation to inspectors and what happens. You will find that there have been some changes in levels and the way the whole unit is structured. The Director-General, since coming into the position – we had a temporary Director-General there and then the job was advertised and filled by a very capable woman to take the whole unit forward. She has been through again and looked at the structure. We have had some recruitment issues. Trying to find the right people is always a challenge, but we are onto that.

Obviously when you have vacant positions there is a reduction in those checks, but it has been addressed and is being addressed.

Ms MANISON: Minister, surely it is concerning that you had 1000 planned visits, yet only 500 were carried out last financial year.

Mr STYLES: If you look at where complaints come from, if there are complaints, then you obviously attend to those first. But other compliance checks, generally – I found that in the last couple of years the AHA and NT Licensing have a very good working relationship. When you look at the support this government has given the AHA in relation to training of staff or responsible service of alcohol and responsible gaming practices – we have been very successful in bringing down the issues. Compliance activities now really focus on risk-based methodology, which sees Licensing NT working very closely with licensees of various establishments and relevant bodies across the portfolio simply to enable those entities to conform to legislative requirements.

One of the things government is doing in this area, and especially in the Department of Business and under that banner, is working with people to make sure prevention, as opposed to going out with a big stick – we all know prevention is better than cure. We are focusing more on, right across the agencies, not only in this area, making sure you look at the risk base and deal with people. You put the ambulance at the top of the cliff as opposed to at the bottom of the cliff. Any areas of high risk obviously get the attention. There are obviously times when you would like to visit everyone, say hello and have a cup of tea, but when you have restructures, recruiting and all that stuff happening at the same time – we simply did not get out to have a cup of tea or visit as many people as perhaps we wanted to ...

Ms MANISON: Minister, in 2016-17, in the budget papers, the department is only planning 600 visits, yet the budget figure target was 1000 in 2015-16. Why has there been such a huge drop in the target of how many visits takes place and is there still a problem?

Mr STYLES: No, when you change your methodology everybody is looking for efficiencies. Instead of having a cup of tea with people we are actually looking at a risk-based methodology. You may not just drop in and see people. There is the ability to visit the conferences, look at the training sessions the Australian Hoteliers Association run and what industry does. You catch up with people, talk to them, and give presentations at these meetings. There is a training program that is funded through the AHA to train people about responsible service of alcohol and responsible gaming.

When you look at increasing the capacity of your employees who are working in that industry, then you reduce the risk of infringements when people understand. With a risk-based methodology, you do not have to drop in and see people. The police do the same thing these days – they look at risk-based methodologies as opposed to just dropping in. It is a changing world. As you get better at these better methodologies ...

Ms MANISON: It is almost halved, Minister. That is quite a significant figure.

Mr STYLES: Well, instead of going for a wander and having a cup of tea, you target high-risk venues. You target the premises you will go to, and make sure you do risk-based assessments. The methodology is improving. The Director-General came in and looked at all this, made decisions and said, 'You have done X number of visits. You had no compliance issues here, no compliance issues there.' If you drop

those down on the premises which you know are run by well-managed people, it is a good result you get. You simply say, 'I will have a look at this one or that one'.

Ms MANISON: So you are saying less is more?

Mr STYLES: No, I am not saying less is more. You can be efficient at what you do when you look at risk-based methodology. For instance, if you do not have any problem at those other premises then that is good.

The other thing is the licensing inspectors work very closely with police. I am led to believe they have meetings on a regular basis. If the police say, 'There is a bit of a problem here', they do more compliance inspections there as opposed to elsewhere. That goes right across the board to the department of Consumer Affairs with used cars. If a dealer is not playing the game, they get more visits than the ones you do not have to see for years and years. It is about risk assessment.

Ms MANISON: There are definitely some steep changes there, Minister. We will turn to the racing ...

Mr WOOD: Talking about the number of visitations, the budget does not say what you said; it said you had trouble getting staff.

Mr STYLES: No, no, the ...

Mr WOOD: That is here.

Ms MANISON: It does. Point number 13 ...

Mr STYLES: Number of visitations ...

Mr WOOD: Yes, but you just gave us a new reason. That reason is not in the budget ...

Ms MANISON: 'The variation in 2015-16 reflects recruitment delays for licensing staff.'

Mr WOOD: ... it just says staff were difficult to get.

Mr STYLES: When you have staffing issues, you always have to look at ways to improve what you are doing. We are always looking for efficiencies, so if you have 1000 visitations and 500 of those are complying, for instance ...

Mr WOOD: Minister, that is okay, but it was not the reason given in the budget. You are saying they were creating more efficiency by using different methodologies ...

Mr STYLES: I am talking about ongoing ...

Mr WOOD: That is right ...

Mr STYLES: The ongoing is where we have moved on to – in 2016-17 we are looking at 600 visitations instead of 1000. That is what we are talking about at the moment. We are down by 400.

So you go through the recruiting process and start to target the licensed premises that you will visit. As a police officer I used to do that too. We would make our own risk assessment on where we needed to spend our time. If you did not need to walk through Mrs Smith's wine bar and everyone was behaving themselves there, then you were at some other premises where there was a rage-in-the-cage type ...

Mr WOOD: I am not saying that is not the case; my issue is that the item in the budget does not say you have been looking for efficiencies. It just says you have trouble getting staff. I will leave it at that, otherwise we will be wandering off the subject too far.

Madam CHAIR: Have you finished?

Mr WOOD: Yes.

Madam CHAIR: So, we are still on Licensing NT?

Ms MANISON: The different elements of licensing?

Madam CHAIR: Yes.

Ms MANISON: So it is time to turn to the racing industry. I remember you had a question as well, Madam Chair. I will start, Minister. When you came to office, you scrapped the agreement between the then government and Thoroughbred Racing NT. You have not provided any growth in their funds at all for a number of years. Your budget papers, on page 74 of the Budget Paper No 3, show the same allocation in 2016-17 as in 2015-16. What is the impact of this continuing cut, in real terms, on the industry?

Mr STYLES: Member for Wanguri, we are actually in negotiations at the moment in relation to increases for TRNT and the racing industry. Until those negotiations are complete I cannot really answer your question. We are still ...

Ms MANISON: Can I expect a bit of an update, a surprise?

Mr STYLES: The NT government has accepted the recommendations of the 2014 NT racing review and is currently negotiating a funding arrangement with Thoroughbred Racing NT to secure the future of thoroughbred racing in the Northern Territory.

Mr MANISON: Will some announcements coincide with the Darwin Cup? Any chance of that?

Mr STYLES: As of 31 March 2016 the Northern Territory government has provided operational funding of \$12.313m. A further payment of \$2.434m was also made in 2016 to cover TIO NTs workers compensation annual insurance premium of \$960 000, with the remainder placed in the TRNT workers compensation reserve account. The Northern Territory government is currently negotiating a new funding agreement. TRNT has rejected a five-year funding proposal and negotiations are continuing.

The Northern Territory government has also secured funding to TRNT via industry payments by UBET under the terms of UBET's 20-year totalisator licence that we recently signed.

Ms MANISON: So, expect a big announcement soon?

Mr STYLES: You do not know what is happening, and nor do I, because it is still being negotiated. I cannot give you anything. The board has not met so we do not know.

Ms MANISON: Thank you, Minister. What capital investments are you making in the racing industry this year, if any?

Mr STYLES: One of the things we did do for the racing industry, especially in Alice Springs, was through the Community Benefit Fund, where we gave them a massive tent, which they use there. That is a great success story for the racing industry.

One of the things Alice Springs needed was some shade. Each year when they have the Alice Springs cup they pay a fortune to hire shade, so they made an application through the Community Benefit Fund to get some shade. The shade is actually shared, so it is a great model for Alice Springs – racing will store it. It is stored in about six containers and the Clontarf boys there are all trained in how to put it up, and every year they will be retrained. That is their community service.

All the public events down in Alice Springs, like the Alice Springs Town Council, the various events that occur around the town, can all share in this shade, so that is one good thing. That is a capital investment. TRNT has its funding. I do not know about specific sport and rec grants. I know the Darwin Turf Club is looking at building an investment property that the Alice Springs Turf Club wants to get involved in. It is about own source revenue. It looks like they will build something at Darwin Turf Club which will be sponsored by private investment and investment from the Darwin Turf Club.

The deal with UBET provides capacity for direct payments to TRNT and the Darwin Greyhound Association. That is to support capital grants, but as the betting increases – and when you look at the sports bet makers and the product service fees the TRNT receives, as well as the commission it gets from UBET, you will see it receives a substantial number of millions of dollars into their coffers. They can do with that what they choose because it will be the board's direction that chooses what they do with it.

Ms MANISON: Okay. Minister, I am advised that prior to returning to life in politics as an alderman, a former member of this parliament, Mr Mick Palmer, undertook consultancy to provide infrastructure advice to the Racing Minister on infrastructure needs for the industry.

Will you table that report? What did it say and what action has the government taken on this?

Mr STYLES: If there is a report that has been submitted to government it is sitting with the Minister for Lands and Planning. I certainly did not commission any report by Mr Palmer.

Ms MANISON: You are not aware of any report into the racing industry infrastructure?

Mr STYLES: Not into racing infrastructure. I have not seen the report; if one has been commissioned I am assuming it has been done by the Minister for Lands and Planning because it has not been done through racing.

Ms MANISON: Okay. Thank you, Minister. I was going to turn to gambling issues.

Mr WOOD: Minister, when you say there will be more funds from places like UBET into the racing industry, is that not reason for the government to not be investing more money into the industry, if it can become self-sustaining? It is a fair bit of money into an industry that is basically there for gambling. That is the very reason it is there. I am not saying it does not produce jockeys, trainers and all the industry that goes with it, but if it is starting to raise its own funds, should the government not slowly reduce the amount of subsidy it gives the industry?

Mr STYLES: That is exactly what we are doing; we are slowly reducing the amount of funds in the coming financial year. We are still negotiating the ...

Mr WOOD: Commercial-in-confidence.

Mr STYLES: It is still under negotiation, what is going on, but the principle of what you are talking about is what we are chasing. The whole idea is to try to eventually get industry, as it does interstate, to pay for it. The way that other states operate is that what they contribute will come to government and then we top up. Interstate, all that betting just goes straight to various racing authorities and they do with it what they will, and government is not involved in it.

However, given the scale of what happens in the Northern Territory, there will still be requirement. I congratulate the CE, Michael Tennant, for leading this negotiation where we have a very good deal for the Northern Territory taxpayer in relation to money from UBET going back to Thoroughbred Racing NT. There will be a requirement for some top-up by the taxpayer, but one hopes that it will get to a stage where the taxpayer will not be putting any money into it. We are not there yet.

Mr WOOD: You might ask them to reduce the public entrance fee for the Darwin Cup. That is something that would put people off going, but that is another issue.

Mr STYLES: I will help you buy a ticket, Gerry.

Mr WOOD: I do not mind buying the ticket, but I think for the average punter, \$60 to get into the Darwin Cup just to be the general area is a rip off. You go country race meeting cups elsewhere and you will not pay \$60. Sometimes we just get carried away with our own importance. I enjoy the races, but that has gone from moderate price to high price and it is not encouraging locals to go.

Minister, the only other thing I am interested in – the word is that the Darwin Turf Club is looking at putting in an application for pokies. Is the Darwin Turf Club a club? And is it allowed to have a maximum of 55 pokies? Is that really what you want the race track to be, a pokies area or a race course?

Mr STYLES: Member for Nelson, I have not seen any application. I do not operate on rumours. If anything is forthcoming then it is up to the Director-General to make determinations subject to the guidelines.

Do you have a copy of this document? It is very good. It is called *Gambling Harm in the Northern Territory: An Atlas of Venue Catchments*.

Mr WOOD: Yes, you have shown me that.

Mr STYLES: I showed you it in parliament. It is a very substantial document that currently has a motion in it from Gerry Wood relating to gaming machines from April last year.

Mr WOOD: Yes.

Mr STYLES: That document is one of the tools the Director-General is required to look at. When we look at machines, the Director-General will make the determination subject to a host of tools that is at her disposal.

Mr WOOD: The member for Wanguri will get onto pokies in a minute, but governments do have the overall policy. Whether the race track gets pokies or not, that is what I was told and I did not take it as a rumour. I thought I was getting it from someone who knew. If it is wrong then I apologise, but I was told they were going to apply for pokies, so I thought I would raise it with you in case it was fact. If you do not know then it is probably just someone's view of what is happening there.

Governments have an overall responsibility to create a policy, whether it is over liquor licenses or poker machines, and the director operates within your policy. We will get onto the pokies in a minute.

Mr STYLES: I have just had the word come through from the department that the Darwin Turf Club has applied for 55 poker machines and it is currently being assessed by the Director-General.

Mr WOOD: For me that would be a concern. That is a lot of pokies. Anyway, I will leave that for the moment and let the member for Wanguri lead the area of gambling.

Ms MANISON: Minister, what funds are being spent directly by government to help problem gamblers and what funds are being allocated to community groups to provide these services?

Mr STYLES: Last year we changed the taxation regime for pokies in casinos so that casinos are now required to pay 10% of their turnover in pokies to the Community Benefit Fund, which has put about \$11.7m into the Community Benefit Fund. We were able to double the amount of money going to support services. A report into gambling has been commissioned. When we look at the grants that have been approved for 2015-16 – seven of the nine gambling amelioration applications were approved in 2014-15 for the 2015-16 year. Applications for 2016-17 are currently being assessed. In relation to gambling amelioration, \$1 826 617 was put into gambling amelioration programs.

Ms MANISON: When was that for, Minister? Was that the 2015-16 ...

Mr STYLES: Yes, 2015-16 and the applications for 2016-17 are currently being assessed in the new assessment phase. Gambling research – there was \$281 818 given to two applications in 2014, and they are for three-year periods. At the date of this report only \$181 818 had been paid. The remainder will be paid prior to the end of this financial year. There is a substantial increase in what is going to gambling amelioration.

Ms MANISON: Do you anticipate, with the grants you have to assess for 2016-17, that it will be higher than the \$1.8m you quoted?

Mr STYLES: I may have that information, but they are currently being assessed. Do you want to know where the money has gone? I can give you this. There is a bit of information written next to something here.

Ms MANISON: Yes, that would be good.

Mr STYLES: Amity Community Services received \$139 091 from multi-venue self-exclusion test; Amity Community Services for Red Flags received \$23 000; Indigenous Community Television Ltd, handling gambling, received \$91 314; the Menzies School of Health Research in gambling-related research received \$181 818; NT Friendship and Support Bright Lights received \$158 532; Somerville Community Services Incorporated, financial counselling for gambling-related issues received \$337 521; and the Waltja Tjutangku Palyapayi Aboriginal Corporation's Be Ninti about Gambling youth camp was \$20 000. That added to a total of \$1 158 278.

I expect an increase in the CBF budget allocation to amelioration grants and research over time. You generally keep pace and find whatever they need to do.

Ms MANISON: Thank you, Minister. How many poker machines are there now in the Northern Territory? How does this compare to 12 months ago? What is the number now and what was the number 12 months ago?

Mr STYLES: In July 2015 the Northern Territory government removed the NT-wide cap on the number of community gaming machines that had been in place since 2008. At the same time, the individual venue caps were lifted for clubs from 45 to 55 and in hotels from 10 to 20. The changes were made to acknowledge the Northern Territory population growth since 2008 and new residential precincts and concerns that existing venues held an unfair advantage over new industry entrants. That is about creating level playing fields within the confines of the catchment map.

Amendments to legislation were also made to provide for the transfer of gaming machine licences at the time the underlying liquor licence was transferred.

A levy is currently payable upon application for an increase to gaming machine numbers of \$10 000 for clubs and \$50 000 for hotels and taverns. This levy is only payable for additional machines between the old and the new caps. However, from 1 July 2016 the levy will apply to all machines applied for. As at 31 March 2016, the Director-General Licensing had approved 19 applications for an additional 243 machines, which has generated approximately \$5.6m in revenue from the levy.

Ms MANISON: Effectively, since you lifted the cap on 1 July 2015, there are now an additional 243 poker machines across the Northern Territory?

Mr STYLES: Correct.

Mr WOOD: What was the original number?

Mr STYLES: I think it was 1092 when the cap was lifted.

Mr WOOD: That is about a 20% increase.

Mr MANISON: So quite a jump.

Mr STYLES: The existing clubs have tried to up their numbers from 45 to 55 and hotels from 10 to 20. There have been a substantial number of applications. I do not know how many applications there have been, but there have been 19 issued. I do not know whether they all got what they asked for ...

Ms MANISON: You just referred to one application of 55 additional poker machines. Are there any other applications currently under assessment? If so, how many poker machines are we talking about?

Mr STYLES: As at 12 April 2016, a further 11 applications with 200 machines have been received and been assessed.

Ms MANISON: So that 243 figure could very well become 443?

Mr STYLES: If everyone got what they asked for, yes.

Mr WOOD: No one has been knocked back yet?

Mr STYLES: That is not a given.

Ms MANISON: So about a 45% jump in poker machines in the Northern Territory in two years?

Mr STYLES: No, that is just the applications. I do not know whether any of those will be issued. You cannot just say that will be this or that.

Ms MANISON: Do you have a time line on ...

Mr STYLES: You cannot just say that will be this or that. What you can say is there have been 19 applications for an additional 240 machines. So there are 243 additional, but there are further applications for 200. They may or may not be issued. I cannot say. So we cannot say that it will be this or that; they are under consideration.

Ms MANISON: Minister, do you anticipate that those applications for those additional poker machines – when they will be assessed? Would you anticipate that those assessments would be done prior to the caretaker mode period?

Mr STYLES: I cannot answer that; that is up to the Director General.

Ms MANISON: Last year you said there were 77 clubs and hotels, and two casinos with electronic gaming machines. What is the number this year?

Mr STYLES: Sorry, can you repeat the question?

Ms MANISON: Last year you said there were 77 clubs and two casinos with electronic gaming machines. What is that number this year?

Mr WOOD: Big clubs or little clubs?

Ms MANISON: Seventy-seven clubs and hotels.

Mr WOOD: That is the combined number.

Mr STYLES: Did you say 77 clubs and two casinos?

Ms MANISON: Seventy-seven clubs and hotels and two casinos with electronic gaming machines. What is that number this year?

Mr WOOD: I do not think there are 77 clubs.

Ms MANISON: Yes, sorry, that is what I meant, clubs and hotels.

Mr STYLES: I am just getting confirmation. That will probably come from the department people in a moment. If you are happy to – they will give that to us in a moment. They are just checking.

Ms MANISON: Thank you, Minister. Did you have any questions, member for Nelson?

Mr WOOD: Yes. I have the figures from the 2014-15 annual report - because it is the only one I have. It has the gross profit, which is the amount of money that people lose, at \$52.9m from clubs and \$29.7m from hotels. Does it concern you that you have a possibility of a 50% increase on that figure? It may not be exactly that. That is actually money removed from the community. That is profit for those pubs and clubs.

My concern is that we are living off an industry which some people will certainly be affected by. Some people will make a fortune and no one seems to really worry. That is why I am worried. What is the government's policy in relation to poker machines? Can every one of these 77 people – can we have a 100% increase in the number of pokies and not expect some social impact in the community?

Mr STYLES: Member for Nelson, the question you asked revolves around a philosophical question about what you believe about poker machines and what other people believe. There are people out there who use it as a legitimate form of entertainment and there are people who struggle with gambling addiction, but that can be all sorts of gambling.

Mr WOOD: That is right, Minister. We know – if you watched the ABC documentary about a year ago – that these machines are computerised and are set to actually lose money. That is, the person who operates that on a continual basis will be guaranteed to lose. They are not a race horse where you can work out or have a go at trying to pick out the best horse, the good jockey, the distance, the state of the track, etcetera. Here, as they have shown, you are guaranteed to lose \$83m. I bet this figure is not much different to last year, and now you are increasing it. Technically, if you double the number of pokies you can lose up to – someone is losing \$160m to poker machines.

Mr STYLES: Member for Nelson, there is a statutory requirement by statutory position – that is the Director-General – to take into consideration a range of things. One of the things is the catchment area. If you look at where you put poker machines – they are a legitimate form of entertainment for some people. Whatever I believe is irrelevant, but government is required to say that these are the machines. You do not want to saturate machines. You want to make sure if someone has a problem that the amelioration programs are there to help anyone who believes they have a problem, as well as with the responsible

service of alcohol and responsible gaming in venues. That is what AHA has been doing to make sure people can flag them.

People who run casinos, pubs and clubs have policies in place to identify people who may have a problem. When I talk to those people and get delegations from AHA – and you get delegations from the casinos and talk to people – none of those people want to have problem gamblers in their establishment. Whether people go there with the intention of having fun – I think the last time I played the pokies was many years ago in an RSL club in NSW.

Mr WOOD: You probably pulled a handle, it was that long ago.

Mr STYLES: It was, actually. I just made a \$20 donation to the RSL club – I think they were very grateful for that donation – but I had a lot of fun for a few hours just doing that. There are people who choose to do that and there are people who choose to go to all sorts of places. I think I made comments on addiction in parliament one day and got into serious trouble. I was talking about my wife.

Mr WOOD: Minister, I do not have a problem with pokies *per se*, but you did not just allow new licensed venues to have 10 pokies. You allowed a new licensed premise to have 20 pokies because you raised the minimum limit. I would say that you were asked by the AHA, in light of the increase in the number of workers in the Northern Territory, to bring these changes in. I have seen documents where the AHA was lobbying the government for this. What concerns me, Minister, is this has happened. This could increase the amount of money lost in our community and I am concerned that there has never been an answer from either party as to whether they will accept donations from the AHA at this next election.

Mr STYLES: They are the sort of things you have to talk to the parties about, both the Labor party and the CLP.

Mr WOOD: You are the Minister and you made the policy.

Mr STYLES: The thing is, member for Nelson, I do not take into consideration whatever AHA and the party may do, as I do not deal with any other people who may donate to the Country Liberal Party or the Labor Party, or the member for Nelson in relation to what he does.

Mr WOOD: I am not saying you personally, Minister, but the government is the one that sets the agenda here. You would have had to get approval from the government, or the government would have said this is what it wants to do. We know the AHA lobbied for this. My concern is that there is a political side to this.

Mr STYLES: The casinos lobbied for a whole range of things, as they do all the time. Sports clubs lobby for things to do. Everyone is lobbying government all over the place.

Mr WOOD: Yes, but the sports club does not generally give the government \$100 000 at the last election. That is the difference. That is a concern for me.

Mr STYLES: That is a matter that you need to take up with the Labor Party and the Country Liberal Party.

Mr WOOD: I have asked both parties.

Mr STYLES: Also, I have not seen your returns as to who donates to you.

Ms MANISON: We had a cap on pokies, Gerry.

Mr WOOD: I have asked both parties will they not accept, at this election, donations from the AHA.

Mr STYLES: I cannot speak on behalf of the party, Gerry. That is something you need to put to the party.

Mr WOOD: I am just putting that forward. That is the concern I have, and that is why it is limited in New South Wales.

I think it is worth highlighting that changes your government brought in will make handsome profits for the clubs and pubs; there is no doubt about it. Some of them make huge profits. At the moment, the Palmerston Sports Club made \$6.4m and Tracy Village club made \$4.8m. If you put the three Katherine clubs together they are making somewhere around \$5m a year. Some of the pubs, even the one near me, the Howard Springs Tavern, made \$1.4m. Humpty Doo Tavern, I think, made \$2.47m. They are large

amounts of money coming out of your community, and that is what worries me, not that people enjoy it, but that money is being removed from other uses in the community, which takes away from other services that need that money.

If it had just been to give new pubs – the Berry Springs Tavern, I think, applied for pokies – I would have happily said give them 10 so they are on a level playing field, but you did not just give them 10. You increased the amount, which I think will have a detrimental effect on many people with gambling problems.

Mr STYLES: I suspect we might have to consider, Gerry, if you are using that analogy, that we should close down some of the taverns because people are selling beer and making a fortune out of that and some people get addicted to it and some people enjoy it.

Mr WOOD: I did not say you should not have them, Minister.

Ms MANISON: That is not what he is saying.

Mr WOOD: They should be controlled just like you control the hours a pub is open. If you believe that then pubs should be open 24 hours, seven days a week.

Mr STYLES: There are a lot of people providing a lot of different services, Gerry, that take a lot of money out of people's pockets.

Mr WOOD: Yes, but this is a sucker's game and you know it. This is a machine that is designed to take the money out. It is not the same as your standard gambling – as I said, a racehorse. It is not pot luck. It is a computer that is designed to take your money.

Mr STYLES: I have just been advised that the AHA has said it will not be donating to political parties, full stop.

Mr WOOD: Great!

Mr STYLES: So that fixes that issue.

Mr WOOD: That is good. I could not get that answer parliament when I asked exactly the same question.

Madam CHAIR: We might have a five-minute break.

The committee suspended.

Madam CHAIR: We will continue with Output Group 3.0, Policy and Regulatory Support, Output 3.1, Licensing NT.

Ms MANISON: We are done with Licensing NT, Madam Chair, and ready for WorkSafe.

Madam CHAIR: Finished? Okay, that concludes consideration of Output 3.1.

Output 3.2 – NT WorkSafe

Madam CHAIR: The committee will now call questions on Output 3.2, NT WorkSafe. Are there any questions?

Ms MANISON: Yes, Madam Chair. Minister, how many staff members are assigned to NT WorkSafe? In FTEs, please?

Mr STYLES: FTEs are 58.83.

Ms MANISON: How many inspectors does NT WorkSafe have? Apparently last year you advised 33; has that changed?

Mr STYLES: It has. It has gone from 33 to 32.99.

Ms MANISON: Thank you, Minister. Big change there.

Mr STYLES: Big drop.

Ms MANISON: How many companies, businesses or people were investigated in 2015-16 to date?

Mr STYLES: Between 1 July 2015 and March 2016, seven investigations were conducted. There were 49 improvement notices issued; 81 prohibition notices were issued; we accepted two enforceable undertakings; and we were involved in three prosecutions.

Ms MANISON: Thank you, Minister. That answers one of my questions. Of those companies, businesses or people, were any of those repeat investigations? Were any of them repeated more than twice, if there were any?

Mr STYLES: No, not to my knowledge. I read through some information last week in relation to this and my understanding was that they were all separate incidences. My answer is no, but the staff watching – I will ask them just to check that and make sure. If that is wrong I will put in a correction.

Ms MANISON: Thank you, Minister. You said before that some companies were prosecuted for offences against WorkSafe legislation. Were any of these companies fined or were any of those prosecutions successful?

Mr STYLES: We will just dig up the results for those.

The three prosecutions that were involved in it has not been finalised yet. On the chart, in relation to fines, it is zero because they are still before the courts.

Ms MANISON: Minister, were there any particular industries that you placed under the spotlight in 2015-16 with regards to WorkSafe?

Mr STYLES: There are a number of enforceable undertakings. You might say that they are under the spotlight. These are often undertakings that the company will take, the cost of which far exceeds what a court might impose. Companies, in relation to wanting to be good corporate citizens and to lift their standards or rectify systemic issues in their work, health and safety procedures or whatever have taken on board, there are three of those so far. The three particular companies were Alcan Gove Pty Ltd, Kalidonis Pty Ltd and the Trustee for the Northline Unit Trust, which is Northline.

Ms MANISON: Okay, no worries. Were there any particular industries that were more focused on by WorkSafe, such as construction?

Mr STYLES: The focus this year – last year it was on the pastoral industry. This year we have looked at training and education, and one of the things WorkSafe does, which is part of the national agreement, is work on ensuring that education takes place. It is a bit like being at the top of a cliff as opposed to the bottom; it is about prevention. It is about education. It is about working with businesses to ensure their OH&S policies ...

Ms MANISON: You are not saying it was the education industry that you have been making sure works ...

Mr STYLES: No. Last year we did a lot in the pastoral industry. This year we have been working on a greater number in remote areas, working in fishing in remote areas. We have had the small business safety advisory officers take trips through Gunbalanya, Maningrida and Nhulunbuy. We have had them at the centre. They have been doing remote area consultations, working out what the needs are, and arranging consultation with Aboriginal communities, Aboriginal organisations and Aboriginal people there to see what they want to do in relation to OH&S. That has been a bit of a focus.

We have also pulled out the training advisers and inspectors. They have all been out. We had 21 of them doing a two-week course.

Ms MANISON: Thank you, Minister. Could you please advise on the personnel on the WorkSafe board and how many times it met in 2015-16?

Mr STYLES: The Work Health and Safety Advisory Council – on 22 April 2016 I appointed the members, of which there are 10. The term of employment was for the immediate past Work Health and Safety

Advisory Council, which expired on 31 May 2015. On 23 June Cabinet approved draft amendments to the *Work Health and Safety (National Uniform Legislation) Act* and Regulations, which included the creation of a single advisory council to oversee all legislation administered by WorkSafe. There are 10 people who sit on that board.

Following the public submission process in October 2015 for the proposed amendments to the work health and safety legislation, and the Cabinet decision in December 2015, only making minor changes to the regulations, an invitation for recommendations for appointment to the council proceeded. Expressions of interest were invited through a government *Gazette* notice on 23 December 2015. They also went out through the *NT News*, Central Australian news, NT WorkSafe's website and the business maximiser. Mail for nominations was sent to Unions NT. Applications closed 29 January. Thirty-eight expressions of interest were received and on 22 March 2016 the Cabinet subcommittee appointed 10 members to council, including Ms Neilia Ginnane to be the council chairperson. The first meeting of the new advisory council was scheduled for 8 June.

Ms MANISON: Who were the other lucky nine people to be on the board?

Mr STYLES: The other lucky nine people were Bruce Anderson, Shenal Basnayake, Brian Fowler, Jeffrey Huyben, Scott Lawton, Skye Lee, Sean O'Connor, Bryan Wilkins and Marita Wilson.

Ms MANISON: Thank you, Minister. On page 74 of Budget Paper No 3 it says the category of information sessions and education campaigns conducted was 200 – against 50 that were planned for. On paper it looks really impressive that there were actually 200 when there were 50 planned for, and 200 more forecast in the 2016-17 budget, but it explains that there has been a change in measurement methodology. Can you please explain that, Minister?

Mr STYLES: I will take that on notice. There is a change in the methodology in relation to how it is counted and what is counted. We probably need to explain that to you so you are fully across the change in methodology.

Question on Notice No 7.18

Madam CHAIR: Could you restate the question please, member for Wanguri.

Ms MANISON: On page 74 of Budget Paper No 3 it says the category of information sessions and education campaigns conducted by WorkSafe was 200, when there were only 50 planned. There is another 200 budgeted for in 2016-17. It explains this by saying there has been a change in measurement methodology. Can you please explain the change of measurement methodology?

Madam CHAIR: Do you accept the question, Minister?

Mr STYLES: I do, thanks, Madam Chair.

Madam CHAIR: The question asked by the member for Wanguri of the Minister has been allocated number 7.18.

Ms MANISON: That is all my questions for that output.

Madam CHAIR: Are there any other questions on NT WorkSafe? That concludes consideration of Output 3.2 and Output Group 3.0.

OUTPUT GROUP 4.0 – CORPORATE AND GOVERNANCE Output 4.1 – Corporate and Governance

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

Ms MANISON: Yes, Madam Chair. I will go to agency travel to start with. This is part of the global questions we submitted. Some people have asked for this via different outputs. As an agency as a whole, can you please provide the total cost of travel for the agency broken down to international, interstate and

intrastate? In the case of international travel, can you please provide the itinerary, persons and costs involved in the international trip? Please provide details and costs of all travel undertaken by the Minister that was paid for by the agency, including travel and charters.

Do you have that? I imagine you would have that information prepared for you and close by.

Mr STYLES: The total staff travel for the agency was \$810 995. International travel was \$142 080, interstate was \$133 588 and intrastate was \$535 327. In addition a total of \$170 135 – \$92 114 for international and \$78 021 for domestic – was spent on client travel and \$65 363 for travel of board committee members. The details of international travel is from 1 July 2015 and 31 March 2016 as per trips ...

Ms MANISON: Would it be possible to table that information providing itinerary, persons and costs involved for each international trip?

Mr STYLES: I can get that to you, but not this copy because I have all sorts of things in here.

Ms MANISON: Can I put that on notice then, Minister?

Mr STYLES: Yes, we can provide that.

Question on Notice No 7.19

Madam CHAIR: Could you restate the question please, member for Wanguri.

Ms MANISON: In case of international travel, please provide the itinerary, persons and costs involved in each international trip.

Madam CHAIR: Do you accept the question, Minister?

Mr STYLES: Yes. I do, thanks, Madam Chair.

Madam CHAIR: The question asked by the member for Wanguri of the Minister has been allocated number 7.19.

Ms MANISON: I also asked for any detail of cost of all travel undertaken by you that was paid for by the agency including travel on charters. Was there any?

Mr STYLES: I will take that on notice too, thanks, Madam Chair.

Question on Notice No 7.20

Madam CHAIR: Could you restate the question please, member for Wanguri.

Ms MANISON: Please provide detail and costs of all travel undertaken by the Minister that was paid for by the agency, including travel on charters.

Madam CHAIR: Do you accept the question, Minister?

Mr STYLES: I do.

Madam CHAIR: The question asked by the member for Wanguri of the Minister has been allocated number 7.20.

Ms MANISON: Staying on the theme of travel, are you aware of the findings of two travel audits conducted by your agency in response to a request from the Department of the Chief Minister in December 2005? I have the documents here, which I am happy to table, which were obtained under freedom of information. Are you concerned that, despite the new travel procedures introduced by the government on 1 July 2015, the audit has shown failures to comply with the new travel rules.

I draw your attention to the anomaly mentioned under key finding number one on page 3 of the compliance audit. I quote from the document, which reads:

An international travel booking was made without appropriate approvals and the booking was cancelled at the cost of ...

It goes on to say:

... \$6500 to the agency.

Minister, what was the proposed destination for the travel and who were the proposed travellers?

Mr STYLES: In January 2016 the Department of Business conducted an internal audit into the agency's compliance with the Northern Territory government's travel policy and the guidelines that were introduced in July 2015.

This audit was conducted at the request of the Chief Executive Officer of the Department of the Chief Minister. While the internal audit provided reasonable assurance that the majority of the requirements of the new policy and guidelines were being consistently met by the Department of Business, the audit covered selected aspects of the agency's compliance for the policy and guidelines, including approval processes, justification for travel, use of corporate travel provider, travellers as defined in the policy, the class of travel and the value for money, air charter services and the time lines of acquittals.

There were seven recommendations arising from the internal audit. All of the recommendations were accepted and will be implemented by 30 June 2016. An implementation is being overseen by the independently chaired Risk Management and Audit Committee and a copy of the audit report is being provided to the Public Accounts Committee and the Auditor General's Office.

Due to time restraints, the audit did not include a review of associated hospitality costs, excess baggage, the use of frequent flyer schemes or travel allowance claims. A separate audit into compliance with those aspects of the travel policy has to be conducted by BDO Australia. The draft report and findings represented are currently being considered by the Department of Business.

Let me look at the Vietnam trip. Due to the short, very tight time frame in that we were trying to get over to Vietnam, the Vietnamese representatives had been to Darwin. My understanding is we were reciprocating. There was a short time frame. Again, when you book these tickets you are actually trying to get the bookings.

The department is aware that it did not meet the recommendations from the travel policy. They booked the tickets because otherwise we would not have gotten them. It went to the Chief Minister, who, for certain reasons, cancelled the trip in relation to what we were going over there for, and unfortunately we had to incur some of those costs. I accept that the department has also accepted that it breached the guidelines; however, it has put things in place to make sure it does not happen again.

Ms MANISON: Can I just ask you again, Minister, as part of my question, what was the proposed destination for travel? From your answer, that sounds like it was Vietnam ...

Mr STYLES: It was Vietnam.

Ms MANISON: ... and who were the proposed travellers that the \$6500 cancel cost was charged to the agency?

Mr STYLES: It was for me; Gary Shipway, my chief of staff; Jeff McAlister, the Director General of Asian Engagement, Trade and Investment; and Thanh Thai, one of the officers from Asian Engagement, Trade and Investment.

Ms MANISON: Thank you, Minister. Can I also draw your attention to the audit finding under the key findings number three, which states:

The business unit advised that they had not known that they needed to use the corporate travel provider for international travel when the Minister was accompanying Department of Business staff on the trip.

Minister, would you please provide details of the itinerary, persons travelling, and the cost of this trip in relation to audit finding number three of the key findings? Is that the same trip?

Mr STYLES: Madam Chair, I have to take that on notice.

Question on Notice No 7.21

Madam CHAIR: Could you restate the question, member for Wanguri?

Ms MANISON: Thank you, Madam Chair. Can I also draw your attention to key audit finding number three, which states:

The business unit advised that they had not known that they needed to use the corporate travel provider for international travel when the Minister was accompanying Department of Business staff on the trip.

Minister, would you provide the details of the itinerary, persons travelling and the cost of this trip?

Madam CHAIR: Do you accept the question, Minister?

Mr STYLES: I have just been given the information and that is the same trip. I am happy to provide that as part of the other one, but I will take it as another question on notice. It will probably be a similar answer, but I am happy to take it on notice.

Madam CHAIR: The question asked by the member for Wanguri of the Minister has been allocated the number 7.21.

Ms MANISON: Thank you, Madam Chair. Please let me know if this is the same trip again, Minister, but under the key finding number four of the audit report, it states:

A business unit paid for travel for a Minister without the required approval.

Would you provide details of the itinerary, the persons travelling and the cost of this trip?

Mr STYLES: It is the same trip so it will be covered in the previous two questions if you want to take that. It is all one trip.

Ms MANISON: Okay. Under key finding number four on page 4 the audit report states:

One further exception was identified when a charter flight was booked for the Department of Business for a delegation including Department of Business staff, the Minister and non-NT government travellers.

Minister, would you provide details of the itinerary, persons travelling and the cost of this trip.

Mr STYLES: I will take that on notice too, thanks, Madam Chair.

Question on Notice No 7.22

Madam CHAIR: Could you restate the question, member for Wanguri?

Ms MANISON: Under key finding number four on page four of the audit report it states:

One further exception was identified when a charter flight was booked for the Department of Business for a delegation including Department of Business staff, the Minister and non-NT government travellers.

Minister, would you provide details of the itinerary, persons travelling and the cost of this trip?

Madam CHAIR: Do you accept the question, Minister?

Mr STYLES: I accept the question, thanks.

Madam CHAIR: The question asked by the member for Wanguri of the Minister has been allocated the number 7.22.

Ms MANISON: Minister, are you aware that the audit also makes findings and recommendations in relation to Latitude Travel? Key finding number one of the audit mentions that transaction details in relation to overseas travel organised by Latitude Travel were referred to police in 2015. Minister, did you hear back from police on whether these transactions were investigated?

Mr STYLES: My understanding is that any dealings with Latitude Travel and any information were forwarded to the Department of the Chief Minister, which actually coordinated that collection of any dealings with Latitude Travel. That is where any information that we had went through to the Department of the Chief Minister, which is coordinating it.

Ms MANISON: Recommendation one on page 24 of the audit report recommends that certain other matters in relation to Latitude Travel should be referred to police. Again, can you confirm the records held by your agency have been referred to police? Do you have confidence that your agency, which you are saying has referred this to the Department of the Chief Minister, has then referred this to police?

Mr STYLES: My understanding is that anything to do with Latitude Travel has since been referred to Northern Territory Police, coordinated by the Department of the Chief Minister. That is my understanding; everything we have records of in relation to dealings with Latitude Travel has been referred to police.

Ms MANISON: But you are not across the details as the Minister of the agency?

Mr STYLES: I do not have the details of that in front of me but my understanding is that – to answer your question – anything with reference to Latitude Travel has been forwarded to the police.

Ms MANISON: Okay, thank you, Minister. Minister, going back to some of these global questions in relation to staffing for the whole agency, can you provide how many staff are in the agency, detailed by full-time equivalent, permanent part-time contract, temporary contract, frontline staff as full-time equivalent and as a percentage of the agency, and full-time and percentage of identified Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff in the agency?

Mr STYLES: FTEs are 360.5.

Ms MANISON: Thank you, and permanent part-time contract?

Mr STYLES: 6.28.

Ms MANISON: Temporary contract?

Mr STYLES: 75.4.

Ms MANISON: Frontline staff as FTE as the percentage of the agency?

Mr STYLES: That is actually in another folder under the Minister for Public Employment. That is another output group and that folder is sitting behind me.

Ms MANISON: The FTE and percentage identified as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander in the agency?

Mr STYLES: That is also in that folder under the Minister for Public Employment.

Ms MANISON: Okay. How many staff are at ECO1 level and above within the Department of Business?

Mr STYLES: There are 29.6.

Ms MANISON: Are these OCPD questions as well? How many staff resigned in 2015-16 to date and what is the percentage of the agency's total staff? How many staff were made redundant in 2015-16 and how many were terminated?

Mr STYLES: That is also in the folder for public employment.

Ms MANISON: Okay, Minister, last question for Business outputs – well done everybody. Boards and advisory bodies – do you want to ask a question, Gerry?

Mr WOOD: No.

Ms MANISON: Last questions from me. Please feel free to table this information for the sake of timeliness, Minister.

Please detail all the boards and advisory bodies in your agency. Please indicate boards and advisory bodies where the chair or the members attract remuneration. Please list the total cost of each board and advisory boards in your agency. Please detail how often each board and advisory board met in 2015-16. Please list the memberships for these boards and amount paid to members in 2015-16.

I appreciate that you have presented some of this information and parts of other outputs, but I am sure you have it all there. It is a pretty straight forward question. You get most of it. Would you like to table it, Minister?

Mr STYLES: I will take that question on notice, simply because we will be here for the next hour and I think, in the interest of getting through some more questions – I will table it, but I have documentation here. There are also other bits and pieces on it, but we will get you the information you are chasing.

Question on Notice No 7.23

Madam CHAIR: Could you restate that rather long question.

Ms MANISON: Please detail all boards and advisory bodies in the Department of Business. Please indicate boards and advisory bodies where the chair and/or members attract remuneration. Please list the total cost of each board and advisory body in the Department of Business. Please detail how often each board and advisory board met in 2015-16. Please list membership of those boards and amount paid to members in 2015-16.

Madam CHAIR: Do you accept the question, Minister?

Mr STYLES: I do, thanks, Madam Chair.

Madam CHAIR: The question asked by the member for Wanguri of the Minister has been allocated the number 7.23.

Madam CHAIR: Are there any other questions in Output Group 4.0, Corporate and Governance? No?

Are there any other questions for the Minister relating to non-output specific budget-related questions?

Ms MANISON: I would just like to say, Madam Chair, thank you very much to the Minister and the Department of Business for the amount of time they have been here, for their very extensive answers to many of the questions and for taking many on notice. I appreciate that means you have a lot more work to do and it does not end here tonight, but thank you. We appreciate the information, all the hard work of the staff in the agency in the preparation, and everybody who stayed up very late tonight and is still behind the scenes working hard. Thank you.

Madam CHAIR: That concludes consideration of all output groups relating to the Department of Business. On behalf of the committee, I would like to thank all the officers that assisted the Minister today.

OFFICE OF THE COMMISSIONER FOR PUBLIC EMPLOYMENT

Madam CHAIR: We will now go on to the Office of the Commissioner for Public Employment. Minister, I invite you to introduce the officials accompanying you and, if you wish, make an opening statement regarding the Office of the Commissioner for Public Employment.

Mr STYLES: Thank you, Madam Chair. The Commissioner for Public Employment, Craig Allen, is joining me and we are it. Everyone else has gone home.

Madam CHAIR: Do you want to make an opening statement?

Mr STYLES: I will and I will talk really quickly; I will try to get through this ASAP. As Minister for Public Employment I am responsible for employment terms and conditions.

Ms MANISON: Again Minister, generally you have some really good content in your opening statements and I certainly will ...

Mr STYLES: Do you want me to slow down?

Ms MANISON: ... not hold it against you if it is more than five minutes because I appreciate there a lot of good information.

Mr STYLES: It is not as long as the other one, but I will get through it.

This is undertaken through the Office of the Commissioner for Public Employment. The office is responsible for public sector workforce management and development, industrial relations and public sector appeals and grievances. The office supports the commissioner's statutory employer role as defined by the *Public Sector Employment and Management Act*.

Budget 2016-17 provides as further \$0.4m for four years on top of the already allocated \$0.5m to implement the Northern Territory Public Sector's Indigenous Employment and Career Development Strategy 2015-2020. This is a total investment of \$4.1m by this government over the life of the strategy, which reflects the genuine intent of the government to make a real difference in creating Indigenous employment opportunities.

The Indigenous Employment Unit responsible for implementing the Indigenous Employment and Career Development Strategy, established in 2014-15, has begun to see some very promising results in Indigenous employment, with an increase at the end of March 2016 to 9.7% of Northern Territory public service employees. This is full percentage point increase and represents an additional 224 Aboriginal employees.

The strategy outlines an ambitious target of 16% Aboriginal employment in the public sector by 2020 and, with the additional funds provided in this budget to support mentoring and retention strategies, this program is on target.

To assist in achieving this goal, all chief executive officers have been given a target specific to their agency, and the Office of the Commissioner for Public Employment will work with agencies to assist them in meeting these goals. This is an area I have specific interest in and will be carefully monitoring the implementation of this strategy.

Additionally, the Northern Territory public service is outperforming other jurisdictions across the country for the number of women in leadership roles. The role of women in the workplace is integral to the sustainable future for the Territory. The Northern Territory government is committed to being an employer of choice that is representative of the community it serves.

There is currently 49% female representative in senior and executive positions. Five out of 31 chief executive officers are women, and six out of 10 deputy chief executive officers are females, while three of the eight Northern Territory public service statutory authorities are also headed by women.

The Office of the Commissioner for Public Employment is delivering a number of key initiatives to build the population of women in higher roles, including the Discovery Women as Leaders Program; the Public Sector Management Program; the work shadowing for women program; and the Lookrukin Indigenous Women's Leadership Development Program.

The government is continuing to support initiatives to increase women's participation in the workforce and the number of women in leadership positions. Though these initiatives and our commitment to supporting women to join, progress, and succeed within the Northern Territory public service, we expect the numbers will only grow in the future.

In 2015-16 the office negotiated successful EBA outcomes for Jacana Energy, Territory Generation and the Power and Water Corporation. The Office of the Commissioner for Public Employment received in-principle support from United Voice for the Northern Territory Fire and Rescue Service EBA. Unfortunately the agreement was not supported by employees. However, there has been some positive news on this front, with United Voice and union delegates accepting an offer by the government to utilise the assistance of the independent Fair Work Commission to determine a fair outcome for employees. These negotiations are ongoing and the government is looking forward to a settlement being reached that enables firefighters to receive a fair wages outcome.

As this matter is before the Fair Work Commission, I am not in a position to elaborate on the details. However, I recognise the continuing efforts of both the union and the Office of the Commissioner for Public Employment in persevering to resolve this complex matter in a professional manner.

In other areas, the office launched the second People Matter public service survey, which closed on Wednesday 8 June. Results of the survey will build on those received in the first survey to help agencies inform their internal strategies and their professional development priorities.

Work is continuing on the transition to retirement strategy. This works looks at assisting employees into retirement whilst ensuring that corporate knowledge is not lost. It also provides strategies to ensure processes are in place to recruit staff to replace those exiting through retirement.

The Future Leaders Network has now been firmly established. This network assists to identify the best and brightest in the public service and assist in their development into future leadership in the public service.

Significant work has also been undertaken in the area of recruitment and selection with the development of the Chief Minister's simplified recruitment initiative and the training of over 5000 public servants in merit selection. Already, data on selection processes has indicated a 50% drop in the time for recruitment activities to occur, along with increased applicant pools and more informed feedback to applicants. This new process has attracted national attention.

I look forward to developments as they unfold in the area of public employment, as our public servants are one of our most valuable assets and their work is highly regarded by this government. I acknowledge the witnesses attending today from the Office of the Commissioner for Public Employment; Mr Craig Allen, Commissioner for Public Employment; and all of the staff who have worked so hard to prepare for estimates. Thank you.

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

Ms MANISON: Thank you, Madam Chair. Just firstly, Minister, with the global questions that we have submitted to the OCPE – and many agencies have referred to the OCPE in their responses. Can you table the answers to those global questions? Especially given the time we have left.

Mr STYLES: Which questions are you referring to?

Ms MANISON: We would have submitted global questions to the OCPE, as we have done to all other agencies, but, as an example, in the last session we had with business you referred to some of those responses that have come from the Office of the Commissioner for Public Employment.

Mr STYLES: So, the two parts of the question you asked under the output group under the Department of Business was frontline staff, as FTE, as a percentage of the agencies?

Ms MANISON: We found that in our responses to questions. Pretty much every agency has referred to the OCPE for responses to some of those questions.

Mr STYLES: That is nice of them.

Ms MANISON: It is a very important agency right across the public sector. Our workforce is important.

Mr STYLES: It is. There are two in relation to frontline staff as full-time employees and as a percentage of the agency.

Ms MANISON: I will not argue, Minister, at this point, but will you table those responses to the questions we had asked. Otherwise, I would not mind moving on to talk about a few of the EBAs.

Madam CHAIR: We have eight minutes left.

Mr STYLES: The number of Indigenous employees by agency – this one does not have any notes on it, so I can table that.

Ms MANISON: Fabulous. That would be great, Minister. Thank you. I think there are separations and terminations of employment, but there would have also been global questions about OCPE and its workforce, procurement, travel – just the standard global questions we ask every year.

Mr STYLES: I have another copy of this which I can table for you.

Ms MANISON: Thanks, Minister. That has been tabled?

Mr STYLES: That has been tabled.

Ms MANISON: Good man. We got there.

In your introduction you spoke about the EBA negotiation, particularly with the Northern Territory Fire and Rescue Service, which was due to be resolved in 2013. As you said in your opening statement, it is still ongoing and it sounds like Fair Work is involved there. One of the issues, I understand, is that the government will not offer back pay to sort the EBA out. Why is that, Minister?

Mr STYLES: I am not permitted to comment on any of that. The Fair Work Commissioner has said that no one is to talk about anything. The negotiations will be done between the Office of the Commissioner for Public Employment and the unions, and that is it. We are not allowed to talk about it. There is a gag order on it.

Ms MANISON: This has been ongoing for some time, are you confident that we will resolve this EBA? Surely the next EBA in 2016 would be fast approaching, or is probably here.

Mr STYLES: I am confident all parties are working to resolve this matter and that is basically all I am permitted to say.

Ms MANISON: Okay, Minister.

Mr STYLES: There is a gag order. If we actually talk about it, any of us in this room, then we are in breach of instructions from the Fair Work Commissioner.

Ms MANISON: Well, we will move on then, Minister.

Mr STYLES: Absolutely.

Ms MANISON: With regard to the upcoming 12 months, can you update us on what EBA negotiations have commenced planning and are currently under negotiation at the moment, and when they are set for expiry?

Mr STYLES: None are due next year. The only one that is outstanding at the moment is the matter between the firies.

Ms MANISON: Are there any due for expiry in the next 12 months? Generally the negotiation process starts well in advance of the expiration date.

Mr STYLES: The next one due to expire is on 27 August, and that is the core public service EBA. I suspect the Office of Commissioner for Public Employment has ongoing contact with these people in relation to what may and or may not be happening, but we will commence negotiations probably around about February or March 2017 to allow for about six months.

Ms MANISON: That is the only one in the next 12 months?

Mr STYLES: That is the only one.

Ms MANISON: And aside from the firies, no others outstanding?

Mr STYLES: No, everything has been sorted. Firies, hopefully, will have a positive outcome.

Ms MANISON: Okay, Minister. Your annual report states a number of priorities for the OCPE output of employing industrial relations for the year, including supporting agencies that are implementing restructuring and major change. Which agencies have enlisted the support of OCPE for this purpose in the last financial year, and which agencies are currently undergoing restructure for major change requiring the OCPE's support?

Mr STYLES: Firstly, there are none undertaking major reform or major restructures. There are restructures ongoing within the department, but no one has contacted the Office of the Commissioner for Public Employment to seek council on major undertakings.

Ms MANISON: Okay. Thank you, Minister. I will make this my last question for tonight as we are fast approaching the 11.30 pm timeslot. Something I am very interested in – and I am sure the shadow Minister for Disability Services is – is that employment, when it comes down to people with disability within the Northern Territory Public Sector, is currently sitting at 1%.

You have seen an ongoing trend. If you look at your State of the Service Reports since June 2005 – there was a while there that we had people with a disability sitting up at about 1.8%, 2.1%, 1.9%, 2% and so forth, and it just seems to be on the decline. I know there is a Northern Territory employment strategy for people with a disability within the public sector. Why are we currently sitting at that 1% figure and what is the OCPE trying to do to ensure we have more people with disabilities getting a job in the NT Public Service?

Mr STYLES: The Office of Commissioner for Public Employment is responsible for improving employment and retention outcomes within the Northern Territory Public Sector for unrepresented equal employment opportunity groups, including people with a disability. The Northern Territory Public Sector, at present, has a disability employment rate of 1%, as reported by employees voluntarily through the payroll system and myHR.

The voluntary disclosure of disability status is a complex issue and may mean that Northern Territory Public Sector and myHR data is not an accurate reflection on the actual number of employees with a disability. Other data sources, such as demographic information from the People Matter Employment Survey, indicate that a more accurate figure for the Northern Territory Public Sector population of employees with a disability is around 4%. This is a voluntary – when you are on myHR, some people may not choose to do that.

Ms MANISON: Was that the case a couple of years ago, Minister? Was it the same thing?

Mr STYLES: I am talking about what is current. Currently if people voluntarily put on their myHR system that they have a disability, that is 1%. When you go through the People Matter Employment Survey, 4% of people have said they have a disability.

When you have people who voluntarily up front say, 'I have a disability', others, in an anonymous sense, might like to say, 'I have a disability, but I do not want to say that to my boss or to other people. I do not want them to know what my disability is.' If it is something that does not affect their functioning in that job, it may not be relevant for them to voluntarily put it on ...

Ms MANISON: I appreciate that and we all understand. We probably all know somebody with a disability who goes through life not ticking the boxes and so forth, but the government sets targets and a strategy is in place to make sure more people with disabilities identify disabilities and get opportunities in the NT Public Sector. Why are we not doing more to help more of those people get in the workforce?

Mr STYLES: So, we are clear that we have about 4% of the public service who identify as people with disabilities. So, it is not one. When you look at the People Matter survey, it indicates it is around 4%.

Let us look at the strategy that we have implemented that recognises ability and aims to increase employment opportunities for people with a disability. It also aims to position the Northern Territory public service as a disability-confident employer.

A range of initiatives and actions are delivered under the employability, including the Disability Employment Program, which has an acronym of DEP. The DEP program offers temporary employment for up to two years to people with a disability as a pathway for ongoing employment. We discussed this a bit earlier in the Business output. If you give people skills and get them up and running they are not only job ready, but they have experience. That makes it a lot easier for them to move on to other positions or jobs and move through the system.

The host agencies are required to provide training and development opportunities appropriate to the participant's capabilities, as well as duties and tasks that are meaningful and contribute to the development of relevant skills and abilities. A training development plan is required to ensure structured skills development. You do not want people sitting around making cups of coffee; there has to be a plan. It is all about facilitating people to get experience. It is much easier to get a job if you already have one and if you have experience.

Madam CHAIR: Minister, it is after 11.30 pm so we will conclude your session here this evening. I thank you and your officers for coming along this evening. On behalf of the committee, I thank the Commissioner for Public Employment for attending today.

We will reconvene at 8.30 am in the morning. Thank you very much, Minister Styles.

Ms MANISON: Our sincerest thanks to the people in the agencies who have been up very late tonight and done a lot of hard work in preparation, who might not have necessarily been able to sit at the table tonight.

Mr STYLES: Absolutely. Thank you to all concerned.

The committee suspended.
