

ESTIMATES COMMITTEE PROCEEDINGS - 16 JUNE 2009

The Estimates Committee of the Northern Territory Legislative Assembly convened at 8.30 am.

Mr CHAIRMAN: Good morning, everyone. As Chair of the Estimates Committee 2009, I formally declare open this public hearing of the Estimates Committee of the Legislative Assembly of the Northern Territory on Tuesday, 16 June 2009. I extend a welcome to everyone present.

This is the eighth year of the Estimates Committee, process and procedures adopted throughout the sittings have become accepted practice. There are a number of areas regarding the conduct of the public hearings I intend to place on record. I table a copy of the resolution of the Legislative Assembly dated 10 June 2009, which refers to the Schedule of the Appropriation Bill 2009-10 and related budget papers to this committee. The role of the committee is to now examine the report on the estimates proposed expenditure contained in that bill.

As in previous years, membership of the Estimates Committee is the same as the Public Accounts Committee. However, the terms of reference allow for other members of the Assembly to participate in the public hearings, provided the composition to the committee never exceeds seven members. The membership shall always consist of three government members, three opposition members and one Independent member. The Assembly has recently passed a motion providing for alternate membership of the Public Accounts Committee, which now sits as a resolution of the Assembly. This does not impact on the composition of the current Estimates Committee. It will only come into effect if, during these public hearings, there is a requirement for the core membership of the Public Accounts Committee to adjourn for a deliberative session. To assist *Hansard*, I will advise the membership of the committee at the commencement of every session. I will also acknowledge for the record when there is a change of membership of the committee throughout the hearings.

I also report that at the first meeting of the Estimates Committee, the member for Nhulunbuy, Ms Lynne Walker, was appointed as Deputy Chair of the Committee in accordance with paragraph 8 of the Terms of Reference. As has been the practice in the past year, the committee has accepted the Standing Orders Committee's suggestion that a minister shall restrict their opening remarks to a maximum of five minutes. Members will be in a position to question the minister on issues that may have been raised within the opening remarks and, where an issue can be directly related to a particular output within the budget, that matter can only be addressed through the process of the interrogation of individual output groups as they relate to the appropriate portfolios of the agency.

I believe it is important to clarify any issues that could be considered as contentious and the matter of relevance of questioning has been raised a number of times throughout previous estimates public hearings. I intend to follow the lead of the Senate, which adopted a report for its Procedure Committee in 1999, in which the following test of relevance was determined: any questions going to the operations or financial positions of the departments and agencies which seek funds in the estimates are relevant questions for the purpose of estimates hearings.

Representatives of the media are present during the hearings and are able to report and rebroadcast proceedings of the process, having obtained written permission from the Speaker in accordance with paragraph 32 of the Terms of Reference.

To clarify the operations of the committee over the next four days, I advise that, in accordance with the resolution of the Assembly, particulars of proposed expenditure contained in the Appropriation Bill 2009-10 will be considered on an output group by output group basis and, within each output group, output by output. A total of 45 hours has been scheduled for ministers and agency officers to appear before this committee.

I take this opportunity to remind all members that it is incumbent on them to maximise their time over the next four days so that all agencies are provided a time frame which enables thorough investigation of specific issues within their particular output groups. The order of the output groups has been set out in the Schedule of Ministers Appearance, which has been provided to all members. Over the next four days of public hearings, we will work through this document as the agenda for the Estimates Committee. It should also be noted that to allow questions to be addressed to ministers

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with principal administrative responsibility for particular portfolio areas, it has been necessary to set out the schedule so that it varies somewhat from the listing of agencies in Budget Paper No 3.

Where a minister will be available for questioning for output groups that sit within other portfolios, these have been clearly identified in the schedule. I will be reinforcing the fact that questions regarding those particular output groups need to be addressed at the time the minister is appearing before the committee, as once an output group has been completed, it will not be revisited. The previously accepted method of allocating questions throughout public hearings has worked well in the past and the same process will be adopted during these Estimates Committee hearings. I propose to invite shadow ministers to ask their questions first, followed by members of the committee, Independent members and, finally, members addressing electorate issues.

Procedures for dealing with questions on notice are contained in the Estimates Committee Information Manual 2009, copies of which are available at the back of this room. I take this opportunity to reinforce the importance of the process I will be adopting when a question is taken on notice. When a minister or the Speaker indicates they are unable to answer a particular question during the committee process, or they will provide an answer at a later time, I will immediately request the member who raised the matter to clearly and precisely restate the question. This will allow agency officers who are present to note salient points of the topic at the same time the question is being relayed to the minister. This process will also assist *Hansard* and the committee secretariat staff when they come to processing the formal question for the Chairman's signature.

I will then ask the minister if he or she accepts the question taken on notice. If it is accepted, I will immediately allocate a portfolio-specific number which will clearly identify that particular question. Agency officers and ministerial staff should take note of the question number and ensure that it is clearly identified in any response tabled by the minister during the public hearing process or at some later date.

Half-hour meal breaks only are allowed over the period of the public hearing. We will be breaking between 1 pm to 1.30 pm for lunch and 6 pm to 6.30 pm for dinner. The schedule of questioning will be strictly adhered to. In the event that questioning of a portfolio concludes before the allocated time, the next minister will not commence before their scheduled time. There are many agency officers involved in these hearings and the last thing Estimates Committee wants to be responsible for is a feeling of uncertainty as to when officers may be called to assist their minister during the questioning process.

Witnesses should be aware that evidence given to the committee is protected by parliamentary privilege. However, I also remind witnesses that the giving of false or misleading evidence to the committee may constitute contempt of the Legislative Assembly pursuant to the powers and privileges legislation. Officers should also be aware that when they are requested by their minister to provide answers to questions, they are not required to comment on matters of policy.

For the purposes of the official recording of *Hansard*, I request that ministers introduce those officials who are accompanying them at these hearings. In addition, when a minister refers a question to an officer, that officer needs to clearly identify themselves at that time for the *Hansard* record.

We have some matters of housekeeping before we start. I have received a letter from the Chief Minister to Madam Speaker. Pursuant to Sessional Orders providing for alternate membership of the Public Accounts Committee, the Chief Minister has nominated the following government members as alternatives for Dr Chris Burns: 10.30 am to 6 pm Tuesday, 16 June 2009, the member for Barkly; 8.30 am to 1 pm on Wednesday, the member for Stuart; 1.30 pm to 6 pm on Wednesday, the member for Macdonnell.

The committee will now proceed with consideration of the estimates for proposed expenditure for the Department of the Legislative Assembly in accordance with the schedule.

DEPARTMENT OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

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Mr CHAIRMAN: Madam Speaker, welcome. Would you like to introduce the officials accompanying you and make any opening remarks?

Madam SPEAKER: I introduce the staff of the Legislative Assembly who are accompanying me: the Clerk, Mr Ian McNeill; Deputy Clerk, Mr David Horton; the Director of Parliamentary Services, Ms Vicki Long; and the Chief Finance Officer, Ms Coralee Holland.

In the fiscal year 2008-09, I am advised my department has again achieved its programmed outcomes within the budget allocation, adjusted throughout the year to compensate for the range of variations imposed through salary increases and members' entitlements under the Remuneration Tribunal Determination.

In respect of the agency budget, the allocation of funds for members' salaries and entitlements remains guaranteed as non-discretionary funding, leaving the balance for salaries and operational expenditure. For this department the discretionary funding for 2008-09 amounted to \$12 000 800, and included the allocation of \$2 000 300 for repairs and maintenance. The major variations revised for 2008-09 and 2009-10 estimates are outlined in the department's portfolio budget statement provided to you earlier.

As members will be aware, there has been an increase in the number of sitting days per year and this is reflected in the variations of 2008-09 and the forecast for 2009-10. Apart from the increased sitting days, the operation of the Assembly for sittings has remained generally consistent with the hours sat and the *Hansard* records provided. Similarly, the performance standard for the production of the verbatim transcript of the *Hansard* was once again achieved.

It has been another busy year for my department, with 11 new members provided with induction programs and established in electorate offices.

Similarly, considerable effort was given to the planning and opening of the Eleventh Assembly involving the swearing-in of all members, and the state visit of the President of Timor-Leste, His Excellency, Jose Ramos-Horta. I also advise a bipartisan parliamentary delegation is planned to East Timor for late August this year.

As members will note, I have continued to support and improve our education awareness programs for the parliament, with 48 schools visiting Parliament House or participating in role-play sessions. In all, some 1656 students have been involved in the program.

Our successful Outreach Program continues with further visits to Central Australia planned to coincide with the Alice Springs sittings in November, with more than 700 students from nine schools already booked to take part in our parliamentary education program.

New programs aimed at senior students, new Territorians, and community groups will be implemented in 2009-10. In addition, the Education Relations Unit will continue to work closely with the Statehood Steering Committee to maximise the use of resources in communicating with and educating the public on the path to statehood.

I also advise that Parliament House will host an open day, together with Government House, in August this year. I hope all members will become involved in that.

Turning to the maintenance and presentation of Parliament House, the major project during the year was the information and communications re-cabling which was completed in December 2008. This project will ensure the ongoing operability of the building over the next 15 years as the demand for technology and new systems increases. Apart from being a major process, the project also placed heavy demands on staff in managing logistics of moving and setting up offices in alternate areas as each floor was upgraded. It was a job well done by building and security staff, which minimised the

level of disruption to building occupants.

Concurrent with the cabling upgrade, the opportunity was taken to upgrade the ageing and increasingly unreliable blue card access system and the camera surveillance system.

Late last year, following a comprehensive review of the Assembly's sound and vision system, a contract was let through the Department of Planning and Infrastructure to upgrade and analogue cameras in the Chamber. This work is progressing with the cabling connectivity and the new digital cameras expected to be installed and operational by October this year. Once completed, both audio and visual streaming of parliamentary proceedings on the Internet will be possible. Further work is being undertaken on the sound system and Chamber acoustics, with a report being commissioned regarding possible solutions.

An outlined asset management plan for the next 10 years has been developed by Building Management staff. The information from this plan will be extended into an electronic asset management database. This will allow Parliament House staff to identify future liabilities for budget planning, and reduce the cost of short-term, *ad hoc* repairs to the building and its operating systems.

The maintenance of Parliament House has reached new levels of importance, and my staff will continue to develop plans and upgrades in concert with the Department of Planning and Infrastructure under the repairs and maintenance and minor new work programs.

In closing, I draw your attention to the portfolio budget statement. I take the opportunity to thank the officers of the department who, during two busy sitting weeks, have prepared for this Estimates Committee process. I am now happy to take questions in relation to the resource allocations and expenditure by output.

Mr CHAIRMAN: Before we proceed to questions relating to the statement, for the purposes of *Hansard*, I will introduce the members of the committee currently here: member for Blain; member for Fong Lim; member for Port Darwin; me, as Chair; member for Fannie Bay; member for Nhulunbuy; member for Johnston and member for Nelson. Are there any questions relating to the opening statement?

Mr MILLS: No.

Mr CHAIRMAN: There being no questions relating to the opening statement, we now proceed to the estimates of proposed expenditure for the Department of the Legislative Assembly in accordance with the schedule.

Agency Specific Whole-of-Government Related Questions

Mr CHAIRMAN: Are there any questions on agency specific whole-of-government related questions?

Mr ELFERINK: I will ask the generic questions now. For all departments who happen to be listening out there in listening land, prepare yourselves for these, because these will be the standard set of questions as far as applicable coming through the system towards you. The generic questions are as follows in relation to carbon emissions. Carbon emissions – how much are you producing now, Madam Speaker?

Madam SPEAKER: I take it that is not a personal question?

Mr ELFERINK: No. I could not help myself when I realised it was going to come out that way, but I thought I would go there anyhow. Perhaps you can ...

Madam SPEAKER: We may have something.

Mr ELFERINK: Then you can probably answer my next question which relates to carbon emissions and individual agency strategies to reduce emissions. Basically, what are you doing to lower your emissions, Madam Speaker?

Madam SPEAKER: Mr Chairman, we have some information on how Parliament House is involved in the Greenhouse Challenge project, which is part of the Commonwealth project. Is that the sort of thing the member for Port Darwin is interested in?

Mr ELFERINK: Well, if you like. Yes, if you have a document there and it can be tabled.

Madam SPEAKER: Proposed energy management initiatives in 2009-10: the Department of the Legislative Assembly's Energy Management Group will consider a range of ongoing energy management proposals within the budget parameters. The installation of a fan coil unit in the members' lobby will alleviate the need to supply conditioned air in unoccupied parts of the building, thus reducing costs.

Legislative Assembly staff are looking to and considering the replacement of the air-conditioning chillers with five-star energy-rated systems. This project will come at a substantial capital cost, but it is considered that, within five years, the project will have paid back the amount of money. Legislative Assembly staff are also considering renewable power projects which could, potentially, halve Parliament House power costs.

Mr ELFERINK: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I note you are reading from a document. Can you table the document or ...

Madam SPEAKER: I am.

Mr ELFERINK: If it is possible.

Madam SPEAKER: Well, there is writing all over and not all of it is relevant, to be quite honest.

Mr ELFERINK: Okay.

Madam SPEAKER: Those are the parts I have chosen to comment on.

Mr ELFERINK: Okay. Next one: utilities increases. What is the effect on the bottom line of your agency as a result of increased costs of power and water? What do you expect the increased costs to be to your agency?

Madam SPEAKER: I understand the power costs will increase by \$60 000 as a result of CPI and power increases.

Mr ELFERINK: Does that also include water, or just power?

Madam SPEAKER: Just power.

Mr ELFERINK: Can you add water to that as well – projecting out for the next couple of years?

Madam SPEAKER: I am unable to advise you on the actual - if there is any increase in the water costs but, apparently, it is \$90 000 a year. I do not have any figures for increases or decreases from previous years.

Mr ELFERINK: You have, obviously, a budget impost as a result of power and water increases. Have you had an extra allocation in your budget to accommodate that?

Madam SPEAKER: I believe we have applied to Treasury for the increased money.

Mr ELFERINK: Do you have it?

Madam SPEAKER: No.

Mr ELFERINK: So, how does that affect the budget? I am hearing a figure of probably somewhere around \$100 000 impost on the budget. How are you going to cope with that?

Madam SPEAKER: It will mean designing our budget accordingly, as we do every year.

Mr ELFERINK: However, as a consequence, you have ongoing costs from one year to the other; you now have a \$100 000-odd impost into how you are going to run your budget. That has to come from somewhere. There has to be some deleterious effect if there is no increase from Treasury. So, where are you going to find the money?

Madam SPEAKER: As I have already indicated, Mr Chairman, we have put in a lot of effort into reducing the costs of electricity throughout the building, and there is an ongoing program of management of energy within the building. We expect prices to be reduced over the year. I should say, in that increase of \$60 000 for electricity use, part of the increase for the year was not simply the increase in power but, in fact, the increase in usage of electricity because of the re-cabling project. Parts of the building were used extensively for the nine-month period of the re-cabling, and that is partly the reason why this is such a high figure.

Mr TOLLNER: While my colleague is researching, can I backtrack a bit in relation to carbon emissions? Is there a quantifiable amount of carbon emissions you are aware of that your department is responsible for? Has that amount been quantified?

Madam SPEAKER: Mr Chairman, it would appear we have targets which we meet. I will have to take that question on notice.

Mr CHAIRMAN: Member for Fong Lim, for the purposes of *Hansard*, would you please restate your question?

Mr TOLLNER: What are the targets?

Madam SPEAKER: That is the question you are asking?

Mr CHAIRMAN: Sorry, Madam Speaker, indicates she will take your previous question on notice.

Mr TOLLNER: Yes, yes. I am not asking about targets, I am asking what is the current carbon footprint.

Mr CHAIRMAN: Is your advice, Madam Speaker, that you want to take that question on notice?

Madam SPEAKER: I will take the question on notice.

Question on Notice 1.1

Mr CHAIRMAN: Member for Fong Lim, for the purposes of *Hansard*, could you please restate your question?

Mr TOLLNER: I just want a figure - a real figure - about what the carbon footprint is currently. Following on from that is: do you know what the targets are?

Mr CHAIRMAN: Do you want to take the targets on question on notice as well?

Madam SPEAKER: I will take that question on notice.

Mr TOLLNER: Can I add a bit more to that?

Mr CHAIRMAN: Well we, will ...

Mr TOLLNER: What methodology did you use to arrive at your carbon footprint figure?

Mr CHAIRMAN: Is that part of the question on notice, or can you answer that?

Madam SPEAKER: I will have to get some advice. Yes, I will take that question on notice.

Mr CHAIRMAN: For the purposes of *Hansard* I allocate that question No 1.1.

Mr ELFERINK: Back to utilities. Mr Chairman, it is unusual for this to occur, but there is a tradition where ministers - or in this case, the Speaker - coming into this place are assumed to have read their own budgets. I am going to answer the question I asked. I thought I had a bell ringing in the back of my head. I point the Speaker to page 42 of Budget Paper No 3. Building Management Services increase reflects higher costs of utilities and repairs and maintenance which, basically, means it has been factored in. What surprises me, Mr Chairman, is that the Speaker was unaware of this particular ...

Madam SPEAKER: Mr Chairman, that was not what I said at all. You were asking a completely different question, and I answered that question. And, yes, it is in the budget papers, I agree.

Mr ELFERINK: The question I asked was: what have you done to prepare for it? I expected you to direct me to the key variations on page 43 and 42.

Staffing questions. Madam Speaker, the number of graduates and apprentices started with the department in 2007, 2008 and 2009; do you have numbers for those? Do you have apprentice numbers and graduate numbers?

Madam SPEAKER: We do not have any apprentices in the department.

Mr ELFERINK: Do you have any graduate positions? Do you have a graduate training program?

Madam SPEAKER: We do not have any specific graduate training program.

Mr ELFERINK: You do not have any of those. Internships? No? Okay. Nothing of the sort.

Discipline: have you any reports of improper use of computers? I will take that as a no.

Madam SPEAKER: No, we have no reports.

Mr ELFERINK: How many credit cards are on issue to departmental staff?

Madam SPEAKER: I believe the figure is approximately 28, but I would prefer to take that on notice so that we can provide the correct figure.

Question on Notice 1.2

Mr CHAIRMAN: For the purposes of *Hansard*, member for Port Darwin, could you please restate your question?

Mr ELFERINK: How many credit cards have been issued to departmental staff?

Mr CHAIRMAN: Minister, will you take that question on notice?

Madam SPEAKER: Yes.

Mr CHAIRMAN: For the purposes of *Hansard*, I allocate that question No 1.2

Mr ELFERINK: Next question on notice. How many transactions for personal items or items and services are outstanding? That is, how many have not been finalised or acquitted?

Madam SPEAKER: I am advised it is a very minimal number, but I will take it on notice.

Question on Notice 1.3

Mr CHAIRMAN: Member for Port Darwin, for the purposes of *Hansard* will you please restate your question?

Mr ELFERINK: How many transactions for expenditure on departmental credit cards are still outstanding in terms of acquittal?

Mr CHAIRMANMAN: Madam Speaker, are you prepared to take the question on notice?

Madam SPEAKER: Yes.

Mr CHAIRMANMAN: For the purposes of *Hansard*, I allocate that question No 1.3.

Mr ELFERINK: Public events: Madam Speaker, can you list the public events, conferences and public forums sponsored by this department for the financial year 2008-09, and those projected for the financial year 2009-10?

Madam SPEAKER: Can I clarify that question, Mr Chairman? Through you, do you refer to functions held by the Department of the Legislative Assembly?

Mr ELFERINK: Yes.

Madam SPEAKER: We have the provision of morning and afternoon teas for guests of Parliament House including the opening of parliament. So that is an extensive amount of time, including the visit by His Excellency Dr Jose Ramos-Horta and his delegation; the breakfast launch of papers for the CDU Timor-Leste, as well. There was a function for Surf Live Saving NT; a lunch at which you were present, member for Port Darwin, for Dr Wolfgang Thierse of the German parliament; and a function for the Darwin Legacy Widows Club. There was Sing Music Count Us In function that most members

were involved in. We hosted morning tea for students and members. There were functions for International United Nations Day, as well as for the Speaker's Christmas.

There were also four functions involved with the condolence motions for Mr Sam Calder, Mr Joe Fisher, Reverend Jim Downing and Mr Tony Fitzgerald.

Mr ELFERINK: Cardinal Pell's little shindig?

Madam SPEAKER: Not on this one yet.

Mr ELFERINK: But is it a Legislative Assembly one?

Madam SPEAKER: That is correct.

Mr ELFERINK: So that list is not yet complete?

Madam SPEAKER: These were as at the end of May.

Mr ELFERINK: I am now going to ask you some questions about advertising through your department. Do you have a definition of advertising anywhere? If so, can you table it?

Madam SPEAKER: I do not think we have a definition of advertising.

Mr ELFERINK: Do not have a definition, okay. What is the department's budget for advertising expenditure?

Madam SPEAKER: We do not have a specific budget for advertising, but advertising occurs in different areas of the department.

Mr ELFERINK: You really do not have a figure of how much you spend on advertising?

Madam SPEAKER: We do, but you did not ask that; you asked a different question.

Mr ELFERINK: What is the department's budget ... Goodness, gracious me.

Mr Tollner: There is a difference.

Mr ELFERINK: All right, you have me. I am sure it is a technical issue that everyone would agree with.

Madam SPEAKER: The total budget which includes marketing, promotion and advertising is \$105 915.

Mr ELFERINK: When I ask you what is the department's budget for advertising and you say I did not ask a specific question, you then answer the department's total budget for advertising is such and such. Do you have a budget or not?

Madam SPEAKER: This is how much has been spent, Mr Elferink.

Mr ELFERINK: Yes. You just told me there was a budget.

Madam SPEAKER: This is how much has been spent.

Mr ELFERINK: You just told me there is a budget.

Mr TOLLNER: What is the budget?

Madam SPEAKER: This is the amount spent.

Mr TOLLNER: I believe, Madam Speaker, he is asking what has been spent and budgeted for. Are they the same figure?

Madam SPEAKER: It comes out of different allocations for different units. For example, it includes advertising of death notices. Obviously, you cannot judge how many people you might need to put a death notice in for each year. It could be advertising the closing of the building; for example, when President Ramos-Horta came here we had to advise members of the public they may find difficulty entering the building.

Mr ELFERINK: What was that complete figure you gave me?

Madam SPEAKER: \$105 915.68.

Mr ELFERINK: \$105 000 is many death notices. Can you break down the expenditure on a purchase-by-purchase basis, or table the document?

Madam SPEAKER: I will table the document.

Mr ELFERINK: Thank you.

Madam SPEAKER: It is called Advertising and Promotion - Whole-of-Agency. As you will notice when you see this document, it is broken down into different areas of the department: Office of the Speaker; Office of the Clerk; Parliamentary Relations and Education; Parliamentary Services; Building Management; as well as advertising from the committees. Separately, there are figures for Portrait of a Senior Territorian and Statehood Steering Committee.

Ms WALKER: Could I see a copy of that as well, please?

Mr CHAIRMAN: I believe the secretary is photocopying it.

Answer to Question on Notice 1.2

Madam SPEAKER: I have just been told the total number of credit card holders is 24.

Mr ELFERINK: Twenty-four credit cards. Did you happen to get an answer on the other aspect of that question, which is in relation to outstanding purchases not been acquitted?

Madam SPEAKER: No, that is still coming.

Mr ELFERINK: Thank you. How much of this advertising money has been spent? I notice the Statehood Steering Committee has consumed about half of that budget, just a smidgen under. How many of these campaigns have been translated into a local languages or dialects?

Madam SPEAKER: To my best knowledge, only perhaps one or two items relating to the Statehood Steering Committee, nothing else.

Mr ELFERINK: Nothing else? What about other languages: Vietnamese or Portuguese?

Madam SPEAKER: No.

Mr ELFERINK: For each advertising campaign, who was contracted? How were the contracts farmed out? Could you break these down by print, audio and visual platforms?

Madam SPEAKER: The majority of the advertising we have is advertising in the *NT News*: for staff positions; for matters to do with the building - when it is closed, for example; if there are special functions such as an open day or something like that; or death notices. These are simple advertisements.

Mr ELFERINK: Are these credit card purchases? How do you pay for the ads? Do you ring them up and give them a credit card number and fax through a format? How are they paid for, how are they procured?

Madam SPEAKER: Mr Chairman, we follow the normal procurement guidelines for all of these. In some cases we have accounts with, say, the *NT News*, and we follow those processes and pay the accounts when they come in.

Mr ELFERINK: Do you use a particular printer for material that comes through produced by your department, including the Statehood Steering Committee? Is there a preferred printer? Is there somebody with a period contract?

Madam SPEAKER: The Government Printing Office.

Mr ELFERINK: The Government Printing Office does all your printing?

Madam SPEAKER: I believe so.

Mr ELFERINK: Do you have any plans in place for this financial year, or the coming financial year, for television advertising? If so, how much?

Madam SPEAKER: No.

Mr ELFERINK: Who approves the material produced by the department? Is it you, or does somebody else approve it?

Madam SPEAKER: Matters that relate to the Office of the Speaker, I approve and, as I have said previously, things to do with death notices and items such as that. The Clerk would approve other matters. The Statehood Steering Committee has its own approval process through its executive.

Mr ELFERINK: Thank you.

Mr CHAIRMAN: That concludes questions on this issue.

OUTPUT GROUP 1.0 – PARLIAMENTARY SERVICES
Output 1.1 – Assembly Services

Mr CHAIRMAN: We now move on to Output Group 1.0, Parliamentary Services, Output 1.1, Assembly Services. Are there any questions?

Mr TOLLNER: Madam Speaker, can you advise who has won the tender for the new digital cameras?

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Madam SPEAKER: That is Output 1.3; we are on Output 1.1.

Mr TOLLNER: I am happy to hold that over.

Mr ELFERINK: How many staff do you have in the committee section? While we are at it, can you break them down into their levels, please?

Madam SPEAKER: I will pass over to Mr David Horton.

Mr HORTON: Current, as of today, staffing in committees is two AO8 committee secretaries, one AO7 research officer, one AO4 assistant, and one administration assistant at the AO2 level.

Mr ELFERINK: Which of those committees have produced reports in the current financial year, and what were those reports - to save me having to go through the Notice Papers?

Madam SPEAKER: I understand there were no reports tabled during this current financial year.

Mr ELFERINK: What is the travel budget for each of these committees - breakdown by committee?

Madam SPEAKER: For the standing committees it is \$1500 per annum for the committee, and the Statehood Steering Committee has a separate budget.

Mr ELFERINK: Which is?

Madam SPEAKER: Unfortunately, we do not have that information. We are happy to take it on notice.

Question on Notice 1.4

Mr CHAIRMAN: For the purposes of *Hansard*, will you please restate your question.

Mr ELFERINK: What is the Statehood Steering Committee's budget. Can we have that tabled, in particular, in relation to travel?

Madam SPEAKER: It was in the travel budget you wanted. It is a figure we do not have. I am happy to take the travel budget on notice.

Mr CHAIRMAN: For the purposes of *Hansard*, I allocate that question No 1.4.

Mr ELFERINK: What are the other costs for these committees? Can these be broken down into different cost areas by each committee? I understand each committee produces a budget on an annual basis. Are they available? Whilst we are flicking through folders, can you also provide the total cost of the committee section of the parliament?

Madam SPEAKER: I have a document which says that the total output budget is \$846 000 for committee budget expenditure.

Mr ELFERINK: Are you able to table that?

Madam SPEAKER: Yes, I am happy to table that.

Mr ELFERINK: Do you have budgets for the other committees at hand?

Madam SPEAKER: It includes all the budgets on this in direct expenses.

Mr ELFERINK: Yes, that is whole-of-committee budgets. I was hoping to drill in a little deeper. Can we table the actual committee budgets?

Madam SPEAKER: Most of the committee ...

Mr ELFERINK: I can take it on notice.

Madam SPEAKER: Most of the committee budgets are quite small. I refer you to Portfolio Budget Statement, page 14, which has more detailed information. It has all of the costs in relation to each committee.

Mr ELFERINK: Can you describe, on a committee-by-committee basis, what current inquiries are being undertaken by each of them, with the possible exception of the ...

Madam SPEAKER: The Public Accounts Committee, as I understand it and, of course, you would be more familiar with this, examines the accounts of the receipts and expenditure of the Northern Territory, as well as each statement and report tabled in the Legislative Assembly by the Auditor-General, pursuant to the *Financial Management Act* and the *Audit Act*. It is also directed by the Legislative Assembly and the Administrator or a minister to inquire and report on any questions relating to the public accounts of the Northern Territory. It is also in the Portfolio Budget Statement on pages 14 and 15.

If you want to look at Substance Abuse, it itemises what happened with that committee, which did not continue with the Eleventh Assembly. If you want to look at the Portfolio Budget Statement, member for Port Darwin, it also indicates that.

The Standing Committee of Legal and Constitutional Affairs has an inquiry looking at issues relating to statehood, customary law and the possibility of a bill of rights; as well as what kind of parliament we might have should we gain statehood.

The Environment and Sustainable Development Committee received a reference from the Minister for Natural Resources, Environment and Heritage in relation to the Northern Territory's capacity to progress agriculture in an environmentally sustainable manner. The committee is pursuing that. During the reporting period, it convened four deliberative meetings and two public hearings. Evidence taken to date appears on the committee's suite of the Legislative Assembly website.

The Sport and Youth Committee no longer exists in the Eleventh Assembly.

The Subordinate Legislation and Publications Committee has considered a raft of delegated legislation by-laws, and the timing of the tabling of annual reports and financial statements by all agencies within the Northern Territory Public Service.

The other committees that meet are the House Committee, which I chair, which looks at matters relating to members and services in Parliament House. The Standing Orders Committee, which has had a number of references throughout the year, has presented ...

Mr ELFERINK: I suspect a few more in the next few months as well.

Madam SPEAKER: ... has presented four reports to the Assembly. I will pass over to the Clerk who is the Secretary of the Standing Orders Committee to make a comment about that.

Mr McNEILL: Mr Chairman, the Standing Orders Committee currently has ongoing references in relationship to: the conduct of Question Time and, in particular, monitoring the experiments currently

being undertaken in the Australian Senate for timed questions and answers and supplementary questions and the application of the relevancy rule; the ongoing review of standing orders in general are being recommended; having the Assembly agree to the revised chapter in relationship to committee operations; and also gender specific language. During this financial year, the Members' Interests Committee was established, which is, effectively, populated by the same members as the Standing Orders Committee and has an ongoing reference in respect of the management of Members' Interests Register pursuant to the legislation which we anticipate will be commenced during the next month.

Madam SPEAKER: The normal process is that we go by Output 1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 1.4 etcetera. I am wondering how we are doing this because we appear to be talking about 1.3. I assume, therefore, that we are not going to do anything on 1.1 and 1.2. Is that actually the situation, Mr Chairman?

Mr CHAIRMAN: What we have before us is Output 1.1 Assembly Services; Output 1.2 Members and Client services; and Output 1.3 Building and Management Services. That is the order we circulated as the agenda.

Madam SPEAKER: Yes, but Output 1.1, as in the EBS, as well, is actually Procedural Advice and Chamber Support, Output 1.2, as opposed to 1.2 and 1.3. I am trying to follow the order we are in here.

Mr CHAIRMAN: The agenda item we are now talking to is Assembly Services, Output 1.1. I will take your advice if you feel we are asking questions outside the output, but we have ...

Madam SPEAKER: No, that is in the output. It is just simply that, when we are talking about committees, it is ...

Mr CHAIRMAN: That is right. The order we are following is that broader Assembly Services, then we go onto the broader Members and Clients Services, and then Building Management Services. They are the three outputs we have as agenda items.

Mr ELFERINK: I am happy with the answer I received. As an aside, I watched the House of Commons Question Time the other day. That is an exciting arena to see questions being asked and answered. Is any staff on long-term leave at the moment from the committee section?

Mr CHAIRMAN: Have you moved on to Output 1.2?

Mr ELFERINK: No, still on Assembly Services, as in relation to the committees.

Madam SPEAKER: I will direct the question to the Clerk.

Mr McNEILL: Dr Brian Lloyd, a Research Officer with the committee office, is presently on an extended period of attachment to the Commonwealth parliament. He is, effectively, on leave without pay from our staff for the rest of this year, I understand. His continuing arrangements will be organised, I suspect, during the next three or four months.

Mr ELFERINK: Are you getting anyone to relieve?

Mr McNEILL: No.

Mr ELFERINK: I suspect this is under Assembly Services, but I may be corrected. Mr Collins' portrait. Does the Department of the Legislative Assembly have a policy regarding which portraits are hung in Parliament House?

Madam SPEAKER: Can I just ask, Mr Chairman, are you specifically asking about the portrait of Mr

Collins?

Mr ELFERINK: I will be getting to that shortly.

Madam SPEAKER: You started the question by saying that.

Mr ELFERINK: Yes, I was reading a little heading I had written for myself.

Madam SPEAKER: At the moment, the policy relates to portraits of Chief Ministers, Speakers and Leaders of the Opposition.

Mr ELFERINK: Do you have a policy other than that? Where or when they are hung? These sorts of things. Is there something, a written document, you can table?

Madam SPEAKER: I do not believe so, member for Port Darwin. We inherited a system where the Chief Ministers' and the Speakers' portraits are hung in a particular part of Parliament House and the Opposition Leaders' in another. We have followed that convention. The Clerk has some historical background.

Mr McNEILL: It traces back to the construction stage of this building. The then Speaker - with the advice of the House Committee, the committee acting as the client for the new Parliament House - agreed, with the government's imprimatur, that a series of portraits be commissioned for installation in the new building when it opened in 1994. The various series were: Administrators since 1948; Presiding Officers of the Legislative Assembly; Leaders of the Opposition; and, Chief Ministers, as well as Goff Letts in respect to government leaders. Their deployment around the building was a matter of some conjecture. Initially, portraits of Chief Ministers were going to be hung in the main hall. They were half installed until Marshall Perron saw his portrait which he had immediately removed. An accident of history is the fact that the Leaders of the Opposition series - while it was logical at that time to place them in the opposition lobby corridor - of course, will now comprise - if that is considered to be a series - members of both parties.

Mr ELFERINK: Whereabouts is Ms Carney's portrait? Has it been commissioned?

Madam SPEAKER: Yes, and I understand it is happening now. The person who painted my portrait has been commissioned to do it. I understand it is in process. I have had a conversation with the Leader of the Opposition about having his done. He has it in his mind, but there is nothing on paper at this stage.

Mr ELFERINK: Has the Speaker or any officer of the parliament discussed or considered whether the portrait of Bob Collins is an appropriate portrait to hang in the halls of Parliament House?

Madam SPEAKER: I have not received any formal approaches on this, member for Port Darwin, but, if I were to, I would be interested to receive the comments.

Mr ELFERINK: Returning to the question: has it been discussed by either the parliamentary staff, yourself, with anybody else in-House?

Madam SPEAKER: No.

Mr ELFERINK: Clearly, the circumstances surrounding the death of Bob Collins left a lot of questions hanging in the ether. Many accusers of Mr Collins - and I purposefully add the word many - have publicly demonstrated, in two jurisdictions, their anger and disgust at not being able to level their accusations in court at the man himself. Furthermore, those victims have received payouts from the Victims of Crime Compensation Scheme. These have not been challenged, as I understand it, by government. We also know Bob Collins was going to be charged, even as early as 18 June 2004,

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when the DPP provided advice to police that, in spite of whatever Mr Collins said during the investigation, they had sufficient evidence to prosecute him. That particular piece of information became available to government members on 18 June 2004, two days before Mr Collins had his accident – accident? - his suicide.

Madam SPEAKER: Mr Chairman, I am wondering what relevance this has to the actual budget.

Mr ELFERINK: It comes to the point of the Assembly Services. We have a portrait hanging in a place of honour in this building acknowledging a man who, in two jurisdictions, has been identified by various individuals as a paedophile. Is there any use placing a portrait in a place of honour when the man, rather than face trial, chose another option to escape it? That is the only thing that prevented him from going to trial. He was charged with a crime in two jurisdictions. The victims have been paid compensation. Some are still angry that they have not received compensation and, yet, we honour the man by hanging his portrait in this House. I have some issues with that, as do members on this side of the House.

Madam SPEAKER: Is that ...

Mr CHAIRMAN: At this stage, I remind members of the test of relevance I outlined at the start. Any questions going to the operations or financial positions of departments and agencies which seek funds in the estimates are relevant questions for the purposes of estimates hearing. That needs to be borne in mind when asking questions.

Madam SPEAKER: Member for Port Darwin, while I consider it not to be part of the budget, I would be happy to receive a letter from you outlining ...

Mr ELFERINK: You are receiving my opinions now.

Madam SPEAKER: It is not actually relevant to the budget. As I said, I assure you I will refer a letter outlining your concerns to the House Committee for decision. It is a bipartisan committee.

Mr ELFERINK: Do you have an opinion, Madam Speaker?

Mr CHAIRMAN: Madam Speaker ...

Madam SPEAKER: I do not believe opinions are part of the estimates process.

Mr ELFERINK: Well, you have my opinion. I am a member of the Legislative Assembly of the Northern Territory. My opinion on this is clear. I am wondering if you have an opinion, Madam Speaker.

Madam SPEAKER: Mr Chairman, as with Question Time, it is not appropriate to ask for an opinion. What I am indicating to the member for Port Darwin is that I would be more than happy to receive a letter from him - or any member of the Legislative Assembly - indicating they have concerns with the hanging of his portrait in Parliament House. I will consider that letter, but I will also refer it to the House Committee, which has members from the opposition on it as well. They will make a decision accordingly.

Mr CHAIRMAN: We are here, essentially, to scrutinise the budget.

Mr TOLLNER: I will rephrase the question, Madam Speaker. Do you find that offensive?

Madam SPEAKER: What I will say is, at the moment, we have a historical display of people who have represented the Northern Territory. I am quite happy to receive that letter and, in fact, I will refer it to the House Committee as a ...

Mr ELFERINK: You are receiving our submissions now.

Madam SPEAKER: I have just said I will refer it to the House Committee, thank you, member for Port Darwin.

Mr ELFERINK: I am wondering if you have an opinion. You can say no, and that is the answer to the question. Do you have an opinion on this? I do and I know some of my colleagues do.

Madam SPEAKER: Member for Port Darwin, it is inappropriate to ask me for a personal opinion on something.

Mr ELFERINK: No, it is not, I have given you an opinion. We are leaders of the community, Madam Speaker. We were elected for our opinions. We have opinions. If anybody in this jurisdiction has a right to have an opinion, it is us. We are elected to represent ...

Ms WALKER: Mr Chairman, under Standing Order 112, General Rules, it states that questions should not ask ministers for an expression ...

Mr CHAIRMAN: Madam Speaker has also made it clear that she has given her answer to this question. I suggest we move on.

Mr ELFERINK: Well, you may suggest that we move on, Mr Chairman, the fact is that we have a portrait hanging in our hallowed halls elevating Mr Bob Collins to a place of honour I do not believe he deserves; a place he has forfeited the right to occupy.

We can engage in the niceties as to whether or not this has a budgetary impact or anything else like that. I am sure we can find some excuse not to talk about it, but it is really a case of 'do not mention the war'. The fact is we have a portrait hanging in a place of honour in this House which eulogises - for a lack of better words - a man who is roundly accused in the community - by many accusers in two jurisdictions - of being a paedophile. Yet, we still honour him. If we are too worried about whether it fits into Output 1.1 or if it is a budget question, then we have lost our way.

Mr CHAIRMAN: That is a very important point, member for Port Darwin. This is the Estimates Committee, which is here to scrutinise the budget.

Mr ELFERINK: What is the cost impact of removing that portrait, Madam Speaker? What do you believe that would be?

Madam SPEAKER: It would obviously be negligible. Member for Port Darwin, I have assured you I will refer it to the House Committee. Up until this point, I have not received a complaint regarding the painting and, therefore, the painting stays, just as all the other paintings do. I have now received a complaint, and I will refer it to the House Committee for consideration.

Mr TOLLNER: Madam Speaker, I find it surprising that up until now you have not received a single complaint.

Mr CHAIRMAN: Are there any other questions?

Answer to Question on Notice 1.1

Madam SPEAKER: I have some answers in relation to the current carbon footprint, which is apparently 2488 tonnes. You asked what the targets are. The targets are -11%, 2214 tonnes. The methodology used to reach this figure was by way of the Greenhouse Challenge recommendations.

Mr ELFERINK: Have we reached our targets?

Madam SPEAKER: Yes.

Mr ELFERINK: Yes. Okay.

Mr CHAIRMAN: Are there any other questions for Output Group 1.1, Assembly Services?

Mr TOLLNER: Can you outline the cost of the Alice Springs sittings, with a breakdown by travel and travel allowance for Legislative Assembly staff to travel to and stay in Alice Springs; the cost of hiring the venue; vehicle hire; accommodation costs; office support - for instance printing; computers; audio broadcasting; and other electronic services?

Madam SPEAKER: Can I just clarify, member for Fong Lim? Are you talking about the estimated costs for the 2009 Alice Springs sittings?

Mr TOLLNER: Yes.

Madam SPEAKER: The total projected costs are \$321 055. I am happy to table the 2009 estimated expenditure.

Mr TOLLNER: Thank you. Madam Speaker, how is Hansard coordinated for Alice Springs?

Madam SPEAKER: I refer you to David Horton.

Mr HORTON: The Hansard staff stay in Darwin. We use a link from Alice Springs and a land line back to Darwin for them to do the transcripts.

Mr TOLLNER: Madam Speaker, what are the access arrangements for the public? What security measures will be in place?

Madam SPEAKER: What do you mean?

Mr TOLLNER: What are the access arrangements for the public to attend the sittings of the Legislative Assembly in Alice Springs, and what security will be in place?

Madam SPEAKER: Member for Fong Lim, we are just about to start this process. Mr Horton is going to Alice Springs next week to start the process with the convention centre. I imagine it will be very similar to previous years when we had the Alice Springs sittings, but I hand over to Mr Horton for specific details.

Mr HORTON: The arrangements will be similar to previous occasions. Public access will be through the main entrance. There will also be school visits, which we will facilitate in the building. The screening arrangements will be similar to those we have in Parliament House, Darwin. There will be a baggage screening and personnel screening at the front entrance - pretty much a replication of what we have here.

Mr TOLLNER: Madam Speaker, can you tell me if there are any events planned in Alice Springs with local Alice Springs dignitaries and the wider community?

Madam SPEAKER: At this stage, member for Fong Lim, we are only beginning to start the planning. We have not started to consider what sort of events to hold in association with the Alice Springs

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sittings.

Mr TOLLNER: Madam Speaker, from the preliminary arrangements you have in place, will there be anything different in the coming November sittings from previous years?

Madam SPEAKER: I am not sure we would be holding the concert again this year. It was excellent, but I am not sure we would be holding that. We had that instead of a big opening function. We will be doing things that involve the community of Central Australia, particularly young people. That will be our aim. I will be discussing this with members of the House Committee, who have always been very involved with what we do during the sittings.

Mr CHAIRMAN: Member for Nelson, do you have any questions on Output 1.1, Assembly Services?

Mr WOOD: I do. I follow on from the questions about the sittings in Alice Springs. I notice there are some large increases from the previous 2007 budget. One is the venue hire at \$60 000. Is there any reason that quote is nearly four times as much the one in the 2007 budget?

Madam SPEAKER: That was the cost they wanted to charge, member for Nelson.

Mr WOOD: Is that for the convention centre?

Madam SPEAKER: I believe so. We actually negotiated this down.

Mr WOOD: You could probably get a very large tent for that; one of those white tents we have on the Esplanade every now and then.

In relation to Information Technology, it is nearly double the price - not quite - from the previous year - \$45 000 as against \$27 000. Is there any reason for that being so much more expensive?

Madam SPEAKER: Mr Horton will answer that.

Mr HORTON: Those are the costs envisaged for the sittings as assessed by our IT Manager and the service providers for IT.

Mr WOOD: Another large increase is in equipment costs. In 2005 they were \$3593. They are now \$21 182. It was similar to the year 2007, but it seems we were able to operate the Legislative Assembly in 2005 at \$3593. We have gone up sevenfold since then. Is there any reason for those increases?

Mr HORTON: The figures we have derived for the 2009 sittings are based on the costs advised, as well as any CPI increases since that time.

Mr WOOD: Why is there the large decrease in Marketing and Promotion from \$53 000 in 2007 to this year's \$15 000? The first time we were there it was \$2275. That figure is all over the place.

Madam SPEAKER: It says in the comments we will not be holding the community concert. We will be doing something else. The community concert was fairly expensive.

Mr WOOD: The annual sittings days in 2005-06 were 381 hours; in 2006-07, 294; in 2007-08, 290. Have you projected figures for the 2008-09 year, and/or 2009-10, considering we have only one more sitting day for this financial year?

Madam SPEAKER: I will hand this over to the Chief Finance Officer.

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Ms HOLLAND: Coralee Holland, Chief Finance Officer. We have a revised target for 2008-09 for sitting hours of 356. In 2009-10, we have predicted 376.

Mr WOOD: What page is that in the portfolio statement, please?

Ms HOLLAND: These are our internal figures.

Mr WOOD: Was it 356 for this year?

Ms HOLLAND: Yes.

Mr WOOD: Is that because of the extra days that have ...

Ms HOLLAND: That is right.

Mr WOOD: We still do not reach the 2005-06 number of sitting hours under the old scheme of 381 hours.

Ms HOLLAND: That was before my time.

Mr WOOD: Madam Speaker, if we are projected to be sitting for another 66 hours, how much extra is that going to cost us in paying for Hansard, air-conditioning, electricity, and security?

Madam SPEAKER: \$132 000 for 2008-09, and \$166 000 for 2009-10.

Mr WOOD: That is the total increase in - that will include extra Hansard work?

Madam SPEAKER: That is correct.

Mr WOOD: The statehood administration is with Legislative Assembly. Why has that not been kept within the Chief Minister's Department? Is it a cost to the Assembly?

Madam SPEAKER: I might pass that to the Clerk, who has that historical information.

Mr McNEILL: At the time of the establishment of the Statehood Steering Committee as a creature of the Legal and Constitutional Affairs Standing Committee, negotiations were undertaken between the then Speaker and Chief Minister about the appropriate arrangements for the administrative support for the committee. There was a general agreement the statehood program would be more successful if the steering committee and its activities were seen as separate from executive government. The Assembly, under the Speaker's leadership, agreed we would be the host department for providing accommodation, administrative, HR, and logistical support to the secretariat of the steering committee.

It involves an impost on the Legislative Assembly Department's budget. It is something that has been absorbed and, to date, I submit it is a fairly successful administrative arrangement.

Mr WOOD: Is minister McCarthy the minister who runs with the Statehood portfolio?

Madam SPEAKER: You are asking is minister McCarthy the Minister for Statehood?

Mr WOOD: Yes.

Madam SPEAKER: Yes, she is.

Mr WOOD: Why, then, is her department not running the whole show; that is, administration, or ...

Madam SPEAKER: That is because it is part of the Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee, as a reference to the Statehood Steering Committee, and, therefore, reports to the parliament. The minister has a different relationship. It is quite complicated. We have a table.

Mr McNEILL: Well, we will not publish that. Mr Chairman, while there is a Minister for Statehood, presently minister Malarndirri McCarthy, on the Statehood Steering Committee, for a period time, she was also the Chair of the Statehood Steering Committee. It is presently Madam Speaker who is the Chair of the Statehood Steering Committee. While minister McCarthy carries executive government responsibility for statehood on behalf of government, the Statehood Steering Committee still sits in that arrangement with our department administratively; and with the Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee in its formal arrangements.

Mr WOOD: I agree it sounds complex. Is it a good way to run it from a public perspective?

Madam Speaker, do you have a break-up of the cost of your morning teas, things like your social functions and parliamentary meals over the last financial year?

Madam SPEAKER: For all functions?

Mr WOOD: Yes, please. If you have a comparison with the year before, so we have some idea.

Madam SPEAKER: All functions including parliamentary meals, morning teas - all the functions I have had?

Mr WOOD: Yes, please. If it is too long, will you be able to table that?

Madam SPEAKER: Yes, it is \$41 586.38. Last year's expenditure was \$40 078. Apparently, the increase was due to the costs of catering for MLA dinners.

Mr WOOD: Have there been more funds allocated to the education program this year compared to last year? Can you give us some idea how many schools have visited Parliament House last year as compared to, say, this year?

Madam SPEAKER: I refer you to the Portfolio Budget Statement, page 17, Parliamentary Relations and Education. It has the budget allocations noted there. In relation to the number of schools, some 48 schools visited Parliament House to date. That could mean a number of classes.

Mr WOOD: How many public tours were carried out in 2007-08 and 2008-09? How many people used that service?

Madam SPEAKER: Guided public tours of Parliament House in 2007-08 were 100, and in 2008-09, 122. The number of participants for 2007-08 for the 100 tours was 2823, and for the 122 tours in 2008-09 was 2009. The statistics are up until 22 May.

Mr WOOD: They are all run by volunteers - is that correct - those public tours, or are people paid?

Madam SPEAKER: They are not paid.

Mr WOOD: Do the people who work on behalf of the Legislative Assembly do so voluntarily?

Madam SPEAKER: No, they are all paid.

Mr WOOD: How many workshops are being conducted in remote communities to provide awareness and understanding of parliamentary democracy in 2007-08 and 2008-09? How many have you have planned for the upcoming financial year?

Madam SPEAKER: In 2007-08, we went to Central Australia and conducted many outreach programs in relation to the Central Australian sittings. There were extensive outreach programs during that time, from Tennant Creek and around Central Australia. In the following year, there was less work, but there were outreach programs to the Tiwi Islands, the Katherine region, and, I believe, to East Arnhem Land, as well. In relation to this coming year, we will be having an extensive outreach program around the Central Australian sittings once again. I am also expecting to do some outreach work into East Arnhem Land. I am also thinking of doing some outreach into areas such as yours, member for Nelson, which will be a new part of the program.

Mr WOOD: Are there any plans to have the parliamentary sittings broadcast, other than the current Question Time?

Madam SPEAKER: Member for Nelson, as you would be aware, and as I mentioned in my opening statement, we are working on replacing all the cameras and improving the sound system. I am sure you would be aware the sound system in the Chamber in Parliament House is not very good. Once cameras are replaced, we will look at a process whereby the entire sittings will be available on the Internet and available to media, as well.

Mr WOOD: Do you see a time when there could be a radio frequency available for people who cannot use the Internet but would like to listen to parliamentary debate, for whatever sad reason?

Madam SPEAKER: Mr Chairman, we are not considering that. It will be a question of funding. I imagine it would be quite expensive to have a Northern Territory Legislative Assembly radio station, but the entire proceedings will be available on the Internet.

Mr WOOD: There is a new channel on Austar called A-PAC, which broadcasts live parliament in the national capital. It is also, I believe, going to broadcast Queensland, Victoria and New South Wales parliaments.

Mr Elferink: And the House of Commons, Gerry.

Mr WOOD: And the House of Commons? I do not have that one. Is there an opportunity, considering we do not sit an enormous number of times, that our parliament could be broadcast, especially with the upgrade of the television cameras?

Madam SPEAKER: Mr Wood, it is something that the Clerk has commented to me about, and it is something we can look at when we have it in place. Mr Chairman, I have some further ...

Mr CHAIRMAN: You have an answer to a question on notice? Madam Speaker, when answering, would you mind also listing the question number? It helps Hansard.

Madam SPEAKER: That is if we know what it is. It is one of the earlier ones from the member for Port Darwin, regarding outstanding credit card transactions.

Answer to Question on Notice 1.3

Mr CHAIRMAN: For *Hansard* that was 1.3.

Madam SPEAKER: Currently, there are 11 transactions outstanding and the value is the \$2326.61,

as at 31 May.

Mr ELFERINK: Why are they outstanding? Are still being processed or are they outstanding credit card transactions not acquitted within the appropriate time?

Madam SPEAKER: It is a normal process and they will be paid.

Mr ELFERINK: Repeating my question: are they are still in the throes of being processed or have some not been processed or acquitted within the appropriate time?

Madam SPEAKER: No, they are simply being processed.

Mr ELFERINK: That is not the question I am asking. Are there any transactions that have not been acquitted within the appropriate time?

Madam SPEAKER: I believe they are all within the time frame.

Mr ELFERINK: You believe? Okay.

Mr WOOD: Just in reference to the cabling project just completed, what was its budget?

Madam SPEAKER: That is Output 1.3.

Mr WOOD: Oh, sorry. The Speaker's Corner Café: how long is the contract?

Madam SPEAKER: That is in Output 1.3 as well, Building Services. Sorry, it is Assembly Services. How long? Sorry, are you asking how long the contract is?

Mr WOOD: I am asking how long the contract is, and how does that contract work?

Madam SPEAKER: It is five years plus five years, and it has had one year so far.

Mr WOOD: Just on the Leaders of Opposition portraits. I am not sure why we do them. They are not shown to the public; they are not accessible. How expensive are those portraits, and why do we - without deriding any of the Leaders of the Opposition - have portraits of the Leaders of the Opposition? Leaders of the Opposition can change very quickly. That means many portraits. Also, the previous Chief Minister was actually a Leader of the Opposition, so should she have two portraits - one for each role?

Madam SPEAKER: Mr Chairman, it is a convention established in this parliament by previous governments and Speakers. We are merely following in those footsteps.

Mr WOOD: The only people who see them are people visiting the building. They are not as open to the public as the portraits on this level. Why do we have them?

Madam SPEAKER: If you would like to see Opposition Leaders' portraits elsewhere in the building, you can write to me and we can see if there is another place.

Mr WOOD: What is the logic in having them, since they are out of the way of the public? What is their value? We could have photographs somewhere.

Madam SPEAKER: I will just pass you to the Clerk who has more of the history of how much they cost and what they are.

Mr McNEILL: Over the years, there has been significant variation in the cost of the portraits. Some are reproductions of photographs, which are probably completed and framed for less than \$1000. Some of the commissioned works for the Leaders of the Opposition series would have been in the order of \$5000.

The history of why and where is very much bound up in the programming put in place to produce the series for the opening of the building. I suspect, at the time, there was an assumption Leaders of the Opposition would always be members of the Australian Labor Party. Hence, they were all placed adjacent to the opposition. History has proved us wrong, once more.

Mr WOOD: What happens when we run out of space? We have nearly filled up both sides on this level. Where will extra portraits go?

Mr McNEILL: In the past, we have addressed that issue, too. We have run out of space to appropriately accommodate Administrators, from Jock Nelson through to the current day. We solved that problem by packing up the Administrators and sending them down to Government House, which was much appreciated. It is an issue which is the proper province of some consideration by the House Committee and Madam Speaker's advisors on that, since it is an recurrent issue.

Mr CHAIRMAN: Those are all the questions for Output 1.1.

Output 1.2 – Members and Client Services

Mr CHAIRMAN: Are there any questions on Output 1.2, Members and Client Services?

Mr ELFERINK: When I moved into my electorate office in Mitchell Street there was a partition in the office which separated the member's personal office into two offices. There was metal bar across the top and sliding doors and all those sorts of things. Do you know when that work was done to change that office, and its cost?

Madam SPEAKER: I understand what you are referring to was done during the time of the former member for Port Darwin. We do not have any costings of that here. I am happy to take that on notice.

Mr ELFERINK: Did you approve that work, Madam Speaker?

Madam SPEAKER: I am happy to take that on notice. I do not actually know. I cannot visualise what you are talking about, member for Port Darwin.

Question on Notice No 1.5

Mr CHAIRMAN: Member for Port Darwin, for the purposes of *Hansard*, would you please restate your question?

Mr ELFERINK: The question is in relation to the partition in the member's office itself. Who paid for the changes; was it approved by Madam Speaker herself; what was the cost of that work, including cabling for the computers; and was there any extra furniture allocation as a result of that?

Mr CHAIRMAN: Madam Speaker, are you prepared to take that question on notice?

Madam SPEAKER: Yes.

Mr CHAIRMAN: For the purposes of *Hansard*, I allocate that question No 1.5.

Mr ELFERINK: Madam Speaker, I presume that, looking at your last response, you have drawn a bit of a blank on this. You have no recollection of that work being done?

Madam SPEAKER: No, it is not the process. The process is that members work through Legislative Assembly staff about issues that they have in relation to their electorate offices. It is checked with my department before it comes to me. It is a question of whether the funding is available as to whether it goes through. Obviously, it has to be something suitable for an electorate office.

Mr ELFERINK: But the approval eventually lands up on your desk, I presume, for any minor new works in an electorate office? Or does that ...

Madam SPEAKER: Not on an individual basis, it would be as a block.

Mr ELFERINK: Okay, so you do not have a great deal of checking and balancing of what goes on inside the offices themselves? Is it all done within your staff without reference to you?

Madam SPEAKER: I will hand this over to Ms Vicki Long, who handles this whole process.

Ms LONG: Vicki Long, Director, Parliamentary Services. The process for minor new works in electorate offices is for us to contact all members in November each year to ask what minor new works they might require in their office. We then compile a list, which includes indicative costing for the works. That then goes to Madam Speaker for approval.

Mr ELFERINK: It is just a list?

Ms LONG: It is an itemised list with individual estimated costings at that point. We then get the formal costings done for each of those works. As part of that process, we then go back to the member and say: 'This is the cost of this particular work, do you still wish to proceed?' If the member does, that request then goes to the Speaker.

Mr ELFERINK: Madam Speaker, are your staff aware of the particular work I am referring to? If so, when was it done?

Madam SPEAKER: I will pass over to Ms Vicki Long.

Ms LONG: I am aware of that work. The actual date I would need to check on.

Mr ELFERINK: Roughly, can you guesstimate?

Ms LONG: It was for the previous member for Port Darwin some time in her term. However, I could not give an exact date. We have that on notice already.

Mr ELFERINK: Yes. Madam Speaker, my next question is then: for whom was this extra office built? Are you aware of that, Madam Speaker?

Madam SPEAKER: Member for Port Darwin, I have indicated to you I am not aware of the actual minor new works ...

Mr ELFERINK: Is any member of your staff aware for whom the office was built?

Madam SPEAKER: ... and that is the way it is presented to me. We are not absolutely certain of the reason, but it may be that it was for privacy reasons in relation to the where the office is in relation to people in the outer part of the office. However, I do not have any further information on that.

Mr ELFERINK: Are you aware of a gentleman by the name of Kent Rowe at all, Madam Speaker? Has he ever been a member of your staff?

Madam SPEAKER: Yes, as you would be aware, he was a member of my staff.

Mr ELFERINK: Did he ever occupy that office space that you are aware of?

Madam SPEAKER: I have no idea.

Mr ELFERINK: I am a little surprised at the issue of privacy. You have an office within an office. The justification for the creation of an extra office with a desk, a bar fridge, a computer cable – if memory serves me correctly – is more than just privacy. It is an office by its very nature. Were you aware of the fact that this private alcove was doubling up as an office?

Madam SPEAKER: Member for Port Darwin, I have already indicated that I do not actually know anything about the alterations whatsoever. I have not seen them. I do not know anything about it. My department organises matters related to those things. I am not aware of it and have not seen it.

Mr ELFERINK: Will your department table all associated paperwork including the rationale – the reasons given - for the creation of this extra office in the former member for Port Darwin's office?

Madam SPEAKER: I do not think there is very much paperwork on this, but I am also being advised that it was a partition and not the creation of an extra office.

Mr ELFERINK: Well, it looked like an office, it smelt like an office, it has desks. Whilst the partition was created it also had, when I got there, a computer screen in it - not an actual computer but a computer screen – so it looked all the world like an office. There is a strong suggestion that it was an office because some paperwork was also left stuck up on walls that indicated it was used for political purposes.

Whilst I appreciate a member of the ALP will use their office for political purposes from time to time - that is what local members do - I am curious to know why this extra office existed. Who was paying for the extra staff member who was in that office either full-time or part-time? Who was that staff member and by what justification was the space created?

Madam SPEAKER: Member for Port Darwin, I do not know anything about this topic.

Mr ELFERINK: Can you then table the paperwork leading up to the ...

Madam SPEAKER: I can find out about the details to deal with the partitioning of the office, which is all the information I would have.

Mr ELFERINK: Are you able to table the paperwork the former member for Port Darwin would have had to fill out justifying the expenditure for the minor new work?

Madam SPEAKER: If such an item exists, we will table that.

Mr ELFERINK: Thank you, Madam Speaker. No more questions.

Madam SPEAKER: Is that being taken on notice, that ...

Mr CHAIRMAN: Is that included in the previous question on notice, or you need a new question on notice?

Madam SPEAKER: We will probably use the same one.

Mr ELFERINK: As long as I can guarantee that the promise to table whatever paperwork is discovered, is tabled.

Mr CHAIRMAN: Madam Speaker, would you consider that the paperwork the member for Port Darwin is asking for would be incorporated into the original question on notice or do we need ...

Madam SPEAKER: Yes, that is fine.

Mr ELFERINK: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Mr CHAIRMAN: Does the opposition have any further questions on Output 1.2?

Mr ELFERINK: No.

Mr CHAIRMAN: Member for Nelson, do you have questions on Output 1.2?

Mr WOOD: Madam Speaker, how long did it take to establish the Fong Lim electorate office; why did it take that long; and how much did it cost?

Madam SPEAKER: We will start with how much it cost. The final cost was around \$304 000, and it did take, regrettably, a much longer time than was desirable, as the Member for Fong Lim, I am sure, would attest to. The process was delayed for a number of reasons. As an agency, we do not project manage this, so the major parts of delivering this office to the member were outsourced to Department of Business and Employment and the Department of Planning and Infrastructure. We had a number of issues in relation to the time it took, which was from, basically, 18 August to 24 April.

The first problem was that the landlord lived in China, which meant the first part of the negotiations of the contracts and the lease arrangements was much slower than you would have expected. There were a number of other issues as well relating to the negotiation of the lease.

The tender process went according to the schedule but, then, there were other issues which arose during that period, regarding whether the site could be used for the proposed purpose, because it was not a retail space. We had to go through the Development Consent Authority which, when it was all done, basically, took us to Christmas time. Then there were issues to do with having contractors providing the services during that time. There were also issues to do with certification.

Essentially, it was a very long process and, I believe, caused great inconvenience to the member for Fong Lim. The Clerk has written to the two CEOs involved looking at how we can improve this process in the future.

One of the issues is that it is quite a different situation establishing an electorate office to other sorts of things, like another agency, where they are trying to build something. It is quite a different matter. We are looking at whether we could have a panel tender or something like that through the Department of Business and Employment, and looking at improved services generally for this.

Mr WOOD: I am surprised you had to go through the DCA because the previous member for Drysdale had an office in that same shopping centre – I presume it is Winnellie Shopping Centre ...

Madam SPEAKER: That is correct.

Mr WOOD: Are you saying that, because it was an office, it was outside the guidelines of the NT

Planning Scheme and was, therefore, required to go to Planning?

Madam SPEAKER: I believe so, but that was one of the faster parts, that only took a few days, so that did not really hold it up very much.

Mr WOOD: Do we have any idea how much the Department of Business and the DPI took out of that \$304 000?

Madam SPEAKER: It was a set amount, which is 18.5%.

Mr WOOD: Each department took 18.5%?

Madam SPEAKER: Yes, 18.5% of the whole amount.

Mr WOOD: So 18.5% was shared between those two departments?

Madam SPEAKER: Whichever part was charged by them, 18.5% came off that.

Mr WOOD: What was the overall length of time from application to when the member for Fong Lim ...

Madam SPEAKER: From 18 August to 24 April.

Mr WOOD: Those are all the questions I have on that section, thank you.

Mr CHAIRMAN: Output 1.2 is dispensed with. That concludes consideration of Output 1.2.

Output 1.3 - Building Management Services

Mr CHAIRMAN: The committee will now consider Output 1.3, Building Management Services. Does the opposition have any questions?

Mr ELFERINK: I want to ask some questions about the tender in relation to the video management system. Can you describe to me what the tender process was? Did you tender for a consultant who then got the job done? Or did you tender for specific firms to quote for the delivery of the system?

Madam SPEAKER: We do not call for tenders ourselves; that is done for us by DPI.

Mr ELFERINK: It was done through DPI?

Madam SPEAKER: That is correct, it is the same for the electorate office. We actually are the client. I will ask Mr Horton who is responsible for this area and to supply more details.

Mr HORTON: When it was recognised the existing cameras were rapidly deteriorating, we submitted a statement of requirement to have them upgraded. That statement of requirement was advised to DPI which, through a local company called TCM - I believe it stands for Townes Chappell Mudgway - were engaged to do the consultancy work. They subcontracted to another company which provided the specification requirements to upgrade the camera system in the Chamber.

Mr ELFERINK: So from you to DPI, out to tender, TCM fix up the tender, then subcontracted out to the marketplace?

Mr HORTON: That was for the consultancy to look at the system and what was required to upgrade it.

Mr ELFERINK: Through you, Madam Speaker, can you tell me if DPI had any input into the company

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that secured the tender? Did they get to look at the tenders, or did consultant come in and say: 'This is the one'?

Mr HORTON: A report of what was required was provided. DPI then went through the tendering process for the installation, or for the purchase of the equipment and installation. That went out to tender. A local company called Audio Technology won the contract and they subcontracted to other companies.

Mr ELFERINK: Through you, Madam Speaker, they are essentially project managing this whole project on behalf of the Legislative Assembly, and DPI is managing the contract?

Madam SPEAKER: That is correct, and that is the way we do all our projects.

Mr ELFERINK: That is fine; I just wanted to make sure the ducks lined up in that fashion before I ask any more questions, otherwise I would be wrong and I would not want that to occur.

Madam Speaker, was there any input from you or your department into the selection of the cameras or the system which was successfully chosen, or did the consultant basically come back to government and say: 'This is the one you have to run with'?

Madam SPEAKER: There was no input from me in relation to cameras. I know nothing about cameras. I will ask the Deputy Clerk. We asked for what we wanted or would have given an indication of what we wanted the cameras for and, therefore, in that process, they would have decided on what kinds of cameras were suitable.

Mr ELFERINK: I should clarify the question. Let us say there was a range of options available - the basic digital camera and then the digital camera with extra widgets - and you had a type of sliding scale of options. Were you, at any stage, presented with a sliding scale of options, or were you simply presented with 'This is what you are going with'? When I say you, Madam Speaker, I mean collectively.

Madam SPEAKER: I definitely did not receive any lists like that. Mr Deputy Clerk.

Mr HORTON: Between TCM and, ultimately, Audio Technology, there were a couple of options, I believe, for a particular style of camera. That negotiation was not influenced by us; it was a matter between Audio Technology and who they were advised to go to, to purchase equipment from - which, I believe, was a company called Gencom, which I understand is a New Zealand company. Gencom, in the line of provision of the equipment, then go to Sony, who build the purpose-built cameras for this particular type of usage. So it is a contract/subcontract relationship.

Mr ELFERINK: Through you, Madam Speaker, the process is this: you have requirements; you put those requirements out into the tender - we want the system to do a, b, c, d and e. You go into the marketplace, or DPI gets the consultant, who goes into the marketplace, then there is a cascading down to your tenderers, who then come up with a product that permits you to do a, b, c, d and e. The consultant is the person who makes all these decisions. When you were at the tender process for the consultant - which, ultimately, become TCM - you tendered broadly, I presume, for whoever to come forward and, then, TCM offered government the best package? Is that correct?

Mr HORTON: TCM were responding to DPI; we were not involved at that point.

Madam SPEAKER: DPI does that, not us. We do not have responsibility for the tender at all; we are merely the client.

Mr TOLLNER: Through you, Madam Speaker, do you know to whom the company TCM sublet the contract to?

Madam SPEAKER: I will pass that to Mr Horton.

Mr HORTON: The company that TCM contracted to was a company known as ICE Design Australia, which is a company that has been dealing with a number of parliaments in setting up sound and vision systems.

Mr TOLLNER: Do you know the name of the consultant who was doing the work up here for TCM, or ICE?

Mr HORTON: ICE is a consortium of four or five people who work in acoustics analysis. The person who was the head of that was Mr Rod Louey-Gung.

Mr CHAIRMAN: Are there any other questions in Output 1.3?

Mr WOOD: I will ask some basic questions, and get down to the horticultural area. How often do the lawns around the building get mowed, especially during the Dry Season? I see a mower go around at least twice a week and I wonder why. Do you have any idea what the contract requires?

Madam SPEAKER: I will pass that to Mr Horton.

Mr HORTON: I am advised they are mown weekly.

Mr WOOD: Have you ever made a judgment as to whether that is necessary?

Madam SPEAKER: That is a matter of opinion, member for Nelson.

Mr WOOD: We always seem to have problems with lifts. Are these problems ongoing, or have we reached a solution to the problem?

Madam SPEAKER: Apparently DPI as our project manager, as already mentioned, is working closely with the system installer, supplier, and product manufacturer to diagnose and rectify the faults in the lifts. It is hoped the remaining software and server upgrades occurring over the next few weeks will rectify these problems. If that is not the case, the product causing the issues will be removed and an alternate lift control product installed at the contractor's expense.

Mr WOOD: We were talking about electricity, or carbon footprint, before. Can you give an idea of how much electricity has been used in this building over the last five years? Have we been able to reduce the amount of electricity? At the same time, can you give us a comparison of the cost of that electricity? Its price is going up so, even though you are bringing electricity consumption down, have we actually achieved anything?

Madam SPEAKER: I have figures from 2001-02 right through to 2008-09 indicating the kilowatts per year. In 2001-02 it was 3 933 699 kW per year, and in 2008-09 it is 3 568 814 kW. It has decreased over that time. It has slightly increased, as I indicated in an earlier question, in this last year, at least in part, because of the re-cabling project and the upgrading of the security system which required much more energy to be used in parts of the building which were usually shut down overnight.

Mr WOOD: Is it possible for me to have that?

Madam SPEAKER: I am happy to table that.

Mr CHAIRMAN: That is where we need to leave it. It is now 10.30 am.

On behalf of the committee, I thank Madam Speaker for coming along, and her officers. Thank you very much. It is much appreciated. There will be a quick 10-minute break.

Madam SPEAKER: I thank the staff of my department for their efforts today. It is quite a business preparing all these materials, and I am very grateful.

Committee suspended

Mr CHAIRMAN: I welcome the Treasurer and her officers. Would you introduce the officials accompanying you and if you have any opening remarks to make, would you care to make them please?

Ms LAWRIE: Thank you, Mr Chair. I make a brief opening statement in relation to my responsibilities as Treasurer. This covers questions relating to Treasury, the Central Holding Authority and the Northern Territory Treasury Corporation. I have with me the Under Treasurer of the Northern Territory, Ms Jennifer Prince, and other senior Treasury staff. Witnesses include Mr Tony Stubbin, the Deputy Under Treasurer; Assistant Under Treasurer, Ms Jody Kirkman; Assistant Under Treasurer, Mr Craig Graham; and Mr Craig Vukman, Executive Director, Revenue and Commissioner of Territory Revenue. I also have with me Mr John Montague, from the Treasury Corporation, who will join us later. As we progress, I will introduce other Treasury witnesses who may be required for individual output areas.

As Treasurer, I will address a number of issues from a whole-of-government perspective, which includes financial and accounting policy issues applying to the 2009-10 Budget; requirements of the *Fiscal Integrity and Transparency Act* including financial statements for the general government and non-financial public sectors in the fiscal strategy; whole-of-government financial issues including relevant parameters, debt and liabilities, revenue including taxes, royalties and GST; revenue measures in the 2009-10 budget and Community Service Obligations and dividends; the effect of the global financial crisis and the Territory's response; and the effect of the new intergovernmental agreement on federal financial relations on the Territory's budget. I will also address any issues in relation to the overall cash program position on the infrastructure budget.

Details on individual projects are to be addressed by ministers responsible for those portfolios. I will deal with questions in relation to possible financing and related arrangements for the new prison. As shareholding minister for Power and Water, I will address issues in the budget that affect Power and Water, including Community Service Obligation payments, dividends and tax equivalent payments, and regulated customer revenues. Operational or other policy questions relating to Power and Water should be directed to the Power and Water representatives who will appear before the Government Owned Corporation Scrutiny Committee.

Mr Chairman, I am happy to answer any question from the committee relating to the responsibility for the Appropriation Bills and budget papers, and for the Northern Territory Treasury, the Central Holding Authority, and the Northern Territory Treasury Corporation.

Mr CHAIRMAN: Before we go to questions on the statement, I introduce the members on the committee with me at the moment. The member for Fong Lim, member for Port Darwin, me, as member for Fannie Bay, member for Nhulunbuy, member for Barkly and the member for Nelson.

A quick matter of housekeeping. When officials are taking notice of a question on notice, could you please take note of the question number and, if the minister has an opportunity to answer that later in estimates, could please quote that number, so that Hansard can easily find it.

Mr WOOD: Can I ask my two questions about where certain ...

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Mr CHAIRMAN: You may. I will throw it to the opposition first, if you have any questions regarding the statement.

Mr ELFERINK: I will, but if you want to deal with that first. If that suits you, Mr Chairman, without breaching any guidelines.

Mr CHAIRMAN: That is all right. I am happy to set precedents.

Mr WOOD: Thank you, Mr Chairman. I want to know when should I ask questions on the waterfront, which was in last year's budget, after land administration. It is not in this year's budget. Where do I ask questions on land corporation, not the development corporation?

Ms LAWRIE: Sure. In terms of the waterfront, it is DCM, in terms of the land corporation it is DPI.

Mr WOOD: Where in the output groups will I find that?

Ms LAWRIE: I cannot speak to the DCM Output Groups. As we progress through DPI, I can point out where that would be appropriate.

Mr CHAIRMAN: Before passing to the opposition, I want to acknowledge the presence in the public gallery of the former member for Greateorex. It is good to have Dr Lim here.

Does the opposition have any questions to the opening statement?

Mr ELFERINK: Yes, I do. I am going to take a slightly different approach in relation to how we deal with this, Mr Chairman. I want to start asking some general questions and then move to specifics, if that suits you, Treasurer?

In relation to economic management you often talk about your economic management credentials. Can you describe to me what you mean when you say 'economic management'?

Ms LAWRIE: Yes, it is important to note when Labor came to government in 2001, we inherited significant debt levels. We also inherited budget in significant deficit. So, economic management credentials means how Labor in government has managed to drive down levels of debt we inherited whilst, at the same time, delivering six surplus budgets in consecutive years. Obviously, this year 2009-10 is forecasting deficit. We are also forecasting a small deficit in the 2008-09 budget.

The cause of those deficits is very clear. We have a global financial crisis which is having an enormous effect on the nation's economy in reduction in GST revenues and, therefore, significant reductions in the share of the revenues going out to the jurisdictions. For example, in 2009-10 we are predicting approximately a \$211m reduction in GST.

Mr ELFERINK: What is the difference between what you have just described and fiscal management?

Ms LAWRIE: Fiscal management is about ensuring you are managing cash operations well. It is different to managing the broader economic situation; the broader economic situation brings into play whether or not governments are going after major projects - for example, to underpin economic health. Clearly, we are doing that in the INPEX project but, also, big projects which have had a good effect on our economy have been mining projects and LNG. We have Blacktip on the go and the Bonaparte gas pipeline has just been completed.

Mr ELFERINK: So, in economic management, say, in attracting people, that is not the answer you gave before. What you gave was a fiscal management answer to my original question, rather than an economic management answer. You did not actually mention major projects in your first answer.

Ms LAWRIE: I have clearly talked about major projects.

Mr ELFERINK: Yes, after I tried to get you to separate, in your mind's eye, the difference between fiscal management and economic management. When I first spoke to you about economic management, you gave me a fiscal management answer.

Ms LAWRIE: Being strong economic managers means you have to manage fiscal as well.

Mr ELFERINK: Yes, but they are quite different things, are they not?

Ms LAWRIE: They are absolutely interrelated because you could be ...

Mr ELFERINK: They are related, but they are different things, are they not?

Ms LAWRIE: You could be managing economic management in seeking major projects and putting investment into mining exploration particularly, which is a whole series of initiatives we have had in successive budgets. However, that is no good if you do not have a tight rein on your fiscals.

Mr ELFERINK: Tight reign on your fiscals; we will come back to that shortly. So, when you talk about being an economic manager, of course, you are describing a process by which government chooses to go and pursue major projects - like the railway, for instance?

Ms LAWRIE: I am waiting for the question.

Mr ELFERINK: Like the railway, for instance - question mark.

Ms LAWRIE: Absolutely. The railway has been a good major project.

Mr ELFERINK: Who delivered the railway?

Ms LAWRIE: It had a lot of people knocking it at the time because it did not quite prove up on freight. What I can say is the clear direction of this government is to pursue bulk mineral trade up and down the rail line, which has proven its worth.

Mr ELFERINK: So, the railway was a worthwhile project. Perhaps the arrival of gas here in Darwin through ConocoPhillips, and other major projects, are worthwhile projects. So, a government which pursues major projects of that nature would be, in your estimation, a good economic manager?

Ms LAWRIE: Well, no, because if you are referring to the CLP's pursuit of those major projects, what you are ignoring at the same time is the relationship with fiscal responsibility. At the same time, the CLP was driving Territory debt levels through the roof and also plunging the Territory into deficit.

Mr ELFERINK: We will get to that shortly. So, you are saying that economic management now is about fiscal management, because you are talking about debt levels again?

Ms LAWRIE: I am saying you cannot do one without the other.

Mr ELFERINK: Oh, you can, though. That is the point: economic management is something that federal governments tend to do. For example, I will put this in the form of a question. What have you changed? What structural part of the Northern Territory economy have you changed to become better economic managers?

Ms LAWRIE: We have put a greater emphasis on mining exploration. When Labor came to

government, the requests for mining exploration were sitting on the former minister's desk. They had not processed them; there were hundreds at the time sitting on the former CLP minister's desk because he had an ideological issue with Indigenous land ownership. We turned that around. We started rapidly processing those exploration licence applications. We are seeing the fruits of that labour coming through. We also put very targeted commitments in the budget to facilitate mining exploration in the Northern Territory. We also worked very closely in finalising, in getting closure, to delivering ConocoPhillips LNG at Wickham Point.

Mr ELFERINK: You misunderstand my question. My question was: what structural changes did you make to the Northern Territory economy, not did you approve some mining exploration leases? What structural changes did you make to the economy? Like, did you nationalise the banks, start printing money, something like that?

Ms LAWRIE: The other thing we did is make sure that we started to spread the base. We put a fair amount of focus on tourism. You can turn your mind back to the time, a particularly difficult one for tourism, because we had the Ansett collapse. We started to look at spreading the economic base. A critical aspect of what we did was fund capital works. We started the government's increased spend on capital works. The construction sector is a particularly important part of the Territory's economy in wealth generation.

Mr ELFERINK: I take it from that answer, you did not structurally change the legislative environment in which the Northern Territory economy functions? You did a bit here, and you made sure some mining applications got passed, but you did not introduce any structural changes to our economy through legislative instruments, by saying you cannot do this, you can do that. I am not talking about tweaking figures and taxation rates, I am talking about structurally changing the Northern Territory economy?

Ms LAWRIE: Well, there has been, from time to time, the requirement to bring legislation before the House. We have needed to have legislation before the House on a couple of the major projects as part of our commitment to those projects. A recent one has been in and around certainty for INPEX. So, from time to time, yes, we do make legislative changes. However, more importantly, it goes to what the government is doing in the priorities of its spending in its budgets; to support strong economic drivers, to support the resources sector, to support the construction sector – bearing in mind, construction was absolutely on its knees when Labor came to government in 2001.

Year on year, we have increased government's own spend in capital works; that is, to support a pipeline of work coming through to support the jobs that had, at that point, been fleeing the Territory because there was a lack of work around. You have to address your economic drivers. Resources is the largest one. That being said, you also have to spread your base as much as you can, which is why we have focused on construction and tourism.

Mr ELFERINK: Okay, so you inherited, basically, a system of economic management which you continued. The former government engaged in major projects, those sorts of things, encouraging mining, supporting tourism, and you continued to do that. Good – no problems with that. What was the international economic environment like in 2000-01?

Ms LAWRIE: We could naval gaze back to 2001-02 all you want, but we are here to deal with 2009-10. What we can say ...

Mr ELFERINK: Can I tell you what the international economic situation was like?

Ms LAWRIE: ... is that the national climate was pretty strong at the time.

Mr ELFERINK: No, actually it was not, and that is ...

Ms LAWRIE: We can agree to disagree.

Mr ELFERINK: I reckon you should go back and read a bit of history, because there are some interesting parallels between 2001 and the current environment. The issue I have is how you keep banging on about being an economic manager but, in actual fact, you did not actually change any of the structures you adopted ...

Ms LAWRIE: Not true.

Mr ELFERINK: ... from the former government.

Ms LAWRIE: Not true.

Mr ELFERINK: You have tweaked around ...

Ms LAWRIE: I have given you clear examples.

Mr ELFERINK: ... and you have maybe changed a few rates or something else like that, but the reason you have done that ...

Ms LAWRIE: I have given you clear examples.

Mr ELFERINK: ... is because you had no choice. You cannot change the economic structure of the Northern Territory. You can encourage business - and I congratulate you for doing that. You can do all sorts of things to encourage tourism but, because of the small size of our economy for a start, particularly on the national scale, and including the small size of our budget, the economic inheritance you were given was pretty much sewn up for you, was it not?

Ms LAWRIE: Obviously, we differ on that. There is absolutely a responsibility by the Territory government of the day to use every aspect it has, every tool it has in its toolkit, to drive economic growth for the Territory, and not be beholden to what is occurring elsewhere. For example, one of the things we have most effectively done was reduce the taxation burden business had at the time. We have reduced payroll tax and stamp duty to encourage a very competitive business environment in the Territory.

We have also, as I said, gone after major projects, which is important, but we have also spread the economic phase across tourism and construction.

We have also been smarter in what we have targeted. For example, the previous CLP government, in and around the rail line, to use it as an example, and its relationship to the port, was very much focused on freight. The Labor government changed that focus to bulk minerals which has proven its worth.

Mr ELFERINK: Huge economy, and that is your answer: 'We changed from freight to bulk minerals'?

Ms LAWRIE: It was not the only answer I just gave you ...

Mr ELFERINK: Well, you also referred to lowering tax rates. Was that not a promise made in IGA 1, the first intergovernmental agreement?

Ms LAWRIE: No, the intergovernmental agreement went to abolishing certain taxes, and ...

Mr ELFERINK: Yes, you just mentioned a couple.

Ms LAWRIE: ... the payroll tax cuts were our initiative.

Mr ELFERINK: No, they were already projected in earlier budget papers, long before you came along. Those cuts were projected, from my memory, as early as 2000 ...

Ms LAWRIE: Well, I cannot talk to what ...

Mr ELFERINK: A graduated scale to payroll tax reduction.

Mr CHAIRMAN: The minister has the call.

Ms LAWRIE: I cannot talk to what you think the CLP projected, but my advice is that those cuts were not at all accounted for in the forward estimates. What occurred is Labor articulated payroll tax cuts and delivered them.

Mr ELFERINK: Yes, so did the former government. All you have done is adopted former policies. By the time that you ...

Ms LAWRIE: No, actually, we had our own policies.

Mr ELFERINK: By the time you came to government, you were provided with a situation where you had no choice. The intergovernmental agreement had already been signed - had it not? - for the new tax system. Surely, you know this?

Ms LAWRIE: Yes, it had been signed.

Mr ELFERINK: At that time, prior to the intergovernmental agreement being signed - because this is the one that changed the Australian taxation system; that is, the GST - did you support the GST or did you think the GST was a big smelly poo-poo thing?

Ms LAWRIE: I was not a member of parliament at the time.

Mr ELFERINK: Did you support the GST or not?

Ms LAWRIE: I was not a member of parliament at the time.

Mr ELFERINK: Well, it is just a straightforward question. Do you think it was a good idea or not?

Mr CHAIRMAN: It is also a question relating to her opinion.

Ms LAWRIE: There was a lot of debate occurring around the GST at the time. What I know is that the Commonwealth grants process was a robust process prior to the GST. The Territory was significantly reliant on the Commonwealth grants process, just as we are reliant on the GST now. Why? We are a very small jurisdiction, we have a very small population - some 200 000-plus people - so, of course, we are going to be reliant on Commonwealth revenue regardless of what system the Commonwealth adopts.

Mr ELFERINK: Your party's resistance to the GST, at the time, was not supported by you?

Ms LAWRIE: It is an absurd question. As I have said, I was not a ...

Mr ELFERINK: It is not an absurd question. Did you support the GST or not?

Ms LAWRIE: ... member of parliament at the time.

Mr ELFERINK: Did you support the GST at the time or not? Is it a straightforward question.

Ms LAWRIE: It is absolutely immaterial to what we have before us today.

Mr ELFERINK: But we were talking – you are the one who started introducing the time of 2001. I am just testing you as to your knowledge of what happened in 2001 and what you thought was a good idea and what was not a good idea.

Ms LAWRIE: Absolutely immaterial to what we have before us today, member for Port Darwin. Do you want to get on to the budget or not?

Mr ELFERINK: Well, this is about budget, because budgets do not happen in isolation, as you are fully aware, minister. They impact on each other as time goes by. What happens in one financial year has an effect on what happens in the next financial year.

Treasurer, if you want to introduce what happened in 2001 into the conversation, I am going to examine that because what happened in 2001. Your opinions of what happened in 2001 have a direct consequence on what follows on in the next few budgets, particularly now that you are Treasurer. I want to test those things. If you introduce these things, I will test them.

Ms LAWRIE: As I said, the importance of what has occurred under Labor, which has given the process that we have had before in the 2009-10 Budget and scrutiny of the 2008-09 Budget is this: the Territory government inherited significant debt from the CLP, and we also inherited a budget in deficit. The relevance to this budget is that we have driven down debt levels, which is why we can manage the deficits we are projecting in the forward estimates. We have driven down debt levels from the historically high levels we inherited under the CLP. We have produced six surplus budgets in a row. That is the relationship to the 2008-09 and 2009-10 budget.

Mr ELFERINK: Okay. I draw your attention to the Treasurer's Annual Financial Statement of 2001-02. To talk about driving down debt, I draw your attention to the overview, page iii. According to that document, nett debt plus employee liabilities is \$3102bn. If I then go to the current budget paper No 2, for the non-financial public corporations, nett debt plus employee liabilities, tracking out to 2012-13, is close on \$6bn, or nearly twice the amount I have just pulled out of your own Treasurer's Annual Financial Report for the 2001-02 financial year.

How can you sit here with a straight face and say we are reducing debt, when your nett debt plus employee liabilities has almost doubled over that period ...

Ms LAWRIE: If you look at the 2001-02 budget through to the 20012-13 budget, at nett debt as a percentage of total revenue, in 200 ...

Mr ELFERINK: ... and in employee liabilities?

Mr CHAIRMAN: Member for Port Darwin, the minister has the call.

Mr ELFERINK: She is changing the question, Mr Chairman. If she changes the question, she can bring up any answer she likes.

Mr CHAIRMAN: Member for Port Darwin, you have asked a question, and the minister is now answering it.

Mr ELFERINK: She is answering another question.

Mr CHAIRMAN: The minister has the call.

Ms LAWRIE: In terms of nett debt as a percentage of total revenue, if you look at 2001-02, nett debt as a percentage of total revenue was 61%. If you look at the projections out to 2012-13, nett debt as a percentage of total revenue is 33%, about half of the level we inherited in 2001-02.

Mr ELFERINK: Is that the total government sector balance sheet, or is that the non-financial public corporations ...

Mr CHAIRMAN: Minister, you have the call.

Ms LAWRIE: Have a look at the nett financial liabilities as a percentage of total revenue, which includes both the general government sector as well as the non-financial public sector. For example, you put Power and Water and all that on to your financial liabilities. In 2001-02, the nett financial liabilities as a percentage of total revenue was 132%. The nett financial liabilities, as a percentage of total revenue, projected out to 2012-13 is 129%. It is still less than what we inherited.

Mr ELFERINK: Really? You say 129%? I draw your attention to page 35, for the projection you just gave us. It does not say 129%, it says 130%. Which is it, 129% or 130%?

Ms LAWRIE: The advice I am provided is 129%.

Mr ELFERINK: At the outset today, you just described that the Territory situation was, to paraphrase you, 'not good' at the time of the transition of government. You said that debt had been driven up. How is it that it was irresponsible financial and fiscal management in 2001-02 to have a debt to income ratio of 131%, when your own budget papers say you are going to drive your debt to income ratio to 130%? Why is it irresponsible when someone else does it, and it is not irresponsible when you do it?

Ms LAWRIE: The nett financial liabilities as a percentage of total revenue reflects employee liabilities the government inherited from 1999.

Mr ELFERINK: Really? Can you track back for me the employee liabilities over the last eight years, in cash terms? Tell us what the figure was in 2001, 2002, 2003, 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007 and 2008.

Ms LAWRIE: I will refer to the Under Treasurer to explain why you cannot do it in cash terms.

Ms PRINCE: Jennifer Prince, Under Treasurer. Mr Elferink, just a clarification on your question: cash payments refer to superannuation benefits which are being paid. I presume what you are actually looking for is the estimated total liability in dollars.

Mr ELFERINK: Yes, in fact, I will take them both if you have them. Cash payments which are being made, I presume, are coming out of the employee line of the Central Holding Authority, when they are made?

Ms PRINCE: The superannuation benefits are paid out of the Central Holding Authority. There is also an accrual of liabilities in respect of benefits that are yet to be paid as a liability over the next 60 years or so.

Mr ELFERINK: Can I ask - through you, Treasurer - Under Treasurer, the liabilities - and we will talk about the liabilities now out into the future with the superannuation liabilities - have they been increasing steadily through actuarial assessments since 2001?

Ms PRINCE: The liabilities have been increasing, but those liabilities are in respect of schemes which had closed in 1985 as it relates to the closure of the CSS to new entrants, and 1999 for NTGPASS.

Mr ELFERINK: Treasurer, your Under Treasurer has just described to us that the liabilities have been increasing, in spite of the schemes being closed. You just told me that those liabilities are not increasing. Which one of you is correct?

Ms LAWRIE: No, I did not tell you the liabilities are not increasing; I clearly said that as a percentage to revenue we are not going to reach the heights which the CLP reached. One of the effects of these liabilities is the bond rate. At the time of publishing the budget, the bond rate was 4%. That was a rate we had to use in projecting out the liabilities. That bond rate is now over 5%. Under Treasurer? 5.5%. The material change that that brings to liabilities is, in rough terms, \$500m reduction in liabilities since the time of publishing the budget. That is how notional those liabilities are.

Mr ELFERINK: Ah, so they are just notional? But, surely, when you talked about the CLP's increasing debt, you were talking about the future liabilities as well?

Ms LAWRIE: That is just one component of it. One of the things you look at is how the CLP were putting much on debt. They did not even have cash to meet the capital works program in 2001. They were very poor managers of their budgets, driving up debt and increasing deficit.

Mr ELFERINK: Okay, so the CLP are poor managers for driving up debt. Can I draw your attention to the general government sector balance sheet on page 101 of Budget Paper No 2, your budget paper for the next financial year. Can you describe whether the nett debt, which is the nice orange set of numbers at the bottom of the page, are going north or south?

Ms LAWRIE: As I pointed out, there is a factor in the nett debt. Of course, we have been going over this ground of the nett debt. Under Treasurer, do you want to talk ...

Mr ELFERINK: Are they going up or down? You just told me it was bad fiscal management to drive debt up. Are they going up or down?

Ms LAWRIE: We pointed out - and this was in my budget speech - that as a result of the global financial crisis, as the result of the fact that there was a deliberate decision by the Labor government to continue spending - in fact, increase spending on infrastructure, particularly to support the local economy - so we were prepared to go into deficit. Therefore, there would be increased debt levels. We would, however, manage a step out reduction in that debt through the forward years.

Mr ELFERINK: The non-financial public sector balance sheet, page 107 of Budget Paper No 2, projects a nett debt situation - which is, for the current financial year \$1.5bn - blowing out or expanding to \$2.7bn by the year 2012-13. That is, by your statement, a response to the global financial crisis. You are saying that this is a way of engaging in countercyclical spending to support local businesses and those sorts of things because we are going into a recession. Do you agree with that?

Ms LAWRIE: Look, the Territory is not going into recession.

Mr ELFERINK: Oh, the Territory is not going into recession.

Ms LAWRIE: Let me be very clear about that; the Territory is not going into recession.

Mr ELFERINK: Then why are you borrowing to support the economy if we are not going into recession?

Ms LAWRIE: Because what has occurred in the global financial crisis is, for want of a better description, a credit squeeze. It is very difficult for private sector to get the credit they would normally have been able to get for their projects. Where you get private sector contraction in the marketplace, you need public sector increased spending so there are not wholesale job losses. Very clearly, this government made a decision to step up government spending during the 2009-10 period. We

recognised - and it started to occur in the second half of 2008-09 - the private sector contracting due to the difficulty of getting credit. We also recognised that, whilst we were stepping up to, if you like, counter balance the private sector contraction, we were doing so in a time when there was significant reductions in GST revenue. We have a declining revenue base coming into the Territory budget through the GST, but also in an environment where we are going to step up spending on infrastructure - \$1.3bn, for example, in infrastructure spending in 2009-10 budget. In this way, we are supporting jobs for Territorians.

If you ask Territorians whether they want a government to produce surplus budgets, not go into further debt, and watch wholesale job losses, or whether they want a government that supports jobs, industry, construction, and provide the legacy opportunities to improved roads, housing, and schools, I believe Territorians would say: 'Yes, we support the spend in the tough times and we recognise the plan to climb out of debt'.

Mr ELFERINK: So we have a growth economy in the Northern Territory, predicting – what? - 4.7% this year? Is that correct? Is that the number?

Ms LAWRIE: We revised it down to 4.1%.

Mr ELFERINK: Okay, we will take 4.1%. So we have a growth economy this year. Next year, it is looking a little leaner, pickings are getting down to below 2%, but we still have a growth economy. Now, you are telling me that in a growth economy you are expecting job losses. Can you explain to me how, in a growth economy, you are expecting job losses?

Ms LAWRIE: Very clearly, to sustain job growth, you need new work coming on. For job growth, you need new opportunities. The private sector is a very important player in that component. What we recognise - what all governments around Australia have recognised, not just the Territory government - is that private sector contraction is going to have an impact on jobs, particularly a lack of more jobs opportunities. To counter that, we are stepping up. We are going to be spending more on infrastructure to stimulate the construction sector. They are a very big job provider in the Territory. The beauty of that, also, is that it provides legacy infrastructure that the Territory needs. We are a developing jurisdiction. We inherited about 23% of a road network that was sealed. For regional economic development, you want to go out and seal more of your road networks.

Importantly, you have to provide for retaining your skills base. It has been a big issue over the years for the Territory in its boom and bust cycles. In the boom, you build up your skills base, and in the bust, the skills base leaves the Territory. What we are very focused on doing is ensuring that we retain the skills base here in the Territory.

Mr ELFERINK: Okay, well, that is a nice long answer which just avoided the question I asked. However, I want to get back to another issue. You said what you were doing was propping up business because they were having trouble sourcing credit. Is that correct?

Ms LAWRIE: We are propping up jobs. Okay? So what happens is ...

Mr ELFERINK: Is that correct or not? Did you say it or not?

Ms LAWRIE: I will give you an example. If the government has an infrastructure spend of \$1.3bn - this example I will give you is pretty clear to follow - what the government does is put tenders out, private business pick up those job tenders and are able to sustain their workforce and build the product. Whether the product is road, houses, schools, or refurbishments to schools, government does not employ those staff in-house. For example, in Construction Division, they are not out there doing the work. Construction Division, with the budgets we provide through this 2009-10 Budget, put that work out to the private sector.

Mr ELFERINK: Okay. Getting back to the question I just asked. Is the only reason you are borrowing,

the reason you just stated; that business cannot obtain credit? Is that the big blockage to growth in the Territory?

Ms LAWRIE: Clearly, what I have said is - and I will keep on saying it – as a result of the global financial crisis, there is private sector contraction. That is recognised and accepted. We have seen examples of that in the Territory. During that period, to sustain jobs that would normally be across that construction sector, government steps up its spending, so there is a \$1.3bn infrastructure record spend this year. We step up our spending whilst the private projects are not flourishing. These sorts of projects would be like new shopping centre developments. This would be a major private construction project, employing hundreds of people. Where you see tightening of the financial credit markets as a result of the global financial crisis causing economic downturn around the world and, indeed, our nation, government steps up with their own infrastructure spending of \$1.3bn to support money going into the private construction sector to build government infrastructure. This provides a legacy result for Territorians - better road, better schools, and also housing which is ...

Mr Elferink: And bigger debt.

Ms LAWRIE: ... a big component of the Territory budget this year - all the things that you need for a developing Territory. Importantly, we are sustaining that jobs growth and keeping the skilled staff here in the Territory, which has been a big issue for industry across the Territory in the past.

Mr ELFERINK: So, you are borrowing to support companies struggling to get debt in a growth environment for the purposes of protecting jobs? Is that a fair précis of what you just said?

Ms LAWRIE: Your words, not mine. Very simplistic and another strange way of describing ...

Mr ELFERINK: You can put your personal insults aside. Let us deal with the issues. The issues are that I am still trying to figure out why you predict a growth economy and you have to drive up debt to a whopping \$2.7bn. Why is that a good thing? Why is that a good thing for future Territorians when, according to you, we are currently in a growth economy?

Ms LAWRIE: Yes, we are in a growth economy, but you cannot ignore the fact that GST revenue has collapsed. Okay? A big issue for us is the reduction in revenue available, and the fact that we are going to drop into deficit. The biggest issue - the biggest impact - for us is the collapse in GST revenue coming out of the Commonwealth. Obviously, the collapse in GST is directly attributable to the global financial crisis and the economic downturn.

Yes, we have a growth economy, but our growth economy is sitting in a broader, national economy that was in a technical recession. The latest figures show an improvement, but you cannot ignore the collapse in GST ...

Mr Elferink: You announced the recession before the Prime Minister in your budget speech.

Mr CHAIRMAN: The Treasurer has the call.

Ms LAWRIE: You cannot ignore the impact the collapse in GST revenue is having on the Territory's own bottom line. Very clearly, I said earlier, we are down \$211m in the 2009-10 Budget in GST, and our predictions. We have collapsing GST revenue. Of course, it has an impact. It has the particular impact of taking us into deficit. What do you do? You have a couple of stark choices. You can claw back and try to remain in surplus by cutting government spending, which equates to cutting jobs, or you can choose to wear the pain, step into deficit, have a debt reduction strategy following on from that - which we have; a debt reduction strategy taking us right through all the forward estimates. We have a proven track record of reducing debt at the same time.

Mr ELFERINK: Yes, we have covered that.

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Ms LAWRIE: We have come off six consecutive surpluses in a row to reduce debt. We have a track record of reducing debt. We will step into debt while we have collapsing GST revenues by going into deficit, because we are deliberately deciding to spend to support jobs – some 2500 jobs being supported in Budget 2009-10.

Mr ELFERINK: This is your temporary deficit. How long is that going to go for?

Ms LAWRIE: We are projecting out to 2012-13, and I would expect us to be back into surplus in 2013-14.

Mr ELFERINK: 2013-14.

Ms LAWRIE: I did not ...

Mr ELFERINK: Based on what?

Ms LAWRIE: Based on our debt reduction strategy.

Mr ELFERINK: Do you have a piece of paper that says that you have a projection out to 2013-14, or is that just a guess?

Ms LAWRIE: No, it is not a guess. I worked very closely with Treasury officials. We know what our debt reduction strategy is. We know how ...

Mr Elferink: So they have a projection – Treasury?

Ms LAWRIE: You can see the climb out from 2009-10, which is a deficit of \$201m, 2010-11 a deficit of \$180m, 2011-12 a deficit of \$98m, and 2012-13 a deficit of \$30m. Nowhere in our budget figures do we factor in growth as a consequence of landing INPEX, because there is no final investment decision.

Mr ELFERINK: That is right.

Ms LAWRIE: These are worst case scenarios. I would expect better results, particularly if we secure INPEX.

Mr ELFERINK: You gave us a prediction for the year 2013-14. You say you work closely with Treasury. Have they provided you any documentation whatsoever with a projection to the year 2013-14?

Ms LAWRIE: No, we are required to project one plus three years, in our budget, in forward estimates. The Treasurer has discussions with the Under Treasurer and Treasury officials in constructing a budget with forward estimates, and part of my discussions were clearly focused on a debt reduction strategy. We had discussions that took us to 2013. I had discussions with my Under Treasurer around the desire to be back in health in 2013-14.

Mr ELFERINK: Yes. You have expressed a desire. That is not quite what you said before.

Ms LAWRIE: And a strategy. A debt reduction strategy.

Mr ELFERINK: A strategy? I have noticed that your financial strategy is somewhat changed for this year and it is changed vastly. How long are these strategies good for before you change them?

Ms LAWRIE: You cannot have a strategy that totally ignores what is occurring around you. Very

clearly articulated in the budget books this year is the fact that we have had to change our strategies as a result of the global financial crisis and the impact that is having on the Territory budget.

Mr ELFERINK: So, you have changed the strategy, but that is not the first time the strategy has changed, is it?

Ms LAWRIE: We have been improving them over time.

Mr ELFERINK: You have been improving it. We have been improving the strategy as the situation - how many changes to the strategy in the last six years?

Ms LAWRIE: One.

Mr ELFERINK: One, which is the infrastructure change. Am I correct?

Ms LAWRIE: Under Treasurer.

Ms PRINCE: Mr Elferink, we did formally change the fiscal strategy in 2003-04.

Mr ELFERINK: Through you, Treasurer, to help me with this. In the mini-budget 2001-02 you introduced Strategy A, and in the year 2003-04 there is a change to the strategy. When was the next one?

Ms PRINCE: Mr Elferink, if I could go back a step. When we introduced the *Fiscal Integrity and Transparency Act*, that legislation requires a fiscal strategy to be included as part of the budget. We did our first full fiscal strategy in 2002-03, which was the year that we introduced accrual accounting. You might recall we were specifying certain targets to be reached within a period of 10 years. A later change to the strategy was actually to specify a year and to be clear about both outcomes for the nett operating balance and the cash surplus or deficit position.

Mr ELFERINK: Treasurer, the 2002-03 strategy had targets out for 10 years. Now that strategy has changed. What were those targets in the 2002-03 budget?

Ms PRINCE: Mr Elferink, if my memory is correct we were ...

Mr ELFERINK: I have Budget Paper No 2 from that year here, if you require it.

Ms PRINCE: Perhaps you could tell me if my memory is correct; that was we were to achieve a surplus in the cash outcome and in the nett operating balance within 10 years, and the cash surplus was first recorded in 2002-03?

Mr ELFERINK: Yes.

Ms PRINCE: We have had a nett operating balance since 2005-06. Since that time, and for the whole of the forward estimates period, we are estimating a positive nett operating balance. Many other jurisdictions record, in their fiscal strategies, only the nett operating balance. We talk about the nett operating balance and the cash outcome. When other jurisdictions talk about getting their budgets back into surplus, they are using the nett operating balance term, whereas we are using the cash surplus or deficit target, which is, in our case, a far more difficult target to achieve.

Mr ELFERINK: Now you have a projection, Treasurer, out to 2013, in Budget Paper No 2. Is that fiscal strategy going to reach its targets by 2013?

Ms LAWRIE: In the nett operating balance, yes, because, as the Under Treasurer just explained ...

Mr Elferink: In a nett operating balance, which is what the other jurisdictions ...

Mr CHAIRMAN: The Treasurer has the call.

Ms LAWRIE: In the nett operating balance, yes, obviously, we meet the target of being in surplus. However, as I have explained - and I am happy to explain again - the result of the global financial crisis has meant we have had to revise our fiscal strategy in recognition of the impact of the economic downturn. The collapsing GST revenues are having an effect, not just in 2009-10, but across the forward estimates. All this reflects we will step down into deficit across those forward estimates, but climb out of the deficit position. This will be achieved by having a very clear debt reduction strategy which was articulated in my budget speech.

Mr ELFERINK: That is the first strategy. We are already getting qualifications in relation to the answers there as to whether or not it reached its targets. Let us go to the next strategy. What changed when that first change to the fiscal strategy was introduced?

Ms LAWRIE: Are you talking about the 2003-04 change?

Mr ELFERINK: Yes.

Ms LAWRIE: Under Treasurer.

Mr ELFERINK: Do you not know?

Ms LAWRIE: Do not be ridiculous, member for Port Darwin. I can refer questions to the Under Treasurer, she ...

Mr ELFERINK: I was just wondering if you know these things, that is all.

Ms LAWRIE: She was Under Treasurer at the time and, if you do not want to hear from the experts, then what are you doing in the estimates process?

Mr ELFERINK: I want to hear from you.

Ms LAWRIE: Under Treasurer.

Ms PRINCE: Mr Elferink, when we did it in 2002-03 we talked about within 10 years. So the following year, instead of saying within 10 years, we specified it as the year that was 10 years from 2002-03, so it was by 2012-13. We did not believe it was a material change.

Mr ELFERINK: Now the strategy is quite different though, is it not?

Ms LAWRIE: As I have said, it is not quite different. We revised the fiscal strategy, taking into account the global financial crisis and the economic downturn. We have met the target projecting out to 2012-13; we are in a nett operating surplus in the nett operating balance. As the Under Treasurer pointed out, most jurisdictions would be out there crying about that. We, instead, look at our cash situation, recognising that whilst we are going into a temporary deficit as a result of the collapse in GST revenue, and the deliberate decision taken by our government to support jobs by a record infrastructure spend of \$1.3bn ...

Mr Elferink: Yes, you keep saying that. I am still ...

Ms LAWRIE: Well, it is important, because it is a clear decision made by the government, which

underpins the direction of ...

Mr Elferink: We are not talking about fiscal strategy anymore, we are just talking about the borrowings.

Mr CHAIRMAN: The Treasurer has the call.

Ms LAWRIE: Regarding the revised strategy, it was developed with both a short-term and medium-term focus. The objective of the fiscal strategy is the development of a robust and thriving Northern Territory capable of achieving ongoing significant operating surpluses, irrespective of economic conditions. This will be achieved by maintaining the fiscal spend evident in the Territory budget in recent years. This has resulted in six consecutive cash surpluses. In more usual times of economic growth, this operating surplus will provide the capacity to invest in infrastructure without the requirement for additional borrowings. However, in the short term, the economic downturn will result in falling revenues of GST, and these, combined with increased infrastructure spending to support Territory jobs, will result in the budget incurring cash deficits.

Over the medium term, once revenue is returned to more usual levels, the overarching objective of returning the budget to a cash surplus, as well as an operating surplus, will prevail and will provide the capacity to reduce Territory debt to pre-GST levels.

Mr ELFERINK: Fiscal strategy changes.

Ms LAWRIE: Global financial crises occur, the economic ...

Mr ELFERINK: You keep saying global financial crises, but you keep telling me that you have a growth economy. I am just trying to figure out why ...

Ms LAWRIE: The GST revenue.

Mr ELFERINK: GST revenue. So, what we are actually talking about is borrowing to underwrite government spending?

Mr CHAIRMAN: Is that a question?

Mr ELFERINK: Yes.

Ms LAWRIE: What we are talking about is borrowing to ensure the government has record levels of infrastructure spending to support Territory jobs.

Mr ELFERINK: Oh, okay. So we are talking about borrowing to underwrite government spending?

Ms LAWRIE: \$1.3bn in this budget to provide for some 2500 jobs. Under the CLP, their answer would be slash spending and watch the unemployment queues grow. We clearly disagree on that point of policy.

Mr ELFERINK: So you sit there and tell me we have a growth economy, and your growth economy which, presumably, will employ people, has to be underwritten by a government which has to increase its spending so people can get jobs. That is the logic of your argument?

Ms LAWRIE: If you look at the economic growth figures, yes, we have a growth economy. We are very proud of that growth economy. Looking at those figures, we were predicted to be in economic growth in the 2008-09 financial year of 6.6%; Access Economics predicted 7%. What happened? Global financial crisis occurred, economic downturn across the nation occurred, our figures were revised downwards to 4.1%. I believe Access Economics revised their figures down to about 4.7% for

the 2008-09 financial year. Both Access Economics and Treasury figures of economic growth in 2009-10 going forward are sitting around the 2%.

In anyone's books, that is economic growth that is moderating. When you are in an environment of economic growth that is moderating, there is contraction; that is, reflecting a contraction in growth. What occurs in a contraction in growth is that jobs are under threat. A deliberate decision of the Labor government is to protect jobs, to commit \$1.3bn in a record infrastructure spend to protect jobs, but also to create some extra 2500 jobs while you are seeing that economic growth moderate.

We expect to see strong growth going forward, particularly if we land the INPEX project. That would be a significant underpinning of economic growth in the Territory. We make no apology for having a policy that, very deliberately, in the toughest economic conditions prevailing in 75 years, protects the jobs of Territorians.

Mr ELFERINK: So you say. Based on what figure, on what piece of information, other than the spin, is this the toughest economic environment for the last 75 years in the Northern Territory?

Ms LAWRIE: Based on all of the figures that the Commonwealth put out ...

Mr ELFERINK: No, no, in the Northern Territory. I am not talking about what is happening in the United States or what is happening in Canberra.

Ms LAWRIE: Over all the nations. So you are saying that we are an island, are you? You are saying that the Territory is an island in the economic downturn. You would be the only person who believes that.

Mr ELFERINK: At the moment, you are the person saying we have a growth environment, not me.

Ms LAWRIE: Moderating. If you looked at the pre-global financial crisis figures, we were expected to have, under Treasury figures, growth at 6.6%. Access Economics predicted 7%. A post-global financial crisis revised downwards by Treasury to ...

Mr Elferink: Can you stop looking at the brochure and answer a question.

Mr CHAIRMAN: Member for Port Darwin, the Treasurer is still answering your previous question.

Mr ELFERINK: No, she is not, she is avoiding my question.

Mr CHAIRMAN: The Treasurer has the call.

Ms LAWRIE: I am trying to explain to the member for Port Darwin that we have economic growth moderating as a result of the global financial crisis. That equates to a contraction and, therefore, a need to step up and provide for job creation opportunities. The \$1.3bn is a very deliberate decision by this government to ensure that, in the toughest economic times, we are protecting the jobs of Territorians.

Mr ELFERINK: Okay. So, you see that moderating growth costs jobs. Is that correct?

Ms LAWRIE: It absolutely has an impact. If you look at moderating growth, across the sectors - for example, construction sector. As I explained before to the member for Port Darwin, if you have private sector contraction - that is, they cannot get their credit that was previously available prior to the global financial crisis to invest in those private sector construction jobs - then, clearly, you are not going to have the jobs there to sustain going forward. The nature of construction is once one job is completed they need other job opportunities to go on with. It is a cyclical industry, so you go from one project to the next. You have to be able to provide for more construction jobs in the pipeline to sustain jobs

already in construction. You also need to provide for job growth when - particularly in the Territory's circumstances - you have population growth.

Mr ELFERINK: Would it not be more correct to say that moderating growth does not cost jobs, it actually just moderates the number of new jobs coming online? That is what growth implies, does it not?

Ms LAWRIE: We have been around and around on circles on this ...

Mr Elferink: No, it is a new question.

Ms LAWRIE: He does not want to accept what I am saying. I accept that he does not want to accept what I am saying, but we have been around and around in circles, and I have very clearly articulated a very clear ...

Mr ELFERINK: You just told me that moderating growth costs jobs. I would like to know how you came to that conclusion.

Ms LAWRIE: Because, as I said, where you get private sector contraction - and if you look at how the private sector fuels our economic growth, it is significant - those jobs are not available because the private sector does not have the funds to go on with the projects that would have otherwise have occurred. I gave an example before, be it a shopping precinct or large new accommodation towers. What the government needs to do in those circumstances and what we have chosen to do, where you have private sector contraction, is step in and provide for growth across the construction-related sector ...

Mr Elferink: So the private sector of the Northern Territory is contracting?

Mr CHAIRMAN: The Treasurer is finishing her answer.

Ms LAWRIE: ... provide for growth across the construction-related sector: a \$1.3bn infrastructure spend to fuel that growth across the construction-related sector creating some additional 2500 jobs.

Mr ELFERINK: So, the growth in the private sector in the Northern Territory is contracting? Is that correct?

Ms LAWRIE: Moderating economic growth is the figures I was talking about. Okay?

Mr ELFERINK: You said it was contracting. You said 'contract'.

Ms LAWRIE: In terms of the economic growth figures, I have been talking about how they are contracting from 6.6% revised downwards to 4.1%. Going forward into 2009-10 they will be around 2%. One of the things that has a huge impact on those figures is when major projects finish. For example, an impact in past budgets has been the G3 Alcan expansion project. That is completed. We have the GEMCO expansion nearing completion. We have the Bonaparte gas pipeline completed. We have had some delays in Blacktip, ENI's project. That will see a bit of a flow through in 2009-10 and, then, that will be completed. Your very large, major projects have a significant impact on those economic growth figures.

Mr ELFERINK: Is private sector investment for growth in the Northern Territory contracting or not?

Ms LAWRIE: In terms of the projects I just explained to you then, clearly, the answer is that they have completed so, therefore, growth is contracting. What the government has done ...

Mr Elferink: Growth is contracting.

Ms LAWRIE: ... is ensure that we go hard for major projects. We have gone out and aggressively pursued the INPEX project. I am also hopeful that we will see the expansion in ConocoPhillips LNG. The government has also stepped up in its own spending. We have the Tiger Brennan Drive project, for example, which is a significant spend in the infrastructure area. We have \$322m of road spending as part of that \$1.3bn. We have a 92% increase in housing-related construction and R&M spending in Budget 2009-10 to ensure that we get those construction jobs. Obviously, if they are not working on a major project, because the major project is completed, there is an opportunity for them to go into the construction sector and pick up those jobs across the residential and non-residential construction. You cannot discount the importance of roads, of the residential construction that is in the budget, nor should you discount the importance of those big projects; capital works projects like Rosebery and the primary and middle school at Palmerston.

Mr ELFERINK: That has to be the longest 'yes' I have ever heard. No more questions.

Mr Tollner: You have still the generics.

Mr ELFERINK: Mr Chairman, I have the generic questions.

Mr CHAIRMAN: And then I will throw to you, member for Nelson.

Mr TOLLNER: Mr Chairman, I have our generic questions. Treasurer, what are the carbon emissions of the individual agencies under you? What are they producing in kilowatt hours or tonnes and what strategies you have in place to reduce those emissions and the time frames you expect to reduce them by?

Ms LAWRIE: I will answer them in regard to Treasury and the members of the Estimates Committee can ask me those questions for my other agencies as they appear.

Mr TOLLNER: I will give you due warning, we are asking these questions across the board.

Ms LAWRIE: It is all good. I am onto it, Dave. To be clear, the answers will be in regard to the agency of Treasury, not Justice and DPI at this stage. Under Treasurer.

Ms PRINCE: Mr Tollner, we have estimated our carbon emissions for 2007-08, and are in the process for calculating that for 2008-09. In 2007-08 our estimated emissions were 803 tonnes.

Regarding what we are doing about it, we have an established Energy Management Committee within Treasury. We have looked at the various elements that are producing our carbon emissions and we have considered what we can do about it. We have substantially increased our proportion of four-cylinder vehicles and we expect to increase that proportion over the next year. We are increasing the use of videoconferencing, or phone conferencing, where that is possible. All of our printers have been set to automatic double-sided printing. We have quite a significant program under way of circulating all documents electronically, rather than by paper. We are using recycled toner cartridges in our printers and looking at electronic newspaper subscriptions.

We have a project investigating recycling options for our kitchen waste. For our office waste, we have had recycling bins and shredding bins in place for some years. We have changed all of the lighting in the Treasury building to energy efficient globes. We have automatic turn-off of the lights at 7 pm on the seventh floor and 6 pm on every other floor in Treasury - which is quite inconvenient during budget time. We shut down our computers automatically every night. All the photocopiers and printers have automatic cut-out switches.

Mr ELFERINK: Sorry, I have been mucking about here. The figure again for the current year and the next year, if you have them?

Ms PRINCE: 803 tonnes is our estimate for 2007-08. We are currently calculating the estimate for 2008-09. We will be considering further initiatives to reduce that estimate for 2009-10.

Mr ELFERINK: Utilities increases; power and water is obviously going up. What is the effect on your department, Treasurer?

Ms LAWRIE: Under Treasurer

Ms PRINCE: Mr Elferink, our power charges are not only affected by the price which is charged per kilowatt hour, but by the amount of after-hour usage and the extent to which ...

Mr ELFERINK: We are going for the midnight oil. They are switching the lights off on you.

Ms PRINCE: Sometimes we resort to that. So, assuming that our consumption in 2009-10 will be the same as in 2008-09, then the increase in power charges will be about \$10 400. In terms of all of Treasury, we are not charged for our sewerage and water use directly; that is included in the lease cost through NT Property Management. We expect those increases to be accommodated within the normal escalation parameters, although, I should say that part of our energy efficiency initiatives is also to look at how we can reduce our water consumption.

Mr ELFERINK: If you are not paying for water, of course, you can set up a small hydroelectric outfit in the kitchens so that will cut down on your power costs, too, you see.

Ms PRINCE: We will look at that.

Mr ELFERINK: It is an idea, is it not? Staffing - do you have graduates, apprentices working in the department?

Ms PRINCE: Yes, Mr Elferink, we do. We have quite an active graduate program; we take a number of other trainees. I am happy to give you those numbers if you like.

Mr ELFERINK: 2007, 2008 and 2009, if possible.

Ms PRINCE: For the three years?

Mr ELFERINK: Yes.

Ms PRINCE: I will give them to you by category. With our FOITs, our graduate program, we had 20 in 2007, 15 in 2008, and 12 in 2009. The reduction is not for budget reasons but, quite frankly, we take as many as we can get and we manage that within our overall staffing levels. We were disappointed in our 2009 intake since we were not able to employ as many as we would like. Most of those graduates stay and become the backbone of our Treasury staffing.

We have NAPS, our new apprenticeship program which had three in 2007, one in 2008, and one in 2009. NICP is another category of Indigenous trainees: one in 2007; one in 2008, and one in 2009. We also have a cadetship program to encourage students to study economics at CDU. We are expanding that into the accounting discipline, which is part of the whole-of-government cadet program called WILS. We had seven WILS participants in 2007. They continued with us and that number increased to nine in 2009 because these cadets are often in our program for three years. We also had a number of vacation employees. They are Territory teenagers and young adults who are studying at interstate institutions. We are trying to encourage them to work in Treasurer during vacations so they might come back and consider working for us full-time. We had four of those in 2008, and two in 2009.

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Mr ELFERINK: Out of the department, Treasurer, were there any reports of improper uses of computers, other than my Facebook?

Ms PRINCE: No reports of improper use of computers.

Mr ELFERINK: Credit cards. How many do you have operating?

Ms PRINCE: Six.

Mr ELFERINK: That is better than last year, is it not? That is fewer than last year. Fewer is better when it comes to these things.

Ms PRINCE: One was returned from last year, yes. So we have six; five of those are held by people within our Office Services and Finance area, and one is held in the Executive Support Unit on the seventh floor. That credit card is used largely for booking travel.

Mr ELFERINK: Are there any transactions which are supposed to have been acquitted by now which have not been acquitted?

Ms PRINCE: Mr Elferink, we acquit all of our credit card transactions monthly as required. There are, obviously, some accounts that have been incurred this month that have not been paid and, therefore, not acquitted. I can give you that amount, if you like.

Mr ELFERINK: If you like, yes.

Ms PRINCE: It is \$5536.

Mr ELFERINK: Goodness, that is a lot of rubber bands.

Ms PRINCE: The rules for the payment of bills by credit card are anything that is \$500 or less is paid by credit card. We buy a lot of things other than rubber bands.

Mr ELFERINK: That is fine, I was being flippant, as I am sure you will appreciate. Public events: Treasury is known, of course, for its outrageous parties and those sorts of things. Have you done any public events in the current financial year, or are you intending to do any in the next financial year, and if so, what are they?

Ms LAWRIE: Under Treasurer.

Ms PRINCE: Mr Elferink, those Treasury parties that you refer to, if they are outrageous, indeed, are managed by the social club, but Treasury has ...

Mr ELFERINK: Does it do an annual report, the social club, or not?

Ms LAWRIE: A good slide show.

Ms PRINCE: Not that is published. We have had one official function this year. That was a briefing that we had on budget day for CEOs and senior agency staff. We provided them with lunch. We have not had any other functions *per se*. There has been some food provided as part of internal training sessions, or working lunches, and those sorts of things.

Mr ELFERINK: Yes, but that comes out of – that is not really a function ...

Ms PRINCE: No.

Mr ELFERINK: ... that just comes out of who runs out and gets the morning tea out of petty cash, I presume.

Ms PRINCE: Correct.

Mr ELFERINK: All right. Do you have a definition for advertising in your department?

Ms LAWRIE: Under Treasurer.

Ms PRINCE: Mr Elferink, in the Territory, we have a standard chart of accounts. We are the only jurisdiction in Australia to have it, and it is the ...

Mr ELFERINK: You knew I was going to ask that, did you not?

Ms PRINCE: Someone usually asks that every year. All audit officers think this is wonderful. We in Treasury consider it great. The chart of accounts has standard classifications, so all agencies have to record their expenditure in this way. Advertising is a category of the standard classifications, so ...

Mr ELFERINK: Would this include the Legislative Assembly?

Ms PRINCE: I am sorry?

Mr ELFERINK: Is the Legislative Assembly bound by this document?

Ms PRINCE: Yes.

Mr ELFERINK: They seem to be unaware of it.

Ms PRINCE: I am sure they ...

Mr ELFERINK: It might be worth pointing it out to them.

Ms PRINCE: I am sure they do use it in their classifications. Advertising includes all advertising except for recruitment-related advertising, which is recorded, and ...

Mr ELFERINK: Perhaps, but we asked similar questions of the Legislative Assembly before, and we got the bureaucratic equivalent of a blank look. It might be worth pointing it out to them.

Ms PRINCE: You are very welcome to have the standard classification ...

Mr ELFERINK: Yes. May I have that document tabled, by the way?

Ms LAWRIE: I will table that.

Mr ELFERINK: What is the department's budget for advertising in the current financial year and next financial year? If you can break it down by radio, TV, community newsletters, newspapers, printing, consultants?

Ms LAWRIE: Under Treasurer.

Ms PRINCE: In 2008-09, we spent \$165 000 in advertising. That is rather higher than normal. We

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normally spend in the order of between \$50 000 and \$60 000. That is what we would ordinarily budget. The reason it is higher in 2008-09 is the additional advertising associated with the Buildstart program.

Mr ELFERINK: With the Buildstart. So, that was sheeted home to you; it did not come out of DCM?

Ms PRINCE: No, we did that.

Ms LAWRIE: A Treasury program.

Mr ELFERINK: How much was that?

Ms PRINCE: For Buildstart?

Mr ELFERINK: Yes. That is television. Did they use TV for Buildstart?

Ms LAWRIE: Yes. Television, radio and print.

Mr ELFERINK: Can I get a breakdown of that, if it is possible?

Ms LAWRIE: Under Treasurer.

Ms PRINCE: We can provide that the components of the Buildstart campaign, yes.

Mr ELFERINK: And more generally as well for the rest of the department - radio, TV that sort of thing. I am more than willing to put it on notice, or if you can table it.

Ms PRINCE: We have that information here. Our other main cost is associated with the production of the budget papers and the associated communication campaign.

Mr ELFERINK: No worries. If you can table that, I would be obliged to you - save me asking the next few questions. Tabled, Mr Chairman?

Mr CHAIRMAN: Yes, it is, if you can just source ...

Ms PRINCE: We have it; we will just get that for you.

Mr CHAIRMAN: It is coming forward.

Mr ELFERINK: How do you tender for the jobs? Is there a particular printer that gets these jobs? Is it a panel contract, period contract? How does that work?

Ms LAWRIE: Under Treasurer.

Mr ELFERINK: Is all that information there, too? If it is, it will save me asking the question.

Ms PRINCE: The information that is in the table is the company that did the design, but it does not go into the detail of how we do that. Given the cost of the design is very low, less than \$20 000, we go to three local companies to get examples of designs and estimates of costs, and we choose one of those. The decision is on the quality of the design and the reliability of the work from them.

Mr ELFERINK: Pretty normal procurement processes. Who rubber stamps it, or who finally authorises the document to be used? Is it the Treasurer or you?

Ms PRINCE: For the budget presentations of the budget papers we get designs from three designers. Usually, those designers give us one or two different designs. We have a number of people in Treasury who have a view. We also discuss ...

Mr Elferink: Noted for their artistic disposition?

Ms PRINCE: They say so. ... and we discuss the designs with the Treasurer. There is a collective approach to that decision-making.

Mr ELFERINK: Thank you very much, I appreciate your patience with those questions. I am done.

Mr CHAIRMAN: Member for Nelson, do you have any questions. We are on a Whole-of-Government questions – Budget and Fiscal Strategies.

Mr ELFERINK: Yes, on the opening statement.

Mr WOOD: Mine are a little simpler, Treasurer. Probably goes with my understanding of this book. When I look at page 25 of Budget Paper No 2, which is the *Fiscal and Economic Outlook*, it has a range of variations that affect revenue. I will go through them quickly. One is a revision of Territory taxation revenue and, according to predictions, that is going to be reduced by \$10.9m. There is a reduction in GST revenue of \$210.6m. We get an increase in tied funding. There was an increase of mining royalties, but that could go down in the next financial year. There will be increases in agency revenues through charges. There will also be reduction in tax equivalent and dividends that you would receive from Power and Water Corporation. With all of that you have budgeted for a deficit.

Ms LAWRIE: Yes.

Mr WOOD: What happens if GST does not grow? What happens, as has been predicted, mining royalty revenue will not increase, and, if we are not going to get any dividends from Power and Water, are we going to be further into debt than we are this coming financial year?

Ms LAWRIE: In 2009-10, we are predicting a reduction in mining royalties from what we have received in 2008-09. We have factored in commodity prices in that. We have factored in a reduction in GST revenue, which is having an impact on the bottom line. They are always estimates; the actuals come in September of the year. We will see what our actuals are like later this year for 2008-09. Similarly, we will be in the same position for 2009-10. They are the best estimates Treasury officials can make, factoring in many different calculations. They look at what receipts they have received in the past, they look at mining royalties, in particular, what is occurring in the commodities and the GST. We factor in what is occurring in the national economy, particularly in consumption, which is pretty critical because of the goods and services tax.

We have also looked at increasing that component of tied funding we receive from the Commonwealth - the Specific Purpose Payments and the National Partnership Payments are increasingly important in government revenue. All of those variations are explained on page 25.

Mr WOOD: Notwithstanding that the stimulus package is only a one-off, unless the government decides to give us more there is no guarantee, especially in the economic climate, that we are going to get more money through the National Partnership Agreement. If GST does not increase, and if mining royalties, which is the other major income stream, decrease, as is predicted - and I believe there was something in the paper yesterday about bauxite production will drop - how can you guarantee that we are not going to go further into debt?

Ms LAWRIE: There are never any guarantees, because it is going to be an unfolding picture of where the national economy is headed in what is going to happen to the GST. That being said, Commonwealth officials do their projections and calculations carefully, as do Northern Territory

Treasury officials, so these are best estimates of what predictions are occurring. Also, we make sure - and this has been a particular focus of mine - to lock more of our funding agreements into those tied agreements that are five-year agreements. That way we know what those figures look like for five years.

In terms of the national partnerships, they are not just for one year, most of them go over several years, and are factored through into the forward estimates. We do worst-case scenarios in our estimates, so that we are not vulnerable to a worsening picture. Again, the qualification with that is no one predicted the global financial crisis to the extent that it occurred, and no one predicted the depth and the lengthening of the economic downturn to the extent that it occurred. Constructing the 2008-09 Budget was a very different scenario to constructing the 2009-10 Budget.

The economic commentators are talking about recovery. There are some early signs of recovery occurring. There are factors that we can influence in our own economic health in the Territory that surround the construction and resources sectors, particularly. We have had a targeted emphasis on tourism in a stimulus package within our own budget for 2009-10. We are doing what we can to support our crucial industries in terms of economic health. But we have a small revenue base - we have payroll taxes and stamp duty tax, but we have a very small revenue base. We are totally reliant on the Commonwealth significantly for revenues.

GST has dropped from 67% of our revenue base to 55% of our revenue base. That constitutes quite a collapse. But, we have seen growth across the SPPs and NPPs in revenue coming in. We are still sitting globally around about 80% of Commonwealth payments being our revenue base. We will continue to work in partnership with the Commonwealth. They are not unaware of how particularly vulnerable the smaller jurisdictions are; when they sneeze, we get a cold - they know that. We have had a very good working relationship with the Commonwealth in being able to lock in the SPPs and pursuing with vigour the opportunities in the National Partnership Payments.

It was significant that in the midst of the economic downturn, federal Cabinet decided to continue its commitment to the emergency response spending. This is significant, in Commonwealth expenditure coming into the Territory across the forward years. I am confident about our collaborative working relationship going forward. I am hopeful about the early signs of recovery, in what is occurring nationally. We are not crowing about it yet, but there are signs of recovery.

Mr WOOD: What I am getting at is, everything is a prediction. The other scenario is the GST does not rise because, as you said, we are technically in a recession; therefore, spending is not as high as it would be normally. Mining royalties are down, reductions in dividends are down, and some of that will have an affect on our own agency revenue. Is there a bottom line as to how far down into the deficit you would not go before you said enough is enough and we have to cut back on the public service or projects, for instance? Because I do not see any bright signs at the moment. There has been talk about some changes, but that will be catch-up. We will be affected by what is happening now. So, is there a point where the government says we cannot go into debt any further, and we are going to cut back?

Ms LAWRIE: I do not think we should be under any illusion; the government is cutting back. We will climb out of debt as we have recognised in the forward estimates. Government is cutting back, and we are going to have enormous restraint on government spending through those forward estimate years to climb out of debt. We have increased the efficiency dividend, which is increasing the required savings from agencies. We are taking the disciplined approach to climbing out of debt. In the volatile environment in which the budgets are currently being constructed, I do not believe there would be a jurisdiction in Australia that is not, at this stage, taking a year-by-year decision.

Yes, we have a plan going forward, based on the best advice from the Territory's Treasury, and on the best and latest figures coming out of the Commonwealth. But, no one predicted the global financial crisis, no one predicted the length or the extent of it. Ours are best predictions. What we have shown is a track record of discipline under the Labor governments to work towards surplus budgets.

We have created six consecutive surplus budgets in a row. We have shown through Budget 2009-10 a plan to climb back to surplus. There is a lot of fiscal discipline to achieve that. Is there a point at which I, as Treasurer, would say to my colleagues: 'We have to increase our savings'? I do not doubt it. We have not seen signs, though, in the recent months of a worsening situation; we have seen signs of a recovery. I am hopeful that will continue. The economic stimulus actions taken by the federal government have had a good underlying effect coming through. The retail trade figures are an example of that. That being said, we are bucking the national trend in all our economic indicators. We have strong population and employment growth, and labour participation.

We are seen as the best place to invest by the multinationals. We look at the work done, particularly in the resources sector, in attracting investment into the Territory. They are all very healthy signs for going forward. The most significant healthy sign for going forward is the INPEX project. That is on the near horizon. That is not 10 years out, that is 2009-10 for a final investment decision. The indicators are strong now. Where we are placing our efforts, as the Territory government, is about ensuring strength going forward as well.

Mr WOOD: Treasurer, I still believe it is worrying. Some things worry me. The efficiency dividend worries me too. When you say the way to cut costs is an efficiency dividend, you have increased that. Who applies that efficiency dividend, and is there some consideration for the department it applies to? Efficiency dividends have been applied to some departments in years gone by, where the person might be doing experiments for a scientific project but, because there is no money to go out bush and have a look at that, he sits at a desk and his morale drops off. What is the point? Efficiency dividends sound very nice. Why do you not just increase the budget because, if you increase the budget, then tell them to take 3.5% off, it seems to be robbing Peter to pay Paul. Is there some process where a little common sense is applied when it comes to the application of an efficiency dividend?

Ms LAWRIE: The CEOs are responsible for the application of the efficiency dividend.

Mr WOOD: Is it a broad efficiency dividend applied right across the board to every department?

Ms LAWRIE: Different levels of efficiency dividend. For example, Health, Education, Fleet, Corrections, have a lesser efficiency dividend applied to them, a quarter of the rest.

Mr WOOD: What about some of your GBDs, like your parks, like the Wildlife Park and groups like that ...

Ms LAWRIE: The government business divisions do not have efficiency dividends applied to them.

Mr WOOD: Has anyone reviewed the effect of that efficiency dividend on the running of that particular department?

Ms LAWRIE: The GBD does not have an efficiency dividend applied to it.

Mr WOOD: No, departments in general, in relation to the practicalities, the common sense, or the sense in doing it to some departments when it really might have negative effects on that department?

Ms LAWRIE: There are other exclusions in the efficiency dividend. Commonwealth funds, for example, are excluded. External grants are excluded. It varies from department to department.

Mr WOOD: It worries me. It is a bit like you are doing experiments on poultry, or pigs. Efficiency dividend means you can only work on half a pig. I am not trying to be silly, but I wonder whether efficiency dividends have negative effects, especially on staff morale or government programs.

Ms LAWRIE: From my view, the importance of having decisions made by the agency rather than

centrally as, for example, Treasury, goes to recognising that agencies have a better idea of the workability of how the efficiency dividend is arrived at. Rather than Treasury applying various cuts, we recognise governments require restraint - particularly in getting out of debt as in 2001 - through efficiency dividends being applied. I am not saying it is not tough. It is tough, but at least enabling the agency to arrive at how and where it applies efficiency dividends is ...

Mr WOOD: Is there a penalty for when an efficiency dividend is not achieved?

Ms LAWRIE: I am advised no.

Mr WOOD: A leading question is then why apply it? But, anyway ...

Ms LAWRIE: They meet them; they have always met them, Gerry.

Mr WOOD: On another thing, you make the statement regularly about the record infrastructure expenditure. That may be the case, but you are not telling people exactly what you are talking about. My understanding is that out of the \$1.3bn capital works program, roughly \$2.9m of that is to fix up Power and Water. That is what is going into their budget. Of that \$1076m that is left over, \$116m is for the Nation Building and Jobs Plan, which has to be spent now, which leaves you \$960m for your capital works program that most people would understand you talking about - not \$1.3bn ...

Mr Elferink: Also, revote out \$485m.

Mr WOOD: Yes. Then, if you look at the cash amount, which is the money you are going to spend, it is \$537.4m. Is it not a far more- and I am not saying you are dishonest - honest approach if you are tell people how much you are going to spend. In actual fact, this financial year when you take the revotes in and the revotes out, you will spend \$537.4m on capital works - not \$1.3bn as you are saying.

Ms LAWRIE: In terms of if you look at the capital ...

Mr Wood: Yes, I am looking at page 15 on the Budget Paper No 4.

Ms LAWRIE: Yes. On page 3 it will show you what the cash program for 2009-10 is.

Mr Wood: That is right.

Ms LAWRIE: For capital works, it is \$654m; for grants it is \$154m; for R&M, it is \$182m; infrastructure-related \$8m – so, a total budget sector of \$998m. Add to that government owned corporations - because it sits on our bottom line in our total financial liabilities, so it is fair to show it - the capital works is \$247m and the repairs and maintenance is \$54m, which is \$1.299bn, which is where we get the \$1.3bn ...

Mr Wood: If I looked on page 15 ...

Ms LAWRIE: That is the 2009-10 cash program.

Mr WOOD: Then how does that compare with the figures that I see on page 15, which show cash for the total at \$1076m and, the bottom line, it says \$653.8m cash is available. How do you compare one with the other?

Ms LAWRIE: If you are comparing the \$653.8m on page 15 cash, to the chart I showed you on page 3, the top cash item of capital works is \$654m - so there was a slight rounding up. That \$653.8m represented on page 15 appears on page 3 as \$654m cash in 2009-10 against capital works. It is one component of the ...

Mr WOOD: I know that but, to me, it is a nice figure of \$1300m.

Ms LAWRIE: That is what the budget provides for in cash in 2009-10.

Mr WOOD: In actual fact you will not spend that in this financial year, will you? Why is there a revote in and a revote out all the time?

Ms LAWRIE: Revotes in and revotes out, broadly explained, are because a significant number of capital programs go across the Dry Season; as we see Territory Construction commission projects like Tiger Brennan Drive for example, Victoria Highway and Rosebery schools. Projects of that significant size will go across financial years, but we reflect that in that chart on Table 3 by saying that the total program for 2009-10 is \$1.07bn, but the cash spent for 2009-10 will be \$654m. We are reflecting that difference between the cash and the program. Yes, the works are in the program, but some of the works will straddle those financial years, which is why the cash amount is different.

Mr WOOD: I know you are going to spend it but it is not all in this financial year. That is what people sometimes look at.

Ms LAWRIE: We are talking the cash figure. When we state \$1.3bn, we are stating the cash figure in 2009-10 which is represented on page 3. That is not the total program figure, so we could have gone out with a much larger figure.

Mr WOOD: All right. I have no further questions.

Mr CHAIRMAN: That concludes consideration of the whole-of-government issues.

OUTPUT GROUP 1.0 – FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT
Output 1.1 – Financial Management

Mr CHAIRMAN: We are moving on to questions on Output Group 1.0, Financial Management, and Output 1.1, Financial Management. Are there any questions on this output?

Mr ELFERINK: Yes, I might have one or two to ask. What is the Territory's current credit rating? I know the answer, but I want to ...

Ms LAWRIE: AA+.

Mr ELFERINK: AA+. It is not AA1?

Ms LAWRIE: Another way of describing it – AA1.

Mr ELFERINK: Okay, so it is AA+. I note that the Northern Territory has been underwritten by the federal government, as are all state jurisdictions, in obtaining credit. Would that have an effect on the Territory's credit rating?

Ms LAWRIE: If we choose to use it, it is a AAA facility, but it does not affect our credit rating.

Mr ELFERINK: Does it not? Who sets your credit rating?

Ms LAWRIE: Moody's set ours, we do not have a Standard & Poor's credit rating, but we do have a Moody's credit rating.

Mr ELFERINK: Moody's sets it? Okay. I will point out what Moody's told the Senate on 1 May 2008,

and amongst other things, I will quote the last paragraph on page 7 of that document:

Moody's assigns a BCA of 1 to New South Wales, Victoria, Queensland, Western Australia and South Australia which places these states in the AAA rating bracket before any consideration of the likelihood of the Commonwealth of Australia would act to prevent a default by the state. The BCA of Tasmania is 2, equivalent to AA1, and the BCA of the Northern Territory is 3, equivalent to AA2. As a result of the very high likelihood of the Commonwealth support, these entities' ratings are lifted by one notch to AAA and AA1 respectively.

In light of your last answer, that Moody's sets your rating and you do not believe that Moody's takes any notice of the Commonwealth guarantees, how do you explain that submission by Moody's to the Senate?

Ms LAWRIE: Under Treasurer.

Ms PRINCE: Mr Elferink, Moody's and Standard & Poor's have both published their methods of rating each jurisdiction. When they establish a rating for that jurisdiction, they take into account a range of jurisdictionally-based outcome measures such as budget performance and fiscal strategy. When they look at Australian jurisdictions, they look at the level of vertical fiscal imbalance, so the support that the Commonwealth provides to all states because of our tax arrangements – and I believe that is what that section you referred to relates to.

Mr ELFERINK: Specifically, our tax arrangements. Treasurer, are you aware of this particular submission to the Senate?

Ms LAWRIE: I would just like the Under Treasurer to finish, because she was still ...

Mr ELFERINK: I am sorry, I thought she had finished, my apologies.

Ms PRINCE: One of the issues that Moody's notes each year when they do our rating is the importance of distribution of GST revenues in Australia, using the principle of horizontal fiscal equalisation, and the relative support for the national government of sub-national governments. The ratings that Moody's or Standard & Poor's attach to each of the state jurisdictions will be affected by their budget performance, not by whether they choose to use the Commonwealth guarantee when borrowing in future. If states and territories do choose to use that facility, then we will be charged a fee for the use of that guarantee by the Commonwealth, and the fee differs depending on whether the jurisdiction's rating is AAA or AA.

Mr ELFERINK: With respect, Treasurer, that does not quite answer the question, because you asserted before that the Commonwealth guarantee had no effect on the Territory's rating. All of a sudden, we find out it does. Are you aware of this submission to the Senate?

Ms LAWRIE: Sorry, what was the question?

Mr ELFERINK: Are you aware of this submission to the Senate?

Ms LAWRIE: Yes.

Mr ELFERINK: You were?

Ms LAWRIE: Yes.

Mr ELFERINK: Okay. How did you respond to this submission to the Senate? Did you respond in any way?

Ms LAWRIE: Under Treasurer.

Ms PRINCE: Mr Elferink, we, the Northern Territory, did not make a submission to that particular inquiry. But if I could just clarify, there might be different uses of the term 'guarantee'. The Commonwealth is providing a facility whereby it will guarantee future borrowings of state and territory jurisdictions; that is different to the normal support the national government gives to all jurisdictions through transfer payments associated with the distribution of tax powers we have in Australia.

Mr ELFERINK: Indeed, 1 May 2008 was long before this guarantee - this unusual guarantee was given by the Commonwealth only a few months ago. Hang on, I have one nodding head and one shaking head.

Ms PRINCE: It is in the process of, that there is ...

Mr ELFERINK: There is no guarantee?

Ms PRINCE: It is not yet passed.

Ms LAWRIE: It has not gone through the parliament.

Mr ELFERINK: I was under the impression it was already there.

Ms LAWRIE: No, the Commonwealth has ...

Mr Elferink: Indicated by the federal government.

Ms LAWRIE: ... conveyed its intention and it still has to pass the Senate.

Mr ELFERINK: So we are talking about the base line credit assessment when Moody's is talking about the AA1 and giving it a AA2 credit rating. Treasurer, can you explain the difference between this system of assessment and the general system of assessment to me?

Ms LAWRIE: Under Treasurer.

Mr ELFERINK: I would actually like you to explain it to me, Treasurer.

Ms LAWRIE: Which system? Be more specific with your question.

Mr ELFERINK: Can you tell me about the base line credit assessment which gives us a rating of AA2?

Ms LAWRIE: The Moody's assessment, are you talking about?

Mr ELFERINK: Yes, 1 May 2008, submission to Australia's Senate Select Committee State Government Financial Management.

Ms LAWRIE: Under Treasurer, would you provide the explanation to the member for Port Darwin?

Mr ELFERINK: I want to see if you can manage it.

Ms LAWRIE: I have Treasury officials here to provide technical information to you, member for Port Darwin. I am not shy about using them.

Mr ELFERINK: There is nothing technical about a media release that screams a headline: 'Territory gets AA1 rating, 17 January 2008, Treasurer, Delia Lawrie'. Now, all of a sudden, it is technical issue, Treasurer?

Ms LAWRIE: There has been a change in methodology, and I am happy for the Under Treasurer to talk you through it, or Monty.

Mr ELFERINK: Ah, a change in methodology? Right, okay.

Mr MONTAGUE: John Montague, Senior Director, Funds Management. Last year, Moody's took a review of its methodology for assessing all governments around the world, in the ratings they applied. The recent methodology took into account the debt ratios which apply. It also took into account the level of support provided by the federal government in each state for the state jurisdiction, or the territory. This change in methodology was partly in response to the global financial crisis, but also reflected a review which was necessary to identify the level of support that states and territories receive from the Commonwealth, or from the federal jurisdiction.

Mr ELFERINK: Treasurer, just so I am clear and I am comparing apples with apples here. When Mr Montague answered the debt to revenue ratio for the rating; that is the one we have the AA1 for?

Mr MONTAGUE: Effectively, that would bring us to AA; that brings us the third level of the BCA.

Mr ELFERINK: Which is what Moody's was referring to in their submission where they say ...

Mr MONTAGUE: Yes, and then they apply another rating increment because of the support which is provided by the Commonwealth. However, that is the case as it was applied to all states.

Mr ELFERINK: Moody's says on page 7 of their submission:

As the result of the very high likelihood of Commonwealth support, these entities' ratings are lifted by one notch, to AAA and AA1 respectively.

That is in exact reference to what you are referring? Okay, apples and apples.

You would be disappointed to discover then, Treasurer, that according to Figure 1.2.2 in the Australian Capital Territory's budget, they list the Northern Territory's credit rating as AA2. I refer you to page 13 of their 2009-10 Budget, Budget Paper No 3.

Ms LAWRIE: I am not responsible for what the ACT writes in their budget.

Mr ELFERINK: No, I understand that but, gee wiz, you would be a little nervous having your credit rating bandied around in that fashion, would you not, Treasurer?

Ms LAWRIE: What I am very confident about is how one of the things of concern Moody's flagged in the past was the position of the Power and Water Corporation. Clearly, their position has been significantly improved as a result of the tough decisions government had to make. We are strengthening our position rather than weakening it.

Mr ELFERINK: I am sorry, can you say that again? I am sorry, about the Power and Water Corporation's position being ...

Ms LAWRIE: Moody's have flagged concerns in the past, of the credit rating assessments with the position of the Power and Water Corporation. The government has made some tough decisions to

improve the financial position of the Power and Water Corporation.

Mr ELFERINK: Which does not answer my question. My question is: you would be concerned, Treasurer, that other Treasuries around this country are rating you AA2?

Ms LAWRIE: I am not concerned by what ACT does or does not do.

Mr ELFERINK: Are you aware of this reference as an AA2-rated jurisdiction from the ACT?

Ms LAWRIE: The ACT is not a player in people's investment decisions in the Territory.

Mr ELFERINK: Yes, but you would be concerned if somebody was walking around telling others your credit rating was AA2 when, in fact, you assert it is not.

Ms LAWRIE: I have not spoken to the ACT Treasurer this week, but I am assuming they have not caught up with the change in methodology.

Mr ELFERINK: Perhaps it is time you should. You are assuming they have not caught up with the change? That is a large assumption to make. All right, no worries.

Getting on with other issues. I was intrigued, several times, to hear you talk about your disciplined approach to fiscal management - truly an intriguing comment. Can you describe to me how the Treasurer's Advance works?

Ms LAWRIE: Certainly. It is one of our favourite topics, is it not?

Mr ELFERINK: It is, indeed.

Ms LAWRIE: Okay. For the umpteenth time, Treasurer's Advance is a mechanism for providing additional funding to agencies during the financial year. This is provided either as a transfer for a specific one-off unexpected item, or at the end of a budget exercise where appropriation is both transferred to and from Treasurer's Advance. An amount for Treasurer's Advance is set at the time of the original budget. This allows a level of unallocated capacity in the budget at the start of a financial year. If additional requirements throughout the year are greater than the amount originally set aside in Treasurer's Advance, then the *Fiscal Management Act* allows for TA to be increased. An increase in TA does not necessarily result in worsening the end-of-year outcome, as it is a means of distributing untied funds such as tax revenue and GST revenue.

For 2008-09, TA was originally set at \$40m. During the year, additional revenue has provided the capacity to further increase TA, which has subsequently been applied to decisions affecting the 2008-09, and included in the 2008-09 Mid-Year Report and the 2009-10 Budget.

Mr ELFERINK: Okay. I know that it rankles you, but I refer to it as a piggy bank. If you condense what you have just said down to two words, that is what it is, a piggy bank. It is unallocated money in the budget. This year, it is \$40m. That is correct?

Ms LAWRIE: Yes.

Mr ELFERINK: Has been for the last two years?

Ms LAWRIE: Yes.

Mr ELFERINK: In a perfect world, you would agree – and I realise I am speaking hypothetically - where your budget comes in, and everybody produces a result and you have your budget 100% right

at the beginning of the year, and at the end of the year it all works out, that actually should turn into a \$40m surplus, should it not, for the budget?

Ms LAWRIE: We actually live in reality, not your world, member for Port Darwin.

Mr ELFERINK: I am just asking you a hypothetical situation. It should turn into a \$40m surplus, because unallocated money not spent is money not spent, yes?

Ms LAWRIE: One of the classic situations we have in the Territory is the washout of the roads network, for example. In any financial year, that requires for TA.

Mr ELFERINK: Okay, that is fine. So, the short answer to that question is yes.

I realise we do not live in a perfect world, that is why you have a Treasurer's Advance - so you can reach into that unallocated bucket of money from time to time, and use it for those little unexpected surprises in life, like Wet Seasons. Is that correct?

Ms LAWRIE: It is always the case that TA exists. That TA exists because every government needs unallocated capacity to deal with matters that arise throughout our financial year. We do not go into freeze frame from 1 May to the next May. Matters arise and government makes decisions about whether or not it attends to matters that arise in a resources allocation.

Mr ELFERINK: In the Treasurer's Advance. Can you tell me if any of the Treasurer's Advances over the last three years has been returned or formed part of the surplus; that is, has any of that \$40m allocation in the last three financial years been unexpended?

Ms LAWRIE: Yes.

Mr ELFERINK: Okay. Could you describe that to me?

Ms LAWRIE: Under Treasurer.

Ms PRINCE: Mr Elferink, I am not sure if you were saying was any of that \$40m unexpended. As you know, Treasurer's Advance has been set at \$40m each year. There are processes for increasing that Treasurer's Advance ...

Mr Elferink: I will come to that shortly.

Ms PRINCE: We follow those processes. Some of that final amount of Treasurer's Advance usually lapses because it is very difficult to predict the very precise figures that are required. It might not be the same original \$40, that is all I was trying to say.

Mr ELFERINK: From a bookkeeping point of view then, I accept what you are saying. However, has government, at any point in the last three years, been able to contain their expenditure to that \$40m level or less – taking in mind those little bookkeeping issues?

Ms LAWRIE: No.

Mr ELFERINK: No, that is right. In fact ...

Ms LAWRIE: I am advised probably not ever.

Mr ELFERINK: Well, that is fine. We are talking about your discipline, not anybody else's. I am curious. There is a mechanism, as I understand it, under the *Financial Management Act*, which

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prevents you from expending unallocated funds beyond a certain threshold at 5%. Is that correct?

Ms LAWRIE: Yes.

Mr ELFERINK: So, you have this threshold of 5%. Have we ever reached that threshold in recent years?

Ms LAWRIE: Yes, just the last financial year.

Mr ELFERINK: Yes, and how much was that amount of money, including the original \$40m?

Ms LAWRIE: Under Treasurer. I know we are going over old grounds, but ...

Mr ELFERINK: I believe it is about \$175m, I suspect.

Ms PRINCE: We believe it is \$177m, Mr Elferink.

Mr ELFERINK: There is some dispute between the Treasurer's and your financial statement, and the Auditor-General on these numbers too, is there not?

Ms LAWRIE: I would like to ...

Mr Elferink: Well, they have different numbers for it.

Ms LAWRIE: I would like to comment on that, member for Port Darwin. The dispute only exists in your interpretation, but ...

Mr Elferink: Really?

Ms LAWRIE: In the Auditor-General's November report, he largely focused on the 2007-08 Treasurer's Annual Financial Report (TAFR). Although the report was genuinely supportive, the Auditor-General provided an analysis of the components of the Treasurer's Advance of the Central Holding Authority that the shadow Treasurer – you - then alluded to in the last parliamentary sittings.

I asked the Auditor-General for his opinion on your views. I provided to the House and, at various times, separately to you through your briefings with Treasury, advice around the difference between the Auditor-General and Treasury. I asked the Auditor-General for his opinion on the issue. He has provided me with correspondence. I wrote to the Auditor-General on 12 March this year and the Auditor-General wrote back – checking the date - on 22 April. He said:

Dear Treasurer,

Thank you for your letter dated 12 March 2009 in which you sought clarification on the possible reasons for the difference between figures for the unexpended balance of Treasurer's Advance in 2007-08 contained in my November 2008 report and in the 2007-08 Treasurer's Annual Financial Report, the TAFR. As you have noted, the information conveyed in the unaudited section of the TAFR showed an amount of \$6.223m of Treasurer's Advance as being unallocated, whereas the amount shown as unallocated in my report was \$4.173m, a difference of \$2.05m.

Mr Elferink: A substantial amount of money.

Ms LAWRIE:

The legal position, as it affects the concept of allocation as set out in the Appropriation Act, is that any appropriation of public monies is cash based and the information contained in the TAFR sets out the position as it stood at midnight on 30 June 2008, the point where all appropriations authorised under the Appropriation Act lapsed. In contrast, the Treasurer's Annual Financial Statement is prepared on an accrual basis in accordance with the provisions of the Fiscal Integrity and Transparency Act, thus the information presented in the TAFR took into account ...

Mr ELFERINK: A point of order, Mr Chairman! That is quite a long letter. If she could ...

Ms LAWRIE: It is a very important issue.

Mr ELFERINK: You are just stalling and you are ...

Ms LAWRIE: No, I am not stalling.

Mr ELFERINK: Clearly, you are stalling. Let us get on with asking the next question.

Ms LAWRIE: You are beating a drum on this, so let us go through it.

Mr ELFERINK: You have made the point. The point is that it is an accrual versus cash-based expression. That is it. That is all you have to say.

Mr CHAIRMAN: Member for Port Darwin, you have asked the question and the Treasurer is still answering it.

Ms LAWRIE: Rude.

Mr ELFERINK: No, she has answered it.

Ms LAWRIE: Very rude.

There are a number of factors that may require end of year adjustments to financial ledgers including the receipt of suppliers claims for payment very late in the financial year or financial adjustments made by agencies, and these may, in turn, require variations to the unexpended balance of Treasurer's Advance after 30 June but which relate to the period ending 30 June.

Events such as those described in the previous paragraph can lead to a difference between the value of the Treasurer's Advance approved formally for transfer in accordance with the Financial Management Act and the unexpended balance that is determined after all known events have been taken into account with an accrual accounting framework.

In essence, the TAFR, in my report, reported upon the same matter but from a different perspective, one focused on the position as it stood at the point where parliamentary appropriation lapsed, while the other reported upon the overall effect upon Treasurer's Advance as a result of the activities of the general government sector for the 2007-08 year.

Mr ELFERINK: The short story is, from anybody from the outside with their nose pressed up against the glass - namely the public - if they are trying to make head or tail of these documents, all they will see is a difference. It is not until you write to the Auditor-General and get an explanation that this starts to make any sense. Surely, there would be some room between you and the Auditor-General to find some common ground on these systems of expression?

Ms LAWRIE: Member for Port Darwin, I have, as Treasurer, explained the situation to you. I have explained it in the parliament. You have chosen to ignore those explanations so I sought clarification from the Auditor-General in writing.

Mr ELFERINK: All right. You had \$177m in – this is the 2007-08 financial year, just to make sure we are talking about the same year? Okay - \$177m of unexpected expenditure in that financial year, which was \$137m over the Treasurer's Advance. I am curious what you did not expect, in your budget planning process, that cost \$177m?

Ms LAWRIE: It was *Closing the Gap*, which was a raft of policy decisions made after the budget was set - and the government does not resile from that - and a grant payment to Power and Water of \$50m.

Mr ELFERINK: Power and Water received a grant but that is a result of a Cabinet decision. Cabinet has this problem. Our Power and Water structure is falling apart, we need some more money. Cabinet sits down and says: 'We had better give them some more money, we will give them \$50m'. How could you not, in your planning processes, know that Power and Water needed an extra \$50m? During Budget Cabinet, when you put this budget together - which is what? March? April? during the year prior to the commencement of the budget - one would think you would be sending out messages to the CEO of Power and Water saying: 'What do you need?'. Power and Water would have come back and said: 'We need this, that, or the other'. Did that occur?

Ms LAWRIE: What occurred is what I have stated. The government, during the financial year, made the decision to provide a \$50m grant to Power and Water to assist it with capital programs.

Mr ELFERINK: Yes, but, before that financial year started, did you speak to the CEO or the board of Power and Water or wherever you go to for this information, and say: 'What do you need? What are your requirements for the year?'

Ms LAWRIE: That would be a very strange way of describing the way the government interacts with Power and Water in its capital and repairs maintenance requirements.

Mr ELFERINK: So, how does it work?

Ms LAWRIE: How does the construction of the budget work, or how does this course between Power and Water work?

Mr ELFERINK: How does the relationship with Power and Water work?

Ms LAWRIE: We have Treasury officials who work very closely with Power and Water and provide advice to me, as Treasurer, of how their performance is going. Subsequently, we have had a very thorough analysis of Power and Water's financials as a result of these reports.

Mr ELFERINK: So, subsequent to the beginning of that financial year, that means afterwards, in spite of the fact that Treasury officials - and when I say Treasury officials, I say you - had communicated with Power and Water, there was no indication they were going to need an extra \$50m in that financial year, to get through the financial year. Is that what I am to understand?

Ms LAWRIE: There is no budget-related request.

Mr ELFERINK: There was no budget-related request? Were they asked what their needs were?

Ms LAWRIE: Specifically, the \$50m grant was in response to the March 2008 revision that Power and Water did to their Statement of Corporate Intent.

Mr ELFERINK: So it is Power and Water's fault they did not indicate to you they needed this \$50m?

Ms LAWRIE: It is no one's fault. That is absurd. Power and Water did a revision of their SCI in March 2008. As a result of that revision, we saw the need for a \$50m grant to be made to Power and Water

to assist them with their capital program.

Mr ELFERINK: So there was a failure on the part of Power and Water because it was only after the financial year started that they reviewed their Statement of Corporate Intent and, all of a sudden, they have gone: 'Uh oh, we need an extra \$50'.

Ms LAWRIE: They are your words, not mine. I disagree with your description of that and I have been very clear in saying what occurred.

Mr ELFERINK: That is how you described it.

Ms LAWRIE: No, it is not at all.

Mr ELFERINK: Well, then describe it again.

Ms LAWRIE: What occurred in May 2008, was Power and Water did a revised SCI which looked at some increases in costs they were incurring and, accordingly, government saw the opportunity to provide them with a \$50m grant payment to help them meet their capital program requirements.

Mr ELFERINK: So you saw the opportunity, they did not come and ask you?

Ms LAWRIE: There was a discussion between Power and Water and government.

Mr ELFERINK: But you just told me that was a strange way to do business.

Ms LAWRIE: Following the SCI. Hello! You have a body work that triggers this; you have some analysis that triggers this.

Mr ELFERINK: But this should happen before the beginning of the financial year. This has happened during the financial year.

Ms LAWRIE: No. The 2007-08 budget was done in May 2007; the SCI revision was May 2008.

Mr ELFERINK: Yes, and you had to pay in that financial year. The planning process would be, one would hope, that it would appear in the next financial year, not that you suddenly had to do this on the spot, on the run.

Ms LAWRIE: We had the capacity to pay them in the 2007-08 financial year, You would recall, because I know you have been briefed on this, we also paid them another \$50m amount in the following financial year.

Mr ELFERINK: That is \$100m over two years. We are talking about your capacity to plan, Treasurer. We are not talking about them; we are talking about your capacity to plan. A budget process means you sit down and you think: 'What am I going to need for the next 12 months? What am I going to need to do my job properly?'. One would expect you would go and ask each of your departmental heads, as well as your dependent GBDs and GOCs, what they will need. That would then help you to cobble together the budget. Then you go to budget Cabinet and you do the tick and flick stuff - this is in, this is out. That is how you plan. But, what you are telling me is that during the financial year you did not anticipate - or someone did not anticipate - the requirement for \$50m to go into the Power and Water Corporation?

Ms LAWRIE: No, that is what you are saying, member for Port Darwin. Very clearly, from what I have said, Power and Water had to revise their Statement of Corporate Intent in May. There had been cost pressures in Power and Water that had occurred throughout that year. Upon revision of their SCI, we saw the government provide the capital grant of \$50m to them to help them meet the government's

ambitions in their capital program. We made a second capital grant in 2008-09 of \$50m. All of that has been stated on the public record previously.

Mr ELFERINK: I understand that, but this comes down to your planning, your capacity to see things coming. By pushing out your expenditure through the Treasurer's Advance, all the way to the 5% limit in that financial year, is indicative of an incapacity to see things coming. Let us go to another example you just gave me. How much was the *Closing the Gap* initiative of that particular financial year? You have \$50m for Power ...

Ms LAWRIE: Rounding up, \$20m for *Closing the Gap*, \$19.9m.

Mr ELFERINK: \$20m for *Closing the Gap*, I will accept your round. That takes us to \$70m of unexpected expenditure in that financial year. What other major expenditure occurred to account for the other \$100m?

Ms LAWRIE: The other matter that popped up during that financial year was \$54m to repay Alcan as a result of a court decision.

Mr ELFERINK: Okay, that takes you to \$54m. We are still \$50m-odd shy of the mark. What other Cabinet decisions were made?

Ms LAWRIE: There was an additional \$23m in new and expanded initiatives by government during that year.

Mr ELFERINK: What were they?

Ms LAWRIE: The continuation of the undergrounding of power project was \$16.6m.

Mr ELFERINK: You made that decision through the course of the financial year?

Ms LAWRIE: The 2008-09 Budget - and we are looking at Budget Paper No 2, page 12 - sets out the ...

Mr ELFERINK: So, what was it? \$16m for undergrounding power?

Ms LAWRIE: Sorry, what was your question?

Mr ELFERINK: Was it \$16m for undergrounding power? Was that correct?

Ms LAWRIE: Yes.

Mr ELFERINK: Which budget book are we in? Oh, at the back of Budget Paper No 3, right up the front?

Ms LAWRIE: If you want the final position, it is in the TAFR.

Mr ELFERINK: It is not the final position I am after.

Ms LAWRIE: In 2007-08, the new and expanded initiatives include public safety; that is, to include the Safer Streets program; digital radio network; antisocial behaviour; increased Correctional Services initiatives; health, including patient assisted travel; education, including special needs funding ...

Mr ELFERINK: What document are you reading from?

Ms LAWRIE: I am reading from the Treasurer's Annual Financial Report 2007-08, page 12. ... climate change; air quality and bushfires, aimed at protecting the environment; and additional funding for new local government shires' remote communications infrastructure.

I have already talked about the \$16.6m to complete the undergrounding of power lines for Millner and Rapid Creek. I talked about the \$50m contribution to the Power and Water infrastructure program; and, the Territory government's commitment to *Closing the Gap* initiatives.

Mr ELFERINK: Now, that is interesting. \$16.6m to complete the undergrounding of power lines for Millner and Rapid Creek. I am a little confused. How could you not expect to spend \$16.6m in your budget planning process on something like that? Surely, you would have planned for that?

Ms LAWRIE: Government received advice from Power and Water of cost increases in the program, which is part of the \$16.6m, but also the advice that if we brought funding committed forward to keep that program rolling, it would actually save us money in that we would not see a demobilisation of the workforce on the undergrounding project and the subsequent costs of starting up again. So we made the decision, even though it meant bringing the financial commitment forward into that financial year, that it would be a saving in the long run to roll the program on rather than stop the program and, then, go out to tender and restart again in the following financial year.

Mr ELFERINK: Surely, through your planning processes, Power and Water would have told you that when you were putting the budget together, would they not? Would that not have been the advice they had given? They would have known that those costing policies would have been a product of truncating, if you like, the roll-out of this program?

Ms LAWRIE: My advice is that Power and Water was still in negotiation with the contractor regarding the continuation of the program and what it would cost. As soon as they had the advice to hand, they provided that advice to government.

Mr ELFERINK: Power and Water, again, for the second time in this budget cycle, has been the poor planner.

Ms LAWRIE: No. I know you like to blame someone ...

Mr Elferink: I am trying to figure out why you cannot anticipate this sort of expenditure.

Ms LAWRIE: ... but the world does not go into freeze frame between November and May when budgets are being constructed, nor does it stay in freeze frame from May to the following May when the budgets are set. Clearly, at different points along a calendar year, there are going to be discussions and negotiations between government service providers and the private sector entities they then contract to provide those services. Hence, you have Treasurer's Advance and, hence historically, Treasurer's Advance is always used. My advice is that it was always used up to its maximum through the 1990s when there was another period of growth.

Mr ELFERINK: All of a sudden, the CLP does the right thing.

Ms LAWRIE: According to you, it is wrong, because this whole line of questioning has been that we were wrong to use the TA.

Mr ELFERINK: Well, I am trying to test the quality of your planning, not the quality of planning that occurred 12 or 13 years ago. I am talking about the quality of your planning today. I will give you an example of where you are criticised - or where your government is criticised. I direct you to the February 2000 from the Auditor-General, page 23, where he said your wages bill blew out. It was an unanticipated variation of 12% or \$120m. At the beginning of the financial year, you do not know your commitment to public sector wages so that, during the course of the financial year, you have to up it

by \$120m. That is an example of the financial planning ...

Ms LAWRIE: Sorry, which year are you referring to?

Mr ELFERINK: I am referring to the Auditor-General's report February 2006, page 23. Employee expenses budget: \$1bn, actual \$1.2 ...

Ms LAWRIE: I thought we were dealing with the 2009-10 Budget period.

Mr ELFERINK: What I am demonstrating here is your incapacity to effectively plan in a budget cycle. You sit here and say: 'Oh, we just thought we would bring this forward, and Power and Water did not know that they would need this extra \$50m'. It goes to how you prepare for your budget in each year. Each year, you find yourself going to the maximum. How are we going this year? How are we tracking? We have seen one transfer of access allocations. Are there going to be more before the end of the financial year, Treasurer?

Ms LAWRIE: Just going back to the comments the member for Port Darwin was making. In any given year, the Northern Territory government seizes upon opportunities being provided from the Commonwealth government in expanding programs and services. Funding opportunities come along whereby we seize these opportunities. We see increased Commonwealth government expenditure in the Territory and, to deliver on that, obviously, we need to hire people in NT government agencies to do the work.

You talk about a wages blowout. The reality for the Territory in the past few financial years has been increased Commonwealth expenditure for increased services and service delivery right across the Territory to meet the requirements of the agreement the Territory government signs up to. To get that increased expenditure, we hire staff. We hire the nurses to do the work in the bush; we hire the police officers to do the work in the bush. A lot of the National Water Initiative core funding that went into NRETAS during that period required staff to be hired by NRETAS. I provide these references as examples of the kind of opportunities that come along. We make no apology for hiring public servants in the Northern Territory to ensure that we meet our commitments to the Commonwealth government in Commonwealth expenditure to improve services in the Territory.

Mr ELFERINK: The Commonwealth does not advise you in advance what they are planning to spend in the Northern Territory? You do not get some sort of notification from the Commonwealth?

Ms LAWRIE: They do not necessarily flag new agreements coming up, that is for sure.

Mr ELFERINK: That is interesting, because when you go to Budget Paper No 4, in the proposed budget, page 38, you can clearly see where Commonwealth expenditure has been flagged through the Department of Health and Families. So you do get advice from the Commonwealth.

Ms LAWRIE: Under the new arrangements we do, under the Rudd government we do. That has been a marked improvement for us. I am sure ...

Mr ELFERINK: You did not know what your SPPs were in advance?

Ms LAWRIE: Hang on a second. You asked the question and I will answer it. Under the new Rudd government arrangements, we do. We have had the NPPs, and we have sat down and negotiated the NPPs with the Commonwealth. But in the past, under Howard, they were not big on forewarning the Northern Territory government, in where they were headed with some unexpected expenditure opportunities for the Territory. However, we would be big on taking those opportunities, even though we had not been forewarned.

Mr ELFERINK: Okay, so ...

Ms LAWRIE: I guess the biggest example of that was the Intervention.

Mr ELFERINK: The Intervention came along - you did not expect that, no one did. The first that Clare Martin heard of that was when she saw it on the TV. That is just poor planning on the Commonwealth's part?

Ms LAWRIE: As I have said, the relationship has vastly improved with the Rudd government in place. There is better planning. There are clearly set out arrangements in the SPPs and the NPPs, and the opportunities they have articulated. Where those NPPs would be priorities, state and territory based jurisdictions, such as ourselves, have had the opportunity to take advantage of that. We have pursued the NPPs with vigour, because they fall in the areas where the government would like to see increased service delivery in the Territory.

Mr ELFERINK: Yes, got that. I ask you the question again. The poor planning by the former federal government, in suddenly announcing changes to how the Territory is administered, was poor planning on their part? Yes? Is that what you are saying?

Ms LAWRIE: That is your strange description of the Intervention.

Mr ELFERINK: That is what you said.

Ms LAWRIE: No, that is not what I said.

Mr ELFERINK: Then tell me what you said again, because I am, obviously, a bit slow on the uptake.

Ms LAWRIE: I will go through it again. In the past, jurisdictions were not always - and the Territory was not alone in this; others had their own examples - forewarned of new funding initiatives by the Commonwealth. I used the Intervention as a pretty significant example of that. However, under the Rudd government, this has vastly improved. They have set out a clear strategy in and around initiatives above the basket of SPPs, and we have broken through the SPP barrier significantly, collapsing 90-odd agreements, down to six agreements, which has been a vast body of work, and gives a government such as ourselves, greater surety in going forward with those payments; and also greater flexibility within the basket of payment - whether it be in health or education and training, or disability, for example. That has been a vastly improved financial arrangement between the Commonwealth and the Territory.

With NPPs, we are very pleased that the Commonwealth government, early in its new term of government, articulated its priority of additional Commonwealth expenditure opportunities. The Territory government has pursued those with vigour, because, fortuitously for us, they were all in the areas where we had a desire to see increased service delivery. One of them has been homelessness funding. That has been significant. The other one has been in lower socioeconomic education, for example, a significant issue for the Territory as well. They are just two of a range of NPPs the Northern Territory government has been able to take advantage of. It assists in the preparation of budgets, to know what is coming forward in matching requirements obligations, in those National Partnership Programs. It assists us vastly. For example, in the construct of the 2009-10 Budget, we were able to ...

Mr ELFERINK: One minute to take us up to lunch - keep going.

Ms LAWRIE: I do not have a clock in front of me, member for Port Darwin.

Mr ELFERINK: I recognise a filibuster when I hear one.

Ms LAWRIE: It is not a filibuster, it is important to understand ...

Mr ELFERINK: You are just waffling.

Ms LAWRIE: ... the critical funding for the Territory. In constructing of the 2009-10 Budget, we knew what the SPPs amounts would be going forward under those SPP agreements struck in late November, early December last year; as well as the NPP matching requirements we would be signing up to. We were able to factor that into our budget planning process. Consequently, we have a vastly improved system. It makes it much better for the Treasury officials, and the Treasurer, but also working with all of those line agencies and their ministers who are involved.

Mr ELFERINK: I notice also some areas of extra expenditure. No, I will rephrase the question and come back to this. What was the projected GST income for that financial year, the 2007-08 financial year, and what was the final result?

Ms LAWRIE: Under Treasurer.

Ms PRINCE: Mr Elferink, in the 2007-08 year, there was an increase in GST revenue of \$83.8m compared with what was estimated at the time of the 2007-08 Budget.

Mr ELFERINK: \$83.8m extra?

Mr CHAIRMAN: At this point the committee, will now break for half an hour for lunch. At 1.30 pm we will resume with the Treasurer and her officials on Output 1.1.

The committee suspended.

Mr CHAIRMAN: Treasurer, we will resume where we left at lunch, which was at Output 1.1, Financial Management, and with the opposition.

Mr ELFERINK: We are going to go through this very quickly, Mr Chairman, because of the nature of the estimates process and loading up one or two ministers with a bucket load of ministries, where you have a time issue. I have one question and then I will be finishing it up in relation to Treasury.

Contingent liabilities: can you table a list of all contingent liabilities the Northern Territory currently has and the value of those liabilities?

Ms LAWRIE: Under Treasurer.

Ms PRINCE: Mr Elferink, in the TAFR, and Budget Paper No 2 every year, we include a detailed summary of all of our material contingent liabilities. That schedule is audited by the Auditor-General.

Mr ELFERINK: What page?

Ms LAWRIE: 38.

Ms PRINCE: Are you on Budget Paper No 2, page 38?

Mr ELFERINK: Yes.

Ms LAWRIE: Page 38 to 39.

Ms PRINCE: This schedule was revised about three years ago to be in line with the new standard for reporting contingent liabilities. It is done by category, as you can see.

Mr ELFERINK: These are the contingent liabilities?

Ms PRINCE: These are. In determining whether they are reported in this way or not, there is a materiality threshold, and that materiality threshold is \$5m. It has been for many years.

Mr ELFERINK: For arguments sake, with the Blacktip pipeline, if we are carrying a liability of any sort, what we might owe if the contracts fail for whatever reason, or if there is a damages action; there is a maximum amount. Where might I find that?

Ms PRINCE: There are no contingent liabilities in respect of the Blacktip pipeline. You will see there is a contingent liability in respect of the Amadeus Basin to Darwin gas pipeline. That has been in our accounts since 1986, from memory. That reflected the undeveloped nature of the gas industry in the Northern Territory when that pipeline was first constructed. There are no contingent liabilities in respect of the Blacktip pipeline.

Mr ELFERINK: Mr Chairman, I have no further questions on this Output Group.

Mr CHAIRMAN: Member for Nelson, do you have any questions on Output Group 1.1?

Mr WOOD: Treasurer, in relation to whole-of-government staffing, what percentage of agency personnel does the Treasury fund? If you have 'x' number of people in your department, do you fund all the staff or do you only fund a percentage?

Ms LAWRIE: In broad terms, the budget provides funding to agency staff. The exception to that is Commonwealth-funded programs and initiatives that its funding provides. An example of that are the Themis positions. We also provide funding to agencies in accordance with our policy regarding EBA negotiations. We have a policy around percentage increases for EBA. If EBA negotiations come in above that, the agency has to come back and present its case to Cabinet for the additional appropriation it requires.

Mr WOOD: My question related to whether some of the GBDs have to cut back if extra staff liabilities come into play, to cover those costs? In some cases, do staff have to be reduced or are there enough funds to pay for all the contingencies that might pop up in a department?

Ms LAWRIE: A very broad question and, therefore, difficult to answer. However, the government business divisions do not have the efficiency dividend applied to them. By their nature, they are revenue generating. They manage within their own budget capacity. For example, the GBD, the Construction Division, is in a growth phase because they have an increased program to run, and their revenues are healthy. That was an example.

Mr CHAIRMAN: Were you finished with consideration of Output Group 1.1?

Output 2.1 – Economic Services

Mr CHAIRMAN: Are there any questions for Output 2.1, Economic Services.

Mr ELFERINK: No.

Mr WOOD: In the Annual Report for 2007-08, it talks about an impact of the national report on the merits of adopting the National Regulatory Framework for electricity. What does that mean?

Ms LAWRIE: Mr Craig Graham, Assistant Under Treasurer.

Mr GRAHAM: Craig Graham. That review has been superseded by the review of the financial sustainability of the Power and Water Corporation, and the Mervyn Davies inquiry. What will come out

of that will be a work program which will consider options for aligning our regulatory framework with the national regime. That work will be done over the next couple of years.

Mr WOOD: What does it mean, having a National Regulatory Framework?

Mr GRAHAM: There is a national electricity market which has been developed over the last few years which has a national single regulator, and is overseen by a ministerial council.

Ms LAWRIE: The AER.

Mr GRAHAM: That is right.

Ms LAWRIE: Regulator.

Mr GRAHAM: If we were to adopt that regime we would have national regulatory bodies overseeing our electricity supply industry.

Mr WOOD: We are going to do that, are we?

Ms LAWRIE: We are, with the new Utilities Commission, continuing the work Treasury officials and the previous Utility Commissioner had been embarking upon which was looking at the potential of the Territory entering the National Regulatory Framework and what issues we have about that. Each jurisdiction has had issues about it. Western Australia is still outside it. There are some benefits to, ultimately, being in the National Regulatory Framework, but there are some issues for such a small jurisdiction to grapple with in how we would, ultimately, be in a national framework. Those are issues Treasury officials, along with the Utilities Commissioners, would work through.

We would also engage the major energy users group in discussions and consultations with some key stakeholders. We are pro-competition, but we also recognise difficulties we have in being such a small jurisdiction in population base, and with vast geographic distance in networks that have to be dealt with in the context of how that framework would apply.

What we have done is work more closely with the national regulatory environment. For example, Andrew Reeves, who we commissioned to do the latest analysis of Power and Water Corporation, is a current member of the AER board. With every assessment we make of what we are doing with our regulatory environment, we are more and more closely aligning that with the national framework. That being said, there are some significant hurdles yet to cross.

Mr WOOD: Treasurer, there was a review I believe your department was involved in of the regulatory framework for the Port of Darwin. Has that been completed, and is it available for public comment?

Ms LAWRIE: Yes, it has been completed.

Mr GRAHAM: Yes, the review has been completed and the review report is on the Northern Territory government website. I am sure I can provide that.

Mr WOOD: There is also a review of the *TIO Act*. Was that review part of the reason the Coolalinga branch was shut down?

Ms LAWRIE: No, to the latter part of the question. In the review of the *TIO Act*, I pass to the Assistant Under Treasurer.

Mr GRAHAM: The review is still under way. We have done a preliminary analysis and we are looking at some more options in more detail. It has not been completed yet.

Mr WOOD: The review covered what range of things? Did it cover things like the viability of branches?

Mr GRAHAM: No, not really, it was more the structure of TIO and its statutory framework.

Mr WOOD: There was also a review on the current workers compensation arrangement with NTPS employees. Is that also finished?

Ms LAWRIE: That is ongoing, member for Nelson.

Mr WOOD: When is that due to be completed?

Mr GRAHAM: We are looking at engaging a consultant to review some options

Mr WOOD: Another one you were looking at was updating self-insurance frameworks to provide greater clarity and direction to agencies. Has that been finished?

Mr GRAHAM: Yes, that has been finished, and the new Treasurer's Directions have been issued.

Mr WOOD: Have you completed the 30-year population projection for the whole of the Territory, and the 15-year projections for the six key regions and, if so, has that been released? It is in your 2007-08 report?

Ms LAWRIE: Yes, I am being advised.

Mr WOOD: Are those projections public?

Ms LAWRIE: Under Treasurer.

Ms PRINCE: They are ready to be released and we are organising a suitable date for when that release can be made.

Mr WOOD: It would be good if they could be released soon, because we are discussing a lot of development in regional Northern Territory. It would be good to see what figures you have there. What role is the department playing in developing climate policies and initiatives?

Ms PRINCE: Mr Wood, there is an interdepartmental working group under the chair of the Department of the Chief Minister, and we have representatives on that group. We have assisted in analysing the national modelling that has been done, and looking at initiatives that might be appropriate for the Northern Territory.

Mr WOOD: The 2007-08 annual report states, under Future Priorities, that it was going to publish the 2006-07 Indigenous Expenditure Review. Why was it going back that far to publish a review that was in the previous year, and are these Indigenous expenditure reviews an ongoing thing for each year?

Ms LAWRIE: They are every two years. What happens is that the Indigenous Expenditure Review audits expenditure that has occurred, which is why it is back cast.

Mr WOOD: What is it reviewing? The whole Commonwealth and Territory expenditure, or just ...

Ms PRINCE: The reason it is two years in arrears is because the methodology we use relies on the Commonwealth Grants Commission assessments and various categories of expenditure. The commission is about 18 months in arrears, because it has to wait until annual estimates have been

audited and published before it does its assessment. So we use its work to then do our review, hence, the two-year lag. We have done two which have been two years apart.

Under the COAG agreements from last year, there has been an agreement of all governments to undertake such reviews nationally. We are part of a national working party determining the process for that to be done. Whether we continue to publish our own, or rely on our contribution to the national publication, is something we are still working through.

Mr WOOD: What would I see in that review? Is it available to the public? And what would I get out of that review? Would I see how much money was spent on Indigenous education, housing, or health?

Ms LAWRIE: Yes, we will publish the Indigenous Expenditure Review. It breaks down into those key agencies what the expenditure is, what the percentage of the expenditure is, and what the source of the funds is.

Ms PRINCE: The review was tabled when it was done, and is publicly available. The methodology we use looks at all of the revenue the Territory receives - untied revenue through GST, tied revenue, and our own-source revenue. We allocate that for Indigenous purposes; that is why we need the Commonwealth Grants Commission's assessments. We then look at all of our own spending and we allocate it by function. We look at service agencies, support agencies. The proportions for each of those agencies is specified in the report. It is also allocated or attributed to function, as well as to agency. We are quite happy to go through that with you.

Mr WOOD: Do you relate any of that to outcomes?

Ms PRINCE: No.

Mr WOOD: It is purely on expenditure?

Ms PRINCE: It is related to revenue in and expenditure out.

Mr WOOD: Payments on behalf of the Territory. Output 2.2, is that a ...

Mr CHAIRMAN: Do you have any questions? That concludes consideration of Output 2.1.

Output 2.2 – Payments on Behalf of the Territory

Mr CHAIRMAN: Are there any questions on Output 2.2, Payments on Behalf of the Territory.

Mr ELFERINK: Lots, but I am not asking them.

Ms LAWRIE: Mr Chairman, I have a copy of the review of the regulatory framework for the Port of Darwin, for the member for Nelson - the final report.

Mr WOOD: What is the Northern Territory government or Treasury doing to reduce the Community Service Obligation costs for electricity, water and sewerage, specifically in relation to solar and wind power? I gather your job is to pay for the Community Service Obligations. Do you have any program to try to reduce that by using other forms of energy?

Ms LAWRIE: We have agreed, as part of the national commitments, to look at alternative energy sources. The government will be embarking on a body of work for that. The experience to date has been that those other forms of energy have been more expensive than the gas we currently rely on. However, that being said, the government clearly has a commitment to look at alternative forms of energy.

Mr WOOD: In relation to undergrounding of power in the northern suburbs: I could not find it in the

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2009-10 Budget. Is it in there at all, or we are not doing ...

Ms LAWRIE: I am advised the current undergrounding program will be cleared by December 2009.

Mr WOOD: That is good, Treasurer; we will be able to get the increase in water mains in the rural area – and, perhaps, even a bicycle path. That is all I have on that section, Mr Chairman.

Mr CHAIRMAN: That concludes consideration of Output 2.2, Payments on Behalf of the Territory.

OUTPUT GROUP 3.0 – Territory Revenue

Output 3.1 – Territory Revenue

Mr CHAIRMAN: Are there any questions for Output Group 3.0, Territory Revenue, Output 3.1, Treasury Revenue?

Mr ELFERINK: Lots, but once again, we have run out of time.

Ms LAWRIE: Plenty of time. We have hours left.

Mr ELFERINK: Yes, but you have several other departments to go through yet. If you want to change the estimates process, I am happy to accommodate you.

Ms LAWRIE: Plenty of time.

Mr WOOD: Just a technical question on Output 3.1. When you are looking up the figures to see how much revenue was collected in, say, 2007-08, so you can actually compare it with an estimate of 2008-09 and the estimate for 2009-10, you have to go and dig up the 2007-08 Budget. Why can we not have that column in there? When you look at this book there is an awful lot of white space here which is wasted. I do not know why we cannot have that 2007-08 Budget, which will be an actual. All we have in here is estimates all the time. Is it possible to have the 2007-08 figures in the budget, especially when we are looking at trying to compare these things?

Ms LAWRIE: I am happy to look at your suggestion, member for Nelson.

Mr WOOD: Nearly as good as a spiral bound version of the budget papers. I must admit, on record, I thank the Treasury - and a lot of people on this side of the table love them like this, it is much easier to use.

You estimated – in regard to Territory Revenue – to lose around \$75m in Territory revenue in the 2009-10 Budget compared to 2008-09. What are your forecasts for the 2010-11 and onwards? Could you give us a breakdown whether that deficit in Territory revenue will be in taxes, gambling revenue, or mining royalties?

Ms LAWRIE: We are predicting a \$10m reduction across the years in gaming taxes and, significantly, there will be a reduction in mining royalty revenue.

Mr WOOD: What figure in the mining royalties are you looking at going down?

Ms LAWRIE: Craig Vukman.

Mr VUKMAN: Craig Vukman, Executive Director, Revenue and Commissioner of Territory Revenue. I will just confirm that. Sorry, for 2009-10, was that?

Mr WOOD: Yes. Do you have forecasts for 2009-10 and 2010-11 onwards?

Mr VUKMAN: For 2009-10 it is \$160.466m for mineral royalties. 2010-11 is \$161.240m.

Mr WOOD: Yes.

Ms LAWRIE: Going forward.

Mr WOOD: Yes, they are not changing much.

Mr VUKMAN: No, our estimates are based on what the miners tell us.

Ms LAWRIE: Down from \$224.610m in 2009-10.

Mr WOOD: That is what worries me. Yes, to rely on that. Those are all the questions I have, Mr Chairman.

Mr CHAIRMAN: That concludes consideration of Output 3.1, Territory Revenue.

Output 3.2 – Tax Related Subsidies

Mr CHAIRMAN: I now call for questions relating to Output 3.2, Tax Related Subsidies.

Mr ELFERINK: Pass.

Mr CHAIRMAN: That concludes consideration of Output Group 3.0.

OUTPUT GROUP 4.0 – SUPERANNUATION

Output 4.1 - Superannuation

Mr CHAIRMAN: Are there any questions on Output Group 4.0, Superannuation, Output 4.1, Superannuation?

Mr ELFERINK: What is the COSR currently worth or its most recent valuation?

Ms LAWRIE: The COSR, as at 31 May, which is the latest figure I have, is \$339.9m. The COSR, as of 31 March 2009, which is in the budget papers, was \$318.6m. Obviously, an improvement.

Mr CHAIRMAN: That concludes consideration of Output Group 4.0.

OUTPUT GROUP 5.0 – STATUTORY BODIES

Output 5.1 – Utilities Commission

Mr CHAIRMAN: Are there any questions relating to Output Group 5.0, Output 5.1, Utilities Commission?

Mr ELFERINK: Many. We have two new commissioners, have we not?

Ms LAWRIE: I am in the process of locking in the Utilities Commission. It will be a three-person Utilities Commission.

Mr ELFERINK: We still do not have one?

Ms LAWRIE: We are in negotiations.

Mr ELFERINK: After how many months?

Ms LAWRIE: It is going well.

Mr ELFERINK: You knew this Utilities Commissioner was going in last December. Why are you not ...

Ms LAWRIE: We have some very good people lining up for it.

Mr ELFERINK: Why were you not shopping around earlier?

Ms LAWRIE: We have some very good people who I have in line of sight for the Utilities Commissioner positions.

Mr ELFERINK: You failed to plan. No more questions.

Mr CHAIRMAN: Member for Nelson? That concludes consideration of Output 5.1.

Output 5.2 – NT Build

Mr CHAIRMAN: Are there any questions relating to Output 5.2, NT Build?

Mr ELFERINK: Do you have any qualified reports on your annual report from the Auditor-General?

Ms LAWRIE: Yes, that is a matter for the NT Build Board.

Mr ELFERINK: Because it is such a difficult system to manage, it gets qualified reports. No further questions.

Mr CHAIRMAN: That concludes consideration of Output Group 5.0.

Non Output Specific Budget-Related Questions

Mr CHAIRMAN: Are there any Non Output Specific Budget related questions?

Mr ELFERINK: Been there, done that.

That concludes that.

CENTRAL HOLDING AUTHORITY

Mr CHAIRMAN: The committee will now move on to the Central Holding Authority. Are there any questions?

Mr ELFERINK: In the operating statement there is a big shift in the numbers in superannuation liability. I take it that is because of the strains of the 10-year bond rate?

Ms LAWRIE: Bond rates being the significant impact on the liabilities, as I have flagged, there has been an improvement in the bond rate since the publication of the budget, so we are on the improve.

Mr ELFERINK: It is already wrong?

Ms LAWRIE: We are on the improve.

Mr ELFERINK: We have not even started this year and we are already wrong.

Ms LAWRIE: We have written \$500m off the debt.

Mr CHAIRMAN: That concludes consideration of the Central Holding Authority.

NORTHERN TERRITORY TREASURY CORPORATION

Mr CHAIRMAN: The committee will now consider questions regarding the business line. Are there any questions?

Mr ELFERINK: No, I was going to have some questions in relation to COSR, but I will let it slip through. We can go to Justice.

Mr CHAIRMAN: That concludes all Treasury related Output Groups. On behalf of the committee, I thank all officers from the Northern Territory Treasury for coming along today. Thank you very much.

The committee suspended.

Mr CHAIRMAN: Welcome to the committee, member for Araluen, and I welcome again the minister. Minister, would you care to introduce the officials accompanying you and, if you have any opening remarks, please make them.

Ms LAWRIE: Mr Chairman, I am pleased to introduce those at the table with me: the Chief Executive Officer of the Department of Justice, Mr Greg Shanahan; the Deputy Chief Executive, Policy Coordination, Ms Elizabeth Morris; and Deputy Chief Executive, Business Strategy and Performance, Mrs Anne Bradford. I will be joined at the table by other departmental officers, as appropriate, as we move through the appropriation for this agency.

The Department of Justice works with the community and other government agencies in making justice relevant to all Territorians. It is responsible for coordinating all elements of the Territory's justice system, with the exception of policing. This involves providing services, frameworks and infrastructure required to build a fairer and safer community. The department also undertakes licensing and regulations within a range of industries.

Mr Chairman, the Department of Justice was expanded during the year to include NT WorkSafe, which joined the agency from the then Department of Employment, Education and Training in August 2008. The WorkSafe output group continues to provide advice on safe work practices, enforces compliance with occupational health and safety standards, and works to improve workers' compensation outcomes.

The Solicitor for the Northern Territory Output Group provides civil litigation, commercial and native title legal services to government, manages the outsourcing of selected legal services, and administers the scheme which provides financial support to victims of crime.

The Court Support and Independent Officers Output Group provides administrative support services to enable courts and tribunals to administer justice for the community. The group includes higher courts, lower courts and tribunals, the Community Justice Centre, Fines Recovery Unit, Registry-General, Public Trustee, Information Commissioner, Public Interest Disclosures, Consumer Affairs, Anti-Discrimination Commission, and the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions.

This output group will manage an additional \$2.3m in 2009-10 to address increasing court activity levels and strengthen security and safety measures at courts in Darwin and Alice Springs. The department will also upgrade and install videorecording and videoconferencing facilities to protect vulnerable witnesses and streamline court processes through an additional funding of \$400 000.

An additional \$1.03m will be provided through the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions in 2009-10 to improve the prosecution of offenders and increase support for witnesses in remote and regional areas. The Court Support and Independent Officers Output Group now also includes the Public Interest Disclosures, which is responsible for the establishment of the Office of the Commissioner for Public Interest Disclosures. \$270 000 has been provided for this purpose in accordance with the new *Public Interest Disclosure Act*. It is intended this act will commence in July of this year. The Information Commissioner, Public Interest Disclosures, Consumer Affairs, Anti-Discrimination Commissioner and the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions also have independent statutory roles in protecting the communities' legal rights and property interests.

The Correctional Services Output Group comes under the portfolio responsibility of the Minister for Correctional Services, Hon Gerald McCarthy. I will be answering questions of a corporate nature for the whole of the Department of Justice, but questions relating to operational aspects of this output group should be directed to minister McCarthy.

The Policy Coordination Output Group provides strategic, legal and social policy advice to government, and monitors and coordinates the implementation of related government policies and research. This output group includes Community and Justice Policy, Legal Policy Research and Statistics, Community Benefit Fund and Community Justice Grants.

Through the Community and Justice policy, \$960 000 has been allocated for information for referral services that provide help in assessing and accessing supported accommodation, return to home services, and a night patrol service in the Darwin area.

Mr Chairman, the Community Benefit Fund, under this output group along with the whole of the Licensing Regulation and Alcohol Strategy Output Group, come under the portfolio responsibility of the Minister for Racing, Gaming and Licensing, and the Minister for Alcohol Policy, Hon Kon Vatskalis, MLA. While I will be answering questions of a corporate nature for the whole of the department, questions relating to operational aspects of these outputs should be directed to minister Vatskalis. I look forward to any questions the committee may have.

Mr CHAIRMAN: Before we go on to questions to the opening statement, I welcome the member for Braintree to the committee.

Are there any questions to the opening statement?

Ms CARNEY: No questions to the opening statement.

Mr WOOD: No.

Agency Specific Whole-of-Government Related Questions

Mr CHAIRMAN: We move onto Agency Specific Whole-of-Government Related questions. Are there any questions?

Ms CARNEY: Minister, carbon emissions. How much is your department producing now in kilowatt hours and tonnes?

Ms LAWRIE: I defer to my Chief Executive Officer, Mr Shanahan.

Mr SHANAHAN: I will pass to Anne, Deputy Chief Business Strategy and Performance.

Ms BRADFORD: Anne Bradford. We have been advised this morning the numbers we need to give you relate to the 2006-07 year, because they are the ones that have been published. In that year, our CO2 emissions were 8368 tonnes. DOJ is one of the agencies participating in the Government Energy Efficiency Program, (GEEP), together with DET, Police, NRETAS, and DHF. The program was established to assist agencies ...

Ms CARNEY: I am sorry, can I interrupt you? You have answered that question. I do not need to know the background. I just wanted to know how much is being used. You referred to 2006-07; you do not have any figures for 2007-08?

Ms BRADFORD: Not that have been published, no.

Ms CARNEY: When you say not published, do you have those figures or not, minister?

Ms LAWRIE: I will ask Anne. Do we have more current figures?

Ms BRADFORD: Unfortunately, the program is overseen by a different department. They have not been published at this stage.

Ms CARNEY: Do you mean they have not been given to you; that is, to the department?

Ms BRADFORD: Yes.

Ms CARNEY: Carbon emissions. Agencies individual strategies to reduce emissions and the time frame of these reductions. In other words, what strategies do you have to reduce emissions and the time frames thereof?

Ms LAWRIE: I defer to Mr Shanahan.

Mr SHANAHAN: In the 2009-10 year, we will be implementing the recommendations of an environmental management system consultancy which we are in the process of seeing through. That should provide a whole-of-agency response to managing our carbon emissions. It will overhaul the Magistrates Court lighting and, in addition to the whole-of-government stuff, particularly focus on the Magistrates Court lighting. It will contain insulation and zoning controls and the latest lighting technology to further decrease the agency's energy consumption. However, it will also be co-locating staff to reduce energy costs for shared infrastructure; that is, office equipment. In the Centre particularly, it will be co-locating staff in Alice Springs, Katherine and Nhulunbuy to reduce operational overheads, including energy usage. \$85 000 has been allocated for the energy management upgrades as per the UMG consultancy report, includes changing lighting systems, air-conditioning systems and controls, ventilation and hot water systems and the like. The department continues to reduce its six- and eight-cylinder range of vehicles and increase its four-cylinder and hybrid range.

Anne Bradford, who is sitting here, is an ambassador for the One Million Women Inspiring Climate Action. This is a national program, as I understand it, so we are well aware of what is happening in that field. A staff awareness campaign to switch off lights and turn off computers after hours will be conducted. We will also be implementing double-sided printing, providing recycling bins and placing tips for recycling and greener work habits on notice boards.

Ms CARNEY: Utilities increases. What is the effect on the bottom line for the agency in 2009-10?

Ms LAWRIE: I defer to my Mr Shanahan.

Mr SHANAHAN: The strict answer is, we do not know at this stage. We are in the process of negotiating a contract.

Ms CARNEY: That is fine, thanks. Staffing: how many graduates or apprentices started with the department in 2007, 2008, and 2009?

Ms LAWRIE: I defer to my Mr Shanahan.

Mr SHANAHAN: For graduates, in 2006 ...

Ms CARNEY: If you have it in tabled form, you can table it.

Ms LAWRIE: We do not.

Mr SHANAHAN: For graduates, there were four in 2006-07; four in 2007-08 and four in 2008-09. They comprise three for the Northern Territory and one for the DPP. For apprentices, in 2006-07 there were three; in 2007-08, four; and in 2008-09, seven. Prisoner Officers in training, for 2006-07, there were 16; in 2007-08, 29; in 2008-09, 81. In Community Corrections promotion parole officers, there were five in 2006-07; four in 2007-08; and seven in 2008-09. For the National Indigenous Cadetship program, in 2007-08 there were three; in 2008-09 there was one.

Ms CARNEY: How many graduates and/or apprentices are still with their original department?

Mr SHANAHAN: Of the 2006-07 four graduates employed by us, three are still employed by us. One is now employed by DPI. In 2007-08, of the four graduates employed by DOJ one is still employed by us. The remaining three are no longer in the NT government. Of the 2008-09 graduates, the four of them commenced in January and they are still with us. They have not completed their program yet.

Ms CARNEY: How many are still with the NT government, all up?

Ms LAWRIE: I defer to my Mr Shanahan.

Mr SHANAHAN: Eight of the 12, with the NTG. Four have gone. That is just for the graduates, not for apprentices.

Ms CARNEY: In respect to apprentices? What is the answer?

Mr SHANAHAN: Nine out of 17 are still with us.

Ms CARNEY: In respect to disciplinary matters, can you tell me the number of reports in 2008-09 for improper use of computers?

Ms LAWRIE: Mr Shanahan.

Mr SHANAHAN: There were four.

Ms CARNEY: How many of those reports resulted in disciplinary action?

Mr SHANAHAN: Four.

Ms CARNEY: How many credit cards have been issued to departmental staff?

Mr SHANAHAN: There were 155, all up.

Ms CARNEY: How many transactions for personal items or services are outstanding?

Mr SHANAHAN: Our policy states there is to be no personal use of credit cards. No breaches have been identified.

Ms CARNEY: What disciplinary action was taken for each outstanding incident?

Mr SHANAHAN: For the credit cards?

Ms CARNEY: Yes.

Mr SHANAHAN: None - no breaches.

Ms CARNEY: In relation to public events, I have been asked to ask you to list the public events, conferences and public forums sponsored by the department in 2008-09. What are they predicted to be in 2009-10? If you have it in tabled form, can you table it?

Ms LAWRIE: I am writing all over it.

Mr SHANAHAN: The Court Support Services in 2008-09 hosted a function for the unveiling of the Chief Justices' portraits. Consumer Affairs held film nights in remote communities in conjunctions with - I think it was ADC at the time. Office of Information Commissioner sponsored the NT Young Lawyers Golden Gavel award to the tune of \$150, and it plans to do so again next year ...

Ms Lawrie: Good value.

Mr SHANAHAN: Other parts of the department also sponsored it ...

Ms Carney: Generosity knows no bounds.

Mr SHANAHAN: The Office of the Registrar General, Public Trustee, held a national Public Trustees meeting in Darwin, and sponsored a dinner out of that - I think it was - or function. DPP hosted the national executive of DPPs in 2008-09.

The Anti-Discrimination Commissioner in 2008-09 hosted the Human Rights Day celebration in December. They also hosted or co-sponsored an International Women's Day dinner on 7 March. They also co-sponsored the Women with Disabilities Photographic Exhibition held in the Supreme Court foyer in March. The ADC also sponsored the Darwin Community Legal Service Human Rights Art Prize. Planning is still under way for 2009-10 by the ADC. We plan to cover Human Rights Day celebrations, the National Women's Day dinner and a photographic exhibition with Women With Disabilities theme in Katherine and Alice Springs ...

Ms CARNEY: That is for 2009-10?

Mr SHANAHAN: Yes. That is planned for next year. Correctional Services in 2008-09 ...

Ms CARNEY: Can I stop you there? Correctional Services will be asked the same questions on Friday.

Mr SHANAHAN: Policy hosted Gambling Awareness Week activities. The Solicitor of the Northern Territory did not put on any functions. Licensing, that is another minister.

As for Corporate management, we plan to host the Standing Committee of Attorneys-General in Alice Springs this year in August. We are participating in the Government Business Expo and the show circuit. We sponsor some of our staff to attend some of the Law Week functions as well, and the opening of the legal year. For WorkSafe, there is a plan to conduct the inaugural NT WorkSafe Safety Awards in the coming year.

Ms CARNEY: I have been asked to ask how do you define advertising?

Mr SHANAHAN: Advertising is a one-off activity or part of a campaign. It may include radio, print, TV, exhibition equipment, Yellow Pages, signs, *Gazetta*/ notices, or bereavement notices. A campaign comprises two or more marketing tools or mediums.

Ms CARNEY: What is the department's budget for advertising? What was it in 2008-09, and what is it going to be for 2009-10?

Mr SHANAHAN: In 2008-09 it was \$271 730, and year-to-date we have spent \$234 009.

Ms CARNEY: Do you have this in table form? Can you provide us with a breakdown of 2008-09 by each area of advertising: newspaper, radio, TV, community, newsletters, etcetera?

Ms LAWRIE: We will be happy to table the information we have.

Ms CARNEY: I believe you have answered this. How much is year-to-date expenditure?

Ms LAWRIE: He answered in the previous answer.

Mr SHANAHAN: \$234 009.

Ms CARNEY: What advertising campaigns have been undertaken by the department in 2008-09, not already mentioned and, if you have any, can you let us know what regions they occurred in?

Mr SHANAHAN: We will table that.

Ms CARNEY: Does that also include the next question? How many of the campaigns were translated into local dialects or languages?

Ms LAWRIE: It does not include that.

Ms CARNEY: What is the answer?

Ms LAWRIE: We will have to take that on notice.

Question on Notice 2.1

Mr CHAIRMAN: Member for Araluen, for the purposes of *Hansard*, can you please restate your question?

Ms CARNEY: Do we have a number for that document that we just tabled because I can reference it to that? It is in respect of document No 7, how many of the campaigns listed thereon were translated into local languages?

Ms LAWRIE: I am happy to take that question on notice.

Mr CHAIRMAN: For the purposes of *Hansard* I allocate that question No 2.1.

Ms CARNEY: For each campaign who was contracted to write material for print, visual or audio platforms?

Ms LAWRIE: The information has gone with the tabled document.

Ms CARNEY: Let me know if this is the same. For each campaign who was contracted to do the artwork for print, visual, or audio platforms?

Ms LAWRIE: The Restricted Areas and Other Alcohol Restrictions were written in Health. The Misuse of Drugs legislation changes were written in-house as was the Photo Id and the Parental Responsibility. I am advised the campaigns translated into local languages were Restricted Areas, Other Alcohol Restrictions, Misuse of Drugs legislation changes, Photo Id and Parental Responsibility. The Marvin program was used for messages about the Fines Recovery Unit, the Corrections Inmates Handbook, courts and the Community Justice Centre. Consumer Affairs also uses the program for consumer messaging to Indigenous people on a variety of relevant issues; for example, door-to-door trading.

Answer to Question on Notice 2.1

Ms LAWRIE: We have an answer for that question on notice. In terms of businesses or individuals contracted for the artwork, print, visual or audio platforms: Restricted Areas and Other Alcohol Restrictions used Sprout, Big Picture and Norsign; Misuse of Drugs Legislation was in-house design; Photo ID was Sprout originally, but some changes were made in-house; Parental Responsibility was through Sprout doing print design and Cutting Edge, TV. All were paid in the previous financial year 2007-08. The Government Printing Office does the majority of our print jobs. If there is something urgent and GPO are not able to provide the services, the department uses Coleman's Printing, but I am advised this did not occur during 2008-09.

Ms CARNEY: What plans are in place for TV advertising in 2009-10?

Ms LAWRIE: None at this stage.

Ms CARNEY: Anywhere in the Territory?

Ms LAWRIE: That is the advice I have received. Not at this stage.

Ms CARNEY: My final question: is the advertising material approved by the minister, the minister's office or the Chief Executive Officer and, if none of these, who is authorised to release advertising and/or promotional material?

Ms LAWRIE: I am advised the steps are the following: the advertisement is developed, the copy and design are signed off by the director of the relevant unit and/or the executive director of the division. Then, the chief executive provides approval for major advertising campaigns, not the minor ones. The advertisement is then placed. The chief executive is kept in the loop regarding major advertising campaigns.

Ms CARNEY: Thank you. Now let us get to the other stuff. I will not say more interesting, but there you go.

Mr CHAIRMAN: The member for Nelson has no questions on Agency Specific Whole-of-Government, so that concludes the questions for this.

OUTPUT GROUP 1.0 – SOLICITOR FOR THE NORTHERN TERRITORY

Output 1.1 – Solicitor for the Northern Territory

Mr CHAIRMAN: Are there any questions on Output Group 1.0, Solicitor for the Northern Territory, Output 1.1, Solicitor for the Northern Territory?

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Ms CARNEY: I have many questions but I will narrow them down. Minister, in previous budgets in this output, there was Agency Legal Services. Amongst its functions it assisted in the administration of the Crimes Victims Assistance Scheme. It has been removed from this output this year. Can you tell me why and where it has gone?

Ms LAWRIE: Mr Shanahan.

Mr SHANAHAN: It is included in the Solicitor for the NT.

Ms CARNEY: Hang on. Solicitor for the NT, so ...

Mr SHANAHAN: Which is this one.

Ms CARNEY: ... you have actually taken the output – because it was a separate output last year, correct?

Mr SHANAHAN: Yes.

Ms CARNEY: So it has been absorbed into Solicitor for the NT?

Ms LAWRIE: Yes.

Ms CARNEY: Does that mean the money it had last year, which was about \$390 000, has similarly been absorbed into Solicitor for the NT?

Ms LAWRIE: Yes.

Ms CARNEY: Why was it done?

Mr SHANAHAN: Just an internal management restructure. The Crime Victims Services Unit - CVSU - has also been brought under that. There are some efficiencies to be gained with that.

Ms CARNEY: During 2008-09 to date, did the Solicitor for the Northern Territory retain any consultants, legal practitioners and others? If so, can you please provide their names and how much individuals or companies were paid, as well as detail the purposes for which they were retained? While you are there - and I know you have this in tabled form – can you also provide details of monies paid to the private profession in 2008-09? You usually give us three documents. One is called 'Ad hoc Expenditure', the other 'Expenditure and Local Practitioners' and the third 'Expenditure on Interstate and Overseas Practitioners'?

Mr SHANAHAN: Yes, we have all those.

Ms CARNEY: Thank you.

Ms LAWRIE: We have 'Outsourced Legal Costs – Local', 'Outsourced Legal Costs – Interstate' and 'Outsourced Legal Advice Ad hoc'. I am happy to table them.

Ms CARNEY: Last year – through you, minister – I think it was you, Mr Shanahan, we talked about the Crimes Victims Services Unit. Can you tell me whether the unit is operating in Alice Springs now?

Ms LAWRIE: Mr Shanahan.

Mr SHANAHAN: Not as a stand alone unit.

Ms CARNEY: Not as a stand alone?

Mr SHANAHAN: No.

Ms CARNEY: Where is it operating?

Mr SHANAHAN: Primarily in Darwin.

Ms CARNEY: Okay. When you say it is not operating in Alice Springs as a stand alone, in what form is it operating?

Mr SHANAHAN: It has various outlets for information it distributes. It uses the court in Alice, and police stations in remote ...

Ms CARNEY: But does it have an office?

Mr SHANAHAN: Not at the moment. Last time I advised we were going to have a one-stop shop in Alice Springs.

Ms CARNEY: You did.

Mr SHANAHAN: Yes, and we are still in the process of doing that.

Ms CARNEY: Still in the process? Twelve months after the event?

Mr SHANAHAN: Yes, there have been a number of things happening in Alice Springs in terms of government ...

Ms CARNEY: Well, not as much as I would like frankly, but ...

Mr SHANAHAN: ... but there has been a bit of a reshuffling ...

Ms LAWRIE: Can we just let Mr Shanahan complete the answer?

Ms CARNEY: Well, he is answering the question. So, let me see if I have this right. Minister, 12 months ago your predecessor sat here and said there would be a one-stop shop for this stuff in Alice Springs and it still has not happened. Shame on you. Let us move along.

Ms LAWRIE: Mr Shanahan, could you please provide the member for Araluen the answer you were giving when she interrupted you?

Mr SHANAHAN: We were ready to go. It went to tender, I believe, before Christmas. There were, subsequently, a number of government accommodation shuffles in Alice Springs. We were caught up in that. At the moment, we are out to tender again and we are just about to let that tender.

Ms CARNEY: Is there a person working in the Crimes Victims Services Unit in Alice Springs or has the person who worked there been assigned somewhere else in the agency?

Mr SHANAHAN: There are people there and they will be charged with, amongst other things, distributing that information. Last year some money was given to us by government to speed up the process as part of the last Budget Cabinet. That has improved the number of claims processed, which shows in the figures we are seeing now, as well as in the proposals we have to report to government

by next year.

Ms CARNEY: So the Crimes Victims Services Unit - which came into being two years ago as a result of getting rid of the old Crimes Compensation Scheme and which, in Darwin last year, boasted seven employed full-time equivalents - still in Alice Springs has no staff nor a functioning office? Have I hit the nail on the head?

Ms LAWRIE: We will walk you through it. When we reformed the Crimes Victims Assistance Scheme in May 2007, it was estimated approximately 300 to 350 applications were submitted per annum.

Ms CARNEY: A point of order, Mr Chairman! Thank you. That was not my question. That might be an answer to a different question, but it was not my question. I just wanted to know, whether I have this right: no Crimes Victims Services Unit in Alice Springs and no person assigned to it? Correct? Have I got that?

Ms LAWRIE: What Mr Shanahan told you is that the department is going out to tender to establish the stand-alone crime victims one-stop shop for Justice in Alice Springs. The number of applications received by the Crimes Victims Services Unit in 2007-08 was 467 applications, which is significantly higher than the estimate. From 1 July 2008 to 30 April 2009, 488 applications were received.

Ms CARNEY: Can I stop you there? I do not want to know how many applications were received. You have answered my question. Thank you so much. I would like to move to another area. I will forgo the remaining questions for Solicitor for the NT in Output 1.1.

Mr CHAIRMAN: Member for Nelson?

Mr WOOD: How much involvement in the Blue Mud Bay decision did your department have, and do you have any idea how much that cost?

Ms LAWRIE: Mr Shanahan.

Mr SHANAHAN: The Aboriginal Land Division of Solicitor for the NT instructs most of the counsel involved in that. In the Blue Mud Bay case, we briefed external counsel. The cumulative cost for the years 2003-04 through to now is \$761 000.

Mr WOOD: What years does that cover?

Mr SHANAHAN: From 2003-04 through to 2008-09.

Mr WOOD: Is there anything else happening on that front, or is it completed?

Mr SHANAHAN: In terms of the legals, it is completed. The negotiations are ongoing with the various land councils.

Mr WOOD: Are you able to give a list of properties forfeited under the Criminal Property Forfeiture Scheme for 2007-08 and 2008-09?

Mr SHANAHAN: We do not give those details. They are highly confidential.

Mr WOOD: Do you know what the value would be then?

Mr SHANAHAN: We report that under Public Trustee, because that is the body that deals with that.

Mr WOOD: The 2007-08 annual report mentions you are still dealing with the Timber Creek

acquisition cases. Is that completed, and could you explain what exactly it is about?

Ms LAWRIE: The Timber Creek decision has been handed down.

Mr WOOD: Could you refresh our memory? What that was all about? Was it a native title claim?

Mr SHANAHAN: Yes, it was a native title claim over Timber Creek, including land within the town. The critical point about that claim was that it found exclusive native title rights, which is almost equivalent to freehold, in terms of access to land, as opposed to normal native title rights, which means the right to go on the land and share it with others for your own Indigenous cultural practices - hunting and that sort of thing. That took it up another notch.

Mr WOOD: Is there a summary of that case one can read?

Ms LAWRIE: We could get one to you, member for Nelson.

Mr CHAIRMAN: That concludes consideration of Output 1.1,
OUTPUT GROUP 2.0 – COURT SUPPORT and INDEPENDENT OFFICES
Output 2.1 – Higher Courts

Mr CHAIRMAN: Are there any questions on Output Group 2.0, Court Support and Independent Offices, Output 2.1, Higher Courts?

Ms CARNEY: Minister, how much was spent on newspapers for judges and magistrates in 2008-09, and how does that compare to the preceding year? When I say newspapers, I mean local, interstate and international publications.

Ms LAWRIE: Mr Shanahan.

Mr SHANAHAN: We will have to take that on notice, but I do recall it being an entitlement under their determination.

Ms CARNEY: Sorry?

Mr SHANAHAN: It is an entitlement for the judges.

Ms CARNEY: Newspapers?

Mr SHANAHAN: Yes.

Ms CARNEY: Under the RTD?

Mr SHANAHAN: Yes.

Ms CARNEY: Do you know that for sure.

Mr SHANAHAN: That is my understanding. We will confirm that.

Question on Notice 2.2

Mr CHAIRMAN: Member for Araluen, for the purposes of the *Hansard*, would you mind restating your question.

Ms CARNEY: How much was spent on newspapers, including local, interstate and international newspapers, for judges and magistrates in 2008-09? How does that compare with the preceding year? Obviously, minister, can you ...

Mr CHAIRMAN: You are prepared to take that on notice?

Ms LAWRIE: Yes, I am happy to take that on notice.

Mr CHAIRMAN: For the purposes of *Hansard*, that is question No 2.2.

Ms CARNEY: Minister, are you aware that it is part of the judges' and magistrates' RTD?

Ms LAWRIE: I would have to seek confirmation on that.

Ms CARNEY: How about we ask that question on notice as well? I understand it probably runs into the vicinity of about \$20 000 a year, so I am keen to know whether it is part of the RTD or whether it is a cost borne by the Department of Justice.

Question on Notice 2.3

Mr CHAIRMAN: Member for Araluen, for the purposes of *Hansard*, would you mind restating your question?

Ms CARNEY: Are newspapers, including local, interstate and international newspapers for judges and magistrates part of the Remuneration Tribunal Determination for them?

Mr CHAIRMAN: Minister, you are prepared to take that question on notice?

Ms LAWRIE: Yes.

Mr CHAIRMAN: For the purposes of *Hansard*, I allocate that question No 2.3.

Ms CARNEY: One quick question on this general Output 2.0.

Ms LAWRIE: Sorry, I thought we were on 2.1, but we are on 2.0?

Ms CARNEY: I am sorry, yes, my apologies.

Mr CHAIRMAN: Sorry, we are on Output 2.1, Higher Courts, which is the portion of the Output Group 2.0.

Ms CARNEY: Are you prepared to take a question which applies to higher courts and lower courts?

Ms LAWRIE: Yes.

Ms CARNEY: There was, according to the budget papers for court services and independent officers, only a \$2.1m increase. In 2008-09 the allocation was \$46.6m. In 2009-10 it is \$48.7m or thereabouts. The announcements made to areas in these output groups, though, trouble me because there was \$400 000 to upgrade videoconferencing, \$2.3m for additional Magistrates Court security and court support staff, \$1.03m for the DPP, and \$27 000 to establish the Office of the Commissioner for Public Interest Disclosure. That adds up to about \$4m or thereabouts. Yet, in the budget paper it only

received a \$2.1m increase. Can you explain to me the discrepancy?

Ms LAWRIE: We will get the details of the funding breakdown.

Mr SHANAHAN: There are two significant items in there for next year. They will come back on stream. The way the *Supreme Court Act* works, there is an automatic appropriation for any money spent on acting judges and the like. That money is allocated by way of TA or adjustment during the year. Last year, that figure was \$587 000 – that is, this financial year. Whilst we get it this year, it is not counted next year until it happens and, then, we are reimbursed for that. This time next year, the figure will probably increase by that amount.

Ms CARNEY: So there is this slush fund – and I say this with tongue in cheek ...

Mr SHANAHAN: No, it has not ...

Ms CARNEY: There is money that goes around that you can recover the following year, and that patches up a shortfall somewhere. Is that right?

Ms LAWRIE: No.

Mr SHANAHAN: For judges it does.

Ms LAWRIE: For judges, the appropriation is paid - obviously, when we know what the cost of the judges is - to the Department of Justice.

Ms CARNEY: Even accepting you got \$500 000 from this area - which I still do not understand – but, accepting you got it, there is still a shortfall, because \$2.1m is the increase from the budgetary allocation from 2008-09 to 2009-10 ...

Mr SHANAHAN: I have not finished yet. The other part is that public prosecutions get money from the police to employ lawyers who do summary matters. That comes out at the start of year and goes back in when we get the money from the police, so there is another \$0.5m.

Ms CARNEY: So you are up to \$3.1m.

Mr SHANAHAN: That takes you up to \$3.2. They get money from the Agents Licensing Guarantee Fund to administer the *Residential Tenancies Act*. Again, that comes out at the start of the year, but goes back in. That figure is \$120 000.

Ms CARNEY: Have you finished?

Mr SHANAHAN: I am trying to clarify one other matter.

Ms LAWRIE: In the additional magistrates, there is also a continuing component of *Closing the Gap* funds that cater to the additional magistrates, so the funding recognises the increase in funding needed to bring the additional magistrates into the system. There are some ongoing funds allocated through *Closing the Gap* for that, as well.

Ms CARNEY: Okay. Is that it? Are we done?

Mr SHANAHAN: Yes.

Ms CARNEY: It is interesting, is it not, that the calculation does not seem to make sense - ask an honest question, get an honest answer - and yet, mysteriously, none of this appears in any of the

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government puffery about the budget. Nowhere in your media releases or reports to parliament do ministers say: 'By the way, this is not new money. This is carried over from somewhere from the year before'. Is this a deliberate tactic on the part of the government?

Ms LAWRIE: No, we announced new money. Catering to those areas of services there are existing funds transferred from one financial year to another.

Ms CARNEY: But you do not tell people about it, though, do you? A normal person would think the government has announced \$4m worth of new money, but it is not really new money, is it?

Ms LAWRIE: We did not make the \$4m announcement. We announced the component that is new money - additional new funding.

Ms CARNEY: We will agree to disagree on that one. We are still on higher courts?

Mr CHAIRMAN: Yes.

Ms CARNEY: In April 2008, there was a case in the Supreme Court in Alice Springs, which was abandoned because of poor equipment. We even talked about it in estimates last year. Justice Eames had much to say about the substandard equipment in Alice Springs for witnesses to pre-record their evidence and have that played to the court. Has that been fixed?

Ms LAWRIE: Subsequent to the Eames decision to discontinue the trial and discharge the jury, the Department of Justice commissioned Rod Louey-Gung of IC Design Australia, an expert in court videoconferencing, to review the equipment in the vulnerable witness room and the relevant courtroom at the Alice Springs Court House. The systems in the two rooms had been installed at different times by different contractors at a total cost of about \$125 000.

The expert noted some compatibility problems had arisen between the two systems and recommended upgrades. Acting on that advice, the Department of Justice has upgraded the vulnerable witness room and both videoconferencing systems, at an extra cost of almost \$110 000. The upgrades include enhancements to lighting, air-conditioning, sound-proofing, microphones, and the audio and video systems including simplifying controls in the court room itself. A new trial proceeded in September 2008, after the recorded evidence was restored to this suitable quality. The defendant was convicted on one count of indecent assault.

Separately, there is planning for construction of a separate toilet in close proximity to the vulnerable witness room. That is under way. This will reduce the prospects of contact between vulnerable witnesses, families and associates of alleged offenders.

Ms CARNEY: Thank you. I am happy this seemingly minor problem has been solved. As a practitioner in that court many years ago, and knowing practitioners who continue to work there, who would have thought that a toilet would take so long to install for the benefit of vulnerable witnesses? Thank you.

There was an announcement by the government of \$400 000 to upgrade and install new videoconferencing facilities with witness box recording capability to protect vulnerable witnesses. I take it that is for somewhere other than Alice Springs? If so, where?

Ms LAWRIE: \$200 000 is for the upgrade assistance to allow recording of evidence from the witness box in three Darwin courts. These are two in the Supreme Court and one in the Magistrates Court. This caters for amendments to the *Evidence Act*, which allows a victim to give evidence only. These upgrades will mean that whether the evidence is given in court or in a separate room, the evidence can be recorded. If there is a retrial or a mistrial, recorded evidence can be used at the subsequent trial.

\$200 000 is to install a new videoconferencing facility in Court 2 in Alice Springs, including the capacity to record from the witness box. This will be available for use for vulnerable witnesses and for links with the prison. The commencement date for the above projects is dependent on the outcome of a departmental review of their videoconferencing facilities, but, I am advised, it is anticipated they will be completed by December of this year.

Ms CARNEY: Nothing for Tennant Creek or Katherine?

Ms LAWRIE: There is a further \$320 000 to be spent on upgrades to court houses and the following projects are either under way or planned for 2009-10: a new interview room and witness box upgrade at Nhulunbuy; expanded office space and conference areas at Alice Springs Court House for new in-custody interview rooms to be built to upgrade existing facilities; new chambers to be built for a judge in the existing library space; and existing offices to be altered to accommodate an additional magistrate. In addition, two new holding cells and a new toilet adjacent to the front of the witness room, and a new office to accommodate court administration staff for Darwin will be built. Works will be carried out to allow civil registry court recording, court permissions, court administration staff and domestic violence legal service to move to Zone B of Nicholls Place. The move will free up space in Zone A for use by court stakeholders.

That is anticipated to be completed by June of this year. There is also an upgrade to Darwin's Supreme Court jury muster room; alterations to allow direct access through registry; an upgrade to the witness box at Tennant Creek Court House; and improved security and minor upgrades at Alyangula Court House.

For the longer term, under my instruction, we have created a working party involving the Department of Justice, the Department of Planning and Infrastructure and Northern Territory Treasury to investigate options for the future of court facilities in Alice Springs.

Ms CARNEY: I am done with that one. I am happy to go on to the next one.

Mr CHAIRMAN: Member for Nelson, any questions? That concludes consideration of Output 2.1.
Output 2.2 – Lower Courts and Tribunals

Mr CHAIRMAN: The committee will now proceed to Output 2.2, Lower Courts and Tribunals.

Ms CARNEY: Thank you. In relation to magistrates you announced in the budget, two new magistrates, one in Darwin and one in Alice Springs. Has advertising started? If not, why not?

Ms LAWRIE: We did not specify where, in terms of location, for the two new magistrates. We funded two new magistrates and the decision of the placement of magistrates will be made by the Chief Magistrate. In terms of recruitment ...

Ms CARNEY: It is not guaranteed that Alice Springs will get one of the magistrates?

Ms LAWRIE: Looking at workload, I would be surprised if there was not an extra magistrate established in Alice Springs. Looking at the upgrade to the facilities, we are catering for an extra magistrate in Alice Springs.

Mr SHANAHAN: We are about to go for expressions of interest for the position.

Ms CARNEY: No Deputy Chief Magistrate has been appointed for ages. Why is that?

Ms LAWRIE: I defer to Mr Shanahan.

Mr SHANAHAN: The Chief Magistrate has a view on that. We have more managing magistrates

doing different parts of the operational ...

Ms CARNEY: It is not a north and south matter?

Mr SHANAHAN: I believe the south has one of the magistrates whose - but it could be that as well. We will be reviewing the *Magistrates Act* the next time. I do not see it is a high priority, but it will be reviewed. One of the issues has been the need to better define magistrates' powers. The act seems to say you have a Chief Magistrate without their powers being spelt out. The Deputy Chief Magistrate is also appointed without any specific powers. They are the type of areas we need to look at in more detail.

Ms CARNEY: How many offenders have received a period of mandatory imprisonment since changes to section 78VA of the *Sentencing Act* which commenced on 10 December 2008?

Mr SHANAHAN: We do not have those numbers yet, because it is early days. It has been proposed we review that in 12 months.

Ms CARNEY: You might give the same answer to the following questions: how many applications for bail have been refused as a result of changes to section 7A of the *Bail Act* which commenced 10 December 2008?

Mr SHANAHAN: The same.

Ms LAWRIE: We will review it after it has been in place for 12 months.

Ms CARNEY: Do I understand your answer? You have no information whatsoever as to how many people received mandatory imprisonment, or how many were refused bail? Or is it just not collated in a format you want to share with me at the moment?

Ms LAWRIE: I defer to the Deputy Chief Executive, Policy Coordination, Ms Morris.

Ms MORRIS: Elizabeth Morris. The information would exist in the system, but we have not had any reports taken from the IJIS system in relation to those things yet.

Ms CARNEY: You will appreciate why I am asking this question. Government said a lot about these particular changes, how wonderful it was going to be for so many people. I am surprised that at estimates you do not have any information to share with the committee about outcomes in these areas. In those circumstances, would you take questions on notice, so that we can get the answers at some point?

Ms LAWRIE: The stated intention by government is to ensure we review the operation of those changes in 12 months. We will do that. It is an undertaking. I am happy to give that in 12 months.

Ms CARNEY: I will take that as a no. Just to be clear, I am left with no alternative other than to say the minister for Justice does not know how successful or otherwise changes to the *Sentencing Act* and *Bail Act* have been. Let us move on to Alcohol Courts.

In Budget 2008-09, under the heading Key Variations page 164, there is reference to funding for *Closing the Gap*, and court clinicians. How many were appointed as a result of that initiative, and where were they based?

Ms LAWRIE: Court clinicians who assess offenders for suitability and report to the court on progress are currently based in Darwin, Alice Springs, Katherine, and Nhulunbuy. Tennant Creek is currently serviced from Alice Springs, due to non-availability of qualified local personnel.

Ms CARNEY: So, how many?

Ms LAWRIE: I defer to Mr Shanahan.

Mr SHANAHAN: Initially, the three additional ones were for Katherine, Nhulunbuy and Tennant Creek. At the moment, Tennant Creek is vacant as we have not been able to find anyone suitable, so we are servicing Tennant from Alice Springs.

Ms CARNEY: How many court clinicians are there working in Alcohol Courts in the Northern Territory?

Mr SHANAHAN: Five. Originally there was one in Darwin and one in Alice Springs.

Ms CARNEY: Last year, there was injection of money. Since then, three have been - what are they - full-time positions?

Mr SHANAHAN: Yes, except one is a job share, as I understand it, so there are actually six people, but five full-time.

Ms CARNEY: In the first 18 months of operation of the Alcohol Courts, 99 people across the Territory were referred to the Alcohol Court. Of those 99, 27 have successfully completed a court ordered treatment program, and only three orders were made. Minister, you have not replied to a letter I wrote to you, dated 2 April, in which I sought updated information about the Alcohol Courts. I will read out some of the questions I asked. I hope you will give me the courtesy of answering them, since I have waited since April. This could be my lucky day:

Alcohol Courts. Would you please provide me with the following information regarding Alcohol Courts:

1. How many individuals appeared in Alcohol Courts in the 2008 calendar year in Alice Springs and Darwin?

Ms LAWRIE: What I have is from 1 July 2006 to 30 April 2009, so it is not a calendar year. It is a period since the ...

Ms CARNEY: You have that all in one document. Do you want to table it?

Ms LAWRIE: Yes, I will table it.

Ms CARNEY: Okay, thank you. That document includes how many people?

Ms LAWRIE: It covers those referred to the Alcohol Court for people who are then deemed ineligible: the prohibition orders, prohibition orders with treatment, and prohibition orders with no treatment, treatment orders, how many have failed, and how many currently in the system, and how many have completed treatment.

Ms CARNEY: Thank you. I always look forward to estimates. I am so pleased I came so that I can get the answer to my letter I wrote on 2 April.

Minister, in Alice Springs in late June last year, a woman appeared in court charged with breaching a prohibition order. Despite her being convicted of 30 offences including assaults, the Alcohol Court magistrate had no power to order her to serve the suspended sentence despite her breaching her prohibition order. Has the legislation been amended so this kind of thing will not happen again? If not, why not?

Ms LAWRIE: There is currently a comprehensive review of the Alcohol Court under way. An options paper is being developed in order to consider substantial changes to the Alcohol Court regime in order to engage with a broader range of offenders but, also, to include those currently excluded by the current *Alcohol Court Act*. The options paper will address a range of concerns that have been raised by people regarding the Alcohol Court regime. These include: the confusion around the when and how each Alcohol Court order should be used; inflexibility in making Alcohol Court orders; difficulties experienced when trying to prove dependency on alcohol; variations in how dependency on alcohol is determined for the two Alcohol Court orders; the inability of interested persons other than the offender, prosecutor or police officer to make applications for referral to the Alcohol Court; a lack of incentives to comply with prohibition orders arising from a lack of penalties for breaching such an order; the exclusion of certain offenders from the Alcohol Court regime as a result of the requirement to enter a plea of guilty in order to be eligible for an intervention order; and the issue of referring offenders to the Alcohol Court if they fail to appeal in the Court of Summary Jurisdiction.

In some regional areas, we have concerns with the low rate of referrals to the Alcohol Court. There are other issues as well; provision of information about the Alcohol Court orders to the victims; the Alcohol Courts regime to engage with persons with alcohol dependency who repeatedly commit minor offences that are considered antisocial behaviour but do not result in attendance before the Court of Summary Jurisdiction but, rather, result in the issuing of infringement notices; and those with alcohol dependence who do not actually commit any offences but who present antisocial behaviour as a result of their dependence.

The aim of the review is to create a more flexible system that will engage with a larger number of offenders and non-offenders who are dependent on alcohol; a system we hope that will assist them address their dependency. We anticipate this options paper to be provided to me by the end of June. Once I have dealt with that and I talk it through with my Cabinet colleagues, it will go out into the public domain.

Ms CARNEY: Thank you. We told your government years ago - I cannot remember the exact date but I think it was 2005 or thereabouts when the bill was introduced – that it would not work. The figures from a cursory glance, clearly indicate it is not working. From a letter written by the predecessor to your predecessor, it was clear it was not working. I note with interest that, when the bill was introduced, the then Attorney-General, Peter Toyne, said the bill:

... will also contribute to the safety and wellbeing of the broader community which is affected by antisocial behaviour associated with regular and excessive alcohol consumption.

It has failed, has it not, minister?

Ms LAWRIE: It is important to see we have had 94 individuals complete their treatment. I do not see that as a failure. Also, we have prohibition orders in place - 14 with no treatment and a further 11 with treatment. We have another 201 treatment orders in place, and currently 24 going through that treatment system.

I do not see that as a failure. I see that as a very genuine body of work by government to establish the Alcohol Court and, in the first instance, get it operational and the clinicians associated with the working for that court funded and in place. Much information has gone out about the Alcohol Court. We make no apology for wanting to strengthen the Alcohol Court, which is why I have asked for an options paper to come forward, and why the Department of Justice is working on that options paper. We will genuinely go out and engage with the broader community around that.

Ms CARNEY: As you should. Sometimes, when this government gets to things, it gets to them very late. I note you referred to 94 people who have completed the treatment program. That is a disgraceful result. In the last financial year, 30 000 people were taken into protective custody for being drunk or having problems with alcohol. That is the revolving door, yet, 94 people have completed treatment. You reckon that is a good result. I disagree, but ...

Ms LAWRIE: 317 were referred to the Alcohol Court.

Ms CARNEY: So, you believe 317 is a fantastic result. Well, good on you. We do not. Okay, moving along.

Ms LAWRIE: Member for Araluen, you have asked me a question, I will answer it.

Ms CARNEY: You have answered it, thank you.

Ms LAWRIE: The government is saying it wants to strengthen the Alcohol Court. It wants to look at capturing non-offenders as well as offenders, because the Alcohol Court was established to catch offenders. We want to strengthen the Alcohol Court system. That is why we have sought an options paper. An enormous body of work has been undertaken by the Department of Justice. We are going out and consulting with the community, because we genuinely want to address the scourge alcohol plays in our community.

Ms CARNEY: You were genuine two or three years ago and you failed, so good luck. Anyway, let us move on to youth justice family responsibility. It was an amendment bill in February 2008. I believe your government announced various measures. There was a blaze of publicity, and in relation to the family responsibility agreements, I would like to know ...

Ms LAWRIE: Mr Chairman, for the purposes of saving time, the member for Araluen should direct these questions to the Minister for Children and Families, because the Youth Justice and the family responsibility agreements come under her purview.

Ms CARNEY: You will not take any questions on family responsibility agreements or family responsibility orders?

Ms LAWRIE: Those sections were transferred to the Minister for Children and Families, minister McCarthy.

Ms CARNEY: When were they transferred?

Ms LAWRIE: When did it commence, Mr Shanahan?

Mr SHANAHAN: From July.

Ms CARNEY: So, you, as Attorney-General, despite the fact that these things happen in the lower courts of the Northern Territory, say it is not you I should be speaking to, it is Malarndirri McCarthy?

Ms LAWRIE: We have administrative orders which establish the responsibilities of ministers. That particular administrative order is under the responsibility of the Minister for Children and Families.

Ms CARNEY: I accept – though I do not like it and think it is absurd - that you are not going to answer questions in this area. Is there not an impact on the budget of this department, because these family responsibility orders go through the lower courts of the Northern Territory? How do you assess what sort of financial or budgetary impact it has on the department or this line item? Surely there is a cross-over with Malarndirri McCarthy?

Ms LAWRIE: The Department of Justice looks at the global workload of the lower courts. The government has responded to their workload in Budget 2009-10. We have put additional funding in place for Court Registry, as well as for additional magistrates.

Ms CARNEY: Even though your predecessor's predecessor did all the media releases under the banner of minister for Justice, it now has nothing to do with the minister for Justice?

Ms LAWRIE: As I said to you, the government transferred responsibility of that section, the juvenile justice as well as the parental agreements, over to the Minister for Children and Families. That was a decision of the government. The administration orders reflect that. The Department of Justice looks at the global resources required for the proper functioning of the lower courts. The government has responded in Budget 2009-10 by putting additional resources into the lower courts, specifically into Court Registry and to provide for the appointment of two additional magistrates.

Ms CARNEY: Let us move on, in the few minutes I have left, to the Fines Recovery Unit. I am sorry, that is a different output, my apologies.

Mr CHAIRMAN: Member for Nelson, do you have any questions to Lower Courts and Tribunals?

Mr WOOD: I do. I am referring to the 2007-08 report. Under client satisfaction, it states client satisfaction was 67% instead of the estimated 85% in 2007-08. This related to clients being dissatisfied with facilities. You are now estimating client satisfaction back at 85%. What have you done in relation to facilities that support that estimate?

Ms LAWRIE: I described some of the improvements to facilities we are making to the lower courts: waiting areas; upgrading systems for evidence; new in-custody interview rooms; new chambers; alteration of offices; extra accommodation for court administrative staff; and improvements in witness boxes.

Mr WOOD: These were the facilities referred to?

Ms LAWRIE: Yes.

Mr WOOD: In relation to the Alcohol Court, has the court the power to lock someone up? I have been advocating for some time we establish special places - even small farms - where people can dry out; places where we give them opportunities like gardening, education, doctor visits and those types of things. Does the court have those types of powers?

Ms LAWRIE: Yes, the court has powers of treatment orders. I will refer to Elizabeth Morris to talk you through that.

Ms MORRIS: There are two kinds of orders under the current legislation the court can make. One is the prohibition order and the other is the alcohol intervention order. The alcohol intervention order is the one where the offence is a serious one and the court might otherwise be considering a sentence of imprisonment. Normally, under an alcohol intervention order, a sentence of imprisonment is imposed and then suspended on entering into an alcohol treatment program. Some of those programs are residential; for example, Banyan House in Darwin. The client will have to live there as a condition of the suspension of his sentence. If they do not comply with that order, or do not complete the treatment program, the usual response of the court then is to bring in the suspension of that sentence. The individual is then sent to one of the correctional facilities.

Mr WOOD: So there are no facilities other than the normal kind of correctional ones? Are there no special places at all set up for these people?

Ms MORRIS: There is a large number of alcohol-related facilities in various places around the Territory, but none of those have big wire fences where people cannot get out, but ...

Mr WOOD: I am referring mainly to the people who go through the revolving door six or seven times. Someone needs to help them; they cannot rely on themselves. I did not know whether there were any of those options available. Is gaol the only option for restricting the movements of such people?

Ms MORRIS: Apart from the residential treatment facility you mean, Mr Wood?

Mr WOOD: Yes, apart from that, because they can walk out of that when they feel like it.

Ms LAWRIE: Sure, but if they do walk out of there when they feel like it, they then face gaol. There is an incentive to stay in the residential treatment facility.

Mr WOOD: In relation to the figures you have, less than half the people complete treatment. Has there been a follow-up to find out how long those 94 people have continued off the grog?

Ms MORRIS: The normal definition of recidivism is re-offending within a two-year period. We are yet to commence the study of the first people who have gone through the program and successfully completed their orders as to whether or not they have re-offended in that period. That will be a body of work for the next 12 months.

Mr WOOD: Are you able to trace those 94 people so you can do that work?

Ms MORRIS: Yes, we would have their names in the IJIS system. If they re-offend, we would be able to pick them up.

Mr WOOD: Has there been an evaluation of the effectiveness of the Restorative Justice Program, which operates out of the community courts?

Ms LAWRIE: I defer to Mr Shanahan.

Mr SHANAHAN: We did an evaluation of the community court at Nhulunbuy and Darwin, I believe, in the early stages. We have not done the full evaluation yet. The money to expand it to the 10 courts only came out in *Closing the Gap*.

Mr WOOD: Restorative justice has been around a while. It came out of Ali Curung first and then Lajamanu. I do not know whether there has been an evaluation. I think it is mentioned in the 2007-08 report or the budget. I am interested to know whether someone has done an evaluation of it.

Mr SHANAHAN: We will be evaluating it towards the end of this financial year. Other aspects of restorative justice tie in to the Community Justice Centre. The centre gets involved in family disputes in some of the communities.

Mr WOOD: Are we using restorative justice, not only in Aboriginal communities, but also in urban regions?

Mr SHANAHAN: The community court is not an Indigenous court, it is a community court.

Ms LAWRIE: Yes, we are using it in urban, regional and remote areas.

Mr WOOD: A lot of the restorative justice came from mixing traditional law with our way of doing things.

Mr SHANAHAN: There has been some work with some of the people in the northern suburbs. The elders visiting program also gets involved in that.

Mr WOOD: That review will be made public?

Mr SHANAHAN: Yes, I think so.

Ms LAWRIE: Police diversion also use restorative justice.

Mr CHAIRMAN: That concludes of Output 2.2.

Output 2.3 – Fines Recovery Unit

Mr CHAIRMAN: Are there any questions on Output 2.3, Fines Recovery Unit?

Ms CARNEY: If you have any information in a tabled document, that would make it better for me. How many fines have been issued, year to date, 31 May 2009? What is the value of the fines issued 12 months to 31 May 2009? How many fines have been paid for the 12 months to 31 May 2009? What is the value of the fines and what is outstanding? You might all have that on one document.

Ms LAWRIE: Yes, I am happy to table the Fines Recovery Unit tables which reflect debt outstanding, court fines and penalties, and clearance rates. It looks at the number of court fines issued; the number paid in full; and the clearance rate; as well as the penalties, number issued, number paid in full and the clearance rate. That is across 2006-07, 2007-08 and to 30 April for 2008-09.

Ms CARNEY: Thank you. I appreciate that document being tabled. I am sure you have another one. How much money in Fines Recovery Unit is outstanding up to 30 April?

Ms LAWRIE: For 2008-09, we have \$2.9m outstanding in court fines; and \$3.4m outstanding in penalties.

Ms CARNEY: What percentage of fines and infringement penalties issued does that represent?

Ms LAWRIE: 43% outstanding.

Ms CARNEY: 43% outstanding?

Ms LAWRIE: The total combined outstanding is 54%. 75% of court fines are outstanding, and 43% of penalties are outstanding. That is a total of 54% outstanding.

Ms CARNEY: How much is outstanding, total?

Ms LAWRIE: No, I do not have the total but ...

Ms CARNEY: You said before, \$2.9m.

Ms LAWRIE: In round terms \$6.4m.

Ms CARNEY: So, the \$6.5m is what the Fines Recovery Unit is chasing in unpaid fines?

Mr SHANAHAN: For fines issued in 2008-09.

Ms CARNEY: Just for 2008-09 fines?

Mr SHANAHAN: Yes. What happens is that there is a lag effect on how quickly they are paid off. When you get the table, you will see it.

Ms LAWRIE: Some will make agreements to pay over a period of time.

Mr SHANAHAN: They pay the early ones off first, so they will be the ones that go off first. The later

years will have a higher outstanding level.

Ms CARNEY: Sorry, maybe I have misunderstood.

Ms LAWRIE: For example, the percentage outstanding from 2007-08 is 36%. There is a high percentage outstanding for 2008-09 because of the time to pay agreements. That is the lag effect Mr Shanahan was talking about. In 2009-10, your 2008-09 percentages will be reduced because some have come to the end of their agreements to pay.

Ms CARNEY: When the magistrate – I think it was Hugh Bradley - was quoted as saying last year that ‘someone should do something about this because there are millions of dollars in unpaid fines owing’, he was on the money, was he not - no pun intended. He got it right; there are millions of dollars owing. I thought the Fines Recovery Unit was meant to be recovering money as opposed to being owed lots of money. What am I missing?

Ms LAWRIE: If you look at what they are doing, from 2006-07 there is a much lower percentage still outstanding. That shows you the agreements to pay have that rolling through effect. In 2006-07, for example, only 28% of the court fines and penalties are outstanding. If you look at the amounts paid, they are impressive. Because of the nature of the agreements to pay, it will have a lag effect. If you look at this from the end of 2008-09, the 2006-07 figures are good. The 2007-08 figures are not as good as 2006-07, but they are better than 2008-09, which is the lag effect of the time to pay agreements that have been an effective tool for the Fine Recovery Unit.

Ms CARNEY: I am sorry, but I am an honourable woman and I promised my colleagues I would only take up so much time. My colleague, the member for Braitling, has the indescribable pleasure of asking you questions in this area and others for the rest of this afternoon. Thank you, everyone in Justice. I am so sorry that we do not do justice, as it were, to the time that all of us have put in preparing. See you next year.

Mr CHAIRMAN: Member for Nelson, do you have questions for Output 2.3, Fines Recovery Unit?

Mr WOOD: Yes. This year's budget is different from last year's. Last year, you put down the amount of money - for instance, revenue collected by the Territory government as \$8.32m; 2008-09, \$7.17m. This year, that does not exist, except it states how many fines and penalties there were. How can someone like me compare one budget with another if you change the system?

Ms LAWRIE: Mr Shanahan.

Mr SHANAHAN: The purpose of those output measures is to give you an idea of activity levels of the various parts of the agencies. We are trying to measure the amount we work on, rather than the quantum we get. We might get one fine of \$10m one year and 10 000 fines of \$100 000 the next, and you do not get a true picture of the level of activity that is going on within that output group.

Mr WOOD: The problem I have is that you have three items under revenue collected in the previous budget, and you have brought that down to two items in the new one. In other words, you have revenue collected for the Territory government, revenue collected for non-Territory government entities, and revenue collected from enforcement fees. In this year's budget, you have enforcement fees issued for court fines and infringement penalties. Even that is not comparable.

Ms LAWRIE: What we have tabled in the estimates is the revenue collected across 2006-07, 2007-08 and 2008-09.

Mr WOOD: I understand that. In the budget, I see there have been 8000 court fines. When I look at the other book, there is not even a court fine.

Ms LAWRIE: Because these are performance measures in the budget.

Mr WOOD: I understand that. However, there is no comparison for me to study. There was a change in the actual headings, as well as the numbers. I understand the numbers. The way it is broken up is different to the way it was broken up last year.

Mr CHAIRMAN: Thank you, member for Nelson. That concludes the consideration for Output 2.3.

Output 2.4 – Registrar-General

Mr CHAIRMAN: The committee will now proceed to output 2.4, Registrar-General. Questions? Member for Nelson.

Mr WOOD: The same question as last time: you changed the format. The 2008-09 budget is now different to the 2009-10 budget. Is it the same reason? You wanted numbers rather than dollars?

Ms LAWRIE: Reflection of work effort.

Mr WOOD: In this case, even the headings are slightly different: Records Maintained Registrations, Transactions and Searches. Last year it was Unit Plan Registration. It is difficult for me to try to compare one budget with another if the headings are changed. There is also less time limits. Last year, there were five break-ups of the time in the section, this year there is only three. Why the change?

Ms LAWRIE: Mr Shanahan.

Mr SHANAHAN: Same reasons. We believe this is a better reflection of the activity carried out within that part of the agency.

Ms LAWRIE: Yes. You did a complete review.

Mr SHANAHAN: I believe you will find the annual report gives more detail.

Mr WOOD: The annual report. I do not have this year's annual report, but last year's annual report uses the figures in the 2008-09 Budget, and I do not have anything to compare it with. I do not want to be too cynical, but you have reduced the amount of information. This is always a little dangerous, because there is less information now in relation to the number of timeliness areas you looked at last year. You have gone from five down to three. Why?

Ms LAWRIE: Agencies were asked to appraise their performance measures to see whether they truly reflected the activity of that section of their agency and to come up with performance measures that more accurately reflected the activity. That is what the Department of Justice has done.

Mr CHAIRMAN: That concludes consideration of Output 2.4.

Output 2.5 – Public Trustee

Mr CHAIRMAN: Moving on to Output 2.5, Public Trustee. Are there any questions?

Mr WOOD: Negative.

Mr CHAIRMAN: Moving on to Output 2.6.

Ms LAWRIE: I just wanted to check with the member for Nelson, if he wanted to ask about property forfeiture under the public trustee.

Mr WOOD: Yes, how much money, or the equivalent of money, has been forfeited to the Crown

under the *Criminal Property Forfeiture Act*?

Ms LAWRIE: In terms of total amounts from its inception until April 30 2009, the actual and estimated values restrained since inception is \$12.5m; the property forfeited since inception is \$8m.

Mr WOOD: Have you tabled that document?

Ms LAWRIE: I have been advised there are some confidential aspects to what is in here, so

Mr CHAIRMAN: Okay, that concludes consideration of Output 2.5.

Output 2.6 – Information Commissioner

Mr CHAIRMAN: Are there any questions on Output 2.6, Information Commissioner?

Mr ELFERINK: Regarding review of the act. Last time I saw anything publicly, the act was supposed to be reviewed, done and dusted by now. I could be wrong of course but, gee whiz, that was 18 months ago when the Australian Press Council were putting submissions into it.

Ms LAWRIE: I am being advised the review is under way.

Mr ELFERINK: Still? How long has it been going?

Ms LAWRIE: That is what I have been advised.

Mr ELFERINK: It has been going for at least 18 months, if not two years.

Ms LAWRIE: Yes, it has been under way for 18 months.

Mr ELFERINK: Well, that is quick. No further questions.

Mr WOOD: Why do members of parliament, if they are doing their job properly, have to pay fees to get something from the Information Commissioner? I will give you an example. I was quoted \$1000 to get the draft Glyde Point Industrial Development EIS. That would have inhibited me doing my job, so I stayed with the Executive Summary at \$100.

Ms LAWRIE: Only three jurisdictions provide for a waiver for the reduction of charges for members of parliament in certain situations – Victoria, Tasmania and South Australia.

Mr WOOD: They are sensible people. Why should MLAs not, as part of their job, be allowed to obtain that sort of information without having to pay extravagant fees?

Ms LAWRIE: In the Commonwealth, the ACT, Tasmania and the Northern Territory, there can be a waiver of fees based on considerations of the public interest. Only SA, Tasmania and Victoria actually waive fees for members of parliament. Our view has always been members of parliament are in the same category as members of the public.

Mr WOOD: That is not the case. Our job is to scrutinise government in parliament. We need as much information as possible. I might be a member of parliament, but I do not have a large amount of money to spend on getting documents to help put forward arguments relevant to my job. I hope the government reconsiders that because this is not proper policy for an open and transparent government. I do not believe it is good from a democratic perspective, either.

Mr ELFERINK: Consider that a submission for the review of the act, if you like.

Mr WOOD: Possibly, yes. In the 2007-08 Annual Report there is a strange line relating to timeliness. It states that Freedom of Information complaints finalised within 120 days of acceptance. The estimate was 60% in 2007-08, it then went to 8% and now you are expecting it to go back up to 60%. Could you explain why there were only 8% of complaints for FOI finalised within 120 days of acceptance in 2007-08?

Ms LAWRIE: I am advised that reflects the small number of complaints the office was dealing with.

Mr WOOD: It is a percentage, would that not mean there was one out of, say, eight? Is that what you are saying? Okay. Maybe that is where you need numbers rather than percentages so we know what you are talking about.

Why has timeliness been reduced in the budget, especially in relation to complaints unresolved at the end of the reporting period? We now only have two matters under the timeliness of the Information Commissioner whereas, before, we had four; The number of unresolved complaints at the end of a reporting period is a good indication of how things operate within that department; yet, that has been removed, even though as a percentage, it was quite low.

Ms LAWRIE: As I advised before, all agencies were asked to look at their performance measures and make sure they were contemporary and reflected the activity of the agency and the section of the agency. Consequently, those are the performance measures we have in the budget paper for the Information Commissioner.

Mr WOOD: The percentage of unresolved complaints range from an estimate of 20%, which went up to 48%. It is estimated to be 20% this year. This suggests there were some issues here. The low figure has been removed from the budget paper, though. My response is the same as before. I understand the reasons why, but I would prefer to see more information rather than less.

Mr CHAIRMAN: That concludes consideration of Output 2.6.

Output 2.7 – Public Interest Disclosure

Mr CHAIRMAN: Are there any questions on Output 2.7, Public Interest Disclosure?

Ms LAWRIE: For clarification, Mr Chairman. Was Timber Creek a question on notice, or was it just a commitment I made to the member for Nelson to get him some information?

Mr WOOD: A commitment.

Ms LAWRIE: Yes, cool. We have that for you.

Mr WOOD: All right. Will you be able to table that?

Ms LAWRIE: I am happy to give it to you.

Mr CHAIRMAN: There being no questions for Output 2.7, we will move on to Output 2.8.

Output 2.8 – Consumer Affairs

Mr CHAIRMAN: Are there any questions for Output 2.8, Consumer Affairs?

Mr ELFERINK: Well, yes, but no.

Mr CHAIRMAN: There being no questions for Output 2.8, we will move on to Output 2.9.

Output 2.9 – Anti-Discrimination Commissioner

Mr CHAIRMAN: Are there any questions for Output 2.9, Anti-Discrimination Commissioner?

Mr ELFERINK: No.

Mr CHAIRMAN: There being no questions for Output 2.9, we will move on to Output 2.10.

Output 2.10 – Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions

Mr CHAIRMAN: Are there any questions for Output 2.10, Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions?

Mr ELFERINK: Lots, but no.

Mr CHAIRMAN: I note that Output Group 3.0, Correctional Services, will be addressed by Minister McCarthy on Friday 19 June.

OUTPUT GROUP 4.0 – POLICY COORDINATION

Output 4.1 – Community and Justice Policy

Mr CHAIRMAN: Are there any questions on Output Group 4.0, Policy Coordination, Output 4.1, Community and Justice Policy?

Mr WOOD: How is the user pay for Return to Country Program going?

Ms LAWRIE: We have a table. I have figures from July 2008 to March 2009. In Return to Country, Larrakia Nation, which operates out of Darwin and Palmerston, have had 2333 people use that service. In Mission Australia's Return to Country service in Katherine, we have had 225 people on 527 occasions use the service. Tangentyere in Alice Springs have had 183 people on 353 occasions use the service.

Mr WOOD: That means we have people doubling up?

Ms LAWRIE: It reflects the numbers of people on the numbers of occasions. Actually, it is the other way around; that is, 527 people accessed a service used 225 times, 353 people accessed a service used 183 times. Clearly, indicating several people in the one service use.

Mr WOOD: Do you have any idea how many people are returning again and again? Have you any idea of recidivism?

Ms LAWRIE: We do not have that information available.

Mr WOOD: Do you keep records of who uses it, by name, so ...

Ms LAWRIE: Mr Shanahan?

Mr SHANAHAN: The service provider probably would, because they would need to track whether they have repaid.

Mr WOOD: Have you any idea of how many people defaulted on repayments?

Mr SHANAHAN: Very little, we understand. They are pretty strict, because the seed funding is only fairly small. We could get that on notice.

Mr CHAIRMAN: Member for Nelson, for the purposes of *Hansard*, could you please restate your question?

Mr WOOD: In relation to the Return to Country program how much money has been repaid to the service provider by people using the program?

Mr CHAIRMAN: Minister, you are happy to take that question on notice?

Ms LAWRIE: Well, it is going to be ...

Ms MORRIS: I am not sure if we will be able to answer how much money has been repaid.

Mr WOOD: What percentage then? Perhaps would that be ...

Ms MORRIS: What percentage of people have repaid their travel debt?

Mr WOOD: Yes, that will do.

Ms LAWRIE: What percentage of people have repaid their travel debt?

Mr WOOD: Yes, cancel the previous bit.

Mr CHAIRMAN: That question, of which I am sure *Hansard* has the edited version, is No 2.4.

Mr WOOD: How many alcohol management plans have been developed in the Northern Territory and are they all still running?

Ms LAWRIE: That is not mine. That is Mr Vatskalis'.

Mr WOOD: In the 2007-08 Annual Report, you anticipated introducing 20 to 25 bills to parliament in 2008-09, two of which were related to vendor disclosure and residential caravan parks. Can you please explain the delay? When can we expect to see them introduced into parliament? This would have been a question for the next sittings, but this will save it.

Ms LAWRIE: I had it for last sittings, Gerry.

Mr WOOD: I know, but there are two Independents now; it is getting a bit hard.

Ms LAWRIE: Yes, you have to share it around.

For vendor disclosure reform, the discussion drafts went out in late 2007. Concerns were raised by government and the private sector about aspects of the proposal in relation to draft regulations. We had to look at the scope of the disclosure requirements, because it is likely it would be considerably wound back from what was contemplated in the draft regulations. There was another concern based on who would provide the required reports because there are practical problems for the legislation applying outside of Darwin.

We are proposing to introduce legislation in the second half of 2009, but we want to complete some Territory-wide consultation before the end of August 2009. We are going to do that last round Territory-wide before the end of August 2009 and, then, have it ready for parliament.

Mr WOOD: What about the residential parks act?

Ms LAWRIE: In terms of the *Residential Tenancies Act* ...

Mr WOOD: No, parks.

Ms LAWRIE: ... it does not apply to residents and owners of caravan parks, which has been the issue. There is no other caravan park-specific legislation, so this area of the law requires reform to allow greater level of legal stability and clarity around the rights and obligations associated with these tenancies. An issues paper asking for comments from stakeholders was released for consultation in July 2008.

Stakeholders, including about 100 caravan park owners across the Territory, were consulted and given the opportunity to provide comments. Comments were received from residents and owners of caravan parks, as well as from a number of government and non-government organisations. These submissions have been considered by the government. It has been decided the *Residential Tenancies Act* will be amended to deal with the rights and duties of residents and owners of caravan parks. In general terms, these rights will be aligned with those of other tenants of residential properties. Regarding the timing of that legislation, we are also aiming for the second half of this year.

Mr WOOD: Thank you. I will wait with trepidation.

Mr CHAIRMAN: That concludes consideration of Output 4.1.

Output 4.2 – Legal Policy

Mr CHAIRMAN: Moving on to Output 4.2, Legal Policy. Are there any questions?

Mr ELFERINK: Pass.

Mr CHAIRMAN: That concludes Output 4.2, Legal Policy.

Output 4.3 – Research and Statistics

Mr CHAIRMAN: Output 4.3, Research and Statistics. Are there any questions?

Mr ELFERINK: Pass.

Mr WOOD: Pass.

Mr CHAIRMAN: That concludes Output 4.3, Research and Statistics.

Output 4.4 – Community Benefit Fund

Mr CHAIRMAN: I move to Output 4.4, Community Benefit Fund.

Mr ELFERINK: First, can we confirm the annual reporting processes are running smoothly and that we can expect to see the annual report within the legislative framework?

Ms LAWRIE: That is an error. That should be under Mr Vatskalis. I talked about that in my opening statement.

Mr ELFERINK: What is that - Community Benefit Fund?

Ms LAWRIE: Yes.

Mr CHAIRMAN: My apologies. For some reason, that was on the agenda.

Ms LAWRIE: I said in my opening statement that comes under his responsibilities.

Mr CHAIRMAN: That concludes Output 4.4, Community Benefit Fund.

Output 4.5 – Community Justice Grants

Mr CHAIRMAN: Output 4.5, Community Justice Grants. We will correct that agenda for minister Vatskalis' section.

Mr ELFERINK: That is the second time that has moved in two years. It was in Treasury, then it was under Justice, now it is off to wherever.

Ms LAWRIE: It was sitting in RGL when RGL moved.

Mr ELFERINK: Before that it was in Treasury.

Mr CHAIRMAN: Do we have questions to Output 4.5?

Mr WOOD: No.

Mr CHAIRMAN: That concludes consideration of Output Group 4.5.

I note that Output Group 5, Licensing Regulation Alcohol Strategy will be addressed by Minister Vatskalis on Wednesday, 17 June, and that would, I assume, also include Output 4.4.

Ms LAWRIE: Mr Chairman, am I able to ask for a five minute break?

Mr CHAIRMAN: We have been going for two hours so I am happy to break for five minutes.

The committee suspended.

Mr CHAIRMAN: We will reconvene.

Answer to Questions on Notice 2.2 and 2.3

Ms LAWRIE: Mr Chairman, I have some answers to questions on notice.

Mr CHAIRMAN: That is fine. Can you just read out the number of the question as you are answering it? I have some notes here.

Ms LAWRIE: These are answers to questions No 2.2 and No 2.3 for the judges' entitlement regarding newspapers. It is a requirement of the RTD:

The judge will be provided with newspapers and periodicals approved by the CEO of the Department of Justice.

I am advised in the 2008-09 year, \$2453 was for the magistrates, and \$7827.94 for judges. That is a total of \$10 280.94 in 2008-09.

OUTPUT GROUP 6.0 - WorkSafe

Output 6.1 - Regulation of Occupational Health and Safety

Mr CHAIRMAN: The committee is now on Output Group 6.0, WorkSafe. We are looking at Output 6.1, Regulation of Occupational Health and Safety. Are there any questions?

Mr TOLLNER: I have one or two. How many organisations are registered to train workplace safety officers?

Ms LAWRIE: We will take that as a question on notice.

Question on Notice 2.5

Mr CHAIRMAN: Okay. Member for Fong Lim, if you can repeat the question for *Hansard*?

Mr TOLLNER: How many organisations are registered to train workplace safety officers here in the Northern Territory?

Mr CHAIRMAN: Minister, are you happy to take that question on notice?

Ms LAWRIE: Yes.

Mr CHAIRMAN: For the purposes of *Hansard*, I allocate that question No 2.5.

Mr TOLLNER: How many workplace safety officers have been trained?

Ms LAWRIE: We will take that one on notice.

Question on Notice 2.6

Mr CHAIRMAN: All right. Member for Fong Lim, for the purposes of *Hansard*, do you mind restating the question?

Mr TOLLNER: How many workplace officers have been trained in the Northern Territory?

Mr CHAIRMAN: Minister, are you happy to take that on notice?

Ms LAWRIE: Yes, I am.

Mr CHAIRMAN: For the purposes of *Hansard*, I allocate that question No 2.6.

Answer to Question on Notice 2.5

Ms LAWRIE: For the previous question, there are two providers – the Chamber of Commerce and Electrotech Jobs.

Mr CHAIRMAN: All right, so question No 2.5 has been answered.

Mr TOLLNER: So you cannot answer the second question – how many workplace ...

Ms LAWRIE: It is on notice.

Mr TOLLNER: All right. What percentage ...

Ms LAWRIE: I can advise that all NT WorkSafe Inspectors have received training on the content and application of the legislation, but it is not quite the question you asked.

Mr TOLLNER: No. What percentage of Northern Territory businesses have a trained workplace safety officer, in accordance with the act?

Ms LAWRIE: We will take that one on notice.

Mr CHAIRMAN: Member for Fong Lim, for the purposes of *Hansard*, could you please repeat the question?

Mr TOLLNER: What percentage of Northern Territory businesses have a trained workplace safety officer?

Mr CHAIRMAN: You are happy to take that question on notice, minister?

Ms LAWRIE: I am just double checking whether we have the percentages here. I am advised it is anticipated the first of the training courses will be held before 30 June, so I will not take the percentage on, because the training courses are being held before 30 June.

Mr TOLLNER: Have they occurred or not occurred?

Ms LAWRIE: As I said, I am advised the first of the training courses will be held before 30 June, as to what stage they are at, I do not have any ...

Mr TOLLNER: So you do not know whether anyone has been trained?

Ms LAWRIE: The training providers are the Chamber of Commerce and Electrotech Jobs. I am advised the first of the training courses will be held before 30 June this year.

Mr TOLLNER: Minister, given the fact that the *Work Health Act* was amended and came into effect on 1 July last year, are you concerned that it seems few, if any, workplace safety officers have been trained?

Ms LAWRIE: The emphasis to date has been on providing industry with information regarding the act, and putting in place the training organisations and organising the training. NT WorkSafe has one Technical Officer Grade 4 who is dedicated to provide advice and assistance to the health and safety representatives and small business employers. NT WorkSafe will look at the participation levels in these training courses to assist them with identifying the numbers of HSRs across the Territory.

Mr TOLLNER: The question is: are you concerned at the lack of trained Work Health Safety officers?

Ms LAWRIE: I am pleased we have two training organisations as providers and that training courses will be held before the end of 30 June. It is heartening that NT WorkSafe has a Technical Officer Grade 4 dedicated to providing advice and assistance to the HSRs and small business employers.

Mr TOLLNER: Irrespective of the fact that you cannot answer that question, it seems to me that you are pleased. Minister, who is Heather Baker-Goldsmith?

Ms LAWRIE: I defer to Mr Shanahan.

Mr SHANAHAN: She is a consultant. She is working for us at the moment.

Ms LAWRIE: Yes, that is correct.

Mr TOLLNER: Minister, is it correct that Heather Baker-Goldsmith was originally contracted for just

six weeks?

Mr CHAIRMAN: Just pausing there, there is nothing wrong with your question, Member for Fong Lim, but I am required by sessional orders to remind members they need to take the following matters into account: that there are limited opportunities for persons other than members of parliament to respond to allegations made in parliament. That is something to bear in mind.

Mr ELFERINK: He is just asking a question about a contractor.

Ms LAWRIE: We have, obviously, the consultancy identified, but we do not have the length of the consultancy identified.

Mr TOLLNER: Minister, it is my understanding that Heather Baker-Goldsmith is from Melbourne. Can you inform me how many times WorkSafe has flown Heather Baker-Goldsmith to Darwin?

Ms LAWRIE: In terms of the consultancy, the travel to Darwin would be part of the consultancy payments.

Mr TOLLNER: How many times?

Ms LAWRIE: I will take that on notice.

Question on Notice 2.7

Mr CHAIRMAN: Member for Fong Lim, if you would restate the question.

Mr TOLLNER: How many times since Heather Baker-Goldsmith was first contracted has she been flown up to Darwin from Melbourne?

Mr CHAIRMAN: Minister, you are happy to take that question on notice?

Ms LAWRIE: Yes.

Mr CHAIRMAN: That is question No 2.7, for the benefit of *Hansard*.

Mr TOLLNER: Minister, to date what has Heather Baker-Goldsmith cost NT WorkSafe in airfares, accommodation, salaries and ancillary costs?

Ms LAWRIE: Expenditure to 30 April 2009 on Safety Solutions, Heather Baker-Goldsmith's consultancy, is \$88 576.

Mr TOLLNER: From what date is that until?

Ms LAWRIE: That is expenditure to 30 April 2009.

Mr TOLLNER: Since what date?

Ms LAWRIE: That deals with the list of 2008-09 consultancies I have. It is in the 2008-09 financial year.

Mr TOLLNER: What date did Heather Baker-Goldsmith start this consultancy?

Ms LAWRIE: We will take the question on notice regarding the start of that consultancy.

Question on Notice 2.8

Mr CHAIRMAN: Could you repeat the question for the purposes of *Hansard*, Member for Fong Lim?

Mr TOLLNER: On what date did Heather Baker-Goldsmith commence the consultancy with NT WorkSafe?

Mr CHAIRMAN: Minister, you are happy to take that question?

Ms LAWRIE: Yes.

Mr CHAIRMAN: For the purposes of *Hansard*, that is question No 2.8.

Mr TOLLNER: Minister, who is the receptionist at NT WorkSafe?

Ms LAWRIE: What is the relevance to the appropriation for WorkSafe?

Mr TOLLNER: Well, I am getting to that.

Ms LAWRIE: What is the relevance?

Mr CHAIRMAN: I will remind members quickly of the test of relevance I outlined in my opening statement. The test of relevance based on the Senate Procedures Committee 1999 states any questions going to the operations or financial positions of the departments and agencies which seek funds in the estimates are relevant questions for the purposes of estimates hearings. Member for Fong Lim.

Mr TOLLNER: I will reword the question. Is there a receptionist at NT WorkSafe?

Ms LAWRIE: Yes, there is a client reception position. That is in the organisational chart.

Mr TOLLNER: Minister, can you describe the office reception area?

Ms LAWRIE: Where is the relevance to the budget appropriation in terms of design of the office reception area?

Mr TOLLNER: I am getting to that, minister.

Ms LAWRIE: Well, then get to it. Where is the relevance?

Mr TOLLNER: Minister, just answer the question.

Ms LAWRIE: Where is the relevance to the design of the office reception area to the budget appropriation for WorkSafe?

Mr TOLLNER: Put it this way, minister. I put it to you there is no reception area in NT WorkSafe. There is a series of buttons you need to push for whoever you want to speak to, but there is no dedicated receptionist at NT WorkSafe. Given there are a number of clients who are injured or

disabled, do you think it is appropriate there is no receptionist at NT WorkSafe? I will give you an example. I am aware of a deaf and dumb man who made his way to the NT WorkSafe. He had no ability to push the button and speak into the thing to ask for whoever he wanted. He could not hear the response and was left to wait in the foyer of the NT WorkSafe office for several hours until an employee on their way back from lunch found him.

Ms LAWRIE: I am happy to look into your concerns. I am advised there is a reception counter with a bell, and staff move to the counter when the bell is rung.

Mr TOLLNER: Minister, have you been to the office?

Ms LAWRIE: Not lately. I have not been there for quite some time. I have been downstairs to meet with the relevant committee.

Mr TOLLNER: Minister, you should go and see if the bell is still there. It is my understanding the bell has been removed because staff were upset by the bell constantly being rung.

Ms LAWRIE: I will check on the bell for you.

Mr TOLLNER: Minister, was the receptionist position axed in order to pay for Heather Baker-Goldsmith?

Ms LAWRIE: No. Consultancies are separate items to employees FTEs.

Mr TOLLNER: Minister, can you give me the reason why there is no receptionist in the foyer at NT WorkSafe?

Ms LAWRIE: As I am advised the bell is rung and staff go to the counter.

Mr TOLLNER: Will a receptionist respond to that bell?

Ms LAWRIE: Clearly, the organisation decided the best way to use its employee resources was to ensure someone was not spending a fair amount of time just sitting around; they would have someone move to reception on notification of the bell ringing.

Mr TOLLNER: Minister, do you believe it appropriate for a deaf and dumb man to be forced to wait for hours in order to see somebody?

Ms LAWRIE: I am not aware that a deaf and dumb man was forced to wait for hours. It is important all organisations have in place policies and procedures to deal with people with a disability. I will look into your allegation.

Mr TOLLNER: Do you think an organisation like NT WorkSafe should be particularly tuned to dealing with people with disabilities and injuries?

Ms LAWRIE: Every organisation should be particularly tuned to dealing with people with disabilities.

Mr TOLLNER: Given the fact that NT WorkSafe has a lead role in this area, do you believe they should be more particular?

Ms LAWRIE: Every organisation should be tuned to dealing with people with a disabilities.

Mr TOLLNER: Minister, can you advise the number of investigations for unsafe work place practices that have been executed since the introduction of the new *Work Health Act*?

Answer to Question on Notice 2.2

Ms LAWRIE: Whilst we are getting that information, I have further information for a question on notice about judges' entitlements. The question was in two parts, covering the expenditure for 2008-09 as well as 2007-08. I provided the 2008-09 expenditure. I now have the 2007-08 expenditure; so, in total the expenditure was \$10 305.38 of that \$2631.34 was for the magistrates and \$7674.04 for judges.

Mr CHAIRMAN: For the benefit of *Hansard*, that was question 2.2

Ms LAWRIE: I am advised in terms of workplace visits and enforcement, activity undertaken by the inspectorate in 2007-08 totalled \$5850; and for 2008-09 to date totalled \$3470.

Mr TOLLNER: How many of these investigations resulted in prosecutions, and how many of these prosecutions were upheld?

Ms LAWRIE: I am advised in terms of enforcement data during the 2008-09 period, WorkSafe issued the following notices: 12 of electrical installation and safety report, six electrical safety inspection reports; 177 improvement notices; five notices of non-compliance electrical safety, and 63 prohibitions.

Mr TOLLNER: In relation to the union right of entry provisions under the act, can you list and describe the cases where these provisions have been used?

Ms LAWRIE: NT WorkSafe has received a small number of inquiries regarding the activity of 12 authorised union or workplace health and safety representatives who operate in the NT. NT WorkSafe has not been requested to visit any sites or to make formal determination on any issues regarding authorised union or workplace health and safety representatives; all inquiries have been resolved during the initial telephone discussions.

Mr TOLLNER: Minister, can you outline the number of times unions have used these right of entry provisions?

Ms LAWRIE: We would not have that data. What we have is what I have just given you; whether or not NT WorkSafe has been requested to visit any site or make formal determination on any issues regarding authorised union or workplace health and safety representatives. As I said, all inquiries were resolved during initial telephone discussions.

Mr TOLLNER: Minister, are you aware of any complaints that businesses have made regarding trade unions' use of these provisions?

Ms LAWRIE: There have been inquiries to NT WorkSafe but, as I advised previously, all inquiries have been resolved during initial telephone discussion.

Mr TOLLNER: Are you saying there have been no complaints?

Ms LAWRIE: I am saying there have been some inquiries, and those inquiries have been resolved during telephone discussions.

Mr TOLLNER: Could you advise in relation to staff at NT WorkSafe, how many staff are related; that is, have a family relationship such as wives, husbands, in-laws? How many of them are former unionists, and how many of them are former political operatives or colleagues of political operatives?

Ms LAWRIE: That has absolutely no relevance to the appropriation of NT WorkSafe.

Mr TOLLNER: I find it quite relevant. When you tell me you do not know of any complaints, you only know of conversations that have taken place and they have all been resolved, it seems to me to make a difference. If there are staff who are either related to former unionists, former political operatives of the Labor government, or colleagues of the Labor government, it impacts directly on how complaints are handled and how money is expended by WorkSafe.

Ms LAWRIE: As I said, that has absolutely no relevance whatsoever to the NT WorkSafe appropriation we are scrutinising here.

Mr CHAIRMAN: I remind members again of the relevance, which is: any questions going to the operations or financial positions of the departments and agencies which seek funds and estimates are relevant questions for the purposes of estimates hearings.

Mr TOLLNER: Minister, you have just been informed by the Chairman that questions that go to the operations of departments and sections are relevant.

Ms LAWRIE: If you are asking me if all employees of NT WorkSafe are required to operate under the public sector management practices, yes, they do.

Mr TOLLNER: That is not what I was asking about, minister.

Ms LAWRIE: That goes to the operation.

Mr TOLLNER: It does. Minister, you have to complete conflict of interest calls in your role. I have to do so; all the members have to. There could be a level of conflict of interest with the way members of NT WorkSafe carry out their responsibilities, particularly if they are former colleagues of trade unionists, or worked in political offices of this government, or are related to people who have worked in political offices of this government, or are related to unionists. To me, that would represent some type of conflict. That is highly relevant to the discussion we are having.

Ms LAWRIE: All employees appointed to an agency are appointed by a merit-based selection process.

Mr TOLLNER: No doubt about that, minister, all I am asking is there ...

Mr CHAIRMAN: Member for Fong Lim, you have asked a question and the minister is still answering that question.

Ms LAWRIE: All employees working for a Northern Territory government agency are required to work under the policies and procedures of the Northern Territory Public Service. If you have any legitimate concerns, or any examples to the contrary then, by all means, say so. It is not unusual for people to have worked for a trade union to then work in the area of WorkSafe. The skills are compatible skills sets; that is the case around the nation in such organisations. They are incredibly compatible skills sets. If you come from a background of understanding workplace safety, invariably, those backgrounds come from either employer groups or union groups, and that means it is not incompatible whatsoever to later work for an organisation such as NT WorkSafe.

Mr TOLLNER: Can you tell me how many people at NT WorkSafe who worked with an employer group?

Ms LAWRIE: Similarly, I could not tell you how many people at NT WorkSafe have worked for a union. We do not ask those sorts of questions when we apply a merit-based selection process.

Mr TOLLNER: It would not end up on a CV? How does a person demonstrate they have worked in a field of health and safety?

Ms LAWRIE: You may not be aware, but the employment of employees in the Northern Territory public sector is not employment undertaken by ministers; it is employment undertaken by agencies.

Mr TOLLNER: I am a disappointed, minister, that you are not more across this particular agency. There have been very few questions I have asked in relation to this agency that you have had the wit to answer.

Ms LAWRIE: That is your view.

Mr TOLLNER: No further questions at this stage. I find it quite amazing, minister, that ...

Mr CHAIRMAN: The call is now for the member for Nelson, member for Fong Lim.

Mr WOOD: Minister ...

Ms LAWRIE: This point of clarification on a question on notice you asked about workplace safety officers. A workplace safety officer is a WorkSafe inspector. I took it to mean that your question was in regard to health and safety reps in terms of number of people trained?

Mr TOLLNER: Yes.

Ms LAWRIE: You did not use the right terminology, that is all.

Mr CHAIRMAN: Member for Nelson. Output 6.1.

Mr WOOD: Yes, just a question on safety. The matter was raised in parliament some time ago about extra costs that might stem from the new safety requirements for building single-level dwellings. Some were anxious about how that might impact on the housing industry. Was there any decision made by the government whether it would support those changes, or would it allow things to continue as they are?

Ms LAWRIE: There was an Housing Industry Consultative Committee established by the previous minister. During 2008, the housing construction sector raised a number of concerns with government regarding policy and regulation in the housing market. Included in this was the regulation in terms of Occupational Health and Safety in the sector. Mr John Pinney was contracted to report to government on the concerns raised by the sector relating to occupational health and safety regulations, and the Housing Industry Consultative Council was formed by the then minister for this purpose.

The Department of Justice paid Mr Pinney \$29 813 for his work. Mr Pinney was selected as he is a former CEO of the Department of Lands, Planning and Environment, Chairman of the Development Consent Authority, and a former member of the Australian Building Codes Board – all of which makes him eminently qualified to undertake this work. The Housing Industry Consultative Committee comprised reps from peak industry bodies such as the HIA and TCA, three builders, and one subcontractor. NT government reps included NT WorkSafe, who also attended all of these consultative committee meetings.

Mr Pinney presented his report on 7 January this year following three meetings of the Housing Industry Consultative Committee, and individual discussions with committee members and others. The report identified the following issues as resolved through that consultative process; that is, the scope and extent of duty of care; clarification and common regulatory status in each jurisdiction; and the nature of the performance-based occupational health and safety legislation and standards applied by the federal Safety Commissioner in the NT. It recommended that NT WorkSafe could improve communications by employing communication specialists to make information products more easily accessible in the sector. NT WorkSafe has subsequently engaged a Communications Manager to

assist with this process.

The report observed that industry had noticed a significant shift in regulatory approach by NT WorkSafe in recent months, and welcomed the increased training for the NT WorkSafe inspectors. It observed there should, generally, be little or no increase in cost of houses associated with the existing occupational health and safety regulatory requirements. Mr Pinney observed that, where there was an increase in costs driven by our risk assessment, particularly regarding poor protection, this should not be sufficient to lose their cost advantage against builders accredited for Commonwealth contracts by the federal Safety Commissioner.

Mr CHAIRMAN: That concludes consideration of Output 6.1.

Non-Output Specific Budget Questions

Mr CHAIRMAN: Are there any Non-output Specific Budget Questions?

Mr ELFERINK: No, Mr Chairman.

Mr CHAIRMAN: That now concludes this session. I thank all the officials who accompanied the minister today. I appreciate your time.

Ms LAWRIE: I thank officers from the Department of Justice.

I just have a figure for the member for Nelson on his question regarding criminal forfeiture. An amount of \$1.8m rounded was forfeited this financial year to date.

Mr CHAIRMAN: We will have a short break.

The committee suspended.

DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING AND INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr CHAIRMAN: Welcome again, minister. We are now going to proceed with the estimates as they relate to the Department of Planning and Infrastructure. Would you care to introduce the officials accompanying you and, if you have an opening statement, care to make it?

Ms LAWRIE: Thank you, Mr Chairman. I welcome and introduce the Chief Executive Officer of the Department of Planning and Infrastructure, Richard Hancock. With us also is the Chief Financial Officer, Jasmin Aldenhoven; the Sustainability, Strategic Planning and Policy Group Acting General Manager, Ernie Wanka; the Land Services Group Acting Executive Director, Leah Croke; the Land Release Unit Executive Director, Steven Walker; the Construction Division, including Waterfront and Darwin Bus Service General Manager, Mike Chiodo; and the Organisational Business Services Executive Director, Tracey Scott. I will be joined at the table by other departmental officers as appropriate as we move through the appropriation for the department.

This department has a vital role in the economic and social development of the Territory. DPI delivers a range of important services right across the Territory including lands planning, regulation and development and the planning delivery of major infrastructure projects. The Territory government is investing an unprecedented \$1.3bn in Budget 2009-10 in infrastructure which will give DPI a greater capacity to deliver more important projects that will cater for population growth and stimulate more economic activity. DPI is well-placed to drive this work to ensure all infrastructure development is sustainable and achieves cost effective outcomes.

The Construction Division is driving major and minor new works in urban centres, towns and remote parts of the Territory. Some of the major projects include: Tiger Brennan Drive extension; the expansion of East Arm port; building the new primary and middle schools at Rosebery; major

upgrades to the Alice Springs Hospital; new accommodation facilities at the Alice Springs Correctional Centre; and upgrade works and new bridges for the Victoria Highway. These are just a few of the major DPI projects. DPI will also manage the \$322m spend on Territory roads in the upcoming year. That will mean more money to build, upgrade and repair the vast road network.

The department's Lands Group is charged with driving land release strategies and planning land options to cater for population growth. This includes the Land to Grow strategy that has land release plans in place for Darwin, Palmerston, Alice Springs, Katherine and Tennant Creek. DPI also develops planning options for the future development of our cities, towns, regional and remote areas.

A recent major body of work includes the Alice Springs Planning for the Future Forum, where the outcomes of this major community forum will shape the future of the town's planning. The department is supporting projects included in the *Territory 2030*, *Growing the Territory* and *A Working Future*, as well as continuing to work alongside other government agencies to deliver a vital infrastructure for our growing economy.

Mr Chairman, I look forward to any questions the committee may have in regard to the appropriation for this year.

Mr CHAIRMAN: Are there any question to the opening statement?

Mr GILES: Yes, just a couple, minister. Manton Dam – I need some clarification about where you would like me to ask these questions.

Ms LAWRIE: It is a Power and Water Government Owned Corporation project.

Mr GILES: In terms of infrastructure, it does not fall under any area of DPI?

Ms LAWRIE: No.

Mr GILES: *A Working Futures?*

Ms LAWRIE: In terms of planning, it would be - under Lands Administration? Under Strategic Lands Planning.

Mr GILES: Town camp planning? Alice Springs?

Ms LAWRIE: That is work being led by DCM. We provide technical support.

Mr GILES: We want to ask about technical support.

Ms LAWRIE: Construction Division.

Mr GILES: And cyclone shelters?

Ms LAWRIE: Construction Division.

Mr GILES: I am not sure of the name of the program, but the funds of \$300 000 per school given by the NT government, not by the federal government. Whereabouts would I ask that?

Ms LAWRIE: It is work undertaken by Construction Division from the client agency, so, strictly speaking, it is a department of Education question.

Mr GILES: I will ask under Construction Division then.

Mr WOOD: Where does Land Corporation go?

Ms LAWRIE: Land Administration.

Mr CHAIRMAN: That concludes questions for the opening statement.

Agency Specific Whole-of-government related questions

Mr CHAIRMAN: We move on to questions on Agency Specific Whole-of-government related questions.

Mr GILES: Carbon emissions: what is the amount of carbon emissions the department is producing in terms of kilowatt hours or tonnes of carbon dioxide?

Ms LAWRIE: I defer to Chief Executive Officer, Mr Hancock.

Mr HANCOCK: Richard Hancock, Chief Executive Officer. 2969 tonnes of CO2.

Mr GILES: Can you please list the carbon emissions for all agencies and the individual strategies they have to reduce emissions, and what the time frames of those reductions are? I am happy for you to table a document.

Mr HANCOCK: We would need to table a document on that; we would not have that for all agencies here, now.

Mr CHAIRMAN: You are saying you will take the question on notice?

Mr HANCOCK: Yes.

Question on Notice 2.9

Mr GILES: Would the minister detail the individual strategies by each agency to reduce emissions, and the time frames for those reductions?

Mr CHAIRMAN: You are happy to take that question on notice, minister?

Ms LAWRIE: Yes.

Mr CHAIRMAN: For the purposes of *Hansard*, I allocate that question number 2.9.

Mr GILES: Minister, what is the effect on the bottom line of individual agencies of the utilities increases; these being water, sewerage, and electricity, for the forward year?

Ms LAWRIE: Mr Hancock.

Mr HANCOCK: For DPI, we have estimated the increase will be approximately \$755 000 in the 2009-10 financial year.

Mr GILES: Are you able to provide that by individual agencies?

Mr HANCOCK: I can break that down within DPI, yes.

Mr GILES: Are you happy to table that document?

Ms LAWRIE: No.

Mr HANCOCK: No, we will take that on notice.

Mr CHAIRMAN: For the purposes of *Hansard*, member for Braitling ...

Ms LAWRIE: Before we take it on, we might be able to satisfy an amount of it because it is all subject to consumption. Potentially, the impact of the increases could be approximately, as you were advised. The total for DPI - which includes Construction Division and Darwin Bus Service - is \$755 000. But, for example, if you like a breakdown, Construction Division would be \$31 746, and Darwin Bus Service would be \$5689.

Mr GILES: I would prefer it on notice so I can get all agencies.

Mr HANCOCK: That is DPI? Yes, no worries.

Mr TOLLNER: Well, hang on; we want to then go into Darwin Port Corporation?

Ms LAWRIE: Port is separate.

Mr TOLLNER: Do we have to ask that question later?

Ms LAWRIE: Yes, when the Darwin Port Corporation output is before us.

Mr GILES: Staffing. Can you please detail the number of graduates and apprentices starting with the department in 2007, 2008 and 2009?

Mr HANCOCK: The department's Early Careers Development Program, as it is known in DPI, in 2007 in total we had 13 participants; in 2008 we had 40; and in 2009, 73.

Mr TOLLNER: Minister, can we suggest these questions are noted for all of the agencies under Planning and Infrastructure?

Ms LAWRIE: No, we will move through it methodically. If you ask the questions, we will provide answers if we have them.

Mr TOLLNER: Well, it may eat into your time, minister.

Ms LAWRIE: As I said, we will move through it methodically. You ask the questions, we will answer them. If we do not have the answers, put it on notice.

Mr GILES: Minister, how many of those graduate apprentices are still with their original department?

Ms LAWRIE: Mr Hancock.

Mr HANCOCK: When you say with their original department, you mean still with DPI?

Mr GILES: Yes.

Mr HANCOCK: Of the total number, six people have left their early careers program over the time they have been with DPI. There are another four who did not complete their apprenticeship programs, in addition to the numbers I read out earlier.

Mr GILES: How many are still with NTG?

Mr HANCOCK: Of the 73?

Mr GILES: Yes, I believe you have just answered it. In terms of discipline, how many reports of improper use of computers were there throughout DPI?

Ms LAWRIE: Mr Hancock.

Mr HANCOCK: None.

Mr GILES: How many credit cards have been issued to departmental staff?

Ms LAWRIE: Mr Hancock.

Mr HANCOCK: 109.

Mr GILES: How many transactions for personal items or services are outstanding?

Mr HANCOCK: None.

Mr GILES: Public events: can you please list the public events, conferences and public forums sponsored by this department for the 2008-09 financial year, and those projected for the 2009-10 financial year?

Ms LAWRIE: Mr Hancock.

Mr HANCOCK: In 2008-09, we provided \$74 000 of sponsorship. Do you want me to break them down into the individual sponsorships?

Mr GILES: I am happy for you to table them.

Mr HANCOCK: We should table the document.

Mr GILES: Minister, how do you define advertising?

Ms LAWRIE: Mr Hancock.

Mr HANCOCK: We have a standard classification code. We define advertising as the promotion of the Territory government departmental initiatives through print media, TV, radio and signage, and our online presence. In the 2008-09 financial year, we spent \$538 000 on advertising.

Mr GILES: Can you please break down, by each area of advertising; for example, newspapers, whether they were black and white or colour, radio, TV, community newsletters, commercial printing, and so forth?

Mr HANCOCK: I can give you those numbers now, if you like?

Mr GILES: I am happy for it to be tabled.

Mr HANCOCK: I will read them out. Statutory notices - \$185 934; advertising on television - \$42 287; advertising radio - \$57 373; advertising in newspaper - \$225 380; advertising for other categories, which would be pamphlets and other forms of print media - \$27 129.

Mr GILES: Can you just repeat that last figure for me?

Mr HANCOCK: Yes, advertising in things such as pamphlets and flyers, yes ...

Mr GILES: Just that number.

Mr HANCOCK: \$27 129.

Mr GILES: How much are you planning on spending in July and August through TV in Alice Springs in the 2009-10 financial year?

Mr HANCOCK: I would have to take that question on notice.

Question on Notice 2.10

Mr CHAIRMAN: For the purposes of *Hansard*, could you repeat the question, member for Braitling?

Mr GILES: What is the planned expenditure on television advertising for July and August in the 2009-10 financial year?

Mr CHAIRMAN: Minister, you are happy to take that question on notice?

Ms LAWRIE: Yes. July, August in the 2009-10 financial year, advertising in Alice Springs on television.

Mr CHAIRMAN: The question number for *Hansard* is No 2.10.

Mr GILES: Can you confirm there will be no TV advertising in July/August 2009-10?

Ms LAWRIE: That is why the question was taken on notice, because the Chief Executive Officer wants to double check with the agency whether there is any planned television advertising for those months.

Mr GILES: Minister, has there been any directive to stop TV advertising in July-August 2009-10?

Ms LAWRIE: No.

Mr GILES: What regional specific campaigns have been undertaken in 2008-09, regarding advertising campaigns undertaken by the department?

Ms LAWRIE: Most of the campaigns that are regional specific go to road safety. It is probably more appropriate to ask that of the Transport Minister, because that is where the regional campaigns are - in road safety.

Mr GILES: So, it would be all under Transport?

Mr LAWRIE: In terms of campaigns, we ...

Mr GILES: Okay. How many campaigns by DPI, excluding transport, have been translated into local dialect?

Mr LAWRIE: Mr Hancock.

Mr HANCOCK: None.

Mr GILES: For each campaign, can you please advise who was contracted to write the material for the print, visual and audio platforms?

Mr HANCOCK: We have used a variety of agencies thorough the Territory. We can supply that detail, but I will do that a little later in the session.

Mr CHAIRMAN: So, you are taking that on notice?

Ms LAWRIE: Yes.

Question on Notice 2.11

Mr CHAIRMAN: Member for Brainting, if you could repeat the question.

Mr GILES: Can you please detail who was contracted to write the material for print, visual and audio platforms for each campaign?

Mr CHAIRMAN: And you are happy to take that, minister?

Ms LAWRIE: Yes.

Mr CHAIRMAN: For the purposes of *Hansard*, that is question No 2.11

Question on Notice 2.12

Mr GILES: I have the same question for the art work for print, visual and audio for each campaign.

Ms LAWRIE: I am happy to take it on notice.

Mr CHAIRMAN: For the purposes of *Hansard*, that is question No 2.12.

Mr GILES: Who has the printing contract, minister?

Mr LAWRIE: Mr Hancock.

Mr HANCOCK: We use the Government Printing Office.

Mr GILES: Minister, is the advertising material approved by you, the minister's office or the CE?

Ms LAWRIE: Mr Hancock.

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Mr HANCOCK: I approve the advertising material for the department.

Mr CHAIRMAN: Member for Nelson, do you have any ...

Mr GILES: I have a number of questions before we get to Output 1.1.

Mr CHAIRMAN: Agency specific, whole of government? Okay.

Mr GILES: What is the increase in staffing numbers across the department in 2008-09? Say, to the end of May.

Ms LAWRIE: We have the staffing numbers broken down into section, but I will speak about it globally. For the whole of the department, which also includes Darwin Bus, the staffing total as of May 2008 was 755 and, in May 2009, it was 879.

Mr TOLLNER: Are you prepared to table that with the individual breakdowns, minister?

Ms LAWRIE: Yes.

Mr GILES: Minister, you have an ECO5 Deputy Executive position. My question - not against the person, but against the position - is, why do you have an ECO5 Deputy Executive compared with other agencies who do not have an ECO5, such as Health?

Ms LAWRIE: The Department of Planning and Infrastructure is a key agency for government in the program delivery it effects. As for the structure of the organisation, we get consultants to come in and have a look at the appropriate staffing structure for the Department of Planning and Infrastructure. Recommendations were made to establish a Deputy CEO position. That position has been remunerated appropriately, consistent with the level of responsibility the position has.

Mr GILES: Can you detail for me how much, in salary and administrative costs, has been spent in the 12 months to 31 May on senior public servants - EO1 to ECO6? I will be happy to take it on notice or for you to table it.

Ms LAWRIE: We do have some information here. I want to check whether I have all of the information you are asking for. We have the number of ECO officers but we do not have the salary amounts.

Mr GILES: I will be happy if you could take on notice the number of officers and the salary amounts in 12 months.

Ms LAWRIE: I do not have to take on notice the number of executive officers. I have that information. You want a comparative, say, from 29 May 2008 to 31 May 2009; is that what you are looking for? In terms of the total number of EO1 to ECO6 - that is, the total number of executive officers - in 29 May 2008, there were 55; on the 31 May 2009 there were 67.

Mr GILES: Can you detail how much money was spent on travel for those executive officers we just spoke about for the 12 months of the period until 31 May 2009?

Ms LAWRIE: We do not have travel broken down into executive officers but we do have total travel for the department.

Mr GILES: I am happy for you to take it on notice for the executive officers.

Ms LAWRIE: Sure.

Mr GILES: Before you take that on notice I will add to the question - a comparison for two, three and five years ago.

Ms LAWRIE: No, I am not going to waste my officers' time on that. I am happy to do a comparative year-to-year. That is quite normal but I am not going to trawling back through the ...

Mr GILES: I would like to know the extent of the expenses of travel from the 31 May this year to 12 months ago and to five years ago to see how much we have increased our expenditure for travel for executive officers.

Ms LAWRIE: I will do it for 12 months. I am not going to waste my officers' time on a trawling exercise. They have too much good work to do.

Mr GILES: You do not have those figures easily at hand? Is that what you are saying?

Ms LAWRIE: It will be going back through old records. That is why I am not going to waste my department officers' time.

Question on Notice 2.13

Mr CHAIRMAN: We will for the purposes of *Hansard*, member for Braitling, just restate that question.

Mr GILES: Can you please detail the amount of money spent on travel to the 31 May this year and compare it to 12 months ago?

Mr CHAIRMAN: Minister, you are happy to take that on notice? For purposes of *Hansard* that is question No 2.13.

Mr GILES: In the last 12 months for executive officers can you please detail the extent of travel intrastate, interstate and international undertaken by EOs?

Ms LAWRIE: We have a departmental breakdown between local, interstate and overseas but it does not just focus on executive officers. My executive officers are busy travelling, particularly in relation to ministerial councils and the COAG working group responsibilities they have. We also went on a recruitment drive in the last financial year which involved executive officers going overseas to recruit highly-skilled technical staff. We do not break down the travel of just executive officers. It is seen as a global travel figure; in terms of the entire agency broken into DPI, Construction Division and Darwin Bus Service in local, interstate and overseas.

Mr GILES: I am happy to take that information but it would be good for next year if we have a breakdown.

Ms LAWRIE: In terms of total travel and accommodation across the agency, locally it is \$335 462, interstate \$118 719. Accommodation costs for overseas is \$35 278. For travel locally, it is \$377 910, interstate \$63 962, and overseas is \$3920. That is across DPI, Construction Division and Darwin Bus Service.

Mr GILES: The \$3920 for international - was that for flights or accommodation?

Ms LAWRIE: That is the travel allowance. There is a separate item that sets out travel expenses, fares and charters which gives me a total for the department. For official duty fares the totals across Lands, Infrastructure, Transport and Corporate, the intra-Territory fares are \$142 784; the interstate

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fares, \$309 789, and for overseas it is \$39 633. There are some air, bus and boat charter in there as well, which is \$22 190, which brings a combined total of official duty fares to \$514 396.

Mr GILES: Minister, can you please detail how many consultancies have been undertaken in the 12 months to 31 May 2009, and compare that to 12 months before? I would also like to know the value of the total, and the cost of each.

Ms LAWRIE: The consultancies are broken into what we call the output groups. Lands is the first one I will provide. The total in Lands is \$38 995, the name of the consultancy is – and this is the Territory consultancies grouping – Technical Assessment of Structures, Dick Ward Drive, Coconut Grove and the supplier of that was Tecon Australia on behalf of Opus Qantec McWilliam; a contract for Bellamack Probity Auditors, CT Alliance; also a probity audit of Bellamack expression of interest, CT Alliance; area plans for the communities of Lajamanu, Kalkarindji, Daguragu, Yuendumu by Central Land Council; the Writing Better Ministerials Course was Samantha McCue; and design of brochures for Ribbons of Green Projects was given to Sprout Creative.

For the interstate consultancy for the Lands Group for the Coastal Catchment Initiative Water Sensitivity Project the supplier was Edaw Australia Pty Ltd; the Queensland Review into Building Certification in the NT - that was consultancy fees for Philip Breeze; the Review of the NT CPTED Guidelines – Coomes Consulting Group; the Review of the NT Planning Scheme, Planning Workshop Australia; and the attendance fee for Rob Adams at the Alice Springs Planning for the Future Forum. The combined total of those consultancies is \$85 137.

In the Infrastructure Group, we have JAQ Write-Up Manager Performance and Planning, Ms Cassandra Spiers – that was \$440; Draft JAQ Manager Performance and Planning, John O'Leary Consulting – \$600. These are all the Territory ones by the way; I will distinguish between Territory and interstate. Draft JAQ Director Infrastructure Strategy, John O'Leary Consulting – \$450; JAQ Write-Up Manager AIS/BAMS, Cassandra Spiers – \$440; Ministerial Writing Workshop, Ms Samantha McCue - \$280; and Nhulunbuy Cyclone Shelter Feasibility Study which was 50:50 joint funded with Alcan Gove Pty Ltd – \$20 863. The combined total of the Territory contracts in those areas for consultants was \$23 073.

For Infrastructure in interstate consultancies we had the Best of Breed consultant advice for Asset Management System, Walter Turnbull – \$17 386; and the ARRB Group Road Contract Workshop by Paul Robinson, which was the ARRB Group Ltd Transport Research – \$3000. The total was \$20 386.

In Corporate, I will deal with the NT consultancies first. We had the Better Ministerial Writing, Ms Samantha McCue – \$700; Ministerial Writing Workshop, Ms Samantha McCue – \$700; OBS Service Delivery Workshops, Ms Gail Humble – \$2475; Staff Survey 2008, Dolphin Software – \$6694; the 2008-09 Four-Year Strategic Plan which was a Charles Darwin University consultancy; that is, their operational account evidently - \$44 682; the Building Positive Work Place workshops, Gail Humble - \$4596; ABS Data Australian Bureau of Statistics - \$1914; Briefing Facilitation, Gail Humble - \$2250; and Graphic Presentation Services staff survey, Dolphin Software - \$2881. This makes a total of \$66 892 for those Territory corporate consultancies.

In interstate consultancies, we have Marcoms Strategy, Royce Business and Communication - \$50 464; Reputation Strategy, Royce Business and Communication - \$29 552; Performance Assessment and Benchmarking Review, The Consultancy Bureau - \$232 548; Change Management Team/Executive Team Strategic, Yellow Edge Pty Ltd - \$2397; national recruitment drive consultant was QI Systems - \$35 000; assessment of the financial, Walter Turnbull - \$39 068; Management Development Program, Imagine Consulting Group International - \$177 727; construction industry research and development, Porter Novelli Australia - \$7464; Change Management Team workshop, The Consultancy Bureau - \$6161; national recruitment drive consultant, Socom - \$39 551; salary benchmarking, Mercer Australia Pty Ltd - \$38 400; and Preparing JAQs, Walter Turnbull - \$5829.

Mr WOOD: Is it possible to table this document? It is taking up a lot of time.

Ms LAWRIE: I will table the last page. There are some mistakes on the first two pages, that is why I am reading it. Otherwise, I would have tabled it. There are some factual errors on the first two, but there are no factual errors on the last page.

DEEWR stats data course, Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations - \$156 000; and JAQs for the CEO, Deputy CEO and General Manager positions, Construction Division, Mercer - \$1575. That is a total of \$615 892. I am able to table, because there are no factual errors, the output group for transport, both for the Territory consultancies and the interstate consultancies, and the consultancies for Construction Division, both Territory and interstate.

Mr GILES: I am happy with that.

Mr WOOD: Regarding the trips the CEO and others took to South Africa and India trying to get skilled engineers for the Northern Territory. We now have a recession. Many of our skilled people do not have jobs. Have we changed our emphasis from recruiting overseas to seeking workers in Australia?

Ms LAWRIE: I defer to Mr Hancock.

Mr HANCOCK: Yes, we did change our focus. When the two international recruitment drive missions were completed, the global financial crisis started to take effect within Australia. We found additional professional staff were becoming available to the department from other parts of Australia. We had already commenced recruitment of some town planning professionals from South Africa but, as far as any other recruitment from overseas, we put that on hold whilst we recruited within Australia. That has been a relatively successful exercise in the current economic climate.

Mr CHAIRMAN: That concludes questions on Agency Specific Whole-of-Government Related Questions.

OUTPUT GROUP 1.0 – LANDS **Output 1.1 – Land Information**

Mr CHAIRMAN: The committee will now consider Output Group 1.0, Lands, Output 1.1, Land Information. Are there any questions?

Mr GILES: Minister, how many applications for the use of the Land Information Services were lodged for the year to 31 May 2009 for both government and private usage?

Ms LAWRIE: I defer to Mr Stephens, Senior Director, Land Information Services.

Mr STEPHENS: Vic Stephens. We do not record the numbers per year. We record the running totals, and the current level of access within government shows approximately 1500 regular users of the Land Information System. There are also approximately 400 external users, including Power and Water Corporation, private companies, legal firms, valuers, etcetera. Those 400 include approximately 900 individual users. That is the current state of play.

Mr GILES: Sorry, I may have missed a number there. So there are 400 private users?

Mr STEPHENS: Four hundred private organisations. Within them, they have 900 separate individuals working for them.

Mr GILES: Minister, how much revenue was generated from the private users of the system?

Mr STEPHENS: We do not generate income from the use of the system. The only charges levied are the statutory charges which go to Land Titles Office.

Mr GILES: Do you have a total for that?

Mr STEPHENS: You will have to ask the Department of Justice.

Mr GILES: When was the last customer survey completed for this division of government, by whom, how much did it cost, what were the outcomes, have the recommendations been implemented, and at what cost?

Ms LAWRIE: Mr Stephens.

Mr STEPHENS: Land Information conducts an annual online survey, and has done for approximately five years. We do it ourselves online using a software tool. The results are compiled automatically. We also ask for comments on the services and we follow up with responses to customers, if we can identify the individuals who respond. We have adjusted our services accordingly. It is done in-house and the cost is minimal.

Mr GILES: There has not been a complete review or anything like that?

Mr STEPHENS: There have been individual user parts of the division, such as the review of the Land Information standards, which was conducted in 2007, which led to changes in the levels of services offered.

Mr GILES: No further questions.

Mr CHAIRMAN: Member for Nelson.

Mr WOOD: Just to clarify - this is where NT Maps would come under?

Ms LAWRIE: Yes.

Mr WOOD: Since your department or the government made a decision to get rid of the commercial arm of the mapping area, what sort of feedback have we had from customers?

Ms LAWRIE: Mr Stephens.

Mr STEPHENS: We have had, in the Darwin area, some negative feedback, which relates to the services the private sector supplier is delivering. In Alice Springs and Katherine, there has been no real adverse feedback.

Mr WOOD: Is government looking at reviewing their decision, at least in the Darwin area? I am one of those who feels it has been a negative step since now we have to go to two places for maps, instead of one.

Ms LAWRIE: No, there are no plans to review that decision.

Mr WOOD: In relation to the government proposing new land clearing guidelines - which are fairly complicated - will your department have a role to play, so people like farmers and developers can come in and get information they need to help them with their applications?

Mr STEPHENS: That question is probably ...

Ms LAWRIE: It is NRETAS.

Mr STEPHENS: ... NRETAS.

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Mr WOOD: I realise that, but NRETAS's guidelines for clearing land require quite a lot of detailed information such as vegetation mapping, soil, and even contours. Is that the sort of information your department could supply to people to fill out NRETAS's guidelines?

Mr STEPHENS: We are not the custodians for that information; NRETAS is. If a package of information is required by the developer such as files, etcetera, then we would be happy to work with people in NRETAS to develop services and products to make that available.

Mr WOOD: Do you see a need for a central point where people can get that information? In the budget it states:

Land Information

Provides spatial (land-related, geographical) data and information and a consistent framework of land information policy, standards and distribution networks to service government, businesses and the community.

You are sending people off into two different directions. Should you not combine this information into a one-stop shop for people?

Ms LAWRIE: Again, that issue is more properly under the NRETAS umbrella. It is a body of work where the DPI provides supporting information to NRETAS, and we will continue to do that, but ...

Mr WOOD: You do not sell that information, as a department, to someone who comes off the street. They have to go to NRETAS to get this information you supply to them.

Ms LAWRIE: In terms of the land clearing issues you have raised?

Mr WOOD: Information like vegetation types. If I was a farmer and wanted to get a map of vegetation types, required under the new guidelines, or I wanted to look at soil types or contours, where would I get that information? If I look here it says, 'land information'. It does not say NRETAS.

Ms LAWRIE: Mr Stephens.

Mr STEPHENS: We have a service agreement with NRETAS. We provide services to them. That is an area where we could develop joint products and make them available through a central service point.

Mr WOOD: Those are all my questions, thank you.

Mr CHAIRMAN: That concludes questions for Output 1.1.

Output 1.2 - Development Assessment

Mr CHAIRMAN: The committee will now proceed to Output 1.2, Development Assessment. Are there any questions?

Mr GILES: Minister, how often has the DCA met to 31 May 2009 for the last 12 months and what did it cost to hold the meetings across the Territory?

Ms LAWRIE: Development Consent Authority in total has, for 2008-09 to 31 May, met 67 times. There are the divisions Darwin, Palmerston, Alice Springs, Katherine, Batchelor and Litchfield. I have the breakdown if you want.

Mr GILES: That would good if you can table that.

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Ms LAWRIE: The cost in total, including airfares, sitting fees, accommodation and other expenses, is \$205 639.

Mr GILES: If you want to table that, I will be happy for the breakdown. How many applications have been received across the Territory in that 12 month period to 31 May?

Ms LAWRIE: From 1 July 2008 to 31 May 2009, in planning applications, there has been a variety. There is the alteration permit, the appeals, the compliance checks, the developments, the extended period of abandonment, the exceptional development extension of time, investigations and subdivisions, and then there are some variations as well. In total, there have been 1262.

Mr GILES: To save me the bother of going through each category and asking for the details of each one, would you be happy to table that document?

Ms LAWRIE: Absolutely.

Mr GILES: Thank you very much.

Ms LAWRIE: I also, on the document, have the comparison from 1 July 2007 to 31 May 2008.

Mr GILES: Does that have section 117 appeals in that?

Ms LAWRIE: Yes, it has the appeals.

Mr GILES: Was the DCA consulted about the Arafura Harbour and Frances Bay proposals?

Ms LAWRIE: There would have been no formal application.

Mr GILES: Were they consulted at all?

Ms LAWRIE: There would have been no formal application. The DCA does not come into play until there is a formal application.

Mr GILES: Do you know what the opinions of people on the DCA were?

Ms LAWRIE: No, I have not canvassed the opinions of the people on the DCA.

Mr GILES: How does the DCA work in areas outside of urban areas in the Territory? What role do they play?

Ms LAWRIE: I am at liberty to appoint the Chair of the DCA to act as my delegate, which I do from time to time, depending on the nature of and interest in the application.

Mr GILES: What changes to planning schemes have occurred in the regions? Are there planning schemes across all major towns, including the growth towns identified under the *A Working Futures* document?

Ms LAWRIE: There is the Territory-wide planning scheme. Serviced Land Availability Program (SLAP) plans sit in the growth towns. At the moment, we are creating area plans for the major communities. When I say major communities, I am referring to about 72 communities on that list. This means ambitious work for the Department of Planning in area plans. To date, we have progressed about 12. We have prioritised the communities based on the SIHIP program, so we can create the area plans for where the residential and commercial centres will go. For example, I know Nguui is one of the active ones, Alyangula ...

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Mr GILES: Minister, in terms ...

Ms LAWRIE: ... Milyakburra and Angurugu ...

Mr GILES: ... in terms of the 20 growth towns that were announced ...

Mr CHAIRMAN: Are we straying to Output 1.3?

Ms LAWRIE: Yes, we are.

Mr CHAIRMAN: Do you have questions on Output 1.2?

Mr GILES: This is under Output 1.2.

Ms LAWRIE: No, it is under Strategic Lands Planning, and we are under DCA.

Mr CHAIRMAN: I will hold for Mr Wood's questions and we will go straight there.

Mr ELFERINK: Minister, late last year at a meeting of residents at the old hospital site, you promised you would make available the Mickey Dewar report when it was to be handed in. Your department received it on the 17 December last year. Can you table that document and keep your promise?

Ms LAWRIE: I do not have the document here, but am happy to provide copies of it to members.

Mr ELFERINK: Thank you. Before the end of this, perchance?

Ms LAWRIE: I do not know if it will be before the end of this session; but as soon as possible.

Mr GILES: Before we move on to the member for Nelson, I had questions about that report identified in Output 1.3 in Strategic Planning. Are you happy to take it in Output 1.3? I have a couple more to add.

Ms LAWRIE: The old hospital site is under Output 1.3. I know it is a hot issue.

Mr WOOD: The figure of \$0.57m in the budget; is that to increase the DCA meetings to a fortnightly basis?

Ms LAWRIE: Yes.

Mr WOOD: There has been a drop in the timeliness for the determination to be settled by the DCA. Minister, can you give me an average number of days for rezoning applications to be completed?

Ms LAWRIE: I invite to the table Mark Meldrum, Director, Strategic Lands Planning.

Mr MELDRUM: Mark Meldrum. Number of completed?

Mr WOOD: Yes, number of completed rezoning applications. What is the average time from an application's start to its end?

Ms LAWRIE: We have the number of completed rezoning applications, but not the number of days.

Question on Notice 2.14

Mr WOOD: That is an important area. It is good to speed up development applications, but rezoning applications are equally critical. Could I get the average number of days for a rezoning application to be completed?

Mr CHAIRMEN: That is the question being repeated for the purposes of *Hansard*. Minister, are you happy to take that question on notice?

Ms LAWRIE: Yes, happy to take it on notice.

Mr CHAIRMAN: That is question No 2.14.

Ms LAWRIE: I can provide advice to the member for Nelson that the department has established a special team to facilitate the processing of rezoning applications.

Mr WOOD: Minister, would you consider developing a mobile Development Consent Authority which would have five members - some of whom would represent those areas affected by decisions being made - as a more open, transparent and democratic process, rather than just the minister, or the minister's delegate, making decisions?

A classic example is Daly River. You are having a public meeting, but those local people will not be talking to you. They will be talking to your delegate, and you will be making the decision.

Ms LAWRIE: Yes, I am happy to consider your suggestion, member for Nelson. As Planning minister, I have used that delegation where there has been any community concern whatsoever to an application. I have done it at Wagait. I am doing it at Daly River. Where there is community concern in regard to an application, I have delegated my powers. I will consider your suggestion.

Mr WOOD: You have not given any thought to reversing your decision to remove the DCA from Middle Arm?

Ms LAWRIE: No.

Mr WOOD: That is not a good decision in light of the importance of this project but, anyway, we will move on.

Ms LAWRIE: I am on the public record saying that, if required, there would be public hearings.

Mr WOOD: You will have to make a decision on your own government's application for INPEX. That does not sound like open and transparent government to me, It sounds like a conflict of interest.

Mr CHAIRMAN: That concludes consideration of Output 1.2.

Output 1.3 - Strategic Lands Planning

Mr CHAIRMAN: We move on to Output 1.3, Strategic Lands Planning. Are there any questions?

Mr GILES: Yes. There is a land shortage in Alice Springs hindering the growth of the town. What is the government doing about releasing Lot 7411 in Larapinta?

Ms LAWRIE: You want to specify the allotment or the ...

Mr GILES: It is the block of land at the end of Ellery Drive in Larapinta.

Ms LAWRIE: I will take the question. It may be where we have our accommodation identified, but I would have to clarify that.

Question on Notice 2.15

Mr CHAIRMAN: For the purposes of *Hansard*, can you repeat that question?

Mr GILES: There is a significant land shortage in Alice Springs, hindering in the town's growth. What is the government doing about releasing Lot 7411 in Larapinta? I ask the same question about the area commonly known as south Sadadeen.

Ms LAWRIE: South Sadadeen is part of a broader body of work the government is working on so I will take the Larapinta on notice.

Mr CHAIRMAN: All right. The Larapinta is on notice and that is question No 2.15 for *Hansard*.

Mr CHAIRMAN: Moving to your Sadadeen question, minister, do you need that question repeated?

Ms LAWRIE: No, that is fine. The government has held the planning forum in Alice Springs to identify potential land release sites for residential for Alice Springs. We established the steering committee in March of this year to oversee the implementation of the action plan. The co-chairs of that are Karl Hampton, our Minister for Central Australia, and the Mayor, Damien Ryan. The action plan is going to review the structure plan of 1999 and put on exhibition any changes proposed for the Alice Springs Land Use Framework Plan and the principles in the NT Planning Scheme. The Department of Planning and Infrastructure has procured QED Pty Ltd to complete that draft framework plan by mid-2009. QED Pty Ltd commenced that project in December 2008.

We are looking at a review of the development control courses applicable to the CBD, because residential opportunity exists, potentially, in the CBD, as well. There was an urban design audit conducted in March. We are identifying specific urban design outcomes and proposals by June this year.

In the residential land release strategy, whilst there are currently 39 residential lots under construction at Larapinta, we are focused on the release of 70 lots in Mt John Valley through the Indigenous Land Use Agreement we struck with the Lhere Artepe. The planning committee are very focused on prioritising the release of land in the Arid Zone Research Institute, AZRI ...

Mr GILES: Minister, I just want to know about Sadadeen. I do not want to know about the rest of it. I know about the rest of it. I just want to know about south Sadadeen. If you can answer that, I am happy to move on.

Ms LAWRIE: In terms of where south Sadadeen fits in that picture, it is currently the purview of the planning committee in Alice Springs to come back to me with recommendations on those turn-offs.

Mr GILES: Has the government or DPI been undertaking strategic lands planning work in the areas of Daly River and Ti Tree in relation to land that is currently owned by government?

Ms LAWRIE: I will ask to the table Tony Renshaw, Executive Director of Regions, who heads our Central Australian office.

Mr RENSHAW: Tony Renshaw, Executive Director of Regions. The department has investigated opportunities for works in Ti Tree. It has been working with the appropriate local government authorities to gather information, and will be able to prepare information in about six months time with

regard to what the ideal circumstances might be. The work has identified there are significant difficulties for some people living in inappropriate types of housing in Ti Tree. That report will identify opportunities to ameliorate those circumstances.

Mr GILES: Will that include commercial land as well, or just residential?

Ms LAWRIE: When we look at it, we tend to look at commercial as well as residential. Mr Renshaw?

Mr RENSHAW: We will ensure that includes commercial and industrial land.

Mr GILES: That will be great, thank you. And Daly River?

Mr RENSHAW: A few blocks in the town.

Mr GILES: I know. That is why I want to find out ...

Ms LAWRIE: Regarding Daly River, I have put together a process involving the officers from the Department of Local Government and Housing, and the Department of Planning and Infrastructure, to appraise future growth needs of Daly River, particularly where the township site is going to be.

Mr GILES: So there will be a report or some ideas coming forward within a certain time frame?

Ms LAWRIE: Yes, I have asked for that work to commence following this sitting period. I have spoken to the Minister for Local Government and Housing about that, and he has committed his resources, as I have mine.

Mr GILES: Do you have a time frame?

Ms LAWRIE: Well, we need to crunch the officers together first of all. They will help us to recognise what are achievable time frames.

Mr GILES: We have 20 towns in this growth town model the government hobbled together. Has there been a land planning exercise undertaken for those 20 towns, as it seeks to move forward, for economic development and everything else that was promised?

Ms LAWRIE: Yes, as I have said, area plans will guide the orderly and proper planning for communities. They are currently being prepared for our 72 major Indigenous communities ...

Mr GILES: When will they be finished, minister?

Ms LAWRIE: I just want to talk you through what we are doing there. Priority for preparing the plans is being given to those communities identified for major works under SIHIP, as I have said. Once the area plans have been done they will be scheduled in the NT Planning Scheme. The land will be identified for specific uses and could then go ahead and be developed without consent for those users. What we have is all 72 communities, covered by the Service Land Availability Program, the SLAPs, to provide for aerial photography, topographical mapping, community service land availability program, MAPS – SLAP MAPS - and homeland community plans and forward land use planning studies.

The community planning forums and landowner meetings have been held on 12 communities. We have eight draft area plans prepared for these consultations ...

Mr GILES: Are those 12 communities, minister, are they growth town communities?

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Ms LAWRIE: Yes, they are.

Mr GILES: So you have eight that have not been done?

Ms LAWRIE: Eight draft areas plans prepared for those consultations will soon be circulated to shire councils for comment and, following those responses, the area plans will be sent to the respective land councils or the office of township leasing if there is a 99-year township leasing in place - for example, Nguiu, Angurugu, Umbakumba and Milyakburra - for endorsement. The endorsed plans will then be scheduled in the scheme.

Funding for our accelerated land use planning and mapping program to support this expanded community housing area ...

Mr GILES: Minister, I am happy with your answer. Have you identified alternative sites for additional port facilities for Darwin?

Ms LAWRIE: We are looking at a range of options for light and heavy industrial opportunities for the Territory. By its nature, those potential sites are being identified with Department of Planning and Infrastructure, and they may include external ports.

Mr GILES: Were there significant differences between recommendations of the Dewar report and the proposals recently announced by government, and what were the differences?

Ms LAWRIE: In terms of the growth towns?

Mr GILES: In terms of the hospital site.

Ms LAWRIE: Sorry?

Mr GILES: In terms of the old hospital site.

Ms LAWRIE: Oh, okay, the old hospital site. Sorry, you are jumping around a bit here.

Mr GILES: I am jumping around and I am cutting questions out.

Ms LAWRIE: No, that is cool. I am going to follow you. We were just talking about ...

Mr GILES: It is 6 pm. I am looking at the time and I know the member for Nelson is not happy.

Ms LAWRIE: Okay. In terms ...

Mr WOOD: Oh, you cannot comment on whether I am happy or not.

Mr GILES: I could see your face, mate.

Mr CHAIRMAN: The member for Nelson is known for his chirpiness.

Mr Elferink: The wind changed when he was 16 and it has been that way ever since, has it not?

Ms LAWRIE: So, the old hospital site. The government went out with plans for the redevelopment of the site consisting of a new park - 80% in area - with medium density and residential tower development in 20% of the area. We put in place a consultant, Dr Mickey Dewar, to undertake interviews with key stakeholders including nearby residents and interested persons. I met with

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members of the local community about the proposal of the old hospital site on 16 November. Mickey Dewar was present at that meeting.

In early January, the consultant prepared the report setting out the concerns to stakeholders. Essentially, coming out of that report were the core components stating they wanted a less formal park, a commemorative space to recognise the historical connection to the old hospital, Kahlin compound, and the Larrakia people. They also liked the feature of public art, a café, a children's water play area, but they talked about the need for disabled access, shaded car parks, appropriate lighting, barbecue areas and shelters. All of those issues arising out of what I will call the Dewar report have been encapsulated in the old hospital site redesign which has now gone out publicly.

Mr GILES: What are the ongoing forward estimates and appropriations for capital works and recurrent funding for the old hospital site for its development, and are funds allocated in the current financial year?

Ms LAWRIE: The Department of Planning and Infrastructure will now work with Treasury on models of the site and residential. It will do the scope and design works of the components that have been committed for the old hospital site. That advice will come forward to government.

Mr GILES: So, is there any ...

Ms LAWRIE: Depending on those models, the government will have some revenue generated by the residential.

Mr GILES: Is there allocation of funds in this forward budget for expenditure to DPI to undertake that work?

Ms LAWRIE: DPI is able to undertake that work from within the agency's existing budget. I have publicly articulated that actual construction would not be until 2010, so it would be in the following budget of 2010-11.

Mr GILES: So, it will not be in this upcoming budget? Has the Darwin City Council agreed to assume financial responsibility for the park operations after the project is completed?

Ms LAWRIE: No.

Mr GILES: What other projects are expected to be run, owned or managed by Darwin City Council in the future? What has been assessed as the NT government's liability to be transferred if the waterfront is included in that mix?

Ms LAWRIE: We will have ongoing discussions and negotiations with Darwin City Council about what I call the Myilly Point park site, as well as the old hospital site. Ultimately, as in the case of the waterfront, if council decides not to take on board the opportunity of those two parks, then government will own and operate those parks.

Mr GILES: What will be the financial commitment required to do that?

Ms LAWRIE: Treasury, as part of the modelling it will undertake with the Department of Planning and Infrastructure in the coming months, will look at the ongoing maintenance requirements and the opportunities with those maintenance options. In the first instance, we want to garner the views of Darwin City Council as to whether they are keen to take over those significant parks for our city.

Mr GILES: So, we are flying blind at the moment?

Ms LAWRIE: No, we are not flying blind; we have quite a lot of options.

Mr GILES: At this point of time we do not know what our commitment is going to be for the Territory government.

Ms LAWRIE: We have some options.

Mr GILES: We do not know what the commitment is for the Territory government.

Ms LAWRIE: We have good options.

Mr GILES: Minister, what are the traffic control issues associated with your new election announcements about the redevelopment of the Duck Pond and its links to Stokes Hill Wharf and the Darwin waterfront area?

Ms LAWRIE: That would come under Roads, Traffic Management.

Mr GILES: It is a strategic planning exercise. It was announced a week or so ago. I am sure you have looked at the roads infrastructure and the implications for ...

Ms LAWRIE: Yes, and I am happy to answer that under Roads.

Mr CHAIRMAN: For the purposes of managing these outputs and getting through the business today, that is under a different section.

Mr GILES: Well, I do not think it is.

Mr CHAIRMAN: Well, the minister has advised it is. Have you any further questions for this output?

Ms LAWRIE: Traffic management comes under Roads.

Mr GILES: All right. Subsequent question – was the Roads section of DPI consulted about this new proposal for the redevelopment of the Duck Pond before you made the announcement?

Ms LAWRIE: Yes.

Mr GILES: I will continue my questions on that later. What are the financial implications and forward estimates for works associated with the Duck Pond redevelopment?

Ms LAWRIE: Again, the Duck Pond redevelopment - which we call the Frances Bay Area Plan - is going out for consultation. It is not locked in yet, although we consider it is a very good proposal. It follows years of consultation. Regarding the cost elements, that depends on what economic opportunities government chooses to take up. I will provide a range of options to Cabinet about how we would stage the Frances Bay area development and which portion of that would be Northern Territory government and which private sector investment.

Mr GILES: Through the Chair, I have specific questions on Noonamah gaol, Berrimah Farm, Bellamack and some planning in Palmerston. I am happy to go through them one by one, and then you will have to go through and do them all again, or I can do sections.

Mr WOOD: No, I will follow on from wherever you leave off, as long as you say it is Weddell, not Noonamah.

Mr GILES: Right. Noonamah gaol.

Ms LAWRIE: The new prison site?

Mr GILES: The new prison site. What research was done prior to the announcement to relocate the main Darwin gaol? Was external research undertaken, at what cost, who did the research, and was it by internal government?

Ms LAWRIE: On 12 February 2009, the Chief Minister announced a new \$300m correctional complex would be located at section 1877, about 8 km north-west of Noonamah on Jenkins Road, which is off the Stuart Highway at Bennett Creek. The new greenfield development will provide greater flexibility in design innovation, as well as be less costly with respect to site servicing. The relocation will also allow residential commercial development of the combined Berrimah Farm and gaol site.

Correctional Services has identified total project funding, including the cost of preliminary studies, investigations and consultancies for the new correctional services facility at Bennett Creek. The site was selected after careful consideration by a variety of criteria, including the headworks cost. Taking all selection criteria into consideration, the ...

Mr GILES: Minister, I do not need a ministerial statement. I just want these questions answered: what research was done, was external research undertaken or was done internally, and what was the cost? They are simple and straightforward questions.

Mr CHAIRMAN: Member for Braitling, your question had multiple parts, and I believe the minister is addressing it.

Mr GILES: I do not want to spend all afternoon or all evening with ministerial statements. I want to get answers to questions.

Mr CHAIRMAN: The minister is answering the question.

Ms LAWRIE: It is a very important question and it is appropriate to show you the level of effort the government has gone to in site selection.

Mr GILES: You are wasting time.

Ms LAWRIE: No, I am not wasting time, member for Braitling.

Mr CHAIRMAN: You have asked the question, member for Braitling, the minister is answering it.

Ms LAWRIE: I know the member for Nelson is vitally interested in this, and I am going to be tabling, after my explanation, the site assessment and criteria. In the site at Jenkins Road, it was the least expensive of the six sites assessed. The site assessment included Department of Justice, Treasury, Department of Planning and Infrastructure, and Correctional Services as a separate component to the Department of Justice people involved. It was all done internally across the government agencies I mentioned.

They looked at six sites and the Jenkins Road north site met all of them. The member for Nelson has been keen to see the site assessment and criteria, so he will be happy. What we call the Bennett Creek site was ranked first out of the six. The headworks would cost \$36m. Comparing that to other sites, Gunn Point was \$99m, Berrimah Farm \$52m, and the Berrimah prison plus part of the Berrimah Farm, \$52m. To improve the Berrimah prison site on its own would be \$52m. We looked at site area, travel distance, whether or not the site was flat, what the contours were, the buffers, the separation for residential, the environmental risks, the headworks, to what level the site met the NT Planning Scheme guidelines for the construction of a new prison, and Northern Territory government land availability. I will table the document. I am also happy to table a map identifying the various sites.

Mr GILES: Minister, how much did the research cost?

Ms LAWRIE: It was all done within government agency budgets.

Mr GILES: There was no consultancy done at all?

Ms LAWRIE: No.

Mr GILES: Did you consult with the two prison officer associations before you made the decision to move the gaol? Did you promise them specific compensation? What will be the cost in the next EBA?

Ms LAWRIE: Correctional Services questions go to the Correctional Services Minister. As the minister for Planning, I am able to advise you of the planning aspects of the facility, but Correctional Services questions go to the minister.

Mr GILES: In the strategic planning before you decided to move, did you consult with the prison officer associations?

Ms LAWRIE: Corrections was involved in the site location. Whether Corrections spoke to the prison officers associations is a question for the Correctional Services Minister.

Mr GILES: Are you saying DPI did not talk to the associations?

Ms LAWRIE: As I said, there were several government agencies involved. Each government agency did its bit of the work required. Planning did the planning side of things; Corrections did the Corrections side of things; Justice did the Justice side; Treasury looked at all the financial issues around it, and there were Justice legal officers involved, as well.

Mr GILES: Minister, how many acres are under the lease of the current Darwin Correctional facilities at Berrimah, and how many of those acres are used by buildings and operations of the gaol?

Ms LAWRIE: As for the existing site hectares, I might have to take that question on notice. The new prison will have an area of at least 100 ha to allow for prison expansion, and that will also have a 50 ha buffer zone. But, as to the existing hectares, I will take this question on notice.

Question on Notice 2.16

Mr GILES: How many hectares are under the lease of the current Darwin Correctional facilities at Berrimah, and how many hectares are actually used by buildings and operations of the gaol itself?

Ms LAWRIE: I will take the question on notice.

Mr CHAIRMAN: That is question No 2.16 for the purposes of *Hansard*.

Mr GILES: Minister, would you agree there is a handful of land available to expand the existing gaol at Berrimah?

Ms LAWRIE: Unfortunately, in planning parlance, the land available has significant constraints.

Mr GILES: Where are those significant constraints?

Ms LAWRIE: I will hand over to **Gerhard Visser**, my strategic planning expert to explain some of the constraints of the existing site.

Mr VISSER: Gerhard Visser. We looked at the current Berrimah prison site. It is quite steep at the bottom end. It is also wet there. We had to look at quite a lot of filling there. Then, there is a stream adjacent to it. The site is too small to accommodate the prison's expansion to 2500 ha.

Mr GILES: I know we have been provided with designs and we have dimensions there, but, are you telling me the size of the land is not big enough to accommodate the proposed prison?

Mr VISSER: The current prison site is too small to accommodate the full 1 ha area around it to protect it from adjacent developments. In addition, it does not have a security buffer of 200 m to 400 m, as requested by the Correctional Services authorities.

Mr GILES: Will there be an environmental impact statement for the new prison, given the size and the scopes of the works, and its location close to waterways and wetlands?

Ms LAWRIE: Yes.

Mr GILES: This is a prison question, minister, and it might be a bit sensitive. What will be the cost to relocate prisoners when the new prison is built?

Ms LAWRIE: That is a Correctional Services question.

Mr GILES: I am moving now on to Berrimah Farm.

Answers to Questions on Notice 2.9, 2.11 and 2.12

Ms LAWRIE: I have questions on notice, question Nos 2.9, 2.11, 2.12 that I am able to table answers for.

Mr WOOD: Why was the public not involved in some of the discussions in relation to options for a new prison? When the previous minister for Corrections asked me what site I thought the government might pick - even though I do not agree with what they are doing - I thought the site near the proposed regional waste facility would have been the perfect option. Yet, it has not been chosen. That site is to the east of Robertson Barracks. I am very surprised that was not the site chosen. Gunn Point, to me, is way off the radar.

Ms LAWRIE: Yes, if that site had been available to us as an option we would have put it in the assessment process. That site was not available after consultations with the Department of Defence.

Mr WOOD: It is nowhere near Defence if you put it in the right place. It is next to the waste dump.

Ms LAWRIE: Member for Nelson, I can confirm again that was what ruled that option out.

Mr WOOD: If the government is saying the existing site is too steep, too wet, and requires filling, how can it turn around and say the place is suitable for housing?

Ms LAWRIE: Because not all of the existing site will be for housing. In residential and industrial development you have buffer zones and green belts. In planning, we identify areas that are constrained, particularly in wet areas, and incorporate them into green buffer zones for recreation use. That is what you do in good planning of residential subdivisions.

Mr WOOD: Fair enough. However, there is no residential land except on the other side of the highway on Knuckey Lagoon. Why are you saying the prison cannot go on either Berrimah Farm or the existing site because of the 400 m no-development zone? Surely, industrial land is no problem when it comes to a prison?

Ms LAWRIE: As Gerhard explained, it was not just the buffer zone that was an issue; it was also the size of land available to cater for all the expanded facilities the government needs to provide for Correctional Services.

Mr WOOD: You have a large amount of land at Berrimah Farm you intend to dispose of. It has sewerage, water, and power. Why incur a headworks cost of \$52m when we already have existing infrastructure in the area?

Ms LAWRIE: As I said, we did the site assessment with the criteria I have tabled. It shows a team looked at the Berrimah prison plus part of the Berrimah Farm. It came in at the third ranking.

Mr WOOD: What I call the Weddell site and you call Bennett Creek is site one. It has only electricity, but no water and sewerage. I am surprised that site can come up with a \$36m headworks and Berrimah prison and part of Berrimah Farm, which has existing infrastructure, comes up as another \$16m dearer. Why is the infrastructure dearer at a site that already has infrastructure, and the Bennett Creek site cheaper?

Ms LAWRIE: I defer to Mr Visser.

Mr VISSER: The prison or the Correctional facility at Bennett Creek is serviced from McMinn water purification plant. The road infrastructure is already in the budget. The gaol at Berrimah would have incurred more roadworks on Stuart Highway, as well as adjacent to it. The services are insufficient. We would have to bring in more services to that specific site, which is a further test. Consequently, Bennett Creek won.

Mr WOOD: Yes, I understand what you are saying in regard to the roads, but Berrimah Farm is not exactly far away from existing road facilities, either. It is a shame this has been done secretly. It may not be, but this is the first time this information has been released after many attempts to gain it. It is, basically, a *fait accompli*, which is a sad indictment on the government. Spending \$300m on a prison and its siting are all very important matters for the community. The community should have had an opportunity to look at what the government was putting forward. Why should a prison site be kept secret? You are going to build it and we are going to know where it is. To not have an opportunity to look at these sites and, perhaps, offer options - which local people could have done - is a shame.

Bennett Creek is in an area set aside as a buffer zone to the suburbs because no dam is going to go on the Elizabeth River. The reason for the buffer zone is because of sandflies. Some people might be very kind and say: 'Who cares about prisoners'. However, prison officers will work there. Has a report been produced on sandflies in relation to the Bennett Creek site?

Ms LAWRIE: The Bennett Creek site has what we call the mid-zones identified. We will have the department of Health undertake specific entomological studies to trap and test on different points of the site to provide more detailed, expert evidence to add to the mid-zone contours we currently have. That will determine the site of construction.

The advice I currently have before me from my planning agency regarding the mid-zones is it will not be in the high mid-zone at all. We want to test trap midges specifically to check the veracity of those mid-zones. I agree with you it is not just about exposing prisoners to that level of biting insects.

Mr WOOD: Cost-benefit analysis done of this site in comparison with Berrimah shows it is three times the distance from Darwin courts. This impacts on the supply of goods and services, and there will be

extra travelling required by Correctional Services people - extra time, for instance, with police taking people there. Have these been factored into a cost-benefit analysis and, then, the long-term running of this prison site compared to others?

Ms LAWRIE: Treasury has worked with the other agencies involved to ensure the necessary work has been done. Factored into that was the efficiencies in the operation of a new correctional facility that is designed and purpose-built. The problem at the moment of some of the high costs in Corrections - and I am straying out of planning here talking more as Treasurer which I should not be doing - but the cost-benefits have been looked at. Treasury was part of the work undertaken. There are some real efficiencies in the purpose-built new site.

Mr WOOD: What happens to the \$7.6m practically brand new low-security prison and the extra money we have already put into Don Dale? Are they going to be pulled down?

Ms LAWRIE: The minister for Corrections will be able to answer those questions more specifically.

Mr WOOD: Are we allowed to see the details of how you came to the headwork costs?

Ms LAWRIE: I provided all the details I have available.

Mr WOOD: It would be nice to see how the government came up with those figures.

Ms LAWRIE: I will ensure you get an adequate briefing from officers in my agency of the elements of the headworks costs. Those elements included roads, drainage, sewage treatment, water, power and any site remediation work.

Mr WOOD: Thank you.

Mr CHAIRMAN: Member for Braitling.

Mr GILES: Okay, short sharp questions. Has the government had discussions with Defence in regard to war sites and dumps on Berrimah Farm?

Ms LAWRIE: Part of the work we are doing there is identifying the World War II issues. There is a whole process around that.

Mr GILES: So have you had discussions with Defence?

Ms LAWRIE: We have a consultancy doing the work at the moment.

Mr GILES: I take it that is the environmental consultancy?

Ms LAWRIE: Yes, it is EcOz Environmental Services. They are looking at the site history including historical aerial photographs, titles, planning certificates, regional sensitive ecosystems and map groundwater assessment. They are looking at the containment and the area that was under the control of Department of Defence, and whether there is potential for buried unexploded ordnances due to uncharted dumping. That is all in their brief.

Mr GILES: How much did that consultancy cost? Has a final report been prepared and when will it be released?

Ms LAWRIE: The cost to date is \$85 000. They are part way through the work, at 75% of the work chartered. The total commission of the job is \$90 000.

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Mr GILES: Has the 44 gallon drum of arsenic-contaminated material been found?

Ms LAWRIE: You might be referring to the arsenic in what we call the poison paddock. The work by EcOz is looking at a range of things.

Mr GILES: It is just a yes or no answer.

Ms LAWRIE: They are doing specific site tests and samples with the storage of herbicides and pesticides, the chemical treatment of pine logs, the burial of infected cattle carcasses, the dumping of leftover chemicals, including the arsenic in the poison paddock and the storage.

Mr GILES: Have they found the drum?

Ms LAWRIE: When I get the full report, because they are 75% through ...

Mr GILES: Have they found the drum?

Ms LAWRIE: They may or may not have. They are doing the work and will provide the report to me as minister.

Mr GILES: The pet crematorium at the right entrance to the farm; do you propose to close that business, or leave it open?

Ms LAWRIE: The pet crematorium is an important service to the community. When all the reports and analyses come back to me, I will be making some recommendations to Cabinet. The pet crematorium will be on a list of matters I will be reporting on to Cabinet.

Mr GILES: I have a list of questions here; they all follow each other, so I will read them out quickly. When will the contract tendering process begin? When will the contract be signed? When will the site survey begin? When will the headworks begin? When will the first blocks be turned off?

Mr ELFERINK: Bearing in mind that Bellamack was early 2009.

Ms LAWRIE: The government has been very up-front in saying that first things first for the Berrimah Farm project, which includes the assessment of the headworks and the contamination study. The contamination study will be in two phases. There has been some initial work already. The second stage is nearing completion. There will be a further stage involving audit processes to prioritise the alternatives to address the contamination.

Mr GILES: I just want to know when this contract tendering will begin.

Ms LAWRIE: The remediation action plan will include cost estimates ...

Mr GILES: Minister, I am not interested in that, I am just interested in finding out when the contract tendering will begin.

Ms LAWRIE: That is all in Phase 3. Phase 4 will be the planning for land release. Once all of that other work has been done, we are hoping for a development application for Stage 1 by approximately March 2011. Then, we expect to have lots selling off the plan from mid- to late-2011. The project has been delayed by the contamination issue, the need for assessment, and a remediation plan; all of which is absolutely necessary work.

Mr GILES: I will just repeat the questions in case you did not hear them: when will headworks begin, and when will first blocks be turned off?

Ms LAWRIE: Just in case you did not hear the answer regarding land release, the DA is time-lined for the start of March 2011 and lots selling from mid- to late-2011.

Mr GILES: So, when will the blocks be turned off?

Ms LAWRIE: I just told you.

Mr Tollner: She is, basically, saying she has no idea.

Mr GILES: That is right.

Ms LAWRIE: Well, no I have been ...

Mr GILES: You will be selling them off the plan, but when will they be ready?

Mr WOOD: Chief Minister said 2013 plus in the brochure.

Ms LAWRIE: We are trying, as best we can, to bring forward the Berrimah Farm residential corridor project because we know there is a lot of community interest in residential there. We have identified a process whereby we can deal with all of the contamination studies and with the remediation action plan.

Mr GILES: Through the Chair, I am not interested in these things. I have specific questions. I want to know when the first blocks will be available, not for sale off the plan, but when they will be right.

Ms LAWRIE: If they are selling off the plan, mid- to late-2011, and you get Dry Season construction in 2012.

Mr GILES: So, you are saying early 2012 the first blocks will be turned off?

Ms LAWRIE: Dry Season construction.

Mr GILES: Dry Season 2012? Okay, what is the expected ...

Ms LAWRIE: If we can do all that work in that time.

Mr GILES: What is the expected price of a block?

Ms LAWRIE: I do not have that yet.

Mr GILES: No range? Are we talking \$50 000 or \$300 000? Can you provide any guidance at all?

Ms LAWRIE: I am not going to give you ballpark figures at such an early stage, especially while we are still at the contamination study phase.

Mr GILES: How will the Tiger Brennan Drive road network feed out to the estate?

Ms LAWRIE: That is a Roads issue.

Mr GILES: All right. I am quite sure you do planning in DPI?

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Ms LAWRIE: Yes, but Tiger Brennan Drive comes under Roads.

Mr GILES: So, you are not prepared to answer that? No worries. I will move onto Bellamack. Has a contract been signed?

Ms LAWRIE: The development agreement has been signed, yes.

Mr GILES: How many blocks?

Ms LAWRIE: We have Development Consent Authority approval for 230 blocks, which is the first stage, and 234 ...

Mr GILES: That is Stage A, Precinct A.

Ms LAWRIE: We have 90 serviced lots of various lot sizes which are expected to be turned off by the end of this year. As a component of this, there will be a minimum of 12 lots released for affordable housing and four lots for social housing.

Mr GILES: What about the second stage?

Ms LAWRIE: They have contractual obligations to government for the second stage. Part of those contractual obligations go to the pace of the release of the first stage.

Mr GILES: In other words?

Ms LAWRIE: Then, we will be into the second stage. My expectation is that we will be in second stage in 2010, which will see another 144 lots in Precinct A and six lots in Precinct B.

Mr GILES: What is the time frame for that? You said 2010, but when in 2010?

Ms LAWRIE: That is a time frame. That is dependent on the rate of sale of the first lots.

Mr GILES: So it could be on 31 December 2010? What is the expected block price of the 235 blocks?

Ms LAWRIE: The prices will vary because the lot sizes vary.

Mr GILES: Well, can you give us some guidance as to different lot sizes and their possible prices?

Ms LAWRIE: Prices will vary as lot sizes vary.

Mr GILES: What will be the average price?

Ms LAWRIE: I am not going to, in an estimates process, put out information the developer will put out.

Mr TOLLNER: What is the estimated revenue to government?

Ms LAWRIE: Has he moved on? Are we moving on? No, I am just checking whether you have finished.

Mr GILES: Answer the question and stop stalling.

Ms LAWRIE: I am not stalling. I am allowed to ask clarifying questions of the Chair.

Mr GILES: Through the Chair, can you answer the questions?

Ms LAWRIE: The revenue depends, obviously, on the sale price of the lots and, because we are not taking it up-front, we are taking a proportion of sale.

Mr GILES: What strategic planning through the department of Primary Industry has been done in respect of additional traffic flows through and around Palmerston once Bellamack has been completed some time in the never-never?

Ms LAWRIE: The traffic flows go to the area of Roads, and we are not at that output point yet.

Mr GILES: Surely, minister, when you look at releasing land, you must consider, as part of a strategic approach, what the vehicle rates per hour are in peak hours and non-peak times will be? What is going to happen when Johnston and other areas come on board? Surely, that is part of your charter?

Ms LAWRIE: What occurs is, the planning section talks to the roads transport section, and all of that work is incorporated. In terms of specifics, I can answer that under the Roads outputs.

Mr GILES: So you are going to stonewall and not even answer a simple question?

Ms LAWRIE: No, no, I am pointing out the relevant output.

Mr GILES: Well no, it is part of strategic planning. It is not part of roads.

Ms LAWRIE: No, actually, it is traffic management and traffic flows and comes under the Roads area.

Mr GILES: I am sure it does, but you are just stonewalling. When will the Rosebery school be at capacity as a result of the new suburbs? Will it be at the completion of Bellamack, Johnston, or Zuccoli?

Ms LAWRIE: The department of Planning works with the department of Education, so the Rosebery school issues are a department of Education question.

Mr GILES: Actually, they are not, because you manage the population data through strategic planning in your department. If you do not understand that, that is a concern.

Ms LAWRIE: No, if you do not understand how strategic assessment of school capacity sits with the Education department, I cannot help you out on that one, member for Braitling.

Mr Tollner: You wonder why the department even exists.

Mr GILES: Or why she even has a job. This is embarrassing for her, surely?

Ms LAWRIE: The department of Education has all those projection figures; I have seen them.

Mr GILES: Good on you. So, you would not have any idea about bus stops in Bellamack because you do not have your head around that space?

Ms LAWRIE: No, we have all of that in the subdivision plans ...

A witness: The master plan.

Ms LAWRIE: In the master plan. Regarding the road network, I will happily answer that in the road network output.

Mr GILES: That is the end of my questions for that general area.

Mr CHAIRMAN: Member for Nelson, do you have a question?

Mr GILES: But I want the last question, otherwise I will keep going.

Mr WOOD: You have your last question then. I will be happy for you to keep going.

Mr GILES: No, I will do the last question later. You go.

Mr CHAIRMAN: Member for Braintree, we have 10 minutes until 6 pm, in which case ...

Mr GILES: I am happy for the member for Nelson to go to 5.58 pm, then I have one question.

Mr WOOD: We finish at 6 pm, do we?

Mr GILES: Yes.

Mr CHAIRMAN: We have a half-hour break.

Mr WOOD: All right. I will not do my Berrimah Farm and prison questions.

Is the government looking at planning for industry in more remote areas? Wadeye now has gas development. We are talking about regional development, yet we are sticking a gas plant in the middle of our harbour. Is the government looking at trying to spread out industrial development into regional areas - especially Aboriginal areas - to provide employment?

Ms LAWRIE: The Department of Planning and Infrastructure is working on, as I said, light industrial release options, as well as heavy industrial land release options. That includes land that is quite some distance from our capital.

Mr WOOD: There are many plans for Darwin. I do not know how they all fit into one another. You are, according to your annual report, developing a Darwin Strategic Land Use Plan. At the same time, you have a number of other campaigns: the Creating Darwin Future, the Darwin Tropical City, the Northern Territory Planning Scheme, the *Territory 2030* plan, Growing the Territory and, now, you are reviewing the building heights. Can someone tell me how all this is going to come together in some sensible fashion? How can the ordinary person on the street have confidence we are heading in a clear direction?

Mr Elferink: Good question, Gerry.

Ms LAWRIE: It all, ultimately, pulls together through a 15-year strategic plan for the greater Darwin area ...

Mr Wood: That is another one!

Ms LAWRIE: You needed to identify all the bodies of work you asked about. You needed to do that. Quite appropriately, Planning has been doing that work. Overlying all of that is the need to update the Greater Darwin Region Strategic Land Use Plan. Our objective will be to update that and take that through to 2025.

Member for Nelson, I was going to chase you up after estimates about this, to give you a briefing on our intentions here; to integrate land use development with our growth management strategy. We are going to look at issues of greenfield developments, as well as infield developments. We will look at residential and industrial. We will look at the rural nodes ...

Mr Wood: Gnomes? Sounds like something in an English garden.

Ms LAWRIE: District centres if you want, not gnomes. We are studying how to support urban growth, but also regional growth in critical areas like Coomalie, Finnis and Dundee. Concurrent with this will be the need for a transport study and strategy to make it all come together and work.

Mr WOOD: Is it true the previous architect of the Darwin Regional Land Use Structure Plan, who still lives in Darwin, Mr Graham Bailey, has not been approached to be part of this plan you are undertaking? If so, considering the amount of knowledge he has, why not? It would not be greatly beneficial to get people who come from south to design our Regional Land Use Structure Plan. Are we involving someone like him in this development?

Ms LAWRIE: Yes, engaging people like Graham will be very much a part of the consultation process. As you rightly point out, he has a vast amount of knowledge regarding the existing strategic land use plan. It makes great sense to engage him in consultation about taking it forward to 2025.

Mr WOOD: A man rang me yesterday and I promised him I would try this question on you. He owns land near the old Rum Jungle mine. This land was subject to a land claim some years ago. If you look at the original maps, it was a Goyder subdivision. Goyder put many gazetted roads in the area. When the land claim came along, you went to this plan which left six blocks with no connection to any road. All the roads appear to have been removed. The man's property is completely surrounded by land claim. Has the government any plan when they people find themselves in this kind of situation; when they have no legal access in or out of their blocks? Is the government willing to negotiate with traditional owners to find ways around this? It disappoints me why, in a land claim like that, there were no gazetted roads left when the application went through.

Ms LAWRIE: Yes, where we find those circumstances - and they do arise from time to time, member for Nelson, as you would be aware - we embark on a process of negotiation for access.

Mr WOOD: So, if I went back to this man and told him to contact your department regarding this situation - it will require government involvement naturally ...

Ms LAWRIE: That is right.

Mr WOOD: ... he can feel confident there might be some solution. At the moment, he follows the old harbour bridle track, as he calls it, through the bush. Whether it is legal or not, he is not sure, but that is the only way he can get to his block of land.

Ms LAWRIE: He should contact us.

Mr WOOD: Okay. Weddell. This has been on the cards since 1984. I have asked the government why they do not take a broad approach and ask developers, planners and architects to come forward with a vision - not a plan, a vision - for the city, including the land that belongs to the Walker family. That is part of Weddell and none of the maps you show include that private land. Why will you not go down that path? Which path are you taking? According to your budget papers, you are already planning Weddell.

Ms LAWRIE: I am not going to rule out what you have suggested, member for Nelson. This is work the Chief Minister and I are engaged in. In the vision for the city of Weddell, it is quite alluring, but I am not going to preempt anything the Chief Minister would want to say on that matter.

Mr WOOD: What is the Cullen Bay sea wall you mentioned in the 2007-08 Budget? There is a report mentioning the construction of Cullen Bay sea wall. What is that?

Ms LAWRIE: I defer to Ernie Wanka, Assistant General Manager Sustainability, Strategic Planning and Policy.

Mr WANKA: Ernie Wanka. I will have to take that question on notice.

Mr WOOD: In the 2007-08 report there is mention of the Cullen Bay sea wall could the minister give us details about that?

Mr CHAIRMAN: Okay, and are you happy to take that question on notice, minister?

Mr LAWRIE: I will just check Phill Piper, from Land Development. He might be able to provide an answer now.

Mr CHAIRMAN: We will not be taking that question on notice.

Mr PIPER: Phill Piper. The Cullen Bay sea wall you are referring to would be behind the beach. There have been some remediation works there to bring it up to a certain height. We could either fill in some rock to bring it up 6 m Australian Height Data, or put in a filled area with a grass that could be used for whatever. Is that the same?

Mr WOOD: It possibly is, yes. I can talk to ...

Ms LAWRIE: Talk to Phill later, yes.

Mr WOOD: I better leave it for the member for Braitling.

Answer to Question 2.15

Ms LAWRIE: Mr Chairman, I have answer in regard to the question from member for Braitling on Lot 7411 Alice Springs.

Mr CHAIRMAN: That is question 2.15.

Ms LAWRIE: The advice is that it contains a retardation dam and, the Federal Court in its determination of native title in Alice Springs, found that construction of public works extinguished native title. However, the Federal Court determined that native title had not been extinguished over all of lot 7411, but only over that area required for the purpose of the dam. Given the typography of that lot, the retardation dam and the drainage works, government decided to instead to negotiate with the Lhere Artepe on the release of land at Sterling Heights and Albrecht Drive. We have then, subsequently, focused on the ILUA to turn off Mt John Valley.

Mr CHAIRMAN: That concludes consideration of Output 1.3, Strategic Lands Planning.

Output 1.4 - Building Advisory Services

Mr CHAIRMAN: We proceed to Output 1.4, Building Advisory Services. Are there any questions?

Mr GILES: Minister, according to you ...

Ms LAWRIE: Sorry, have we moved to Output 1.4?

Mr CHAIRMAN: Yes, Output 1.4.

Mr GILES: Minister, according to you, you did not instruct your CEO to call off the Red Rooster prosecution. Will you take this opportunity to explain why you thought you gave him an instruction?

Ms LAWRIE: I am happy to go over what I have stated publicly and on the *Parliamentary Record*. I indicated I was willing to instruct the CEO to stop the prosecution of the owner of Red Rooster, but did not feel I should have to do so. The reason for my willingness to stop the prosecution was quite simple. When the matter was brought to my attention, I asked a series of questions about that establishment's certificate of occupancy. They had achieved compliance with that certificate.

It came to my attention after questioning that there were a range of other buildings in Tennant Creek that had not achieved compliance requirements with that certificate. My view was why prosecute someone who had become compliant when, in fact, there were other buildings and owners in Tennant Creek who were not. Surely, the desire is to achieve compliance. This, then, started a process embarking upon building certification.

Mr GILES: Minister, my question actually was: will you take the opportunity to let your CEO explain why he thought you gave him the instruction?

Mr CHAIRMAN: Questions from the committee go to the minister. It is up to the minister whether she chooses to refer or not.

Ms LAWRIE: Mr Hancock is happy to comment.

Mr HANCOCK: The minister has already indicated, I believe in the House, there was, obviously, a misunderstanding between the minister and I in our conversation about the Red Rooster prosecution. I believe that is where the matter lies.

Mr GILES: Minister, how much did ...

Mr CHAIRMAN: Member for Braintree, we have gone past 6 pm. This is where questions end. Thank you for your time today, minister, and thank you to the staff who have attended. We appreciate your time. We will now take a half-hour break and resume at 6.30 pm.

Ms LAWRIE: I thank the officers of the Department of Planning and Infrastructure and the Port Corporation for being here today.

The committee suspended.

Mr CHAIRMAN: I believe we are right to start. I welcome the Chief Minister to the committee. If you could introduce the Auditor-General and, if you have any opening remarks that you would care to make?

Mr HENDERSON: Thank you, Mr Chairman. I welcome our Auditor-General, Frank McGuinness, who will be taking questions directly from the committee. As members know, the Auditor-General's Office is a statutory office reporting to the parliament, so it is totally appropriate for the committee to ask Mr McGuinness questions directly.

I can advise the committee if the questions go to the issues of government policy or legislation then, as Chief Minister, I will deal with them.

ESTIMATES COMMITTEE PROCEEDINGS - 16 JUNE 2009

In regard to the appropriation budget and operational aspects of the Auditor-General's Office, I invite the committee to ask questions of our Auditor-General. On behalf of everyone, I commend you, Frank, on the great job you do for the parliament.

Mr McGuinness: Thank you very much, Chief Minister.

Mr CHAIRMAN: Are there any questions to the opening statement?

Mr MILLS: No.

Mr CHAIRMAN: Are there any questions on agency specific, whole of government questions?

Mr MILLS: Yes, there are a few questions. I add to the Chief Minister's words; we appreciate the work you do for the Territory parliament. I know you have been counting the sleeps to tonight ...

Mr McGuinness: I have, sir.

Mr MILLS: However, we do not have a lot of time to cover seven portfolios in 270 minutes, so I am going to hand over to my colleague here, who has a question or two for you.

Mr ELFERINK: We are not going to generics?

Mr MILLS: No.

Mr ELFERINK: I would love to keep you here for about the next four hours, quite frankly, but it is not going to happen.

However, I referred a matter to you the other day in relation to the tender process surrounding the federal government's stimulus package; how schools are being asked to manage those processes. Without identifying any individuals, you would be aware of comments in *The Australian* newspaper over the weekend ...

Mr McGuinness: I am well aware of that, Mr Chairman, which is why, in 2009-10, we have tentatively included a review of expenditure under the stimulus program. If you look at what is happening at the Commonwealth end, it seems the desire to push money out is probably overriding governance in some areas.

Mr ELFERINK: It appears from information I have received – and you would have received the same – that schools are being asked to organise these quotes/tenders – I have not quite identified what they are – by themselves. You have the situation where a school principal – a lady or man of 40 years of age, with not much experience in construction – all of a sudden having to look after - what? - a \$200 000 contract.

I was thunderstruck when one of the contractors described to me what was happening, particularly in relation to him telephoning and trying to find more information, only to be told 'just give us a verbal quote'. That is the gentleman I expect you have spoken to since then. That is an extraordinary tale. Can you confirm or deny that anything like that has actually occurred?

Mr McGuinness: I cannot confirm or deny it, sir. I am aware some of the stimulus funding has been allocated to school councils so they can proceed quickly with minor works. But, as you are probably aware, the *Education Act* excludes the application of the *Audit Act*. Therefore, once it leaves CHA ...

Mr Elferink: I was not aware of that.

Mr McGuinness: ... and goes out to school councils, it is beyond my purview.

Mr Elferink: So, we now have no audit trail at all in relation to the federal government stimulus package being pumped through our schools. Procurement, by your own statement, is a profession - a stand-alone profession. All of a sudden, we will have the chalkies in charge of a modern school which will have to engage in contracts. I presume some of these contracts will be worth a couple of hundred thousand dollars. That could end up being quite messy in lack of experience leading to legal fights between schools and contractors due to poorly managed contracts. Would you say that is a risk?

Mr McGuinness: It is a risk. It depends a lot on what experience the school council has had in managing minor works in the past and letting contracts for minor works. I am not sure, at this stage, how large some of these contracts are. Once it is out with the school council, there is nothing I can do.

Mr Elferink: From your understanding, we are talking tens of thousands of dollars. We are not talking about painting the local park bench out the front. We are talking about major contracts which lead to major court cases if the whole thing turns pear shaped. I have nothing further to add, suffice to say that is an extraordinary situation. I am, quite frankly, dumbfounded. Whilst I appreciate the federal government's urgency, this is the most reckless way to manage public funds. It is no reflection on the Northern Territory government. You would like to see these schools bettered but this is a reckless way in which to manage public funds. It will lead to tears.

Mr McGuinness: I was at a meeting in Melbourne in February about the time the COAG communiqué was issued. Everyone was taken aback when they saw how tight the time frames were. The Commonwealth wanted this money out and spent within 12 months and that included planning.

Mr Elferink: School councils are often staffed by well-intentioned, non-professional people, particularly in schools in certain socioeconomic areas where school councils will be made up of well-meaning mothers and fathers. Asking them to look after contracts worth tens of thousands; if not hundreds of thousands of dollars, leaves me exasperated. I am really sorry to hear it is beyond your purview.

Mr Henderson: Can I just make a point there, member for Port Darwin, to allay some of your concerns? The Department of Education and Training is providing support materials and guidelines to school councils; guidelines covering how to get quotes for this particular program. We are talking about programs under \$200 000. For example, for works under \$15 000, one written quote is required; over \$15 000, three written quotes are required. Schools have been encouraged to seek quotes widely and to utilise the Northern Territory Industry Capability Network to identify suppliers. School councils have been managing minor new works projects for some time, if they have the capacity. In addition, building and equipment grants under the former federal government's Investing in Our Schools Program were entirely managed by schools.

I agree; there is some level of potential exposure here, but many school councils have had to acquit these grants under previous government programs. The Department of Education and Training is providing support to those school councils. The whole idea of the stimulus package was to stimulate the economy and get money out into the economy quickly. The Department of Education and Training is providing support to the school councils proactively and managing projects on a case-by-case basis if the schools do not feel they have the capacity to do so.

Mr Elferink: We will watch this; a far from perfect situation. What I am concerned about is the potential economic impact on the Northern Territory if a couple of these contracts do go pear shaped. If they do, simply because they do not work properly and somebody gets sued, who pays, the feds or the Northern Territory?

Mr Mills: We will watch this. I would love to investigate this much further and more closely, knowing schools and schools councils and the different capacities they have. But we will leave it for now and move on. I do not have any further questions.

Mr CHAIRMAN: Member for Nelson. You have no further questions for the Auditor-General?

Mr WOOD: No.

Mr CHAIRMAN: Well, in that case, thank you very much for coming.

Mr McGuinness: Thank you.

NORTHERN TERRITORY ELECTORAL COMMISSION

Mr CHAIRMAN: The committee now moves on to Northern Territory Electoral Commission.

Mr HENDERSON: Mr Chairman, I welcome the Electoral Commissioner, Mr Bill Shephard, to the committee. The Electoral Commission is an independent statutory body reporting to parliament, so I invite the committee to ask questions directly to the commissioner. Where they go to issues of policy or legislation, I will deal with those issues. I commend Bill and the work his agency does on behalf of all Territorians.

Mr CHAIRMAN: Are there any questions on the opening statement?

Mr WOOD: Mr Shephard, was there a difference between the system used for the pre-poll voting for the Northern Territory government elections compared to pre-poll voting for the Litchfield Shire Council elections?

Mr SHEPHEARD: No, I do not believe there was any notable difference.

Mr WOOD: Normally, when you pre-poll vote, you walk in and cast your vote and they tick your name off. Is that correct?

Mr SHEPHEARD: Yes.

Mr WOOD: Well, in the case of Litchfield Shire Council vote, I had complaints from people who had to fill in a slip of paper which then had to be put into an envelope. They felt the envelope was insecure. The system I saw for pre-poll voting at Litchfield - I am not sure of the type of vote - was not a straight kind. You had to write down your name and address on an envelope then put the ballot paper in it. Then the envelope was sealed. That appeared laborious and it concerned people. It was markedly different from the system used for the NT government elections.

Mr SHEPHEARD: I will look into that for you. It was not raised as an issue during the elections. The vote goes into an envelope which details from what district or electorate it was cast.

Mr CHAIRMAN: Member for Nelson, I have been lenient, but these are not really questions to the opening statement, which was quite brief. They are more relevant to what will come later.

Output 1.1 Electoral Services

Mr CHAIRMAN: I now call on questions for Output 1.1. Member for Blain, if you have any questions.

Mr MILLS: The Electoral Commission failed to meet its 80% voter turnout for its performance measures in the last election. I believe it was significantly less than that. What research has been conducted to identify measures which need to be put in place to prevent low voter turnout occurring in the next election?

Mr SHEPHEARD: On voter turnout, I can say a few things. The turnout is usually worked out by the number of people on the roll and the number of people who vote. There is a ratio that comes out of

that. When we have federal, Territory, or local government elections, those turnouts tend to be quite stable, although the lower the level of government the fewer turnouts we seem to get. This is probably a reflection of the amount of resources applied in polling places interstate; for instance, people overseas notice these sorts of issues.

We usually operate overall at 80%, which seems to be the stable figure for Territory elections. It came in at about 5% less than that. The reason for that, partly, is because of the roll. We are comparing who is on the roll to those who are not and, if the people are not there, obviously they are not going to vote.

In terms of research, we have completed a non-voter process with that. We have put together research which will be presented in the election's report. There we will discuss what excuses people offered, how many people did not vote, etcetera.

Mr MILLS: When will that report be available?

Mr SHEPHEARD: We have had many elections recently, as you will appreciate. We also want to compile a report on the local government election, and then we have an annual report. We are hopeful they will be simultaneously released. We are aiming to get it in for the August sittings. If we miss out then, we should be ready for the next sittings in October.

Mr MILLS: You are going to combine both? The last Territory election, 9 August, and the local government election combined into one report?

Mr SHEPHEARD: No, the intention is to present the report of the local government election to Local Government. The Minister for Local Government will deal with distribution of that. In terms of the Legislative Assembly election report, that will be going direct to the Legislative Assembly.

Mr MILLS: Hopefully, in August?

Mr SHEPHEARD: Hopefully, in August. If we miss it, it will definitely be ready for the next sittings.

Mr MILLS: It looks about 25% of those on the roll failed to vote. How many of those were fined for not voting?

Mr SHEPHEARD: We got about \$32 000 in fines. Compared to last time, from memory, it was about \$27 000. The fines are \$25 each.

Mr MILLS: Right, I do not have my calculator in front of me. If you have about 25% who did not vote, how many were issued with a fine and did not pay it?

Mr SHEPHEARD: If I can just go through it with you. We had 26 853 electors, with 24.7% of enrolled electors apparently failing to vote. We have a regime of sending out a first notice, a second notice, and any follow-up work deemed after that. For first notice, we had 5825 returned unclaimed.

Mr MILLS: What do mean, 'unclaimed'?

Mr SHEPHEARD: These are letters returned to sender, left address, that sort of thing. For valid and sufficient reasons, we had 4480. A penalty was paid in 1237 cases. Before we send out mail, we cull them since there is a time lag between the election and people moving on. There are deaths to factor in, for example. That is the sort of culling we do. I do not know what other figures you may be interested in. The initial culling was 4377, which left us to deal with 22 476.

Mr MILLS: All right. I will take what you have given me and do some analysis. Why were Defence members serving overseas not able to vote in that last election? A number of them wanted to but

could not. Why was that the case? What has been done to correct that from occurring again?

Mr SHEPHEARD: I am not sure how many were unable to. As you are aware, the timetable has always been very restrictive for postal voting. I assume you are talking about Defence people serving overseas. It is a very tight timetable to deal with, but we put a number of arrangements in place that should have been able to, despite the tight turnarounds, get those votes in on time.

Mr MILLS: Are you familiar with an electronic voting trial that was conducted with ADF in 2007?

Mr SHEPHEARD: Yes. There have been some pilots run by the AEC. We will have to wait for the joint subcommittee's report on that, which I believe is coming out next week. My understanding is that those pilots will not be pursued. We will have to wait and see what the reasons are, but I understand it has to do with costs. There are also other issues to do with logistics and things like that. I suspect you will find that is what will come out next week.

Mr MILLS: That it may be too costly to provide electronic voting?

Mr SHEPHEARD: I cannot explain why that might occur. As I say, the report does not come out until next week. However, my understanding is there may be a scaling back of those pilots we run - not only for Defence people, but also for vision-impaired people.

Mr MILLS: How do you budget for by-elections?

Mr SHEPHEARD: As you can appreciate, we do not get much notice for by-elections ...

Mr MILLS: Nor for the last Territory election either, 11 months early.

Mr SHEPHEARD: True, but even more so with by-elections. They often happen because of a death or sudden resignation. They come from left field. Basically, we look at the situation wherever the electorate is, and how we can facilitate those by-elections with polling facilities. That includes the static polling places, pre-poll services, and the mobile polling system if required.

Mr MILLS: How do you budget for it, though? How do you ensure you have the capacity to facilitate that?

Mr SHEPHEARD: We usually have the capacity within our own budget to deal with a by-election. An urban by-election would probably be in the vicinity of about \$40 000. In a remote electorate in the Legislative Assembly, it would be about \$75 000.

Mr MILLS: If you collect all your fines, you would be able to pay for an urban by-election.

Mr SHEPHEARD: There are a couple of issues with a simple calculation like that. One is about being able to locate some people in some of those remote areas. It is very difficult to administer the non-voting process in that area. The other thing is high transient rates interstate, lead to non-voting numbers.

Mr MILLS: Thank you. Given the time, I will move on.

Mr CHAIRMAN: Member for Nelson, do you have any questions?

Mr WOOD: Is there a difference between the pre-poll voting that occurred in the NT government election and the pre-poll voting used for Litchfield Shire Council?

Mr SHEPHEARD: No, I do not believe there should have been.

Mr WOOD: So, what is the normal process a pre-poll vote when you walk in the office?

Mr SHEPHEARD: We would provide the polling official with the records for the roll and they would mark the voters off the roll and give them the correct ballot paper.

Mr WOOD: They would just put that in a ballot box as you would normally do on a Saturday?

Mr SHEPHEARD: Correct.

Mr WOOD: Would you be able to find out whether there was a different form of pre-poll voting at Litchfield Shire Council elections and ...

Question on Notice – No 3.1

Mr CHAIRMAN: For the purposes of *Hansard*, Member for Nelson if you could repeat the question.

Mr WOOD: Could the Electoral Commissioner find out whether the pre-poll voting system for Litchfield Shire Council was different from that used for the NT government elections? If so, could he explain what that system was and why it was used?

Mr CHAIRMAN: Are you happy to take those questions?

Mr SHEPHEARD: Absolutely.

Mr CHAIRMAN: That question for Hansard is No 3.1.

Mr WOOD: Mr Shepheard, how many people applied for postal votes in the NT government elections?

Mr SHEPHEARD: You are talking about postal voting?

Mr WOOD: Yes, how many people applied for postal votes in the NT government elections?

Mr SHEPHEARD: I do not have the figure in front of me, but the number of counted ballot papers was 2664 – so it would be around that figure.

Mr WOOD: I received complaints from people living on pastoral properties or those who had gone overseas. They felt they had been disenfranchised because the election was called so quickly. The figure for how many people applied as against how many people returned within the time frame is important. Do you have the number of postal votes you sent out?

Mr SHEPHEARD: That will be in our report. I will take that on notice if you like.

Question on Notice 3.2

Mr CHAIRMAN: Just quickly for *Hansard*, member for Nelson.

Mr WOOD: Mr Shepheard, can you tell us how many people applied for postal votes in the last Northern Territory government election?

Mr CHAIRMAN: That question is 3.2.

Mr SHEPHEARD: It is true to say there was not a lot of notice for that election but the Territory is used to it. It was not unique to that particular election. If you look to when the election timetables were much longer, we have always faced 17-, 18-, 19-day elections.

The other point about postal voting is registration. People in remote places can register as general postal voters when they register. Their ballot papers are sent out at the first available opportunity. There are black spots though because of remote mail delivery. This makes it very difficult for the people to get it back on time. Mostly, it is to do with those individuals who are serviced by only one plane a week missing the mail plane that day.

We are now are dealing with fixed-term elections, though. The difference there from an operational standpoint is that the Electoral Commission will be on the front foot. They can make sure as many people that can be registered as general posters are, in fact, there on the register. Changes to the legislation in recent times allow for an extra day. This should cope with that troublesome day of despatch we have had in the past.

Fixed-term elections also mean people will be more acquainted that an election is coming up and make suitable arrangements. That relates to people who apply for a postal vote when an election occurs rather than being on a permanent register.

As for the last election, there were some difficulties in places. We bent over backwards to make sure votes were gathered since postal votes can be returned by the Friday following polling day. I even had officers driving to Katherine post offices and picking up people's postal votes. We did what we could within our logistics to do that. Even though there was publicity given to these issues, I am not sure problems were as serious as some believe.

The most important point to remember for the next election is that it is fixed. Postal votes can be despatched earlier and there is that extra day there. Hopefully, we can address those problems we struck in the last election, next time.

Mr WOOD: How many mobile polling booths did you have, say, in the last Northern Territory government election? What cost is that to the Electoral Commission?

Mr HENDERSON: I defer to Mr Shephard.

Mr SHEPHEARD: In terms of numbers I am happy to take that on notice. There are probably over 200 stations we go to. In terms of cost, it is more expensive to run elections in remote areas. We do not cost the mobile polling *per se*, usually the costs associated with mobile polling are amalgamated with other costs. For instance, the hire of vehicles, will be the hire of vehicle costs for the election. Some costs you can identify directly from accounts. They are things like mobile polling staff. Generally speaking though, in an urban division, a by-election would cost us \$40 000; in a remote, approximately \$75 000. The extra cost is largely due to mobile polling.

Mr WOOD: With the current fixed elections, would it not be wise to review mobile polling booths, considering postal votes will be more secure since you have a wider time frame?

Mr SHEPHEARD: The whole landscape has changed with the introduction of fixed-term elections. The other key feature is the establishment of the local government shires, which will largely look to mobile polling to service their electors. The landscape has changed because now, as an agency, we will be building local government areas up from the ground. We will establish ongoing networks with the authorities in local government because we will be running quite a few by-elections within a four-year election cycle for local governments. Even if those elections do not go to poll, even if we only get

the bare minimum candidates nominating, we do not know that until the close of nominations. We still have to go through that process with the local government authorities and the various community service centres to gather intelligence to establish mobile polling runs that will be productive.

That is going to be the building block on which we base those things in the future. In the past, we had to deal with various times for running elections, as well. It does not matter what time of the year it is. If it is early in the year, we have weather problems in the Top End, but none in the southern regions. If we go later in the year, we do not have problems weatherwise in the Top End, but we do in the south. Since we do not know when elections will be, organising mobile polling tends to be very much done on the quick.

Now, because we are heading for a very established roll and frequent mobile polling through the local government, we have more consistency with mobile polling runs for, say, the Assembly elections. I hope our Commonwealth colleagues will start to look at their mobile runs so we can build on each other's events as well as share intelligence. Things we have not been able to do in the past.

Mr WOOD: Are you advocating all elections on one day?

Mr SHEPHEARD: No, I am not advocating any policy or legislation.

Mr WOOD: I thought we might use the American system.

A member: That works really well, does it not? About 40% of people vote.

Mr WOOD: Yes, but it is voluntary voting. A report came out from some academic on the voting system used for local government elections. That report went to the Department of Local Government. Have you seen it? I asked if I could get a briefing about the details of that report. I gather it was critical of the system.

Mr SHEPHEARD: I have seen a version of it kicking around. I have seen the newspaper reports. The *Alice Springs News* ran a feature article on it. I also attended a public address the author gave at the university. I want to be mindful that I am an independent officer. I am not here for policy, particularly in a department which I am not associated with. The report's criticism - that the full preferential voting is a 'winner takes all' system when applied to multi-member constituencies - is pretty much widely accepted.

The key though - and this is something local government will have to address if they perceive a problem with our cumbersome terms of representation - is the application to multi-member constituencies. This creates problems; that and your boundaries. For instance, if you do not have an homogenous electorate, and you have, say, groups within it where one is dominant, then because you have one election and then have another, the dominant group will be able to dominate. If the boundaries are like those for Victoria Daly - and I believe the author actually cited this as an example - then you have a lot of wards; thereby creating a more homogenous constituency within their larger constituency. Victoria Daly does not seem to have a problem but, in Yuendumu, where Yuendumu voters have the numbers, they can get people elected.

There is a similar point when it comes to by-elections. If you have a by-election for one member - we have had quite a few since, in fact, half a dozen by-elections with local government - the dominant one will always win on that one, as well. This should be analysed properly, because it is not so much about the system, but how it is applied when you want to elect many members. It is the application to the multi-member constituency that creates the problem.

Mr WOOD: I suggested some years ago LGANT look at the Tasmanian system for local government, which is a proportional system that works. We could go on for a long time and discuss this, but I have to cut it short.

Mr SHEPHEARD: We could, but that is the point I am trying to make. Often these arguments digress to the full preferential system versus a totally different system, which is not an absolute majority system, but a proportional representation system. That is good for debate, but you should not necessarily say the full preferential system does not have any advantages. There are some. It has consistency and a whole range of other pros. I am not advocating one or the other.

Mr WOOD: The Chief Minister does policy, so maybe we should ask him what the policy is on this one?

Mr CHAIRMAN: Are there any non-specific budget related questions?

A member: No, I will let them go.

Mr CHAIRMAN: In that case, we thank the commissioner for his time.

OMBUDSMAN'S OFFICE

Mr HENDERSON: Mr Chairman, I welcome our Acting Ombudsman, Mr Vic Feldman, to the table. The statutory Ombudsman, Caroline Richards, is on leave. Again, the Ombudsman's Office is a statutory office created by the parliament. I invite the committee to direct questions directly to our Ombudsman. Again, if those questions go to government policy or legislation, I will take those questions on board. I thank the Office of the Ombudsman for the great work they do on behalf of all Territorians.

Mr CHAIRMAN: Are there any questions to this statement?

A member: No.

OUTPUT GROUP 1.0 – OMBUDSMAN'S OFFICE **Output 1.1 – Ombudsman for the Northern Territory**

Mr CHAIRMAN: Are there any questions?

Mr MILLS: How many complaints have you received regarding Family and Community Services?

Mr FELDMAN: I do not know if I can tell you offhand. I do not have the breakdown with me.

Mr MILLS: I can take that.

Mr FELDMAN: I can say it would not be a major proportion of our complaints, but I could find out how many there are.

Question on Notice No 3.3

Mr CHAIRMAN: For *Hansard*, member for Blain, could you repeat the question?

Mr MILLS: How many complaints have you received regarding Family and Community Services?

Mr FELDMAN: We are happy to take that and that is question No 3.3.

Mr MILLS: How many of these complaints featured Indigenous children?

Mr FELDMAN: Sorry, I would not be able to tell you offhand. I will take it on notice.

Mr MILLS: Will I state it again?

Mr CHAIRMAN: Yes.

Question on Notice – No 3.4

Mr MILLS: How many of those complaints featured Indigenous children?

Mr CHAIRMAN: In that case, that will be question No 3.4.

Mr MILLS: How many complaints is the Ombudsman currently investigating?

Mr FELDMAN: We are investigating two. Those are formal investigations you are talking about?

Mr MILLS: Right. Over the past 12 months, how many own motion investigations have been conducted?

Mr FELDMAN: Probably three.

Mr MILLS: Are you able to give me more information on an own motion investigation?

Mr FELDMAN: As distinct what it is compared to ...

Mr MILLS: Well, probably a little more detail. What motivates one to investigate something?

Mr FELDMAN: Okay. We can take complaints from complainants and these can be specific complaints. Usually, an own-motion complaint is related to the more systemic type issue, or something we regard as being in the public interest - health and safety for instance. It is matter that could come to our attention through a number of other complaints, for argument sake, and then we might take up as a systemic issue under our own motion.

We could get someone who makes a complaint we think is in the public interest, but they may want to keep their name out of it, for argument sake - or a number of people may want to. If we believe we can look into that complaint and it is important enough, we can look into that on our own motion. Generally, though, they have to be at the upper end of the scale, if I can put it that way, so it is particularly in the public interest, or for health and safety reasons that we look at those.

Mr MILLS: The two investigations currently afoot; are they own motion?

Mr FELDMAN: No.

Mr MILLS: You are sure about that? Yes? Okay. I am curious how the number of staff has decreased yet it appears salary liabilities have increased.

Mr FELDMAN: Staff has not decreased. Our formal staffing establishment has been at 18 for quite a long time. We have also had, though, a trainee. We have had a supernumerary also. We have also had a person we employ under secondment. There have been a number of other people who have come and gone, if I can put it that way. We currently only have 18 plus the one trainee. To that extent, it looks like our staff numbers have gone down.

Mr MILLS: So, 2008-09 staffing was listed as 21; this budget it is 18.

Mr FELDMAN: Yes. Again, staffing compared to establishment - we have had two part-time people working one job, so staffing, in that context, is also up against the establishment. Our constant figure

has been 18. That has not changed ...

Mr MILLS: For how long? Two, three, four years?

Mr FELDMAN: Yes, at least, I would say.

Mr MILLS: So what gave rise then to the closure of the Alice Springs office?

Mr FELDMAN: To be honest, as an operation there was no justification to keep it open. In terms of the walk-ins that come in to Alice Springs - which are the people who directly come in the door to complain - you are probably looking at maybe two or three a week. In terms of phone complaints, they are taken by the office in Darwin anyway. The initial point of contact for all phone complaints is Darwin.

The majority of complaints in Alice Springs come from the prison. The prison has a direct line to the Ombudsman's Office in Darwin. In that context, operationally there really was no reason to keep it open. Plus the operational savings - not the staff savings, but the operational savings - out of that will help us to ensure we can maintain our full staffing, and do a better job with our access, awareness and that sort of thing.

Mr MILLS: It ticks the box in terms of operational efficiencies. What actions have been taken to explain to the Alice Springs or Centralian community why that office had to be closed?

Mr FELDMAN: There has been no difference in terms of people getting the service. Complainants, to be honest, I do not think we would see any difference apart from the odd few who might walk in.

Mr MILLS: You and I know Alice Springs. They notice these things profoundly, even if they have never used the Ombudsman's Office. They get the sense less attention is being given to Central Australia. What actions have been taken by the office to explain there has been no change; that, in fact, there could well have been an improvement in services to Alice Springs? Have any of those sorts of activities been enacted or was the office simply closed?

Mr FELDMAN: The commissioner has spoken, I think on radio and in the paper. Apart from that, I do not think anything specific has been done in that context. We intend as part of roll-out of the new act which becomes operational on the 1 July, to engage the public and inform them about what our role and services. Alice will be a major part of that promotion.

Mr Mills: A presence at the show, do you think?

Mr FELDMAN: No. To be honest we have found from our and the Ombudsmen's point of view, we do not get a lot of value from that. We are better off going into organisations or specific areas where we can ensure we get the word out as to what we do. We are hoping to travel to more remote communities and ethnic organisations and do presentations. It is more about groups we can give the word to so they can get out and spread the information. It is one thing to give out a lot promotional stuff - which is nice if people come - but you do not get a chance to talk to people about who you are and what you do. We have not been part of that show circuit.

Mr MILLS: Right. Salary liabilities: how are they tracking, are they increasing?

Mr HENDERSON: I defer to Mr Feldman.

Mr FELDMAN: At the end of this financial year we have asked for a Treasurer's Advance to up our salaries to make sure we get paid more. That was fine.

Mr MILLS: When was that request made, sir?

Mr FELDMAN: Just in the last two weeks.

Mr MILLS: Right. Since the budget? How did that occur? If there a budget was set, how can put in a subsequent request?

Mr FELDMAN: I am referring to this year's budget. I am not talking about next year's. In this year's budget there was a shortfall. Normally, at the end of the year, if there is a shortfall, we ask for a Treasurer's Advance to top that up.

Mr MILLS: How does that occur if you have approximately the same number of staff? In fact, it looks on paper to be less staff for this budget as opposed to last budget; but you have a shortfall in salary allocations.

Mr HENDERSON: I defer to Mr Feldman.

Mr FELDMAN: Because the initial budget has never been enough to fully pay for the full staffing of the office.

Mr MILLS: Has staffing levels changed significantly in that time?

Mr HENDERSON: I defer to Mr Feldman.

Mr FELDMAN: There have been a couple of upgrades which has upped salaries. There are some upgrades for next year which we have additional funding for.

Mr MILLS: The operations savings with the closure of the Alice Springs office you would assume could be transferred across to assist in this deficiency.

Mr HENDERSON: I defer to Mr Feldman.

Mr FELDMAN: Some \$40 000 has been transferred across from operations this year into helping to support some of that salary increase. Next year, part of that will go towards funding the additional salary costs.

Mr MILLS: What is the shortfall then with salary?

Mr HENDERSON: I defer to Mr Feldman.

Mr FELDMAN: This year?

Mr MILLS: This year. What was the request for the Treasurer's Advance?

Mr FELDMAN: \$100 000

Mr MILLS: So it was \$140 000?

Mr FELDMAN: It was \$140 000 of which \$40 000 we gave out of the operation amount.

Mr MILLS: Did this situation influence the decision to close the office in Alice Springs?

Mr HENDERSON: I defer to Mr Feldman.

Mr FELDMAN: To be honest not in itself. If you look through our annual reports and even Estimates Committees, its closure has been talked about from the Ombudsman's perspective for quite a number of years. We were often debating whether it was efficient to keep it open or close it. This year the decision was finally made to close it. It is not something that has just come out of the blue.

Mr MILLS: I can understand how you would have considered its closure a possibility when assessing how to more efficient. Alice Springs or those remote places would have often been factored into that.

Moving to other business: two investigations afoot at the moment. Are you hampered in your capacity to take on loads with the shortfall in salary?

Mr FELDMAN: No, our numbers are fine. As long as we can maintain the numbers, skills level and the mix we have, then I believe we are right to continue doing our work.

Mr MILLS: There is plenty of work, is there not?

Mr FELDMAN: Yes. We hope to up the ante in terms of investigative processes. Next year, we are starting a Certificate IV in Investigations which we are running in conjunction with Charles Darwin University. Part of that is to get a wider variety of people in the departments who can conduct their own investigations and so on.

Mr MILLS: You say you are going to up the ante, yet you have approximately the same number of staff and a short fall in your salary component. How are you going to up the ante?

Mr FELDMAN: We will but not this year. With the funding we have for next year, we should be able to maintain our full staffing. We should be right.

Mr MILLS: The two investigations afoot at the moment, when are they likely to be reported?

Mr FELDMAN: I would not like to say. To be honest, sometimes it is very hard to determine how long those take. I would not like to even guess at this stage.

Mr MILLS: You are saying you are going to increase training next year. It sounds like there will be a significant change in the way you operate. Is that due to additional staff, or are you outsourcing to conduct investigations within agencies?

Mr FELDMAN: It is us undertaking the training with Charles Darwin University. It is using our own staff, particularly those very experienced members who have the qualifications to run the courses. There are two staff members who will be involved in that for one Friday for a number of weeks.

Mr MILLS: This is planned for next year?

Mr FELDMAN: Yes.

Mr MILLS: Are these extra people ...

Mr FELDMAN: No, they are within the current ...

Mr MILLS: ... improving the skills of the group you have at the moment?

Mr FELDMAN: Improving the skills of people within the public service, including some of our own people. There will be 25 people on that course. They will be from departments like Health and Power and Water and whoever wishes to put their name down to do the course and gain investigative

qualifications.

Mr MILLS: Who will they be working for?

Mr FELDMAN: Their own departments.

Mr MILLS: How does that assist the Ombudsman?

Mr FELDMAN: Hopefully, they will be able to better investigate their own departments and we will get less complaints.

Mr MILLS: Would they not, therefore, be more skilled at making it difficult to investigate?

Mr FELDMAN: I would not have thought so.

Mr MILLS: No, I would hope not, but I am trying to understand the connection between the two.

Mr FELDMAN: It is to increase the skills within departments so they can better investigate their own complaints. Ultimately, people will be more deeply satisfied with the results of what comes out of their own investigations and, therefore, not feel they have to keep coming back to the Ombudsman.

Mr MILLS: I understand. That will do for me.

Mr CHAIRMAN: Member for Nelson, do you have any questions?

Mr WOOD: No.

Mr CHAIRMAN: In that case that concludes consideration of Output 1.1.

Output 1.2 - Health and Community Services Complaints Commission

Mr MILLS: In this area, how many complaints have there been about Family and Community Services?

Mr FELDMAN: None since we only deal with, in a sense, the Health, Aged and Disability Services. We do not deal with any Family and Children Services complaints.

Mr MILLS: Okay. How often do you fail to receive materials from agencies in the course of your investigations?

Mr FELDMAN: Oh, very rarely.

Mr MILLS: It has occurred though?

Mr FELDMAN: Yes, but let me put that in context. If we are talking formal investigations, I would say, on the Health side, it would probably be very, very rare, like one in 50 or whatever. Maybe not even that; one in 100 or more. We would not get the cooperation to provide any information we wanted, basically, and that is without us calling on the powers we have. At the end of the day, if they do not produce the information or the documents, or whatever, then we have the powers to go in and, basically, make sure we get that information. But that is extremely rare.

Mr MILLS: In the last period, have those powers been called upon?

Mr FELDMAN: Yes, I think once.

Mr MILLS: Can you detail the circumstances that required you to call upon those powers, and what agency was involved?

Mr FELDMAN: It was the Department of Health. It was mainly to do with getting records we believed were required. Ultimately, they were provided to us. We are sometimes forced to resort to this because, particularly in Health, people want to protect the records, which you can well understand. However, sometimes there are records we believe we should get. The department or a unit may not think so, though. We will make it clear by issuing a proper letter, like a summons, for want of a better word, that says: 'These are the documents we want. This is the information we want'. We make sure we get that data.

Mr MILLS: Apart from Health, any other departments?

Mr FELDMAN: You have to remember probably over 60% of complaints we get are related to Health. Most of the major complaints that warrant an investigation generally come from the Department of Health

Mr MILLS: Okay. Thank you.

Mr CHAIRMAN: Member for Nelson?

Mr WOOD: No questions.

Mr CHAIRMAN: In that case, I thank the Ombudsman's Office for coming in.

Mr FELDMAN: Thank you.

Mr CHAIRMAN: I welcome the Chief Minister again. Chief Minister, would you introduce the officials accompanying you and, if you have an opening statement on behalf of the department, please present it.

Mr HENDERSON: Mr Chairman, I welcome Mr Mike Burgess, Chief Executive of the Department of the Chief Minister, and Mr Karl Dyason, Chief Financial Officer. Other officers of the Department are available to assist the committee in their deliberations as required.

The Department of Chief Minister not only provides leadership in facilitating government's priorities, but also provides a range of services which support the business of government. The major achievements this year have been coordinating the government's efforts to bring the INPEX project to Darwin; the drafting of *Territory 2030*, the Northern Territory's first 20-year strategic plan; and the development of *A Working Future* strategy for Territorians living in remote areas.

The department has also been extremely busy this year on other significant matters including coordinating the Operation Stimulus Action Plan; adapting to the new COAG arrangements; refining the Northern Territory's position on climate change; furthering Darwin waterfront developments; and coordinating strategies to ensure the Territory remains a great place to live and work.

In relation to my Department of the Chief Minister, I inform the committee that I will be taking questions on climate change, Australian and Northern Territory government relations, multicultural advancement, major projects, *Territory 2030*, Darwin Waterfront Corporation, the AustralAsia Railway, ministerial office expenditure and community support. I will also be taking questions on the employment output which sits within the Department of Business and Employment.

In the Asian Relations and Trade output, questions will be covered by minister Burns on Wednesday

and, for the Indigenous Policy output, questions will be handled by minister Anderson on Thursday.

I will make some further comments and introduction in relation to Police, Fire and Emergency Services, and Education and Training when those portfolios come before the committee.

Mr CHAIRMAN: Are there any questions for the opening statement?

Mr MILLS: Yes. I have done some sums, Chief Minister. With four-and-a-half hours and 270 minutes, we have to deal with that long list you just described. If we count the portfolios and not the agencies, that leaves us with 38 minutes per agency for the Chief Minister. We have the same amount of time for someone who looks after Sport and one other area. It makes it quite difficult. I need to make that clear: it is the same amount of time for the Chief Minister with seven portfolios, four-and-a-half hours, 38 minutes per agency, and we have other agencies within these. It makes it difficult, but we will do the best we can.

Mr CHAIRMAN: Thank you, member for Blain. Member for Nelson, do you have any questions?

Mr WOOD: In light of the member for Blain's opening statement, I decline from commenting.

Agency Specific Whole-of-Government Related Questions

Mr CHAIRMAN: I now call for questions to answer agency specific, whole-of-government related questions.

Mr MILLS: These will be generic questions, Chief Minister, and you may be familiar with them. I notice some assistants there with boxes probably filled with information in response to these questions.

Carbon emissions. We often talk about reducing the footprint and so on. Can you describe exactly how much is produced by the Department of Chief Minister in kilowatt hours, or tonnes of carbon dioxide?

Mr HENDERSON: I will hand over to Mike Burgess, Chief Executive of the Department of the Chief Minister, for the answer.

Mr BURGESS: Mike Burgess, Chief Executive. The current emissions of carbon dioxide from buildings in the Department of the Chief Minister amount to about 563 tonnes per year.

Mr MILLS: Have you specific strategies to reduce that?

Mr BURGESS: Over the last few years, we have already reduced our intensity by about 15%, which is equivalent to about 80 tonnes. There are a number of measures we have taken to achieve that in our buildings. These include rationalising the number of stand-alone printers, faxes and photocopiers, and greater use of multifunction devices with built-in energy efficient functionality; encouraging employees to adopt more energy efficient practices such as turning off lights when not occupied; and minimising use of after-hours air-conditioning. Air-conditioning in our buildings shuts down at 5 pm and has to be manually turned back on after 5 pm; and that goes for weekends as well.

Additional energy efficiency measures are planned for NT House in 2009-10, including the upgrading of lighting controllers and installing sensor lighting in some areas. We now have a waste paper and co-mingled recycled program in NT House to recycle cardboard, newspaper waste, used drink bottles, cans, plastic containers and food containers.

Under the whole-of-government Greening the Fleet policy, which will be introduced from 1 July, and aiming at a 20% reduction of emissions from the fleet over the next five years, we have already made some inroads. Over the last 12 months, we have halved the number of six-cylinder vehicles in our

fleet and increased the number of four-cylinder vehicles by 33%. 75% of the fleet is now four-cylinder. As well as that, ministerial VIP pool vehicles, which are currently eight-cylinder types, are being replaced with six-cylinder models, fitted with LPG conversions.

We are also coordinating the introduction of TelePresence, a national videoconferencing network, which will reduce interstate staff travel and greenhouse gas emissions associated with that travel. This initiative is being introduced with the assistance of the Australian government with a particular focus on COAG senior officials meetings in the first instance.

Mr MILLS: I missed at the start - the tonnage now is?

Mr BURGESS: It is 563.

Mr MILLS: That has been reduced by 15% since?

Mr BURGESS: Over the last 3 years. It was 643.

Mr MILLS: How do you calculate this?

Mr BURGESS: I do not calculate it. There is a government energy management program that employs a set of algorithms based on electricity consumption and a whole range of factors.

Mr MILLS: There has been a significant increase in the cost of utilities. How will that increase be reflected on the bottom line? How much is it going to cost?

Mr HENDERSON: I defer to Mr Burgess.

Mr BURGESS: If we were to make no further efficiencies savings - and we believe we will - then the additional cost to the bottom line will be \$26 000.

Mr MILLS: That is from increased power and water charges? A 26 000 increase? Power and water?

Mr BURGESS: Power and water.

Mr MILLS: How many graduates and apprentices started with the department in 2007, 2008 and 2009?

Mr HENDERSON: I defer to Mr Burgess.

Mr BURGESS: In 2007, four graduates were employed in the department; in 2008, five; and, in 2009, we currently have two graduates undertaking the program in the department.

Mr MILLS: The four from 2007, are they still there?

Mr BURGESS: One of the four graduates remains in the employment of the department.

Mr MILLS: And in 2008?

Mr BURGESS: Two remain with the department.

Mr MILLS: How many of those graduates are still with their original departments?

Mr HENDERSON: I defer to Mr Burgess.

Mr BURGESS: They started with us and they have stayed with us. In terms those who are still with the Northern Territory government, from 2007 two remained, from 2008 one remains, and with 2009 we are yet to see.

Mr MILLS: How many reports do you have of improper use of computers?

Mr HENDERSON: I defer to Mr Burgess.

Mr BURGESS: We have had no reports of improper use of computers.

Mr MILLS: How many credit cards were issued to departmental staff?

Mr HENDERSON: I defer to Mr Burgess.

Mr BURGESS: We have 45 credit cards.

Mr MILLS: How many transactions for personal items or services outstanding?

Mr HENDERSON: I defer to Mr Burgess.

Mr BURGESS: One outstanding at the moment.

Mr MILLS: One. Significant?

Mr BURGESS: No, that staff member has been cancelled.

Mr ELFERINK: The Auditor-General recently reported on credit card expenditure. Did the Department of the Chief Minister get singled out in any fashion in amounts used or purchased on those credit cards?

Mr HENDERSON: I defer to Mr Burgess.

Mr BURGESS: I do not believe so but I will just check with my colleague. No, we were not singled out.

Mr ELFERINK: In all the credit card transactions he looked at - I believe there were many thousands - how was the Department of the Chief Minister represented on that list of transactions? Were you at the expensive end or the non-expensive end?

Mr HENDERSON: I defer to Mr Burgess.

Mr BURGESS: I really cannot answer that. I do not have that material in front of me. We would probably have to refer back to the Auditor-General's report.

Mr MILLS: Okay. List of public events and/or public forums sponsored by this department for the year 2008-09, and those projected for 2009-10?

Mr HENDERSON: Mike.

Mr BURGESS: As you would be aware, the department has a large responsibility within its list of responsibilities for supporting public events through our Protocol area, as well as through our community engagement area. I have a list I can ...

Mr MILLS: I am happy for it to be tabled.

Mr HENDERSON: Happy to table it.

Mr MILLS: That includes what has occurred and what is to come?

Mr HENDERSON: Mike.

Mr BURGESS: That shows all events and special events supported by the department over the last 12 months to 31 May. In answer to how many are likely to occur, I believe it would be in the same order. It is a large number. I do not expect there will be any major variations.

Mr MILLS: Thank you. How many staff in the department are dedicated to communications; that is, media and advertising, Chief Minister?

Mr HENDERSON: Mike.

Mr BURGESS: We have budget for 11 staff.

Mr MILLS: Eleven staff for communications, plus consultancies?

Mr BURGESS: That is a separate area of budget.

Mr MILLS: How do you describe these 11, and what do they do?

Mr HENDERSON: Mike.

Mr BURGESS: They are a range of people who have expertise in marketing and communications, at a range of levels.

Mr MILLS: And they are employed for that purpose?

Mr BURGESS: Yes.

Mr MILLS: How do you define advertising?

Mr HENDERSON: Mike.

Mr BURGESS: Within the advertising standard classification code, advertising is defined as the promotion of government and departmental initiatives through broadcast media: TV and radio, print media, outdoor signage and online advertising.

Mr MILLS: What is the budget?

Mr BURGESS: The total budget in this area is approximately \$2.4m per year.

Mr MILLS: How much is this year-to-date expenditure? Can you break it down to, say, newspapers, colour printing, black and white, radio, TV, community newsletters, consultants, printing?

Mr HENDERSON: Mike.

Mr BURGESS: Year-to-date expenditure for those things we purchase is \$1.5m to 31 May. I have a list of how that is broken down: newspapers - \$235 723; radio - \$131 495; television - \$181 014; magazines/journals - \$54 436; online - \$3571; banners - \$12 784; displays - \$190 563; conferences and events - \$27 620; brochures and leaflets - \$291 831; promotional merchandise - \$9717; multimedia - \$52 196; newsletters - \$10 919; market research - \$580; promotional VIP gifts - \$31 804; photography - \$19 353; editorials - \$13 287; consultation and planning - \$147 949; marketing websites - \$30 491; and media monitoring - \$64 995.

Mr MILLS: That is 2008-09?

Mr BURGESS: Expenditure to date.

Mr MILLS: Can that be tabled?

Mr HENDERSON: It has been just read out. There is no harm in tabling it.

Mr MILLS: What advertising campaigns have been undertaken by the department, specifically in the regions?

Mr HENDERSON: Mike Burgess.

Mr BURGESS: Most of our campaigns are Territory-wide because of the strategic nature of those campaigns. I have a list of them I can read out.

Mr MILLS: Can it be tabled?

Mr BURGESS: Yes.

Mr MILLS: If they are advertising campaigns, people would know about them.

Mr BURGESS: We are talking about: Buy in the Territory; Growing the Territory; Housing the Territory; Secure NT; *Territory 2030*; *A Working Future*.

Mr MILLS: Thank you, for that being tabled. Were any of these translated into local languages?

Mr BURGESS: Yes, four.

Mr MILLS: For which areas?

Mr BURGESS: They were for the following campaigns: *A Working Future*, antisocial behaviour, *Closing the Gap*, and, in the outstations, consultation services we provide such as interpreters for forums.

Mr MILLS: Have any campaigns been translated into ethnic languages or non-Indigenous languages?

Mr BURGESS: Yes. We did some translation brochures for Chinese delegations.

Mr MILLS: All right. For each campaign, who was contracted to write the material for print, visual or audio platforms?

Mr BURGESS: I have those details on the tabled document.

Mr MILLS: Oh, it is already there?

Mr BURGESS: Yes.

Mr MILLS: Thank you. Who has your printing contract?

Mr BURGESS: The Government Printing Office.

Mr MILLS: No one else is ...

Mr BURGESS: It would be very rare for us to use anyone else.

Mr MILLS: What plans do you have in place for TV advertising?

Mr BURGESS: In the coming six months, we plan to have TV advertising in place for the Buy Territory campaign, which is expected to be managed by the Department of Business and Employment; antisocial behaviour; climate change; and core services campaign.

Mr MILLS: I would assume you would have locals putting this advertising package together. The Buy Territory campaign, for instance?

Mr BURGESS: That would always be our aim.

Mr MILLS: Do you achieve your aims, Chief Minister?

Mr HENDERSON: Mike Burgess.

Mr BURGESS: I had a quick look today at our level of achievement for NT-based contractors winning bids from agencies. Based on the number of contracts we have had with individual companies, we achieve over 99% NT content.

Mr MILLS: Fantastic. That is very good, but going to this specific one. Has the Buy Territory campaign contract been let yet?

Mr BURGESS: A lot of the development work with these has already taken place. So, in relation to the question on TV advertising, we expect to be using that collateral that has already been developed in those areas. There will be additional costs for the placements, but I am not aware that we will be producing any new collateral.

Mr MILLS: Collateral means the ad itself?

Mr BURGESS: Materials. That is right.

Mr MILLS: The collateral you currently have in stock is locally produced collateral?

Mr BURGESS: Yes.

Mr MILLS: I have heard recently how a lot of advertising that had been booked has been cancelled. Is this the case?

Mr BURGESS: I am not aware of anything we have booked in recent times that has been cancelled. We do have a forward booking program for the next six months. That amounts to something like about 90 days worth of booking space.

Mr MILLS: There have been no significant changes to forward bookings in the last month in particular?

Mr BURGESS: I am not aware of any.

Mr MILLS: This time last year there was a lot of forward booking. I wondered what that was about. We soon learnt the answer when the election was called. However, I am digressing.

Is the advertising material approved by the minister, or the minister's office - in this case the Chief Minister? Does it all get authorised by the Chief Minister?

Mr HENDERSON: Mr Burgess.

Mr BURGESS: I approve the material.

Mr MILLS: Does the Chief Minister get to know about it, or is it delegated completely?

Mr HENDERSON: I can answer that. The first I see of the ads is when they appear.

Mr MILLS: Right. All ads?

Mr HENDERSON: All ads.

Mr MILLS: It is often a surprise to you?

Mr HENDERSON: There is a whole range of work the department undertakes. That is all done at a departmental level.

Mr MILLS: There is no connection between the plans you have to communicate initiatives of government and the department? How does the left hand know what the right hand is doing?

Mr HENDERSON: Government sets the policy and determines if there is a budget appropriation to communicate that policy. It hands the work over to Communication, and they develop the content.

Mr MILLS: Surely, it must pass through some kind of political filter?

Mr HENDERSON: I do not get to see it.

Mr MILLS: Does anyone else in your office get to see it?

Mr HENDERSON: Not to my knowledge.

Mr MILLS: Seriously? You and I know how this works; there must be some be someone else so that the left hand ...

Mr HENDERSON: Well there is the Buy Territory campaign. These are generic campaigns any competent advertising agency could put together.

Mr MILLS: But, you cannot have that. That is an extraordinary disconnect if you are running down this way and making statements and this ad appears on television that ...

Mr HENDERSON: What? To buy Territory, to support local business? That is not a very difficult campaign to put together.

Mr MILLS: That is just one example. I am expected to believe campaigns do not pass through any filters other than the parameters set by the department? They are completely the initiative of the department to determine the creative aspects of these messages? There is no other filter?

Mr HENDERSON: What I am saying is the first I see of them is when they appear.

Mr MILLS: You are saying, to your knowledge, there is no other involvement from the Chief Minister's Department in assisting in the creation of these promotional activities?

Mr HENDERSON: The Chief Minister's Department engages the advertising agents to produce the ads.

Mr MILLS: So, what about the glossy brochures, Chief Minister?

Mr HENDERSON: Which glossy brochures are you talking about?

Mr MILLS: Ah well, the gentleman here brought boxes in. I could bring boxes of glossy brochures in.

Mr HENDERSON: Show me what you are on about.

Mr MILLS: Oh well, have you not received them in your letterbox? Are they targeted at certain electorates? You mean to tell me that even glossy brochures ...

Mr HENDERSON: Television advertising, you were taking about.

Mr MILLS: No, I am talking about advertising - glossy brochures included.

Mr HENDERSON: Which glossy brochures are you talking about?

Mr MILLS: Ah well ...

Mr Elferink: The ones that turn up almost weekly with five photographs of you, Chief Minister.

Mr MILLS: There has been an extraordinary number of these. You mean to say you do not know this stuff is being produced? You do not get it in your letterbox, and you have had no one talking about it?

Mr HENDERSON: Well, I ...

Mr MILLS: Do you mean to say it is a complete initiative of Mr Burgess?

Mr CHAIRMAN: The Chief Minister has the floor.

Mr HENDERSON: No, I am saying I am not sure which particular brochures you are talking about. The question was about advertising and communications. We were talking about television advertising.

Mr MILLS: We were talking about a range of campaigns including newspapers, editorial, etcetera. I am sure that could be stretched to include the glossy brochures that have been appearing as though there is an election coming. I know there is not, but it is extraordinary that you have not even noticed these things.

Mr HENDERSON: Which glossy brochure?

Mr MILLS: Which glossy brochures?

Mr HENDERSON: Which one are you talking about?

Mr MILLS: Oh well, stay tuned. We might be able to bring you some. You, obviously, have not seen them, you have had no involvement in their creation, no one in your office has ...

Mr HENDERSON: Specifically, which one are you talking about?

Mr MILLS: Unbelievable, extraordinary. All right, that will do.

Mr ELFERINK: Some time ago the Auditor-General did a bit of homework into Sprout Creative. Sprout Creative got 85% of the work, which was one of the issues concerning the Auditor-General. Eleven out of the 14 on tabled Paper No 22 is Sprout Creative. Is this continuing to cause some grief in the industry?

Mr HENDERSON: I defer to Mr Burgess.

Mr BURGESS: Sprout Creative is a part of our contract arrangements for provision of a lot of products and services - period contracts and individual purchases and all the rest. We have around about 120 people that we go to. As I described before, it was some \$1.5m worth of purchases.

Mr ELFERINK: Sprout gets 11 of that 14.

Mr BURGESS: In the past 12 months Sprout has won through the tender arrangements around about \$160 000.

Mr ELFERINK: This is the Sprout Creative located in Tiki House or Tiwi House? Tiki House. I just want to be sure we are talking about the same company. Chief Minister, have you been there?

Mr HENDERSON: To the best of my memory, I do not believe I have.

Mr CHAIRMAN: Just to remind participants about test of relevance we are using during this Estimates Committee process that I made in my opening comments. Any questions going to the operations or financial positions of departments and agencies which seek funds and estimates are relevant questions for the purpose of estimates hearings.

ELFERINK: I notice working along with Sprout is another company on four of those contracts called Cutting Edge. Where is Cutting Edge located?

Mr HENDERSON: I will pass that to Mike Burgess but, again, I do not know the relevance that has to do the budget.

Mr ELFERINK: It will be very relevant shortly.

Mr BURGESS: I believe they are based in Winnellie.

Mr ELFERINK: Winnellie. For a while Cutting Edge was located in Tiki House in Hudson Fysh Avenue. Cutting Edge is actually a Brisbane-based firm which moved into the Northern Territory. The person or the proponent of Cutting Edge as a business, as I understand it, was between jobs when she took up the Cutting Edge project. She was the Chief of Staff to Clare Martin and then your own

Chief of Staff. Between these positions Adele Young was involved with Cutting Edge, was she not, Chief Minister?

Mr HENDERSON: I fail to see what this has to do with the budget.

Mr ELFERINK: Well, you reckon ...

Mr CHAIRMAN: Member for Port Darwin, I need to remind members that when individuals are mentioned when speaking in committee, members need to take the following matters into account: they need to exercise their valuable right of speech in a responsible manner and the limited opportunities that present and other members of parliament to respond to allegations made by them.

Mr ELFERINK: I have not made any allegations other than to point out that two companies which are getting the lion's share of this work. When I say the lion's share, in the case of Sprout Creative - 11 out of 14 - partnered up with a company called Cutting Edge which was once headed, as I understand, by Adele Young. I believe there are some questions to be answered. The Chief Minister's answer - 'I do not understand what this has to do with the budget process' - is very surprising indeed, considering that the Auditor-General has already looked into these arrangements.

Mr HENDERSON: And found nothing improper in regard to those arrangements.

Mr ELFERINK: That is not quite the case.

Mr HENDERSON: It absolutely is.

Mr ELFERINK: Well, actually, it is not. Perhaps you should go back and have a chat to the Auditor-General.

Mr HENDERSON: I know what was in his report.

Mr ELFERINK: I know what was in his report, but there were also concerns raised in the report. It was found during that time your department - Department of the Chief Minister - was filling out paperwork after contracts were being let. That was also in that report. So it was not ...

Mr HENDERSON: The report found nothing improper occurred.

Mr ELFERINK: So what we have now is a situation where your Chief of Staff has nothing to do with documents you never get to see, which has your face on it, being shoved into people's letterboxes almost endlessly. It has all to do with the department, nothing to do with the Chief of Staff. There are no questions to be answered here; there are no issues of concern. As far as you are concerned, there is no conflict of interest?

Mr HENDERSON: I fail to see what the conflict of interest is and what you are alleging.

Mr ELFERINK: What I am suggesting is that there is a definite overrepresentation of these contracts for a company called Cutting Edge, only to be outperformed by Sprout Creative which, at one stage, shared business premises together, as I understand. I believe that is starting to look a little on the cosy side. Perhaps it is time to send it back to the Auditor-General. What do you think?

Mr HENDERSON: I will just hand over to Mike Burgess who can advise how Sprout Creative was awarded these contracts and the terms and conditions.

Mr BURGESS: The way in which the department engages creative work for marketing and promotions was subject to an extensive review last year. That review involved a lot of community consultation with the assistance of Stanton's. They helped us to put together a whole new package

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and framework for procuring those types of creative and other marketing services. That resulted in calling of tenders for seven individual contracts; one was panel contract, and six period contracts to cover the field. That tender process was overseen by a probity auditor, Deloitte, who signed off on the recommendations that went forward about the companies that successfully gained entry to that panel and those period contracts.

Since those contracts were put in place, there has been approximately \$400 000 worth of work which has flowed out of that new framework. Inside that framework, work has been spread across 10 contractors. Sprout has obtained approximately \$150 000 of that work; \$250 000 has gone to other contractors.

Mr ELFERINK: Chief Minister - yes or no - were you aware that Clare Martin's former Chief of Staff, your current Chief of Staff, was the front for Cutting Edge in between her jobs?

Mr HENDERSON: I fail to see what this has to do with the budget.

Mr ELFERINK: Yes or no, were you aware of it?

Mr HENDERSON: I fail to see what this has to do with the budget.

Mr ELFERINK: Were you aware of it?

Mr HENDERSON: I fail to see what it has to do with the budget.

Mr ELFERINK: I am just asking you, did you know?

Mr HENDERSON: , I am not aware of the details of my Chief of Staff's employment when she was not employed by me.

Mr ELFERINK: You are not aware of what she was doing. So, you are saying you did not know she was representing Cutting Edge?

Mr HENDERSON: I am saying I do not know how this relates to the budget, and the details of her previous employment.

Mr ELFERINK: So you knew what she was doing in the meantime? Did you have any conversations with her when you realised these contracts were going out to Cutting Edge? Have you talked to her about it?

Mr HENDERSON: What contracts? Which specific contracts are you talking about?

Mr ELFERINK: I am talking specifically about core services recruitment brand campaign, skilled workers campaign, antisocial behaviour campaign, and Buy Territory. Those campaigns.

Mr HENDERSON: As you have just heard, they all went through the appropriate procurement processes.

Mr ELFERINK: Have you discussed the matter with your Chief of Staff?

Mr HENDERSON: This has nothing to do with the budget.

Mr ELFERINK: Have you discussed this - it has everything to your budget and how the money is distributed to people. I am asking you, have you discussed this with your Chief of Staff?

Mr HENDERSON: This has all been through the Auditor-General who looked at these issues.

Mr ELFERINK: And found problems.

Mr HENDERSON: No, the Auditor-General found nothing improper occurred.

Mr ELFERINK: Other than the paperwork was done up. There was none.

Mr HENDERSON: Nothing improper occurred.

Mr ELFERINK: The procurement system was not followed,

Mr HENDERSON: Nothing improper occurred.

Mr ELFERINK: I cannot believe it.

Mr HENDERSON: The Auditor-General could not find anything improper occurred. A mistake was made in regards to the paperwork, but nothing improper occurred. That was the finding of the Auditor-General; we discussed this last year.

Mr ELFERINK: Thank you, Chief Minister.

Mr CHAIRMAN: Are there any other questions?

Mr HENDERSON: I have been given some advice in regards to the glossy brochures. I am not aware of every single committee that exists within the department and across government, but there is a committee called the Communications Advisory Committee which facilitates effective communication of government policies and programs. The membership of that committee consists of the Office of Chief Minister's staff and the Department of Chief Minister's Director of Strategic Communications. This committee makes decisions regarding whole-of-government branding; whole-of-government communications policy; exemptions from style guidelines; approval of artwork. The Department of the Chief Minister's Strategic Communications Unit provides a secretariat service to the CAC. So, there is some involvement of my staff; it is a committee I was not aware of.

Mr MILLS: Who is the Chief of Staff on the committee?

Mr HENDERSON: There are a number of people - senior staff – who sit on that committee from time to time, predominantly, it is the Director of Communications. However, on occasions, the Chief of Staff would be on there.

Mr MILLS: I would just like to bring your attention to these. These are just a few that are at hand.

Mr HENDERSON: Yes, but I do not see them until they appear in the letterbox. I was not aware specifically of this particular committee.

Mr ELFERINK: Chief Minister, can I just clarify one thing? You are telling me your Chief of Staff sits on the committee that makes determinations in relation to contracts with Cutting Edge with ...

Mr HENDERSON: No, you are making that allegation.

Mr ELFERINK: Well, is it true or not?

Mr HENDERSON: No. You are making the allegation. I am saying the Auditor-General looked into these particular issues and found nothing improper occurred. That was tabled in the parliament last

week.

Mr ELFERINK: That paperwork was filled out afterwards.

Mr HENDERSON: And nothing improper occurred.

Mr ELFERINK: Okay, we will leave it there, thank you very much, Chief Minister.

Mr CHAIRMAN: Member for Nelson.

Mr WOOD: Just by turning off a couple of photocopiers and reducing the lights, can one honestly say they are reducing carbon emissions? In other words, are we kidding ourselves about this? Do we have facts and figures showing that by reducing the amount of lights used, we have made a physical difference to the amount of carbon burnt through generators such as those at Channel Island and Weddell?

Mr HENDERSON: Member for Nelson, I do not profess to be the world's greatest expert in regard to how carbon emissions are calculated in their production and, on the obverse side, how reductions are calculated. My understanding is it is across the entire chain of generating those emissions and, as the saying would go, every little bit helps. There are algorithms, as Mr Burgess said, that people who know the science of this sort of area produce and they are well accepted.

Mr WOOD: I understand the science. What I do not understand is the method calculating the tonnage of carbon. The tonnage of carbon is a product of the burning of fossil fuels or gas. The only way you are going to reduce the amount of fossil fuels or gas in the Northern Territory is to reduce the energy consumption, and the way you reduce that is to knock off one generator. A generator will continue to go, regardless of whether it is going at half or full capacity. There may be a negligible difference in the amount of fuel it uses. Are we really telling people wonderful things? Should we not have an expert saying: 'Yes, the changes in your department by reducing usage of photocopiers and lights has actually made a physical effect on reducing carbon emissions because we were able to shut down one generator'? Is that not what we should be trying to prove, rather than saying: 'I know we did our bit'?

Mr HENDERSON: The algorithms and the tonnages of greenhouse gas emitted, and the savings in that, are all part of a reputable and acknowledged science. If you look around the world in how the globe is responding, everybody is being called on to put their shoulder to the wheel - residential, business, commercial and industrial. Everybody doing their bit makes a difference. The science is fairly robust and those algorithms and methods of calculation are well established and well recognised.

Mr WOOD: I am trying to get down to the practical side of the equation. I am not disagreeing with you about turning off lights and other measures but I would love an electrical engineer or someone who works for Power and Water to come here and explain how much power Darwin does have to knock back to take one generator off the system. Then I could believe those savings actually reduced carbon emissions. You have called it an algorithm; it is a theoretical thing. It is a bit like recycling. People put their plastic bottles in; they find they get crushed and end up as landfill. People felt they were recycling, but were they really? Are the savings we are talking about in reality reducing the amount of carbon emissions in Darwin?

Mr CHAIRMAN: I suggest, considering the time, we move on to questions.

Mr WOOD: Okay.

Mr CHAIRMAN: Thank you, member for Nelson.

Mr CHAIRMAN: We now move on to Output Group 1.0, Policy Advice and Public Sector Coordination, Output 1.1, Policy Advice and Public Sector Coordination.

Mr MILLS: Chief Minister, how many people are employed in the Policy Advice And Coordination section?

Mr HENDERSON: I defer to Mr Burgess.

Mr BURGESS: The number of people employed in our Policy Advice and Coordination output is 19.6.

Mr MILLS: Breakdown of skills and levels?

Mr HENDERSON: Mr Burgess.

Mr BURGESS: There is a range of skills in that area, predominantly in the areas of policy formulation. We have people with legal backgrounds as well. There is the odd other professional technical employee. The levels range from AO4 all the way up to ECO4.

Mr CHAIRMAN: Before you proceed, member for Blain, it is good to see so many eager members of the opposition, but we can only have three at a time.

Mr MILLS: They are keen, are they not? You have creative people in that communications group?

Mr HENDERSON: Mr Burgess.

Mr BURGESS: No.

Mr MILLS: Who developed the 'Fresh Ideas, Real Results' government slogan?

Mr BURGESS: I would have thought – and I will take advice on it – it would have been through the Communications Advisory Committee.

Mr MILLS: The Communications Advisory Committee?

Mr HENDERSON: Yes, the Communications Advisory Committee.

Mr MILLS: Is that the group you spoke about before?

Mr HENDERSON: Yes.

Mr MILLS: That slogan is a Territory government slogan? Correct?

Mr HENDERSON: Yes.

Mr MILLS: Well, my eager friend here wanted to draw our attention to the use of that slogan on this letter circulated in my own electorate. I wonder if every electorate gets these letters. I doubt it.

Mr HENDERSON: I wonder what the letter was about.

Mr MILLS: Do you want me to read it to you?

Mr HENDERSON: What was it about?

Mr MILLS: You would not have received one in your electorate. It is only the baddies on the other side who get these letters. We were the terrible guys who did not back your mate, Kev.

Mr HENDERSON: Oh, the stimulus package you would not have supported.

Mr MILLS: Yes, at the bottom of that letter you have 'Fresh Ideas, Real Results'. Is this a Territory government letter?

Mr HENDERSON: Well, if you pass it to me ...

Mr MILLS: Clearly, it is not a Territory government letter.

Mr HENDERSON: I am advised those letters were paid for by the Labor Party.

Mr MILLS: Correct. That is what I assume, because you have the contact details there for your party office. So, does that 'Fresh Ideas, Real Results' slogan belong to the Territory government or to the Labor Party?

Mr HENDERSON: It is the Territory government's branding. The Labor Party, in this instance, has chosen to use it in that letter paid for by the Labor Party.

Mr MILLS: Who paid, then, for the creative work behind 'Fresh Ideas, Real Results'?

Mr HENDERSON: I would not have thought it cost any money to do that.

Mr MILLS: Really?

Mr HENDERSON: No.

Mr MILLS: You have never worked with creative agencies? They charge a fair amount of money to come up with creative ideas.

Mr HENDERSON: I am advised it comes through the Communications Advisory Committee, not through any commercial agency.

Mr MILLS: All right, so it did not cost anything. It belongs to the Labor Party, does it?

Mr HENDERSON: I do not know if there is any copyright either by the government or the Labor Party. Anybody can use that slogan if they wish. I am not aware of any copyright on it.

Mr MILLS: You can see there is a message with this publication. It creates the impression - with the very small print here - that it has been paid for by the Labor Party but the branding presents it cleverly as a Territory government letter.

Mr HENDERSON: No, the letter is a Labor Party letter. I have a copy of it authorised by the Labor Party.

Mr MILLS: But it does not say that very clearly, Chief Minister. It is in very small print.

Mr HENDERSON: I am sure it does; that authorises the authenticity of the letter.

Mr MILLS: I think you are missing something. You have urged me to get out there. If you go and listen to people, they would assume this publication is a Territory government letter. The smallest print down the bottom there gives some reference, if you read it very carefully. It is not so easy to read that it is Territory Labor. Your little creative unit is very clever. They make use of images created to carry one message - Territory government to carry another.

Mr HENDERSON: It carries the message that we supported the \$500m being invested into the economy and the CLP did not.

Mr MILLS: Sorry? Say that again.

Mr HENDERSON: I assume the letter is about the stimulus package.

Mr MILLS: No, the actual question here is the use of public funds.

Mr HENDERSON: No public funds were used in the creation or distribution of that letter. None at all. It was all through the ALP.

Mr MILLS: Okay, not even those who are on salary to generate a slogan which is not paid for by the Labor Party but the Territory taxpayer?

Mr HENDERSON: There is no copyright on that slogan. There is no ownership appointed to it. Anyone can use it.

Mr MILLS: I am sure you will see ...

Mr HENDERSON: No advertising agency was paid to come up with that slogan.

Mr MILLS: A little while ago you were quite unsure about the ...

Mr HENDERSON: I have taken advice and I had been told no advertising agency nor any public money was used to come up with that slogan. There is no copyright or ownership of it. Anybody is free to use it.

Mr MILLS: I do not know whether I will be, but ...

Mr HENDERSON: You do not have to. You can if you want.

Mr MILLS: It is very similar to ours by the way ...

Mr HENDERSON: Oh, okay.

Mr MILLS: Can you tell me once again who is on this committee that generates these great ideas?

Mr HENDERSON: The Communications Advisory Committee consists of officers of the Chief Minister's staff and Director of Communications and the Department of the Chief Minister's Director of Strategic Communications.

Mr MILLS: So those officers, paid by the public account, are generating material used for party purposes.

Mr HENDERSON: That is an extraordinarily long bow. There was no public funding that went to any

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agency to determine that slogan. There is no copyright or ownership of that slogan. Anybody is free to use it.

Mr MILLS: You got advice there that is the case. This creative little group designed this.

Mr HENDERSON: That is my advice.

Mr MILLS: That will be all for me for now.

Mr CHAIRMAN: Member for Nelson, do you have any questions to ask?

Mr WOOD: Chief Minister, what was the cost for setting up your offices in Palmerston, Katherine and Alice Springs?

Mr HENDERSON: I think that belongs in another output group, if we can get to it.

Mr WOODS: I will wait for that output. Which output?

Mr HENDERSON: Government Business Support, Output Group.1.3.

Mr WOOD: The Blue Mud Bay decision: can you give us an update on what discussions have been held with traditional owners in relation to that decision?

Mr HENDERSON: That issue really should be directed to the Minister for Indigenous Policy. She is the minister who has a policy responsibility for those negotiations.

Mr CHAIRMAN: Which is the next output.

Mr HENDERSON: It is really the Minister for Indigenous Policy who has responsibility for leading those discussions.

Mr WOOD: You had a whole-of-government recruitment campaign to promote the core services of policing, nursing and teaching, to encourage Territorians to take up careers in these areas. How successful has this campaign been? Can you give us numbers to support your success or otherwise?

Mr HENDERSON: The advice I have, member for Nelson, is that it was a whole-of-government campaign. In regard to the effectiveness or the number of people who have applied for positions as a result of that, each of those individual agencies would have that information: Health for health, Education for teachers, Police for policing. The Department of Chief Minister does not receive those applications as a result of those advertisements.

Mr WOOD: Even though you helped the recruitment campaign, you did not gauge its success?

Mr HENDERSON: I will hand over to Mr Burgess.

Mr BURGESS: There is regular discussion between the communication directors of those departments and my department. They report that core services campaign has been quite successful in boosting applications for positions in all those areas. I also recall a discussion I had with Helen Garnett, from Charles Darwin University, who was keen for us to keep running that program because it also helped them recruit people to their professional offices, as well. So, it has been seen as quite a successful program.

Mr WOOD: I find it strange that you spend a fair amount of money on a recruitment program and do not sit down at the end of it and ask: 'Did it work?' To determine if it worked you would ask: 'How

many people took up careers in these areas from the Territory?' There must be some evaluation of the value of these campaigns.

Mr HENDERSON: Mr Burgess.

Mr BURGESS: I believe success of the initial run of the core services campaign is reflected in decisions taken by agencies towards running it again. We have booked space over the next six months for re-running that program. That is a fairly good indication.

Mr WOOD: Climate change is in this section, policy advice and coordination?

Mr CHAIRMAN: Yes.

Mr WOOD: What is government doing in relation to climate change, as far as reducing our dependency on oil and gas? Building more low energy designed houses, instead of what we seem to be doing at the moment? What strategies do we have to reduce overall consumption of water?

Mr HENDERSON: The government is committed to cutting carbon emissions across all government buildings by 10% by 2010-11 based on a base line which was established in 2004-05. There is funding in the minor new works side of appropriations across government agencies to assist them implementing saving measures in buildings, particularly in schools across the Northern Territory. There is a significant program running through the schools to look at how to reduce emissions across schools as part of environmental programs. There is a target, it is reported on, and it is a reduction of 10% by 2010-11.

What was the second part of the question? Water consumption?

Mr WOOD: Yes and alternative energy sources.

Mr HENDERSON: We are scrutinizing such sources. It is an ongoing body of work in regard to renewable energy. At COAG, I signed up to the national Renewable Energy Targets. The advice based on Commonwealth assessments, given the economies of scale, is that it is going to be hard for the Territory to reach those targets. We will be looking to partner with Charles Darwin University and industry to improve the amount of electricity produced by renewable sources. We are way ahead of the other states inasmuch that all of the electricity consumed locally will - when Blacktip comes on line - be produced by gas. Gas is three times as environmentally friendly, or produces three times fewer emissions than coal-fired power stations. Compared to the rest of Australia, we do very well in the total amount of emissions per kilowatt hour of electricity generated to a factor of between three and four. That is not to say we should not be trying to do more regarding renewable sources. As I have indicated, we will be looking, now that we have signed up to these targets, to formally partner with the university and industry to examine how to achieve that in the Territory. We are unquestionably playing our part.

As to buildings, COAG members also signed up at the last COAG meeting to national reforms. These will move the jurisdictions towards six-star energy efficiency homes, and ...

Mr WOOD: Does that mean no windows?

Mr HENDERSON: My home in Wanguri has louvers on every window. I believe there is a ...

Mr WOOD: Is it a six-star?

Mr HENDERSON: I do not know if it is a six-star or not. Going back to some of those older designs around Darwin would be good, but you cannot mandate for that. Work is being done at a national level on how to achieve that, given our tropical climate. There is no one-size-fits-all six-star building

design available. A design for the tropics would be totally different to one for Central Australia or Tasmania. The same goes for commercial buildings. There will be requirements in a couple of years time for disclosures of buildings' energy efficiency upon their sale. This will be a national move.

We are moving forward all the time. It is about educating the consumer and putting standards in place. When you look at areas like electricity production here in the Territory, we are way more efficient than the other states.

Mr WOOD: As far as reducing water usage, could the government take a lead, for instance, in less lawns in the middle of main streets and more native plants? Can we lead the way a little before you ask people to reduce the amount of water they use?

Mr HENDERSON: You would have to ask the Lands and Planning Minister and the Roads minister about those specific issues. All agencies are looking to reduce water. I must admit, I am still astounded when driving around to see reticulation on in the middle of the day, with sprinklers and roads being watered. We have had a debate of power and water pricing. There is a push in some quarters to significantly increase the prices for water to force a reduction in consumption. We have resisted that but there are arguments in favour of such a move. We would rather get there by way of education.

Mr WOOD: There used to be advertisements on television - they might have been by Power and Water - promoting drip irrigation and growing native plants. If you look at the Stuart Highway in Alice Springs, for instance, it is entirely greened with native plants. This is thanks to a fellow called Jeff Myers, who made sure the department did not put down any other type of plants. Yet, in the Top End, we have gone to the other extreme. We have planted plants that need high levels of watering on our median strips and in some of our parks. I am not saying they do not have a place, but the government tended to send out mixed messages.

Has the government, your department, a role to play in trying to encourage people to reduce water consumption? Especially in light of the fact that government is going to bring in water allocation plans for the rural area. We are struggling to provide long-term water plans for the new city of Weddell. That is why Power and Water is looking at Manton Dam. Is there is a lead role the government can play in showing how to live in a tropical city and reduce the amount of water used?

Mr HENDERSON: Power and Water is, I understand, about to embark on a significant campaign to that effect. You can go online to the Power and Water website and find a tool where you can model how much power/water you are consuming and get specific advice on how to reduce that. Getting out there and communicating energy-saving measures is important.

There is also funding in the budget to assist business to audit their consumption patterns of electricity and water and advise small or medium businesses on how to reduce consumption. I accept the comment that we could do more to promote those things. Power and Water have an imminent campaign to promote what they are doing, the facilities and tools they have available that homeowners can use to measure their current consumption, and tips on how they can reduce that.

Mr WOOD: Getting back to whether we can reduce the amount of electricity usage if we physically turn off one of our generators. Is it possible? To me, people want to see real benchmarks. Is it possible, for instance, for the government to say: 'If we reduce our electricity consumption by this much, we can stop the use of one generator, therefore, we can reduce our emissions because we will be using less oil and gas'? That is a campaign which makes more sense than just carbon emissions. Is there a possibility of such a campaign? If you really want to reduce our carbon emissions, then we have to reduce the amount of electricity used by, say, 15%. That way people feel like they are part of a team.

Mr HENDERSON: I will have to take that on board. I have no idea how much less electricity this city would have to consume to shut down one of the generators at Channel Island. Nor do I know what the savings in carbon emissions would be. I do not know if that work can be done easily or quickly, but I

will take it on board and see what I can do.

Mr WOOD: I am looking for down-to-earth, practical ways of demonstrating how we are reducing carbon emissions by using less energy.

Mr CHAIRMAN: That concludes consideration for Output Group 1.1. I note from the schedule, Chief Minister, Output 1.2 will be addressed by the Minister for Indigenous Policy on Thursday, 18 June.

Mr HENDERSON: Yes.

Output 1.3 – Multicultural Advancement

Mr CHAIRMAN: Are there any questions to Output 1.3, Multicultural Advancement? Member for Sanderson.

Mr STYLES: Chief Minister, I draw your attention to the lead article in the June edition of the *NT Business Review* that comes with the *Northern Territory News*. I quote from it. It says:

The federal Immigration Department is secretly planning to kick out many of the Territory's guest workers. Department officials have been told to quietly not grant most of the applications for the renewal of 457 Visas. There are 1700 skilled and semi-skilled foreign visa holders working in the Territory. There is still a chronic shortage of labour, and some smaller companies depend upon overseas workers to operate.

Chief Minister, unlike many other cities in Australia, we have a large proportion of foreign workers here on 457 Visas who came to Darwin because they already had family and/or friends living here, either as permanent residents or naturalised Australian citizens. Given our ongoing skills shortage in the Northern Territory, have you made any representations to the Commonwealth government in relation to 457 Visa holders in Darwin - and that includes the Northern Territory?

Mr HENDERSON: I can see how this crosses two areas. I am not trying to hide from the issue because I have a strong sympathy for the position put in that article. That issue, however, is managed by the Department of Business and Employment. It is an employment-related issue as opposed to Multicultural Affairs. The allocation of budgets through Chief Minister's is predominantly a grants program. The Department of Business and Employment has made significant representation working with a number of companies. I have made representations through various reviews. I can deal with it more effectively under the Employments output group when it comes up.

Mr STYLES: Chief Minister, have you made any representations at all to the Commonwealth government?

Mr HENDERSON: Again, it crosses both areas but, yes, representations have been made to the Commonwealth government in regard to this issue in a number of ways, particularly through the formal review of policy in this area.

Mr MILLS: Not by you by the sound of it, Chief Minister.

Mr HENDERSON: I signed off on the submissions to the review process the Commonwealth government undertook.

Mr STYLES: I note in the ALP ethnic affairs 2008 platform it states you will continue grants and aid funding, yet there is a decrease in funding. Given the global financial crisis and the economic downturn in Australia, your government has received Commonwealth monies as part of the stimulus package. There are a lot of multicultural community assets that could do with some maintenance or upgrades; why then is there a cut in the grants program of \$258 000?

Mr HENDERSON: I am very proud of this government's commitment to our multicultural communities. We were the first government in the Territory's history to establish an annual allocation for upgrades to multicultural facilities. Virtually all of those facilities have received significant upgrades during the term of this government. There were commitments made in the election last year in regard to upgrades of facilities. Those commitments have been met and the budget has gone back to its standard annual allocation. There have been no cuts. Specific commitments were met and those commitments have been funded.

Mr STYLES: When you say the standard annual allocation, what figure are you referring to?

Mr HENDERSON: The 2009-10 Ethnic Communities Facilities Development Program budget is \$250 000.

Mr STYLES: Where is the cut? In the 2009-10 budget, multicultural advancement has a total allocation of \$1.903m which is just \$127 000 above the 2003-04 allocation. Is that the normal total allocation for multicultural advancement? About \$1.9m?

Mr HENDERSON: That budget is the total allocation; not just for the upgrades to facilities but the entire allocation. The additional funding, the \$270 000 which was added to the 2008-09 Budget, was to fund election commitments. There has been no cut, but those election commitments have been met.

Mr STYLES: In several recent budgets there have been a number of substantial variations in spending in the area of multicultural advancement. In the lead-up to the 2008 Territory election, there was an increase in the budget for Ethnic Communities Facilities and Development Program. In the key variations notes, it states the decrease in the Multicultural Advancement output is due to one-off funding provided for the Ethnic Communities Facilities Development which occurred just prior to the Northern Territory election. Is that correct?

Mr HENDERSON: No, it was to meet commitments that were made.

Mr STYLES: If we go back to, say for instance, the 2003-04 Budget, we had an increase to the budget of 2004-05 to \$2.326m for multicultural advancement - roughly \$2.3m. In 2005-06, we went to \$2.3m, where it roughly matches what was spent the previous year. The 2005-06 Budget is about the same as the estimate; we are up around the \$2.3m. We go into the 2006-07 Budget and it is nearly \$2.6m. We had an increase there from the previous year of \$204 000. This is fairly consistent within a couple of hundred thousand. Then, suddenly, we budgeted in 2007-08 for \$2.597m and we dropped \$742 000 in one year to \$1.855m.

Mr HENDERSON: I can explain. The Interpreter Services used to be funded through this particular output group and \$700 000 was transferred out of this particular group to the Department of Local Government and Housing which now runs Interpreter Services. That was transferred when the Interpreter Services area of the budget was relocated to Local Government and Housing. As that service grew over the years, it received additional appropriation in all of those budgets to fund the increasing demand for that service.

Mr STYLES: Can you tell me when that started? Has the Interpreter Service always been part of that output?

Mr HENDERSON: We were the government that first started the Interpreter Services. It has been going for a long time. It was significantly expanded when we came to government and, as the demand for those services has grown, so too has the budget. Then, \$700 000 was transferred to Local Government and Housing.

Mr STYLES: But we have gone back to the budget this year of \$1.903m which is just \$127 000 above what it was some years ago. I believe the Interpreter Service was there then. Why has there been

such a huge decrease?

Mr HENDERSON: I just explained; \$700 000 was part of the allocation. That has now been transferred to the Department of Local Government and Housing.

Mr STYLES: If we go to figures from some years ago, we have not had a huge increase. Would you agree we have not had a huge increase in basic multicultural advancement if you take out the Interpreter Service funding of roughly \$700 000?

Mr HENDERSON: I do not have those budget numbers going back all those years. What I have is last year's and this year's budget. That is the explanation for that variation. We were the first government to have an annual allocation for capital grants to upgrade multicultural facilities across the Northern Territory. It is a budget allocation oversubscribed every year. Depending on the needs, we always try to meet those requirements. All of us in the parliament want to support those multicultural communities.

Mr STYLES: As part of a key ALP policy in the 2008 election, your party stated the government would consult with communities and ensure their voices would be heard. How can that occur, for instance, in Central Australia where the Multicultural Council of Central Australia have had a big reduction in their federal budget. They look like they will have reduce their hours from being open three days a week to one-and-a-half, as well as cut a lot of their programs. Are you aware of that?

Mr HENDERSON: We are debating the Territory government's 2009-10 Budget, not the Australian government's budget.

Mr STYLES: My question now is: will you be funding them? I note we have a reduction from last year of \$258 000. You say that was the works program. Is there any money in here to assist those people in Central Australia?

Mr HENDERSON: I have been advised that we are working with the Multicultural Council in Central Australia and we will be doing all we can to assist them.

Mr STYLES: As part of current ALP government initiatives, the Multicultural Office located within the Department of the Chief Minister has a role to provide funding for sponsorships, community facilities, development and maintenance, and awards. Given there is a reduction in funding, what areas of sponsorship, community facilities, development and awards will form part of the multicultural retreat? It seems there is a bigger need in the community - there are more multicultural people coming to the Territory - and there is not a huge amount of money available to cover this increase.

Mr HENDERSON: But there has been no reduction in funding to those programs.

Mr STYLES: All right. Given the current state of play in southern capital cities in relation to Indian students being harassed and assaulted, there are many who have expressed the desire to leave those cities. Given our great multicultural city and the fact that, currently, international students contribute fees of approximately \$2m to the Charles Darwin University, and an estimated further \$3m to the local economy in living expenses, what funds has the government set aside to attract those students to study and live in Darwin?

Mr HENDERSON: Sorry, I missed the last part of your question, member for Sanderson.

Mr STYLES: Given that our great multicultural - you are aware of the Indians, you got that part?

Mr HENDERSON: Yes.

Mr STYLES: Given that we have a great multicultural city here, and the fact that current international

students contribute approximately \$2m ...

Mr HENDERSON: Yes, I got that bit, I just missed the end of it.

Mr STYLES: What funds has the government set aside to attract students to study and live in Darwin?

Mr HENDERSON: I have had a personal discussion with the Vice Chancellor of Charles Darwin University. I have also spoken directly with senior members of the Indian community, and the agency has discussed those issues with the Indian community. The Vice Chancellor has also welcomed additional students to the Northern Territory from those parts of Australia who are experiencing those problems. They will be welcomed to the Northern Territory, not only by the university, but by the Indian community in Darwin, the broader community and the government.

Mr STYLES: Are you aware of any program that has been put in place to attract these people here as opposed to losing them out of Australia?

Mr HENDERSON: Those will be issues for Charles Darwin University to work through as part of their additional intakes of overseas students. As I said, I had a discussion with the Vice Chancellor about that issue.

Mr STYLES: The statement in the ALP Ethnic Affairs 2008 platform states all Territorians have the opportunity to achieve competency in English. How, then, will the NT Office of Multicultural Affairs and the various multicultural agencies provide services to those multicultural communities when there is a reduction in funding - communities whose members need the service to improve their skill sets, social interaction abilities, and job prospects? You say there has been no reduction in funding; has there been an increase in funding? There are far more people turning up. The children of these people are occupying special units at Anula and Moil schools. There is a need for increased funding. Do you anticipate your government can put more money into this?

Mr HENDERSON: I invite Jim Laouris, the Director of the Multicultural Affairs side of the department to be more specific. Support for our multicultural community does not come through this particular output group. As Education minister, there is funding based on need to support ESL students. That funding has always provided for the kids who turn up. For any child in the Northern Territory, particularly through refugee programs and so on, there is funding to accommodate them. There is also funding through the Multicultural Council of the Northern Territory to look at various programs. Maybe, Jim, you can expand a little.

Mr LAOURIS: Jim Laouris, Manager, Office of Multicultural Affairs. From time to time during various financial years, when it comes to grants funding for things like assistance in learning English, we do fund one-off grants. For example, one that is not a one-off that has been occurring for a number of years is the Happy Migrant Centre. They are funded through the Multicultural Council. We provide them with money. That is, basically, a part social workshop conducted for people from culturally and linguistically diverse background to become more comfortable in English. Some of those things do come up from time to time, but they are application driven.

Mr STYLES: There has been increase in people, yet, no real increase in money. If we look at the budget figures, if I remember correctly, you said as an election promise there would be \$258 000 in grants for works. Was that the figure you quoted?

Mr HENDERSON: In addition to what is normally in the budget, yes.

Mr STYLES: If there is a increase in people, does that mean there is a reduction in dollars per person to spend on these things?

Mr HENDERSON: The grants program and the budget for the department for multicultural

advancement is not allocated on a per-capita basis. It is allocated on a policy basis and the needs of those communities. In the Northern Territory, we support our multicultural communities to an extent over and above enormously - I could not even put a factor on it - than anywhere else in Australia. You talk to anybody from multicultural groups who come to the Northern Territory and interact with our multicultural groups; they cannot believe the quality of the facilities for the size of the population and the amount of support the Territory gives to these organisations – not only in facilities but in cultural grants, artistic grants, support for seniors programs in the community, transport, language and education. We provide far more here in the Northern Territory than anywhere else in Australia.

At the Glenti the other day, I met two people from the Greek community of Melbourne who came up to participate in the festival. They were overwhelmed by the level of support for the Greek community in Darwin.

There has been no cut. Support for multicultural groups comes through a number of government agencies. Support for refugees in housing and education is based on the numbers approved for the Northern Territory. Where they are approved for the Northern Territory, they are funded.

Mr STYLES: I have been approached by a number of ethnic groups in relation to a proposed dedicated multicultural broadcasting service across the Northern Territory. Given there is no increase in the budget and these things are on a needs basis, is there a plan to support that service? If so, what other area of multicultural advancement will suffer if you say there is no increase?

Mr HENDERSON: I am happy to handover to Jim to answer the question. Before he does, I am well aware of this issue, and have spent a lot of time on it myself. Essentially, this has been an issue between - I am not going to mention the name - one of our broadcast radio stations in the Northern Territory and the way they reconfigured their broadcasting arrangements to the detriment of some of those groups. We are attempting to broker a resolution. Jim, maybe you can add a bit more.

Mr LAOURIS: The current position with Multilingual Broadcasting Council is that they are running a few short hours every week through Radio Larrakia. Their main goal is trying to obtain their own broadcast licence. They have made applications to the Australian Communications Media Authority. Basically, they have in-principle approval. What we have done is given them some funding to allow them to conduct an engineering assessment. Part of ACMA's requirement is to have a technical analysis done; that is, finding the right frequency, having the right equipment and those sorts of things. We have given them - I cannot recall the exact amount of money, but it is in the order of \$20 000 to conduct that engineering assessment. Unfortunately, that is a very slow process and we are working through that. The Multilingual Broadcasting Council has made submissions to us and also as part of our review of the multicultural policy about continued support for the Multilingual Broadcasting Council should it establish and obtain a licence in its own right. Those are matters that will be put to the Chief Minister once they start to become more concrete.

Mr STYLES: Excellent.

Mr CHAIRMAN: Thank you, member for Sanderson. Before we move to Output Group 2.0, Output 2.1, we will take a two minute recess.

The committee suspended.

OUTPUT GROUP 2.0 – TERRITORY DEVELOPMENT
Output 2.1 – Major Projects

Mr CHAIRMAN: I suggest we start again. We were at Output Group 2.0, Territory Development, Output 2.1, Major Projects. Any questions?

Mr MILLS: How do you describe a major project? Do you have certain criteria?

Mr HENDERSON: There is a defined list of major projects the agency is working on at any one time.

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These are projects which will significantly improve and enhance the economy of the Northern Territory. Those are subjective elements. There are no definitive tests and identification of those.

Mr MILLS: I was wondering whether there was any criteria you are able to describe whereby something can fall into the category of being a major project.

Mr HENDERSON: I will hand over to Mr Burgess.

Mr BURGESS: The major projects have a common theme around the need to coordinate multiple agencies for the delivery of a specific project. We do that through the major projects group. We bring projects into the purview of that group based on an assessment by them of which undertakings require a particular effort and bring particular value to the Territory.

Mr MILLS: Blacktip, is that on the list?

Mr HENDERSON: Mike.

Mr BURGESS: It was. It no longer is, as it was a project prosecuted to the development stage. Power and Water Corporation has taken over the complete running of the project with the gas pipeline and offshore facilities.

Mr MILLS: Given the description you have just used to describe what a major project is, would *A Working Future* endeavour fall into the category of a major project?

Mr BURGESS: Not in that nature. These projects are generally ones of immediate economic content. They are generally around development projects.

Mr MILLS: Going back to Blacktip. It is not on the list of major of projects, but it was and, now, Power and Water is overseeing it. We still do not have gas. I understand there are penalties the consortia would incur by not delivering on their contract.

Mr HENDERSON: Those are really issues you would need to address to Power and Water. They relate to the contractual arrangements between Power and Water and ENI.

Mr MILLS: We will have that opportunity on Friday. If there is that gap, and the cost of generating power is diesel, that is a question then to Power and Water?

Mr HENDERSON: Yes.

Mr MILLS: Have you any indication then of when the Blacktip project would be completed?

Mr HENDERSON: With all due respect to the process, the minister responsible for Power and Water will be able to answer those questions in regard to the latest due date for the completion of that project.

Mr CHAIRMAN: To clarify that, that is for GOC on the Friday, as the minister responsible for Power and Water does not do that.

Mr HENDERSON: Thank you. Mr Chairman.

Mr MILLS: Do you have any further advice on what your understanding of INPEX's final investment decision may be? How is that threshold going?

Mr HENDERSON: Full steam ahead. The latest advice I have is that INPEX are looking to make a

final investment decision in 2010, but they are ongoing with their full front-end engineering and design for the offshore, the pipeline, and the onshore plant in Darwin. They have opened an office in Darwin. They are employing people here. I am very confident about a final investment decision in 2010 but, then again, it is not my decision to take. They are decisions that will be taken by INPEX and Total.

Mr MILLS: Going back to Blacktip; if the failure to have that gas arrive becomes critical, at what point would the Chief Minister and Cabinet be involved to resolve that situation? Would issues such as ConocoPhillips and the supply of gas from ConocoPhillips come to Cabinet?

Mr HENDERSON: We do get regular updates. Currently, there is under construction an interconnect between ConocoPhillips and Channel Island in terms of a pipeline. If there were issues, there is an interconnect and arrangements have been entered into between Power and Water and ConocoPhillips for the supply of gas.

Mr MILLS: Thank you, I will leave it at that. I have plenty of other questions, but we have to finish at 11 pm.

Mr CHAIRMAN: Member for Nelson, do you have any questions to Output 2.1?

Mr WOOD: If another LNG company was to come to Darwin, where would it go?

Mr HENDERSON: We are working to secure the INPEX project. We are also working with the operators of Darwin LNG to look to an expansion of that project. I am not aware of any proposals for another LNG plant for Darwin. We have enough on our plate as it is.

Mr WOOD: Minister, I was speaking to a lady the other day who was concerned about whether we had done enough risk analysis of putting a large LNG plant about 3 km from Palmerston. Was there a risk analysis assessment done before government offered that site to INPEX?

Mr HENDERSON: We had, in parts of the community, the same debate around Darwin LNG. INPEX will have to go through the same absolute rigour and scrutiny in regard to their EIS and all of the approvals and safety approvals ConocoPhillips went through. I do not believe there is any risk that cannot be managed by the project proponents, under international world best practice.

Mr WOOD: There is another phase of the INPEX development which is the construction village. I have a picture here of two sites which are 1 km apart. They are practically the same size. One is made up of 100% cypress pine, which is a long-abandoned forest.

Mr HENDERSON: Mmm.

Mr WOOD: Yes, well, you better tell us if there is other ...

Mr HENDERSON: There are many community groups who use that reserve.

Mr WOOD: No, Chief Minister. I do not live in Wanguri or wherever you live. I live in Howard Springs. That land here is the land used by community groups ...

Mr HENDERSON: I stand corrected.

Mr WOOD: ... this land here is used by blokes who want to burn out a car, who usually come from the suburbs somewhere. This land is not the land you are talking about ...

Mr HENDERSON: They would never come out of the suburbs.

Mr WOOD: Behind this land is a mile of Crown land. We are not exactly short of Crown land in this area. This block of land will be further away from the community. It will only destroy cypress pine. This block is totally covered in native vegetation which is loved by many people in the rural area. INPEX has decided to expand by 25%, taking nearly the entire triangle - except for the bit around the Lutheran school - plus the corner, which is really the entrance statement to people coming to Howard Springs.

It might seem to people who do not live in that area that it is a bit of bush but, for many people who live there, it is very much a part of the rural lifestyle. I ask the government - I am asking you, Chief Minister - to please reconsider, especially as a big ad went in the paper the other day which is a lease of Crown land application. It appears as though INPEX and you have made up your mind this will be the block of land; no matter what the people in the community say, that is going to be the block of land. That is an unfortunate way to get this project started.

Is there a chance, Chief Minister, of doing a proper, public evaluation of the alternate block of land, which still gives INPEX a block of land in Howard Springs? I support the INPEX proposal. I would rather have the big smoke stacks or concrete tanks at Glyde Point. The construction village will bring benefits but, if you tear down all of the vegetation in that area - which is what they are going to do - people will not be onside with INPEX.

Mr HENDERSON: This is an issue for the Planning minister. I will have a talk to the Planning minister about that. However, INPEX selected the preferred site following a rigorous assessment of 14 locations including public and private landholdings. The assessment was based on a range of criteria such as impact on the surrounding community, traffic management and safety, and the cost of headworks. Of course, we have had discussions as well looking at the potential options for use of the construction village infrastructure when the village is decommissioned, after the plant is completed. There is always going to be a debate about the preferred site, but INPEX continue to consult. This will have to go through a planning and approvals process, as any other development would. In regard to that alternate site, I give you a commitment I will have discussion with the Planning minister about it.

Mr WOOD: Thank you, Chief Minister. The alternate site was never given as an option by the department of Plans so that ...

Mr HENDERSON: I have given you a commitment and we will deal with that.

Mr WOOD: Still relating to LNG; could you give us an update on negotiations with Woodside and the Timorese government in relation to the Sunrise gas fields?

Mr HENDERSON: That really is not an issue for the 2009-10 Budget. Those are commercial discussions happening within the joint venture at a national level. I have just returned from East Timor where I made the point to everybody that I was not prepared to discuss these areas because they were internal issues with the joint venture. In terms of the treaty between Australia and East Timor, they are matters for the two governments to discuss.

Mr WOOD: Thank you.

Mr CHAIRMAN: Member for Nelson, that concludes Output 2.1. Questions for Output 2.2, Asian Relations and Trade will be addressed by Dr Burns on Wednesday, 17 June 2008.

Output 2.3 - Growth Planning

Mr CHAIRMAN: The committee will now consider Output 2.3, Growth Planning. Member for Nelson, are there any questions?

Mr WOOD: It said in the budget the key priority is implementing *Territory 2030*. Can you explain the time line for 2009-10 for this implementation?

Mr HENDERSON: I will get some advice as I thought we were talking about Growth Planning Unit. The 2030 Committee has published their draft report. That draft report is out for a further round of public consultation. I am anticipating the steering committee will submit to government its final proposal during July this year. We will then consider that and publish the final plan shortly after. We are on target and I expect the latest rounds of consultations to conclude in July. The committee will then consider the input from those consultations and make a final report to government that will go to Cabinet for a decision.

Mr CHAIRMAN: Thank you, member for Nelson. That concludes Output 2.3.

Output 2.4 - Management of the Darwin Waterfront

Mr CHAIRMAN: We now move Output 2.4, Management of the Darwin Waterfront. Are there any questions?

Mr MILLS: Yes, many questions but I will only ask one. Chief Minister, what is the estimated undeveloped value of the land incorporated into the Waterfront precinct before and after zoning changes to accommodate the construction of the Darwin Waterfront Precinct?

Mr HENDERSON: I will invite Pat Coleman, Chief Executive of the Darwin Waterfront Corporation, to assist with answering this question.

Mr COLEMAN: Pat Coleman, Chief Executive, Darwin Waterfront Corporation. I believe I can answer the first part. The undeveloped value is approximately \$25m. I believe it was \$25.6m in 2003. We do not have current valuation post-development that has been done to date.

Mr MILLS: When will that likely be?

Mr COLEMAN: That will occur in the next month or two.

Mr MILLS: Will that be made public?

Mr COLEMAN: Absolutely. It is required for striking rate.

Mr MILLS: And how would that be advised?

Mr COLEMAN: It will be notified in the paper, exactly the same that council advertises rates, striking value

Mr MILLS: Thank you. That is it.

Mr CHAIRMAN: Member for Nelson.

Mr WOOD: In the budget it talks about an operating payment for management of the convention centre of \$12.29m this year and \$12.99m for the 2009-10 Budget. Is that how much the government will put into running the convention centre, and for how long will that amount have to be paid?

Mr HENDERSON: Pat Coleman.

Mr COLEMAN: Yes, that is the amount annually, recognising, of course, it is partially indexed annually. Consequently, that number will constantly change each year. It will run for the full 25 years of the concession. Right now we are into year one.

Mr WOOD: In relation to the other figure - contribution and management of precinct and community infrastructure - I presume that is the amount that keeps our lifeguards there and the lawn mowers

going. Will that figure disappear eventually if you are doing the same work as the Darwin City Council? Will that figure be replaced by revenue raised from rates?

Mr HENDERSON: Pat.

Mr COLEMAN: Yes. We do not have exact operating cost information at this point, given we have only been operating for six weeks. However, we do have a long-term maintenance contract to do most, if not all, of the services council would have been doing. We are still gathering data on costs of electricity and other utilities but, based on previous projections done 18 months ago, we expect the break-even point will be about 2018.

Mr WOOD: You would expect contributions from the government of a similar amount until that happens?

Mr HENDERSON: Pat.

Mr COLEMAN: Yes, something like that amount. It may come down. It is a hard to say because, as an example, if we were to continue with the current levels of participation in the wave pool, they are far higher than we estimated. Revenue from that activity alone is 30% higher than we budgeted when we came up with the break-even at 2018. Coupled with that is the one thing we do not set ourselves, as the Waterfront Corporation: the rate levels. Rate levels are based on the Darwin City Council rates. They have increased three times since we did the original modelling. That will probably bring that 2018 date back. We do not have the hard data at this stage, and we do not get the full rate income, obviously, until the residential development is complete.

Mr WOOD: I wrote to you about my trip around the waterfront. One of the issues was the landscape design, especially, *ficus benjamina* and trees like that planted right up against the hotel precinct and near the shade structure by the kiosk. There were a couple of other large trees that vexed me. Who was the expert landscape designer?

Mr HENDERSON: Pat.

Mr COLEMAN: We had a number of designers involved. The principal designer was Hassell who, at that stage, had a local Darwin-based office. They no longer do. They had a dedicated landscape architect as distinct from someone who thinks they know about landscaping. Coupled with that, we hooked them up with some local people. We also conducted extensive consultation with Darwin City Council.

Mr WOOD: When I see beauty leaf trees on the footpath there I think of the trees in Raintree - the park just across the road - and the others at the Botanical Gardens. Those trees have an enormous girth. It is hard to believe they were planted in the footpath outside the hotel.

Mr COLEMAN: I do not disagree with the concern, but it was intended from day one that trees planted there would give substantial shade cover and, in particular, achieve shade cover at a high level so they would almost arch across the street.

Mr WOOD: I totally agree.

Mr COLEMAN: Hence the type of tree. All of the structures at the waterfront, with the exception of the kiosk, are piled structures, so they will not be impacted by any root issues. The kiosk and some of the paving could conceivably be if the root barriers were, in fact, breached, but the root barriers are not the ordinary garden small square type. That was a matter we consulted with Darwin City Council on very thoroughly. We wished to hear about their experiences dealing with those species. They are very long barriers, which prevent any snaking around the corner, if I can use that non-landscaping term ...

Mr WOOD: Well, I will watch as they grow older. I have seen people plant trees inappropriately and

pay to have them removed later on. I will rest my case with time.

Mr CHAIRMAN: Thank you, member for Nelson. That concludes consideration of Output Group 2.0.

OUTPUT GROUP 3.0 – GOVERNMENT BUSINESS SUPPORT
Output 3.1 - Support to Ministers and Leader of the Opposition

Mr CHAIRMAN: The committee will now deal with Output Group 3.0, Government Business Support,, Output 3.1, Support to Ministers and Leader of the Opposition. Are there any questions?

Mr MILLS: No.

Mr CHAIRMAN: That concludes consideration for Output 3.1.

Output 3.2 – Legislation Production

Mr CHAIRMAN: Are there any questions?

Mr MILLS: No.

Mr CHAIRMAN: That concludes consideration for Output 3.2.

Output 3.3 - Support to Administrator and Government House

Mr CHAIRMAN: Are there any questions? No? That concludes consideration of Output 3.3.

BUSINESS AND EMPLOYMENT

OUTPUT GROUP 3.0 – EMPLOYMENT

Output 3.1 – Employment

Mr CHAIRMAN: I note Output Group 3.0 sits within the Department of Business and Employment, that the Chief Minister has carriage of this. Are you bringing any other related officials to the table?

Mr HENDERSON: So this is the Employment output?

Mr CHAIRMAN: It is Output 3.1.

Mr MILLS: If it helps the decision, I have no questions in the interests of time.

Mr WOOD: In September 2008, you announced the government's Workforce Growth NT Unit. Can you give us an idea how many people are in this unit? Are they new to the public sector or have they been transferred or seconded from somewhere else? What is the budget for this unit?

Mr HENDERSON: For this output group, I welcome Dennis Bree and Mr Kim Jenkinson from the Department of Business and Employment as part of Major Projects, Employment and Economic Development portfolio. This area is all about protecting and helping to create jobs for Territorians. I advise, however, questions about trainee and apprenticeship outputs fall under Training in my portfolio of Education and Training. I ask Dennis, who is the CE for the department, to respond to the question.

Mr BREE: Dennis Bree Chief Executive. I ask Mr Jenkinson; he has that information.

Mr JENKINSON: Kim Jenkinson, Executive Director, Employment. The work was broken down and comprises of six new members in the 2009-10 Budget. The funding comes through via three streams: \$388 000 for a skilled worker campaign that was transferred from the Department of Chief Minister to the Department of Business and Employment; \$350 000 for workforce growth offices that will be located in Alice Springs and Katherine; and \$500 000 for the development of regional job hubs in

Nhulunbuy and Tennant Creek. Combined, these six offices work in concert to attract labour to the regions. They have an international and interstate focus, as well through two offices from within the department located in Darwin.

Mr WOOD: What strategy is the unit's Rapid Recruitment Team using to assist private sector and industry associations respond to economic opportunities in the Territory?

Mr HENDERSON: Dennis or Kim.

Mr BREE: Our strategies have been, over the last year, to respond to opportunities in southern states where there were closure of factories or places of high unemployment. We did that last year. As well as that, we attend overseas job forums to attract people, as well as go to industry associations - in the case of South Africa, the Chamber of Commerce. We deal with Charles Darwin University because we also attract students from there. We have a website where people are able to register and we try to link them with collected jobs from employers in the Northern Territory.

Mr WOOD: This question might be related to what the member for Sanderson said before in relation to the business and skilled migration visas. Nominations and sponsorships certified for 2008-09 were estimated at 870 and projected to be 850 in 2009-10. Can you give a breakdown of these industries? Have we a conflict at the present time in bringing in skilled migrants and employing locals?

Mr HENDERSON: For the detail of the question, I will flick in a minute. However, from a policy perspective, I and the government acknowledge we still have significant skill shortages in a number of areas across the economy. The strategy is to focus the training effort around our local population, to upskill people to take advantage of those jobs available. Hence, we can talk about it in the training part of the Education portfolio in a minute; the commitment to 10 000 extra trainees and apprentices.

On the other side, training takes time to get those skills developed and people into the workforce. We have also strongly supported both permanent and temporary migration to the Northern Territory. We have worked proactively with business, industry associations and individual businesses to assist them in bringing in the skills they need from overseas. In regard to the detail and the breakdown of that, I hand over to Kim.

Mr JENKINSON: The 870 in the 2008-09 Budget refers to all classes of visas we deal with in the Northern Territory, not just the 457 Visas. There is a range of subclass visa types we deal with. We estimate a reduction of about 20 in the coming year due to the changes we are beginning to see from the department of Immigration. We may see changes in the legislation and regulations of the Australian government that will impact on visas.

As to what industry sectors they are in, when we go overseas to various expos we are recruiting in the skills shortages areas for the Northern Territory. That is the express base we are looking for recruitment in.

Mr WOOD: I have some other questions, but I will cut them short.

Mr CHAIRMAN: Thank you, member for Nelson. In that case we will be moving on to Output Group 4.0

OUTPUT GROUP 4.0 – COMMUNITY SUPPORT **Output 4.1 - Community Support**

Mr CHAIRMAN: We will move to Output Group 4.0, Community Support, Output 4.1, Community Support. No questions, member for Blain? Member for Nelson?

Mr WOOD: I am concerned about the difference between the 2008-09 grants and the 2009-10 grants, which appear to be in the vicinity of about \$3.5m. It says in the notes this is caused by a number of

seasonal and one-off grant payments including 2008-09 payments for the Arafura Games, the Masters Games, and closed circuit television. Could you give us figures that make up the \$3.5m decrease, and could you also explain why the closed circuit television is in this area here as well?

Mr HENDERSON: Mike Burgess.

Mr BURGESS: The difference between the revised estimate and the budget for 2009-10, is due to one-off expenditures. There was \$.25m for track upgrades at Hidden Valley, through a grant to Major Events Corporation. The Alice Springs CCTV was a \$1.1m grant to the Alice Springs Town Council. There was an additional \$1.2m grant to the Major Events Company in 2008-09 for the running of the Arafura Games Those things are not happening, in 2009-10.

Mr WOOD: Yes, we could not find \$220 000. I think it is now in upgrading the track. We looked everywhere for the figures since they did not collate. They do now. Thank you.

Mr CHAIRMAN: Is that all, member for Nelson?

Mr WOOD: Yes.

Mr CHAIRMAN: Are there any non-output specific budget related questions?

Mr MILLS: Plenty of them, but no time.

Mr CHAIRMAN: Member for Nelson?

Mr WOOD: No.

Mr CHAIRMAN: In that case, I thank the Chief Minister and the officers who attended him today. Thank you very much for your coming along. We will now be moving onto Northern Territory Police, Fire and Emergency Services.

Mr CHAIRMAN: I believe the committee is ready. Chief Minister, are you ready?

Mr HENDERSON: Yes, absolutely.

Mr CHAIRMAN: Welcome again, Chief Minister, and Police, Fire and Emergency Services. I ask you, Chief Minister, to introduce the officials accompanying you and, if you have any opening remarks, if you could make them.

Mr HENDERSON: Thank you, Mr Chairman. I welcome Commissioner Paul White; Greg Nettleton, Director of NT Fire and Rescue Services; Mark Payne, Assistant Commissioner Human Resource Services; Audrey Ko, Executive Director of Corporate Services; and Rose Hallett, Director of Finance and Procurement.

Police, Fire and Emergency Services is a tri-service organisation and the Commissioner of Police exercises Chief Executive Officer authority over all three services.

Mr Chairman, Budget 2009-10 provides record funding of over \$279m, a 104% increase since 2001. Police numbers have increased by 353, or 39%, since this government was elected: 304 additional police, 22 additional ACPOs, and 27 additional auxiliaries. Highlights of the budget include \$9.3m for a further 25 additional police under our Safer Streets initiative, who will be dedicated to patrolling our suburban streets. These extra police are in addition to the 35 additional police delivered in 2008-09 under the Safer Streets initiative which delivered 10 police allocated to Darwin City Safe and licensing

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patrol, 11 to the Youth Crime Unit, 13 to Casuarina Police Station, and one to Wadeye. Following the success of the Casuarina Police Beat, Budget 2009-10 contains funding to establish the Police Beat in Alice Springs which is planned to be opened in July this year, and two further Police Beats.

There is an allocation of \$7.26m in 2009-10 to continue the expansion and upgrade of the police digital radio network. Total project funding of this is \$13m over three years. This budget delivers \$2.75m to establish and maintain close circuit television systems in Darwin, Palmerston and Casuarina, and funding of \$1.65m is delivered to commence the first phase of our initiative to resource the Fire and Rescue Services to meet current and future fire and emergency risks.

The budget also provides for our continued commitment to *Closing the Gap* with \$6.5m to enhance policing services in remote communities and the expansion of the Child Abuse Taskforce. There is also \$8m of new capital works funding provided to upgrade the Alice Springs Police Station, and convert the Numbulwar Police Post into a police station.

I am pleased to take questions from the committee on behalf of the agency and commend the commissioner and the tri-service for the great work they do on behalf of Territorians.

Mr CHAIRMAN: Are there any questions to the opening statement?

Mr MILLS: Not to the statement, no.

Mr CHAIRMAN: Member for Nelson?

Mr WOOD: No.

Agency Specific Whole-of-Government Related Questions

Mr CHAIRMAN: I now call for questions in agency specific whole of government related questions.

Mr MILLS: We will try to get through these as quickly as possible. I would like to know the size of the carbon footprint; that is, what are greenhouse gas emissions around this department?

Mr HENDERSON: I will ask Audrey Ko, Executive Director of Corporate Services, to respond to these questions. Thanks, Audrey.

Ms KO: We have a particular focus this year in reducing greenhouse gas emissions. This is being achieved through our Energy Smart Buildings policy. Also we have been trying to carry out extensive in-house air-conditioning changes. Where possible, we are partitioning those staff who require after-hours services. We have been significantly reducing the tonnes per building portfolio by shutting down computers at night when it is proven they are not being used.

In the new building all light globes are energy efficiency. With the old building, we tried to replace as many as we could. We have identified this over the last two or three years, and replaced a lot of them. In terms of our vehicle policy, we have been replacing our Hilux vehicles with those that use diesel fuel. We have also cut down the size of our fleet to four-cylinders vehicles wherever possible for non-operational purposes ...

Mr MILLS: Could I just interrupt. I appreciate the range of strategies, but what is the carbon emissions of the department? I accept the range of strategies in place, but has a target been set?

Mr HENDERSON: I will hand that to Audrey Ko.

Ms KO: We have not set the target for that. However, over the last few years, we have improved by 2%.

Mr MILLS: How do you measure 2% if you do not know what you produce?

Ms KO: We assess our energy consumption and divide it by the number of our buildings' square metres. That is how we arrive at that figure.

Mr MILLS: That is fine. The cost of utilities - power, water, sewerage - has increased. What has been the effect on the bottom line to this agency?

Mr HENDERSON: Ms Ko.

Ms KO: Again, we have tried to gain momentum by reducing the amount of after-hours air-conditioning, using energy efficient light globes, and by switching computers off at night.

Mr MILLS: I just want to know, in dollar terms, what effect has the increased power costs and water costs had on the bottom line of Police, Fire and Emergency Services?

Ms KO: It would equate to around about \$400 000 for next year.

Mr MILLS: Thank you. Number of graduates, Chief Minister? What is the number of apprentices that started with the department in 2007, 2008 and 2009?

Mr HENDERSON: Commissioner, I am not sure who would answer that.

COMMISSIONER WHITE: Can I just seek some clarification? Are you talking about recruit graduates, police graduates?

Mr MILLS: No, those who are working in the department. You have the records of those who are ...

Mr HENDERSON: In the interests of time, we will take that on notice. There are a number in these books somewhere.

Question on Notice No 3.5

Mr CHAIRMAN: For the purposes of *Hansard*, member for Blain, could you please restate that question?

Mr MILLS: Can I add a related element to that? What is the number of graduates and apprentices who started with the department in 2007, 2008 and 2009? How many of them are still with the department, and how many of them are still with the Northern Territory government?

Mr CHAIRMAN: For the purposes of *Hansard*, that is question No 3.5.

Mr MILLS: Thank you. Chief Minister, what is the number of reports of improper use of computers?

Mr HENDERSON: I will defer to the Commissioner.

COMMISSIONER WHITE: Are you speaking in relation to the police department itself, or the tri-service?

Mr MILLS: Tri-service.

COMMISSIONER WHITE: We will have to take that one on notice.

Mr MILLS: Okay.

Question on Notice No 3.6

Mr CHAIRMAN: For *Hansard*, just repeat the question.

Mr MILLS: Well, I will add more. What is the number of reports of improper use of computers, and how many reports resulted in disciplinary action?

COMMISSIONER WHITE: I have the answer to your question about graduates, so I can relate that to you now.

Mr MILLS: I am happy to leave that on notice.

Mr CHAIRMAN: We will get to that in a second. We will just finish taking this question on notice for *Hansard* so we are all on the same page. Member for Blain?

Mr MILLS: The number of reports of improper use of computers, and how many reports resulted in disciplinary action?

Mr CHAIRMAN: And that for *Hansard* is question No 3.6.

Answer to Question on Notice 3.5

Mr CHAIRMAN: Through the Chief Minister, Police Commissioner, you have the answer for 3.5?

COMMISSIONER WHITE: Yes. The number of graduates/apprentices that started with the department in 2007, 2008, and 2009 were 26 in total including school-based apprentices: eight in 2007; 15 in 2008; and three in 2009 to date. How many of those graduates/apprentices still with their original department? Fourteen, including school-based apprentices - two from 2007, nine from 2008, and three from 2009. How many are still with NTG? Eighteen including school-based apprentices and those still with the NTPFES - three from 2007, 12 from 2008, and three from 2009.

Mr MILLS: Thank you. How many credit cards have been issued to departmental staff?

Mr HENDERSON: I will defer to the commissioner.

COMMISSIONER WHITE: How many credit cards have been issued to departmental staff? Number: 663.

Mr MILLS: Any transactions for personal items or services outstanding?

COMMISSIONER WHITE: Nil.

Mr MILLS: Then, no disciplinary action required?

COMMISSIONER WHITE: Not applicable.

Mr MILLS: Could the Chief Minister list the public events, conferences and public forums sponsored by this department for 2008-09 and those projected for 2009-10?

COMMISSIONER WHITE: There was the Police Commissioner's Conference 2009 - a very successful conference, I might add - and the International Association of Women in Policing Conference, which was an international conference attracting over 600 delegates to Darwin.

Mr MILLS: That is it?

COMMISSIONER WHITE: Yes.

Mr MILLS: Any projected for 2009-10?

COMMISSIONER WHITE: No.

Mr MILLS: How many staff in the department are dedicated to communications, media and advertising?

COMMISSIONER WHITE: Roughly six or seven, I believe. You have the statistics, do you, Mark, for the tri-service's media and corporate communications? Yes, I can supply that.

Mr MILLS: Do you want to take that on notice?

COMMISSIONER WHITE: Yes, on notice.

Question on Notice No 3.7

Mr CHAIRMAN: Just quickly, repeat the question, member for Blain.

Mr MILLS: How many staff in the department are dedicated to communications?

Mr CHAIRMAN: You are happy to take that on notice?

COMMISSIONER WHITE: Yes.

Mr CHAIRMAN: That is question No 3.7.

Mr MILLS: Okay. What is the department's budget for advertising?

COMMISSIONER WHITE: Yes, we have that: \$72 000.

Mr MILLS: Can I be provided with a breakdown of the advertising budget for 2008-09 reporting year by area of advertising, newspaper, colour, black and white, radio, television, community newspaper, consultants, printing etcetera? I am happy for that to be tabled.

Mr FERGUSON: That can be tabled.

Mr MILLS: Do you have, therefore, the same for the current year to date - expenditure year to date. That is 2008-09?

Ms KO: Yes.

Mr MILLS: And year to date equivalent?

Ms KO: That is it.

Mr MILLS: Oh, you have the lot. Okay, what advertising campaigns have been undertaken by the department in 2008-09?

Mr FERGUSON: A fair amount of recruitment campaigns.

COMMISSIONER WHITE: Most of it is in relation to recruitment. I cannot think of any other. There would have been a cyclone awareness campaign.

Mr DAVIES: Peter Davies. And flood awareness down in the Alice Springs area.

Mr MILLS: Do you any breakdown on the costs of these campaigns?

COMMISSIONER WHITE: Peter, do you have the answer?

Mr DAVIES: The cost of the campaigns is zero. We had a grant last year from Emergency Management Australia for \$50 000 which produced the cyclone 'Get Ready, Get Thru' campaign which we produced as an advert. It was done through Channel 9, Channel 10 and the ABC for free.

Mr MILLS: Okay. And the recruitment?

Mr FERGUSON: Do we have that, Audrey, or shall we take that on notice?

Ms KO: Oh, no, we can get that information today.

Mr MILLS: I will take that on notice.

Mr CHAIRMAN: Just quickly for *Hansard*, the Member for Blain, if you could repeat the question.

Mr FERGUSON: Can I just get some clarification because we have already tabled a document that shows some costs against recruitment. Is that the same question? Eric, can we look at that document we have just tabled?

Mr MILLS: The advertising ...

Mr FERGUSON: Yes, there was a number there against recruitment.

Mr CHAIRMAN: We can move on, if you ask the question.

Mr MILLS: Sure. When you were crafting these campaigns, who was contracted to write the material for print, visual or audio platforms? Who got the contract to help you create the campaign?

COMMISSIONER WHITE: I will have to take that on notice. I sent our requirements to Territory-based companies but, beyond that, I cannot equivocally answer. I will take it on notice.

Mr CHAIRMAN: All right, in that case, just quickly, member for Blain.

Mr HENDERSON: Just in terms of recruitment and advertising, I can answer that.

Question on Notice No 3.8

Mr CHAIRMAN: We will in a second, Chief Minister. Just quickly for *Hansard*, the member for Blain, if you could repeat the question.

Mr MILLS: Who was contracted to do the artwork, the print, visual and audio platforms for the advertising campaigns?

Mr CHAIRMAN: That is question 3.8 for *Hansard*.

Mr CHAIRMAN: Commissioner?

COMMISSIONER WHITE: The information tabled today indicates the cost for recruitment and advertising as \$306 000 for print; radio \$25 000, TV \$14 000.

Mr MILLS: Thank you. Do you have future plans for television advertising?

Mr HENDERSON: Commissioner?

COMMISSIONER WHITE: Yes. We have undertaken a reasonably aggressive advertising campaign for entrance into the NT Police Force, for both mainstream groups and for targeting women in policing and various publications. The response has been overwhelming so I suggest we do more of that.

Mr MILLS: When advertising material is created, is it approved by the minister, the minister's office? Who approves it?

COMMISSIONER WHITE: No, it is not. I do.

Mr MILLS: I have a number of questions that have been sitting with the Chief Minister. There are 36 of them that have been on notice since November;. How far away are the answers?

Mr HENDERSON: Commissioner?

COMMISSIONER WHITE: I have those answers and can table them.

Mr MILLS: Thank you. Are they up-to-date? The questions were lodged in November and it is now getting on.

COMMISSIONER WHITE: Yes.

Mr MILLS: Thank you. What was delay? Thirty-six questions since November.

Mr HENDERSON: I defer to the commissioner but they were very extraordinarily detailed questions that would have taken quite some time to collate. Commissioner?

COMMISSIONER WHITE: That is, basically, the answer.

Mr MILLS: Thank you. I accept that as the answer. Further questions. The flea infestation of the Darwin city watch-house. How much did it cost to fix?

Mr CHAIRMAN: Chief Minister?

Mr HENDERSON: I am astounded. Of all the questions you could be asking in regards to policing ...

Mr MILLS: There is no reason to worry. It is all right. Was the fumigation delivered by a local contractor?

Mr HENDERSON: Commissioner, I think you had other things on your mind.

COMMISSIONER WHITE: I will take it on notice.

Mr CHAIRMAN: For the benefit of *Hansard* and me, what was the question? Something to do with ...

Mr MILLS: Was the fumigation to deal with the flea problem delivered by a local contractor?

Mr CHAIRMAN: Is that, and you are happy to take that ...

COMMISSIONER WHITE: I will take it on notice.

Mr CHAIRMAN: Okay, so to clarify – one question at the moment, 3.9, is on the fumigation by locals - is that it?

Mr MILLS: Things are moving so quickly. I want to know how much it cost. I will take it on notice.

Question on Notice 3.9

Mr CHAIRMAN: So for the purposes of *Hansard*, 3.9 I will include the fumigation done by locals, and the cost. Member for Blain?

Mr MILLS: What was the cost of fumigating the Darwin watch-house and was the work carried out by a local contractor?

Mr HENDERSON: Do we want the number of fleas fumigated as well, and the cost per flea?

Mr MILLS: No, thank you.

Mr CHAIRMAN: I hope *Hansard* can cope with that.

Mr MILLS: How many NT Police are on extended sick leave as of NTG Pay 25?

Mr HENDERSON: Commissioner.

COMMISSIONER WHITE: I have that information, but I will ask Mark Payne to assist me. It is in one of the documents. The number is 14.

Mr MILLS: Fourteen. Can you describe the efforts employed to assist these staff return to work? I assume it would be a case-by-case matter but, in general terms, what sort of effort is made to get those 14 back to work?

Mr HENDERSON: Commissioner.

COMMISSIONER WHITE: Considerable efforts are made through the chaplaincy service, the employer support services of the tri-service, and private providers. A great deal of effort is expended in doing our best to get these people back online and working productively.

Mr MILLS: Would you say 14 is a large number to have on extended sick leave?

Mr HENDERSON: Commissioner.

COMMISSIONER WHITE: No. I do not like to see any member on extended long-term sick leave, but it would be within the parameters of policing in Australia.

Mr MILLS: How long would this extended sick leave generally last? What is the average term?

Mr HENDERSON: Commissioner.

COMMISSIONER WHITE: It can take some time. We deal with some matters which are relatively short, and others years in length. Each case is dealt with on a case management basis, through the Human Resource Management Branch, HRM. It works full-time endeavouring to case manage these individuals to try to get them back to work.

Mr MILLS: Through the Chief Minister, commissioner, these 14 are tri-service?

COMMISSIONER WHITE: Yes, but mainly police. I do not have a breakdown in front of me at the moment. They are all police, I am told.

Mr MILLS: How many speeding tickets were received by NT Police in marked or unmarked cars which were not in response to an emergency?

Mr HENDERSON: Commissioner.

COMMISSIONER WHITE: I have a lot of information here, Mr Mills, but I will have to take that one on notice.

Question on Notice No 3.10

Mr CHAIRMAN: So, for *Hansard*, member for Blain.

Mr MILLS: Yes, how many speeding tickets were received by NT Police in marked or unmarked cars which were not in response to an emergency?

Mr CHAIRMAN: That is fine. Chief Minister, are you prepared to take that on notice?

Mr HENDERSON: Yes.

Mr CHAIRMAN: That is question number 3.10, for *Hansard*.

Mr MILLS: I suspect the next one might fall in the same category. How many positive breath tests were recorded by NT Police staff, uniformed or civilian?

Mr HENDERSON: Can I ask, Leader of the Opposition, what this has to do with the budget? We are talking about the appropriations of Police, Fire and Emergency Services in regards to output groups. What on earth does this have to do with the budget for the Department of Police, Fire and Emergency Services?

Mr CHAIRMAN: I will just remind members of the test of relevance I outlined in my opening comments. Based on the Senate Procedures Committee 99: any questions going to the operations or financial positions of departments and agencies which seek funds and estimates are relevant questions for the purpose of estimates hearing.

Mr MILLS: Thank you.

Mr HENDERSON: Respectfully, Mr Chairman, given that ruling, what on earth has that question got

to do with the budget and appropriations of the police department? The question is out of order.

Mr MILLS: I find your statement ...

Mr CHAIRMAN: The Chief Minister's advice is that this question is irrelevant to the current output group, which is Agency Specific Whole-of-Government Related Questions.

Mr MILLS: Well, it goes to the morale, the disciplinary matters related to the force and so on.

Mr HENDERSON: What has that to do the budget or the agency?

Mr MILLS: Well, we can have an argument about this.

Mr HENDERSON: I will ask the commissioner whether he is prepared to take it on notice. I will leave it up to the commissioner to decide, but it has patently nothing to do with the budget. Commissioner, are you prepared to take it on notice?

COMMISSIONER WHITE: Yes. I am aware of one instance, at least, where a member was involved in a motor vehicle collision. My recollection is that member was subjected to a positive breath analysis test. There is a matter before the courts at the moment but, beyond that, I will have to take the question on notice.

Mr MILLS: Thank you.

Question on Notice No 3.11

Mr CHAIRMAN: For *Hansard*, could you quickly repeat the question?

Mr MILLS: How many positive breath tests were recorded by NT Police staff, uniformed and civilian?

Mr CHAIRMAN: And that is question No 3.11.

COMMISSIONER WHITE: Excuse me, can I just get clarification, how many breath tests were performed by NT police ...

Mr CHAIRMAN: The question I believe, is in relation to NT Police members who have tested positive.

COMMISSIONER WHITE: All right, thank you.

Mr MILLS: How many positive breath tests were recorded?

COMMISSIONER WHITE: Just to clarify further, is this while they are on duty or off duty?

Mr MILLS: Uniformed and civilian.

COMMISSIONER WHITE: Either on duty or off duty?

Mr HENDERSON: Can I ask what on earth a police officer has had a recorded positive breath test whilst they are off duty to do with the budget?

Mr MILLS: I will take it on duty.

Question on Notice 3.11

Mr CHAIRMAN: To make sure *Hansard* got that clarification, if you could repeat the whole question again? Question 3.11 on notice.

Mr MILLS: How many positive breath tests were recorded by NT Police staff, uniformed and civilian, on duty?

COMMISSIONER WHITE: I will take that on notice.

Mr CHAIRPERSON: That is question No 3.11.

Mr MILLS: That will do for now.

Mr CHAIRMAN: Member for Nelson.

Mr WOOD: I do not know where we are now.

Mr CHAIRMAN: Agency Specific Whole-of-Government Related Questions.

Mr WOOD: Oh, we have not got to Output 1.1 yet?

Mr CHAIRMAN: No further questions? That concludes Agency Specific Whole-of-Government Related Questions.

OUTPUT GROUP 1 – COMMUNITY SAFETY AND CRIME PREVENTION
Output 1.1 - Community Safety and Crime Prevention

Mr CHAIRMAN: We are now in on Output Group 1, Community Safety And Crime Prevention, Output 1.1, Community Safety and Crime Prevention. Are there any questions?

Mr MILLS: How many people were taken into protective custody for each police station within the Territory?

Mr HENDERSON: I believe that was a question you asked in your earlier one on notice. It has been answered.

Mr MILLS: Which means it has been with you for a very long time.

COMMISSIONER WHITE: Yes, I have it here. It is on pages 18 and 19 of the document that was tabled. So, 113 000 breath tests, year to date, that is, 1 July to 31 May 2009. That constitutes Alice Springs and Southern – 36 179; Greater Darwin – 47 719; Katherine and Northern – 28 130; Themis - 1281.

Mr MILLS: How many times have police been called to an incident at an NT government school?

COMMISSIONER WHITE: I would have to take it on notice. Does that involve work provided by the school-based constables, or is it outside of that?

Mr MILLS: In addition to that if they have been called to an incident that requires police attendance.

COMMISSIONER WHITE: Okay.

Mr CHAIRMAN: For the purposes of *Hansard*, could you restate the question, please?

Mr MILLS: How many times have police been called to an incident at a NT government school?

Mr HENDERSON: Again, Leader of the Opposition, concerning the enormous work the police do and the main priorities they have, this is going to be very difficult to pull out of the records and systems. I am wondering where you are heading. We can send police off to do all sorts of research on spurious issues, but we have school-based constables. They do a great job. The advice is, yes, we can get this information but it is going to be very hard to do so and take a fair bit of time and consume police resources that could be better deployed elsewhere.

Mr MILLS: With respect, Chief Minister, the answer to this question gives a clear indication of the nature of the problems we need to attend to; and how effectively we are responding to those problems.

Mr HENDERSON: Well, it will just be a number.

Mr MILLS: That number may tell us something. We will be able to match it with other numbers, so we have an idea of the nature of the problem and how we should allocate resources to fix it.

Mr HENDERSON: Including the flea infestation.

Mr MILLS: I am not talking about the fleas.

Mr HENDERSON: Commissioner, if you are happy to take that on notice.

Question on Notice No 3.12

Mr CHAIRMAN: For the purposes of *Hansard*, could you restate your question?

Mr MILLS: How many times have police been called to an incident at a NT government school?

Mr CHAIRPERSON: That is question No 3.12.

Mr HENDERSON: Over what time period?

Mr MILLS: Over the last school year.

COMMISSIONER WHITE: The last calendar school year?

Mr MILLS: Yes, and to date. The last school year. We are nearly at the end of the first semester.

Mr CHAIRMAN: So, essentially, the last year-and-a-half.

Mr HENDERSON: Hang on. You want all of the 2008 school year and 2009 until the present day?

Mr MILLS: The end of first semester.

Mr CHAIRMAN: To the end of the first semester.

COMMISSIONER WHITE: Yes, it is just a matter of working through the data.

Mr MILLS: As you have both portfolios of Education and Police, you may be able to bring the whole-of-government mind together on this. Which schools are they and how many by region? Same again?

COMMISSIONER WHITE: Yes, same again.

Mr HENDERSON: Again, I ask the relevance of these questions to the budget. This is about the appropriation to the budget. It is about the outputs and the outcomes police are targeted to achieve. I fail to see how this question has any relevance to the budget.

Mr MILLS: Money is allocated to effect a response to a problem. If we do not understand the nature of the problem - we may have an allocation but we may not deal with the problem. So, it is about the effective use of resources to deliver an improvement to a problem.

Mr HENDERSON: With all due respect, Leader of the Opposition, you have not identified what the problem is you are trying to achieve an effective result for.

Mr MILLS: This is the estimates process. You want to prevent me from getting this information so I cannot, therefore, have any insight into anything more than the spending of money?

Mr HENDERSON: No.

Mr MILLS: It is about much more than spending money. It is spending money to produce a result. Are you dealing with the real problem? Are we making improvements or not?

Mr HENDERSON: I am mindful of sending police off on a wild goose chase that is going to consume an enormous amount of resources just to pull together information you have an issue with. I am trying to be helpful here. If you were to identify what the issue is, we could be more targeted in our responses. At the moment, it just looks like a wild goose chase that will take a lot of the police department's time and energy that could be better put to other matters.

Mr MILLS: So you are asking me to ...

Mr HENDERSON: I am asking you what this has to do with the budget.

Mr MILLS: I have just explained that, Chief Minister. If you believe it is just about how much money is spent on things and to heck with the results, to heck with the problem, you are barking up the wrong tree. It is real money spent to produce real effect ...

Mr HENDERSON: If you ask about how police are reducing crime across the Northern Territory, I am happy to take questions on that. If you ask about specific issues in regard to law and order across the Territory, I am happy to take questions on that. However, how many times police are called, by geographic location and what school - my advice is that is going to be difficult and time consuming to get that information.

Mr MILLS: Well, maybe so. I am familiar with the term 'intelligence led policing'. It should also be intelligent led policy formation. This is intelligence to assist in the formation of appropriate policy to deal with a known problem ...

Mr HENDERSON: You are saying there is a known problem but you will not answer ...

Mr MILLS: Well, we do not know; you do not want us to have the information.

Mr HENDERSON: You, obviously, understand there is a problem. Tell us what the problem is. You

are saying it is a known problem, but you do not have the information to support that it is a known problem.

Mr MILLS: The information is not forthcoming, so how would we, therefore, know?

Mr HENDERSON: But you are saying it is a known problem.

Mr MILLS: Well, it is.

Mr BOHLIN: By avoiding the question, you are only avoiding the problem. We have certain services within the police force that deal with jobs - some go to school, some are already school-based police officers. The PROMIS system will allow the commissioner to extract that information rather rapidly and it will not be a waste of time. If you do not know where the roots of the problem are, how are you going to fix it? This is a part of that process. We identify where there are potential problems, move forward and see money within the budget is spent in the right areas. Or can you not really see the correlation between ...

Mr HENDERSON: Well, no. You still have not identified what the problem is; you have alluded to it.

Mr MILLS: Chief Minister, do I have to convince you there is such a thing as reports circulating through the community about incidents the police have responded to? I have worked in schools for many years. I am a part of my community. I want to know the scope of this problem. It may be less that people think it is. That data would assist in a proper response to that.

Mr HENDERSON: If the commissioner wants to take the question on notice, we will take it on notice along with the fleas.

Question on Notice 3.12

Mr CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Chief Minister. Member for Blain, if you could just repeat that question for the purposes of *Hansard*.

Mr MILLS: That discussion there was when I wanted to take it down to school level. How many times have police been called to incidents at NT Government schools and which schools did they go to?

Mr CHAIRMAN: So the question is: which schools have they been called to?

Mr MILLS: Yes. How many by region, so we are not identifying schools.

Mr CHAIRMAN: Okay. If you could put that as a whole question.

Mr MILLS: I seek information relating to the category of incidents, how many times police have been called and how many incidents by region.

Mr HENDERSON: Commissioner White?

COMMISSIONER WHITE: We can supply that data. Are you talking about during school hours or after school hours or both?

Mr MILLS: Preferably during school hours. Have there been assaults? Has someone come onto the school grounds causing concern? Were there any drug incidents? Whatever.

Mr CHAIRMAN: So to summarise the question?

Mr MILLS: How many times have police been called to an incident at NT government schools; how many schools were there by region; and what category of incidents were police called to?

Mr CHAIRMAN: Chief Minister, you are happy to take that question on notice? I allocate all of that back to original question of notice which was question 3.12.

Mr MILLS: Thank you. I will stop there.

Mr CHAIRMAN: No more questions? We have concluded general questions for the Agency Specific Whole-of-Government field. We are at Output 1.1, Community Safety and Crime Prevention. Are there any questions?

Mr WOOD: Chief Minister, how many Blue Light Discos did the police run in 2008-09?

Mr HENDERSON: Commissioner White?

COMMISSIONER WHITE: Thank you, minister, we have that information.

Mr WOOD: How many have you run in the Darwin rural area and in what locations?

Mr HENDERSON: Blue Light Discos are run by police across the Northern Territory to great effect, in terms of community liaison and engaging young people, particularly those in primary school. It is a very fruitful program.

COMMISSIONER WHITE: Sorry, Mr Wood, I do not have that information at hand. I will take that on notice, but I do know it is a very active program that occurs across the Territory.

Mr HENDERSON: There was one at Wanguri school weeks ago. They sold sausages and will continue to be allowed to do so, Gerry.

Mr WOOD: Thank you.

Mr HENDERSON: Thank you for your support.

Question on Notice 3.13

Mr CHAIRMAN: Please repeat the question for the purposes of *Hansard*.

Mr WOOD: My question to the Chief Minister is how many Blue Light Discos were run in 2008-09 and, in addition, how many of those were in the Darwin rural area and what were their locations?

Mr CHAIRMAN: That is, for *Hansard*, question on notice, 3.13.

Mr WOOD: Chief Minister, what police involvement is there in the development of the youth hub you announced for Alice Springs?

Mr HENDERSON: I will defer to the commissioner in a moment. That was a significant government policy response in relation to juvenile antisocial behaviour and crime issues in Alice Springs. Police will coordinate the youth hub. Members have already been appointed to positions that are funded. Work is getting under way. I defer to the commissioner.

COMMISSIONER WHITE: Yes, a lot of work is under way. We have selected a superintendent in the role of Youth Services Coordinator to drive this whole process. We are keen to meet the government's policy objective to have this in place by the start of the school year in 2010. A consultant is also engaged to help scope out the nature of the work. I can read from a document in front of me if you like, but it is quite extensive.

The Youth Services Coordinator will be situated within the hub and will chair the cross-agency Youth Tasking and Coordination Group; as well as the Youth Liaison Group. The coordinator will facilitate a coordinated approach to the provision of youth services, in addition to coordinating youth activities in Alice Springs. The Youth Liaison Group comprises the Youth Diversion Unit, school-based constables, Aboriginal and Islander Education Workers and School/Home Liaison Officers. This group will operate under the direction of the Youth Services Coordinator and would work closely with the Student Attendance Officer from the Department of Education and Training. This is being project managed by the police. It is on schedule and progressing well. A number of meetings are being held to ensure this stays on track.

Mr WOOD: Chief Minister, were you looking at developing a youth club, like a Police Boy's Club, in Alice Springs?

Mr HENDERSON: This is about bringing together all of the youth service providers in Alice Springs and engaging with youth in the community, particularly disadvantaged youth. We will be working through the new middle school we will be creating in Alice Springs with the merger of ANZAC and ASHS into one campus. The police will facilitate that. When you say it is like a youth citizen's police boy club, it is not quite that. It is getting the service providers in Alice Springs to work together, coordinated by police, utilising infrastructure some of which will be developed on the middle school campus. It will result in having a more coordinated effort in engaging youth who are getting up to mischief in Alice Springs. This will not only deal with their antisocial behaviours, but will get them re-engaged with school.

Mr WOOD: Chief Minister, who will look after the dormitory accommodation you are developing in Alice Springs?

Mr HENDERSON: We are still working through that issue. No decisions have been made yet.

Mr WOOD: In relation to youth diversion, Chief Minister, can you give us figures relating to how many people were diverted in 2007-08 and 2008-09? How many re-offended? I presume that means how many did not re-offend?

Mr HENDERSON: We have that detail in the briefs. It is a good news story of the effectiveness of juvenile diversion. It is in these books. I read it this afternoon.

Mr WOOD: Do you also have a list of the diversionary programs that police use? Is Hamilton Downs part of those programs?

Mr HENDERSON: Commissioner?

COMMISSIONER WHITE: I will provide the information I have here, but I am willing to supply details if required. Since May 2008, 58% of youth offenders were denied diversion as a result of the seriousness of the offence or re-offending. Over the past six months, there was an increase of approximately 70% of the number of participants in Youth Justice Conferences, which reflects an ongoing commitment to encourage victims to participate in conference with the youth involved. As for youth offending in 2008-09 it was: court re-offending 45%; 14% juvenile diversion; 10% Youth Justice Conferences; 19% verbal and written warnings. So the totals: for court 724; for diversion 337; for Youth Justice Conferences 136; and for verbal and written warnings 199.

Mr WOOD: In the case of the diversions there were 337 cases. How many re-offended?

COMMISSIONER WHITE: Around 14%.

Mr HENDERSON: So 86% did not re-offend, which is significant.

Mr WOOD: Those other two categories, the 136 and the 199, was there a re-offending rate for those?

COMMISSIONER WHITE: Yes, 90% of those involved in Youth Justice Conferences did not re-offend. This is 2008-09.

Mr WOOD: Is Hamilton Downs part of the diversionary programs?

COMMISSIONER WHITE: Yes, the contract is managed through Family and Community Services.

Mr WOOD: It says in the annual report that NT Police provide 35 police officers for security at Darwin and Alice Springs Airports.

COMMISSIONER WHITE: Yes.

Mr WOOD: Considering it is either Commonwealth land, private land, or RAAF land, why do we provide 35 police officers which probably could be used elsewhere?

COMMISSIONER WHITE: I have a fairly comprehensive answer to your question. The 35 police are not part of the Northern Territory Police establishment *per se*; that is, they are funded by the Australian government. We recruit and train these officers who are deployed to Aviation Security in Australian Federal Police uniforms at Alice Springs and Darwin. Those 35 positions are fully funded by the Australian government; they are not part of our establishment. I need to make it clear we are not running 35 positions short within the Northern Territory Police Force.

Mr WOOD: Who is their boss then?

COMMISSIONER WHITE: The Australian Federal Police. They are on secondment for up to two years and rotate through. We receive additional funding over and above our approved establishment. But, from time to time, you hear debates claiming they are NT Police taken away from other duties. They are not. They are over and above and funded by the Australian government.

Mr WOOD: Chief Minister, you mentioned there is going to be CCTV cameras at Casuarina Shopping Centre. How much is the Northern Territory government paying to put those CCTVs in? Why is it not the responsibility of the owners of Casuarina Shopping Centre? They are the ones who will benefit from this because they will end up having a much safer and more secure shopping centre. Why should they not pay for those cameras?

Mr HENDERSON: The announcement the other day, member for Nelson, was not for CCTV cameras just in Casuarina Shopping Square; it was for the Casuarina business district, the Palmerston business district, as well as the CBD in Darwin. CCTV cameras are going to locations identified by police and a working group to provide the best possible coverage in our most populated community areas. The funding split is between the Australian government and the Territory governments - \$2.75m, I believe, from the Australian government and \$2.25m from the Northern Territory government. Contracts have been awarded. Some 61 CCTV cameras will be rolled out between the Darwin CBD, Casuarina business district and the Palmerston business district. They are not located to specific commercial premises, but identified by police as the most appropriate places.

Mr WOOD: They will be on private land?

Mr HENDERSON: Some will be on council land, some on Territory government land and, I believe,

some on private land.

Mr WOOD: Were any private businesses or business groups approached to contribute to the program?

Mr HENDERSON: I know what you are getting at. For example, with the Police Beat program at Casuarina Shopping Centre, owners of that centre are providing peppercorn rental for the Police Beat. The same arrangements will be negotiated in Palmerston. Those commercial entities are contributing to the policing presence in what is our highest utilised public precincts in Darwin and Palmerston.

Mr WOOD: I asked in the last estimates about the possibility of mobile CCTV cameras, especially for those spots where there is regular hooning and those living near by find it impossible to identify these vehicles. There are complications with citizens filming incidents. Has the government considered this? Ipswich City Council now has the technology to use mobile CCTV cameras in known hot spots to try to control some of those activities.

Mr HENDERSON: Before deferring to the commissioner - a good question - we are expending a significant amount of money in the budget this year in building a new digital network for the Northern Territory Police. Once that network is in place all sorts of opportunities become available. I defer to the commissioner specifically for where we might be heading.

COMMISSIONER WHITE: My answer is that there is always scope for that. For operational reasons, I really do not want to go into details too much. However, I add the CCTV network under way is a wireless network, so there is capacity to bring that network to other locations.

Mr WOOD: You will find plenty of gum trees to hide behind in the rural area.

Mr HENDERSON: I am advised, member for Nelson, that all of the locations for the camera roll-out are actually in public open areas, not within those commercial centres.

Mr WOOD: No more questions.

Mr CHAIRMAN: Thank you, member for Nelson. That concludes Output Group 1.0.

OUTPUT GROUP 2.0 – GENERAL POLICING, CRIME DETECTION, INVESTIGATION AND PROSECUTION

Output 2.1 – Response and Recovery Services

Mr CHAIRMAN: We will now proceed to Output Group 2.0, General Policing, Crime Detection, Investigation and Prosecution, Output 2.1, Response and Recovery Services.

Mr MILLS: I have a lot of questions, but I will only ask two. What is the target response time to answer the 131 444 police number?

Mr HENDERSON: I defer to the Police Commissioner.

COMMISSIONER WHITE: Off the top of my head, I think it is 20 or 25 seconds. It is 10 seconds for 000. I believe it is around 25 seconds for 131 444.

Mr MILLS: That is ringing and someone picking it up and answering?

COMMISSIONER WHITE: Yes.

Mr MILLS: I think answering it and responding is a problem.

COMMISSIONER WHITE: I do not think there is national category for that. In the budget papers, we use the national standard time taken to answer the call for both 000 and 131 444 - 000 is 10; other calls is 20 seconds - the time from receipt to despatch and, then, despatch to arrival are figures that we look at in-house. There is no national benchmark as to standard. It is an area we focus on quite a bit.

Mr MILLS: You indicated in-house figures that relate to physical response.

COMMISSIONER WHITE: Yes.

Mr MILLS: Are you able to disclose those? Do you have a target?

COMMISSIONER WHITE: In the budget papers, under Response and Recovery, we indicate we attempt to dispatch police within 10 minutes 80% of the time. That is on page 51 of the budget papers.

Mr MILLS: Yes, 50%.

COMMISSIONER WHITE: We endeavour an 80% achievement rate within 10 minutes. The proportion of this is where police are dispatched within 10 minutes; 80% of the time we attempt to meet that mark.

Mr MILLS: I will leave it at that.

Mr WOOD: In the 2008 annual report there is a section on page 31 which compares the Northern Territory Police Taskforce Themis and NTER. This is on page 31 and 32.

Mr WHITE: Yes.

Mr WOOD: What do those tables represent?

COMMISSIONER WHITE: With the advent of Themis we established 18 police stations, by and large, in the Australian government's identified 73 prescribed communities. We identified the Themis locations and all other Northern Territory Emergency Response prescribed localities. My recollection is the Australian government identified 73 prescribed communities.

Mr WOOD: What is the comparison for?

COMMISSIONER WHITE: To indicate - when comparing year-to-year crime statistics - how the advent of those 18 police stations - stations we did not previously have - has impacted on reported rates of crime.

Mr WOOD: Is that compared to what is also happening from the Intervention?

COMMISSIONER WHITE: Yes.

Mr WOOD: These are Intervention figures as well?

COMMISSIONER WHITE: Yes, that is correct.

Mr WOOD: Just purely statistics, not trying to beat one another?

COMMISSIONER WHITE: No, it is a genuine attempt. Also in the crime statistics section - to indicate that while we had roughly a 5% increase in reported crime last year, around 4% or 2% was related to crime reported to Themis stations. The premise being that, if those Themis stations had not existed, we probably would not have received reports of those crimes.

Mr WOOD: You can read it a bit differently then.

COMMISSIONER WHITE: No, we are not having a go at anybody.

Mr CHAIRMAN: Thank you, member for Nelson. That concludes Output 2.1.

Output 2.2 - Investigations

Mr CHAIRMAN: We will now proceed to Output 2.2 Investigations. Are there any questions?

Mr MILLS: Yes, there are, but I will have to bail out in the interests of time.

Mr CHAIRMAN: Thank you. That concludes consideration for Output 2.2.

Output 2.3 Services to the Judicial Process

Mr CHAIRMAN: We will now proceed to Output 2.3, Services to the Judicial Process. Are there any questions? No? That concludes consideration for Output Group 2.0.

OUTPUT GROUP 3.0 - ROAD SAFETY SERVICES

Output 3.1 - Road Safety Services

Mr CHAIRMAN: We now proceed to Output Group 3.1, Road Safety Services. Are there any questions for this Output? Member for Nelson?

Mr WOOD: No.

Mr CHAIRMAN: That concludes consideration for Output Group 3.0.

OUTPUT GROUP 4.0 - FIRE PREVENTION AND RESPONSE MANAGEMENT

Output group 4.1 - Fire Prevention and Response Management

Mr CHAIRMAN: We now proceed to Output Group 4.0, Fire Prevention and Response Management, Output 4.1, Fire Prevention and Response Management. Are there any questions?

Mr MILLS: No.

Mr CHAIRMAN: Member for Nelson?

Mr WOOD: Are there any moves to combine those Bushfire Councils and the NT Fire Service - especially the volunteers - into a unit that works together? I am not saying there are any problems but they overlap at times.

Mr HENDERSON: I defer to the commissioner.

COMMISSIONER WHITE: I will briefly answer and then ask Greg Nettleton to respond. That merger was mooted one or two years ago but my understanding is that the working relationship is pretty good. It was not seen as something urgent or necessary, but I will defer to Greg.

Mr NETTLETON: At the moment, there is no plan to merge our volunteers, particularly in the rural area. We work very closely with Bushfires NT. We use exactly the same training program for our volunteers. It is exactly the same for volunteers for Fire And Rescue as for the Bushfires. We have

protocols in place for operations across boundaries so interstate efforts are quite seamless. When we went to Victoria in 2006 it was a 50:50 contribution from both Bushfires and Fire and Rescue Service and, again, this year we sent people to Victoria. It is an all agency approach. We also share the water bombing aircraft that operate out of the Batchelor field. Both the Director of Bushfires NT and I work closely on nationally related issues.

Mr CHAIRMAN: More questions? No? That concludes consideration for Output Group 4.0.

OUTPUT GROUP 5.0 - EMERGENCY SERVICES

Output 5.1 – Emergency Services

Mr CHAIRMAN: We move into consideration of Output Group 5.0, Emergency Services, Output 5.1, Emergency Services. Are there any questions?

Members: No.

Mr CHAIRMAN: That concludes consideration for Output Group 5.0.

Non-Output Specific Budget Related Questions

Mr CHAIRMAN: Any non-Output Specific Budget Related questions?

Members: No.

Mr CHAIRMAN: We thank the Police Commissioner and his officials for their time.

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Mr CHAIRMAN: We welcome to the committee the Department of Education and Training. The member for Nhulunbuy will chair the next 20 minutes. I will be remaining in the committee.

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: Thank you. I call the committee to order. I invite the Chief Minister to introduce the officials accompanying him and, if he wishes, to make a statement on behalf of the Department of Education and Training.

Mr HENDERSON: Thank you, Madam Deputy Chair. I would like to introduce Gary Barnes, our new Chief Executive of the Department of Employment and Training - welcome, Gary, to your first estimates; and Katrina Harding, Chief Financial Officer and staff of the Department of Education and Training. This year's Education and Training budget is \$808m, up 70% since 2001. There has been a significant change by the Australian government intergovernmental financial arrangements to achieve national reform in target areas with significant financial benefits to the Territory. I have a brief statement but, in the interests of time, I will conclude it there.

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: Are there any questions in relation to the statement?

Members: No.

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: I call on questions on any agency specific budget and fiscal strategies.

Mr MILLS: I understand the protocol is that I still must read out the generic questions, the same ones that have been asked for all departments. They are all on record.

Mr HENDERSON: In the interests of time to get through some Education questions, I am happy to table those.

Mr MILLS: I appreciate that. I understand there was a ruling they had to be read out.

Mr CHAIRMAN: That is actually a ruling, Standing Orders Committee matter, Application to Parliament.

Mr MILLS: We are breaking some kind of rule. I will read them very quickly.

Mr HENDERSON: Read them all very quickly and we will table them all.

Question on Notice No 3.14

Mr MILLS: Carbon emissions: how much is being producing in kilowatt hours or tonne CO₂? What are agencies' individual strategies to reduce emissions and what the time frames for those reductions?

Utilities increases: what is the effect of those increases to individual agencies for the forward year?

What is the number of graduates/apprentices who started with department 2007, 2008, and 2009? How many of those graduates/apprentices are still with their original department? How many still with NTG?

What is the number of reports of improper use of computers? How many reports have resulted in disciplinary action? How many credit cards have been issued to departmental staff? How many transactions for personal items/services are outstanding? What disciplinary action has been taken for each outstanding incident?

What have been the public events, conferences and public forums sponsored by this department for the 2008-09 financial year and what are projected for the 2009-10 financial year?

How do you define 'advertising'? What is the department's budget for advertising? What is your advertising budget for the 2008-09 reporting year? Please break down that budget by each area of advertising; that is, newspaper, specifying colour or black and white, radio, TV, community newsletters, consultants, and printing.

How much is the year-to-date expenditure? Please break down as above.

What advertising campaigns have been undertaken by the department in 2008-09? Specify if there have been any regional specific campaigns. How many of these campaigns have been translated into a local dialect? For each campaign who was contracted to write the material for print/visual/audio platforms? For each campaign who was contracted to do the art work for print/visual/audio platforms? Who has the printing contract?

What plans are in place for TV advertising?

Is the advertising material approved by the minister, the minister's office or the CE? If none of the above - who is authorised to release advertising/promotional material?

Mr HENDERSON: The easiest way to do this is to take that on notice and table it.

Mr MILLS: Thank you.

Mr CHAIRMAN: So you do not have those answers to table?

Mr MILLS: Yes.

A witness: We have the answers, just not in a format that can just be tabled.

Mr CHAIRMAN: Okay, for the purposes of *Hansard* then, we will allocate that question as No 3.14.

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: Member for Blain, if that concludes questions on this issue, we will move on.

Output Group 1.0 - GOVERNMENT EDUCATION
Output 1.1 - Early Years.

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: We convene Output Group 1.0, Output 1.1, Early Years. Are there any questions?

Mr MILLS: No.

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: That concludes consideration for Output 1.1.

Output 1.2 – Preschool Education

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: We proceed to Output 1.2, Preschool Education. Are there any questions?

Mr MILLS: Not specifically, no. Is it general government education, is that a broad category?

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: Under Output Group 1.0, sections, Early Years, Preschool Education, Primary Education.

Mr MILLS: This has been an ongoing question at estimates. It is about the signing of an agreement with Indigenous communities. If my recollection is correct, Yirrkala was signed last year and there was talk about others being signed very soon. Do you recall that, Chief Minister?

Mr HENDERSON: I do and there is an answer in here somewhere.

Mr MILLS: I would like to know the status of those community agreements.

Mr HENDERSON: The Remote Learning Partnerships, Phase 1, commenced in February 2007, with the first five communities - Borroloola, Maningrida, Ramingining, Yirrkala and Yuendumu. To date they have been signed with Yirrkala, Ramingining, Gunbalanya, Millingimbi and Ngukurr. For the remaining 10 communities, discussions are under way.

Mr MILLS: Have those ones like Yirrkala and others been completed. Are they are alive and going well?

Mr HENDERSON: The agreements have been signed. The commitments contained within them - commitments working both ways - are being worked on. I have not been briefed on current performance under those agreements, but agreements have been signed with Yirrkala, Ramingining, Gunbalanya, Millingimbi and Ngukurr.

Mr MILLS: I might have to investigate that further, thank you.

Suspensions are another area of concern. Are you able to advise the number of students who are on suspension for schools across the Territory?

Mr HENDERSON: We rolled out a new student behaviour policy, implemented in 2009. The policy features a zero tolerance approach to unacceptable behaviour in schools. We have significant funding for positive learning centres, 18 Wellbeing Behaviour Officer positions in primary schools, and 26

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school counsellors located in secondary schools. The total number of suspensions recorded for 2008 has increased by 500 from 2007. This is due to the full implementation of the Safe School NT Code of Behaviour, including a zero tolerance approach to unacceptable behaviour. Cultural change from full implementation of middle years may also have impacted. We anticipate the total number of suspensions in 2009 will decrease as behaviour expectations become embedded in school culture.

Mr MILLS: Do you have the suspensions to the end of the first semester 2009?

Mr HENDERSON: Yes, we do. Year to date, 648, with 195 being for assaults against staff and other physical/verbal assaults against other students, and 453 for dangerous substances, disobedience etcetera.

Mr MILLS: I am sad. I wish we had more time to investigate this.

Mr HENDERSON: I am happy to provide a briefing for you.

Mr MILLS: Yes, I need to. The other issue - in the interests of time, I want to give my parliamentary colleagues some time - is attendance. I understand rolls are called in the morning. Are they called in the afternoon? How do you ensure the person who is being ticked off in the morning is counted as attending school?

Mr HENDERSON: Primary schools conduct roll calls in the mornings and afternoons. For secondary schools they are conducted in every lesson.

Mr MILLS: What is the level of attendance in middle schools? Have you some broad figures?

Mr HENDERSON: I am advised the department's website has the attendance figures for every school in the Northern Territory. That is updated twice a term.

Mr MILLS: Done. I will take that.

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: Member for Nelson?

Mr WOOD: We have a great chaplaincy service in the rural area but Stuart McMillan is still not allowed to be the chaplain at Humpty Doo Primary School. Could someone please explain why, considering he has support from 99.9% of everybody?

Mr HENDERSON: I know this is a very contentious issue, member for Nelson. I believe we have all been lobbied on this particular issue. I will defer to Mr Alan Green, Executive Director, to answer.

Mr GREEN: Alan Green, Executive Director, Schools North. The issue with the chaplain you speak of at Humpty Doo relates to a number of issues that occurred in the community last year, none of which were of his doing. However, a number of issues were raised by some community members resulting in the chaplaincy at the school being withdrawn temporarily. We have been in ongoing consultation with the school leadership team to talk through their preparation and handling to get the chaplaincy back in the school.

We need to be confident issues raised by staff last year can be addressed properly this year. These issues were about the stress and problems they faced as a result of matters raised by a small number of community members. We have been in constant consultation with the school leadership team and it looks like we can move forward in the not-too-distant future.

Mr WOOD: What disappointed me was how the department let the principal down; a man who has been under enormous pressure. By not allowing the chaplain back the department put more pressure on that individual. I hoped the department would bite the bullet and make a decision at the beginning

of this year.

Mr HENDERSON: I am happy to provide you with a briefing on this issue so we do not detract time from estimates. As Mr Green said, we are getting close to a resolution, but let us deal with it outside of this Chamber.

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: So committee members three outputs in this area. The first one is government schools, the second one is non-government schools and the third is training. Have we finished with government schools?

Mr MILLS: How many teaches hold first aid certificates, Chief Minister?

Mr HENDERSON: We will have to take that on notice.

Question on Notice 3.15

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: Member for Blain, for the benefit of *Hansard*, would you just repeat that question please?

Mr MILLS: How many teachers hold first aid certificates?

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: That question is nominated as question No 3.15.

Mr HENDERSON: I have been advised all teacher assistants would have first aid certificates as part of their role and job description. It is not necessarily in the job description of teachers, but all teacher assistants in schools would have first aid qualifications.

Mr MILLS: Is it not mandatory for a teacher to have a first aid certificate in the Territory?

Mr HENDERSON: That is right, but all teacher assistants in schools would have. That is similar to other jurisdictions.

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: Committee members, I am prepared to extend by an additional five minutes given the breaks that we have had.

Mr WOOD: Is it the case that under the *A Working Future* policy all existing homeland learning centres located within a 50 km radius from a Territory growth town will not continue to be staffed and funded? If the answer to that is some will be shut down and some not, what is the criteria that will determine which schools survive?

Mr HENDERSON: The Homeland Learning Centre program operates across 45 homeland learning centres with approximately 800 students enrolled. There is an officer responsible for development and implementation of sustainable homelands education strategy who has been funded for a two-year period. The role includes reviewing learning programs and infrastructure; collaborating with NT Distance Learning to introduce a virtual learning strategy; development of a homeland learning centre policy in line with broader government policy on homeland service delivery including remote service delivery in 20 new towns; and developing a professional learning strategy for homeland assistant teachers.

The *Closing the Gap* funding of \$5.46m is being invested in capital works as follows: an early childhood facility at Woodykupuldiya of \$460 000; services delivered through Nganmarriyanga school expected to commence Semester 2; \$3.2m for a middle school at Alparra to service the Utopia Homelands - programs are expected to commence in Semester 2 2009; the addition of two teacher houses and additional school buildings at Yilpara, \$2m will enable formal operation of a school which

will occur in late 2009; Marpurru Homeland Learning Centre is currently transitioning to school status and will be operating as such from 2010; and the government has committed in 2009-10 a further \$2m in capital works and \$1m for minor new works for homeland learning centres and teacher accommodation. We are looking at different models, better ways of delivering education to those kids who live in the homelands. The final result will be a combination of those service delivery models we are currently working through.

Mr WOOD: Your *A Working Future* policy states:

Territory growth towns will provide services to all people living in that region, including people in living on outstations and homelands. Where outstations and homelands do not have a Territory growth town nearby, we will continue to provide services.

The definition of nearby appears to be within a 50 km radius. The member for Arafura is asking: what is going to happen to learning centres beyond that 50 km radius? Are they going to be funded?

Mr HENDERSON: There is no definitive conclusion as to how we are going to do that. We are saying we have to deliver and achieve better educational outcomes. That means strengthening the main schools in those 20 communities, providing full preschool, primary, middle and senior schools where kids can get easy and appropriate access. Where they cannot, we will be looking at strengthening service deliveries to those remote schools. This is work being undertaken now. It will be done in full consultation with the schools and major hub communities. No firm decisions have been made.

Mr WOOD: What work has been done on the cost of transporting students to these Territory growth towns? I believe the member for Arafura is referring to provision of buses, fuel, staffing and also the state of the roads required to deliver students to those centres.

Mr HENDERSON: We are starting those discussions now. No decisions have been made.

Mr CHANDLER: Minister, can you please advise in regard to the schools which have been fortunate enough to receive \$3m from the federal stimulus package. We know they can only construct buildings up to \$2m, with the remaining \$1m as contingency funds to ensure they do not run over that \$3m. Can you advise if a school, through good fiscal management, is able to have total works built for, say, \$2.75m, and are able to access the \$250 000 remaining for other purposes within the school?

Mr HENDERSON: I will hand over to Sharron Noske, Deputy Chief Executive, who is handling the infrastructure program.

Ms NOSKE: Sharon Noske, Deputy Chief Executive. In each case, we will be working within the total budget the schools have with a small variance. Obviously, they will be building as closely as possible to that budget.

Mr CHANDLER: I understand that, but the project cannot go over \$2m, which allows the additional \$1m to ensure there are no overruns. We all know projects can go over budget, so that \$1m is tucked in to avoid that. But if they come in under budget – that is, there is money left over – are they able to use that money for additional works within the school?

Mr HENDERSON: Ms Noske.

Ms NOSKE: I believe the answer is, generally, yes, but that will be a very favourable outcome in the current climate.

Mr CHANDLER: Thank you.

Mr MILLS: How much money will be diverted from the department's budget to establish schools in the

hub towns? Has there been a diversion of money from other places to establish the regional hubs?

Mr HENDERSON: There is additional funding through the National Partnership Agreement to address low SES schools, to improve teacher quality, and IT issues. I pass you on to Mr Barnes.

Mr BARNES: Gary Barnes, Chief Executive. The important thing is to look at real outcomes for those indigenous and non-indigenous students who are going to be serviced by those hub towns and the attendant schools that surround them. We need to execute what I call a backward mapping exercise so we can make sure the infrastructure spend and other service delivery costs will lead to students moving into either further training, higher education or real jobs. There is, as the Chief Minister has pointed out, quite a deal of additional funding flowing in from both the Northern Territory and Australian governments.

The trick is to make sure that when we build trade training centres, additional teacher accommodation, or additional facilities for our schools, all of those actually represent real pathways to jobs. I am happy to tell you the Australian and Northern Territory governments have allocated, over a five-year period for all of those programs, around \$174.9m worth of new money. The real key will be to use that additional investment in infrastructure and service delivery as wisely as we can, and not race ahead building things that will not lead to real outcomes. There is some redirecting of additional funding, but that redirecting, in the first instance, will be providing more teacher salaries and redirecting some programmatic work we have. All in all, across that five-year period, we are looking at approximately \$195m. Most of this is new money.

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: Thank you, Mr Barnes. That is our last question and answer for this evening. On behalf of the committee, I thank the Chief Minister for attending, as well as officers from the Department of Education and Training. That concludes this session, indeed, today's committee. We will reconvene tomorrow morning at 8.30 am.

The committee suspended.
