

The Estimates Committee convened at 8 am.

MINISTER MOSS' PORTFOLIOS

ABORIGINAL AREAS PROTECTION AUTHORITY

Madam CHAIR: Good morning and welcome to today's Estimates Committee hearings. Minister, I welcome you and invite you to introduce the officials accompanying you today.

Ms MOSS: Thank you, Madam Chair. With me today from the Aboriginal Areas Protection Authority I have the Chief Executive Officer, Dr Ben Scambary, the Director of Corporate Services, Mr Alan Buckingham, and Mr Che Walsh, Director of Policy and Governance.

Madam CHAIR: Minister, I will invite you to make a brief opening statement then I will call for questions relating to your statement. The committee will then consider any whole-of-government budget and fiscal strategies related to questions before moving on to output-specific questions and finally and non-output-specific budget-related questions.

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

Minister, do you wish to make an opening statement regarding the Aboriginal Areas Protection Authority.

Ms MOSS: Yes, thank you, Madam Chair. Thank you to the committee for the opportunity to make this opening statement today and I welcome the questions to come after that.

As you are aware the authority plays a really critical role in supporting the economic growth priorities of the Northern Territory and through its regulatory functions the authority supports stakeholders in progressing projects for infrastructure, mining, housing, tourism, agriculture, aquaculture, Defence and many other intersecting areas.

Since 1989, the authorities delivered certainty for thousands of projects across the Territory while protecting sacred sites. In 2017–18 the authority received a total of 134 authority certificate applications. Ninety-one of the those authority certificates were issued, including for the continued upgrades of the Arnhem Highway to address the issue of flooding in the vicinity of the Adelaide River.

Major road upgrades to the Buntine Highway, Tablelands Highway and Kintore Road also support government and private sector tourism projects. The authority issued a number of authority certificates that protected multiple sacred sites while allowing for works to improve visitor experience for locals and tourists, including ongoing work at the Howard Springs Nature Park; upgrade and maintenance works for the four-wheel drive tracks at Nitmiluk National Park; and upgrades to the Alice Springs Telegraph Station and Henbury craters tourist access.

The authority also provided certificates for a range of construction projects including construction of the health clinic at Ampilatwatja, a township development work at Mutitjulu, development of a solar facility at Batchelor, upgrades to the Alice Springs Motor Vehicle Registry and construction and upgrades at the Alice Springs Hospital.

Other key highlights for the year include issuing an authority certificate for Project Sea Dragon on Legune Station helping to provide certainty for this \$2bn job-creating project; launching AAPA Online, which has made accessing the key authorities faster and easier for stakeholders; and progressing the recommendations of the review of the *Sacred Sites Act*.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the board, the chief executive officer and the staff of the authority for their continued work in protecting sacred sites and supporting economic growth in the Territory.

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

Mr HIGGINS: If I could ask just one quick question. But before I do that, thank you very much, minister for that statement and I thank your staff for all the work you have done in getting the minister prepared for this Estimates Committee this morning.

My only question would be—I think you said 134 authority certificates were issued—in the budget paper on page 188 one of the key performance indicators actually identifies a 50% reduction in those certificates to be issued. Can you explain why such a big reduction?

Ms MOSS: Ben Scambary, are you able to speak to that one for me?

Mr SCAMBARY: The authority's workload is demand driven so we are not proactive in seeking authority certificates but respond to the applications that we receive. The trends over the last few years have been a decline in the demand for services for authority certificates however, that is balanced out by an increase in the lesser process that we offer, of register inspections.

Whilst the number of applications has declined the actual scale of the projects we are dealing with are actually quite large. That then reflects in the revenue base of the organisation. So there is a balance there in terms of numbers of applications and the scale of those, so quite a lot of exploration work that is generally remote and generally expensive to do.

Mr HIGGINS: If you are using that performance indicator as a measure of your performance, is it really a true indicator? I would interpret that it is driven from outside so it is really—the amount of work. Then what you have done is said look, some of these we are issuing at the moment—well we might be issuing less, they are more complex. So is there some other way that—in the future—could be measured as opposed to just the numbers? I know the numbers are easy to collect but do they have any meaning is really what I am saying there?

Mr SCAMBARY: Yes, I think you are right.

Mr HIGGINS: Or as meaningful as they could be.

Mr SCAMBARY: The figures require some nuanced explanation which we endeavour to do in our annual report, so whilst the figures are there we try to put that context around them about the size of projects that we are working on, the revenue that we retrieve from doing that work. Currently the revenue is up quite high which reflects the scale and complexity of the work we are doing.

Mr HIGGINS: Or we could actually alter the charges so it looks better, too. I am not too sure the revenue is a good measure either. A lot of Territorians would not think that. Anyway, that is all I have.

Madam CHAIR: Any further questions relating to the statement? Thank you.

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

Madam CHAIR: The committee will now proceed to consider the estimates proposed expenditure contained in the Appropriation Bill 2018–19 as they relate to the Aboriginal Areas Protection Authority. Are there any agency-related whole-of-government questions on budget and fiscal strategies?

Mr HIGGINS: My only question, Chair, would be, what are the major challenges that you are facing besides the declining requests for certificates?

Ms MOSS: Member for Daly, I think—I will hand back over to Dr Scambary in a moment—the growing complexity of projects is probably one of the biggest challenges. The Aboriginal Areas Protection Authority is dealing with a number of increasingly complex project work across the Northern Territory and they do an incredible job in dealing with those complex situations as well.

Mr SCAMBARY: Member for Daly, I think the complexity of jobs is certainly there in terms of the variety of work that we do. Roadworks is a large part of a lot of work we do. A lot of those roads intersect sacred sites historically. They were there before the *Sacred Sites Act* was brought into play, so navigating issues like that. In addition, I think that the changing nature of knowledge about sacred sites is also a challenge for the authority. The significant generational change that occurs impacts on the nature of the knowledge that we inquire into to protect sacred sites and that presents quite a significant challenge.

In addition, we have been around for 40 years this year and have an enormous body of information about custodianship and sacred sites across the Northern Territory, though there are still some significant gaps in that knowledge base. Increasingly, traditional owners—custodians—are seeking the repatriation of that knowledge to their groups and there are certain challenges in doing that as well, which we are looking at in some detail as well.

Mr HIGGINS: An interesting question that I ask people, or quite often get asked, what is the difference between a traditional owner and a custodian? It is not a test.

Mr SCAMBARY: A custodian is defined by the *Sacred Sites Act* as someone who has knowledge of sacred sites in accordance with Aboriginal tradition; whereas a traditional owner in the *Land Rights Act* has to satisfy three criteria of being a member of the local descent group, exercising primary spiritual responsibility for sacred sites and having the right to forage. That is a technical explanation. The reality is that there is typically not much difference. However, particularly in the pastoral lands there are people who are regional experts who may not have a direct genealogical link to an area but have great knowledge about sacred sites from their position in Aboriginal society.

There is a nuance difference, but custodians can be a broader definition than traditional owner.

Mr HIGGINS: Is that saying, in actual fact, you could have a custodian who is not a traditional owner?

Dr SCAMBARY: Potentially. In the history of land claims, most of those people have been acknowledged as traditional owners through the processes of the courts. But on the face of it, yes, that is possible.

Mr HIGGINS: From a legal point of view, I think your answer was that your traditional owner is defined under the Land Rights Act, which is Commonwealth, as opposed to the Aboriginal Sacred Sites legislation where we define the custodian. I just wanted to get all that on record so I can refer people to it in future when they come to me and ask for an explanation. Thanks for that. That is good. That is all I have there.

Mr WOOD: Good morning, minister.

Ms MOSS: Good morning.

Mr WOOD: This is another question about statistics. What has been the reason for the improvement in the average time between receiving authority certificate applications and completing service? I am referring to the last annual report where it went from 120 days down to 90 days. That sounded good, then I looked at the budget and it has gone back up to 120 days. Why has there been an improving performance and then a performance going back to where it was previously?

Ms MOSS: Thank you, Member for Nelson. Again, I will refer to Dr Scambary to talk about the process in time.

Dr SCAMBARY: Our current average is running at about 91 days to issue an authority certificate. The way in which the figures are measured—it is an average. If we have a complex long-term job—which sometimes happens—for one reason or another there might be delays to the consultation process that will increase the average time. We anticipated that we would probably take longer this year, but the reality has been different and we are actually turning things around in about 91 days at the moment.

Mr WOOD: Sometimes sacred site decisions can be controversial. I refer to my local high school, which has had a number of sacred site decisions made that probably have cost the school a considerable amount of money because they have had to change the design of a building. Some people query whether there was a sacred site there at all. Are there any procedures which allow for an appeal about a sacred site?

Ms MOSS: Yes, thank you, Member for Nelson. Again, I will ask Dr Scambary to talk about that process. Obviously, there are a number of sites and developments across the Northern Territory where been sacred sites have been identified, where the design of a building has had to take that into account, as you know.

Dr SCAMBARY: Member for Nelson, the processes of the act allow for, in the first instance, if there is a conflict between development and a sacred site issue in our authority certificate process, which is premised on consultation, we provide instructions. Where there is conflict in those instructions, we then have a process of variation where we will re-consult and refine instructions. That was the case at the school in your electorate, I believe. However, sometimes there are very tight constraints associated with the protection of sacred sites. We always endeavour to try to strike that balance between development and the protection of sacred sites.

There is an appeal process in the sacred sites act to the minister, but it has rarely been invoked because we generally manage to resolve issues before they get to that stage.

Mr WOOD: What worries me is, you nearly feel sacrilegious if you disagree. There are times when I felt that there was more an issue about politics rather than whether a site was a genuine sacred site. I just wonder

how you can test the veracity of the claim that a particular tree, for instance, is sacred when every other tree in the area is exactly the same. Do you not just take the word of someone and say that is it, or do you look at the bigger picture to see how this claim fits with a larger spiritual context—if you want to use that word—of the area? What do you make your judgements purely on?

Dr SCAMBARY: The research methodology is that we identify appropriate custodians—people who know sacred sites—and we look at those issues about who the traditional land-owning group are. We do a lot of pre-fieldwork research to identify those people. We undertake onsite consultations, not just with one person but with a number of people from that group to seek to corroborate the view. So if there is dispute between custodians about what is and what is not a sacred site, then we examine that very closely.

I meant to mention that there is another process in the act whereby an applicant can apply for a conference with custodians to discuss these sorts of matters. That often provides an opportunity for face-to-face meetings for both parties to explain what their issues are and for custodians—if they are comfortable to do so—to disclose the nature of the sacred sites.

Mr WOOD: The people who may be affected by a decision of yours who may not be traditional owners—just the people who own the land, for instance, and are developing the land—do they have any participation rights in this discussion or do they basically have to accept the decision you make aside from any chance to put their point of view?

Dr SCAMBARY: Well, no, they get plenty of opportunity to put their point of view. The conference provision is a key way for doing that. Our job is not to prevent development but to strike a balance between the protection of sites and economic development aspirations for all Territorians. We take that very seriously and seek to engage both sides of the argument in those situations.

Mr WOOD: Just a further question—and I am sure the minister knows there has been discussion about—because she put out a press release yesterday on diversification. But, from part of my reading into this issue, the sacred sites authority already has a key role to play in any development on a pastoral property, especially in relation to land clearing. If there is a land clearing application are you automatically contact by the Pastoral Land Board, or do you respond to the advertisement in the paper in relation to any issues that you see would be relevant to that land clearing application?

Ms MOSS: Thank you, Member for Nelson. It would not necessarily be an automatic contact with the Aboriginal Areas Protection Authority. It certainly would be where there may already be sacred sites identified on a pastoral property, for example. Then there will be many people on pastoral properties across the Northern Territory where those sacred sites are already identified who would be well aware that that exists and where that process would be triggered.

Dr SCAMBARY: The processes of the act are not compulsory, so it is not compulsory to apply for an authority certificate. But that is balanced by the offence provisions of the act. So we are not necessarily contacted about land clearing, although I think there might be a process through the request for information where the pastoral land branch does liaise with our people. I would be happy to find out the details.

Mr WOOD: I have it here. 'In determining a clearing application, the Pastoral Land Board will take the following matters into consideration ... presence of any sacred sites within the many of the *Northern Territory Aboriginal Sacred Sites Act*.' I would imagine if they—the 'will' in this case, I presume, is they will do it. I do not want to get in the argument with lawyers between 'will' and 'must'. So would they be required to find out through you whether there are any sacred sites within that land that was being applied for clearing?

Mr SCAMBARY: Yes. I think that what actually happens there is that we have what we call a register inspection process whereby the register of sacred sites can be inspected. That will provide information about whether we know about sacred sites on that location or not. I would be happy to find out the further detail of that process, from our end, if that was of benefit.

Mr WOOD: I wanted to know how it fits into this discussion we are going to have—probably sometime today—and what your role is here.

Madam CHAIR: You are giving it away.

Mr WOOD: You gave it away with your media release yesterday.

Madam CHAIR: That concludes consideration of agency-related whole-of-government questions on Budget and Fiscal Strategies.

OUTPUT GROUP 1 – PROTECTION OF SACRED SITES

Output 1.1 – Protection of Sacred Sites

Madam CHAIR: The committee will now proceed to Output Group 1, Protection of Sacred Sites, Output 1.1, Protection of Sacred Sites. Are there any questions?

That concludes consideration of Output Group 1.

OUTPUT GROUP 2 – CORPORATE AND GOVERNANCE

Output 2.1 – Corporate and Governance

Madam CHAIR: The committee will now proceed to Output Group 2, Corporate and Governance, Output 2.1, Corporate and Governance. Are there any questions?

That concludes consideration of Output 2.1.

Output 2.2 – Shared Services Received

Madam CHAIR: The committee will now proceed to Output 2.2, Shared Services Received. Are there any questions?

That concludes consideration of outputs relating to the Aboriginal Areas Protection Authority. On behalf of the committee, I would like to thank the officers who attended today.

ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCES

The committee will now consider outputs related to the Department of the Environment and Natural Resources.

Mr WOOD: Could I ask for clarification when there is no change over?

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

Ms MOSS: Thank you Madam Chair. I would like to take the opportunity to make a brief opening statement. At the table with me is Joanne Townsend, CEO of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources and Cynthia Loganathan, Chief Financial Officer. There will be other officers from the department who will join us at different times. They will include Luis Da Rocha, Acting Executive Director of Rangelands; Collene Bremner, Executive Director Bushfires NT; Paul Purdon, Executive Director of Environment; Alaric Fisher, Executive Director of Flora and Fauna; and Karen Avery, Executive Director of Environment Policy and Support.

This government has had a very strong focus on growing the Territory by supporting economic development and attracting more people, business and industry. We know that growth inevitably increases demand for and on our natural resources and greater competition and pressures on our environment. More than ever it is imperative that we have effective regulatory frameworks that support the effective use of our resources for the economic and social benefit of Territorians, while protecting them for future use. It is really vital that we are gathering the evidence, science and data to provide for sound decision-making and that we are supporting land owners and occupiers to effectively manage threats like fire, weeds and pests.

The decision by the Northern Territory Government to lift the moratorium on hydraulic fracturing underscores the importance of ensuring a robust and contemporary environmental protection regulatory framework and legislation. With this in mind, my department continues to deliver critical natural resource assessment and monitoring services to ensure the conservation and sustainable use of the resources across the Northern Territory.

The department provides services and programs to mitigate threats posed by wildfire, pests and weeds and it advises on environmental policy as well as environmental impact assessments, approvals and compliance activities under the direction of the Northern Territory Environmental Protection Authority.

Across the agency, it has an important assessment role in proposed developments and ensures that developments can proceed with the appropriate environmental risk mitigation. Over the past 12 months, the department has continued its focus on improving its regulatory capacity on supporting effective land management and on increasing community involvement and confidence in its decision-making.

Some of the many highlights have included developing a draft of the Territory's first ever coastal and marine management strategy that has been done alongside a very active partnership group as well as a draft Aboriginal carbon strategy; completing and implementing strategic Aboriginal water reserves; implementing the recommendations of the independent review of water extraction licences, with 75% of the recommendations already completed and the remainder under development; new regulations to support the *Bushfires Management Act* to define the penalties associated with offences under the Act; the introduction of the Pastoral Land Amendment Bill; continuation of government support of Aboriginal ranger groups through a \$2.57m in grant funding for the Land Management and Conservation Fund to support conservation practices on Aboriginal land and sea country; and \$2.1m in capital grants for essential capital equipment for our many ranger groups.

It has also been undertaking work to identify potential investigation areas for the Mapping the Future program, which is a five-year program to accelerate integrated natural resource assessment to support regional economic development with a total budget commitment of \$9.9m; updating the NT Pastoral Land clearing guidelines to assist proponents in understanding the processes undertaken when assessing a land-clearing application; re-establishment of the Darwin Harbour Advisory Committee, which was a very important election commitment; and providing more than \$1m in grant funding to NT environment groups and projects.

Highlights of Budget 2018–19 include \$4.5m in new capital works for a regional bushfires response centre; an additional \$2m a year to better resource bushfire volunteer brigades; an additional \$900 000 ongoing to increase the capacity to process environmental approvals from major projects; and \$1.13m in 2018–19 for implementing the recommendations of the scientific inquiry into hydraulic fracturing in the Northern Territory. The budget also supports the ongoing essential work of the department assessing, managing and allocating the Territory's natural resources and robust environmental impact assessment and approval processes.

I welcome the opportunity to discuss these highlights in more detail through this process and take the opportunity to thank the department for their incredible, ongoing work in protecting the Territory environment.

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

Mr WOOD: I just asked at the beginning, could I get clarification on some on outputs please before we get into the questions? I must admit, I am disappointed—I am not saying you are to blame, minister—that heritage does not seem to get its own output. So where would heritage come under?

Ms MOSS: The Department of Tourism and Culture.

Mr WOOD: It goes way down there. I thought it would be natural resources but anyway, parks and reserves.

Mr MOSS: Parks and Wildlife are also under ...

Mr WOOD: Well, there is a difference between the parks that is the wildlife parks as distinct from parks and reserves which is a heading in the annual report. They call it parks and reserves, so where does that fit? So that is your overall parks, where do we discuss that?

Ms MOSS: So in terms of asking questions about national parks, Litchfield et cetera, it is the Department of Tourism and Culture, Member for Nelson.

Mr WOOD: Who thought of that? I thought it would come under Environment and Natural Resources.

Madam CHAIR: Any other clarification needed?

Mr WOOD: No, that is why I am totally confused.

Madam CHAIR: You have the answer, so you will not miss out on asking those questions.

Mr WOOD: I will put that in my notes for when we sum up.

Madam CHAIR: Member for Daly, do you have any questions on the minister's statement.

Mr HIGGINS: The minister gave an opening on just about everything there. Anyway, I would rather keep them for the outputs. There are a couple I want to ask, but I thank the department for the work it has done in answering the global questions. It is a fantastic department. It is one that would interest any minister being involved in it. The minister who did not get involved in this portfolio would be very remiss in doing their role. I will just say that.

A couple of quick questions from the statement. The first one is about the Indigenous water reserves. Where are we at with that? You know I have a very special interest in this one.

Madam CHAIR: Member for Daly, turn on your microphone please.

Mr HIGGINS: You will not ask me to repeat all that, will you?

Madam CHAIR: Do you need to repeat it for our recording?

Mr HIGGINS: I think they would have it.

Ms MOSS: No? Got it. The strategic Aboriginal water reserves was obviously a very important commitment from this government on our water policy and sustainable water policy going forward and also in ensuring Aboriginal landholders across the Northern Territory have the opportunity for economic benefit from the water resource.

We have put in place that policy. A lot of consultation happened across the Northern Territory on that policy. It will be put in place for the water allocation plans that are under development. Our new water allocation plans are in train now.

We also made the commitment that it would be added as a beneficial use under the *Water Act*. That will also occur. We obviously have some other changes to the *Water Act*, including the exemption of mining and petroleum activities coming up. We will ensure that is inserted as a beneficial use under the *Water Act* as well.

Did you want to add anything there?

Ms TOWNSEND: The Strategic Aboriginal Water Reserve Policy came into effect in October. We are applying it to water allocation plans as they develop now. It actually has effect now, but as the minister said, we have also made a commitment to create another beneficial use in the *Water Act*, which means it has some longevity beyond just a policy.

In those water plan areas where the water is already allocated or there is no water that can be allocated, then the reserve exists as a notional allocation and should water become available in that system through new technology or any returned water, that would be one way the reserve might be furnished. But the real opportunity for the water reserve is for new water allocation plan areas.

Mr HIGGINS: Do we have anything in place in that policy that says what the purpose of that reserve is or how it could be used? Is that defined?

Ms TOWNSEND: Yes, it is very clearly applicable in water allocation plan areas only and is available for the economic development of Aboriginal land owners. Aboriginal land owners are defined very clearly in the policy as well as the methodology for determining what that amount is in each plan area.

The work in the policy was to really settle the key policy matters like where it would apply, who would be eligible and what the methodology would be for determining what landowners would get what allocations.

Mr HIGGINS: Is trading available to them? Do we have rules and guidelines for that?

Ms TOWNSEND: Trade is a key part. The strategic Aboriginal water reserve exists for Aboriginal people to be able to establish their own economic projects, but it also exists for them to be able to trade with a third party. That is all specified in the plan—sorry, in the policy but also in the water allocation plan.

Mr HIGGINS: I might save some other questions in regard to that in trading with mining operations and the charging for water. I will leave that until later.

The other one I wanted to raise is to do with the *Pastoral Lands Act*. I asked the minister yesterday in regard to that, to see whether he had seen that letter. I said I would ask whether you would be tabling that letter that I referred to today. Therefore, I ask if that will be tabled.

Ms MOSS: Member for Daly, I will grab a copy. I have no issue with that letter being tabled. I assume the letter you are referring to is the letter from Jo Townsend, CEO, to the Cattlemen's Association former CEO, Paul Burke?

Mr HIGGINS: Yes, which I do have a copy of here. If you cannot find one I am quite happy to make that letter available.

Ms MOSS: Member for Daly, there was also a similar letter that went to the Northern Land Council, and the Central Land Council, to that effect.

Mr HIGGINS: It would be good if they could be tabled as well. My question around that was that there was a press release put out yesterday, and your interview last night clearly linked the decision to drop that out of the legislation with the treaty issue. I remind the minister that she should not mislead this committee and ask, therefore, how was that part of that decision process? Because my understanding is that the MOU et cetera would have gone through Cabinet. Yet the minister yesterday had no idea of this letter or the decision to withdraw it.

How can Territorians have faith when there is no mention of the treaty or the MOU in the letter or the attached documentation? The dating of that letter and reference to a meeting on 22 April would indicate to me that there is no connection between the treaty, the MOU, and this decision. I think this decision was made separate of the treaty and MOU.

Ms MOSS: Member for Daly, I am not entirely sure of the question but I am happy to make a comment in relation to that. I did give an interview yesterday. I think this is probably a better opportunity to actually talk about the issues here. I just want to make it clear. The amendment has not been withdrawn, if you like. We are putting through a range of amendments in August, and the amendment in relation to subleases is a much more complex piece of work. I think that has been acknowledged by all parties.

I want to acknowledge the work that the Department of Environment and Natural Resources has been doing over a long period of time with NT Cattlemen's Association, pastoralists more broadly, and the land councils on this issue. I am coming up with a workable model going forward about how we will address the subleasing issue.

In terms of the conversation yesterday, and of the media, I was making an observation about we are currently—as a government, things like local decision-making across the Northern Territory and ensuring Aboriginal Territorians are at the forefront of conversations about economic benefit on Aboriginal land. That is a priority of government as well.

In progressing this issue we need to be balancing both the rights of native title holders and of pastoralists. It is a complex piece of work. We want to make sure we are encouraging that economic development on pastoral land and that diversification of activities on pastoral land. But we want those stakeholders to be around the table together, coming up with a workable model going forward. That is what the offer has been to all stakeholders.

I do not know, Jo, if you want to add any more about this in terms of the work with cattlemen and land councils.

Ms TOWNSEND: Members will be aware that there was significant concern around the sublease provisions in the Pastoral Land Act Amendment Bill. Some of the members here were part of the Economic Policy Scrutiny Committee discussions where those concerns were certainly aired. The decision has been that the amendments will proceed with the Pastoral Land Act Amendment Bill minus sublease at this point in time. That decision is premised on further policy discussions around options for increasing the procedural rights for native title holders in the issuing of a non-pastoral use permit.

That decision was communicated to the Northern Territory Cattlemen's Association and the land councils back in April, and my letter in May was to confirm those discussions. All parties have the opportunity to work together on a workable model on increasing the rights of native title holders in the issuing of a non-pastoral use permit, and the decision has been that subleases will be deferred until there is a policy decision around that. Once there is a policy decision, subleases certainly have to be back on the table.

Mr HIGGINS: My question was more about not questioning anything that you have just said. The inference given yesterday to Territorians was that this decision was made in line with the treaty negotiations and the MOU, and my question is, there is no evidence of that and that is completely incorrect.

It was made for other reasons and I am not questioning the validity of those other reasons. I sat on that scrutiny committee but my question is, the inference that was given to Territorians yesterday was that this decision made around the MOU and the treaty, and that clearly is incorrect.

Ms MOSS: Member for Daly, having been the person who gave that particular interview I can tell you that the inference was absolutely that we need to make sure we are making decisions in the spirit of respecting the rights of native title holders across the Northern Territory as well as pastoralists.

The inference that I was giving in that interview was that this is absolutely about making decisions in the spirit of government also having a commitment to local decision-making and economic development for Aboriginal people. At no point did I state, at all, that the MOU or the development of the MOU was part of this particular process.

Just to go back to the letters—I think the letter was sent on 11 May to the NT Cattlemen’s Association, to former CEO, Paul Burke. Similar letters went to the land council. There was a Cabinet meeting that was held in Newcastle Waters where Cabinet met with the Cattlemen’s Association and at every point government has spoken with stakeholders about the approach we were looking to take around these sublease provisions within the *Pastoral Land Act*. I think what the letter absolutely speaks to is that the department has been upfront every step of the way with all stakeholders about that particular amendment under the *Pastoral Land Act*.

I also have those letters to the Central Land Council, the Northern Land Council and NT Cattlemen’s Association and I am happy to table those for the committee.

Mr HIGGINS: Has the letter to the Cattlemen’s Association or any of those, have they got the attachment?

Ms MOSS: What attachment are you discussing, Member for Daly?

Mr HIGGINS: There was a legal attachment.

Ms MOSS: Member for Daly, while we will table the letters today, the legal advice is a matter for government through that particular process.

Mr HIGGINS: I might table that advice that was given—it was attached to a letter that was given to the Cattlemen’s Association, so I will actually table that advice. I think one point in question that was raised by the Cattlemen’s Association yesterday, was point 5(c)—I think this is the one of concern to them—it says, and I will read it out, ‘On this basis it must be open to the Territory legislature to define the extent of the statutory powers by requiring that the board take into account the wishes of the native title holders and refuse to grant the permit if it is contrary to those wishes’.

I think some of these things need to be considered by the committee in the future and I would hope, as the Member for Nelson said yesterday, that any changes to this do actually come back to that scrutiny committee. I will table that advice.

Madam CHAIR: Minister, is it your wish that the information in that document being tabled by the Member for Daly is kept confidential?

Mr HIGGINS: It was not marked at confidential when it was sent to the Cattlemen’s Association.

Madam CHAIR: It will be a matter for the committee to decide to keep it confidential.

Mr WOOD: My only comment there would be if the Cattlemen’s Association has received it without being told it is confidential, then I do not see how it can be confidential.

Ms NELSON: It would be up to them to decide whether or not to share it, would it not? They are the recipient.

Mr WOOD: They have shared it with the Leader of the Opposition.

Ms NELSON: We are assuming that they have shared it with the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr HIGGINS: I am not too sure—someone has shared it with me and I definitely have a copy of it.

Mr WOOD: They have shared it.

Mr HIGGINS: They have shared it, it has been shared.

Ms NELSON: Yes, but the thing is, you have to ask if they have shared it. Have they shared it with the knowledge that you are going to be sharing it publicly like this? I think it does come down to whether or not the minister wants to keep it confidential.

Madam CHAIR: If it pertains legal advice that is what I need to ...

Ms NELSON: I would be a bit cautious about that.

Ms MOSS: If I could get further advice from—can I get further advice on that please, Member for Daly?

Mr HIGGINS: Yes. I will accept that.

Ms MOSS: I would like to address in the context of—I certainly saw some of the comments from a member of the NT Cattlemen's Association as part of that same conversation yesterday. I just want to make it clear. We are not talking about a right to veto. What we are talking about is getting the stakeholders around the table to come up with a workable model which is most likely to be tiered. We know that there are a lot of mum and dad pastoralists out there who are looking at doing things like small tourism ventures, you know putting some cabins on their pastoral estate and diversifying in that way; right up to projects like sea farms for example that have negotiated an ILUA for their particular project. There is a whole scale of projects that we are talking about here as you know. What we are talking about is trying to come up with a model here, not talking about a right to veto. If that is what you are talking about.

Madam CHAIR: Before we go any further, as committee Chair, I would like to call a ten minute recess with committee members in regards to the confidentiality of the letter. Once we table it, it is public, so I would like the committee members to recess in the Ormiston Room so we can discuss that.

Ms MOSS: Can Jo speak to that?

Ms TOWNSEND: Thank you, Chair. So the idea of this advice was in the free and open spirit of the negotiations that we were going to have with third parties. There is some risk in the Territory in sharing this advice even in a summarised form because it is legal advice. The intention would be that we would provide this to the land councils and to the NTCA but also that they would share their advice back to us so if the decision is that this is public, then the whole thing needs to be public and the question is, how does that advance the policy development?

Ms NELSON: Through the Chair, I just have a quick question on that. So are these discussions still ongoing?

Mr WOOD: Through you, Madam Chair. The point is that this is a very topical issue. It is out there in the public arena now and if the department is putting out its reasons or version of what they think the *Native Title Act* means, what these changes would mean in relation to that *Native Title Act*, and what the powers of the Northern Territory are in relation to pastoral properties being able to diversify; surely that really is something that the greater public should be able to look at and comment on. Are we talking about open and transparent? Unless there is something in there that would cause either financial harm to someone, I would say that there seems to be no reason why that information should not be out there for public discussion and that is what I believe is healthy in this discussion because this is an important debate.

Ms MOSS: It is an incredibly important debate, Member for Nelson, but I do not think we are having a discussion here about the need for openness and transparency. We have been quite open with all stakeholders and the public about the conversations with Cattlemen's, pastoralists and the Northern Land Council. I think we are having quite a different conversation here. But I would certainly support if we could get some further advice on that, Madam Chair.

Mr HIGGINS: I do not have an issue with getting the advice back. That is fine. I will not seek to table it if the advice back is that it should not be tabled. My question was simply, was it being tabled? It is an attachment to the letter. The letter is not marked confidential nor is the attachment. So if it is now confidential, I would

have thought that it would have been marked in that way prior to going out. All of these documents are available if someone did an FOI. Do not get me wrong, I am not going to criticise government if the advice comes back that it should not be tabled, full stop.

Madam CHAIR: Member for Daly, can I just clarify have you tabled the document yet, or not?

Mr HIGGINS: No, I have sought to table it. It has not occurred.

Madam CHAIR: So you are willing to wait on advice once it comes through from the minister if it is confidential.

Mr HIGGINS: I am even happy for it to be tabled only for the committee to look at it in-confidence or whatever. At some point it does need to be reviewed either by this committee or, more into the future, by the scrutiny committee.

Ms NELSON: I am assuming that it will go through a scrutiny committee at some point or another and at that point ...

Mr WOOD: I would not say that necessarily...

Ms NELSON: Well I know your opinion on that one but ...

Mr WOOD: Well, why not? You just gave an opinion and I said ...

Madam CHAIR: Order!

Ms NELSON: I know your opinion on that one and I am saying, at one point or another, it will be scrutinised and people will have the opportunity to read it then but at this point, I do not see what the purpose is.

Madam CHAIR: Minister, you are willing to provide advice in regards to the confidentiality of the attachment of the legal advice?

Ms MOSS: Yes, Madam Chair. Are we taking a recess or not taking a recess?

Madam CHAIR: Member for Daly?

Mr HIGGINS: Yes, we can just take a recess for a minute.

Madam CHAIR: We will take a recess and recommence at 9 am. Thank you.

The committee suspended.

Madam CHAIR: We will resume. The committee has deliberated and the document will be tabled in-confidence to the committee. Unless the minister advises its publication, it will stay in-confidence.

Ms MOSS: Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

Mr WOOD: Two. I attended a meeting in Katherine. It was one of the early meetings in relation to the changes to the *Pastoral Land Act*. This issues actually never arose. The main issue they were concerned about was rent. This issue did not come up.

I am also a member of the economic scrutiny committee. I am getting a little confused as to the processes by which we bring these issues to parliament. We have a process where the department goes out and discusses with various people, then they come back with a bill. Then, the scrutiny committee looks at the bill. It then goes back and asks the same people that you have asked previously. Then, we bring it back to parliament with our recommendations and it gets pulled.

Do you think we could do this process a little better from the point of view of avoiding the issues we have at the moment which has left a lot of people feeling they have been let down by the system? Because when the system was first developed, the bill did not have anything that appeared to be controversial in it that was not in a previous bill.

All of a sudden, we have this debate about the rights of people whether to negotiate or consult over the diversification of industry on pastoral properties. Do you think the process could be done better so we do not have this duplication of discussion and what I call a very messy outcome at the present time?

Ms MOSS: In relation to this specific bill or just generally?

Mr WOOD: This specific bill. I could say in general, but this specific bill is a good example of where we, as a parliament, need to review our processes in relation to how we run our process to come up with a bill we can present to parliament. It seems we have two lots of things happening. One is a departmental process and we have a scrutiny committee process. That makes life complicated when it comes to these issues. We should be able to do something a little better.

I am asking you that because you are in the middle of a fairly controversial change to the act. Some of that is due to a duplication of process, which in the end has been overridden by the government.

Madam CHAIR: Member for Nelson, can I ensure that you are not asking the minister for her opinion on the process under Standing Order 109? If you can rephrase your question to relate to the department.

Mr WOOD: I probably cannot, so if the minister does not want to say anything on it, I am happy for her not to give an opinion. But I have listened to this discussion and looked back, because I was involved from the very early stages ...

Ms MOSS: You did, yes.

Mr WOOD: ... because I knew this would be something that was important. I was involved way back when the previous government brought this into play. Yes, it is asking her for an opinion so I am happy if you do not give me an answer. I am at least putting it out there that the way we operate under this committee system needs sorting out. But I ...

Ms MOSS: I am happy to make a general comment that we have taken on board the recommendations of the Economic Policy Scrutiny Committee through this process. Yes, the subleasing component of this is complex, but it has been positive, at least, that stakeholders have plenty of opportunities to have their say on this matter.

Mr WOOD: The one thing the scrutiny committee had brought up is it had asked for options. I have not seen options. We did not say it should be the right to negotiate, we said negotiations should be one option. I am also of the opinion that perhaps it should be consult. There may be some other options—I do not know—but government has not come back with a series of options for the scrutiny committee to look at, if that is the process.

But I will leave it at that at the moment ...

Madam CHAIR: You have a second question in regard to the statement?

Mr WOOD: The second question is from the opening statement. You mentioned that you had revised the Darwin Harbour Advisory Committee—I thank the minister for that. That is a good move. I used to be on it once. That reminded me that at least half of the Darwin Harbour is fed by catchment out of the Litchfield Council area. Is there anyone on this committee who is from the Litchfield Council or someone who has some knowledge in relation to this sort of work who would come from the Litchfield area? There is Elizabeth River, Darwin River and even the Howard River, because the Darwin Harbour catchment, I think, goes from nearly Gunn Point to Charles Point in actual area. If there is not, do you think there should be someone, a representative either officially from Litchfield Shire or a knowledgeable person from within the shire area, who would be able to assist in giving a local perspective on some of the issues that could affect the harbour?

Ms MOSS: It was reinstated, I think, they are doing excellent work and there are a whole range of different stakeholders that come from a whole range of different perspectives and places of experience, who are putting in for that. I do not believe there is anyone specifically from the Litchfield region. There are people

who are very knowledgeable about the harbour, industry and environment groups. You are actually looking for some geographic knowledge as opposed to?

Mr WOOD: Darwin Harbour is basically fed by a catchment and most of that catchment is in Litchfield Shire. Much of the development in Litchfield Shire is either horticultural or rural residential. It is also extracted mining. There are industries within that catchment that obviously can have an effect on the harbour. It would be good to have a person living within that catchment, preferably someone from the council. There may be someone else who has that expertise, just to give that view of what is happening in that area and what affect it could have on the harbour.

Ms MOSS: We do have 15 members, I will give you a quick rundown of where they are from. Have you got that?

Mr WOOD: Yes.

Ms MOSS: Do you want me to give it to you?

Mr WOOD: No, if I just turn the page over.

Ms MOSS: I will not read that. Obviously there are representatives from Territory Natural Resource Management, the university, the Fishermen's Association, Landcare and Land Councils. There is a diverse knowledge base there, but I can certainly take your comments on board, Member for Nelson, in relation to that local knowledge.

Mr WOOD: I think sometimes you need a non-departmental or non-NGO person as well.

MS MOSS: Yes. I think it is important that that group will have a broader outreach and consultation basis to bring in those other perspectives.

Mr WOOD: I will leave that up to you.

Ms MOSS: Thank you. I appreciate that.

Madam CHAIR: Any further questions on the statement?

The committee will now proceed to consider the estimates proposed expenditure contained in the Appropriation Bill 2018—19, as they relate to the Department of Environment and Natural Resources.

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

Madam CHAIR: Are there any agency-related whole-of-government questions on budget and fiscal strategy?

Mr HIGGINS: I will save them for the outputs.

Mr WOOD: No. Could I ask a question? Where we do we come under, Flora and Fauna, that is a funny name for it, or rangelands? I reckon you need a scrutiny report on outputs for this department.

Mr HIGGINS: I think weeds comes under the first, all of them.

Madam CHAIR: Have you got your answer Member for Nelson?

Mr WOOD: Yes. I have to make sure that when I get to it, I have not missed it. I think I have got it in the right place but it does not show up that easily sometimes. I know it is in the annual report.

Madam CHAIR: That concludes consideration of agency-related whole-of-government questions on budget and fiscal strategies.

OUTPUT GROUP 3.0 – NATURAL RESOURCES Output 3.1 – Flora and Fauna

Madam CHAIR: The committee will now proceed to Output Group 3.0, Natural Resources, Output 3.1, Flora and Fauna. Are there any questions?

Mr HIGGINS: I will not ask about weeds at this point of time. We know there was a lot of contention around the change to the magpie geese bag limits last year. Have we come up with a decision on what the bag limits will be? If not, when will we do it? Will we see an increase, decrease or no information?

Ms MOSS: This is my favourite topic. I would like to acknowledge Dr Alaric Fisher, who has joined me at the table in case there are more questions about magpie geese.

I acknowledge it was a contentious issue, but it was a decision that was made last year based on robust science and the aerial surveys that happen every year. Those trends showed we had the lowest population of magpie geese on record last year. It was a very important part of that decision-making process that we looked at how we could decrease the pressures on the magpie geese population. It is really heartening that the analysis of the recent aerial surveys has shown approximately a 27% increase in magpie numbers and good nesting. I think everyone will be really happy about that.

The department and the Minister for Education, who was acting Minister for Environment and Natural Resources a few weeks ago, has also met with stakeholders about that process and where we were up to. There were representatives from our stakeholders who are part of that counting process as well.

The decision will be made before 1 July. I am expecting to meet with stakeholders later this week. I know the department has been talking about what they were expecting to recommend to me, but I look forward to coming out this year with this year's bag limits and season. But it has not yet been decided, Member for Daly. I need to have those conversations with stakeholders as well.

Mr HIGGINS: So if there is an increase in numbers by 27%—just a rough percentage, not 25% or 30%, but just roughly 27%—I presume that they will see an increase in the bag limit. I will not draw the comparison into increasing it by 27%, but I presume from that there will be some increase.

Ms MOSS: Member for Daly, I would imagine so, but as I said, we will take the time to properly consider that advice based on the science and have those conversations with stakeholders as well. It is probably a good opportunity to thank rec hunters who hunted responsibly last year. I know it was not necessarily a popular decision for all, but I think making sure we have sustainable magpie geese populations is important from an environmental point of view and also for maintenance of those recreational pursuits.

Mr HIGGINS: Not in the view of mango farmers, I would say.

Ms MOSS: I know, absolutely. Of course, the quota around crop protection as well is something that needs to be built into that. Parks and Wildlife have certainly undertaken extensive consultation with farmers last year, and they will do the same again this year.

Mr WOOD: I have a follow-up question on that. In relation to the commercial harvest of magpie geese, are there quotas on the people who operate that business?

Dr FISHER: To do a commercial harvest you need a permit. They apply for a certain number. For the last several years their permit has been for 4000 animals. In the first couple of years they did not harvest anywhere near that number because they were developing their trapping techniques. I believe this year they are likely to harvest up to their permit number, and they will be in some discussions with us about the potential to increase that.

Mr WOOD: If the commercial harvest quota is increased, does that automatically reduce the quota for the shooters?

Dr FISHER: I guess it is part of the complex equation that we have to take in to account and try to work out the balance between the commercial harvest, the pest mitigation permits and the recreational hunting season. In the current scenario, where the geese numbers are increasing, it is not really a pressing problem. If they were to decrease it would be much trickier.

Mr WOOD: Does one group have priority over another group?

Dr FISHER: Not necessarily, no.

Mr WOOD: Minister, what was the outcome of the research into the dieback of mangroves in the Gulf of Carpentaria, in summary?

Dr FISHER: They grew back.

Mr WOOD: Yes, they grow back.

Dr FISHER: We do not have an answer yet, unfortunately. We gave the money to the university and they, in consultation with us, decided to invest that money in a grant application to the Australian Research Council, which had the potential to leverage a lot more funding. It took a very long time to assess that grant. It was outside our control. They were unsuccessful, which was surprising, I think, to everyone considering ...

Mr WOOD: The seriousness of the ...

Dr FISHER: ... the seriousness of the issue and the large government investment in the project, which means the university still has the \$200 000 that the government invested in that research. We are working with them for a smaller-scale research program. But there has also been funding directed to that area from the Commonwealth Government through the National Environmental Science Program. There is a consortium of research under way at the moment.

Mr WOOD: No hints as to the possible cause of the dieback?

Dr FISHER: It is generally believed that the cause is severe seasonal conditions which were to do with a very poor Wet Season and very high sea surface temperatures, which meant that the mangroves were subjected to very unusual levels of salinity and heat stress.

Mr WOOD: And the grow-back ...

Dr FISHER: Yes, that is one of the parts of the progress, to monitor the rate of recovery. Sorry, I cannot give you any facts yet, but will as soon as we can.

Mr WOOD: That is all right. What is the five-year management plan for crocodiles, and is culling included in the management plan?

Ms MOSS: Thanks, Member for Nelson. It is another topic that is always topical. Of particular interest to Territorians across the Territory. The five-year croc management plan covers a range of areas. We obviously do management through the Department of Tourism and Culture as well. It is important to note that both of my departments are working in tandem on croc management here. They do the management in parks and reserves and the off-park management zones of Darwin Harbour, the rural area and Katherine River as well.

In terms of the culling, safari hunting is not part of the current management plan. It is a discussion that we have had at a federal level. I have had that discussion with Minister Frydenberg about how we approach that issue where traditional owners support safari hunting on their land. That is an ongoing discussion that is happening.

Mr WOOD: Am I right that there is a quota that can be culled presently? Is that correct?

Dr FISHER: The management plan allows for the harvest of up to 1200 live animals—non-hatchlings, so large crocodiles generally. That is a combination—well, actually it is from three sources. It is from the animals that Parks and Wildlife catch and remove, mostly from Darwin Harbour. Landholders can apply for permits for both the removal of problem crocodiles and for commercial harvest up to that total number ...

Mr WOOD: Do they have to be caught, or can they be shot?

Dr FISHER: They can be shot, yes. But it needs to be done in a way that is ...

Mr WOOD: Humane, yes.

Dr FISHER: ... humane and guarantees a successful kill. That is right.

Mr WOOD: I presume the people licensed to do it should be well trained?

Dr FISHER: Yes, that is right.

Mr WOOD: I suppose what I am getting at is if there is a continual concern that the numbers are increasing. I do not know whether your five-year management plan shows that. Do the numbers that can be culled therefore go up proportionally with an increase in the population of crocodiles?

Dr FISHER: The management programs are for five years. In the last management program, we increased the number of animals that can be harvested by about 40%. If that total number was taken, that would be about 10% [Correction provided by the minister's office on 26 June 2018:1%] of the large crocodile population in the Territory. But people do not apply for that, they only apply for something like half the number that is available for permit.

Mr WOOD: Does your management plan take into consideration the possibility of a sustainable harvest of crocodiles for commercial purposes?

Dr FISHER: That is its purpose, yes. Or one of its purposes.

Mr WOOD: Okay.

Ms MOSS: I have those number here as well, Member for Nelson. We have a big farming industry in the Territory and that is at 90 000 viable eggs and 1200 adult animals from the wild. But the issue is always the problem crocs. That is what we were talking about. Culling does not necessarily deal with the problem crocs.

Mr WOOD: That is right. I saw the YouTube the other day with all those crocodiles down on the mudflats at the mouth of the Daly River. Not that many people swim—even though some of my family live fairly close by but they do not go and swim in that part of the river. But the point is that I think people are concerned about the numbers and whether that can be balanced between people's safety and preserving crocodiles. I am not after the pre-1970s. But I still think, having travelled to Canada and seen the sustainable harvest of polar bears which might scare people—that is done with the traditional owners and science and gives people employment and an economic background or livelihood. I wonder whether we should do more work in that field for our traditional owners, especially in areas where employment is low and there is not much other opportunity for economic development.

Dr FISHER: One of the issues with that idea unfortunately is that crocodiles harvested from the wild are not worth very much money simply because the skin quality now does not compete with the farm-bred skins—and the meat. The costs involved in transport from large distances mean the value is very low. So it is actually quite hard to set up a significant industry based on the harvest of wild crocodiles.

Mr WOOD: Thank you. Minister. This might sound a bit off the usual sort of question, I noticed in your annual report it talks about new remote camera technology that Melbourne University has developed, I presume this is for capturing pictures of hard-to-see animals at night, especially in relation to endangered species. Have you been involved in projects to improve that sort of technology with Melbourne university?

Dr FISHER: I think it is important that Melbourne university does not get the credit for that. We do collaborative research programs with a number of research institutions but the development of camera technology is something that our department has strongly driven. One of our tricky jobs is to assess what the wildlife is out in the wild and to trap animals is quite a labour intensive and expensive process.

Mr WOOD: You have been advertising for one particular animal. I cannot think of its name.

Dr FISHER: Yes, that is right. The fawn antechinus. There is the use of cameras, which are cameras that you can set up and they have an infrared motion trigger and you can set them up and leave them in the field for weeks or months at a time. It is, for many species, a very effective way of sampling them, so we have done a lot of work over the last four or five years in developing that technology so we now have very good sampling methods for a whole lot of species including the fawn antechinus.

Mr WOOD: Do they have Wi-Fi attached so you do not have to go out all the time?

Dr FISHER: Unfortunately, you still need to go and collect them and download the photos.

Mr WOOD: When it has a picture of what you are after...

Dr FISHER: No and in fact, there is a massive amount of time in going through all the, sometimes, hundreds of thousands of images. There is a lot of stuff on our Facebook site about the interesting things we have recorded.

Ms MOSS: You have got to get on there, Member for Nelson, get on Facebook.

Mr HIGGINS: I am surprised we have not heard YouTube mentioned by the member. He has a drone as well!

Mr WOOD: I just ignore these uneducated comments. My daughter has Facebook and my secretary has Facebook and I can use them if I need. Minister, this was an interesting one. The department has been using baits called Eradicat. Have these baits been successful and if so has there been an increase in native animals like the rock rat in Central Australia since the bait has been used and has the program continued? Does Eradicat eradicate anything else?

Ms MOSS: Thank you, Member for Nelson. There are such good things happening in this area. Very interesting.

Mr WOOD: As the minister said, it is a great area.

Ms MOSS: It is. Again, I will hand over to Dr Fisher to talk about Eradicat.

Dr FISHER: The purpose of Eradicat is to kill cats.

Mr WOOD: I gathered that from this name.

Dr FISHER: There is actually a funny story around the names of such baits. There is another one called Curiosity.

Mr WOOD: And you play the Little River Band music to it at night.

Dr FISHER: Cats are probably one of the greatest threats to our native wildlife. They are very, very difficult to control in any meaningful way. The use of poison baits seems to be the best way although again, it is very hard to get them even to eat those baits.

We have used Eradicat in two different situations, one is Central Australia where there is a threatened species call the central rock rat that lives high in the very rocky parts of the MacDonnell Ranges. We have undertaken a trial where we have bombed that part of the range with Eradicat baits and that has shown great potential. Cat numbers have gone down and rock rat numbers look like they are recovering.

We have just received another year's funding from the Commonwealth Government to continue that trial and if it is proven to work then it is a relatively cheap thing to do annually.

The other part of your question was if they kill other things. Potentially they do and one of the big concerns about using it in northern Australia is the potential to inadvertently kill native wildlife like quolls. So we have been involved in a trial on Groote Eylandt where there is a large number of quolls.

We deployed the baits without the poison in them but with a compound that, once eaten, makes their whiskers fluoresce under UV light—this is very groovy science. We could actually test where the quolls ate the baits but also whether they actually ingested the poison. The baits are designed in a particular way so that there is a plastic capsule inside it and the idea is that animals—so cats just gulp it down in one go and get the plastic capsule, whereas things like quolls actually chew it and spit it out. That trial was very successful in proving basically that the bait was safe for native wildlife.

Madam CHAIR: Dr Fisher, was that trial in partnership with the University of Queensland or are they doing separate studies?

Dr FISHER: They are doing a whole lot of separate studies but the fact they are already working on quolls was very helpful to us and we actually used their study site because there was a known density of quolls there so it was a very collaborative approach.

Mr WOOD: I wish you could have taught quolls in Daly River not to eat my chickens. They certainly have a taste for them.

Dr FISHER: Unfortunately they do not have that problem anymore.

Mr WOOD: No, that is right. That is the problem—not because of the chickens.

Ms MOSS: Sorry, I wanted to make a quick comment as well. While that is the main project that a number of our ranger groups that are supported through some of those grants around feral animal management as well, so a lot of those ranger groups, as the Member for Arnhem would know in particular, are doing work specifically on cats as well.

Mr WOOD: I would like to follow that up next year and see where it is going because cats in my little part of the world—I groan at how many little birds get eaten. Although dogs sometimes can be just as big a pest but anyway that might lead in to my next question.

What were the results of a trial to control foxes that does not harm dogs or dingoes and can you tell me—because I am a bit ignorant here—where are foxes in the NT?

Dr FISHER: Foxes are basically in the southern half of the Northern Territory.

Mr WOOD: What is the limitation?

Dr FISHER: Around about Tennant Creek and it approximately corresponds with the limits of rabbits. Foxes are actually an even bigger problem than cats for many native species because they are a bit larger they actually are able to take down, sort of wallaby-size prey as well.

That trial that you refer to has only just commenced. Basically there is a mechanical device that has been developed to control wild dogs, which is a ...

Mr WOOD: Not the old trap?

Dr FISHER: No. It is a bit horrible actually. Basically it is a mechanism with a tubular thing with a bait inside. The dogs put their heads into it and when they pull on the bait it gives them an injection of poison. It is very effective and it also kills foxes. The problem is that in some areas, particularly in the Territory where there are dingoes, people want to be able to kill foxes without killing dingoes. The trial is to make a modification to this device so that it is much more specific to foxes.

Mr WOOD: Does the pastoral industry have problems with foxes as well?

Mr FISHER: I do not believe so. The problem is more in areas like national parks where it is desirable to control foxes but not to kill dingoes.

Mr WOOD: I do not think I heard of any issue about foxes before until I read that, it seems to be off the radar, when it comes to our pests.

Mr FISHER: That is right. I think it is fully understood that is the real issue in the Northern Territory, or throughout the desert.

Mr WOOD: There is another project which would be good to follow up on.

Mr HIGGINS: Could I follow up on that? In those baits we talk about, is it 1080 that is used in all of those?

Mr FISHER: 1080 is in Eradicat. In the other cat bait there is another poison called PAPP.

Mr HIGGINS: What about for pigs and dogs—PIGOUT?

Mr FISHER: Most dog baits are 1080. For pigs it can be 1080 and there is another bait, which I think is sodium nitrite, I believe.

Mr HIGGINS: All of those ingredients are pretty well controlled so you have had to have done your ChemCert and then a follow up, I think, for the baiting process, so it is not generally available?

Mr FISHER: They are all used under licence conditions. In fact, to do the work we have to go through an extraordinarily rigorous process through the APVMA, which is the licensing authority.

Mr HIGGINS: Have you heard of people using [redacted].

Mr FISHER: No. It is not something I am familiar with.

Mr HIGGINS: Anecdotally I can tell you that [redacted], well factually [redacted] is a bait used for ants. I have been informed that it is a bait that people will mix which will get rid of dogs and it is freely available. I would not mind if that could be taken on board to have a look at?

Mr FISHER: Unfortunately, it is possible that if you use it outside the label ...

Mr HIGGINS: Yes, if you use it outside the label, which is illegal, of course.

Mr FISHER: I'll take a note of that.

Mr HIGGINS: I can talk to you about that at the break or whatever.

Madam CHAIR: Any further questions? That concludes consideration of Output 3.1.

Output 3.2 – Rangelands

Madam CHAIR: I will now consider questions on Output 3.2, Rangelands.

Mr HIGGINS: Before we go to that. Mentioning that poison may not be very good and we may want to get that out of Hansard if that is possible? Maybe it is too late?

Madam CHAIR: Moved by Mr Higgins, seconded by Ms Nelson.

Madam CHAIR: Minister, would you like to introduce your official for Output 3.2?

Ms MOSS: I have Luis Da Rocha at the table with me for the Rangelands division which I know everyone is very excited about.

Madam CHAIR: Any questions?

Mr HIGGINS: I have one question and that is, what carbon farming projects have been developed on Aboriginal land and how much input does the department have into that?

Ms MOSS: I think that would probably go under the Bushfires Output, if you would not mind Member for Daly. I will make a note.

Mr HIGGINS: No, that is fine.

Mr WOOD: My favourite subject here—although I might start off on a slightly different one. Minister, how much money has been spent on the barrages in the Mary River this year compared to last year? Can you give us an update of the effectiveness of the barrages? What is the long-term outlook for this program?

Mr DA ROCHA: The barrage program has a \$600 000 R&M program annually. That focuses on four main barrages in the system. Throughout the system, throughout the 20-odd years of the program, there was over 100 barrages. Government made a strategic decision four years ago to draw the line in the sand, in essence ...

Mr WOOD: The line in the mud.

Mr DA ROCHA: Yes, that is probably more appropriate—to focus on the four barrages. With that commitment also came the establishment of some monitoring equipment, being salinity monitoring equipment and also cameras. The data we have been able to capture has identified that it has reduced salinity beyond those barrages, so reducing the amount of salt water moving down through the system into Shady Camp Billabong. Does that answer your question?

Mr WOOD: I suppose it is an area we probably do not discuss a lot. For years we have been talking about the rise of sea levels, and the reason I presume we are talking about barrages is because people say—I am not saying they are not correct but I do not have the information. Even 20 years ago we were talking about rising sea levels. What information can you give us about the rate of rising sea levels in that area? Is there scientific data that can show that it is still rising?

Mr DA ROCHA: Yes, there is. CDU were engaged three years to undertake the study, and it is ongoing monitoring that we have engaged them to do. There is scientific evidence to show there is continued sea rise levels. The approach that has been taken by the department over a number of years differs from previous approaches, in that barrages were built at a level that was beyond the natural highest point at high tide level, creating a dam-like effect. We have identified that that caused more issues in that the water would actually work around the barrage and erode the banks.

Since we resized and re-engineered those barrages we have seen that that has not occurred and they have been working with intent and purpose. The structures have been holding, and we have reduced the amount of damage caused to the barrages. The impact of sea level rises is 100 year cycle, so it is incremental but very slow.

Mr WOOD: So if a layman was asking me what is the rise in millimetres or centimetres each year, do you have that sort of figure?

Mr DA ROCHA: I do. I do not have it off the top of my head.

Mr WOOD: Do you mind if I put that as a question on notice? I would be interested because I think when you go out on the Arnhem Highway, before you get to Lambells Lagoon, there is a sign on the side of the highway about rising sea levels. It has been there for quite a long time, and I have always wondered what it is doing there.

Mr DA ROCHA: Terry Baldwin.

Mr WOOD: Terry Baldwin, is it? Yes, it is a long way inland.

Ms MOSS: Member for Nelson, as I understand there was a report with CDU a few years ago that we can provide you a copy of.

Mr WOOD: That will do. But it is an area that does not get much mention these days. I suppose, just a follow-up question, minister. Does that rise in sea levels—like we worry about the Pacific Islands—have an impact on especially coastal communities in the Northern Territory or is it so slow at the moment that it is not an issue?

Ms MOSS: There is a lot of work undertaken in this area across the department. The coastal and marine management strategy will be a really important part of this. Perhaps the department can talk a little more about some of the other mapping activities that are happening.

Mr DA ROCHA: Yes, it is incremental. The focus on the Mary River—as I have said, we have monitoring stations in place to ascertain what the level of sea rise is. The study undertaken by CDU will answer some of those questions for you. It is focused primarily on the Mary River catchment area. The study has not gone beyond that, but there are other studies, as the minister alluded to, looking at that impact.

Mr WOOD: My final question on this. How is it measured? Years ago I heard that one our local survey companies here had buoys out in the sea, which would enable some of those measurements to occur. Is that not the way it is done?

Mr DA ROCHA: Member for Nelson, I do not know the technicalities around that. It will be entailed in that report, though.

Mr WOOD: Okay. Thank you. I will get on to weeds. Gamba grass—I presume it is your department that has a four-wheel drive that races around with 'gamba' written all over it. I also get around the rural area a fair bit. In fact, I have to be a bill careful here. Very close to my place there are a couple of properties that have gamba grass on them. They have had it for years. With a little work they could probably get rid of it. But the longer they leave it, of course, the worse it gets.

My first question is how many infringement notices did you issue for gamba grass infringement?

Ms MOSS: Member for Nelson, it certainly is a challenging issue across the Territory and one we know has an impact on the fire intensity for our bushfires crews who do incredible work to deal with that issue as well. To give you an overview of it, we have the herbicide program where the department has been giving out—we have the information on that for you, if you are interested in it.

There have been more than 1000 properties assessed, more than 100 orders to control gamba have been issued to landholders in the rural area, and two infringements have been issued for non-compliance with an order.

Mr WOOD: That sounds good, minister, I am not—but I doorknock, or gate knock in my case, every property. I know there are areas where there has been no change to the gamba regime at all. We are talking five-acre blocks in many cases which should not be—with free herbicide available—difficult to eventually to cut right back. Once you mow it, burn it, you can spray it. It will not get rid of it straightaway.

Is the program effective? How much money are you spending on this program?

Ms MOSS: As far as the herbicide expenditure goes, that was \$103 000 this year. That was 20 000 litres of free herbicide distributed. The department underwent a period of community education about this and has moved into that compliance and enforcement space. The fact that we have seen 100 orders and infringement notices where necessary being provided demonstrates it is being effective. But we would want to see landholders taking more responsibility for what is occurring on their land—absolutely. Do you want to speak more about that?

Mr DA ROCHA: Yes, thanks, minister. Member for Nelson, what we have seen since shifting into that compliance and enforcement space—I will give an overarching. The way we approach our compliance program is we look at areas of priority. Since moving into this compliance and enforcement space, we have identified that those blocks that we have inspected previously, on a repeat visit up to 90% have been compliant. We have been seeing a high level of compliance since moving into the space.

From our perspective, we have had success in the compliance arena.

Mr WOOD: I know it is a budget issue, but do you think it needs more effort from a budget point of view, so that you have more staff? I know it is a bigger issue further down the track—Batchelor and Adelaide River. I had a block of land there once, I gave it up simply because I could not control the gamba grass there. If we are going to at least keep some—I do not think we will ever get rid of it because pastoral properties use it as well. But if we ever get some pull back on the situation, do we need to make a bigger effort financially and also the amount of staff that are involved?

Ms MOSS: Member for Nelson, we have \$300 000 in the budget this year for this particular activity and we will certainly keep an eye on it. But looking at the numbers of participants from say 2013–14, where we had 960 participants to the 2017–18 where there were 2326 participants.

Mr WOOD: So is that people who picked up the free ...

Mr MOSS: The free herbicide.

Mr WOOD: Well we do not know that they are using it for gamba of course. That is why I asked.

Mr DA ROCHA: Member for Nelson, as part of the gamba action program, or the herbicide program, those recipients are to provide us with a plan of where their gamba is and where they are going to use it and that is with a view that when we undertake the inspections in follow-up season, we can see the impact of using that herbicide.

Mr WOOD: So when people turn up for their free Roundup, they are required to fill in a plan of what they are going to do.

Mr DA ROCHA: Yes.

Mr WOOD: And you follow up on that?

Mr DA ROCHA: We do, if they are in those hotspot areas. We may not necessarily the following year, but as part of the inspection regime we will do that. Just to add something further, with regard to resourcing and inspections, the department has recently moved into a collaborative approach in inspections and compliance with our bushfires people. So we are doing joint inspections and are currently investigating the potential of co-locating our compliance officers to allow a more strategic approach to not only gamba grass but to reduce and mitigate the risk to life and infrastructure.

Mr WOOD: That was one of my Bushfires questions because I thought that is a perfect collaboration you can have because if you can get the gamba down, then come in with the spray, you are not spraying an 8-foot-high piece of grass, you are spraying the little bit that grows off.

Mr DA ROCHA: With that, the compliance training that the weeds officers undertook near on two years ago, has recently—that same training has been undertaken by the bushfires people.

Madam CHAIR: Before we proceed any further, Member for Nelson, I just have to do an administrative process and I will just pass to the Member for Daly.

Mr HIGGINS: I think to formalise the issue with the poison name, in addition to removing my reference to poison name from the public record, I also move that the committee forbids the publication of that part of the transcript.

Madam CHAIR: The question has been put by the Member for Daly. Committee accepts?

Members: Happy to accept.

Madam CHAIR: I note that the committee has prohibited the publication of that part of its proceeding so any such publication could result in the person publishing it being in contempt of the Assembly.

Thank you, Member for Nelson, you may continue with gamba grass.

Mr WOOD: For the Top End, it is a very serious issue. Minister, how do you enforce gamba control on land that the government owns and also on Commonwealth land?

Ms MOSS: Thank you, Member for Nelson. I know that is an ongoing issue and that management is certainly one that we discuss at things like the Bushfires Council for instance.

Mr WOOD: Well, NT Fire Service as well if it is closer in.

Ms MOSS: Absolutely. It does require that communication between the two departments, around Crown land.

Mr DA ROCHA: The Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Logistics is responsible for managing Crown land estates on behalf of the Northern Territory Government. They are responsible for the weed management both on vacant crown land and road reserve.

Mr WOOD: Do you send them an infringement notice?

Mr DA ROCHA: We work with them. They have a \$0.5m budget to administer—they have contractors to undertake the weed spraying. Our Weed Management Branch supports and works closely with DIPL to manage the weeds by providing the monitoring of contract control. We train and provide advice to the contractors in technical support and advice. We are also involved in their tender assessment process.

Recently the Weed Management Branch worked collaboratively with DIPL and Bushfires to develop a one-off \$300 000 weed management contract for high priority gamba grass blocks in the Darwin rural area as part of the government's 2017–18 budget stimulus package. Weed Management Branch and Bushfires have taken a collaborative approach to compliance. When we have received complaints about potential weed issues on government land, the Weed Management Branch contacts the Crown Land Estate in DIPL to explore what actions we can take to address the concerns. We also provide direction to enable DIPL to take the required action.

Mr WOOD: With pastoral properties and permission to use gamba, one of the issues has always been the off-growth outside that property. Do you inspect pastoral properties and look at the risks associated with the growth of gamba and perhaps the lack of grazing of that gamba?

Mr DA ROCHA: With those permits to grow gamba on pastoral estate, they are required to provide monitoring updates. We do inspections on an annual basis, but they have reporting requirements as part of their permit to identify how they will mitigate the spread of gamba off that site.

Mr WOOD: On Aboriginal land, what are the controls?

Mr DA ROCHA: On Aboriginal land it is like any other landowner. The landowner is responsible for managing weeds.

Mr WOOD: Would that be the Northern Land Council?

Mr DA ROCHA: If that is the relevant council. As part of our regional weeds committees we have had representation from the land councils, whichever that may be, to work through how to best approach it.

Mr WOOD: The use of rangers—the minister might be able to mention that. A good friend, who passed away recently, used to be one of the main rangers for the Malak Malak. That started off looking at Mimosa. You are trying to bring in the use of Aboriginal rangers for the control of gamba and other weeds.

Ms MOSS: Absolutely. Through the grants we have provided for equipment and conservation activities, weed management activities come up as a really important part of those projects that have been funded. They are doing an incredible amount of work across the Territory. There are different weeds depending on where you are, but that is an important part of the work we are supporting through those grants.

Mr WOOD: There are a couple of other weeds that are important. This one is relatively recent in the Darwin area—olive hymenachne. I wrote a letter to the department concerned that it is in the lagoon next to Girraween. It is in an area around Coolalinga shops. I am concerned that something we have not had before is now a threat to the wetlands of the Litchfield area. Are there any moves with the landowners to control this terrible weed before it gets out of hand?

Mr DA ROCHA: Those wetlands and lagoons you referred to are on private land. I have the branch working towards developing an aquatic weed management plan for the rural Darwin area. We are looking at releasing that this year. There is a concerted focus on that.

Mr WOOD: The department can help private landowners. Control olive hymenachne in a lagoon is not the easiest thing to do. There is a version of Roundup does not kill the frogs et cetera. Do you work with those landowners?

Mr DA ROCHA: We do provide advice, yes.

Mr WOOD: Sagittaria—have all plants been eradicated?

Ms MOSS: Can we take that one on notice, Member for Nelson? I am not sure we have that information in front of us.

Mr DA ROCHA: From memory, there was one outstanding plant still, but I will have to ...

MS MOSS: So we need to make sure.

Mr WOOD: Again, it was a local outbreak. It reminds me of citrus canker, you know, a local outbreak.

Ms MOSS: If we can take it on notice we will get it for you as quickly as possible.

Question on Notice No 7.1

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: Member for Nelson, please restate the question for the record.

Mr WOOD: Minister, could you provide an update on whether all sagittaria plants have been eradicated?

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

Ms MOSS: I do, thank you.

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: The question from the Member for Nelson is number 7.1.

Mr WOOD: Two other important weeds—one would have to be cabomba on the Darwin River.

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: I love that name.

Mr WOOD: I know, you can dance to it.

Mr HIGGINS: Sounds like a dance, yes.

Mr WOOD: Let's do the cabomba. The department has been trying to do the cabomba for a long time. What is the outlook on the control? It surely must be getting close to a finality by now.

Ms MOSS: Thank you, Member for Nelson. I knew cabomba was coming. I think it is a good news story. There is \$600 000 in the budget for the cabomba eradication program. I think it is a program that the department has been doing an awesome job at. It has been over 10 years since cabomba was last detected upstream of Lok Landji. There are early Dry Season surveys that are under way. We will have a look at whether or not the quarantine zone is lifted as a result of those surveys. It is important work the department continues to keep an eye on. I think the results have been positive.

Mr DA ROCHA: Just to add to that, it has been close to 15 months since cabomba was detected, which is the longest period since we first started the cabomba quarantine zone area at Lok Landji.

Mr WOOD: Do you have any idea what this one weed has cost the Territory tax payer to control? I think it is a good example of where people should be more responsible about throwing aquatic weeds out into waterways.

Ms MOSS: We will take that question on notice, Member for Nelson. We can absolutely provide that to you. As I said, we have specific allocation in this budget around intensifying our response to that and making sure we have resources specifically in the department to deal with that particular program and provide the operational support. But I certainly take your point. I think it is a good thing to have a look at how much it is costing us in controlling weeds. It is a good part of the education for the community.

Question on Notice No 7.2

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: Member for Nelson, can you please restate the question for the record.

Mr WOOD: Thank you, Madam Deputy Chair. Minister, could you give the committee the total cost from when cabomba was first investigated in the Darwin River to the present time.

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

Ms MOSS: Yes, thank you. So, from 2004 to present?

Mr WOOD: Yes.

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: The question asked by the Member for Nelson has been allocated the number 7.2.

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: On that note, I would like to call a break. We will be back at 10.15, a 15-minute break. Thank you.

The committee suspended.

Madam CHAIR: Thank you, we will resume the hearing. I understand a minister has an answer to Question on Notice 7.1.

Answer to Question on Notice No 7.1

Ms MOSS: Question on Notice 7.1 was in relation to sagittaria plants. I understand five sagittaria plants are unaccounted for over 100 plants.

Answer to Question on Notice No 7.2

Ms MOSS: Question on Notice 7.2 was your question about the total cost of the investigation and management of cabomba. That is an estimate of about \$5m. I am happy to table the report we talked about.

Madam CHAIR: Minister will table the report, could you please read the title of the report.

Ms MOSS: *Mary River Project Sea Level Rise and Salt Water Intrusion Modelling on the Lower Mary River.*

Madam CHAIR: Thank you Minister. Further questions for Output 3.2

Mr WOOD: Neem tree, which has now been declared a declared weed. What controls do you have in place, especially in relation to the Victoria River?

Ms MOSS: I will give you a broad answer around neem, Member for Nelson, and then we can get into more specifics, if we have it, or take it on notice.

We have recently partnered with Territory Natural Resource Management on the neem blitz program in Katherine. It has been a declared weed in Katherine and it is an incredibly difficult weed to manage, as many of them are.

There are technicalities and costs related to delivering that program. There was free herbicide and technical advice provided to landholders around neem management with 260 landholders participating. That was compared to a similar program that had a participation rate of 100 landholders in 2015–16.

This is about identification of neem methods of control, understanding the risks, being part of a broader community effort to reduce neem's impact and how to meet the legislative requirements for the management of a class B or C weed.

In regards to the specifics, Victoria ...

Mr WOOD: Just before that—without giving you the names of any poisons that have not been registered in the Northern Territory—the recommended means of killing a larger neem tree, what are the recommendations for that? Besides chopping it down.

Mr DA ROCHA: We will have to take that on notice. I am not sure of the technicalities on the type of chemical we use.

Mr WOOD: I will leave it for the moment. I will talk to you later about that one. I just thought you might have known off the top of your head.

The issue was about what control methods you are using for the Victoria River.

Ms MOSS: I just wanted to add to this that one of our ranger grants was \$82 000 to the Roper River Landcare Group for neem control as well.

Mr WOOD: Yes, that is where I got my question from too.

Ms MOSS: But we can take that on notice and get you more information.

Mr WOOD: Yes. Okay.

Question on Notice No 7.3

Madam CHAIR: Member for Nelson, would you like to repeat the question for the record?

Mr WOOD: Thank you, Madam Chair. Minister, could you give us details of your control projects for the neem trees on the Victoria River?

Madam CHAIR: Minister, do you accept the question?

Ms MOSS: Yes.

Madam CHAIR: The Member for Nelson's question has been allocated the number 7.3.

Mr WOOD: Mimosa, Minister. There has been many attempts to biologically control mimosa. Do those programs still exist and has there been any new developments in the control of mimosa?

Ms MOSS: Thank you, Member for Nelson. There is an ongoing mimosa program and there is federal funding as part of that controlled program as well. Again, it is another ongoing battle that we are having but I might hand over for more information about mimosa control and we are happy to take any more on notice as well.

Mr DA ROCHA: Member for Nelson, what specifically, are asking with regard to what we are doing?

Mr WOOD: There were a number of beetles that were let loose quite a long time ago actually, but we still have mimosa around so obviously they might have put a dint in the system but there is still a lot of mimosa around.

Mr DA ROCHA: The beetles in isolation will not address the issue. It needs to be done in combination with a chemical approach and so that work is still ongoing.

Mr WOOD: There was, a few years ago, the death of a large patch mimosa out on the flood plains. Was there any investigation as to what caused that destruction of the plants there?

Mr DA ROCHA: I am unsure of that.

Mr WOOD: I happened to be on the station and there was hectares and hectares of dead mimosa and no one could explain why.

Madam CHAIR: Member for Nelson, would you like to put that question on notice?

Mr WOOD: I do not want to waste the poor man's time but do you want me to ask that question as to whether there was any studies done on that? I think it was on Melaleuca Station. I could ask the question.

Question on Notice No 7.4

Madam CHAIR: Minister, could you please repeat it for the record.

Mr WOOD: Minister, could you investigate as to whether there was any investigation into the dieback of mimosa on Melaleuca Station some years ago?

Madam CHAIR: Minister, do you accept the question?

Ms MOSS: Yes, I do.

Madam CHAIR: Member for Nelson's question has been allocated the number 7.4.

Mr WOOD: I said I would ask a Central Australian weed question—athel pine. Have we been able to eradicate athel pine or is it an ongoing program?

Mr DA ROCHA: It is an ongoing program. We are making progress but it is not eradicated.

Mr WOOD: Thank you. That is all my weedy questions.

Mr HIGGINS: Could I just ask a follow-up question? We spoke before with gamba and the giving out of glyphosate. But it is known that the pH level of your water can affect the effectiveness of glyphosate. In the rural area most of the water is bore water. When people get this glyphosate, do we give them any advice on that or do we presume they know it? Plus do we give them some product that will alter that pH?

Mr WOOD: It is on the instructions.

Mr HIGGINS: Yes, I know, but it is ...

Mr DA ROCHA: Yes, in the distribution of the chemicals at the various locations, there is a weeds officer there to provide advice to recipients as to how to mix the product and so forth.

Mr HIGGINS: I can assure you that information is not passed on when you get that ...

Mr DA ROCHA: I take that ...

Mr HIGGINS: I know it might be in the instructions, but I can tell you a lot of people who come in and see me about gamba say glyphosate does not work. I say, 'Are you testing the pH of the water?' They say, 'No', and I say, 'That is what you are supposed to do'. The response is, 'Why are we not told that?'

It is a bit of information that needs to get out a bit more. A classic example of how that is distorted is that a lot of people at the moment—and someone started the rumour—think if you use citric acid with glyphosate it is a hell of a lot more effective. But it has nothing to do with the citric acid, it is actually the effect on the pH that acid has.

It is something that needs to get out there a bit more. I know the famous saying, RTFM, read the fixed manual—or whatever you want to say. In a sense, we are wasting a lot of money if we are not ensuring that these products are not used properly.

Mr DA ROCHA: I will take that feedback on board.

Ms MOSS: Thank you, Member for Daly. We will definitely take it on board. As you know, the officers are on the show circuit and various other places making sure they have those conversations with people. We will take your concerns on board that that might not have been getting through.

Madam CHAIR: Any further questions on Output 3.2? That concludes consideration of Output 3.2.

Output 3.3 – Water Resources

Madam CHAIR: The committee will now consider Output 3.3, Water Resources. Are there any questions? Member for Daly.

Mr HIGGINS: Yes, I have three or four questions, which may surprise people. For water resources, whenever I ask any questions through the minister's office, I get an immediate response back. I thank the department for that.

I presume you are expecting these questions. Straight up, one of them is about Quintis. I know in the last couple of days we have questioned why it has been on the major projects list. It is under administration and there is a stack of different issues around it. My question is specifically with regard to water. I asked the question yesterday.

What is the status of the 35 gigalitres or 35 000—whatever—litres that is there? Why I ask this question is very specific. It is my understanding—I have been told—that Quintis has an unusual structure in its land ownership—that is, it subleases some of its holdings that carry sandalwood to private people. I am also advised that if those people who sublease do not sign a management agreement with Quintis, they are not given water through the Quintis licence. That is an issue being done by Quintis.

Is the department, first, aware of that? Second, if it is not aware of it, in the future will that licence be reduced because those people who do not have access to that water—because they are not using Quintis as their management, will need to get water. We have a problem there. My question is, is the department aware of it, what are we doing with that licence, should that be taken into account in any review of that licence and will it be investigated?

Ms MOSS: Thank you, Member for Daly. I will begin by introducing Christine Long, who is the Executive Director for Water Resources who is joining us for this session. Jo, do you want to talk to the specifics of that licence?

Ms TOWNSEND: Quintis, formerly TFS Properties, has 13 ground water extraction licences in its name, but also has a further 10 which are held by entities other than Quintis who have a management arrangement between them. The total water licences that it would have its plantations on are 23 licences. That totals just under 47 000 megalitres per year.

The majority of the licences it acquired through purchasing and leasing properties that already had a water extraction licence. Part of its strategy was to actively target the purchase of properties that already had a water extraction licence. That is because under the *Water Act* if a property is sold, it is deemed to have its licence entitlement transferred with it.

The matter that you are describing is something I would be happy to talk to you about out of session, if that suits?

Mr HIGGINS: Yes. I am quite happy to tee up a meeting with you, if the minister is happy enough for me to pass those contacts on. I was contacted to see if I could find out what is happening with it, or if I could get them a contact. So that is what I am doing now.

Ms TOWNSEND: We are aware of where Quintis has a management arrangement with a third party. Those third parties are the ones who are liable with compliance with their water licence. I would like to understand a bit more of what you are describing and what implications there might be for the Territory in that arrangement.

Mr HIGGINS: Yes, okay. I am happy to pass that on and hopefully get an answer on that. In passing that on, I do not necessarily want to be involved in those, if I could just be kept informed through the minister's office on that.

The next one is with regard to Akuna Blue. Again, I know the issue of the \$10m grant to them is a bit questionable in the view of how that money is being used. That does not affect your department as such, but my question—and I know I have been kept informed about the status of that licence. My question is twofold. One is, did the development fund get in contact with you to check that you had a water licence, or even ask you when that licence may have been issued before they made their decision? The other thing is, on the last timing that licence application will be reviewed, I think in August from memory. The question would be when they applied to redo their bore—I understand their first had collapsed and has been decommissioned and they have put in a new bore—why did we not take that opportunity to say, 'You need to apply for your liquor licence—liquor licence?—water licence. Water can be dearer than grog.

Mr WOOD: What kind of water do you have in Acacia?

Mr HIGGINS: Why did we not take that opportunity to get them to process that licence because, as you know, there was a lot of traffic through my office out there saying, 'Why are they putting a second bore down? Is it deeper and are they pumping more water?' It raised so many questions. It would be so much easier if people knew exactly how much water they are taking. I know that is a long question, but ...

Ms MOSS: It is a little. There are a couple of parts to it. Just to go back to the beginning of your question—and please let me know if we miss any parts ...

Mr HIGGINS: Yes.

Ms MOSS: The department was not in discussions with the Northern Territory Infrastructure Development Fund and was made aware after that approval had been given ...

Mr HIGGINS: They did not come to you at all and check. Okay.

Ms MOSS: That is that part of the question. The other part was about the decommissioning of the bore and the new replacement bore and why the licence ...

Mr HIGGINS: Why we did not progress a licence application then.

Ms MOSS: Obviously there are around 260 commercial applications that are currently with the department for processing. This is, as a result of the changes from July 2016, where they are now required to apply for a licence. They are based on systems rather than when applications were lodged. I do not know if you want to talk specifically about that particular Akuna Blue licence. But I did want to make the point that the bore was a replacement bore and not an additional bore.

Mr HIGGINS: I am quite aware of that. I have actually made it—I got the information and it came back very quickly, and made that point. I think my question was, rather than having us go through that heartache, why did we not actually start to do their licensing, knowing that it was a contentious use of a resource.

In that sense, we had mining people here saying, ‘You take these resources out of the ground and people should pay for it’. Here we have a company that is making money and they are not even licensed in any way, shape or form, and they have been given a grant. I would have thought it would be a contentious one.

My next question on that would be, can we give it some priority? I know we are getting close to August now.

Ms TOWNSEND: As you are aware, the decision to lift the 15-litre per second exemption in the Darwin rural area resulted in a large number of applications being received at once. The priority has always been to process people who had established their existing businesses on water extraction in the Darwin rural area completely lawfully under an exemption, but to try to get those people into a licensing regime before we then look at other licence requests there.

We also made the decision that we would prioritise. We would start with Berry Springs because it had a declared water allocation plan in place. Then we would move to the larger area of Howard. You will be aware that there are currently about 70 or 80 applications in the public domain now.

The Akuna Blue licence is in the Palmerston Dolostone aquifer and will be the next batch processed. To be fair to Akuna Blue, they did ask us to prioritise their licence application. Knowing it was contentious, we took the view that we had made a public commitment in how we would order them and that we would not change that order in response to one application. They would certainly have a preference to have their licence now, but we have said no. We are starting with the most straightforward ones for us, which are Berry Springs, moving to the largest batch, which is Howard, and then we work through from there.

Ms MOSS: If I can just make a comment on the amount of water as well. We are talking about the equivalency of watering six hectares of mangos, for example. I think it is important that we add some context around it as well.

Mr HIGGINS: I think when in some of the discussions—I do know whether I put it in writing, but some of the discussions around the Akuna Blue one and that replacement bore, I did make the point that if they are applying for a licence when they put a new bore in then surely they put a meter in. I said, it would be good for them to ensure they have a social licence going forward, that they actually make those figures available.

So, are they providing any of those figures? If not, could we actually ask them? I know, they do not have a licence so they cannot be compelled to actually make those figures available. That in actual fact may allay some of the fears of the people around. It would have to be on a voluntary basis, I presume, until such time as they got their licence.

Ms TOWNSEND: I am not aware if they have a meter or not. I presume, as an operating business, that they do. Perhaps we could ask them that. They are not required at this point in time to have one. Any water-dependent business that does not have a meter ...

Mr HIGGINS: Will have to get one in the future.

Ms TOWNSEND: Well, and really they should if they are trying to manage their water use.

Mr HIGGINS: That is probably enough on Akuna Blue.

Ms MOSS: Did you want us to take anything on notice?

Mr HIGGINS: I do not want to take it on notice, but it would be good if we could actually ask them and if someone could let me know. Look, have you got a meter? If you have a meter, why do you not make those figures available? In actual fact, it will probably allay a lot of people’s fears. I hear wonderful things coming out of how much water is being taken out of the bore. I do not know whether it is right or wrong.

The other one on charging for water—and I am not linking it to any of that, but we were talking earlier about the strategic Indigenous reserve, and then the trading and the issue of trading that with a mining business—especially around the fracking inquiry and the recommendation that mining companies are charged for that water.

Have we sat down and thought about how that process would take place? If you are allowing trading and then trade with a mining company, that means they have to pay for that water which traditionally has not been paid for. What sort of rates would that incur and who would it be incurred by? Would it be incurred by the mining company or the Indigenous people who are doing the trading? You can see there will complexities in that. The answer might be that we have not looked at it yet, but I would like to know if we have considered that and if we will say to people that we have a reserve sitting there for Indigenous people. The intention of the reserve originally was to provide an income for Indigenous people, so will there be an onus on the mining companies if they trade first with the Indigenous people before they trade with, say, a horticulturalist?

Mr WOOD: That is a complicated question.

Ms MOSS: It is, so I will shortly hand over to Ms Townsend. We are going through a *Water Act* reform process at the moment and there are a lot of components to that. A lot of work that needs to be done and things that need to be considered at a policy level. That is important work the department is doing alongside our regulatory reform program.

We are looking at the recommendation from the hydraulic fracturing report and the question of charging for water in the context of that recommendation, which has been accepted by government.

The Chief Minister said last week, and I completely agree, that it is a complex body of work. You need to look at the potential implications for other industries, but also the questions you are raising about how that works with things like strategic Aboriginal water reserves and trading.

We have an implementation plan being developed as part of that, which our department is an active part of. It will be released publicly on 17 July, and how we respond to that recommendation will be part of that. There is a broader body of work and conversations we need to have as a community.

Ms TOWNSEND: At the risk of being controversial—the issuing of fees and charges for water has not been grappled with in the Northern Territory but has been looked at in a number of other jurisdictions. It is in place, with the exception of Western Australia.

The independent Inquiry into Hydraulic Fracturing makes a recommendation about the application of fees for that industry alone. That then presents an opportunity to have a discussion on the application of fees more broadly. You are correct in linking fees with trading. It is a real conundrum if the Crown is allocating water for free for industry or commercial purposes and then those licence holders can trade that water for a gain.

The National Water Initiative is very clear that trading and pricing is a desirable thing, but it also comes with impacts for the Northern Territory. There will be a lot of people in the Territory who speak passionately about the high cost of water infrastructure and why that should be a consideration.

Across Australia there are lots of models for fees. You can look at fees based on management or use, or fees that focus on an area of competition. It is an area we have looked at a lot in terms of structural options, but it is the impact of those options that needs to be assessed more fully. That is a decision that will have to be made in consultation with those people who are affected, but also for the government to decide.

The water reform that the minister referred to—there are probably a number of key priority areas for us and that is we must improve the front end. When water is allocated we have to have a much tighter process around the allocation of that water in the first instance and that includes reforms to the *Water Act* to make my decision as controller much more clearly about social and economic benefits.

Once that water is allocated, we need to have mechanisms that allow it to be moved around and trade is one of them. But you cannot look at trade without really looking at fees. We are hoping to have a position paper on the reform process that we want to take out for public comment in August. That is a culmination of all the conversations we have had through water advisory committees, the advice we have had through the independent review into licences, the legal opinion that we have collected over the years and also some of the conversations that have been raised in forums just like this.

What we need to do to make water more effectively allocated is not too hard to know, it is the courage to go there.

Mr HIGGINS: The previous minister had a lot of courage. My question would be, we looked at the potential for any legal action in charging just one industry and not another for using that water.

Ms MOSS: Thank you, Member for Daly. It is certainly something that would need to be considered in the context of that body of work that is being undertaken.

Ms NELSON: Could I ask based on the Member for Daly's question? What input does your department have in the implementation of the 135 recommendations for fracking?

Ms MOSS: We are an exceptionally active part of that. It is being coordinated through the Department of the Chief Minister. Given that there are other moves afoot around the *Environmental Regulatory Reform*, we are already moving some of the functions over from the Department of Primary Industry and Resources into the Department of Environment and Natural Resources, where we are looking at the regulatory system as a whole.

The hydraulic fracturing inquiry also raises some questions about the process we have been going through for the environmental regulatory reform and consistency across industries. We have been a very active part, but it is being coordinated currently through DCM.

Ms NELSON: I have another quick question, which has to do with the implementation of the 135 recommendations and the *Water Act*. I know we are going through a review of the *Water Act* right now. I know what I want to ask but I do not have the right words. Does it go hand in hand, the review of the *Water Act* and the implementation or development of the 135 recommendations in regards to water usage?

Ms MOSS: Yes. Jo would like to respond.

Ms TOWNSEND: There are some very specific recommendations in the inquiry report about amending the *Water Act* to remove the current exemption that applies to mining petroleum activities. There is also another very specific recommendation around extending water control districts. They are things that need to happen much faster and we are anticipating that we will have, potentially, a bill in the next couple of months around that removal of that exemption. That is a long-standing commitment. That would mean that mining petroleum activities would be subject to licensing permit arrangements in the act.

The other broader reforms to the act will have an impact on those industries, of course, but they actually are much more wide-ranging. Some of the critical areas that we need to focus on is trade, under-utilisation, the issues around stock and domestic—so for people in those peri-urban areas; Darwin, Katherine, and Alice Springs—there needs to be stronger protections and arrangements for those.

We also need to look at making sure that I have, as the controller, sound frameworks to make decisions around allocations. We have got to get past this currently allocating and recouping, allocating and recouping. It is not a very stable way to run your water resources.

Ms NELSON: We need to get through the *Water Act* reforms first, before we can get to the ...

Ms MOSS: Member for Katherine, there is a lot of work that has been happening concurrently.

Ms NELSON: Great.

Ms MOSS: The reform to the *Water Act*—that work started some time ago. We had the water licence review, for example, with 21 recommendations made through that water licence review. What we saw in the four years that were looked into through that water licence review was half the water that could be allocated, was allocated in that period of time, and we have a seriously outdated framework for the allocation of water.

For us, it has been exceptionally important to do things like establish more of the Water Advisory Committee's feedback, returning that community voice; the establishment of the water portals so people have greater transparency around the decisions that are being made; and we have also put the additional resources into water resources as well. That is \$1.8m in this 2018–19 and \$1.6m ongoing, because we recognised as well that the resources in the department, to actually be able to process applications and those sorts of things, were seriously lacking.

There is a range of work that has been happening concurrently. I think we saw a fairly reckless approach previously in an under-resourced environment. That work has been happening for some time. I am very pleased—I mean, the department has already implemented 75% of the recommendations from the water licence review. We are strengthening that framework and the transparency around decisions and what is publicly available. All of that has already happened.

There is a lot more still to achieve. As Ms Townsend said, obviously water has been a key concern of the public through the hydraulic fracturing inquiry and the protection of those resources. It is important to us all. That work is continuing and we are strengthening that all the time.

Mr HIGGINS: When we talk about that independent review, the logic behind that initially was that there was something untoward about the issuing of those licences. Did that review find anything untoward?

Ms MOSS: Member for Daly, as I said, there were 21 recommendations made in relation to the processing of water applications. They made a number of recommendations that were particularly in relation to things like procedural improvements, administration improvements and made specific comments around how much water was allocated within that period of time with very few resources within the department to assess those.

Mr HIGGINS: So there was nothing that criticised any decisions made by the minister? I know that ministers do not make the decisions around the water.

Ms MOSS: In terms of whether it was critical about how decisions were made, I think it probably would depend on your definition of critical, because it provided 21 recommendations, Member for Daly ...

Mr HIGGINS: I am talking about with the minister.

Ms MOSS: ... about how that framework could be improved. What that certainly demonstrated to us was that that water—it is outdated. The *Water Act* needs serious work. I think that within that context—and I understand where you are going with this—that the former government worked within, some of these issues were apparent then and should have been picked up then, particularly regarding things like resourcing a department for assessing applications and making sure that process could be done thoroughly.

Resourcing departments is incredibly important, and supporting them to do vital work in the Territory to protect essential resources.

Mr HIGGINS: I would agree with you on that. I know when I took over the portfolio I tried to address a lot of that. My question was more specific. The inference was always made that there was political interference in the issuing of those water licences. My interpretation of that report is that it does not say that. That is the simple question. I am not saying that there were not problems in resourcing or with the act. All of those things over time need constant reviews. I would take to heart that you have implemented 75% of the recommendations. The rest of them, what sort of timeframe are you looking at the rest of them being implemented, or are they more longer-term type?

Ms MOSS: They are the longer-term recommendations that were made. Again, it is important to note that at the time, the report was made public, the department had already worked on, or completed, around 50% of those administration changes, things they had already identified needed to be improved. We went about supporting them to improve those procedural issues but I did want to make the point that a report with 21 recommendations did demonstrate there was definitely an issue with the way this was operating previously. It should have been recognised, in terms of—this was an issue that Territorians made very clear was something that they cared about deeply. They were concerned about the approach to water allocation as well.

It was done within a framework that was seriously outdated and needed work but there is also an obligation on us to recognise that and address those issues when you are seeing enormous amounts of water being allocated within that context. There is a lot of work still ahead but the department has done an incredible job.

Mr HIGGINS: I think my question is very specific about whether there was political interference and the answer is no there was not, so I will leave it at that.

Ms MOSS: If people still have concerns, we have established an ICAC.

Mr HIGGINS: Yes, well that was going to be my next comment. If they have concerns, maybe they should go to them. Just to clarify on something on charging for water. There has always been the issue around when

we introduce licensing and in the rural area people then say they are going to introduce charging and it is to some people's political advantage to actually hype that up a bit. Of course, the issue there is, I just want to ask some very specific questions about charging. I think they will pretty well be yes or no answers and I think that is probably the best way because I want to be able to quote this to people.

We have a plan to implement charging around the mining issue and I do not think you need to answer that, it is one of the recommendations of the fracking review. The other licences that we are talking about getting there are going to be basically commercial licences. Can you confirm that we have no plan to introduce charging in the loosely foreseeable future for commercial licences? That would just be a yes or a no on that one. Then my next one would be, have we got a yes or no on domestic usage of water as opposed to, if someone is exceeding that domestic usage, that third category then which is domestic-commercial, if you want to use that term. I am sure you understand the ones that I am talking about.

Ms MOSS: Yes, as I have said previously, we are currently undertaking reform of the *Water Act* and there is a whole range of conversations that need to take place as a result of that and we need to make sure we are making informed decisions. In terms of stock and domestic users, no. Obviously our focus at present is ...

Mr HIGGINS: So stock and domestic would be then, I understand what it means by that, but for the rural people that are purely domestic, they fall under that stock and domestic? Okay, yes. So no plans to introduce a fee for stock and domestic?

Ms MOSS: No. Our focus at present is obviously on the implementation of the 135 recommendations of the hydraulic fracturing report. That is focussed on the fracking industry so that is a recommendation, as you have said. We have accepted it and we are looking at that work. In terms of the other question you have around other commercial users, is that currently on the agenda? No but we obviously need to be very careful about how we are going about the issue of charging for water around the hydraulic fracturing industry. We need to understand the potential implications for other industries and we need to make informed decisions about that and that work is occurring. In terms of stock and domestic, no.

Mr HIGGINS: Then, my next question then—thank you for that, I can actually refer people now to the Hansard and say there are no plans to do it, here are the three different categories. The fourth category that I might throw into there is one in regard to excess water. I have had some discussions with various people in regard to this. That is, if you have a licence to pump 100 units of water and you exceed that—if you are a commercial user, I will not come to domestic at this point because they do not have meters—allocation, there is no plan to charge. I presume under the review of the *Water Act* you will have a couple of options. One would be that you either fine the person for exceeding their water limit, or the simpler approach would be that you charge for an excess. Will that be one of the considerations in going forward with regard to the charging? It is water over and above what your allocation is.

Ms MOSS: I will ask Jo to speak a little more about the excess water ...

Mr HIGGINS: She is probably not very happy that I am asking those questions ...

Ms MOSS: I will make the comment again that we are undergoing significant water reform and ...

Mr HIGGINS: Yes. I am asking these questions because I am asked all the time. I can say, 'Here are the answers to those specific questions'.

Ms MOSS: Yes. We are undergoing that reform because it is so important that we get the management right. These are a lot of the big, complex questions we have to answer.

Ms TOWNSEND: Thanks for that question. There is no current view about exceeding your water extraction licence conditions and being able to pay for that. That is where you would want trade to kick in. You would want an agile trading system. If you really needed more water you would want to be able to get it from someone else. With trade comes water markets.

You must work within your water allocation. We rely on people to work within their allocations so we can manage the system overall. It would be an offence for you to exceed your water extraction licence. People provide their monthly pumpage returns, which is how much they are pumping. We can give people an indication of when they are starting to track a bit high.

In some industries there is a large amount of pumping at certain periods of the years and then it tails off. We are aware of it and you can see it. For others, particularly things like schools, it may be that they have a water

leak and they do not know and we are say something is going on with your water extraction, they will draw it back.

Alongside the amendments we are making to the *Water Act* on the removal of this exemption, for stock and domestic we are also modernising the offence penalty provisions and introducing more flexibility in our offence provisions. The act does not allow us to be very effective enforcers of the act now. With those changes coming through this year we will have much more robust penalty and offence provisions and some flexibility in those.

Mr HIGGINS: Okay. In Budget Paper No 3 you talk about a water for purpose principle and its regulations. I know it was part of the Labor election promises. Can someone explain to me what we specifically mean by water for purpose?

Ms MOSS: Do you want to go to ...

Mr HIGGINS: Is it for washing, for growing?

Ms TOWNSEND: The idea of a water for purpose principle is a commitment in the sustainable water use policy position launched as part of the election campaign for the Labor government. We have had some discussions about what that principle actually means. In the early days it was criticised as being that we would get really restrictive and limiting.

For us, we have elected to see water for purpose as a collection of strategies. One is improving the documentation up front, making applicants provide a lot more information around their development proposals. It is also about having some amendments in the *Water Act* so I have a greater number of considerations I need to take into account. Currently, the section 90 factors are quite short and there is not a lot of latitude for me to be able to say, 'Hang on, is that a social or economic thing we want to do?'

The other part of it is to potentially look at strategies like staging applications linked to that development plan. It is really a collection of strategies at the assessment and application process, which is about being much tighter about what water is allocated for what purpose, with responsibilities on the proponent and on the department and also on the controller to be much more rigorous about that.

Mr HIGGINS: That is more trying to match it then that it is there for social or environmental or—is that what you are saying?

Ms TOWNSEND: Currently, section 90 factors in the *Water Act* that I need to take in to account are, is water available? Are there other water users? Is it going to impact on other water users?

Then there is a catch-all called 'other'.

Mr HIGGINS: Good.

Ms TOWNSEND: If I have an application in front of me for one sort of enterprise and then another, I have no way of saying, well actually there is a really strong case that the community benefits from this application are significantly weighted higher than this other thing.

It allows you, as a decision-maker, to apply a bit more of a lens around—strategically is this going to have benefits for the Territory given it is the Territory's resources going out. I am not saying it would be the only consideration but at the moment I am not required to take that in to account.

Mr HIGGINS: Do we keep a track of how much water bushfires use?

Ms MOSS: Can we take that one on notice?

Mr HIGGINS: Exceptional usage.

Ms TOWNSEND: There are some exceptional uses, yes. We can provide a bit more information about that.

Mr HIGGINS: Yes. If I generalise in the question—if that is all right?

Question on Notice No 7.5

Madam CHAIR: Member for Daly, can you please repeat your question for the record?

Mr HIGGINS: Could I get some details on the exceptional usage of water amounts?

Ms MOSS: Can I just clarify—is the question specific to bushfires?

Madam CHAIR: Member for Daly's question has been allocated the number 7.5.

Mr WOOD: It is an interesting phrase for your question—exceptional uses.

Madam CHAIR: Any further questions?

Mr HIGGINS: No. I will let the Member for Nelson ask some over there.

Mr HIGGINS: I suppose just one more on water. I am not too sure how it affects you but it would, I think. We have a whole stack of banjo lines or whatever—it was interesting. I asked the question of the infrastructure about banjo lines and they came back and asked me whether it had something to do with the pumping of fuel or something. It is a bit of a worry when we cannot get this out. But the issue, of course, is that a whole stack of these lines were put in through the rural area years ago and there is a stack of problems around them and I think the amount of wastage of water through that is phenomenal and some of these go under the highway, everything.

Do water resources monitor some of that or is it purely left to Power and Water and if we are really guarding our water resource should we not be having some involvement in this? Or should there be some sort of review around that?

Ms MOSS: It is one for Power and Water. It is their infrastructure.

Mr HIGGINS: In my question is, water resources are looking at the resource of water and this is actually a very big waste of it. Should they have some input in to it?

Ms MOSS: I think obviously it is something that is measured through Power and Water but I certainly take on board what you are saying here. But yes, it is measured through their agency currently. It is our policy, as a government, around the protection of water and the work that we are doing around water reform so all agencies should be taking the view that water is a precious resource and we need to be making sure that we are keeping a good eye on usage and wastage.

Mr HIGGINS: I think Power and Water have a water licence and when people apply for water licences they also say are you going to use overhead spraying or under tree et cetera because there is a different usage in that. Maybe we ask Power and Water how it controls the water? How are you using it to query whether they are actually really caring for it? I know you do not really want to take on Power and Water, but anyway.

Ms MOSS: I think they are up tomorrow, are they not?

Mr WOOD: Member for Daly has taken a few of my questions. Could I ask—I should declare that I am a member of the Howard Water Advisory Committee. One of the issues that I have raised and it is related to the banjo lines—it might need a government decision—it is the government that allowed too many bores to be approved in the Howard Water Advisory area. That is not blaming anyone that was just the way it was done. Your department is saying we need to pull that back because we are using more than the 80/20 allocation for water in that area.

One of the areas I was hoping that could be investigated, it is a carrot and stick approach. One is to get rid of some of those banjo lines, which would require a lot of money. I think back when your government was in power before, and when I had some power as well—a little bit of power—we asked to investigate the cost of getting rid of all the banjo lines in the Litchfield Shire at that time. I think it was about \$40m. That was about seven or eight years ago.

If that infrastructure could be developed in areas where there are too many bores, is there a possibility that you could have a program which said, we will give you free access to town water if you cap your bore? In a lot of cases, some people would take it up because as bores get older, 30 or 40 years, they are probably going to collapse, simply just fold in or need re-doing.

Have you ever given some consideration about a program that would include Power and Water naturally, but yourselves, so that we can try and reduce the amount of water coming out of the ground by giving people the opportunity to be part of the town water system?

Ms MOSS: I think that is a question, and as you said \$40m—7 or 8 years ago. I am not sure how much that would cost at present.

Mr WOOD: I am not saying it would happen overnight but it may be a rolling process targeted at the areas that need change.

Ms MOSS: I will take your point on board. I understand Power and Water will not do more banjo lines. But I will certainly take what you are saying on board.

Mr WOOD: You know there is an issue about stock and domestic. I need to put this question to you.

A lady rang me about a subdivision in the rural area recently. That subdivision application was to subdivide 2 hectares off an 8 hectare subdivision. She asked me for advice and I said you cannot get a new bore, because that is not permitted, and I know there are some issues about me making that statement by the way, it is stock and domestic bore.

I said that you can apply to have the people who would buy your land, to get their water using rain water tanks. She said, 'Yes, I am happy to do that but I have a response from Water Resources saying they still would not approve or support my application to subdivide because', and I am presuming this is the reason, 'the *Water Act* cannot stop someone from applying for water for stock and domestic'. Is that correct?

Ms MOSS: I will ask Ms Long to make comment on that particular issue.

Ms LONG: You are correct. The *Water Act* cannot stop somebody applying to construct a bore to access their stock and domestic water right.

Mr WOOD: I know you are saying you are reviewing the *Water Act*, but that was actually my first question. The difficulty I have as a local member, and being a member of the Howard Water Advisory Committee, is that I know on the one hand that we are trying to reduce the number of bores so we do not put more pressure on the environment, on the other hand people have legal rights. I cannot say to someone, 'Well, I do not support your subdivision', simply because the department has not gotten up to scratch with fixing the legislation. The question really is, when will the department make some changes so this particular issue is not left up in the air?

There is another seven-stage subdivision in Berry Springs which has been delayed and delayed. I presume it is for exactly the same issue, because this is now leaving not only people like myself who people ask for advice, but even people who wish to develop their land are not sure whether they are coming or going.

What will the department do to try to sort this situation out in relation to the legality of stock and domestic bore?

Ms MOSS: You have referenced the fact we are going through the water reform, which is good. I think the legislation that impacts here is the *Planning Act*. Our department provides input through that process.

Ms LONG: There are a couple of things that are at play here. There is the *Water Act* and the *Planning Act*. As the minister has indicated, our department provides comments to the Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Logistics in relation to development applications, including subdivision applications.

The *Planning Act* has the powers—I guess I can use that word—to stop a subdivision if the underlying groundwater resource is over-allocated.

Mr WOOD: Right, but in this case the person is quite happy to subdivide the land and provide water through rain water tanks. But, again, she has been told that the department said no because they are scared of this

issue in relation to their right to get water for stock and domestic; therefore, they will not support that application.

Ms LONG: It is slightly more complex than that in that under the *Planning Act* the Development Consent Authority cannot issue a development permit for land to be subdivided on the basis that an alternative water supply to ground water will be provided. That would be an invalid act under the *Planning Act*.

Mr WOOD: That is the first time I have heard that.

Ms LONG: In terms of what we are doing about it, there are two acts—as I said earlier—at play here. What we are trying very hard not to do is blame each other. We have the two agencies point at each other and go, ‘It is your act’, ‘No, it is your act.’

Really, what it is, is the two acts operate within their own spheres, in a legal context. They are like two planets going around each other in that they interact but they do not intersect. We have already started the conversation with the Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Logistics to actually work out what it is we are going to do about this. Whether that is going to require amendments to the *Water Act*, the *Planning Act* and possibly the NT Planning Scheme, we do not know at this stage because we have to work through it.

As I said, what we are not going to do is continue to point the finger at each other.

Ms MOSS: Member for Nelson, it is an issue that we are very aware of. There are pressures in development going on in the rural area, that simply were not when legislation was originally drafted. We recognise a level of urgency in addressing these issues.

Mr WOOD: My concern is that this is not a big development. This is one person subdividing a piece of land off their block, which might help them financially. They are basically being held back by the bureaucracy—I will put that in a nice way. The bureaucracy has its own rules and regulations that all of a sudden are inhibiting what was a normal process before. My concern is that the bureaucracy—it is its problem, not the developer’s, or in this case the lady’s, problem. She is doing what she could legitimately do previously.

All of a sudden, because we have this issue about the planning people not allowing you to have a subdivision with water tanks—which is basically what I think you are saying even though there are people in my area who have just water tanks—is confusing to me. We need development in the rural area and we understand that bores are probably not going to be the way it is going to go. It is either going to be town water or the alternative, water tanks. It leaves a wide open question as to what will now happen with any development in the rural area where we have a stoppage to any more bores being drilled.

Ms TOWNSEND: This is an issue we have been seeking legal advice on for a few months. I am aware of the case you are talking about. I have some sympathy for the situation they are in. Under the *Water Act* we cannot prevent someone putting in a stock and domestic bore for their own purposes, but when it comes to subdivision that right does not automatically apply. You get one right for your stock and domestic take, but if you want to chop your block in half you do not get two goes. It is one of the issues we have had to get complex legal advice on.

Our preference is that people have rainwater tanks in the Darwin rural area if they want to subdivide and are areas of high risk. It is a limitation in the current *Planning Act* intersecting with a limitation in our act. We got the advice now we have to unpick it.

Mr WOOD: I hope I am not speaking out of turn for my Water Advisory Committee, but I raised this—why can we not fix it? They said they would review the *Water Act* and I asked how long it would take. They said at least 12 months. That will not solve the problem we have now. Can this issue not be fixed by an amendment or do we have to wait for the *Water Act* to be reviewed?

Ms MOSS: I had foreshadowed things like the Strategic Aboriginal Water Reserves and our commitment to remove the exemption for mining and petroleum activities. There will be other points at which we will make amendments to the *Water Act* sooner than the reform process. As Jo said, we are working through that issue. We are aware of it, and we will try to rectify these things as soon as we can.

Mr WOOD: I might write to the minister for DIPL and ask what is going on there, because that is just as important.

Do you have any rural blocks are stock and domestic? How many are not that would need to apply for a water licence? Have you done any aerial investigations? If you fly over in the middle of Dry Season you would have a fair idea who waters more than 4000 square metres.

Because of the complexities of this issue, does the government intend to pursue this idea further or does it have any other ideas on how to reduce water use in the rural area considering it was the government that approved the bores in the first place?

Do you have numbers of people—just say 2% of people in the rural area water more than 4000 square metres. You all have the complications of 4000 square metres, by the way—is it worth doing anything? Is it worth the agony to pick up a few people who are not commercial growers but happen to water their whole five acres of lawn?

I am not promoting that, by any means, but the effort to sort that out may not be worth it in the bigger picture of trying to reduce usage of the water table.

Ms MOSS: Five thousand have bores, and less than five thousand do not.

Mr WOOD: Is that the whole rural area—Litchfield, for instance—or a certain aquifer?

Ms MOSS: The whole rural area.

Mr WOOD: How many of those do you think require a licence under the changes?

Ms MOSS: Those are all stock and domestic.

Mr WOOD: Do you know how many do not fit into what is commercial—mango or vegetable growers—and are simply five acre blocks that are green and not producing anything? That was an area we were looking at. There are five-acre blocks which are not productive. They are very nice, but they use much more than the 4000 square metres of land you are entitled to. Do you have any figures on how many of those people would fit into that category? They are the ones who do not want to put—I have met some of them—a meter on their bore because they say, ‘I have done this for the last 20 years. I do not produce bananas or mangoes, so what are you on about?’

Ms MOSS: Ms Long will make comment on that for you.

Ms LONG: I am not really clear what you are asking, but I will have a go at it anyway. I think you are asking have we done a Google Earth look at the rural area for the average householder who may have exceeded their 0.5 hectare of garden ...

Mr WOOD: Yes.

Ms LONG: It does not strictly fit into the definition of a stock and domestic user who, strictly speaking, should therefore have a licence.

The answer is we do look at the rural area. Your question earlier was, ‘Is it worth the return on investment?’ My answer is no, and the reason is we use an average for these types of blocks anyway when we do our water modelling, and that average just takes into account the highs and lows. While there are people who might have a very lush, green rural block, who might strictly be over the 0.5 hectare, there are also people who have nothing on their blocks as well, as the figures the minister presented earlier indicate. We have bigger fish to fry.

Mr WOOD: That sounds what I would call a very sensible, pragmatic approach.

Ms LONG: Thank you.

Mr WOOD: I have that on Hansard now, so that is good. My last question is about water charging. Can I clarify? The recommendation of the onshore fracking inquiry talked about charging for water. That could be either they charge for the water licence and then they can use whatever they are licensed for or will they be charged for the number of litres that go through the meter?

Ms MOSS: Thank you, Member for Nelson. The preference would be volumetric, but there are different ways in which those water charging systems could be put in place. We need to complete that body of work.

Obviously, other jurisdictions have. We want to encourage efficiencies around that water use in a volumetric approach. If that assist with that. There are obviously different systems in place across different jurisdictions. We have to undertake and complete that work.

Mr WOOD: Volumetric control would allow a government to charge an onshore gas company per litre for the water used. But if that company bought a water licence, would they still have to pay the government for the water used from that water licence? They have not their own source water, it is someone else's source of water.

Ms MOSS: The licence would transfer.

Mr WOOD: That is right.

Ms MOSS: So, yes.

Mr WOOD: Does leave a real dilemma? Because when that water is held by this person, they get it for free, but the same water goes to this company and is charged volumetrically, it seems to be. I can see the issues you have in front of you. I mentioned the other day the government was probably worried about the politics of fracking, but it should have said, 'We will look at the recommendations'. I am not sure people realise the ramifications of that recommendation.

Ms MOSS: Member for Nelson, this is exactly what I meant in this being a very complex piece of work. This is a recommendation that has been accepted in principle for the exact reason that there needs to be a distinct body of work done on the potential implications of decisions made in relation to this. It is complex, but it is certainly a body of work that is being undertaken by the department in relation to the hydraulic fracturing report.

Mr WOOD: My last question relates to—the Member for Daly raised it—was the review of the water licences. One of the things that concerned me in the early days was that people were putting in ambit claims for water. Did you find that there were some applications where the amount of water had been asked for were well over what was required presently or in the future? If so, is the government able to pull back some of those excessive claims for water if that was the case?

Ms MOSS: Member for Nelson, we have been very focused on making the administrative changes and the procedural changes that were recommended through the licence review. That has been the focus of the department and as I have said they have already undertaken about 75% of those recommendations. That has absolutely been our focus rather than individual cases.

Mr WOOD: I was not looking so much at individual cases from that perspective but if there had been an over-allocation of water for a particular property and bearing in mind, if you knew water trading was something that was going to be permitted, obviously people could be putting in an ambit claim to actually trade that water for a profit. I have always had a problem with this whole water trading business, that the government gives a water licence for free and someone sells it for a couple of million dollars added onto a property.

It just seems a system that might sound good. People might complain that the cost of water does not help when it comes to the cost of production but then they turn around and trade it. Someone has to buy it. You have to wonder why in the first place we are not buying it and giving the taxpayer some money for the particular resource. If you can do it later on and someone else gets a private profit from doing the same thing.

Ms MOSS: Yes, Member for Nelson, there is a case I can think of in relation to this. There are other intersecting policies here, things like the 'use it or lose' policy, where the usage of water monitored where it is not being used. As you know, through the Water Advisory Committee, the department does liaise with those licence holders to work towards pulling some of that back. Do you want to talk specifically about over-allocation?

Mr WOOD: I suppose the question was, did the review find there was an over-allocation?

Ms TOWNSEND: I certainly do not want to talk about over-allocation. But the review did cite one infamous example. Could that water be recouped? No. There is not good provisions to do that. That licence has since been sold and is being fully utilised. The commentary I made before around how we have a more robust way of getting it out the door, it does seem like there was some enthusiasm to get water licences and some optimism about how that water could be used. I do not know that people necessarily asked for water so they could trade it. Certainly they asked for water so they could make their properties more valuable.

Also people also asked for water to deal with uncertainty in reliability levels and that is why one of the very strong recommendations coming out of a number of Water Advisory Committees is to move away from low reliability because it encourages asking for more. We are in the process of going through a correction now, so where licences have been allocated for three or more years and there has been no use up to a certain threshold criteria, those licence holders have been asked to give good reasons for why that should not be returned.

Mr WOOD: The reason I asked was there was an article in the paper by, I think, a Japanese landowner who wanted to look at growing cotton and his response was—well he has dropped the idea because there was not any water available in that particular aquifer. I was concerned, of course, that you want the maximum use of the water to help as many people as possible. That is where I was coming from.

Ms MOSS: You are absolutely right, Member for Nelson. There are some legacy issues with that system and the way that water has been allocated previously that we are working through, but we still have work to do.

Mr WOOD: Thank you. Thank you, Madam Chair.

Madam CHAIR: That concludes consideration of Output 3.3.

Ms MOSS: Madam Chair, I do have the answers to some of the other questions we took on notice, if now is appropriate.

Madam CHAIR: Yes, go ahead.

Answer to Question on Notice No 7.3

Ms MOSS: For 7.3, the Member for Nelson's question about what we are doing on the Victoria River for the control of neem trees—the answer I have is that the most established infestations are in Wickham River, Victoria River Downs station, Victoria River upper reaches on Aboriginal and Aboriginal leased land around Kalkarindji in Daguragu, and Timber Creek.

The focus has been on the upper catchment area as the most strategic area. They have an annual ongoing neem eradication program. The Territory Natural Resource Management Organisation funded, and the Victoria River District Cattlemen's Association recently undertook a project on Aboriginal leased land around Kalkarindji, which involved the lessee and local Aboriginal people.

We continue to provide education and awareness where needed.

Mr WOOD: Thank you.

Answer to Question on Notice No 7.4

Ms MOSS: I have an answer for 7.4, which was, 'Is there any investigation on dieback of mimosa at Melaleuca?'

A PhD student studied mimosa dieback on Melaleuca station in the Mary River catchment between 2012–15. The results of that study were inconclusive but indicated that native fungus was present in the plants and were likely to contribute to plants coming to dieback. So, salinity is not the cause.

Stresses include seasonal drought and flooding, biocontrol agents, native insects, fire et cetera. Further spread of biocontrol agents are likely to increase the prevalence of the dieback.

Madam CHAIR: Thank you, minister, for those answers.

Output 3.1 – Bushfires

Madam CHAIR: The committee will now move on to Output 3.1, Bushfires. Are there any questions? Minister, if you would like to ...

Ms MOSS: Yes, I would like to welcome Ms Bremner to the table. Everyone is very familiar with Collene.

Mr HIGGINS: I know the director is very excited about the allocation of the land near Townend Road. I know she is grateful that I have kept writing letters about this piece of land. Could you actually just give us a bit of an outline on when you plan on moving there, what is going to be there, and then also whether any of that includes an update to Hughes airstrip?

Ms MOSS: I am really excited about this. I do not recall ever receiving a letter from you actually.

Mr HIGGINS: I wrote to the Infrastructure minister.

Ms MOSS: I know you are passionate about it.

Mr HIGGINS: I will give you copies of the letters.

Ms MOSS: I am really excited about the \$4.5m in the budget for a new headquarters and also about the \$2m going into the operational budget—I know I am preaching to the choir here. You all appreciate the incredible work that Bushfires NT and our volunteer brigades do across the Territory. I think this is going to go a long way to supporting the work that happens there.

The new facility will ensure that Bushfires NT is able to respond better, but also they have an appropriate facility to do that. There will be command and control there, training facilities and a better space for them to engage with volunteer brigades in the community. The \$2m will also fund five additional positions which will include volunteer coordination. I am really pleased about this.

Mr HIGGINS: It was a good Dorothy Dixier for you.

Ms MOSS: Thank you, I really appreciate it. It is good we are all excited.

Ms BREMMER: To answer the question, yes, I am very excited. In fact, I was at the block on Sunday to have another look just to make sure it had not moved anywhere. The really exciting thing about this particular project is it is sort of in the middle of the heartland of the Vernon and Arafura regions of bushfires. Eleven of the 22 volunteer bushfire brigades are situated in that area, of which a large section is part of your electorate. In particular, obviously the concern we have had—and we have been working very collaboratively with the Weed branch—is the increase in gamba grass and the impact on fire management in the rural area.

The \$4.5m and the land does not include upgrading Hughes Airstrip. We only use it as a full command post. There is no intention to relocate the planes from Batchelor at the moment. That has quite a good airstrip. We still have telecommunications and other ways we can utilise the deployment of aircraft.

Mr WOOD: You can always use Strauss.

Mr HIGGINS: I also wrote to the minister—the Infrastructure minister I am referring to in all of these letters—and sought a connection into the water main a bit closer to Hughes airstrip. Do you know if that has been done? The response came back that yes, it would be.

Ms BREMMER: Yes, that is right. The response has been done, but the work has not yet been done. Obviously, we have had some discussions with the Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Logistics because there were two places. One was, obviously, at the Batchelor airstrip which was also an opportunity while they were looking at potentially resealing. My director of operations has had some conversations about the logistics of that. We were given some advice that we could proceed with putting some water on the airstrip as opposed to using the tanker ...

Mr HIGGINS: Trucking it.

Ms BREMMER: The truck. But that has not yet ...

Mr HIGGINS: Has not occurred. When do we plan on having the people move from Batchelor? Do we have a time frame on that?

Ms BREMMER: Obviously the design has not—we have started looking at the functionality and what we need. We will be looking at moving both the Batchelor team, as well as the team that is based in Winnellie and co-locating on the one site.

We were given an indication that the facility may be finished during the fire season next year, so we have no intention of relocating the team at that time, so it might actually be a stage approach. The Winnellie team might be able to move without impacting on fire management operations. We are going around, obviously, the season, the builds and when it is suitable to move and relocate that team.

Ms MOSS: But we understand, Member for Daly, from the Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Logistics that that will be around 12 months. As we said, the physical move of the team depends on a range of other factors as well.

Mr HIGGINS: Okay. More for the minister directly. The original concept of that block of land—it is quite a big block and in some of the original uses for that block there was a section in the corner put aside for police. I am sorry, these letters went—as I said—to the Infrastructure minister. The issue was it was originally allocated to police and there was a concept that the whole block would be used for Bushfires, Police, ambulance, et cetera. Is government considering that into the future? At this point, the whole lot is being allocated to Bushfires. As we know, it is a pretty long piece of land that probably does not lend itself to residential or anything else other than that. It is in a very central location for some of those essential services.

Ms MOSS: Yes, thank you, Member for Daly. It is, and the boundaries are changing around that response and the type of response people need. My focus is obviously on the Bushfires infrastructure. I am really pleased we are delivering that. There is obviously a separate infrastructure program that is happening in Palmerston with the new Palmerston police station in terms of that emergency response planning. But I am fairly sure you could probably ask questions of the Chief Minister on that particular project.

My focus is certainly the delivery of the new headquarters for Bushfires NT. This needs to happen now and I am really pleased that we are progressing that. As I said, they do incredible work. Our volunteer brigades are doing incredible work and this puts them in a much better position to be interacting with everybody who is out there providing this response.

Mr HIGGINS: My question was more, you get your foot in the door so you may as well ask a few other questions while you are there. So Bushfires are there, I would really like to see the ambulance and police extend there. That is good.

If I go back to a question that I was told to move to now. What sort of carbon farming projects are being developed on Aboriginal land and how does the department get involved in these projects?

Ms MOSS: I might just start before I hand over. Carbon farming is such a fantastic opportunity in the Territory and we certainly see some incredible projects happening particularly in Arnhem Land around carbon farming and ranger groups, I think are world-leading, really. I think people are sitting up and taking notice of what is happening in the Territory. We have undertaken the establishment of the Aboriginal Carbon unit and we are working on our strategy. I might hand over for some more on some of the projects that are happening across the Territory. Again, this is just one of the things we should be talking more, particularly nationally, about what is happening across the Northern Territory when it comes to carbon farming.

Ms BREMMER: To answer your question, there are 25 carbon projects across the Territory of which 14 are on Aboriginal land. Carbon farming in the Territory has had a long history. All of those approved carbon-funded projects under the emission reduction fund is based on the Savannah region, so basically the 600 millimetre and above. That is where we have approved methodology for measuring carbon emissions. There is future work. The carbon industry are working closely with the industry but as well as in the Aboriginal carbon projects. The industry is looking at alternative projects that extends it below the 600 millimetres so that is where we start talking about sequestration. We do not yet have the approved research in relation to that. So carbon farming in the Territory started in 2006 and the methodology was developed with Territory researchers and those five Aboriginal traditional owners in Arnhem Land that set the scene really in relation to carbon farming.

Mr HIGGINS: It is a bit like the foxes question. Where is the 600 millimetre line, roughly?

Ms BREMNER: So we draw it—I am trying to think—Tennant Creek, yes.

Mr WOOD: Same as the foxes.

Mr HIGGINS: Same as foxes. I did say similar to the foxes question. We cannot keep hounding on about this, can we? The strategic bushfire management system, does that take into account the effects of burn-offs, say on air quality, at all? Does that take that into account at all?

Ms BREMNER: Sorry, I do not understand the strategic ...

Mr HIGGINS: How we do our strategic pre-burns, early burns, planned burns, whatever we call them. Do we take into account the effect of that on air quality in doing any of that planning?

Ms BREMNER: Planned burns, or the fuel mitigation burns, are done at a time of year when it is considered safe to do so obviously before the fire weather conditions worsen especially around late-August and September. Prevailing winds do have a habit of pushing the smoke over Darwin. We have been working—I have had meetings with the Environment Protection Authority, the Department of Health and NT Fire and Rescue Service. Not all the smoke is coming from us.

Interestingly enough, the month of May was particularly bad. I live here as well and noticed it. Our Bushfires team in Batchelor was responding to 122 fires in the Vernon Arafura area, of which only 10 were planned burns. There is quite a bit of confusion about when we get smoke, whether it is planned or wildfire. It is a difficult mix, but it is definitely an emerging concern. We are working on trying to put in some advice to residents about that.

Just last week I met with the Bureau of Meteorology, trying to work out how we can fit this in. Fire management in the Northern Territory is also landholders' responsibility. If we have people doing burn-offs on their land, how does that then feed into the information that might be put to the general public? It is a challenge that we are taking into account.

Ms MOSS: If I can just add to that—Parks play a role as well. They have been putting information out about their controlled burns in places like Lee Point. How all that comes out in a cohesive way to the public is something we continue to look to improve.

Mr HIGGINS: I am pleased you mentioned the weather bureau there, because I think they can have a lot of input into that as to when you do it and how long the smoke might hang around.

Ms BREMNER: Yes, there is a cost.

Mr HIGGINS: That is all I have at this stage. Member for Nelson, I am sure you have some on this.

Mr WOOD: A large part of my electorate comes under the Bushfires Council, which I think people forget sometimes. Has there been any review of the boundaries between the NT Fire Service and Bushfires? I have one subdivision which is north of Girraween Road, which is in Lambells Lagoon bushfire area, yet it is adjacent to Northern Territory Fire Service—Koolpinyah Fire Service. Has there been some look at rationalising the boundaries?

Ms BREMNER: We have been looking at boundaries between the emergency response area, which comes under the NT Fire and Rescue Service and what we call the fire protection zone, which under the *Bushfires Management Act* is the responsibility of Bushfires NT.

We have been working closely in five areas around Alice Springs, as well as Tennant Creek and Katherine, and we have the parts that fall into your electorate. The Vernon Arafura and the Darwin ERA has not expanded as yet; we have not changed the boundaries on those. We are working very closely—I have been, with my operational staff—to continue to practise to make sure the residents, whether they are on the ERA side or our side, get a level of response and are not left behind. We are doing an exercise on Wednesday with the fire service to test the transition from command and control from Bushfires to them. We are making sure we have similar operating procedures and language.

Mr WOOD: They work together where they cross over.

Ms BREMNER: Absolutely. We are trying to ensure that following on from last year's season, where we had severe fire weather conditions, we are well practised in that—as well as expanding it so it is not just Bushfires NT and Fire and Rescue, that it is a broader community response, or government agency response.

Mr WOOD: Perhaps we need to bring back the 'fiery games', which we have not had for a few years. Bushfires have been out of it for a while, but we used to have them many years ago. They were worth doing because they promoted ...

Mr HIGGINS: Could be part of the Arafura Games.

Mr WOOD: That is a good idea. They promoted and let people in the community know that these people exist.

Ms BREMNER: If I may. Obviously our firefighting capability relies on our volunteers in the areas to do that. There have been increasing demands on our volunteering service, they have not had a lot of time to play. I think that is the reality and with the new funding that is coming Bushfires NT's way, one of the things we want to do is not play games but increase training in relation to firefighting capability and making sure it is accredited training that is recognised.

Mr WOOD: The games did have some training aspect but at least it was a social event as well and it was good for the community.

Ms MOSS: Important for people to know that that opportunity exists as well, if people are looking for volunteering opportunities.

Mr WOOD: Yes, opportunity to promote volunteers in that area.

Ms MOSS: Yes, absolutely.

Mr HIGGINS: Have we done any work on the changing demographic of our volunteers, and specifically age? It is at the forefront of my mind.

Ms MOSS: The changing demographic of volunteers is certainly something we are very cognisant of and the recruitment of new volunteers coming through. I think that additional operational funding and the ability to have positions able to do that volunteer coordination work is going to help put us in a much better position to look at that recruitment.

Always happy to have those conversations about how we can more people involved. There are lots of people involved in our volunteer brigades who have been involved for a very long time and are very experienced. We need to make sure that they are sharing that knowledge with new volunteers coming through, we rely so heavily on them in the Territory.

Mr HIGGINS: Has some of that additional funding been allocated to promote volunteering, especially to the younger ones. If it is, how much, roughly if it is not specific in the budget?

Ms MOSS: As I have said before, there were five positions that will be funded through that and two of those are to do specifically with volunteer coordination and training with \$1.3m for equipment and training and just over \$1.2m for grants. We have the employee costs and money in there for operations as well. There is a component of that that is around volunteering coordination, training, equipment and recruitment is definitely something we are very cognisant of.

Mr HIGGINS: When we talk about the money being given to the volunteer organizations, what percentage is actually government funded as opposed to self-funded through the volunteers raising their own money? Do we have a percentage of that? I am not after a figure.

Ms BREMNER: It is actually dependent on which brigade you are looking at. I cannot give you a figure on that, but obviously every year an audited statement is provided and those brigades are required to say what part is fundraising. They often get paid to do mitigation burns along roadsides or on vacant Crown land. They include that as part of their fundraising.

We provide the brigades, we being Bushfires NT through the NT Government, with operation funding to run the running costs for the firefighting fleet. With the new funding coming in, we are looking at reviewing how we fund the volunteer brigades. If we think about, in those years where we do not have a lot of wildfires, the

stress on the vehicles is not as much. The last couple of years, when we have had quite large wild fires across the Vernon and Arafura it has had a real impact on the running costs for those brigades. It has also affected their fundraising. Those are certainly some of the areas we are looking and I am looking forward to reviewing how we fund the volunteers in the future. What I do not want them to do is think that they have to fund raise to operate. That is not the intent of what we are trying to do.

Madam CHAIR: Any further questions?

Mr HIGGINS: Could I just ask one more? Then we can finish with this one.

We are talking about water and charging and all that sort of stuff and there is—I think it is Livingstone—went through a bit of a discussion with the reserve. The water on the reserve was actually metered and then they were trying to charge the brigade for the water—and we passed comment, that Bushfires do not pay for water even though it was metered. Has that issue been resolved? Is that then an issue that should be promulgated through all the brigades to ensure that they are all aware they should not be getting charged for the water?

Ms BREMMER: That I actually cannot answer.

Ms MOSS: Can we take that one on notice, Member for Daly, about whether that issue is ...

Mr HIGGINS: Yes. I will follow it up with a separate letter. I do not think I could regurgitate the question and we are going to finish this one right at 12.00 to make it nice and neat.

Madam CHAIR: Thank you and that concludes consideration of Output 3.4 and Output Group 3.0.

The committee will now break for 30 minutes and recommence at 12.30 pm. Thank you.

The committee suspended.

OUTPUT GROUP 4.0 – ENVIRONMENT

Output 4.1 – Environment Management and Policy

Madam CHAIR: We will recommence the hearing. The committee will now consider Output Group 4.0, Environment, Output 4.1, Environment Management and Policy. Are there any questions?

Mr HIGGINS: The department has carriage of implementing recommendations of the scientific inquiry. I note not all of them, as some of them fall under the Chief Minister. Are you confident that you have enough funding to do that and when is it planned on being completed? Picking up on some of the comments around the water and the resources, talking about the adequate resources and staff, are we planning on putting extra staff on? If I could just get a handle on that.

Ms MOSS: Thank you for the question, Member for Daly. Yes, there is an additional \$1.13m going in. I think that was part of my opening statement, which was around specifically the initial work around the hydraulic fracturing inquiry. We do have a new position in the department that started earlier this week, yesterday.

So, yes. The initial work is obviously around that implementation plan and feeding into the work that is being coordinated through the department of the Chief Minister. After that point, I imagine a lot of that will come under the carriage of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources. We will absolutely continue to keep an eye on the resources that are needed across the department to make sure we have a robust environmental regulatory regime in the Territory.

We have a lot of reform work happening at the moment but we will continue to monitor that.

Mr HIGGINS: You mentioned in the opening statement—I think you were talking about a date of July to get some of the initial work done. The end of July, was it?

Ms MOSS: 17 July, approximately.

Mr HIGGINS: Middle of July—what day of the week is that, sorry?

Ms MOSS: I am not—again, that was part of the recommendations of the hydraulic fracturing inquiry around getting that implementation plan out.

Mr HIGGINS: That will produce some sort of timetable for us on all of that?

Ms MOSS: Yes. I will ask Ms Townsend to talk a little more about that so you have some more detail, but yes it is about how we are going to approach all of those recommendations going forward.

Ms TOWNSEND: When the Chief Minister announced the lifting of the moratorium he also announced that there would be an implementation plan and that implementation plan, as the minister said, is due around 17 July.

That implementation plan is really around taking the 136 recommendations because there is an additional one and corraling them in to some order. It will actually present publicly how we will approach each of the recommendations individually but also how we will approach them semantically.

Myself; my colleague, Alister Trier, the under Treasurer; and the head of the Department of the Chief Minister, Ms Jodie Ryan; are part of a steering committee overseeing this. Across our departments there are staff working to address those implementations either individually or across government departments.

As the minister said, we have received \$1.13m. Some of the money will go to support a very small implementation team in our agency. Some of it will be additional resourcing for the environment division to support the NTEPA and the minister for Environment to consider regulatory approvals. Some of it will go for additional members of the Northern Territory Environment Protection Authority to be able to advise the minister on hydraulic fracturing.

Ms MOSS: Just if I could, Member for Daly, some of the areas, as they relate to us, obviously the water section—there is a number of recommendations around water so potential changes to the *Water Act*, guidelines and codes of practice for the industry. The SREBA, the Strategic Regional Environmental and Baseline Assessment, which we will have to have—the Department of Environment and Natural Resources will again be at the forefront of, but also the new water plan districts. There is a whole range of areas in that 136 recommendations that will require us to be properly resourced.

Mr HIGGINS: That baseline data—how can we be assured that we are going to have the resources to do that? I know that it sort of says the companies have to do that but it still means you have to look at it and assess it. I think government has a specific role to play. That is, while the mining companies might be doing it, we need to be assured that the data we have is correct. I can see a heavier workload there for that lot of people.

If those people are already occupied now what is going to dip out in the future if they are not available to do that? I think back to a question when the previous Labor Government introduced land clearing, and I asked a question—people that are going to enforce this, where are they coming from? They said weeds branch. We have seen a proliferation of gamba since then. That is always a concern that worries me. It is not a criticism. Every government has done that.

What assurance do we have that, in keeping an eye on that base data that is being collected, that it is to our standard, to our government's standard?

Ms MOSS: There is funding for the planning for the SREBA. I will get Ms Townsend to talk a little more about that. You are correct, there obviously was a recommendation in there as well about cost recovery from industry—at what point that occurs. I think that is a conversation for us to have but we need to make sure that we continue to get the standard of data, as you say, that is to the standard expected by both government and the community and we will be actively involved in that.

Do you want to talk some more about the SREBA?

Ms TOWNSEND: As the minister said, there is \$0.5m allocated through the NT government to support some of the planning and methodology setting for the SREBA. That work is actually led by the Department of the Chief Minister but we clearly have very key role around the environmental aspects of that.

The commitment is that industry will be a significant contributor to that but the Australian Government has also put money on the table for that.

Mr HIGGINS: Who has put money on the table, again?

Ms TOWNSEND: The Australian Government.

Mr HIGGINS: The federal government. That is very good.

Ms TOWNSEND: The conversations are currently with CSIRO, Geoscience Australia and the National Centre for Groundwater Research. We will be partnering with other independent and respected research organisations in doing this. It is not something we have to do all alone. But we have some resourcing to get cracking with this, but we also have a little time to do the planning around the SREBA correctly, and some resourcing.

Mrs LAMBLEY: Can I ask a question?

Mr HIGGINS: Hang on. One more and then I am done. You mentioned staffing and said you had put one staff member on. Can you tell me what level that staff member is? Do they have specialist experience or is it just purely administrative? Could I get a feel for that?

Ms MOSS: Yes. Again, given it is operational level, I will hand over to Ms Townsend. I understand it is an ECO2 position and yes, that person has specialised skills and relevant expertise.

Mr HIGGINS: Yes, so if I can get a feel on that.

Ms TOWNSEND: The person we have appointed has environmental experience in the petroleum sector and has also worked for the Northern Territory Government, advising it on environmental matters relating to the petroleum industry ...

Mr HIGGINS: Okay, I think I know who it is.

Ms TOWNSEND: ... most recently been working for a ...

Mr HIGGINS: Minister.

Ms TOWNSEND: ... an environmental consultancy company in Queensland. That person is an ECO2 and they are on board for two years. They are supported by and AO7. That decision was in recognition that the bulk of this work was being shared across a very small executive team, most of whom are in this room and that this would allow for a very senior position with authority in their own right to drive some of this on our behalf.

Mrs LAMBLEY: Has any decision been made about exactly where those SREBA or baseline assessments will be done and how many will be done across the Territory in preparation for hydraulic fracturing?

Ms MOSS: We will ask Dr Fisher to come up to the table to provide more information, Member for Araluen.

Dr FISHER: I have been helping with the department with the implementation of recommendations to date. Hopefully, not for too much longer.

Mr WOOD: That is the boss.

Dr FISHER: I mean there will be someone else to do it.

The inquiry report requires a SREBA to be done in any area before it is developed to a production level for onshore gas. It seems quite clear that the most immediate target area for the industry is in the Beetaloo sub-basin, which is in the area south of Daly Waters to Elliott and east towards Borroloola. The first SREBA we are planning at the moment will be in that Beetaloo sub-basin area. The boundaries are set, depending on where the zone of any potential impact from the development trajectory of the industry is.

In the future, if the industry looks to develop other basins, then there would have to be a similar SREBA exercise in those.

Mrs LAMBLEY: Given that these assessments take between two and three years minimum, I would have thought the government would have started a range of these baseline assessments across the Territory to prepare for greater exploration and production.

Dr FISHER: Yes, that is a good point. There is probably a misconception about the rate of development of the industry. It is actually quite a slow development trajectory. It is important that the SREBA does not have to be done before exploration. It has to be done before production.

Mrs LAMBLEY: But that was the point of contention in the report, wasn't it?

Dr FISHER: It was. There are certain things that have to be done before exploration can continue. But in the very broad and comprehensive baseline assessment, it is before production. Yes, while your point is a perfectly valid one, I think we will know five to 10 years in advance of future areas likely to be coming into production. That will actually give plenty of time for planning of a SREBA. Really, we want to get the first one right, and that will be a good model for future planning.

Ms MOSS: If I could just add there, Member for Araluen, obviously that work did not begin, a decision had to be made and that decision was not pre-empted by government. We were awaiting that scientific inquiry to do its work and provide the report. So we did not pre-empt the decision.

Mrs LAMBLEY: Given that the only SREBA that will be undertaken in the Northern Territory will be in the Beetaloo Basin in the short to medium term, at this point in time, it is safe to say that there will not be any hydraulic fracturing beyond the Beetaloo Basin in the long term or next three to five years.

Mr DA ROCHA: In the next three to five years, I believe, that is reasonable.

Mrs LAMBLEY: That is interesting. Thank you very much.

Mr WOOD: That was pretty heavy, all that. Mine is a little bit less than that. It is regarding the Container Deposit Scheme. Minister, could you explain the large increase in Container Deposit Scheme approvals?

Ms MOSS: Member for Nelson, I had not introduced Paul Purdon, who is at the table with me. He is the Executive Director for the Environment division. I will get him to speak to the Container Deposit Scheme.

Mr PURDON: Good pick-up, Member for Nelson. This is an accounting issue, it is not a dramatic increase in the number of approvals that we have issued. What the numbers show in the different budget estimates is a methodology change in terms of how we count the approvals. In our 2017–18 budget we had Container Deposit Scheme approvals at 270. Our 2017–18 estimate increased dramatically to 994.

The change in methodology is that we are now counting—it seems like common sense, really—every approval as an approval, whereas previously we were counting the number of companies that had supply approvals. As you might expect, one company might have a number of supply approvals that they have applied for over time and been granted over time. So one company may have up to 20 different supply approvals.

If you account for the number of companies with supply approvals instead of the actual number of supply approvals in existence, you get a lower number. That is really the discrepancy that you can see there.

Mr WOOD: Minister, I gather you are going to review the act pertaining to the Container Deposit Scheme. Will you consider changing the regulations to allow expanding the number of containers that are exempt, such as milk? To me, that is the classic problem with our Container Deposit Scheme. On my right—well, it is. That is 10c. It is exactly the same container made out of exactly the same material, but because it is milk it does not have it.

Do we lead the way and try to wake up the rest of Australia to unify and make the system more efficient? Because at the moment it is an inefficient process to recycle product and reduce the amount of landfill. I can give you other examples; you probably know them. A one litre bottle of iced coffee does not have the 10c on it. That is crazy. Non-alcoholic wine has 10c on it, and wine has 10c on it, and it can go on for a long time.

In your review, is there a possibility that the Northern Territory could lead the way in trying to rationalise the whole system of container deposits?

Ms MOSS: Yes there is, Member for Nelson. I am expecting that I will receive the results of that review in August. There has been a significant amount of interest in that from yourself and from a range of people and the general public as well. South Australia went ahead with a container deposit scheme, as well, and we have worked over the years to be consistent with South Australia.

We have had input into the development of other jurisdictions' schemes, as they are going along that journey as well. It is something that is often part of our national conversations. Where we can get some more of that uniformity, we should be doing that.

In terms of the wine and the plain milk, it has been based on those beverages that have typically been prevalent in litter surveys and consumed away from home. The consistency is important and you make very good points. I know through the department we have that input into the development of other jurisdictional container deposit schemes as well. We must not shy away from giving the Territory credit, we have been alongside South Australia leading the way with this kind of scheme, for a long time.

Mr WOOD: I know the scheme well. I have written to both ministers in New South Wales and Queensland and it is disappointing that the minister in Queensland basically said 'No, we are not interested because we are only looking at litter'. That is 20-year-old thinking from South Australia. We have moved on from litter, moved on from recycling product and have moved on from reducing landfill. New South Wales has not changed much either.

I am saying that perhaps the Territory needs to show the way. I know that might be difficult to do because the problem with, once you said that milk container will have 10c on it in the Northern Territory, then you will have the companies complaining that they will have to change their labelling, et cetera. But we have been through that and I think that at the moment especially, as we are trying to promote a better environment and hopefully get more involvement in remote communities with recycling and in schools.

I know I am waffling, but the other day I went to my local school. They had the containers that they have popper juice in, the aluminium cardboard container, I am not sure what the proper name is. They had one for juice, one for flavoured milk and one for milk. The kids had to put up their hands to say which one had the 10c on it. One of them does not. The message you are sending out to your kids is that this one is okay for recycling, because you get 10c, and this one you do not get 10c on it.

So that lack of uniformity is what is setting the whole concept back. I would be interested, minister, what the review is and whether there is an opportunity for the Territory to take the lead.

Ms MOSS: I will keep you updated on that, Member for Nelson, I know it is of particular interest to you. As I have said, we need to continue to have those conversations nationally. South Australia and the Territory went ahead and did it because it was the right thing to do. I know there are other jurisdictions playing catch-up, but we will continue to have those—as much input as you are having with other jurisdictional counterparts, that is welcomed as well.

Mr WOOD: Is there any move to a national scheme? I think you have Tasmania looking at it now and Western Australia, which would only leave silly old Victoria out of the system if it comes into play.

Ms MOSS: We will continue to have those conversations at a national level about how we can harmonise the schemes. What other jurisdictions then choose to do is out of our control. It is a topic that comes up often at our environmental ministers' meetings.

Mr WOOD: One other one, which I think is really important ...

Madam CHAIR: That is a quick one, it is about the container deposit scheme and you probably answered it minister. The information for the survey results—where is that to pass on to our constituents? There are a lot of remote people very interested in looking at recycling in their communities.

Ms MOSS: I have not received the review yet, I expect that I will do in August. A quick overview—there were 714 responses to that, 76% of respondents said they thought it was successful, 81% said that they participated because they were environmentally conscious. We see that more people are paying attention to. The issue of recycling—I acknowledge that there are organisations in remote areas that have been awarded some of the environment grants to undertake some of their own recycling programs and initiatives as well. Once I have that it will be tabled in parliament once I have had time to consider it. But I will certainly make sure that people have that information.

Mr WOOD: A good question, Madam Chair, because if we can get more people in the remote communities to get their product back, the percentages will go up. Minister, what were the results of the environment grant to the Motor Trades Association? I have a Territory end-of-life about tyres study.

Ms MOSS: Can I take that one on notice, Member for Nelson?

Mr WOOD: Okay.

Question on Notice No 7.6

Madam CHAIR: Member for Nelson, can you please repeat for the record?

Mr WOOD: Thank you, Madam Chair. Minister, what were the results of the environment grant to the Motor Trades Association for a study of the end-of-life of tyres?

Madam CHAIR: Minister, do you accept the question?

Ms MOSS: I do.

Madam CHAIR: The Member for Nelson's question has been allocated number 7.6.

Madam CHAIR: Are there any further questions for Output 4.1, Output Group 4.0?

Mr HIGGINS: It may not be able to be answered by you, minister. Are all the mining management plans and annual performance reports on all the active mines online at the moment?

Ms MOSS: That would be a question for the Department of Primary Industry and Resources, Member for Daly.

Mr HIGGINS: I was not too sure whether it was an environmental one or what. That is okay. The public portal that we spoke about for environmental decision-making, has that been established yet?

Ms MOSS: Has it been established yet, was that the question? It has not been established as yet.

Mr HIGGINS: It has not?

Ms MOSS: No.

Mr PURDON: The portal is the subject of an election commitment has not been established yet. I think you will find that most of the environmental decisions of interest are already publicly available on the NTEPA website. It is not much of a step to go from there to a portal.

Mr HIGGINS: It was just that Budget Paper 3, page 195 said it was going to be there. That was all.

Madam CHAIR: Further questions? That concludes consideration of Output Group 4.0.

OUTPUT GROUP 5.0 – STATUTORY BODIES
Output 5.1 – NT Environment Protection Authority

Madam CHAIR: We will now move to consider Output Group 5.0, Statutory Bodies, Output 5.1, NT Environment Protection Authority. Are there any questions?

Mr WOOD: I will start off on this one. This one came to me yesterday from a concerned member of the public. Do you know if the EPA was involved in a court matter regarding an extractive mining company in the rural area? And the reason I am asking is that there was an understanding that perhaps that court case went against that company which has put that company into financial difficulty.

Mr PURDON: I am not 100% sure of the case or the company you are referring to. There is no immediate extractive mining company that I am aware of that the EPA has been in court with. We have had prosecutions recently of a supermarket operator in relation to a noise complaint from air conditioning; a waste handler who illegally buried waste in Humpty Doo area—I am not sure whether that is perhaps the same case you are talking about but it seems a little bit different—and also successful prosecution of a company in Pinelands who did not store hazardous waste in an appropriate way. It basically let it spill out into stormwater. They are the three prosecutions I am aware of in the last 18 months.

Mr WOOD: That company was at Pinelands?

Mr PURDON: Yes.

Mr WOOD: Minister, I do not know where this question will go but I wrote a letter to your predecessor regarding the possible environmental impacts of the cattle holding facility at Noonamah. The predecessor did say it was on his list, but I have heard nothing since. Of course, the previous boss of the EPA has since left.

Mr PURDON: I recall you asked a similar question about six months ago, Member for Nelson. We have an ongoing program of doing compliance checks on a range of industries. The cattle yards are a part of that. Your interest is in the Noonamah yards a number of years back.

Mr WOOD: And the effect on the Elizabeth River.

Mr PURDON: That is right, and I think at the time we followed up on that. We are seeking assistance from residents in the area to notify us if they see anything untoward because we are very reliant on people reporting pollution incidents to us. We have not received any reports in relation to those yards in the last 12 months, as far as I am aware. We have been active in other cattle yards in the rural area and also redevelopment of cattle yards closer to the city. So it is part of our ongoing program. We are in consultation with the industry and the Department of Primary Industry and Resources in terms of how those yards are operated and what is good practice.

Mr WOOD: I think the reason for the inquiry was the possible—pollution is probably a hard word for it. But if you are going to have a large number of cattle, you are going to have a large amount of manure. You are going to have some nitrogen runoff. The issue was, is that nitrogen runoff getting into the Elizabeth River and affecting the ecology of the river.

Mr PURDON: Yes, that is right, and increased nutrients can be considered pollutants as well.

Mr WOOD: Should I write again?

Mr PURDON: You are welcome to write again. We understand your interest, and as I said, it is part of an ongoing program for us.

Mr WOOD: This was raised by other people and I noticed it is in your annual report or in the budget. You studied the potential impacts to significant water bird aggregations from alternations to the hydrology of the Legune floodplain. What conclusions did you come up with? I think some people would be interested to know if we are going to have all these prawn ponds, whether that will attract a lot more wildlife into that area.

Dr FISHER: Would you mind asking your question again?

Mr WOOD: This came out of the EPA report. They studied the potential impacts to significant water bird aggregations from alternations to the hydrology of the Legune floodplain. What conclusions did you come up with?

Dr FISHER: As we do for most development assessments my group provided a lot of advice about the potential for those impacts. That was considered in the EPA's assessment of the prawn farm project. It was written into—and also in the Commonwealth's consideration of the project under the APPC Act. There clearly are significant aggregations of water birds in that area. So there is the risk of impact there.

Mr WOOD: Is that risk of impact on the company losing its prawns, or impact on the bird environment being altered?

Dr FISHER: The risk we were mostly concerned about is the potential risk from the environment being altered. There is a second issue about if birds start feeding on the prawns, what does the company do about them, and therefore is that also a potential impact?

Mr WOOD: Harvest the birds.

Dr FISHER: Yes, although most of the birds in that area are not species that actually dive. So the main risks to prawn farms is from diving birds like cormorants.

Mr WOOD: Magpie geese.

Dr FISHER: Most of the birds in that area are water birds which feed on the surface, so that was not the largest concern for us. But if the company, in future, has to develop bird scaring techniques then that is something that they will be required to do further work on, the most effective way.

To cut a long story short, some of the conditioning around the approval of that project requires them to do a very comprehensive monitoring program of the water bird populations and the usage of the wetlands in that area. There is a reference group formed from relevant ecologists and wetland experts to oversight that program.

Mr WOOD: My last one might be a bit strange again. This came out of the annual report, I think it was the Chair who wrote this in his foreword. 'Your annual report said you investigated crowing roosters in residential areas. How was this solved, and how was the roast chicken?'

Ms MOSS: I might ask Mr Purdon to answer that question but he might not know how the roast chicken was.

Mr PURDON: I am not familiar with that particular case and how it was resolved. I can say that noise complaints make up a large share of our pollution hotline calls and they can be typically very difficult to resolve unless those involved in the complaint are amicable to trying to resolve the issue themselves. Using the *Waste Management and Pollution Control Act* provisions to deal with nuisance issues such as a noise complaint is a long and difficult process. But as to that particular case with the crowing rooster, I could take it on notice.

Mr WOOD: He actually said crowing roosters plural, so I thought this might have been a problem in Anula or somewhere. In relation to noise, is there a review of the noise act if it is called that?

Mr PURDON: Yes. The NTEPA is developing some new noise guidelines in a framework for better regulating noise and providing better guidance and what is appropriate in terms of noise levels from various industries and in various different situations. One of the reasons that is so important is that the *Waste Management and Pollution Control Act* sets up a very subjective test on what is a nuisance noise and what is not. So the EPA is trying to provide some guidance to fill that very grey space around what level is acceptable and what level is not.

Mr WOOD: Certainly a difficult area. Thank you, that is all the questions I have, Madam Chair.

Madam CHAIR: Further questions for Output 5.1? That concludes consideration of Output Group 5.0.

Answer to Question on Notice No 7.5

Ms MOSS: I have an answer to a question taken on notice 7.5 which was the Member for Daly's question about information being provided on the exceptional use of water as it pertains to bushfires? The answer to 7.5 is water for bushfire operations may be accessed from bores or nearby dams and creeks. Access to ground water for bushfires from roadside water points utilises Power and Water Corporation infrastructure through the use of a Power and Water Corporation card. There are no limits to the volume of water that can be extracted for bushfire operations.

Some of these bores are included under the Power and Water Corporation licence to take water from a bore which also includes extractions from the McMinns and Howard Springs bore fields for reticulated water supply. The maximum entitlement under this licence is 8420 megalitres per year. Power and Water uses approximately 60% of their licence ground water entitlement annually. The entitlement recognises access to water for emergency supply purposes. Alternatively, access to ground water or surface water can be obtained with the permission of individual landowners. The department is currently reviewing Power and Water licences to determine if all the bores are listed on the licence and recognise the need to service Bushfires' operations.

Mr WOOD: Could I cheat?

Madam CHAIR: I do not know if I am going to let you cheat but I will let you ask something if it is on that.

Mr WOOD: It reminded me, we talked about charging for water. If an onshore gas company harvests water in their own dam, are they free to use that without being charged for it?

Dr FISHER: One of the recommendations of the inquiry was that the use of surface water was not allowed for hydraulic fracturing.

Mr WOOD: I must admit I will read that again. It sounds a bit strange if you can harvest water on a dam.

Madam CHAIR: Thank you, minister, for that answer.

OUTPUT GROUP 6.0—CORPORATE AND GOVERNANCE

Output 6.1 – Corporate and Governance

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

That concludes consideration of Output 6.1, Corporate and Governance.

Output 6.2 – Shared Services Received

Madam CHAIR: The Committee will now proceed to Output 6.2, Shared Services Received. Are there any questions?

That concludes consideration of Output 6.2, Shared Services Received and Output Group 6.0.

Are there any non-output specific budget related questions?

This concludes consideration of Output Groups relating to the Department of Environment and Natural Resources. On behalf of the committee I would like to thank the officers who have provided assistance to the minister today.

DEPARTMENT OF TOURISM AND CULTURE

Madam CHAIR: Thank you, minister. I invite you to introduce the officials accompanying you and to make an opening statement, if you wish, regarding the Department of Tourism and Culture.

Ms MOSS: Thank you Madam Chair. Thanks for the opportunity to make an opening statement today. With me from the Department of Tourism and Culture, I have the Acting Chief Executive Officer, Michael Tennant; Acting Deputy CEO, Andrew Hopper; Executive Director for Parks, Wildlife and Heritage, Mark Ashley—he will come to the table when we get to that output group—Executive Director Community Participation Sport and the Arts, Phillip Leslie; Deputy CEO of Strategic and Organisational Alignment, Lorraine Corowa—who will also come to the table when required—Chief Financial Officer, Joanna Frankenfeld; and Executive Director for Strategic Services, Susan Kirkman.

This agency is incredibly important to building the Territory's reputation as an attractive and vibrant place to live, work, study, visit, research, and raise families. It is critical to the Territory's economic growth. The Department of Tourism and Culture, which brings together a number of previously separate agencies, has a key role to play in achieving that important strategic direction.

The newly restructured department is leveraging and aligning parks, wildlife, heritage, sports, recreation, arts, museums, festivals and other cultural assets in order to drive economic growth, bring more visitors to the Northern Territory, enhance the Territory's liveability, better preserve and activate our natural heritage and cultural assets, build partnerships, economies of scale and operational efficiencies.

A key focus of the Department of Tourism and Culture this year has been the development and roll out of government's unprecedented \$103m Turbocharging Tourism stimulus package which is all about attracting more visitors, stimulating the economy and creating more Territory jobs. We are already seeing some early winds from this investment with the recent direct flights from China between Shenzhen and Darwin, and new air routes from Brisbane. There is one in to Alice Springs and one to Uluru.

Our record package includes \$56.2m for tourism infrastructure to create more memorable experiences for our visitors, particularly on parks and reserves. Work is under way on these important job-creating, visitor-boosting projects. Under our Turbocharging Tourism package, we have already provided more than \$1.4m to 56 Territory businesses as part of the Visitor Experience Enhancement Program.

Thanks to the additional Turbocharging Tourism investment, the department has also escalated its focus on innovative and targeted cooperative marketing. This means more opportunities to get the word out about the NT as a vibrant, entertaining, beautiful and welcoming place that is full of opportunity, community and aligning government's strategic goal to increase our population, build our workforce and grow the economy.

I look forward to continuing to share the results of our Turbocharging Tourism efforts as we continue to roll out this package. Importantly, it is providing a critical immediate boost to our tourism industry and local businesses ahead of other major investments that will also attract people, create jobs and stimulate the economy. That includes our \$100m arts trail initiative, which will become a major tourism drawcard, generating economic benefit throughout the Territory.

Work is well under way in developing the arts trail, including planning for gallery extensions at Mimi Aboriginal Arts and Crafts (inaudible) in Katherine, worth a total of \$10m. There is also a \$10m enhancement at Nyinkka Nyunyu in Tennant Creek. I also look forward to announcing a further \$10m worth of gallery enhancement works in Arnhem Land.

Our arts trail investment also includes a \$50m down payment on the game-changing national Aboriginal art gallery in Alice Springs and \$20m towards the cultural centre there as well. Equally exciting is our more than \$55m investment into the Murrumbidgee sporting precinct, with three major stadiums either just completed or under way. I think it is really important to note that at this point, it is unprecedented.

The \$18m Darwin indoor netball stadium is due for completion in November. The \$16.7m tennis centre will officially open mid-July to meet the growing needs of local tennis competitions and provide a facility capable of holding national-standard events. Work has started on the \$25m home for rugby league at Warren Park. These are just some of the highlights of the work under way by the Department of Tourism and Culture. I look forward to taking questions from the committee on these and other aspects of the agency, which plays such a critical role in economic development, job creation and supporting vibrant and healthy communities across the Territory.

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

Mr HIGGINS: If I could just make some comments and I would like to thank all the public servants we have here. I think the whole department is critical in the whole economy in the Northern Territory and it is one that we need to keep a very close eye on to ensure that it is achieving those results.

I really only have one question that is in regard to the tennis centre that will open in July. I think we should actually, rather than a question, I think we should actually commend Tennis NT for a great job. I have been out there and had a tour of that. I know they have a lot of help from Sport and Rec and Phil Leslie has had a lot of input into that and I know that stems a lot out of the Davis Cup coming to the Territory. That is just a comment.

The question I suppose that I have to ask—you also mentioned about the turbocharging and I think Budget Paper No 3, page 203 talks about Turbocharging but what specific performance indicators do we have that will measure that and the thing in asking what those performance indicators are? There is also a prediction that the numbers are going to go down over the next 12 months—the number tourists. I just wanted a bit of clarity around that. I suppose in doing that the overall statement, I would be interested in how any of this is being measured so what indicators we are using at the moment.

Ms MOSS: Thank you, Member for Daly. First, to your comment, I think you are absolutely right, Tennis NT have done a fantastic job at the tennis centre and have worked very strongly with Sport and Rec around that—there are currently tournaments being played out there. There are people playing there now, but it will officially open in July. We are all looking forward to that as well as the opening of the other major sporting infrastructure projects.

The question is a complex one because there are three components to the \$300m Turbocharging package—part of that around marketing, part of it around infrastructure and obviously the rest around supporting festivals, events and experiences in the Territory.

In terms of the comment around a drop in numbers, one of the challenges that we anticipated and knew was going to affect us in the Territory is the change happening at INPEX. There is an opportunity there in terms of seats on planes and beds in hotel rooms but a challenge around making sure we are filling those with holiday visitors. I just wanted to make a comment there about numbers.

We have a target of 53 000 holiday visitors as a result of the Turbocharging Tourism package and will continue to measure how that is tracking. But in terms of things like the \$10.85m that is going in to additional cooperative marketing with airlines, those sorts of things can be tracked through numbers of visitors coming on those routes.

I might ask Mr Hopper to talk about some of the measures—because we agree we need to make sure that money is spent strategically and is delivering more visitors across the Territory, not just in the Top End but in Central Australia and through our regions.

Mr HIGGINS: Before Andrew Hopper gives us that answer, if we are predicting that decrease with INPEX, I would really like an explanation. If you are going to measure how effective this extra spend is—you mentioned 53 000 extra visitors—how is that being measured and then how is the drop caused by the INPEX being measured?

The simplistic approach is, we are spending more money, our numbers will go up but this one is the situation now where you are saying the numbers were predicted to go down or are predicted to go down and then we are spending this money, they are going to go up—we still going to have a decrease. We have two different things at play there, how are we measuring the two of those to ensure the money is being spent effectively?

Ms MOSS: Member for Daly, it is important to note they are counted as different kinds of visitors. When you look at our visitor numbers, you can look at holiday visitors, business visitors, visiting friends and relatives, for example. There are different categories, if you like, of visitors who are tracked through different data sets ...

Mr HIGGINS: It would be good if we could get the answer around those categories to get some understanding. The overall question that the budget papers produces is, 'Hey, we are spending all this money but the numbers are going down'. If you are a person who does not understand tourism, you will have difficulty comprehending that we are spending \$100m but we will get fewer visitors.

I am putting that simplistically, I am not saying that is the result. I am asking how we are measuring that that is not the result that we are getting.

Mr HOPPER: It is tricky because there are differing types of visitors, as the minister has discussed. But we track all of those different types. The 53 000 is very much aimed at holiday visitors and we need that to lift. What we are acutely aware of is that, as a result of any major project in any jurisdiction, there can be a level of displacement with holiday visitors. We believe in this instance we have seen that happen. We have seen equally an increase in business travellers to the Top End—Territory broad, but into the Top End.

Our aim is to understand what they are right now—in effect, as benchmarks. The additional 53 000 is very easily tracked through the national surveys that are run by Tourism Research Australia. We are confident we will be able to see what happens. It is tricky. Obviously, the \$103m is not all aimed just at marketing. There is a lot of work being done around experienced development. That is critical. We need, from a tourism perspective, those new products coming online. Whilst there are some longer-term projects coming, we also need to make sure we are doing things now to improve our product offering—and equally new products. We always need to be either developing what we have or creating some new opportunities.

It is a mix. We can look at things like—we are obviously tracking how people respond to the Territory from an advocacy perspective, so we want good scores in that regard. We can again see what that is doing relative to previous years. We would like to see that improving so that as people leave here they are talking positively about the Territory. Marketing is super critical, of course, but equally word-of-mouth endorsement is as important because it is person-to-person and people take that sort of information on board and it has a real impact. It is multifaceted.

Mr HIGGINS: Yes, so ...

Ms MOSS: Member for Daly, sorry, I can also add that one of the things we are very aware of is our visitor numbers are tracking at about 3% growth in the Territory. Other jurisdictions are around 6%. We need this injection and to make sure we are lifting our game so that our growth is on par with what is happening in other jurisdictions. We want to make sure we are putting in the effort required to take advantage of the opportunities that are ahead of us.

Mr HIGGINS: Yes. When we look at the base numbers we start with—with tourism you talk about these different categories, like people coming up on holidays, on business, then you have the INPEX people

leaving. Does the department have those base figures, as at now, available. I am not asking you to rattle them off, I am just asking if we have them now. That is the first bit.

Mr HOPPER: Yes, absolutely. Those figures are released quarterly, so we have them then. For example, the up to March 2018 figures will be released in the coming days. There is a bit of a lag—a quarter lag—but we get those figures quarterly. We have a very clear picture from the national data picked up from a domestic and an international visitation perspective of exactly what those figures are.

Mr HIGGINS: When we look at this figure of decreasing tourists in the KPI in the next 12 months, is that figure a prediction of the increases and decreases? Is that able to be given out at the moment? In other words, when we predicted an increase over the next 12 months—in saying we will get a decrease because of INPEX and an increase because of our advertising, can someone give me the figures that say how much we are predicting our increase will be in visitor numbers from interstate based on our spend, and what is the decrease? I am trying to find if I am happy and this committee is happy, that we have the information that will measure the performance of this spend?

Mr HOPPER: I do not that figure with me and I would be happy to provide that in more detail.

Mr HIGGINS: Could we put a question on notice? Under those categories we produce for three months, how is that projected forward to give us that decrease?

Mr HOPPER: I would like to add, one of the challenges with some of these major infrastructure projects, is absolutely understanding when that change is going to start happening. I think, at the moment, in planning towards the latter half of this year, we should see that capacity really come available. Having a clear picture of when that is going to occur. I do not think anyone could answer that right now, but equally we are ready and waiting to go. A lot of the turbo-work is planned and in place and that is rolling out over quite a period of time.

Mr HIGGINS: I think my next question would have been along those lines. Where we have spends and infrastructure and spends in marketing, do we get a breakdown of what we expect each of those to impact on our tourist numbers.

Question on Notice No 7.7

Madam CHAIR: Member for Daly, could I get you to repeat your original question for the record?

Mr HIGGINS: My question is in regard to the KPIs that are set to measuring the turbocharging and the tourism initiative, it predicts a decrease over the next 12 months. Can we see the breakdown of the predicted increases into the current categories of how we track visitors at the moment?

Madam CHAIR: Minister, are you happy to accept that question?

Ms MOSS: Yes, I do.

Madam CHAIR: The Member for Daly's question is allocated the number 7.7.

Mr HOPPER: Yes, we can provide that. As a starting point, what we have been really clear from the outset is that 53 000 holiday visitors is a genuine target that we have gone on record and stated.

Mr HIGGINS: I do not question that, I am trying to get the breakdown.

My second question would be along the same lines and how we are measuring the different spends. I have got some in infrastructure, some in marketing. I am saying, where are we getting our best bang for the buck? What are we expecting to come out of the infrastructure spend, out of our marketing, and if we have got a breakdown of that marketing?

I know these are pretty broad questions but, to me, if we are going measure, it is how we are measuring it. It is a large amount of money, as the government said, and it is a critical area to the Territory.

Ms MOSS: I am sorry to do this to you, could you repeat your question for me?

Mr HIGGINS: I knew you were going to do that.

Ms MOSS: I am being serious.

Mr HIGGINS: You want me to repeat that now? Can the minister provide us with details on what the predicted increase in tourism numbers we are going to get based on the different categories of the over \$100m spend.

Ms MOSS: Do you mean in terms of the breakdown of infrastructure, marketing.

Mr HIGGINS: Infrastructure as opposed to marketing and then which areas of marketing, if we have a lower breakdown.

Ms MOSS: Yes. If you are happy for us to take on notice so I know we can provide you with more of a contextual picture of that and the measures?

Question on Notice No 7.8

Madam CHAIR: Member for Daly, could you repeat that for the record please?

Mr HIGGINS: Can the minister provide me with a breakdown of the predicted increase in tourism numbers resulting from the over \$100m spend broken into the various categories; where that spend is; being infrastructure, marketing, and whether that marketing is local or overseas; and what other categories might be there?

Madam CHAIR: Minister, do you accept the question?

Ms MOSS: Yes, I do.

Madam CHAIR: The Member for Daly's question is allocated the number 7.8.

MS MOSS: We do have an expected return on investment for the \$26.57m worth of marketing of \$345m to the NT economy. We do have some of those. That component is what we expect. In terms of the other two, we can.

Mr HIGGINS: My reason for asking those questions is not just that it is the amount of money, but it is looking at the budget papers and seeing how we are measuring it. I think that is critical. You have someone sitting on your left who has a lot to do with business. I am sure they would like to claim that they are increasing the tourism numbers through their portfolio.

Ms MOSS: From our perspective, as I have said, we want to be able to report on that to the public about how that is working. We want to make sure that any future funding going into tourism activities is going into tourism activities and markets that are working for us. It is in all of our best interests to make sure that targeted spending is providing the return on investment that we all want to see.

I think this is an economic stimulus for the Territory, and it is important that we make sure to continue to see it that way and make sure it is working.

Mr HIGGINS: I have no more on the statement. I will keep my questions for the specific output areas.

Madam CHAIR: Any further questions on the minister's statement?

Mrs LAMBLEY: Thank you, Madam Chair. My main interest, not surprisingly, is the national Indigenous art gallery and culture centre. We are all excited about this in Alice Springs. It stands to be the biggest public infrastructure project we have seen in the town for many, many, years. As well as that it brings an unprecedented facility, an art gallery and culture centre, of national significance to the town. I think it is safe to say that people in Alice Springs, and hopefully right across Australia, are very positive and excited about this gallery.

I just wanted to clarify firstly—the funding for the art gallery and the culture centre, the \$50m and the \$20m, they come online in 2021. Has that changed?

Ms MOSS: No, we certainly have not changed when that money is in the forward works. It is the \$50m for the art gallery and the \$20m towards the culture centre.

Mrs LAMBLEY: Is that when you would expect to start construction for both of these projects?

Ms MOSS: That would absolutely be the hope, yes.

Mrs LAMBLEY: Last week in estimates I asked the Treasurer about funding for the art gallery. She was very clear in stating that all the Northern Territory Government would stump up is the \$50m, period. I asked her about securing additional funding. You mentioned publicly several months ago, minister, that it would cost more than \$150m to build the national Indigenous art gallery. She suggested that I refer the question to you as to how you are travelling with securing that funding. What work have you done in trying to attract philanthropic and private interest in securing the additional funding for this art gallery?

Ms MOSS: Thank you, Member for Araluen. I am glad that we can talk about positivity in town for this project. As you say, it is a major economic injection into Alice Springs and Central Australia, and certainly the national conversation is of excitement and positivity for Alice Springs. I know that we have had representatives of our agency talking nationally to our federal government representatives and departments, also to other national institutions. Certainly the feedback is positive.

We know that in South Australia they are very keen to get their project happening, but I can say that the feedback we have received nationally is one of excitement. There has never been any argument from anybody we have spoken to about Alice Springs being the rightful home for the national art gallery.

We have always said that we would put \$50m towards the art gallery as a down payment. We have that on those forward works. I have provided the figure previously of the \$150m. You look at other cultural institutions across Australia and we are looking at around that figure or more. We would be looking at Australian Government contribution and philanthropic support. We obviously need to make sure we have a solid proposal to take to them with community support, the support of the arts and business communities. We are continuing to have those discussions with other institutions.

I think it is incredibly important that we continue to strengthen that concept in Alice Springs. Obviously the conversation about the site is a really important part of that, in getting agreement there. That work is continuing.

Again, it is important that we note there are other cultural institutions in development, not only nationally but internationally, and the planning processes for these institutions takes a considerable amount of time. A lot of work has been done by the department to make sure we are progressing this project both in Alice Springs and nationally.

Mrs LAMBLEY: Have you put together that proposal you intend to take to possible sources of funding? Have you prepared that proposal as yet?

Ms MOSS: Member for Araluen, I am off to Canberra in the next week or so and will be having discussions with my federal counterparts again then. I have also presented at the meeting of cultural ministers we had last year about our arts trial and where we would be going with that project. That was with the federal minister, my federal counterpart, and all of my jurisdictional counterparts as well. I will be going to Canberra and meeting with my counterparts. The department continues to talk to a range of people including the Department of Communications and the Arts, Indigenous Affairs, the National Museum of Australia, the National Gallery of Australia and a range of others.

We are also in the midst of putting together our national reference group and recruiting to our director and curator positions as well.

Mrs LAMBLEY: A question that is of some concern to Alice Springs people in particular is what happens if you do not get that extra funding?

Ms MOSS: As a government, we are very committed to this project. We are committed to making this project happen. It is a game changer for Alice Springs. It should be in Alice Springs and we will continue to do the work with the federal government and philanthropic partners around looking to share those costs.

We are looking at it as a national project. It is an art gallery of national standing. The excitement and interest is genuinely there for this project in Alice Springs. We will continue to have those conversations. The

department is actively working on this. I am very confident that we will attract that support and continue to do that. The best way we can do it is to do it together. That is us with the community and these national institutions. I am encouraged by the conversations to date.

Mrs LAMBLEY: Okay. At the moment, the Member for Braitling is conducting some work in this space. Is what she is doing a consultation process? Is that what you call it?

Ms MOSS: What we have heard—and Member for Araluen, you have put this perspective forward before—is that there is more community engagement required around this project and the provision of more information, ensuring that we are having more of a community conversation about this and the future of that project.

I believe that has to be driven from Alice Springs. We have a team on the ground which is an inter-agency team. It is not just the Department of Tourism and Culture, there are representatives on it from the Department of the Chief Minister, for example. They are supporting the minister, the Member for Braitling, in that community engagement on the ground. That will occur over the next few months.

People are telling us they want more information about the project, that they support the project and want more information. It is important that is being driven on the ground in Alice Springs. It is a conversation with the community. That is what people are telling us they want.

Tourism Central Australia has expressed its support. The Chamber is supportive and there are a range of other businesses that have come out in support of this as well. We are continuing that community consultation and conversation about this project.

Mrs LAMBLEY: I do not think there is any doubt that Alice Springs people support the art gallery, as I said before. I am interested in the process that the Member for Braitling is undertaking. Someone sent me a copy of the survey form that you are distributing. Is that a formal survey you will be using as a basis to make decisions about the art gallery?

Ms MOSS: The Member for Braitling has already been undertaking a series of activities. She has been knocking on many doors, I know, having these conversations with people one-on-one. The department has been doing coffee catch-ups with people, allowing people to be part of the conversation. We have pop-up coffee chats that are happening in the Todd Mall over a range of dates. There will stalls at local events and there are things like the postcard and many ways that people can be part of that conversation. All of that will form the community conversation and inform our decision-making about that project.

Mrs LAMBLEY: So it a conversation rather than you taking any scientific evidence-based kind of approach to consulting.

Ms MOSS: I think going out and talking to people is an evidence-based approach towards the future of the project.

Mrs LAMBLEY: So you will be recording the conversations and using some sort of clear and scientific process around the feedback that you get in collating that? Is that how you are approaching it? I guess people do not really understand what you are doing, minister, in that space. Having a cup of coffee with someone does not necessarily constitute a formal sort of process.

I know you have spent a lot of money on this process too, and people are curious about that. How much have you spent? I understand you are using a local media provider, marketing and media consultant. If you could just provide a bit more clarification around exactly what you are doing.

Ms MOSS: Yes, there is a register being kept on those conversations that are being had at a community level. As I said, this is a period of community consultation and engagement. It is what the community has asked for. It certainly is what council has asked for, and you have said that we need a bit more of that engagement and those conversations and information out in the community.

Over the next three months—we are through a few weeks now—the Member for Braitling is having some of those conversations, and the department and their team are having those conversations with organisations and individuals. That is being collated, absolutely.

Mrs LAMBLEY: So it is taking a very scientific approach to how you are conducting interviews?

Ms MOSS: It is an evidence—I mean, that is a way of building an evidence-base.

Mrs LAMBLEY: Is it, minister? You are having a conversation and collating it in some sort of format?

Ms MOSS: As I said, yes we are—that is being collated. There is a register that is being created on those consultations.

Mrs LAMBLEY: Will that be publicly available, those results? Is it a survey you are doing?

Ms MOSS: No, it is not a specific survey, but there is a register being kept of the consultation and the engagement that is being had. There are obviously things that are easily accessible around support that is being shown by other groups, membership organisations who are coming out in support of this. People like the rugby codes have obviously published their support. They are happy to move and have issued that advice publicly. But no, it is not a specific survey. There are a range of different communication techniques. There is a whole range of engagement that is going on. But yes, that is being collated so we can make an informed decision.

I think it is important as well that we talk about Have Your Say. That process has occurred. That was obviously a computer-based engagement tool. As has been pointed out throughout estimates so far, not everybody has access to the Internet. I know that was a comment made by the Member for Daly. So we have undertaken targeting consultation with Aboriginal organisations, for example. We did that around the same time as the Have Your Say was live.

We continue to undertake consultation with council. We continue to have conversations and consultation with Tourism Central Australia, with Chamber, all of whom are putting out their own information and support for this project. There are a range of engagement mechanisms that are occurring, Member for Araluen, and a range of ways that people can have their say.

We are not focused on one way of that being done. We have heard loud and clear that that did not meet the mark; we needed to do more, and that is what we are doing.

Mrs LAMBLEY: How much money are you spending on promoting the work that the Member for Braitling is undertaking in this space? I mentioned before, you are using Bellette Media, I understand, as a consultant. How much are you spending on that?

Ms MOSS: I understand the anticipated cost in relation to that is around \$11 790 is what is expected around that. As I say, people have asked for more information. It is really important that we continue to put that out there. We talk about things like how we have reached where we are at and the next steps for the project. It is really important that information is out there in the community and the team in Alice Springs is supported and engaged, and that it is driven from Alice Springs.

Mrs LAMBLEY: How much have you sent on advertising in the *Centralian Advocate* since you started this process in, I think, October last year? I notice you have a half-page add in the *Centralian Advocate* today. What is the overall budget?

Ms MOSS: Can we take that one on notice, Member for Araluen? I will get that for you.

Question on Notice No 7.9

Madam CHAIR: Member for Araluen, please repeat your question for the record.

Mrs LAMBLEY: The question is, what is the overall advertising budget spent to date in the *Centralian Advocate* for promoting the consultation for the national Aboriginal art gallery?

Madam CHAIR: Minister, do you accept the question?

Ms MOSS: I do.

Madam CHAIR: The Member for Araluen's question has been allocated number 7.9.

Madam CHAIR: Are there any further questions to the minister's statement?

Mrs LAMBLEY: I just have a few more on the art gallery, then I will ...

Mr PAECH: Member for Araluen, the \$11 000 you just mentioned—that is taking into account—that is not for one company, is that right?

Ms MOSS: Yes. That is for undertaking some activities with Bellette.

Mr PAECH: That is for the operation as a whole.

Ms MOSS: It is for a range of different materials that are part of those engagement activities.

Mr PAECH: I just want to confirm for the record that it was not—thank you.

Ms MOSS: Yes. That is with Bellette.

Mrs LAMBLEY: It is being promoted as having a coffee with the Member for Braitling. How much are you spending on coffee? What is the coffee budget?

Mrs LAMBLEY: Assuming that she will be drinking a lot of coffee.

Ms MOSS: I will take that on notice. I think it is incredibly important we are making sure—we said we would do further community engagement around this. That is what we are doing. It is being driven from Alice Springs. We will continue to do that. It is a really important activity that we are undertaking. This is a really important project and we want to make sure we are getting it right. We will continue to undertake that engagement on the ground in Alice Springs.

Question on Notice No 7.10

Madam CHAIR: Member for Araluen, could you please repeat the question for record?

Mrs LAMBLEY: How much has been allocated in the budget for coffee in this consultation process?

Madam CHAIR: Minister, do you accept the question? The number for the asked by the Member for Araluen has been allocated number 7.10.

Mrs LAMBLEY: Early in May, the Member for Braitling came out in the *Centralian Advocate* and said that she will be taking the lead role in the national Aboriginal art gallery. Why is that, minister?

Ms MOSS: As I have previously stated, I think it is very important that the community engagement and the leader of the national Aboriginal art gallery in the Alice Springs community, is in Alice Springs. The Member for Braitling is in Alice Springs. She is very passionate about this project and ensuring we have this investment in Alice Springs.

Yes, the Member for Braitling is taking the lead on that component of the project, and the department and I continue to support that activity on the ground and have a number of conversations and do project planning work that needs to happen concurrently. I think it is really important that we make sure we have the support from local MLAs on this project.

I am glad to hear you talking positively about this. We have a federal election coming up at some point soon. It will be really great to have bipartisan support federally for this project in Alice Springs. I certainly would encourage everyone to be part of that conversation.

Mrs LAMBLEY: To clarify, does that mean she has greater authority over this process than you, as the minister? Is that what she meant?

Ms MOSS: Member for Araluen, we work as a team in government.

Ms NELSON: I think she is just taking the lead on the campaign and promoting it.

Ms MOSS: I know that has not been everybody's experience. It is certainly our experience. The Member for Brailling is leading the community engagement on the ground in Alice Springs.

Mrs LAMBLEY: Just the community engagement?

Ms MOSS: As I have already stated, she is leading the community engagement component of this on the ground in Alice Springs because it should be driven by that team in Alice Springs. We continue to operate as a team on this and believe it is a very important investment and that it should happen in Alice Springs. We are going to work together to make sure it happens.

Mrs LAMBLEY: A final area I wanted to ask you about were the recommendations from the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art Museum report that was provided by the steering scoping committee. I do not remember you ever stating publicly which recommendations you intend to implement and which recommendations you do not. Clearly you have decided not to go with number 9, which is a recommendation about the site. Are there other recommendations that you will not be implementing?

Ms MOSS: We are working through the recommendations. There are a number of recommendations and they speak to different components of the project and they also speak to different times within the projects as well. We will be responding to the recommendations. I will get Mr Tennant to talk a bit more about that.

Mr TENNANT: The work is underway, as the minister mentioned, in relation to developing a response to the full suite of recommendations. We are not waiting for that in relation to responding to some. For example through the Department of Trade, Business and Innovation with the Department of Tourism and Culture, we undertook a workshop with Desart last month in Alice Springs, talking about what we needed to do to address the recommendations in relation to development of an Aboriginal workforce and capacity building for art centres throughout all Central Australia. Not just specifically in relation to the art gallery.

As we are aware, there are a range of the art centres and art centre managers throughout the region, that the managers in many of those art centres are not Aboriginal people. Also the commercial retail galleries within Alice Springs, that there is under-representation of Aboriginal workers in that.

We workshopped the development of a program based on Desart's existing program to help that workforce development for the entire greater region and that would capture within Desart's region, which as you are aware cuts across the Territory borders as well.

As a result of that workshop, through the Department of Trade, Business and Innovation, we are providing a grant to Desart to take the lead in relation to the development of that workforce program over the next 12 month period. Desart will lead that process with us through the Department of Trade, Business and Innovation as well as through Tourism and Culture being involved in a steering committee to support the development of that workforce program.

When we have developed that workforce program but also the parallel business capacity and development program for the art centres, we will then look at how we actually roll that out and support the delivery of that program moving forward.

That will help to address two of the recommendations of the interim steering committee that was included in the report. As I said, we started that work already to get moving. The real benefits from that, we hope, will be in relation to improving the number of local Aboriginal people who can be the future managers of the art centres within the region, but also work within the retail galleries within Alice Springs itself as well.

Mrs LAMBLEY: In terms of the cultural centre, we have not had a lot of feedback about that. Will there be a similar report produced by the group that is overseeing the implementation or planning for the cultural centre and how much will that cost to build and establish? Obviously \$20m will not go too far.

Ms MOSS: As I have said previously, that is a project that is being led by Nganampa Anwernekenhe and they have been working with government. We have provided a seconded resource to them to support that development. I think there has been about \$108 500 provided to them so far for their consultation process. They held a two day workshop in Alice Springs last year, I cannot remember the exact date, I will look that up. They held a workshop over two days, they invited a range of representatives from national organisations and they put a preliminary report on that workshop to government. We have since had another report to government, we have gone back and asked for more information, we are going back to ask for more information on that. At present, we are working with them around their next steps for that project as well.

Mrs LAMBLEY: Will we get to hear more information about this in the near future? It is the same time frame as the art gallery in commencement of construction by the sound of it.

Ms MOSS: Yes, absolutely. There will be more information that comes out on the cultural centre. But as I have said previously, I encourage you to be talking to that organisation as well about its development of that concept. I am sure they will be very happy to talk to you as well.

Mrs LAMBLEY: How much do you think the cultural centre will cost?

Ms MOSS: I will get Mr Tennant to speak to that.

Mr TENNANT: Thank you, member, for the question. At this stage, the government commitment is for \$20m. There is further work that Nganampa needs to be undertake to scope up before we are in a position to understand the estimated total construction cost, but also the operational cost of that centre. That is some of the further work, as well as national and interstate consultations, that will be led through Nganampa that needs to be undertaken to advance the centre.

Mrs LAMBLEY: The Chief Minister said in parliament last time we sat that in his view it should be co-located—the cultural centre with the art gallery. Is that pretty much what will happen, do you think?

Ms MOSS: That is something we have discussed with Nganampa. It is an offer that is on the table. As we are developing our concepts about the national Aboriginal art gallery, we are doing it with that in mind. As I said, that cultural centre is being led by Nganampa and it is an ongoing conversation. We are open to that.

Mrs LAMBLEY: Thank you.

Madam CHAIR: Any further questions relating to the statement, Member for Daly?

Mr HIGGINS: Yes. The last APIA conference in Adelaide I took the opportunity and organised to get a tour of their art gallery to have a look at the collection they have of art et cetera from the Northern Territory. Is someone on this project from your department or office been down and done a similar thing? Has anyone had a look at that collection?

Ms MOSS: I will get Susan to talk to some of the national institutions that the department has been speaking to ...

Mr HIGGINS: It is not just speaking, it is going down and having a look at the one down there.

Ms MOSS: Yes. I will be doing that. I will hand over to Ms Kirkman.

Ms KIRKMAN: There have been a number of visits to national institutions. They include the National Museum of Australia, the National Gallery of Australia, the National Gallery of Victoria, the Art Gallery of New South Wales, the Art Gallery of Western Australia, Museums WA and the Janet Holmes à Court Collection.

Discussions with those institutions have been about sharing collections and borrowing from their incredible collections. Often these institutions only display 2% or 3% of their collections. They have been very enthusiastic in the proposal and concept we have with this national Indigenous art gallery and are very open to sharing what they have in travelling exhibitions and short- to long-term loans.

Mr HIGGINS: My question was more because South Australia will build their own—they have the land, the money and a massive collection. We have a big list there of places we have seen, but I would have gone to South Australia first. That is just my view on that. That is why I asked the question. There has been a change of government down there, which is probably why it has got on the front foot with them. I would have expected that if that has not occurred yet, it is in the planning.

I had meetings with the Chief Minister's people and some of yours as well before I went down there and had a look. So ...

Ms MOSS: We will certainly take that on board, Member for Daly. I have met with the minister in South Australia. We had the tourism ministers' meeting earlier last week and I took the opportunity to have a chat with Minister Ridgway. We talked about some of the initiatives we are doing between South Australia and the Northern Territory—things like the Explorer's Way and some of the other tourism initiatives. We had a chat about the national art gallery. They are obviously very committed to their project as well.

It is probably important to note that while we also have a collection in the Northern Territory where we only show a fraction of what we have. We are the birthplace of many of those art movements. I take your comment on board, but as you can see, there is a lot of work going on through the department.

Mr HIGGINS: The reason for asking that is that South Australia controlled the Territory and took a lot of our artwork, and it is still there. It is good that you are going.

Ms MOSS: I understand there is a new appointment to be made at that art gallery in South Australia, so we will make sure that is a conversation that happens.

Mr HIGGINS: It is important that you meet with the Premier; he is the one with the driving influence on that.

Ms MOSS: It will be great to have everybody's support in these conversations between us and South Australia, and nationally.

Madam CHAIR: Any further questions in regard to the statement?

The committee will now proceed to consider the estimates of proposed expenditure contained in the Appropriation Bill 2018–19 as they relate to the Department of Tourism and Culture.

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

Madam CHAIR: Are there any questions on agency-related whole-of-government questions on budget and fiscal strategy?

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

OUTPUT GROUP 7.0 – TOURISM AND CULTURE **Output 7.1 – Tourism and Culture**

Madam CHAIR: The committee will now proceed to Output Group 7.0, Tourism and Culture, Output 7.1, Tourism and Culture.

Are there any questions?

Mr HIGGINS: You may not have these figures, but Donghai Airlines—do we have any figures on how many people have arrived on flights since it began? How many have gone on the return flight? What sort of capacity is there on each flight?

In other words, what occupancy—or seats—is being taken up on those? It may be a bit early to know.

Ms MOSS: I am very happy to keep you updated when we get those figures, which will be commercial-in-confidence considerations, but we are happy to keep people updated on how the service is going. It is a very exciting moment for the Territory and presents some enormous opportunity for us. It was incredible to be on that flight with a number of people coming over. The feedback locally, anecdotally, has been that of excitement. I am happy to continue to keep you updated.

Mr HIGGINS: That would be good if we could. It would be nice to know if they are half-full or what.

On Budget Paper No 3, page 205—it was announced on 31 May that the government paid for five non-government people to accompany the inaugural Donghai Airlines flight between Darwin and Shenzhen at a cost of \$15 000, with a further \$7000 on accommodation. Who were those individuals? I am cautious that we do not name them, but where were they from and why were those people picked?

Ms MOSS: You are talking about who accompanied me?

Mr HIGGINS: Yes, the non-government people.

Ms MOSS: They were representatives of our local media. The department also released who travelled from the department.

Mr HIGGINS: On the same page, you stated previously that as a result of your trip to Singapore in December 2017, Donghai Airlines signed a letter of intent to commence direct air flight services between Shenzhen and Darwin; however, Donghai announced this route back in April 2017. Written Question 164 got that information out.

If it was already announced in April and you went in December and you said December was when you got the letter of intent signed, why did you go to Singapore again in December when Donghai already announced that they are going to fly?

Ms MOSS: I would have to double check dates, Member for Daly, but I did have a visit to China where we did stop in Singapore and met with existing airline partners in Singapore. I am very happy to double check those dates for you.

Mr HIGGINS: The answer we got back for the written question was a bit confusing. That was all. If you could check written question 164 so we can get some clarity on that one.

Ms MOSS: I will definitely double check that for you. Previously, yes, we did stop in Singapore to make sure we were having meetings with existing airline partners. I think it is important to make sure we are building those relationships. I met with SilkAir and Jetstar Asia when I was there and continue to have conversations with a whole range of different stakeholders.

I am sorry if that was confusing. I will definitely go back and check that for you.

Mr HIGGINS: Again on the same page—it was a question that was asked of the acting minister on the same subject on 3 May. You can probably clarify the confusion. The budget paper says or refers to a \$2m allocation for marketing with China Southern Airlines, yet they do not operate in the Northern Territory. So why do we advertise with China Southern Airlines and why is that not with Donghai?

Ms MOSS: That was a wording issue in the budget paper. It is \$1m for negotiations with Chinese airlines.

Mr HIGGINS: So instead of saying \$2m allocation for marketing with China Southern Airlines, it should say \$1m allocated for marketing with China airlines. So it should not have the word 'southern' and it should be \$1m. Is that correct?

Ms MOSS: Yes.

Mr HIGGINS: They spell check is bad. How much are we actually paying Donghai Airlines to fly to Darwin this year and next financial year?

Ms MOSS: Member for Daly, we have cooperative marketing arrangements in place. In terms of the total, that is a commercial-in-confidence figure. I can give a global figure for cooperative marketing, and obviously we have put \$10.85m additional over two years into cooperative marketing. So that figure is very public. But in terms of specific agreements, that is commercial-in-confidence. I will get Mr Tennant to talk a little bit more about that.

Mr HIGGINS: So that would include a cooperative marketing with, say, Qantas and Virgin?

Ms MOSS: The global figure.

Mr HIGGINS: Okay. That is fine if I cannot get the figure.

Mr TENNANT: We do not and have never provided direct payments or subsidies directly to any international carrier airline. What we do work with, along with NT Airports, is in relation to cooperative marketing packages. The money we provide is in relation to alongside their funding for marketing. To help support the service of getting passengers both inbound and outbound on the service.

Our arrangements with airlines vary with domestic and international. In some cases where we do not have a long-standing existing relationship, such as with Qantas and Virgin, that payment we only make to where we agree to pay to third parties. They are not paid directly to or via that airline. Where we do have, such as Qantas and Virgin, long-standing arrangements, we will provide the funding to them. But it is distributed to third parties only with our approval and only for approved marketing providers.

We do not disclose the individual dollar values of the cooperative marketing agreements. We maintain that as commercial-in-confidence. We do that in the greater public interest in that if we disclose this then every airline will be asking for a better deal and more money than the last one ...

Mr HIGGINS: Just tell them the lowest.

Mr TENNANT: ... in relation to—so we are very mindful of taxpayer investment and resources and trying to get the best deal for the taxpayers of the Territory, which is the reason why we do not disclose the financial arrangements in relation to the original individual cooperative marketing deals with individual airline carriers.

If you would like, we can give you the global figures in relation to what we have for all the domestic services, as well as for all the international services, which I will just give to you now.

Mr HIGGINS: Yes.

Mr TENNANT: So, \$3.4 is the total we have for all the international services from a corporate and marketing perspective. Sorry, \$3.4 is the total cooperative marketing across the board, domestic and international carriers.

Mr HIGGINS: Thank you, Dave. You would have seen recently a story on ABC that referred to the CEO of Donghai. He was cited on corruption charges. Is that of any concern to you? Was there a failure in due diligence or anything there? Do we have any concerns with that going forward?

Ms MOSS: Member for Daly, Mr Tennant will talk to the due diligence about that.

Mr TENNANT: I thank the member. We became aware of that situation when we were asked. We had undertaken due diligence through the department with Donghai commensurate and appropriate to the level of negotiations that were undertaken. That due diligence included consideration through the finance risk and audit committee of Tourism NT Commission. Due diligence also in relation to Donghai Airlines itself, with its track record as a company we were engaging with, from a company point of view. Also, in the arrangement we have with the cooperative marketing with Donghai, we are not providing funding to Donghai Airlines. It is where we agree marketing to third parties and we will pay those third parties directly.

Part of that was assessing the risk, on balance, with the arrangement there. We undertook appropriate due diligence and I stand by that due diligence process we undertook, considering the nature and value of the cooperative marketing arrangement with Donghai.

It is obviously disappointing to hear that news in relation to the chair, but considering it is the Chair, I do not think it, in any way, has any impact on our arrangements we have with Donghai, or moving forward.

Mr HIGGINS: Yes. That sort of accusation can come out at any time. Okay. You mentioned then that you met with various airlines in Singapore. I am interested to see what the government is doing to increase the number of international carriers flying to Darwin.

Philippine Airlines, Air Asia and Malaysian Airlines have all pulled out in the last couple of years. Have we done the analysis of why they have pulled out and how we can stop that bleed—there is not much more to bleed out, I suppose—and how we might increase that and whether we go back to those airlines or we have other potentials? We might name these ones because it will encourage others to step forward.

Ms MOSS: Absolutely. There is a lot of work happening, but I will get Mr Hopper to talk through the activities for the department there.

Mr HOPPER: Thank you, Member for Daly. Those airlines leaving was always disappointing, but they predominantly were outbound service, which is very important for a liveability perspective for Territorians. They should not be overlooked.

From a tourism perspective, they did not necessarily provide as much benefit as other airlines ...

Mr HIGGINS: Inbound.

Mr HOPPER: Yes, inbound. We continue to pursue a range of different airlines from areas we believe there is sufficient demand to warrant a service. Obviously we do that in a range of different ways. We work very closely with people like Tourism Australia and NT Airports to look at where we all believe there is opportunity.

That has to be looking from an international perspective at what Tourism Australia is doing and what their key markets are. That is taken into account.

Where we believe we can generate some demand—the fleet and what aeroplanes they have. Obviously a narrow-bodied plane such as Donghai has a very different economic or financial outcome versus a wide-bodied plane so is a little more achievable in some instances than a wide-bodied plane might be.

We will continue to pursue airlines from a range of different destinations. Of course, we would not like to say which ones to give our competitors a head start ...

Mr HIGGINS: I would be saying it. We are dealing with this one, that is someone knocking at your door.

Mr HOPPER: We would welcome having a conversation with any airline, of course. But we are in a highly competitive market with other jurisdictions. We all want tourism to be great in Australia, but the reality is we are all equally pursuing international tourists.

What I can tell you is we do due diligence on those opportunities around demand. We talk with our partners to understand where we all think the opportunities are, then we build a business case to support which ones we select.

Mr HIGGINS: When you talk about narrow and wide-bodied planes, wide body of course is implying cargo et cetera, how much work do you do with primary industries, like with horticulture et cetera, to try and see what leverage we can get with the two working together? I presume you work together, if you do not work together do not answer the question, just sit there.

How much work is being done in that area, so looking at, when you are dealing with airlines, cargo as opposed to tourists taking up seats?

Mr TENNANT: I will answer this, both as acting CEO of the Department of Tourism and Culture but also as CEO of Department of Trade, Business and Innovation. It is part of a live discussion we have with any of the airlines. I have travelled both with the minister and the Department of Tourism and Culture, both as acting CEO of Tourism and Culture but also as previously as CEO of the Trade, Business and Innovation. As part of that Team NT effort, we take, along with NT Airports, when we are talking to airlines about starting up services or recommencing services to Darwin. While wide bodied aircraft give us the 747s, the greatest capacity for cargo, there is also cargo opportunities for the high value premium exports and goods on the narrow-bodied aircraft as well, on the 737 fleets.

It is part of the discussions we have with airlines. Part of what we do is work across all of our departments, including the Department of Primary Industry and Resources. We have in the past, where we include that information, both in our proposals and pitches to the airlines. Where the airline has agreed to come and undertake joint studies with the airline to pursue trade opportunities.

With the commencement of the Donghai service there is a significant program of work that we are now undertaking, underway into Shenzhen and also into Guangzhou and the Guangdong Province. I am excited by those trade opportunities, whether it is for our mangoes, our fish or our seafood to fill those holes on the Donghai flights heading back into Shenzhen on that five-and-a-half hour flight.

I think there are great opportunities on our agri business potential. Also other high-value perishable products.

Short answer, we do and we are excited by the opportunities that are now going to flow in because of Donghai, for our businesses and our exporters.

Ms MOSS: If I can go back to your original question, Member for Daly, because I probably should have added there as well, in relation to other international carriers and opportunities. This goes to the heart of the \$103m turbocharging package, we hear from airlines all the time from a tourism perspective, about the importance of really building our offering as a destination, both in Alice Springs and the Top End.

We have a substantial investment into our infrastructure and things like the Visitor Experience Enhancement plan. That is about building ourselves as a destination, building the demand because that is about sustainability of our services we well.

Mr HIGGINS: When you talk about negotiating with airlines, is it primarily driven by tourism with cargo as a secondary thing? Primary Industry probably would not see itself as something that should start to negotiate

with an airline. You associate airlines with tourism, but to me in a lot of ways, the reverse should apply in certain instances which could give us benefit. Do you see a problem with how that is being done at the moment?

Mr TENNANT: We take a balanced approach, a cross-agency perspective. Obviously we are wanting inbound tourists to visit the Territory for the benefits that flow to our businesses and jobs for Territorians because of the tourists on that. We do look at the cargo aspects.

We also, as part of those who we target and the negotiations, look for where the opportunities might arise for Territorians because of those future business-to-business links on trade and investment. I did not mention it earlier, but again a five-and-a-half hour service directed to mainland China in Shenzhen. I am already aware anecdotally of a lot of Territorian business people who got on that plane and flown to Donghai, or planning to get on that plane, to look at pursuing those business and investment links as well. We do look, as part of that, of connectivity. If we are talking to airline partners—which city they are hubbing out of and how good that connectivity is from that city to other locations within regions of the world, including codeshare arrangements that airline has—either their own services or with other international carriers.

That is important from a tourist inflow point of view but also the connectivity for Territorians, including our businesspeople in relation to accessing our priority international markets.

Tourism is an important part of that. It is not the sole consideration that goes into those arrangements.

Mr HIGGINS: I am not after the figures at the moment, but do you have figures on the amount of potential cargo we have in different areas? You spoke about high-value stuff and mangoes; do we have a feel of how much of that there is?

Ms MOSS: We do a lot of work with other agencies, but our predominant focus in regard to tourism is opportunity. On our previous visits we were there for the China-Australia Year of Tourism closing ceremony. Mr Tennant travelled with me and we had a round table with a number of stakeholders about trade opportunities in the Territory. We took material from the Department of Trade, Business and Innovation and other areas of government to talk about those opportunities in the Territory. We make sure we are fully briefed before we go.

Mr HIGGINS: I am not asking questions about trade, but when we start to get airlines here, one of the key keepers—when you get the ups and downs in tourism—is in the trade area, so it is a critical part of having an airline stay here.

Speaking of flying around, what work has been done with Parks Australia to open up Kakadu to tourists for 12 months of the year?

Ms MOSS: Kakadu is high on our radar. It is a very important key asset for us as Territorians, but also for visitors who come here. Something that operators talk to us about often is access to Kakadu, seasonality, and accessing new areas.

We have raised this consistently with the minister responsible, Minister Frydenberg. The department has had ongoing discussions with Parks Australia over a long time, as has the industry. I raised it at the Tourism ministers' meeting on the work government is doing on the future of Jabiru township and how important it is as a tourism hub and a gateway to Kakadu.

We are continuing to push for greater road access particularly, and we will continue to do that work. I appreciate all the shared messages that come from the Territory on those trips to Canberra.

Mr HIGGINS: Have we asked the Commonwealth for any specific infrastructure funding for Kakadu, separate from Jabiru?

Ms MOSS: We are looking at it in a holistic way at the moment. I will ask Mr Tennant to talk a bit more about that work, but we are doing this work across agencies. It is important to the economic future of Jabiru township and we need to make sure we look at it in a holistic way.

Mr TENNANT: There is a significant body of cross-agency work that has been undertaken. That has been coordinated through the Department of the Chief Minister because it works across a range of agencies. There have been extensive consultations with Gundjeihmi Aboriginal Corporation in relation to the master planning

for the future of Jabiru. There have also been extensive consultations with 13 traditional owner groups within the border of Kakadu in relation to the future planning for Kakadu.

Obviously, this is an Australian Government national park with the park authority as well in relation to that future. There have been discussions from a range of NT ministers with various federal government ministers, as well as across relevant federal government departments regarding that future.

It does include looking at both the future of Jabiru and what investments need to be made within the broader park itself, particularly to improve all-weather road access and also the upgrade of existing facilities and areas, or the opening of new facilities and areas. As the minister said, that is critically important to address the seasonality so we are getting the product there and it is accessible for more tourists throughout the year. If it is good for tourists, it is good for locals as well who like to visit the park over the weekend.

Again, being the park, there is also a benefit for the local traditional owners in the way of providing more opportunities for businesses and jobs within the park for traditional owners and local Aboriginal people, as well as non-Aboriginal people. Until we get that done and the work in relation to the future of Jabiru and the tenure there, that will then provide the confidence for private sector investment into the future of Jabiru, including the small business sector are well.

Mr HIGGINS: I might just ask one more question in this area and then give some other people a go. I have heaps of questions. In the budget paper, we talk about \$5m being committed to engaging China and India in tourism over the next two years.

Can you give us a breakdown of how much of that is being spent in the Indian market? Are we working with any airlines? That will be a yes or no. In India, in that regard, I think India wrote a mention a couple of times through the budget papers. I am just trying to get an understanding of what we are doing there.

Ms MOSS: There was a \$5m commitment over two years to China and India. China is obviously the biggest growing international market for Australia. We want to make sure we are bringing more of those visitors off the east coast and into Darwin—preferably on their first visit, but whenever they are coming to Australia.

The investment has gone into a whole range of activities from researching markets, our efforts to secure a direct airline between China and Darwin and the Northern Territory, the grants program—which is the China Ready and accredited—the last time I checked there are about 45 businesses that are now China Ready and accredited, and identifying opportunities around the Arafura Games as well.

In terms of the in-market activity with India, for example—it was only a few weeks ago—some of those wraps on buses in Mumbai and a couple of other very highly populated parts of India are promoting the Northern Territory and routes to the Northern Territory. I think that is a longer-term pace, Member for Daly, around growing that awareness in the Indian market. It is a market that is on the radar nationally as a growing market. It is a longer-term pace.

Mr HIGGINS: How much of the \$5m would you say we would commit to that Indian market over the next two years?

Ms MOSS: I can get the breakdown. That was 2016–17 and 2017–18. I can get the breakdown of what that looked like, but the majority would have been focused on the Chinese market activity.

Mr HIGGINS: I think this is looking forward to \$5m over the two years—how we are going to break that down.

Ms MOSS: Certainly, I can take that on notice for you but it would still be predominantly focused on our activities in the China market. The India market is longer term. It is one that we are certainly building our presence in, but I will get that for you.

Mr HIGGINS: Are we doing any negotiations with any of the Indian ...

Madam CHAIR: Member for Daly, do you want to repeat the question for the record?

Mr HIGGINS: If I could just ask this little one and then I can maybe add this to it as well.

Madam CHAIR: Okay. Hansard might get cranky.

Mr HIGGINS: Are we negotiating with any Indian airlines at the moment, without naming them?

Ms MOSS: What we are doing at the moment is we have done some famils with key distribution partners. In India we have had a travel mission, as you know. Our representatives from the department often are going to trade missions and events. We will continue to do the work with different airlines as our awareness and markets grow and those become commercially viable. We do have through Singapore, for example, connections through to the Indian market.

Question on Notice No 7.11

Mr HIGGINS: So the question on notice—can you give us a break down of the \$5m that has been committed to engaging China and India tourism over the next two years? Specifically, how much of that is targeted towards the Indian market?

Madam CHAIR: Minister, do you accept the question? The question has been allocated the number 7.11.

Madam CHAIR: While you are thinking, Member for Daly, we might just take a short 10-minute recess and recommence at 2.45. Thank you.

The committee suspended.

Madam CHAIR: Thank you all. We will continue with the Estimates Committee hearing. We are continuing with Output 7.1.

Mr WOOD: I see an item which says there will be \$1.4m used for strengthening the Territory as a military history destination. As you know, I am a great fan of protecting and developing our World War II sites. What is your strategy to put the \$1.4m to good use for?

Ms MOSS: I am glad you agree it is for good use. I know you are passionate about it. We have some incredible history across the Territory. We should be getting people here to learn about how important it is on a national stage.

I will hand over to Mr Hopper to talk a bit more about the strategy on military history.

Mr HOPPER: There are a couple of different facets to it. A lot of work is being done by Tourism with existing military operators. Recently there was a trip up the track to look at other heritage/military sites, among other things. We are working hard to understand all the great sites that exist and making sure they are they are appropriately talked about and represented.

In regard to military history specifically, and the money you referred to, the proposal is to try to position the Northern Territory—in this instance Darwin—as a military history pilgrimage destination, initially nationally and hopefully, in time, internationally. There is a great history national and internationally. In a lot of places it is probably not as well-known as we would like.

The plan is to develop a military history event for 2019—it has commenced and is under way—to showcase in the shoulder period, linking the Bombing of Darwin anniversary in February and Anzac Day in April, to generate a range of activities that link in the cruise ship sector and promote military history to those visitors. Equally, it gives a real reason to come to the Territory and experience our history, specifically in the week leading up to Anzac Day and making sure we have a range of activities. There will be more announcements on that in due course to promote what the Territory has to offer from a military history perspective—importantly, Darwin's. Darwin has a lot of significant moments in time that people should be aware of.

Mr WOOD: Have you given any consideration to developing heritage parks that would be running, perhaps, either in conjunction with Territory parks or as a separate unit? For instance, I have always believed you have a great opportunity with Strauss, Sattler, Livingstone and Hughes—I should mention Strauss cricket ground—and sites around those areas—to having a headquarters at Strauss where there is a heritage ranger, you might say, who keeps an eye on there being no camping on heritage sites, but also giving tours to people in those areas. In other words, we could develop this as we would a park.

I also think that as much as there has been a lot of good work in developing the history in the Darwin region—if anyone has been to Long airstrip and the one on the road to Ooloo—there are two airstrips on the Douglas

Daly road, and there is a huge amount of history in that area. Bringing international tourists, especially from the United States, who have a passion for World War II heritage—there is an opportunity there for some sort of park to develop there. It also has environmental benefits.

I do not know if you have looked at that. I have raised before the possibility of setting up parks and having people run them. Do you see a benefit in trying to develop not just in Darwin, but down the track? Here come the grey nomads with their World War II book and the CDs—you can still, hopefully, buy them—and they can visit Gorrie and the supplies area for Gorrie Airstrip and go down to Larrimah and perhaps go into Birdum on the little train if it was opened up. There is a fantastic number of things we can do, but we do not seem to be doing them. We just seem to be letting the grass grow longer and they deteriorate more and more.

Do you see some benefits in trying to go along the track and probably put some parks and ranger stations in?

Mr HOPPER: Sorry, Member for Nelson, that was part of the recent trip I mentioned. Before the minister answers a bit about the parks, it was understanding—I do not know that we have done it for a little while—what exists and in what order it is in terms of its quality and presentation, and equally what are we talking about and making sure we have joined all those dots.

The great teams at Heritage and Parks have a real interest in making sure these areas are maintained and built into the tourism experience. But we also have to make sure we have something meaningful for sale when people visit. How we do that—and your point about the CDs ...

Mr WOOD: You already have those. I do not know whether they have stopped making them. You have the booklets, the CDs are in the back and the front and you can travel up the highway with the CD going.

Mr HOPPER: Absolutely. And maybe even some other technology we can introduce ...

Mr WOOD: Excuse me, I belong to that group of people that has hair like me. The CD is fine.

Mr HOPPER: No, no. There is a place for CDs. My collection is also significant, so I agree with you. I just want to make the point that we certainly are taking a very good look at that because it is an area we want to make sure, as we look at our marketing activities and what we are doing—and the reason why this department was put together the way it was, was to try to find those opportunities and work together on these opportunities. I have just said opportunities a lot, haven't I? It is late in the day.

Mr WOOD: No, that is all right. I am scared we will miss an opportunity because it is so unique.

Mrs WORDEN: Oh, Gerry.

Mr HOPPER: No, no, there are probably ...

Mr WOOD: Do not worry about her, she is just been working all day doing something else.

Mrs WORDEN: I have been sitting next to him too long—too long.

Madam CHAIR: We are getting a bit rowdy now. We will let Mr Hopper finish his answer, thank you.

Mr HOPPER: Your point is noted about missing things. We certainly do not want to miss the good ones.

Mrs WORDEN: You still have cassettes. Sorry.

Mr WOOD: I do not have cassettes. I have a digital radio. There you go, how is that?

Minister, one small request. Some years ago when we saved Strauss from having the Stuart Highway go through the middle of it, there were what I call two-dimensional planes put on that airstrip. None of them are P40s. Strauss, of course, was the United States' Army Air Force Captain—not that he flew from there, he flew from Adelaide River. He was shot down over towards Talc Head. The strip was named after him. The Americans were based there for quite a while and they were not the only ones, of course, But the P40 was their plane.

I go there and you have all these planes marked with Australian insignia, and that is fine and good, but the planes that were flown from there—you only have to look at some of the books that were brought out—were P40s. For some reason, the P40 with an American insignia is not shown there.

The reason I am a little passionate about that is we can very easily forget that for the first eight, nearly nine months of the bombing of Darwin, there were no Australian fighter planes in Darwin, they were in Europe or somewhere overseas. It was only the Americans who were fighting in the air when it came to fighter planes. Sometimes I think when we have a bit of American bashing, we forget who was here to save Darwin.

It is important, if possible, to have a plane there. I know the lady who put them together, by the way. She lives in the rural area. She painted them and they are fantastic works of art really, but that is one model of plane that should be there. I just raise that as an aside ...

Ms MOSS: Thank you, Member for Nelson. I will note it. I have to say, my knowledge of aircraft models is nowhere near as strong as yours. I completely take your point about that history and relationship and ...

Mr WOOD: And I am no expert on planes. It was just that I have a close relationship with the Strauss family in America and that is the plane that they flew.

You mentioned mountain bikes and, as you know you have a close relationship with a mountain biker. Have you done any land assessment of the possibility of a mountain bike trail from Humpty Doo to Adelaide River along the old North Australian Railway Line? I thought you were actually going to do a land survey at one stage, I do not know what happened to that?

Ms MOSS: Mark Ashley has just joined us at the table, who is undertaking a lot of that work on parks. Also loves a bit of mountain biking himself. He will talk a bit more about the master plan, but I do acknowledge that he has raced a number of these routes previously.

Mr WOOD: It is great that you have a longer one being built in Central Australia, but it may be nice to have one up here this way.

Mr ASHLEY: You would be aware that there was a previous master plan developed for mountain biking across the Northern Territory. That is a document that guides the development across the whole of the Territory. At this stage, the highest priorities listed within that master plan are the regional centres, Alice Springs, Katherine and Darwin. There has been some initial preliminary work done around an extension of the bike path from Howard Springs through to Adelaide River.

The outcome of that work was that, potentially it will not have the largest possible impact in terms of resources and impact for the broader community and the broader tourism industry that those focuses should be upon those regional centres.

Mr WOOD: Wearing two hats then. One, it is not just about mountain biking, it is about retention of heritage which is the old North Australian Railway Line and it has the opportunity of opening up a part of the Territory that a lot of people would not see. It is a sad thing that the Power and Water have shut down the option of visiting Darwin River Dam.

I suppose it was looking at it from a range of options, you have Snake Creek Amarment area. In fact I had one of the traditional owners see me about that recently whether there could be any way that it could be re-established. You have a mixture of heritage, the Adelaide River Railway Museum, Snake Creek, Rum Jungle, the Batchelor airstrips. You did have the Darwin River Dam until it has now been blocked off, unfortunately.

There was a meaning, more than just mountain biking, to develop that trail. I understand where you are coming from, but I still think that, as someone who still reads magazines, the Rail Trail book, as you know, some of these rail trails in other parts of Australia do not go through main towns, but they attract people to them because they are so fantastic.

Do you think there is still a chance of that being something the government would look at seriously in the future?

Mr ASHLEY: Certainly comment was made previously around having heritage as part of the broader department. I think that is the real value opportunity here.

Mr WOOD: Preserving the railway line.

Mr ASHLEY: Absolutely. We recently did a road trip with the members of the Heritage Council about identifying those sites and values. We are in the process of pulling that piece of work together. I think that will add some coordination to the market. At the moment we do not have a lot of the sites clearly marked along the highway. I was travelling, for example, south of Adelaide River quite recently and found two sites that previously were not recorded. They are out there and we need to get a better understanding of that.

I think, in terms of the capital cost of the mountain bike track would be very extensive, the strategic approach would be to target those sites specifically and get people off the road, to do it that way.

Mr WOOD: You just mentioned signage there, I think one of the bad moves, I do not know who did it, the signs that describe our WWII Airstrips went from a sign that obviously needed a bit of upgrading, it was a sign that had information on who the airstrip was named after and what happened to that person, whether they were killed or whatever. Livingstone was killed on Livingstone airstrip, he crashed.

Those signs have now gone and all we have is Livingstone airstrip WWII. There is no information. Someone made a decision to get rid of the information, which would help tourists come, and just put the name of an airstrip, which does not really mean a lot unless you know where that name came from. There is a lot of history in those names.

Was that a decision of this government or the previous government? Why was that changed?

Ms MOSS: Can I take it on notice, Member for Nelson, about when those were removed?

Ms MOSS: They were replaced. They had a big sign, a little soldier with a bugle and the name of the airstrip. Below that it would have the details of the person and where that person ...

Ms MOSS: There are certainly other ways in which the department is working towards getting out those stories about what has happened around the Northern Territory. There was the recent release of a new heritage map. We have been working with Heritage around that. If you know when, I am happy to look into that for you, if you know when that changeover was.

Mr WOOD: I am not too worried about the changeover, I am just a bit worried.

Question on Notice No 7.12

Madam CHAIR: Member for Nelson, I will ask you to repeat the question for the record so we can put it on notice.

Mr WOOD: Minister, could you give us an indication of when the information signs on World War II airstrips on the Stuart Highway were changed? I think the only one that was not, by the way, was Gorrie Airstrip.

Madam CHAIR: The minister accepts the question and it has been allocated number 7.12

Mr WOOD: This is a mixed bag. I have been asked about this since its inception in 1999. This has been asked before.

The Portrait of a Senior Territorian Art Award has captured the imagination of Territory artists of all ages and stages of practice. It remains the only portrait award exhibition in the country to put a spotlight on seniors, which resonates with the culturally imbedded notion of elders in the Northern Territory. In 2017, the award was showcased in Alice Springs at the Araluen Arts Centre for the first time. The call for entries usually occurs in February or March. This year there has been no such call. Minister, what is happening to the Portrait of a Senior Territorian Art Award for 2018?

Ms MOSS: Thank you, Member for Nelson. I might ask Mr Leslie to come back to the table as well. We will support the Portrait of a Senior Territorian Art Award. It was fantastic to see it for the first time at Araluen. The Centralian community embraced the opportunity to have it there. We look to continue that support. I am not too sure when the call out has gone out or is due. Mr Leslie, do you have more information on that?

Mr LESLIE: Member for Nelson, there will be the Portrait of a Senior Territorian competition this year. We will get you the information apart from this that you require on the actual dates.

Mr WOOD: Okay.

Ms MOSS: I will take it on notice, Member for Nelson, about the dates—the call-out for artists. We are very committed to that. It is a fantastic event.

Question on Notice No 7.13

Madam CHAIR: Member for Nelson, can you repeat the question for the record please?

Mr WOOD: Minister, could you provide the information as to when the Portrait of a Senior Territorian Art Award entries will be called this year?

Madam CHAIR: The minister accepts the question and the Member for Nelson's question has been allocated number 7.13.

Mr WOOD: Just two quick questions, one is a technical question. You provided a \$50 000 grant to Top Croc NT to be a new crocodile farm, educational facility and tourist attraction. Can you say where that attraction is, and has it been completed? It is in your grants provided.

Ms MOSS: I might take that one on notice, Member for Nelson.

Question on Notice No 7.14

Madam CHAIR: Member for Nelson, can you please repeat the question for the record?

Mr WOOD: Could the minister please provide information regarding a \$50 000 grant to a company called Top Croc, which was a new crocodile farm, educational facility and tourist attraction. Where is this attraction and has it been completed?

Madam CHAIR: The minister will take the question on notice and it has been allocated number 7.14

Mr WOOD: Minister, my final question is a bit political, but I need to ask it.

Minister, you do all of this—remote sporting infrastructure program, Urban And Regional Oval Lights Program, MotorSport NT, supporting national rugby league in the Territory, upgrading sporting facilities in Alice Springs, upgrading purpose-reserved sporting facilities in Tennant Creek, upgrading infrastructure for drag racing and for the Finke Desert Race in Central Australia, supporting two Australian Football League premierships in the Territory—and you have nothing for sporting facilities in the rural area.

Mr HIGGINS: I could see that coming!

Mr WOOD: Why is Freds Pass left out of any mention in the budget for sport?

Ms MOSS: Member for Nelson, I will ask—there is a lot of good stuff on there. I will ask Mr Leslie to talk on Freds Pass Reserve and what will happen there.

Mr WOOD: He knows how many people use it and how many people work hard—I was just giving my two bobs' worthwhile I had a chance.

Mr LESLIE: Member for Nelson, as you would no doubt be aware, the Litchfield Council has a master plan, which it developed and is continuing to pursue. In 2015–16, \$3m was provided towards that master plan.

Mr WOOD: Outside of the budget, after much political argy-bargy.

Mr LESLIE: In addition, at that time another \$560 000 was provided for all the individual user groups through a series of grants. After that some funding was provided to the council.

That was put in place and those works have been completed. We are continuing to talk to Litchfield Council about the master plan and how we can fund more of the activities and projects they have going forward.

In the last 20 years Freds Pass has grown significantly. There has been infrastructure developed in that course of time, and will continue to be so.

Mr WOOD: I realise that, but if anyone goes there they will realise how hard it has been to even get toilets for the Litchfield Soccer Club. They only just got that money, and it did not necessarily come from the government—probably indirectly through Bendigo Bank and Litchfield Council.

It is a struggle for those community groups. Sometimes I feel there is not enough in government's budget for what I call the in-between, sport south of the Berrimah line and north of Alice Springs.

Ms MOSS: It is a fantastic facility, Member for Nelson.

Mr WOOD: I will try in the next budget and see how we go.

Mr MILLS: I am not sure if this is the appropriate place to ask the question; it relates to Summernats and public liability—major events.

Ms MOSS: If you want to ask we can see if it can be answered. NT Major Events is its own ...

Mr MILLS: It is the matter of holding public events in which there is public liability risk management undertaken. It relates to Summernats, where someone in my community—I value the conversation we have already had about the assistance provided to this family. Three of the children were severely burned at Summernats last year.

There has been ongoing conversation and what has come to light is that there is an anomaly in that a spectator at such an event who is severely injured is not able to access public liability, but must go through the MAC Scheme. I understand it has been reported in the *NT News* and by legal advice. Could you please explain the quirk of law that means someone who is injured at such an event is not able to access public liability cover? Those three children are still in a difficult position.

Ms MOSS: I will ask Mr Hopper to answer that question.

Mr HOPPER: I do not represent the NT Major Events company. I was the general manager, but my answer will be broad inasmuch as all event organisers should have public liability insurance. I am no lawyer, so any advice we have provided to any party at any event—whether that is injury, a slip and fall or whatever it might be—is that they need to seek legal advice. That is as much as I can say on the matter.

Mr MILLS: The report in the *Northern Territory News* said that pending the findings of the NT WorkSafe investigation, it looks unlikely that the victims will be entitled to more compensation from the government, acknowledging the assistance that had been provided. But accessing it through the MAC Scheme does not provide them with the cover that is adequate—certainly to this family and others who are injured.

It says here on—I do not have the date for it. It says:

In a strange quirk of the law, spectators at motorsports events who are injured by vehicles are not eligible to claim through these channels.

What work has been done to give some clarity on this matter? I have raised it in parliament. This became the nub of the question. Has that quirk of law been investigated and is there some movement in providing greater safety for those who are injured at such events going forward? From what I understand—I am no lawyer either—it appears that the significant public liability that is available is not able to be accessed by those who are injured because of a quirk of the law, as it is described. Has that legislation been looked at?

You have Summernats coming up again. Has it been revisited? How can we be certain you will not have spectators burnt again and they will be put in some difficult position trying to get some adequate assistance?

Ms MOSS: Member for Blain, speaking broadly, obviously the major events that are run through NT Major Events and this agency in government, safety is the number one concern. There is constant review within government of how those processes are in place for major events. I will take on notice your question regarding a quirk of law in that regard. If I could take that on notice ...

Mr MILLS: To be more specific then, what is the specific legal issue that makes it impossible for a spectator injured at a motor sports event to access the public liability cover? What is that law and can that be fixed? Has it been considered being fixed? You have Summernats coming again. It is nearly 12 months since this occurred.

Ms MOSS: We have Red CentreNATS coming up. We have allocated money in the budget around upgrades to the burnout pads as per national guidelines that came out since the last event. Again, I will have to take it on notice around what you are saying is a quirk of law and have a look at that specifically, Member for Blain.

Mr MILLS: With respect, I asked that question in parliament and there was no follow-up on that point.

Ms MOSS: Member for Blain, people have been provided the advice to seek legal advice in relation to this matter. Yes, I will take it on notice and it will be provided a number and we will need to follow up on that today, Member for Blain.

Question on Notice No 7.15

Madam CHAIR: Member for Blain, can you repeat the question for the record so we can allocate a number.

Mr MILLS: I am seeking what is the quirk of law that makes it impossible for spectator injured at a motor sports event to access the public liability insurance?

Madam CHAIR: Thank you, minister, you will take that question on notice. That question has been allocated number 7.15.

Mr MILLS: Rather an explanation about the assistance that has been provided and everyone is taking due care and so on, I am interested to know what has been done in that space because that happened nearly 12 months ago. What has occurred in that space to ensure that that loophole has been closed off so there is adequate assurance that those who are going to such events will be protected?

Ms MOSS: Member for Blain, we will need to seek further advice on the question you are asking.

Mr MILLS: Notwithstanding we are legislators and this is the law. We create legislation in our Chamber.

Ms MOSS: Absolutely. I will need to seek ...

Mr MILLS: It is the context, it is not ...

Ms MOSS: I will need to seek further advice on the question you are putting forward, Member for Blain.

Mr MILLS: Okay. I would like some feedback on that because I did not get it when I asked last time. Thank you.

Madam CHAIR: Member for Nhulunbuy, you have some questions?

Mr GUYULA: Thank you, Madam Chair. Good afternoon, minister and your colleagues.

Given the extra cost of running remote tourism programs, what extra resources are made available to the development of these businesses?

Ms MOSS: It is a really important question and I think there are a range of programs that have been available to support tourism businesses right across the Territory. This is one of the important reasons why we have put money into things like the arts trail, so that we are supporting that regional dispersal across the Territory. We know that arts centres and galleries, for example, are really important tourism draw cards in remote and regional areas.

We have an Aboriginal Tourism Advisory Committee who are working together. They are currently embarking on the development of an Aboriginal tourism strategy, which I am very happy to talk to you about, Member for Nhulunbuy, and get you in touch with them. I think that is going to be incredibly important as to how we support tourism enterprises in a whole range of different contexts, but particularly in remote communities.

The Visitor Experience Enhancement Program that we recently opened—there was a tourism operator in East Arnhem Land that applied for that and was awarded funding, \$42 500 approved to support a project that was worth almost \$90 000 in East Arnhem. We will continue to support a whole range of tourism operators across the Territory particularly looking at having a regional dispersal of those grants as well.

We have a lot happening on our national parks as well, which has very good opportunities for Aboriginal tourism operators in remote areas. I would be encouraging you, Member for Nhulunbuy, to encourage the operators in your region to take advantage of the Visitor Experience Enhancement Program and other programs that exist within the department. We are very happy to talk to you about that.

The whole purpose of the development of the Aboriginal Tourism Strategy is that we get a better understanding of the needs of our remote Aboriginal tourism operations and how we can support them better.

Mr GUYULA: Thank you. There are several tourism businesses in my electorate that are on homelands and run by the TOs. What is the Aboriginal Tourism Strategy, how does it help to develop the projects and are there other strategies to support these very important projects?

Ms MOSS: As I have said, the Aboriginal Tourism Strategy is currently under development, that is being led by the Aboriginal Tourism Advisory Committee. If you do have specific tourism operators that you think have specific needs and would benefit from having a chat with someone in the department about what those needs are and what kinds of assistance is available, we are very happy to provide that advice. Our departmental staff, through Department of Tourism and Culture, are constantly on the road connecting with tourism operators about what the needs are. We would love to catch up with you for a chat about specific operators.

There are also programs through the Department of Business, Trade and Innovation that could potentially be of assistance as well. If you connect them with our department, we can direct operators to the programs that might assist them in their business growth.

Mr HIGGINS: I have a couple of questions left on Output/ Yesterday, when we were talking to the Primary Industry's minister, it became evident that there was \$30 000 given last year, this year and next year to AFANT in regard to consultation on fishing access.

On Budget Paper No 3 page 204 we talk about a recreational fishing access plan being in consultation with AFANT. How is that going? I cannot ask you why we are giving AFANT \$30 000, but why are we then doing the consultation or consulting with AFANT and we are also giving them money?

I am getting confused. AFANT to me, should be a peak body that represents members. They should not be given money to do consultation, it should be part of their operational grant that comes out of that industry development.

And then here we are doing more consultation on access, with fishing. Can I get an explanation on that?

Ms MOSS: Member for Daly, that is through the Department of Primary Industry and Resources.

Mr HIGGINS: So your department is not doing anything in regard to the recreational fishing access plan? Page 204 of Budget Paper No 3.

Mr TENNANT: I thank the member for the question, whether you asked that of Mr Vowles yesterday in the Department of Primary Industry and Resources.

Our department is working with DPIR in relation to that plan, obviously being consulted as that is undertaken as an agency. We obviously have an interest in relation to recreational fishing. It is one of the attractions for tourists and why they come to the Territory, to enjoy our great fishing.

So we have an interest from the tourism perspective and are being consulted as a department in relation to that context, and in relation to any upgrades of recreational fishing facilities and being able to feed in the potential tourism benefits that flow from those.

Mr HIGGINS: So is it this department that is then going to come up with that recreational fishing access plan?

Mr TENNANT: We are involved in that, but the Department of Primary Industry and Resources has the lead in relation to recreational fishing. As I mentioned, our interest is in relation to the tourism benefit that comes

from recreational fishing. As well, we know there are a lot of Territorians who enjoy recreational fishing ourselves.

Mr HIGGINS: I am just trying to get a handle on this \$30 000 that seems to have just been magically plucked out of the air and given to AFANT under the guise of consultation.

Ms MOSS: Member for Daly, our agency has not provided the funding.

Mr HIGGINS: Yes. I know where it has come from.

The museum masterplan, has that been developed and released? If it has not been released, when is it being released?

Ms MOSS: Thank you, Member for Daly. The 10-year museum masterplan, which covers Darwin and Palmerston is an incredibly important piece of work and is currently under development. It will be released in the coming months.

Mr HIGGINS: So when we say coming months, before the end of this calendar year?

Ms MOSS: Yes. Roughly before the end of this calendar year, yes.

Mr HIGGINS: That is all I have on that output.

Ms MOSS: Madam Chair, I also have a number of responses to some of the questions we have taken on notice.

Madam CHAIR: Would you like to table those or would you like to read them?

Ms MOSS: I can probably read them very quickly. I have them on a few different pieces of paper but it will not take too long.

Answer to Question on Notice No 7.10

Ms MOSS: For question 7.10, the total budget for hospitality including coffee is \$650. I am positive that includes milk, Member for Nelson.

Answer to Question on Notice No 7.9

Ms MOSS: The total expected spend on advertising with Centralian Advocate on the national Aboriginal art gallery in 2017–18 is \$69 368.

Answer to Question on Notice No 7.12

Ms MOSS: Question 7.12, which was about the signs at Livingstone airstrip, I will get some more information for you but I understand the signs were replaced in 2012, on the occasion of the 70th Anniversary of the Bombing of Darwin.

Answer to Question on Notice No 7.13

Ms MOSS: Portrait of a Senior Territorian, 7.13. Call for entry is planned on 22 June, so the exhibition will be between 12 and 19 October. I will make sure you get the information for that.

Answer to Question on Notice No 7.14

Ms MOSS: The Top Croc, is in Berry Springs, and it is all completed and acquitted.

Madam CHAIR: Thank you Minister.

Mr HIGGINS: I have one more question I know the Minister will love to finish on. I can assure everyone this is a very high priority, almost a Dorothy Dixier for you. What is the government doing to mark the 40th anniversary of self-government and what will we do that is different year-on-year? Will we engage some of the people who were here in 1978? What are we doing around our regional towns—I know this is a big question—and how much have we set aside in the budget.

A wonderful Dorothy Dixier for Tourism to finish on.

Ms MOSS: Thank you, Member for Daly. It is very exciting. The budget allocation for the 40th anniversary is \$1.7m. That includes the signature events and community grants; a number of non-government organisations to put on fabulous events around the Territory; My Territory, which is the 40th anniversary interview project; fireworks at the signature events as well as 16 regional locations; and the marketing.

We have Neil Finn coming to Darwin; that is pretty awesome.

Mr HIGGINS: Who?

Ms NELSON: I remember seeing him when I was about 14.

Ms MOSS: We also have Baker Boys, and the Veronicas are coming ...

Madam CHAIR: We only have a short amount of time, so make sure the minister is able to answer.

Ms MOSS: There are a number of regional fireworks locations around the Territory. There are a number in your electorate, Member for Daly. There will be some interesting events happening not only on 1 July, but over the next few months to mark where we have come from and where we want to go in the future.

Madam CHAIR: Are there any more questions on Tourism and Culture? We have three minutes.

Mr WOOD: Can you give us visitor numbers for all parks in the Northern Territory over the last five years, please?

Ms MOSS: I will take that on notice.

Question on Notice No 7.16

Madam CHAIR: Member for Nelson, can you repeat the questions for the record, please.

Mr WOOD: Can you provide visitor numbers for all parks in the Northern Territory over the last five years?

Ms MOSS: Member for Nelson, it is on the website. But I can provide it to you; that is no provide it to you.

Madam CHAIR: The Member for Nelson's question has been allocated the number 7.16.

Mr WOOD: I can use the website. The visitor numbers are only small. There are lots of parks in the Territory.

Ms MOSS: There are lots on the website, too. I will get those to you; that is no problem.

Mr WOOD: Howard Springs Nature Park suffered quite a bit of damage from Cyclone Marcus, including to the jungle trail, or the rainforest trail. Has there been money allocated to repair that area? Will this affect the possibility of having the tree adventures experience—is it at risk of not going ahead?

Ms MOSS: I will ask Mr Ashley to answer that question.

Mr ASHLEY: You are correct; there was significant damage. You forget how close Howard Springs is to the coast; it is pretty evident in this case as there was extensive damage. We have been in close consultation with the company proposing to put up the tree-climbing infrastructure. They came up about four weeks ago and toured some sites, and they are currently assessing their options.

The damage was extensive. We did a survey of all the structural trees. Because it is a climbing infrastructure, they were structural trees they needed to use. Those negotiations are ongoing.

I am pleased to say they are committed to the Territory, and they have looked at alternative sites, but at this stage they are still making that commercial decision.

Mr WOOD: I wanted to go on the zip line across Howard Springs lagoon.

Mr ASHLEY: It is a fantastic opportunity for the park.

Madam CHAIR: That concludes the consideration of outputs relating to the Department of Tourism and Culture, as the minister's time has expired and reached its limitation. On behalf of the committee, the officials accompanying you, we thank you for providing assistance to the minister today. We would also like to acknowledge and thank the staff who were prepared to provide advice to the minister regarding Territory Wildlife and Parks, the Department of Corporate and Information Services, NT Fleet and Data Services Centre. Thank you to all of those staff who were on call.

The committee suspended.

MINISTER LAWLER'S PORTFOLIOS

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Madam CHAIR: The committee will now consider outputs relating to the Department of Education. I welcome you, minister, to today's hearings and invite you to introduce the officials accompanying you.

Ms LAWLER: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. On my right are Vicki Baylis, the Chief Executive of the Department of Education; and Marion Guppy, Deputy Chief Executive School Education. On my left are the Executive Director Corporate Services, Jasmine Aldenhoven; and Brett Roach, Chief Financial Officer.

Madam CHAIR: Thank you. Minister, I will invite you to make a brief opening statement. I will then call for questions relating to this statement. The committee will then consider any whole-of-government budget and fiscal strategy-related questions before moving on to output specific questions, and finally non-output specific budget-related questions.

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

Minister, do you wish to make an opening statement regarding the Department of Education?

Ms LAWLER: Yes, please.

This government has been placing children at the heart of our decisions and working hard to ensure every child in the Northern Territory has the best start in life and through early learning and school education, gains a bright future.

For the coming financial year, the total investment in Education will be a record \$1.144bn, including \$135.8m for improving infrastructure across government and non-government schools. This investment supports 152 government schools, including 45 homeland learning centres and 37 non-government schools, to provide education services for over 45 000 students across the Territory.

Our school students are supported by a workforce of over 4200 full-time-equivalent staff. Government school-based employees make up 87% of the workforce and include over 2500 teaching staff. In 2018, \$506m is allocated to meet the direct costs of operating Northern Territory Government schools. The Northern Territory budget for non-government schools in 2018–19 provides a total investment of \$244.5m, which includes \$185.7m of Commonwealth Government Quality Schools funding.

As minister for all schools in the Territory, I remain committed to having government schools that set a high standard, and to supporting the non-government schooling sector to ensure parents have a choice in accessing education. We are enhancing the way we resource government schools, providing fairer and more transparent funding. We completed an independent review of schooling resourcing and are implementing the recommendations through our action plan.

Our action plan is focused on building a new school resourcing model that will enable government schools to tailor their resources to better meet student needs, have budget certainty and flexibility and improve support through targeted investment.

As part of the introduction of the new model, a one-off injection of \$4m was added to school budgets in 2018 to recognise legacy issues from 2015 and 2016. To increase transparency and build awareness of how schools are funded, final budgets of every school were published on the department's public website for the first time in early May 2018.

Improving education outcomes for Aboriginal students continues to be a significant priority. We have allocated \$48.4m to the Indigenous Education Strategy. The community-led schools initiative will be a critical part of the next stage of the strategy from 2018 to 2020. I am pleased that this initiative will support our government's broader local decision making agenda.

The government's 10-year early childhood development plan aims to strengthen families, build vibrant, resilient communities and improve the health, wellbeing and educational outcomes of children and young people. I am proud of the strong contribution the Department of Education will play in supporting this whole-of-government commitment.

In 2017, the Families as First Teachers program was expanded to 11 new sites, to make a total of 38 sites with over 1900 children participating in this evidence-based quality early learning and family support program. In 2018–19, we are investing \$11.2m as part of the early childhood development plan to deliver Families as First Teachers programs and expand the program to an additional seven new sites. This investment will continue to grow in 2019–20 with a further seven more sites, bringing the total to 52 sites across the Territory. A total of \$2.2m is also budgeted to continue to engage children and their families in quality, integrated early years programs and services through child and family centres, with plans to expand these centres over the next five years.

We are also allocating \$6m to continue to provide the early childhood services subsidy for long day care, three-year-old kindergarten and family day care services to assist families with childcare costs. Improving the quality of early childhood education and care across the Territory remains a priority for the department, with 62% of all education and care services rated as meeting or exceeding the national quality standard at the end of March 2018.

There are promising signs for our schools, too, in the latest NAPLAN results. Four-year cohort gains for the NT have been strong, with Year 7 and 9 cohorts achieving stronger gains than nationally. There are also significant achievement increases in the 2017 NAPLAN results compared to the previous year for Year 5 Aboriginal students in reading and spelling and Year 9 Aboriginal students for numeracy.

We are continuing to invest in quality programs and initiatives we know are making a positive difference, including targeted professional learning and a focus on improved teaching and learning strategies based on effective data analysis. To provide students with the skills and knowledge to prosper in the future, \$300 000 has been provided to expand enterprise education and innovation programs within schools and \$100 000 to engage students in coding and digital technologies, with 98 school teams across the Territory competing in the 2017 RoboCup competition.

A further \$400 000 is allocated to upskill teachers in digital literacy and introduce computer coding training into primary and secondary schools. We are also investing \$4m to upgrade local area network cabling in schools across the Territory to improve digital capability and \$2.3m to develop interactive data and analytic dashboards for schools to support data-informed decision making to improve student outcomes.

To assist schools to build safe and supportive environments that support student learning and wellbeing, NT schools have been trialling the NT Social and Emotional Learning curriculum, with the program planned to be fully implemented in government schools by the end of this year. To support the students to be successful in their education journey we are continuing to invest an additional \$10m to better support and educate children and young people with challenging behaviours and additional needs. This funding has also extended the flexible learning pathways for secondary-aged students through the expansion of the Malak Re-engagement Centre to Palmerston last year and the establishment of alternative education programs for disengaged youth in the Barkly and Katherine regions through the Healthy Life Creative Life commitment.

We continued to provide secondary options in 2017, with 949 students from government schools completing the Northern Territory Certificate of Education and Training, representing the largest cohort to date, and 675 students completing a VET qualification.

The government's economic development framework focuses on improving economic opportunities for all Territorians. I am pleased that we are investing \$6.5m in vocational education and training in schools, and \$4.2m to enable students to complete the NTCET to provide skills and knowledge for future career paths.

We are also extending secondary education options in remote communities through the Indigenous education strategy's Transition Support Unit post primary and employment pathways program with an estimated \$5.3m allocated.

We continued to enhance learning environments for students through \$153.3m program with new and improved schooling infrastructure, and supported the economic growth of the NT by providing local jobs through a continuous stream of projects. I recently opened the \$2.5m new preschool at Alpurrurulam, and late last year I opened the \$2.5m preschool at Ampilatwatja. Both are in the east of the Northern Territory.

Last year also saw the commencement of our Building Better Schools program, which is providing \$300 000 for every NT school over a four-year period for refurbishments and upgrades to school facilities. This is a great opportunity for schools to be able to address infrastructure needs right across the Territory. But, as I said, we continue to roll out our 2017 minor new works program and upgrade our schools. There are a whole number of projects. I will not go through them now—I have them listed here—but will wait until we have an opportunity through questioning.

Since becoming Education minister I have visited around 127 schools across government and non-government sectors. There are around about 60 that I still have not gotten to yet. I can tell you that the investment we are providing schools through the \$300 000 as well as our minor new works and capital works is always very well received.

Looking ahead, the 2018–19 budget provides substantial investment in education infrastructure, totalling \$135.8m, which includes \$103m for capital and minor new works for government schools, including round two of Building Better Schools and \$1.5m for the rooftop solar in schools program; \$30.1m for repairs and maintenance, including \$1m for repairs to homeland learning centres; and \$2.7m in capital grants to non-government schools for the Building Better Schools program projects.

New infrastructure projects includes \$15.9m for Darwin Middle School's multipurpose hall as part of stage two of the Bullocky Point education precinct project; and an addition \$6m for stage two of the new Zuccoli government primary school, which builds on the \$9m announced in last year's budget.

I will not go on and read all of them—I have a long list here, but the government's response to the findings and recommendations of the Royal Commission into the Protection and Detention of Children in the Northern Territory supports a coordinated effort to make effective, meaningful and generational change to our youth justice and child protection system. This includes our investment of \$2.1m to improvement educational services to young people in detention to enhance their engagement.

We are continuing to deliver an education system that is fair and equitable for all students by resourcing schools based on the needs of students. We are creating safe, positive and inclusive school environments, ensuring that every classroom has a quality teacher and every school has exceptional leaders. We respect and value the role of families in communities and their children's education.

We are investing in areas that we know will make the most difference to the quality of education to ultimately deliver better outcomes for all Northern Territory students.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

Madam CHAIR: Thank you, minister. You have the option to table the rest of your statement if you wish.

Ms LAWLER: Yes, I am very happy to table it.

Madam CHAIR: Thank you. The minister will table the remainder of the opening statement. Are there any questions to the minister's statement? Thank you.

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

Madam CHAIR: The committee will now consider the estimates of proposed expenditure contained in the Appropriation (2018–2019) Bill as they relate to the Department of Education. Are there any agency-related whole-of-government questions on budget and fiscal strategies?

Minister, I have one which relates to government employee housing for local recruits. I was just wondering what the department's overall strategy is in regard to supporting the local recruits in government employee housing.

Ms LAWLER: Thank you, Madam Chair, for that question. One of the things I am very proud of as a Northern Territory Labor government minister is our government's commitment to government employee housing. In the past our government employees, our local recruits, have not been able to access government employee housing. But that is one of the things we are committed to do, as a government.

If you are recruited from interstate and you move into a remote community, you obviously get a house with your employment. But if you are a long-term government employee who is local from that community, you have not been able to access housing in the past. One of our commitments as a government is to do that. There is a working party across government. There are about 600 employees in education that would be eligible for housing, so it is not going to be something that is going to happen overnight. We know that and understand that, but we believe it is the right thing to do.

There is a group working with the Office of the Commissioner for Public Employment looking at eligibility criteria and to roll that project out. As I said, it is not something that will happen immediately, because as you can imagine there is substantial cost, but it is something that is a priority of our government, Member for Arnhem. Thank you.

Madam CHAIR: I have a follow up question on that, minister, thank you for your answer. I did ask this question of the Minister for Housing and Community Development.

In regard to long-term local recruited staff who currently have access and are using government employee housing, will there be a transition of assisting those education government employees to be able to either access community housing—or would the department be negotiating for those employees to have their departmental housing assets changed into community housing assets?

Ms LAWLER: Thank you, Madam Chair. For those details I will call on Adam Walding, the General Manager of Infrastructure.

As I said, it will be a complex issue to map the housing that is currently available in those communities. The housing that is being used by current teachers and principals in those communities, what housing then is available, and what the new builds need to be and to map that out over time. I will pass to Adam Walding.

Madam CHAIR: Thank you. Can you state your full name and your title for the record?

Mr WALDING: Yes, Adam Walding, General Manager, Planning and Infrastructure.

If I do not answer your question in full, please clarify it. Basically, we have developed a government employee subcommittee within the Department of Education to focus on the government employee housing issues.

As we work through it, and it is in its early days, we are trying to understand the future needs and future growth areas for government employee housing. At this point in time it is early in that strategy, to clearly identify the future requirements, and align with the other budget that is being developed through the department of housing.

Madam CHAIR: Thank you.

Ms LAWLER: Madam Chair, just to clarify, on pay week 22, the Department of Education had 657 local recruited employees who would be eligible for government employee housing, using the current OCPE guidelines. So a substantial number of government employees are in Education in our remote communities, which is understandable. Health and Education would have the largest number of government employees in these localities.

Ms NELSON: I have a quick question. Minister, I was wondering if you could explain, the Department of Education regional office in Katherine reports to the office in Alice Springs, is that right? I was wondering if you could explain the strategic plan with that.

Ms LAWLER: Member for Katherine, this is probably a bit of a long-winded response. One of the tasks I set the CE of the Department of Education when we came into government was to revitalise and work on the strategic plan of the department. As we know, there was considerable work that was undertaken for that. There was extensive consultation across the Northern Territory with stakeholders, teachers and staff. Following that, there was some work undertaken to look at, once the Strategic Plan was developed, where the gaps were in the current structure of the department. If you are going to have a new Strategic Plan, you need to make sure that the staffing can hit the mark and deliver on that Strategic Plan.

There has been work underway to look at a new organisational structure and I will pass to the CE, Vicki Baylis, to give details of that.

Ms BAYLIS: As the minister said, we have been through some fairly exciting conversations with our students, staff, and community; and internally with our corporate staff as well. That has landed a very accessible and concise strategy. However, when we then had a look at, what do we actually do now organisationally and where do we fit with the whole-of-government approach as well as internally with the department. The advice that came back to us was we needed to be more effective and more efficient.

The consultation, over the last three months, has been across the Northern Territory with Marion and me being physically out and about with possible macrostructures. We have had extensive input and feedback along the way and we have only just approved the structure—the organisational realignment. We will go live with that on the 2 July and we will be able then to roll through how we are going to deliver on the strategy.

Katherine region, per se, is geographically going to exist, as will all the six regions. There will be the same presence around the resources, but the way that we do our work will need to be quite different if we are going to accelerate that improvement agenda.

We have got lots of good indicators of beginning stuff but, where we are in the Territory, requires us to be very focused and to have a sharp and narrow focus. When we look at how we work and intersect with other government agencies, the Katherine region predominantly works with the south across the whole-of-government strategy, and there are critical opportunities that we might miss if we are not doing that.

However, from a schooling point of view the opportunity will continue to be about the local regional presence providing the service that is responsive to the needs of the schools within that Katherine region.

For those Territory-wide services we provide across the Territory, that will continue to be accessed out of Darwin. There is no sense of us trying to do the geography travel from Alice to Katherine and it is not effective or efficient. But when it comes to the decision-making where we have whole-of-government opportunities, where we are talking about integrated services and talking about the connect, for example with housing, the location for those services or other agencies is with Alice, with the south. We have tried to align that more effectively from a whole-of-government perspective.

Operationally, it will be located in Katherine still and will be continuing for a whole of Territory wide—specific things. For example, in some disability areas. They will be delivered out of the Darwin region not from the central spot, not from Alice Springs to the north.

Ms NELSON: Thank you so much for that response. That certainly allays quite a number of theories. It was a great response, I really do appreciate the detail.

Ms BAYLIS: To reassure any of the people within your electorate, but also in other electorates, Marion and I will be back out, because we love doing road shows. It has been such a positive experience. We are going to be back out in Term 3 and we will run a number of community meetings as well as staff meetings, just to be able to talk with people again. To go, 'This is what you said, this is where we have got to, and this is how we will work'. Also, just to be able to have that conversation and to keep it ongoing.

Ms LAWLER: I would like to add to that. Watching from outside, the work that the department has done has been exceptional. To me, it is the absolute right way to go around. Sometimes people will just put together an organisational chart and say what we need to do. The department has—it should probably be written up in a leadership book. Someone can do a Master's degree or a case study about it.

It has involved substantial consultation to get the strategic plan right, first and foremost, and then bring in an outsider with some clear eyes to have a look at the staffing of the department and say—where the staff are they will not achieve what needs to be achieved. There needs to be some tweaking and movement around that. That has happened. Now is the time to go back out and work through it.

It has been a lot of work, but we need to do it if we are to make the gains that we need to in education. If we are to be the fastest-growing and -improving education system in Australia, we need to—as Vicki says—have a really sharp and tight focus on what we do. I put on record the work that has been done and thank the department. Besides that work, they are doing the work that keeps schools going as well. There is a lot of work being done.

Madam CHAIR: Thank you, minister. Are there any other questions related to agency and whole-of-government?

That concludes consideration of agency-related, whole-of-government questions on budget and fiscal strategies.

OUTPUT GROUP 1 – GOVERNMENT EDUCATION **Output 1.1 – Early Years**

Madam CHAIR: The committee will now proceed to Output Group 1, Government Education and Output 1.1, Early Years. Are there any questions?

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Thank you, Madam Chair. I thank the Department of Education and all the people who are here this evening, as well as all the people watching eagerly on their screens somewhere across the Territory. Thank you for all your hard work. We understand this is a significant body of work to prepare for. As an opposition, we are very much looking forward to tonight. Thank you very much in advance.

Minister, I refer to Budget Paper No 3 page 244, which is the new initiatives section. We have a series of questions on the government's early childhood development plan Starting Early for a Better Future. Noting that, due to time limitations, we were unable to question the Minister for Children. You will come at it from the Minister for Education's perspective, but these were questions we had for that minister.

Minister, on page 244 of Budget Paper No 3, \$750 000 has been allocated for the early childhood development plan initiatives, but the Starting Early for a Better Future Plan has \$35.6m over four years. We were wondering why there was such a disparity in those funding figures.

Ms LAWLER: Just to clarify, the \$35.4m is the total spend of what Education spends in that focus on those early years. The \$0.75m in 2018–19 and \$1.5m annually is to build on the existing investment in FaFT and preschool. The funding will be used to combine FaFT and preschool programs at seven new sites in 2018–19, and a further seven sites in 2019–20, expanding to a total of 52 sites by 2020.

In the early childhood plan, that is not just Education money, some of it is for Health and Territory Families. There is a component in there that is around Education. The Education spend is around Families as First Teachers.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Out of that \$35.6m over four years, is only \$750 000 of it for Education or is that just the amount for FaFT and preschools, as you described?

Ms LAWLER: Yes. Education has a huge spend in that early childhood area. That includes preschool education across the Northern Territory. That extra \$0.75m in 2018–19 and \$1.5m annually from 2019–20 is for the ...

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Comes from the starting better ...

Ms LAWLER: Yes.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Okay. Out of the \$35.6m, the starting early for a better future funding, \$750 000 in the next financial year and then \$1.5m recurring comes from that pool of \$35.6m?

Ms LAWLER: How about I pass to Vicki Baylis, who has read that. I can assure you, Member for Spillett, that ...

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: I just want to be clear. I know. Obviously, Education has its own budget, yes.

Ms LAWLER: ... the early childhood plan is not just Education. It has a large number of other agencies input into that.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Yes, thank you.

Ms BAYLIS: Thank you, Member for Spillett. For the 2018–19 budget, there is an additional \$5.6m and another \$10m annually from 2019–20. That is about improving housing, health and education outcomes, so it is a more comprehensive picture than just education. That is a wrapped-up total that sits in amongst that. As the minister said, it is that \$0.75m—we receive part of that plus the \$1.5m annually that will continue to go onto FaFT and preschool education. The bit for Education sits in that area.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Yes, that very specific amount, then there is a combined—about \$10m you were saying that is also ...

Ms BAYLIS: Yes. Then there is also what we will invest internally, which will be our contribution, which is around \$1.167m that is ongoing work that Education continues to do around the early childhood strategy with the work and investment we have in that space now.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Okay. Thank you for that. Sorry ...

Ms BAYLIS: That is okay.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Minister, how much did the Starting Early for a Better Future plan cost to produce?

Ms LAWLER: I will have to take that on notice because that is not my portfolio. It is the Minister for Children's portfolio.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: That is okay. We can do that as a written question to that, minister, thank you.

I refer to your answer to written question 105, which stated, 'It is anticipated that the early childhood development plan will be completed in the last quarter of 2017'. That plan was released on 30 April of this year. Can you please advise the reason for the delay?

Ms LAWLER: These are probably questions that should have been for the Minister for Children, but as I was involved in that—sometimes those things take longer. They do not always just go according to plan. There was substantial consultation. That expert group was a large group. In the end, there were probably about 12 people on the expert panel. When you have lots of experts you have lots of conversations. There was a draft that was probably finished by late December, but it went back to have a sharper focus and another look at.

There was some work then that came out around the child and family centres. That was one of the really clear initiatives we all acknowledged would bring the whole plan together, by having those 17 identified child and family centres across the Territory. That was some later work where we all acknowledge that to have a plan you actually then needed some tight, specific sites where we could, in communities, deliver on that plan.

That was then around the commitment that tied in also with the Royal Commission work the Minister for Territory Families was leading as well. It was about bringing together a number of bits of work the government was doing to make sure we had something that was really able to be tangible to be in our remote communities.

We have six child and family centres across the Northern Territory. You would know the one in Palmerston. We have them in Ngukurr, Maningrida, Yuendumu, Umbakumba and Larapinta. Through the expert panel meeting and the Children's Subcommittee of Cabinet, it was that realisation or understanding that those child and family centre are great places to bring together all of that preventative work. Communities have schools

and health centres, but in the places where we have the child and family centres we are seeing some great outcomes. We are getting traction there.

It was then about doing that work around how we then tie in that preventative work. There will be a total of 17 child and family centres across the Territory. We were recently in Ngukurr and saw a wonderful example. They will include the Families as First Teachers working out of that site. There will be childcare at the site as well as preschool and creche. There will be such things at the site as hearing or OT—you can have those services in the community and they can have a base. That was some of the later work on that.

Sometimes those time lines need to stretch a bit—three or four months was what happened.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: I refer to Budget Paper No 3, page 241, the early years output. The Starting Early for a Better Future plan commits a seven-year abecedarian centres. Where will these centres be located and how much of this output is allocated to building the centres?

Ms LAWLER: The Abecedarian Approach is what underpins the Families as First Teachers sites. It is called 3a, or Abecedarian Approach Australia, which is the philosophy that underpins the FaFT. The value of Families as First Teachers is that it is underpinned by a theoretical framework.

The Abecedarian Approach has been in the United States for around 20 years and it is based on clear research which shows that the little children who have been through the Abecedarian Approach when they were up to three years old have made substantial growth. Those kids then go on to university and have success in life.

The seven additional sites will be rolled out and identified through the department. It will not be necessarily through me. They will be in a priority area identified of greatest need. Places where we do not have FaFT but will need to.

I will hand over to Tricia Wake, who is the Acting General Manager Early Childhood Education and Care.

Ms WAKE: In relation to the new stay, play, learn FaFT sites that will be coming on board, no decision has been made as to where those sites will occur. There has been some discussion on the criteria that would determine those sites including the vulnerability of the children, the level of remoteness and a range of factors we need to take that into account when we look at the best place for those sites, particularly within a remote area and where there may not be other education services readily available, such as a preschool.

The first seven sites are due to be selected by 31 December 2018, and the following seven sites in the coming year after that.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Have any new sites been established since 1 July last year?

Ms LAWLER: I will give a rundown on the sites. I am trying to think of the time lines around some of these that I know of.

I opened the Katherine FaFT site recently. That is one of the new ones. It is at Clyde Fenton School. The Ampilatwatja FaFT at the preschool opened as well. I was there for the opening. Jabiru is a relatively new one as well. It opened in Term 3, 2017. There is also FaFT at Nguui on the Tiwi Islands, which is one of the most recent ones.

Madam CHAIR: Minister, just for clarification, is it Jabiru FaFT or Kakadu FaFT?

Ms LAWLER: I will ask the acting General Manager, Early Childhood if she wants to elaborate on any of those.

Ms WAKE: No, those are all the correct sites. Currently, there are 38 sites. One site was replaced by another site in Central Australia, but we still have 38 sites across the Northern Territory, and we are looking forward to the other 14 sites coming on board over the next 18 months.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: That was my next question, thank you. The one that ceased operating, which one was that and which one was it replaced by?

Ms WAKE: Yirrkala homelands had a FaFT they were running. That ceased to operate at the end of 2017. It has not been replaced within the Arnhem area. We are currently looking at whether or not there is opportunity for those resources to be utilised in establishing an alternative FaFT in the Nhulunbuy area.

In terms of the scoping we have done around the Nhulunbuy area, we have found there is a lot of support. Those conversations are fairly embryonic at the moment. Yirrkala homelands services were looking more to using the remote assistant teacher preschool package, because it felt it was more appropriate to their needs.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Was that a local decision to discontinue FaFT?

Ms WAKE: Yes, that was a local decision.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Thank you very much.

Ms BAYLIS: Member for Spillett, can I clarify the answer to your question. You asked which one was switched on as a result, Ampilatwatja was the program using the resources we had allocated to that.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Thank you very much.

Minister, I refer to Budget Paper 3, page 246. My question is about early childhood KPIs.

In both the budget paper and in your targets in the early childhood development plan, how will performance be measured for the 2022 targets, which are better quality learning, increased attendance and greater family involvement? And will these targets be incorporated in future budgets as budget KPIs?

Ms LAWLER: Is that in relation to preschool or FaFT?

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Early childhood.

Ms LAWLER: The preschool enrolments and attendance are pretty straightforward. You mark the role when the kids attend preschool. And increased attendance at preschool is one we really strive for, because that is also one we think makes a big difference to children's lives, if they attend preschool regularly.

Probably being a young mum yourself, or a mum of young kids, you understand that sometimes they have a cold and they do not come to preschool, or they are having a bit of a sleep in that day or a nap and things like that. It is one that is continually being worked on in making sure we do push the attendance up in the preschool area.

Preschool enrolments—again we would love to see every single child that is four years old in the Northern Territory at preschool, and I will go one step further. I have been pushing the federal government to fund three-year-old preschool. I would love to see every three-year-old in the Northern Territory attend school.

There was a report done by Susan Pascoe. All the ministers of education in Australia called for an early childhood review to look at early childhood across Australia. That is called *Lifting our Game*; it is an amazing report. One of the things it recommends was that we do have three-year-old preschool.

One of the things I have in the back of my mind is that every school, every system in the world that does very well in TIMSS and PISA has their children doing a full year of three-year-old preschool and a full year of four year old preschool.

So we can do all these things with curriculum at later years, and do a whole heap of things. To me it is about providing quality early years education. When you look at Singapore education, Finland—lots of places—they have really high quality early childhood education.

I have been asking the federal government to try to get three-year-old preschools funded throughout the Northern Territory. The department is doing some work on that, because we know it would possibly mean greater infrastructure. It depends on how many three-year-olds are in certain communities. It would mean extra staff as well, but I think it is some important work to be done.

The performance indicators are increasing in numbers of days attended by zero to three-year-olds, and parents of three-year-olds can take their kids to schools in a remote community. It is about driving improvements in attendance and enrolments.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: That is very interesting, minister, what you said about the three-year-old preschool. I hear it as early learning; is that three-year-old preschool the same as early learning?

Ms LAWLER: Yes, so I mean there are a large number of children that attend creche playgroups and a whole heap of things, but one of the things that we are very proud of in the Northern Territory is our preschool curriculum. That is some great work that the early childhood team have done. It is about—like the abecedarian, it is all very well kids going to these places, but it is about having some key activities. It is singing to kids and doing nursery rhymes.

If they are not getting those things at home, it is important to be able to have that really strong play-based learning, particularly for our remotes, where some of our children are missing out on it might be reading books. It does not matter which language, whether it is a home language or in English. Having those opportunities, having opportunities for a whole heap of things that are those pre-behaviours, basically, for school, I think are important.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Obviously preschool is—I think it is six years old is the compulsory age, so up until that point the department is relying on parents to bring their children to school. Is there any work being done in that space?

Ms LAWLER: It is probably a really difficult one. The compulsory school age in the Territory is six years old. There are plenty of parents that will tell you they think it is best if they can keep their child at home and they can do those things. That, to me, I agree. If you have that really rich environment, that is fine. But we are particularly concerned or focused on disadvantaged students or young children who may not have that rich learning environment. There is not any work at the moment around changing the *Education Act*, because that is what it would be to lower that age.

I do not think that you have to make it compulsory to get something happening. It could be that we have a look at those opportunities. Maybe this is pre-empting some of that work. We look at our most vulnerable kids, our most disadvantaged students. We have that data through that AEDC data—the census data. So we have where the kids are the most vulnerable in the Territory, where they need additional supports.

So whether it is focusing on those areas first and foremost and then continuing to, as I said, roll that out—but we would love the Australian Government to come on board because it will be additional costs.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Minister, what percentage of Territory children are accessing approved childcare centres?

Ms LAWLER: I will pass to the acting General Manager of Early Childhood for that figure. She may or may not have that.

Ms WAKE: I will have to take that one on notice because I do not know that specifically, because obviously some of it is private and some of it is public et cetera. Under the Quality Education and Care NT regulation we do regulate, but some of those are in scope/not in scope so it is a little bit more complex than just giving a number.

Madam CHAIR: Member for Spillett, would you like to place that on notice?

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: That would be great, thank you.

Question on Notice No 8.1

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Minister, what percentage of Territory children are accessing approved childcare centres as at 31 March 2018?

Madam CHAIR: Minister, do you accept the question?

Ms LAWLER: Yes, absolutely. We know all childcare centres are approved. That has been one of the great things about the quality of childcare.

Madam CHAIR: The Member for Spillett's question has been allocated the number 8.1.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Minister, do we know what percentage of Territory children are starting school—this may very well be preschool—with learning or developmental challenges that they need support for right from the start?

Ms LAWLER: One of the, I guess, useful—sometimes some assessments are not necessarily useful, I must say. But a few years ago the federal government brought out the AEDI. It was the AEDI and now it has become the AEDC, the Australian Early Childhood Development index. It measures children's development across the following five domains that are closely linked to the predictors of good adult health, education and social outcomes.

We are collecting data from 1 May to 29 June. It is a national measure and it is when kids enter their first year of schooling. It is May, so they have been at school for five months. It measures their physical health and wellbeing, social competence, motor maturity, school-based language and cognitive skills, communication skills and general knowledge.

The NT achieved a high participation in 2015, 98% of kids were assessed. There has been three national collection cycles, 2009, 2012 and 2015. I will pass to Tricia Wake for the details of the results. We will have to look at the 2015 data, because that would have been the last information.

Ms WAKE: In terms of the actual percentage of children starting with a developmental delay, I do not have that information from the 2015 data. I will have to get that information for you, it is generally more generalised data that is provided. At the moment we are not undertaking the 2018 AEDC collection. Currently we have 91% of schools activated and the actual participation rate has been extremely high.

Ms LAWLER: Member for Spillett, I do remember seeing the data in 2016 when it came through, that our results are the highest in Australia. It is useful because it goes down to postcode level and the positive thing is, about using that data to then target what you can put in place. What support, what specific programs and things like that you can put in place.

I think the Barkly, from memory, had some of the highest needs of children anywhere in Australia, in that five-year age level. We can get that data to you from 2015.

Question on Notice No 8.2

Madam CHAIR: Member for Spillett, would you like to put that on notice?

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Minister, what percentage of Territory children begin school with developmental delays with respect to 2015?

Madam CHAIR: Minister, do you accept the question?

Ms LAWLER: Yes.

Madam CHAIR: That question has been allocated number 8.2.

Ms LAWLER: I might just add one little story, you know how I like to tell stories. One of the good things we have done as a government is open the Mimik-ga Centre. There is a Families as First Teachers centre at the old Henbury School site, the focus is on little ones with developmental delays. Any kids can go, zero to four- or five-year-olds can attend but it is also strongly recommended through the health clinics as well as speech therapists. If they pick up any developmental delays—for the kids to go there. It is really a lovely thing to know that there is that really early intervention for the zero to four- to five-years-old. It is a way of picking up some of that work early.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Minister, on Page 13 of the Starting Early for a Better Future plan there is a target that, 74 communities will have identified their interest in developing their own early childhood development plan. How many communities currently have an early childhood development plan?

Ms LAWLER: That is work to be done. I will pass you onto the acting General Manager, Tricia Wake.

Ms WAKE: There is work occurring with that space, particularly through our remote early childhood integrated services area. They are doing work in Katherine and are in a go/no-go stage as to whether or not the Katherine area would like to participate in the development of the plan. My understanding is there is also some work occurring at Yuendumu. Some of this work will be expanded as we move into the other areas.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Thank you.

Ms LAWLER: Member for Spillett, in relation to one of those questions I took on notice, the AEDC data is actually available on the aedc.gov.au website. But we will still follow up to get that clear data for you. It is publically-available data.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Yes, I am aware of that.

I have a specific question about Emu Point creche. Budget Paper No 3, page 241, in the Early Years output—what services are you providing the Emu Point community after the closure of the Emu Point creche?

Ms LAWLER: Nganambala creche. I will have to ask the General Manager about the specifics of that creche.

Ms WAKE: The Emu Point creche was a service that the Northern Territory Government undertook almost as the provider of last resort in that area. We are providing the childcare at the creche through the principal and the teacher at the school. We are also currently negotiating with a private provider to take on the provision of that service. It was always intended to be just an interim arrangement.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Thank you. My last question for Output 1.1 is in relation to community play groups. What funding is available through grants or other means for the establishment and support of community play groups?

Ms LAWLER: I will pass to the General Manager. One of the things we, as a government, have been rolling out is the Families as First Teachers because it has a sound educational foundation. That has been our focus as a government around FaFT. I will pass to the acting General Manager, Early Childhood.

Ms WAKE: The work we have been doing, particularly in the urban area, has been around the Family as First Teachers and using the child and family centres to promote that and provide the resources to support children in that nought to five area within that good early childhood program.

For Families as First Teachers we have five urban centres. We also have the 33 remote centres. That has been the basis of our focus in that area.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Thank you. That is all my questions, Madam Chair, for Output 1.1.

Madam CHAIR: Any further questions for Output 1.1? Member for Nelson.

Mr WOOD: Thank you, Madam Chair. Minister, you might be able to tell me if your Indigenous education strategy starts this early?

Ms LAWLER: Yes, the Families as First Teachers is very strongly focused on those early years. We have recently reviewed our Indigenous education strategy. It was a strategy that went from 2015 to 2024. The Indigenous education strategy was one started under the previous government. It was one of those ones that had a cycle that meant it was revitalised and reviewed when I came in as minister. We have continued to maintain that strategy and develop a focus. The focus continues to be on early years, literacy and numeracy, secondary education options, engagement, attendance and quality workforce—very much around the early years because we know that is where you need to make a big difference.

Mr WOOD: Minister, so far, would you know whether it has been proving successful?

Ms LAWLER: One of the things we are undertaking is research on Families as First Teachers to make sure it is a program that is hitting the mark. One of the early things we also recognised—a bit like preschool and school—is you need to go to make a difference. It is all very well having it in your community but you need to make sure that the kids are attending.

We will make sure any decisions regarding funding are based on evidence, but it is about doing some research. I will pass to the acting General Manager, who can add some comments on that. If it is not making a difference ...

Ms WAKE: Families as First Teachers is undergoing an evaluation which is being undertaken through the University of Melbourne. We call it the 3a linkage program. It is currently looking at the impact of the Abecedarian Approach in terms of the impact of attendance and participation within the FaFT program.

The final report will not be released until later in the year, but there have been some results that show a very strong correlation between attendance and children's development through the period of time that is being looked at. We are really excited about what we are seeing.

In regard to the work we have already looked at and the information we are being provided, it will show that the Families as First Teachers program is of absolute importance in the remote areas in the early years.

Mr WOOD: This question runs off a bit of what you said in your opening statement about the Indigenous Education Strategy and localised decision-making. You would have noticed an article in today's paper from Andrew Grey regarding schools being given some rights to run the school the way they would like to. In the case of FaFT, how much localised decision-making is made in relation to setting up that particular process?

Ms LAWLER: All the sites have Indigenous employees. That is what FaFT is about; the title is Families as First Teachers and it is all about families being in the centres, such as grandmas—I am happy for you to look at the centres. You have the families there so they are part of the delivery. It is as much about working with mums and grandmas—their interactions and teaching them—as it is about the kids.

FaFT is all about community engagement and bringing families in so they understand the value of early childhood education. It is not about dropping the kids off and running; it is about them being there. The activities are very structured. That is why you get results. They are counting activities or things to do with self-esteem. It is about bringing the parents to the site, sharing food and interacting with the community.

Ms WAKE: The Families as First Teachers program is very much integrated within the community. There is a strong consultation process. I referred earlier to the scoping that is currently occurring in Nhulunbuy to determine if that could be an alternative FaFT site. That scoping has been extensive and is a good example of community consultation that is undertaken to deliver a FaFT program.

That consultation goes across community, service providers and the range of people who may be involved in the early childhood program delivery including health, Aboriginal community-controlled agencies and the people themselves.

Ms LAWLER: Member for Nelson, do you want to go more into community-led schools?

Mr WOOD: There was a curriculum.

Ms LAWLER: That is preschool curriculum, but also abecedarian.

Mr WOOD: You are saying localised decision-making, and I think people are concerned about how far you take that. Does the decision-making start to change the curriculum, or is the curriculum still a basic part of what we are trying to do?

Ms LAWLER: No. I have to be up front, there is a national curriculum. If we are talking about local decision making there is still, and always will be—because the federal government fund us—a large percentage, let us face it. And we have to, still at this stage, do NAPLAN. The decision-making is around a whole heap of things, but when you talk about curriculum in primary or secondary schools, there is still a national curriculum.

There is also flexibility around a certain number of hours and things like that, and the focus of topics. You still have the content. You still have to do the maths and the English and all of those things because that is the national curriculum. There is the preschool curriculum and the Abecedarian Approach, but through the focus of the activities or the flexible time, you can have greater input into Indigenous language and culture. Things the community wants to have a greater focus on.

For example your music program can be local Indigenous music. There is lots of flexibility around curriculum but there are still some absolute deliveries around—it is not just throw it to the wind.

Mr WOOD: It worried me when I heard the Chief Minister talking about so-called ability of communities to, it sounded like, 'do your own thing'. That would worry me because I think we have a responsibility.

Ms LAWLER: We have big brother, the federal government, which provides us with funding and also does all the national testing and things like that. Even our non-government schools and independent schools have to be answerable when it comes to curriculum.

There is plenty of flexibility though, around the topics and things you choose and what you spend time focusing on. So you can be doing a maths activity around graphing, which can be looking—if I am teaching the concept of pie graphs, it can be that if I am in remote Arnhem Land, I have collected all the rubbish on that beach. I have seen this activity done at Yirrkala. You can graph how many thongs, fishing nets, and bits of plastic you collect. You have the localised content, but you still have to teach graphing to the kids. So it is around having greater local input into that.

If you are doing an activity around a pop-up shop when you are in secondary school, it might be selling artefacts or artwork from that community. Instead of ancient Greece or something like that, you might have a greater focus on your own history.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Are you happy to keep taking questions along that line, minister?

Ms LAWLER: I was going to say, Vicki is the expert on curriculum, so maybe I should hand to her.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: I had it under 2.1 but I can ask these ones now given the Member for Nelson has raised it.

The Chief Minister did mention a three-year plan around 34 engagement and decision making committees, giving the local communities a greater voice about the delivery of education. The Chief Minister also mentioned that education plans for the communities would be contractual, with rights and obligations for both the government and the communities.

Could you please give us more detail about the three-year plan and what the 34 committees are?

Ms LAWLER: I will pass this to Vicki, the CE, but will also explain that when we talk about local decision-making, the communities are at different points. Even if you look at urban schools and their school councils and boards—some of our schools have wonderful school boards and are independent public schools. It is a continuum. Some have great school councils where people attend, and you know some of these, Member for Spillett, because you had some of those schools in my electorate.

We have some that really struggle to get parents engaged, and we have some schools that do not have a council. They have a management board because they are a tiny school with only 10 or 12 kids.

It is pretty much the same with the local decision-making. Some are a long way down the track, and are more than ready to have a greater say around their education delivery. Some are very much at the beginning. So it is about a continuum of governance.

I will pass to Vicki Baylis.

Ms BAYLIS: Thank you, Member for Spillett.

The community-led schools process, as the minister has identified, is about working with a community around their readiness, and their capacity, to be able to engage in this conversation. To support that I am going to ask Tony Considine our General Manager to come forward so he can talk to you in a little more detail.

If we think about where we start over the next little while, we know we have, for example, Gunbalanya, which is one of our Independent public schools that has done a lot of work and progressed their governance structure, curriculum and assessment processes from the early childhood to Year 12 to be able to create their measures and their metrics. That is a really important one.

Early next week we expect the Yambirra school council, Yirrkala homelands, will provide us with some feedback about their decision as to how they would like to participate in that process and where they would see their contribution as a school council in the decision-making, and what elements they wish to be involved in. For some of the schools it will be about curriculum; for others it will be governance or understanding the budget and the investment in the resources; and for some it will be about engagement with families.

We just need to get some further ones. The other group that have indicated a very strong interest about being actively involved closer to the beginning of this process is out in the Warlpiri triangle. They already have a large degree of support and autonomy, and they are looking to participate in that conversation.

Additionally, what we have done through the Indigenous education strategy is look at things that we talk about—community engagement and local decision-making. We are looking to be able to have local engagement and decision-making across 54 schools. For those who have a long memory, you might remember ASPA as a process in some of our school communities. But it is something similar to that, to create the reason for being active and participating in decision-making without formalising it to the point that you have to be a school council or a board.

It is growing that capacity and giving autonomy through specific initiatives so that families have a say on how they best want their kids to engage and how they will contribute to the running of the school. Some of those might be around sporting activities, as the minister indicated. It may be about music. It may be around specific-purpose curriculum elements that they want their kids to do on country. We just need to be able to provide that.

That is one of the things that came through really clearly when we were consulting about the strategy. We were talking about what is it we are going to need to do to improve that community engagement and accelerate that improvement/ We know when we get that strong connection between school and family we get a better result.

Ms LAWLER: That is the bottom line. It is not just about doing this for the sake of doing it.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: No, of course.

Ms LAWLER: It is about for too long governments have had that top-down direction. I know the Member for Nhulunbuy and I often have these discussions and questions in the House. It is about if kids and family have a greater say, is that going to improve attendance? Is that going to improve outcomes? Because that is what we need to do. We have seen that with community, particularly with health boards. So how can we do that more in education?

I will pass over to Tony Considine, General Manager Indigenous Education Review and Implementation.

Mr CONSIDINE: Thank you, minister. I will spend a little bit more time on answering that. The engagement of community has been really central to local decision-making around community-led schools. It has been important to consider the past when we have done that. Our Chief Executive alluded to the Yambirra school council, which was Yirrkala homelands school and Yirrkala school. They have long had a wish, and in the past had a strong partnership agreement about moving in this direction.

This piece of work has been to explore with them what a community-led school means to them and what sort of decisions that they want to be making that they think will make things better for young Yolngu kids in northeast Arnhem Land.

In the Warlpiri situation, where we talked about the Warlpiri triangle, that is a different situation because that is four schools linked by Warlpiri people, not by an organising body like a governance arrangement, which the Yambirra council is. So that is a different pathway to get there.

The key bit is building the engagement so we can build local governance. That is a piece of work that will take time. It will take time working with people and may involve some consultancy work, but people need time to think about what they want their future to look like and where they will take the future for young people.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: It is very much opt-in, tailored to each school or school cluster—or however communities want to go about it. It is not like with the Gunbalanya example, where it becomes an independent school and then follows a set course. It is very much tailored.

Mr CONSIDINE: I would like to say a trajectory, but it is not really a trajectory because people may move. That is really at the far end of the spectrum, having an independent school and a full school board—the Electoral Commission conducting their elections and those sorts of things. Communities will move over time with changes in leadership.

The other important thing about the community-led schools pathway is building local capacity—understanding the capacity people need and building it. We build that in partnership with COGSO, the Council

of Government School Organisations, and we work at the pace that schools and school communities wish to. That is why the lead communities that you alluded to before are so important. That gives you a very good start and you can grow and build from that.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: The Chief Minister said something like they will go from being a public school to a private and be treated like a non-government school.

Ms LAWLER: Ultimately, there could be some schools like that. If that is what the community wants, longer term—to be able to do that is highly complex. You need the financial stability and you need to register as a non-government school. If that is what the community wants, there is a process to follow.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: At the base of it then, the national curriculum underpins all that. That is great.

I have lost track. Gerry Wood took us on a bit of a tangent.

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: Are we ready to move on to Output 1.2?

Mr MILLS: No, I would like to continue on the tangent. There are a lot of overarching questions that are difficult to fit into early childhood or primary. This gives the opportunity—it relates to Indigenous teachers in remote schools.

How is the government addressing the decline in Indigenous teachers in remote communities?

Ms LAWLER: I recently announced scholarships for Indigenous teachers. There were about 15 scholarships for Indigenous trainee teachers to take up. I was at CDU at a lovely ceremony, where I handed out some scholarships.

Mr MILLS: How many were handed over at the ceremony?

Ms LAWLER: At the ceremony it was three girls, but there were a number—12 students. We probably need to note that our government has an election commitment of 500 more teachers, police and nurses by 2026. Education is one of the organisations that is leading the way and doing well in regard to Indigenous employees.

Mr MILLS: Did you say you handed over three at the ceremony?

Ms LAWLER: There were three people there when I was there. There are 12.

Mr MILLS: As in, 12 received scholarships? How many of those scholarships that have been awarded previously have led to employment as teachers? How successful has the program been?

Ms LAWLER: Member for Blain, one of things as the previous Labor government had—teaching scholarships for Indigenous students. When the CLP came in, that was one of the things that suffered a cut and the teaching scholarships were run through, so if you had a scholarship you continued through until you graduated but there were no new scholarships.

As Minister for Education, I brought back in a number of scholarships. I brought in scholarships for teachers to undertake studies in ESL or special education. There are 15 scholarships available. I am more than happy to grow that number and I have said that to the CE. There were 12 successful applicants this time but we are very happy to continue to grow the number of Indigenous Territorians who undertake teaching.

Mr MILLS: Thank you. I am just looking at the number of Indigenous classroom teachers in 2013–14, there were 84. Then it drops in 2014–15, it drops to 76 and is down to 74 in 2015–16 so there is a decline there. It is also in executive contract officers in 2013–14 there was just one, now there are none. The same with executive principal levels, two, and trainee teachers, zero. That is in 2015–16.

I know that there are scholarships and are those scholarships the best answer? Are you considering the Growing Our Own? That model has been recommended and from my own figures it says, I think, there were 17 of them in play at the moment. Batchelor Institute has other scholarships at just five, Charles Darwin has other scholarships at 9 but you have 17 from Growing Our Own. So that has been recognised as a very valuable project that is strengthening those who are currently in the system. Is there consideration of adopting the strength of that model in supporting the scholarship fund?

Ms LAWLER: Member for Blain, as I said it was your CLP government that cut the Growing Our Own Indigenous scholarships in the Northern Territory. I have brought back some scholarships, I am very interested in growing...

Mr MILLS: With respect, I was there for six months so let us not just play politics with this, talk about the issue.

Ms LAWLER: Well I am not playing politics, I am just talking about a program that was in place in 2012, so it was in place.

Mr MILLS: Yes with my CLP government. Let us talk about the issue and forget the politics. I was there for six months if you want to play silly games like this.

Ms LAWLER: Well why did you cut it? I am just saying the program was in place in 2012.

Mr MILLS: You do yourself no favours with that sort of approach.

Ms LAWLER: Catholic Education then took on the program and continued the program. It is a program that I value and as I said, we have started back by putting in place scholarships. Catholic Education continue to have their Growing Our Own program.

I will pass to the Chief Executive of the department.

Ms BAYLIS: Thank you, Member for Blain. Your original question was if scholarships are converting to employment. That is a mixed bag in the process of what we have seen. We know that this particular round of scholarships we have been quite clear that we wanted participants to be working with Charles Darwin University. What we had is other scholarships where students were enrolled in different campuses and we had students who were employed interstate as a result of those scholarships. We had not tied and connected people back to the Territory employment conditions—when we went back and did the research about what happened here.

We have also learnt some valuable lessons in the process of scholarships. Providing a scholarship in and of itself is not sufficient and you made reference to Catholic Education's Growing Our Own process where the wraparound support and the ongoing mentoring is absolutely vital so that we do not lose people throughout the program of learning. Catholic Education has done incredibly well in that area.

We have two strategies. The minister mentioned the scholarship component of all of this, and we are really excited to have that ongoing. We also have a lot of our teacher assistants undertaking Certificates II, III and IV as well as Diploma work so they are on a trajectory and a pathway. All of them may not necessarily be ready to go into university-levels of study but we can grow their increment, recognise their work, and grow their confidence at being able to undertake further study so they can have that recognition as they move forward.

Mr MILLS: Thank you, Ms Baylis. So they are supported in the workplace? Through CDU?

Ms BAYLIS: So they are supported. They have got—depending on which course they are studying they will be either through Batchelor Institute or CDU. They are not all doing teacher assistance, some of them are doing some competency work in social work, so that is the trajectory. Predominantly our partnership is with the Batchelor Institute because of their understanding of the cultural requirements and the demands that many of our remote Aboriginal workforce have to compete with in trying to prioritise their learning.

Mr MILLS: My figures show there is only five at Batchelor Institute.

Ms BAYLIS: For teaching, but if we talk about the other certification work, I can get you the data for the amount of work that we are doing with the other courses.

Mr MILLS: So do they leave the workplace to go to Batchelor to do this or are they being supported by Batchelor in the workplace?

Ms BAYLIS: Mostly supported by Batchelor in the workplace and supported also by education staff out of the regional offices as well so that we have a high degree of wraparound support. Then they are supported back at the school by the mentor teacher or the school leader who is providing that additional support.

Mr MILLS: So it sounds similar to the Growing Our Own model.

Ms BAYLIS: Yes, very, but it is not a teacher qualification for all of these people it is building a stepping process through.

Mr MILLS: That is good. So, the link to what was being referred to before was that as the schools aspire for independence and they want to take charge of their own destiny in a sense. If they make a request for a Growing Our Own-type program just like the Catholic system is having, would they be supported in that request?

Ms BAYLIS: They would need to demonstrate the stability of their workforce and the readiness of their workforce to go through that. We need to be able to see that they have a capacity to sustain that investment over time. Schools have done some of this of their own initiative because they have seen the priority through their school councils. Then we have the capacity as an agency to go, this is what is available and connect them with the right support.

Mr MILLS: Is that yes?

Ms BAYLIS: It is a yes, but it is a yes with a 'depends'.

Mr MILLS: Sure, you cannot just—I understand that.

Madam CHAIR: At this point we might take a 10-minute recess and reconvene at 5:12pm.

The committee suspended.

Answer to Question on Notice No 8.2

Ms LAWLER: Madam Deputy Chair, I have a response that I can table for number 8.2, the percentage of Territory children beginning school with developmental delays with respect to the AEDC data in 2015.

There are 37.2% vulnerable on one or more AEDC domains and 23.1% on two or more AEDC domains.

I will table that for the Member for Spillett.

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: Minister, I know that the Member for Nhulunbuy had a question on Output 1.1. Can I ask for your leniency when he comes back and if we go back to that? Thank you.

Ms LAWLER: That is fine. As you we know the Education one we are very happy to go all over the place. Yes, it does not necessarily just follow the outputs.

Output 1.2 – Preschool Education

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: We will move on to Output 1.2, Preschool Education.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Minister, at page 10 of the Starting Early for a Better Future Plan the government commits \$4.8m for hearing health and the FaFT sites. My question is not so much about that but along the lines of supporting children with their hearing health. What funding, if any, has been allocated for improving acoustics in classrooms?

Ms LAWLER: Thank you, Member for Spillett, for the question. There has actually been considerable work around hearing health in our schools because we know that it has such an impact on the learners. It was one of our commitments going in to the election. Also, COGSO continue to lobby very hard around hearing health.

There is a working group that includes COGSO as well as APONT. It is very much focused on classroom acoustics. I can give you some specifics around that. There are currently 109 students across the NT receiving levels of support from the five hearing education advisers and as I said some of their work is to

work around prevention and reduce the impact and the incidents of middle-ear infections which then leads to conductive hearing loss by promoting population-based strategies as well.

Schools have currently purchased sound field systems out of their school budgets. The NTG has also been working to upgrade washroom facilities in 10 very remote schools where there are high levels of middle-ear infections and trachoma. The sound field systems assist students with hearing loss to hear teachers and other students while they use a natural level of voice in the classroom, by reducing the impact of background noise.

Thirteen schools in 2017–18 have been trialling the sound field system. Catholic Education Office has also provided sound field systems to all classrooms in NT catholic schools from 2018. I do not know if there is anything the CE might add.

Ms BAYLIS: Member for Spillett, the investment we have made around the 2017–18 budget for hearing health is \$802 000. We have an additional investment that will be made to continue with the infrastructure upgrades in 2018–19. That particularly will be looking at ear and eye health across the Northern Territory. We know there is a lot of preventative work we can do to delay and ensure we do not have the infection or—we teach young people about their own wellbeing so they can understand what they need to do and not cross-infect each other.

Importantly, with hearing, we work very closely with the Department of Health and a number of other agencies that provide support. When a child is born—if we pick up that there is hearing loss from birth—that is the very beginning of the support that goes in with families right from the get go. If we have—otitis media is different because it is intermittent. As we go through that process from birth, we are working closely with the Health team to support families and the young person to have the best opportunity to come into schooling.

As the minister said, the Council of Government School Organisations is very keen to continue to lobby nationally around what we can do to increase the access to sound filed amplification for young people in remote schools.

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: Member for Spillett, could I just interrupt? The Member for Nhulunbuy had a question on Output 1.1, is that correct? With your leave, I was wondering if I could—thank you. Go ahead Member for Nhulunbuy.

Mr GUYULA: I have a few here.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: For 1.1?

Mr GUYULA: Yes. Thank you. Minister, good evening. Thank you for directing me to your website in the last Question Time, which lists the current budget for government schools. For comparison, could you please provide the budget figures for all schools in my region including Gapuwiyak and Maningrida for possibly 2016, 2017 and 2018?

Ms LAWLER: Thank you very much, Member for Nhulunbuy. Regarding the specific budgets of schools, I will take that one on notice. As I said, the funding per student and the overall funding for that school is available on the website. I can give you that detail on those school budgets. I will get those to you.

Question on Notice No 8.3

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: Member for Nhulunbuy, could you please restate the question for the record?

Mr GUYULA: Minister, thank you for directing me to your website in the last Question Time, which lists the current budget for government schools. For comparison, could you please provide the budget figures for all schools in my region including Gapuwiyak and Maningrida for 2016, 2017 and 2018?

Ms LAWLER: We have those figures but it is probably easier to take it on record seeing that it is over those three years.

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

Ms LAWLER: Absolutely.

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: The questions asked by the Member for Nhulunbuy of the minister has been allocated number 8.3.

Mr GUYULA: In Arnhem Land we have Yolngu and Balanda team teachers who have Two Ways knowledge and several literacy production centres. We can develop Two Ways pedagogy if the government puts resources into local pedagogy development. Can you explain why the LANE program is implementing a phonics-based program called Read Write Inc that was designed for English-speaking children in the UK? It references foreign concepts such as snow and mittens.

How can this approach be based on any evidence that it works for Aboriginal children who speak and live in Yolngu language communities?

Ms LAWLER: I will actually pass to Maree Garrigan, who is the General Manager of the curriculum area. She will be able to respond to your question. I will pass to the CEO, Vicki Baylis, to comment.

Ms BAYLIS: The Literacy and Numeracy Essentials has been built so that it has a very strong English as a second language learner focus, so we have that very structured process. The Read Write Inc is a small part of that curriculum. It is available as a resource, so that is the phonics part of it only—in standard Australian English, as you say, so that young people can have that.

We would absolutely want, though, the literacy production centres to continue to work in partnership around first language and to be able to ensure that when they are translating—and the process of training the schools and the teacher assistants and the teachers in a team-teaching area is to be able to help them work out what is best in their space.

The material is available for the phonics component, but we also are saying to the schools—and I had the opportunity to brief the Member for Blain around all of this earlier this year. I am more than happy to spend time with you and the team to brief you about how it all works together so that you can see the very strong first language elements.

We also have clear feedback from families and communities. They want their young people to be proficient not only in their first language, but also in English. It is how we do that together that we do those things. I would be absolutely horrified if I thought that was all that young people who are Yolngu speakers were seeing and experiencing in our schools, because that is absolutely not the intent. It should be done with a strong first language focus, a strong English as an additional language pedagogy, and then this particular Read Write Inc is one tool. It is not the only tool that is available to teachers.

I will hand across to Maree Garrigan, who is our Executive Director for School Support Services.

Ms GARRIGAN: The Read Write Inc is an evidence-based program that is actually having some really good results with young students in schools. We continue to gather evidence that it is being used appropriately and effectively. As the chief executive said, it is one of a range of resources being used. There is just about to be put out to schools a very good phonological program that really links first language to standard Australian English and supports young people to continue learning standard Australian English in line with what they are doing in their first language. They are complementary and supportive of the students.

Mr GUYULA: Thank you. The next one is—some school councils have not been consulted about using LANE with their schools. As I understand, this is an English-based phonics program that does not have a Yolngu Matha component. How can bilingual schools be forced to be part of these programs?

Ms LAWLER: Again, I will pass to the chief executive to explain.

Ms BAYLIS: Literacy and Numeracy Essentials is about the teaching of standard Australian English and the curriculum, but it should not be at the exclusion of first language. It is about how we do both. If I could invite you to make a time with us, I can show you the material and get the consultants doing that work to talk with you ...

Mr GUYULA: Can, you? Please. I would like to do that.

Ms BAYLIS: We would welcome that opportunity. I would not want us to lose first language. It is a part of what we want young people to continue to have mastery of, and to use it for conceptual development and

the way we go about teaching is that. We also want them to be strong in English and we need for them to be able to master that as well. It is two-way, as you said before.

Mr GUYULA: What ESL training is required by teachers in remote Aboriginal schools, and currently how many teachers have ESL qualifications who are teaching or supporting remote Aboriginal students? What ESL professional development and support is being made available to all teachers in ESL settings?

Ms LAWLER: This is an area where we have allocated some additional dollars to provide more support. We have scholarships for teachers to do ESL so they can upgrade their qualifications. The Department of Education provides a range of support to schools and teachers to ensure they are able to provide ESL and have an underpinning of that in their pedagogy.

In 2018 there was \$4.8m allocated to support English language learners across our system. I will pass to Maree Garrigan, who can provide some updates on that.

It is about upgrading teachers in our system, as well as through induction, but also having teachers studying online to complete ESL qualifications.

Ms GARRIGAN: There is a strong focus on the effort to build the capacity of NT teachers in teaching English as a second language. As mentioned by the minister, there is a scholarship program, and 14 teachers based in remote schools successfully completed a graduate certificate of teaching English as a second language through Deakin University.

The department is currently exploring options to recommence the Teaching English as a Second Language Scholarship from July 2018. There is also a strong focus from centrally-based staff in my team and in the regional areas, who support staff to access quality ESL information, resources and pedagogical strategies. There is also some online professional learning available for teachers. I do not have the number of teachers who are currently teaching who have ESL qualifications.

Mr GUYULA: I have been on the road for three weeks before I drove here for the estimates. I have been to schools like Dhalinybuy, Garrthalala, Biranybiran, Wandawuy and Gangan. People say in Garrthalala especially that there is a strong demand in homeland schools—there are teaching aides, or TAs, working in most of those schools and Batchelor college used to provide proper teacher training, not just TAs. In those schools on homelands they would like to see equality and proper trained teachers working, rather than TAs only. That is the demand I got.

Ms LAWLER: Member for Nhulunbuy, I hear similar things. One of the things we have seen is that Batchelor Institute has a new CEO, Steve Larkin, who started in about March. One of the things he will work on is about looking at Batchelor's strategy and where they are going. There are a lot of people in our remotes particularly and regional towns who would like to see Batchelor doing some of the things it did very well previously but has seemed to have moved away from.

One of those is around vocational education leading to graduate diplomas, but also teaching degrees. Vicki, the CE, was talking about that previously. It is about Batchelor having a look at its strategic directions and where it wants to go. Like you, when I travel around those places, I hear similar things.

Also, it is important to add on to what Maree was saying. It is important that the teachers going out to our remotes have a thorough understanding of ESL and qualifications in that teaching English as an additional language in our schools.

Schools that have principals who can work with staff to identify their professional learning needs can then put in place those qualifications if those teachers do not have them. Whether that is doing it online or doing a Masters qualification as well, it is about the principal taking the lead and working with the staff to make sure we deliver that.

Mr GUYULA: It is Batchelor College they were asking about. They also asked about whether you are able to provide some sort of teaching training on the job for those teachers working on homelands, or even in communities.

Ms LAWLER: Yes, as you say, it is about Batchelor or a university to deliver that. It has to be people who are lecturers and have those qualifications to be able to lecture and teach.

I have a note saying that there are 55 assistant teachers enrolled in Certificate II and III courses with Batchelor, and they are looking at another 30. All up, that will be about 85 assistant teachers who are enrolled in those certificate-level courses.

As Vicki said, it is about those stepping stones, doing the certificate level course, that then moves to a graduate diploma, a diploma and then to a degree. Unless you come out of secondary school ready to go into university to do a degree straight away, they are the scholarships we offer for students to do that. If you do not have the ability to do that because you do not have a Year 12 qualification or ATAR, you need those steps to prepare you to do a degree or to do tertiary studies. It is a considerable ask to be successful doing tertiary studies.

Mr GUYULA: Yes. One last one.

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: Yes, go ahead, Member for Nhulunbuy, thank you.

Mr GUYULA: There is currently a high turnover of teachers in remote schools. Many schools are only offering one- or two-term contracts. As a result, students and Yolngu teachers have many teachers during the year and are unable to benefit from consistency. Ideally, we want teachers who can commit to four years or more so that they grow to understand the students and community and work with the guidance of Yolngu educators. What is the department doing to address this issue?

Ms LAWLER: Thank you, Member for Nhulunbuy. It is one of the most difficult ones, I guess. All of us—whether you are a principal or a person on the executive in the department—would all like to see teachers make remote communities their home and consider those places as their home and stay long term. We know when teachers stay long term, they build up that relationship with the students and end up with a much better, richer quality of teacher.

At Laramba, in Central Australia, there are some teachers who are about to leave, but they have been there 21 years in that community. It absolutely makes a difference because they know the families, the brothers and the sisters, and can stay long term. We want to see teachers stay long term and there are a lot of reasons why teachers do not stay long term in communities.

On the issue of teacher permanency, the department has a teacher permanency strategy and has been working hard to make sure contract teachers can be moved on to being permanent. For teachers that do not stay in communities, sometimes they might be backfilling somebody on maternity or study leave. That happens in town schools as well where you sometimes have people there for only six months. It is a focus of our government to make sure we have teachers that stay long term in communities because we know it is a much better outcome.

If you have principals that stay for four, five, six or seven years and teachers who stay more than four years, it makes a difference. It is hard sometimes to make that happen.

Mr GUYULA: The final question. People are a bit confused on homelands or in communities when the government is going around visiting homelands or communities and then I do my visits, where they should be seeing us together; working together.

Some people—elders and community members—would be more comfortable talking with me than with departments like education, business, road or infrastructure. That is their view. They would like to see you with me so they can communicate through me, properly.

Ms LAWLER: Member for Nhulunbuy, I have told you before you can come and join the Labor government and work for us.

Mr MILLS: With due respect ...

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: It was said in jest, Member for Blain. Carry on, Minister.

Mr MILLS: It's not jest. I have seen the same joke ...

Ms LAWLER: Member for Nhulunbuy, thank you very much for the offer. It is important that we work together. I know you want the same outcomes we want.

We want kids to go to school every day. We want them to be happy, healthy and able to achieve to their full potential. We want great schools in our community, with principals who are focused on the kids learning. We want the community to value education and be part of that.

Yes, I am more than happy for the regional director in Arnhem, who travels to those remote communities at times, to work in with you on that.

Mr GUYULA: It does not matter who I am with. It is just that people want to see us working together. It does not matter whether I am with Labor or the CLP. I want to work with people. Thank you.

Ms LAWLER: Thank you very much Member for Nhulunbuy.

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: The committee will resume consideration for Output 1.2, Preschool Education. Member for Spillett.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Thank you Madam Deputy Chair, that is all from me for Output 1.2.

Output 1.3 – Primary Education

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: This concludes consideration of Output 1.2. The committee will now call for questions on Output 1.3, Primary Education.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Minister, Woolianna School is included in round two of the building better schools funding for urgent repairs for classrooms; however, \$300 000 is insufficient to cover repairs for the school.

The community at Nauiyu has been desperate for a new school facility and flood evacuation centre for years. The previous government committed \$12m to building this for the community, and the recent flooding of the Daly River in the wet season demonstrates the necessity for this new infrastructure.

Minister, how much was spent on transporting the whole Woolianna school community to Nightcliff during the Daly River flood, and will your government commit to constructing a new Woolianna School and flood evacuation centre for the people of Nauiyu?

Ms LAWLER: Thank you, Member for Spillett. I will go backwards in answering those questions. Our government has a 10-year infrastructure plan, 2017–26. In that plan there is a commitment. That is on page 64. That talks about a new school to replace Woolianna School, plus teacher housing in Daly. There is a commitment of \$15m there, and it is in the medium term for the three- to five-year time frame.

Using the Building Better Schools—the \$300 000. I know the Chief Executive and I had a number of conversations around the \$300 000 and the use of that. Woolianna School is actually a community resource, so we thought the funds, even though they were to be expended for the school, they would be able to be used in an ongoing capacity by the community when the school is not there.

The actual cost of the moving of those students from that community to the Foskey Pavilion and then educating them—I will pass to the CE around those. Before I do, I need to say that when you evacuate and wherever you evacuate you need to bring people to a place where there are services, where people can be safe. When the people from the Daly River region need to be evacuated, by bringing them into Darwin you have meals to be delivered. You have those facilities there. You have security, counsellors, and medical staff.

I know there has been some talk by, I think, the Member for Daly, to have some sort of site or something built on that site, or on a high level site at Daly. I do not believe that is the right use of funds. If you have a facility in a regional centre then you can bring people in, the services are there, but also it can be used by anywhere else that there might be flooding, not just the Daly River.

We are committed to a new school at Woolianna. The Member for Daly has written to me about that at times, but it is within a time frame. In relation to the cost, I will pass to the CE.

Ms BAYLIS: Member for Spillett, could I just get you to ask the question so that I can determine whether I am answering it from an evacuation process or from an educational provision process for those young people who were evacuated.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: How much was spent on transporting the Woolianna whole school community to Nightcliff during the Daly River flood?

Mr WOOD: Can I just ask—I am just a bit confused. Daly River went to the Foskey Pavilion. Woolianna School is a separate school from Nauiyu. So, are we talking about two schools here?

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: We can provide that?

Ms BAYLIS: Member for Spillett, no I cannot, which is why I wanted to check with you. The recovery process, or the evacuation process, is managed through Chief Minister's. That is a question that they would have that data on and will have it as a coordinated response because of the different agencies that provide different types of support.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: So you would have the figures on what it costs to educate the students in that new environment?

Ms BAYLIS: We continue to do that from within. We were able to redirect the existing resources that we had and set that up so those students who attended the Catholic Education provision were able to attend St John's. Also, we had those children attending the government school at Nightcliff Middle School, and we were able to wraparound the resources from our different sectors to provide that support for those kids. There was not an additional cost to government; it was a redirect from within our existing resources for education.

Mr WOOD: Can I just piggyback again on that? I know the Member for Daly is not here, and I hope he does not go crook at me for saying this, but I lived opposite of where the proposed Daly River township is meant to be, which is near the corner of Woolianna Road and the Daly River Road. It is at the base of a hill, and I know from experience that in the Wet Season it is absolute slop. You drive in there and you do not get out.

I am interested to know if, before you build something there, there would at least be a proper engineering process to make sure the site you put the school on will not cost you an arm and a leg to develop, when if it was moved somewhere else slightly it could be a lot cheaper?

Ms LAWLER: Thank you, Member for Nelson. The Woolianna School has been a long discussion. I remember when Rob Knight was also the Member for Daly and Labor was in government. He was very keen to see a new school built at Marlinja at the time as well. Then the Member for Daly was keen to see a school built and that has not happened, which tells me it will be expensive, probably. I understand—because I have asked a number of questions about the site—it would need also a heap of headworks done. There is no power or water at that site ...

Mr WOOD: Power is close, but there is nothing else.

Ms LAWLER: No. That cost of \$15m reflects that you are talking about quite a small number of students in a small school. There are probably about 45 students there at the moment, so \$15m is quite a substantial amount of money. It will need to take that in. It will need to be an appropriate site that has all of the headworks done. But it is one that, I guess, both governments over the last few years, have been considering. It is on our forward works.

One of the positives—well, there are lots of positives—I was at Woolianna recently and there is an amazing principal doing fantastic work there. It was wonderful to see the kids head down, learning in a great learning environment. You feel that community should be rewarded because they are getting kids to school at Woolianna and doing some really good learning there. It will be one we will look at.

You can let the Member for Daly know.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Thank you. I am sure he is listening. A similar question. That is obviously an environmental or other catastrophic event and we have to move students to Darwin and we try to slip them into existing education. Obviously, with remote schools when there is a situation where the school has to be shut—whether it is for environmental, construction, cultural issues, whatever it might be—how does the department then provide ongoing support to students or ensure that students are still attending school in the event that remote school has to close down?

Ms LAWLER: I will pass to the CE. The times that schools close are short in number, but it occasionally happens. In Central Australia sometimes it is after the April break when there has been some flooding. I was

in Central Australia when the Plenty and that area flooded. You think there are a lot of times, but there are not a lot of time when schools close. Usually, it is about ...

Mr WOOD: Cyclone Marcus closed a few.

Ms LAWLER: Cyclone Marcus, yes. But when you look at the big picture it is not a large number. I will pass to the CE and she can talk about the emergency plans of the department.

Ms BAYLIS: Member for Spillett, there are a number of reasons you identified when a school would close. If we talk about it from an emergency management perspective of a natural disaster, that is done in coordination with the emergency management committees. One of the first things we try to do is normalise the routines and get schools back as quickly as possible because that allows families to get back in to do all of the other work. But the priority is to make safe and check the environment we are bringing young people back into—is right and safe first.

The second part of that question was about cultural reasons or for different things that are beyond a natural emergency. There are times when communities will seek to have the school closed. For those purposes it will be one where the community has made a decision to do that. But our non-Indigenous staff are expected to continue to work and to be there. For those young people who are able to attend, there is always that opportunity for them to participate in the learning and for them to continue the learning. Because the community, for cultural reasons, has said, 'This is not appropriate', does not mean we do not have resources and people there. We find that communities make different decision about age groups and things like that, and whether young people should or should not be attending.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Thank you. Noting we are in primary years, how does the department measure—academic outcomes is probably the wrong word—what is being taught as compared to what is being learnt, what the students are absorbing? NAPLAN is one point in time but how do we know whether the measures you are putting in place are actually working? What is that measured by? I mean, attendance is one thing but obviously there is...

Ms LAWLER: We could probably spend a long, long time answering this question. Any of your teachers will tell you the accountability in schools has gotten much higher, Member for Spillett, over the years. Back in the old days we would do a spelling test and a mental test on Friday and that would probably would have been about it, and somehow we all learnt still. But there is an old adage, 'I taught my dog how to whistle', and someone says, 'well I cannot hear it whistle', and the answer is, 'I taught it, I did not say the dog learnt to whistle'. We have to be very careful about the difference being teaching and learning in education.

But there are a whole layer of system checks and balances and assessments that are done down to then, the classroom level. At the system level, and Vicki can talk more about it, we have a school review process, principal performance review process as well, and then besides NAPLAN that you talk about, we have Northern Territory system assessments for all children between Year 1 and Year 10 in maths and in reading as well—PAT testing. There are lots of checks of balances and it is probably the opposite. Teachers will probably tell you there is a lot more, let alone reporting to parents as well.

Ms BAYLIS: Thank you. Member for Spillett, great question. This goes back to our strategy. If we are saying that we want to accelerate that improvement, we need to be able to get that feedback. Let me start with—and I will refer to the Deputy CE, as well—sharp and narrow focus, and then I will elaborate.

The Deputy CE sets five priorities for schools to choose two from. I will get her to step that through. They are Territory-wide and all school priorities that they need to work to. The schools will have their improvement agenda that informs that. They are allowed to choose another two. However, we prefer they choose one, because what we were seeing was that they were trying to be everything to everybody and it became a very diluted focus. People were lost in the busyness of what they were doing.

At a system level, how do we know that people are having an impact? It goes back to the Member for Nhulunbuy's question. We closely monitor teacher turnover and absenteeism. That is a really important thing for us to look at. Teacher permanency is one of the indicators we need to continue to work on. The minister has given me some fairly clear direction about that. We are working incredibly hard and trying to understand some of the practices there.

We also need to recruit the right people and there are a whole range of strategies that are in place. If we look at it from the school improvement point of view, the school improvement tool is an annual and a four-yearly review process. Teachers are to have a performance development plan where they have evaluation and

feedback. In schools, we have coaches who work directly with observations of classroom teacher practise to be able to provide that.

But a whole-of-system process is also around implementing what we refer to as visible learning and we know that is one of those areas where evidence-based practise that has impact is really important. So you would walk into some of our schools and hear kids talking about a growth mindset. That is part of them doing that. You would want to hear young people talking to you about what their goals are, where they are. In classrooms, you should be able to see their charts their targets and how they are making progress against those things. If I am walking into a school, or the minister is walking into a school and we cannot see evidence of that type of work going on in a classroom—it is a conversation of what support you need to help you get to that point. That goes from behaviour, to reading, to maths—what it happens to be.

The other component in amongst all of that, is as the minister referred to, we do monitor through the PAT testing and that gives teachers immediate feedback. That is not so much used at a system level but it is about informing teacher practise.

The other thing we have in the early years, particularly for kids who are acquiring English as a first language is we do a foundation of early—FELA. We use acronyms and then we end up confused—early language acquisition. So this helps us understand where they are. Can they detect the beginning and end sounds? Can they get the pronunciation of sounds correctly? We do that as a full continuum and we start that also in the early childhood area.

When Trish was talking about what we do in the Families as First Teachers, we are also working with Health about some of the developmental milestones through a tool called ASQ-TRAK. We need to be able to do all of those things.

For those young people who we know that are vulnerable and at risk who have got a diagnosed disability they have their individual education plans that sets specific and targeted goals. We are able to work with their families—are we on track, do we have the right measures and activities in place? That also applies for our kids in special education centres and schools.

It is a suite. It ranges from a system level to a school level, then to a classroom level and then an individual student level. Some of those things run all the way through so that I get to have a line of sight of that but others are there particularly to inform teacher practise and it is for them to be able to understand where their children are in their learning journey and what they need to do.

We report A to E for families in Years 1 to 10 so we are able to collate all of that data to see what that looks like on their semester reports and we get to see that. We moderate in some of those areas. Senior secondary is a whole other process again.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: I was just thinking, you can look at Year 12 completion rates and that is obviously the end goal KPI. But in terms of primary school are we looking at Year 6 and them having a minimum level of competency before they are moving on to senior school.

As a Year 6 cohort across the Territory, what does that look like? How are we able to say yes, you are ready, good luck at middle school?

Ms BAYLIS: Not quite like that but let me hand over to the deputy CE because she has help set the targets and priorities for schools and it is that focus where we need to say what it is that we want you to pay attention to.

Ms GUPPY: Thank you, Member for Spillett. If I can go to your question about students and their achievement at the end of Year 6, then in fact we need to go right back to FaFT, because this is where we start. It is about growing and developing our children throughout their years of early education and schooling education. Both the minister and the chief executive made reference to the consultations that took place in the development of our strategic plan. It was a fascinating experience because we engaged with a whole range of stakeholders.

What came through to us so very, very clearly was the commonality and consistency of what stakeholders were identifying that they felt we needed to have as the overarching goals for all of our children. That is to engage, to grow, and to achieve. I think that resonates with us all in education in terms of our children but also our staff. It is also what we want for our community as a whole.

From those three goals of engage, grow and achieve, we have set priorities for our system that takes account of our need to have a sharper, narrow focus for schools and children, but across the breadth of the development of a child through their education.

We have already spoken this evening—and it has been highlighted by a number of the sitting members—about the importance of engagement with education. Three of our priorities for 2018 focus on that goal of engagement. The first takes us to where we commenced this evening's proceedings, that is with FaFT. We have recognised the importance of that good, strong, early start for those little children. We also recognise that to really get the benefit of the program, we need those children attending regularly. Participation level is one of the key priorities for 2018.

Then we come to the next priority under the engagement umbrella, which is attendance. When giving consideration to attendance, we know that in schools through our policies and strategies, we will be able to address issues of attendance for children across the board.

Then we looked at the connection between attendance and learning. Our second priority has been for our schools to focus particularly on the children who are attending within the 60% to 80% attendance bracket. The reason for that is because of what the evidence tells us. If we got back to the Wilson report, the data shows clearly that if a child attends 60% of the time—three days per week—around 30% of that cohort of children will achieve the NAPLAN benchmark. If children are attending 80% of the time, which is four days per week, the level of NAPLAN benchmark achievement goes up to 60%.

For a 20% increase in attendance—one day a week every week—over the school year, we are able to get a doubling of the NAPLAN benchmark achievement. For that reason, our second priority has been to ask our schools to focus on that area of attendance in particular—but of course, not to ignore the others.

The third priority you have already touched on, Member for Spillett. That is about retention of children in senior years. We know that our data from Year 10 to Year 12 is sitting, for the whole jurisdiction, at around 60%. We really need to ...

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Sorry, is that attendance?

Ms GUPPY: No, this is retention.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: It is number of kids, okay. So 60% of Territory students stay until the end of Year 12?

Ms GUPPY: Yes. From those who start in 10 through to Year 12. The schools are really working on case management of their students to make sure that if a student started in Year 10, they are carefully monitored; their progress is mapped; and the wrap-around support is provided for them to get them through Year 10 and, importantly, get them back again the next year to Year 11, do the same again and, importantly, get them back the following year.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: That would be quite a low percentage, I imagine, comparatively with other jurisdictions?

Ms GUPPY: It is lower than other jurisdictions, yes.

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: Similar jurisdictions in other areas?

Ms BAYLIS: If we were to look at the socioeconomic demography of those things, it is comparable, but 60% is an average. We have young people doing extraordinarily well in the Territory, but we have remote and regional schools that are patchy. It is not acceptable that we are not moving to improve that outcome for young people. We know of all the protective factors that completing secondary education gives you for life. We need to focus on that and not get into a mindset of 'it is okay to do something else'. That is a strong commitment to secondary provision as well. It is more than just providing it; it is keeping the kids engaged.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: How many Territory students would be in that 60% to 80% attendance bracket?

Ms GUPPY: The CE will look at that. They are the three key priorities for the engagement goal—FaFT, attendance and retention. For the goal of 'grow', we looked at our data on writing. Since the advent of NAPLAN in 2008—when we look at the outcomes we see that writing is an area we need to give attention to across the year levels.

For that reason, we looked at a priority of writing gains from Year 3 to 5, Year 5 to 7, and Year 7 to 9. We want to see what you are looking for in your question, which is growth.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: So, it is growth for individual students rather than every student should achieve X as long as every student is growing in an exponential way?

Ms GUPPY: Yes.

The fifth priority was 'achieve', and that goes to the ultimate goal of schooling, which is increasing Year 12 completion. Our very best results were last year in regard to those completions.

Ms LAWLER: Vicki has the Education NT strategy, and you can see down the bottom where we are talking about the measures. We can table those.

Ms BAYLIS: They are very broad, but they are there.

Mr WOOD: I have the figures from NAPLAN from your report. Minister, I notice that you stated there were significant achievement increases in NAPLAN results this year for Year 5 and Year 9. I do not have those. I remember looking at these figures before NAPLAN existed, when they were broader than this. They also had remote and very remote, and you had a better idea of where the issues were.

The reality is, in 2012–13, for instance, Year 9 for Aboriginal students' reading was 37%. It is now 41%—that was in 2016. It has not gone up by much in all that time. Year 5 numeracy for Aboriginal students has gone 35%, 43%, 38%, 53%, 54%, 46%. I do not see any trends that give me a feeling that we are getting on top of these issues. I would be the first to ask if NAPLAN is a suitable way to identify these issues for Aboriginal kids when the NAPLAN examination paper talks about trams. It has ideas that are foreign to the people who have to do those tests.

Do we need a completely different approach or do we need to go back to basics? My wife has a grade six education at Delissaville, Belyuen—and elsewhere—can read and write as well as anyone. Without all the computers and the inquiries and strategies. Do we need to go back to basics to try to turn this around?

Ms LAWLER: I think Vicki has just talked about basics and having a sharper, narrow focus. Whether you want to call it basics or a sharper, narrow focus.

One of the things about the data is it does not show growth. One of the good things now is that NAPLAN has been around for 10 years, and students have a unique pupil number in the Northern Territory. The federal government are pushing to have a UPN nationally, so everybody will probably be tattooed at birth with the number.

We can see from Years 3 to 5, to 7 to 9 now, because over those 10 years you can track some students, particularly if they have stayed in one school. You can see their growth. That is what I mentioned in my opening statement. There have been some significant achievements. The bald data does not show that.

Mr John Hattie, the world-renowned educationalist and the chair of AITSL, wrote letters to a number of our schools in the Northern Territory. We are talking about last year's data; they only completed NAPLAN this year around 13 May. Mr Hattie wrote letters and spoke to me at the education council, and was congratulating the Northern Territory.

Our teachers work hard and are showing our kids are putting on substantially more growth. Every parent should expect one year's growth from one year of education. If my child is in Year 3, I expect them to have 12 months' growth by the time they get to Year 4.

We know in the Territory, we need to put on more than one year's growth. One year's progress is not enough. For most kids it is fine, but there are a large number of kids starting so far behind. That is why we have been focusing on that zero to four, FaFT area, so that by the time they start, they are all at an equal starting point.

That is the Chief Minister's line: day one, year one, semester one. They are all ready for school.

We are being recognised for the growth of our students, and we are able to track that data and show we have made improvements around value-add. I will pass to Vicki, who can add more.

Ms BAYLIS: Thank you. Member for Nelson, the data you have is reporting on the outcome of the year. What the minister was referring to is growth over time, and we do that through matched student data.

Mr WOOD: So that is what I have seen at Taminmin College?

Ms BAYLIS: Yes.

Mr WOOD: A picture of the student and data. I almost needed a science degree to work it out.

Ms BAYLIS: Ask the kids and they will be able to tell you about where they are. Ask them and they will tell you their story.

To go back to the question about whether we need to go back to just teaching some of the basics, some of our schools are doing direct instruction, which is a very scripted process for teaching English, reading, writing and mathematics.

The other schools have the literacy and numeracy essentials. One of the things we have learned is we need to not assume that every educator understands the sequence of learning, around where a child is. First you have to know where the learner is, then we need to provide you with a clearly scripted program of work so that you do not leave gaps.

If kids have patchy attendance, you need to understand where the young person is, and not just assume because you happen to be eight or 10 years old, that you have all the prerequisite knowledge. We build on that, which is what the literacy and numeracy essentials curriculum does, particularly in our very remote schools. We provide that strong scaffolding.

The other component amongst all of that is that it cannot be done if we do not have kids there. We have to do something about connecting our young people to the learning so that it is purposeful. It goes back to the Member for Nhulunbuy's question around local decision-making of what are the things that will keep our families and our kids connected to our schools. But it is in partnership with more than just education.

We know some of the factors that impact on families come from housing. It comes from domestic and family violence. None of this is new information, but it is where we work together with the other agencies to minimise that mobility to be able to create the stability in a schooling context to ensure we are able to get that engagement. At least on our end of it we need to keep the right teachers in front of these young people so they have the relationship. Then we know that we can hit that success.

The Member for Nhulunbuy's point about changing teachers—does not build kids' confidence and relationships. They make a decision, they vote, and they do not come.

Mr WOOD: Attendance is complicated. When I was at Port Keats, they have a bus that goes around door to door. Parents were throwing stones at the bus because they wanted the child to stay home while they went off to play cards. There is a whole range of reasons why kids are not at school.

The issue I raised with the Chief Minister was, if he is looking for some sort of memorandum of understanding where communities have a little bit more empowerment—that is the question I asked earlier—then it has to be a two-way street. Maybe the two-way street is, if you want this extra independence then part of that is that you will bring your children to school. And if they do not then it does not happen. Do you think that is a reasonable approach to putting the responsibility back where it belongs?

Ms LAWLER: I was going to say—and we could talk for a long time around attendance—that there has to be sticks and carrots with that, and there has been. But, yes, I am more than happy to—we think if we can engage people and empower people, that they will come to school, but there has to be that two-way reciprocity.

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: Member for Sanderson, do you have a question?

Mrs WORDEN: I do, but only if these guys are finished on the output, obviously.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: It is not related to that? Okay, I will keep going.

Ms GUPPY: Excuse me, Member for Spillett. You queried the proportion of students who sit in the 60% to 80% attendance. In Term 1 that was 17.6%.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Do you have the—I am probably stretching the friendship now—break down? If only 17% of students are in that bracket, what is the percentage of the other bracket?

Ms BAYLIS: I will get the data for you.

Ms LAWLER: It should be 17 then 12, 10, one. We would hope so. We know that in most of our urban schools—and all that data is online. In most of our urban schools the attendance is 90%.

Mr WOOD: Are you still talking attendance?

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: We are still in primary years.

Mr WOOD: I have a question here. The question is, why have key performance indicators for attendance of Aboriginal students been set so much lower than those of non-Aboriginal students? I refer to AG budget statements 2018–19, page 246. It shows for primary, middle and senior attendance rates, non-Aboriginal, it is budgeted at 90%, and for Aboriginal it is 71%. If you are looking at a performance indicator, will you try to aim it as equal, even though you might not get there?

Ms LAWLER: Yes. Ideally it should be equal. That is what we absolutely aim for. Schools have those targets. The Deputy Chief Executive talked about those things having that very strong focus on attendance or improving literacy and numeracy. That said, they also have to be realistic, otherwise it is just not achievable. I will pass to the CE to comment.

Ms BAYLIS: Member for Nelson, good question. It is one that has perplexed the executive of the Department of Education when we have set targets. Do we make them realistic; equitable; aspirational? Then when your funding agreement with the federal government requires you to deliver on your targets, realistic is good.

We need to be mindful so we have built in incremental improvement on those things when we understand the complexity of the drivers that impact on attendance and what we can directly influence. However, the conversation is around high expectations with schools because the expectation is that every young person should have the opportunity to be at school for the maximum amount of time and what is it going to take? Knowing that we have a piece of work to do there but solely education is not going to be able to solve some of the complexities.

Mr WOOD: Well the other aspect of attendance is, we use to call them truancy people. Do we still have them and have we actually—have people been prosecuted?

Ms LAWLER: Yes.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: I have truancy questions as well but I have them in a different output.

Mr WOOD: I am talking about attendance and if you do not turn up at school, theoretically you are in trouble because of the *Education Act*, you must send your children to school.

Ms LAWLER: Yes, Member for Nelson, there are sticks and carrots and we do have punitive actions such as issuing infringement notices and initiating prosecutions. For March 2018 there had been 249 infringement notices, there had been 157 recommendations to suspend Centrelink payments but that option ceased then because that was involved with SEAM, the Federal Government method. There has been 27 prosecutions commenced in court and 10 finalised in court. We do have, at the school level, incentives. The Member for Daly, I know he provides bikes, the kids can enter in a lottery to win a bike if they go to school regularly at Berry Springs. I was out there recently and saw that. There are then those punitive measures. I was at Gapuwiyak late last year and there were three families who were in court there regarding non-attendance of their children as well.

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: Member for Spillett, do you have questions on that?

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: I do have questions around truancy. I just wanted to know how many truancy officers there were across the Territory. Maybe broken into regions?

Ms LAWLER: There are a couple of things to clarify. There is RSAS, the remote attendance strategy that is the federal government initiative, so there is that layer funded by the federal government. If you travel out remote—they call them the yellow shirts, because they wear their yellow shirts and I think there are about 80 RSAS officers that are in communities. I think it was Member for Daly talking about that. They will go around,

they will drive the school bus, they will call out to kids, and they will walk the community. Some of them actually walk around the community and have like a moving bus and the kids jump on and hold a bit of rope and take them to school. There will be those RSAS officers as well as attendance and truancy officers. Vicki can provide the exact details on those numbers.

Ms BAYLIS: Thank you for that question. We have 14 enrolment and attendance positions that are funded through the federal government Remote Aboriginal Investment strategy. Of the remote school attendance positions—the yellow shirts, as they lovingly refer to themselves—there are 80 positions that service those schools that have the Remote School Attendance Strategy in that area. Then what we have are 21 Northern Territory Government positions. Some of those are directly attendance and truancy officers but there are a couple in back of house who do our data and collation and be able to provide the reports and do the analysis and things like that.

In total, what we have are 21 NTG-funded positions, 26 Commonwealth Government-funded positions and the Remote School Attendance program has about 80 positions there. We have a range of resources that provide a range of activity and to add to the minister's data in that area. The minister provided information, Member for Nelson, on the suspensions and non-compliance and things like that, and the prosecutions. The step that happens before all of those is engaging with the families to create an attendance plan.

Between July 2017 and the end of March 2018, there were 1332 of those plans constructed and they have varying degrees of success. But they are the first step in engaging with families.

Mr WOOD: Do you work in with the Territory Families?

Ms BAYLIS: Yes we do. The Department of Territory Families is changing some of the ways it works. The good thing is now, with their youth officers, that is becoming a stronger opportunity and partnership because they are more regionally based and not all as close to the major centres.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Of the 21 NTG positions, how are they split across the Territory?

Ms BAYLIS: Good question. I would need to take that question on notice.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Yes. I was also going to ask how many students have been engaged by the 21 truancy officers. Would that need to be on notice as well?

Ms BAYLIS: Yes, because we would ...

Ms LAWLER: It is complex, though, because when you look at the data, as you say it cascades down. First of all, they are engaged in ...

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: Minister, sorry, could I go through this to get it on record and then go back to you.

Question on Notice No 8.4

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: Member for Spillett, can you please restate the question for the record.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Of the 21 Northern Territory Government truancy officer position, where are they located across the Territory? How many students, within each region the truancy officers are located, have been engaged by the truancy officers.

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

Ms LAWLER: Yes.

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: The question asked by the Member for Spillett of the minister has been allocated number 8.4.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Are the truancy officers based on site in the schools?

Ms BAYLIS: No.

Ms LAWLER: There would be some at the Palmerston Regional Office, for example at Goyder. There would be some at the Katherine Regional Office, Alice Springs and Darwin Regional Office, yes.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Okay, thank you. What is the budget for this year for truancy officers?

Ms LAWLER: The budget for 2018–19 is \$6.8m.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: That is to fund and support the 21 positions?

Ms LAWLER: Yes. The federal government, the RSAS, which is under Nigel Scullion's Indigenous Advancement Strategy—that is a federal government Commonwealth-funded program.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Thank you.

Mr WOOD: I knew there were truancy officer because they come to my office occasionally. I did not mean to say they did not exist, but I thought they had a different name. They would not be happy to hear me say they did not exist. They do.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Perhaps they will come back to your office, Member for Nelson.

My next questions for this output are about water safety. How many students took part in the Semester 2, 2017 trial of the new water safety life skills program?

Ms LAWLER: I will take that one on notice.

Question on Notice No 8.5

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: Member for Spillett, can you please restate the question for the record.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Yes. How many student took part in the Semester 2, 2017 trial of the new water safety life skills program?

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

Ms LAWLER: Yes, I do. I was just going to say I know one of the great schools in my electorate was involved.

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: The question asked by the Member for Spillett of the minister has been allocated number 8.5

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: Member for Spillett, do you have another question.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Yes.

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: We will get one more question and then we will go on the break.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: What is the budget allocation for 2018–19 for that water safety life skills program?

Ms LAWLER: I will take that one on notice as well.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: I will ask the next one in case. How many Territory students have achieved the national benchmark for water safety at the end of primary school?

Ms LAWLER: Yes, I will take that one on notice.

Question on Notice No 8.6

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: Member for Spillett, can you please restate the question for the record.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Thank you. What is the budget allocation in 2018–19 for the water safety life skills program? How many Territory students have achieved the national benchmark for water safety at the end of primary school?

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

Ms LAWLER: Yes.

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: The question asked by the Member for Spillett of the minister has been allocated number 8.6

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: On that note, I will call a dinner break. We will recommence hearings at 7 pm.

Mr WOOD: Plus two minutes. Every minute counts in this.

The committee suspended.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Thank you, Madam Deputy Chair.

Minister, what funding is allocated to provide access to early identification and intervention services for struggling children in rural and remote communities?

Ms LAWLER: Thank you, Member for Spillett, for that questions. First up I can say one of the things I am very proud of as a minister is the additional \$8m, which ended up being close to \$10m. That was new money that our government put in to students with additional needs, with challenging behaviours. I know it was very well received by our schools but it was new money that has gone in.

I will hand to Vicki Baylis because one of the other key initiatives our government also committed that is being delivered is for SWAN which is Students with Additional Needs, a strategic plan. We are doing some work to make sure those additional dollars that we have put in to kids with high needs, additional needs—whether it is FASD, autism, developmental delay. Whatever those additional needs being supported, whether they are in a remote school or an urban school, our goal is to make sure that it is fair across the system.

The other one that Vicki can talk about is our needs-based funding for the schools. One of the things that we are also doing is using the NCCD data which is the national data that all schools across Australia are undertaking around how much additional support a student needs to be able to achieve. We are using that data to support our schools with additional funding. Vicki can provide details on those.

Ms BAYLIS: Thank you, Member for Spillett. I will also invite Maree Garrigan, the Executive Director for School Support Services to come up just in case I miss one of the things.

When we talk about early identification for students it is not identified solely as regional and remote it is for all Territorians. When we look at the way that we go about that work it is a service that is provided across more than just a geographic location.

If we look at the additional funding that has gone in to provide additional therapists, or support for those students with a disability. We have increased it by physio, by speech therapy and we are looking at the specialist support that goes in to that in the early intervention areas.

If we also then, as the minister said, look at what we are doing for the students with additional needs the focus has been around understanding what the profile of need is. We currently have a funding model that is universally applied with special education support funding for students but that is after identification so that it picks up on those areas.

That policy framework will provide guidance to the agency for how we then best distribute on a needs-base model and we are working closely nationally to understand how that is being done across the other jurisdictions so that we continue to work on that. That is work in progress. It is currently a consultative process that has been undertaken. We have had the consultants visiting regional and very remote schools as well as the schools in our provincial areas.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Do they include school of the air?

Ms BAYLIS: School of the air is one of our areas we have talked to but they have been able to touch, because the parents with the isolated children are also wanting access. For our school of the air parents as well after their AGM—and Maree was part of the briefing with them regarding resources that are available to them and the tutors they can access online—professional learning—so that they have the additional support. The strong focus that they had through their conference this year was to invite some speakers who provided additional information for them and that is a further piece of work.

We also know that we need to work with existing families with the National Disability Insurance Scheme, so we will have young people entering the schooling system who may already have packages. We also know that as it is rolled out through the Northern Territory, we need to understand what the package is and where it best intersects with the formal schooling process so that we maintain the focus on learning, but also provide the wrap support where it is relevant and pertinent within those hours of schooling.

Ms NELSON: I was wondering how NDIS would affect how it came into play.

Ms BAYLIS: Yes. We are growing in our understanding of what the NDIS will look like. It is really unique to each young person's package and what that particular therapeutic support or access package is for those young people. We are still coming to understand.

When it comes to the NDIS, we are working closely in the first instance with Henbury School and their schooling system to work through what the external therapies are and how that is. The minister picked up, Member for Spillett, on Mimik-ga. That is the hub we have set in the Darwin area so that families with children who have developmental delays beginning to show are able to access that support.

Health also participates in the provision of programs and they attend where it is relevant and appropriate. Early childhood intervention teachers are consultants and part of that program. Those early childhood consultants also move across the Northern Territory and provide that support.

We work strongly in partnership with the other professionals who are able to provide families with advice about where we are. That is not always readily available in our very remotes. If I use an example where local decision-making has made a massive impact—Gunbalanya, through their Clontarf program, had a team of six specialists in the community last week do a full health screen of all of their children—the little ones in their early learning programs through to their school-aged children.

That was driven through the school board in partnership with their Clontarf program, which was doing that for their boys. They went, 'Could we have that for everyone?' They will then work closely with the clinic if it is a medical issue. If it is a developmental issue, we have advice then, and we can continue to support.

These additional investments this government has put in, plus our existing resources in partnership with other professionals so that we can continue to provide that support—we still need to look to other areas like the National Disability Insurance Agency to continue to learn.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Thank you.

Mrs WORDEN: My question piggybacks on a little, but it is a bit more focused. The minister probably expected I might ask a question on this. I obviously know some information, but I was hoping you could give me the full picture of what support is being provided for our students that present with the autism spectrum disorder, if I could? I know the short story and you touched on it a bit before. Obviously, Mimik-ga is—I think there might be a bit more to that story.

Ms LAWLER: Thank you, Member for Sanderson. I know this is one that is close to your heart, but also close to mine. I think, Member for Spillett, we also often support AutismNT and the amazing work that Cherie Vance does. It is truly amazing that a not-for-profit takes on a huge amount of work and supports families so much across the Territory.

There are currently 773 students across the NT diagnosed as being on the autism spectrum. We note that there has been a directive, it is 'autism spectrum' now, not 'autism spectrum disorder'. We talk about 'AS' rather than 'ASD', which has a growth of 44 students in 2018. I think anybody who works in education knows that number has been growing over the most recent years. It continues to be a puzzle around how schools manage students on the spectrum.

There is additional funding that has gone in from our government. We talked about the \$8m, but we have expanded our ASD programs. There is about a \$2.2m spend in 2018–19 on that. There are now three programs in the Darwin region. There is a unit in Malak, which has been around for a very long time, since 2006. There is the Mimik-ga Centre that we talked about as well. There is also a unit at Moulden Primary School, which has about six students from the Palmerston region. There is a program at Macfarlane in Katherine, which I was at recently, and a program at Braitling Primary School.

Each program caters for about six students so besides the education advisors who are in the central office and can work with students with AS in specific classrooms. There is also that opportunity for kids to be in a unit where they get that additional attention and have those social stories written so they can manage themselves, the classrooms, the distractions. It is one where we are continuing to provide scholarships for teachers in special education. I think there was 15 graduate diplomas for scholarships for special education that we gave out last year.

There are also online courses for teachers to undertake in training for AS because ideally you have every classroom teacher with a comprehensive understanding of managing and getting the best out of students with AS.

I will pass to Maree Garrigan and she can add to that. But as I said, it is an area that our government has put additional resources in. Is it enough? Probably not. We could probably do with a great deal more but I do see, in my travels around how schools, have changed their work. Most of our urban schools—when you walk into them—have engine rooms now, cool-down rooms for kids to go and feel safe and get re-focused and calm. Schools are changing and teachers are improving their skills in managing AS kids, but then also we have the specialist support too.

Ms GARRIGAN: There are a range of online courses that are very popular. In total this year we have had 33 teachers participate in understanding autism spectrum and a total of 75 teachers over the last—from Semester 2, 2017 to 31 March this year. It shows that teachers are really working to provide the best opportunities for students on the autism spectrum.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: I have a number of questions regarding teacher numbers, but in the interests of time I might submit those as written questions. I will ask, what is the number of teachers recruited and what percentage of those have been recruited from interstate?

Ms LAWLER: Thank you, Member for Spillett. Are you talking about the start of this school year, in the 2018 school year?

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: I guess it is for the period 1 September 2017 to 31 March 2018.

Ms LAWLER: As you can understand, a lot of—well not a lot—but that is when teachers will often cite that they will travel the world, resign, or find a better offer or whatever else. That usually happens at the end of the school year. We can get you those figures, we will take that one on notice rather than doing that now.

Question on Notice No 8.7

Madam CHAIR: Member for Spillett, can you please repeat the question for the record?

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Yes. How many teachers been recruited from 1 September 2017 to 31 March 2018 and out of those, how many were recruited from interstate?

Madam CHAIR: Minister, do you accept the question?

Ms LAWLER: Yes, thank you.

Madam CHAIR: The Member for Spillett's question has been allocated the number 8.7.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Thank you. I just wanted to also ask, minister, does the department keeps statistics on the number of Territory kids who report as being bullied?

Ms LAWLER: Yes we do.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Do you have the figures for that?

Ms LAWLER: Yes, let me just find the—first and foremost let me emphasise that no school wants to see or hear about any bullying and works very hard to eliminate bullying in schools. There are multiple layers and ways to address that. You probably heard me talking about the Social and Emotional Learning curriculum, we have to have a very firm base that addresses bullying and teaches about bullying and the importance of being a kind, compassionate, caring friend. That starts at five years old, it does not start at 14 when you have an incident of cyberbullying in a school.

It is about curriculum and policies and aligning to the National Safe Schools Framework. It is also about identifying those students at risk, supporting them and working in partnership with counsellors and NGOs. IT is also putting in place restorative practices, addressing the issues as bullying arises, because it is one of those very complex issues we would love to see eliminated. The reality is, we must constantly work hard to have zero tolerance on bullying.

I will pass to Vicki, who has some data.

Ms BAYLIS: Thank you, minister.

Member for Spillett, for Term 1 in 2017 there were 202 students involved in bullying incidents. In Term 2 there were 191. In Term 3, 184 students, and the recorded number of students involved in bullying incidents in Term 4 was 188.

In 2018, for Term 1—we do not have Term 2 data yet—it is 148. The optimist in me would be hoping that is an indicative trend from our social emotional learning, but we are dealing with young people and it will be something we will watch carefully.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Is that just for primary years or is that across all years?

Ms BAYLIS: That is across the board.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Is there a break down for primary and secondary?

Ms BAYLIS: We could get that break down but I do not have it in front of me at this point in time.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: I would not mind, Madam Acting Chair.

Ms LAWLER: The research shows there are peaks at certain ages. It is often at Year 4, as they come out of early childhood, and sometimes around Year 9. It is probably one of those areas where a lot of research has been done. Some countries have whole-of-country ways of addressing bullying and have some very interesting research on it.

The Prime Minister wrote to all schools in Australia after the incident with Dolly. I wrote to all principals and our schools for the start of Term 1, before the Prime Minister, alerting and—it is also around the victims, but the perpetrators—emphasising the work that needs to be done around cyberbullying.

I recently met with a father whose daughter had been cyberbullied and it is just heart rending to hear the stories about how hard they have worked to support their children, and yet things still happen and the consequences are dire. The department and principals will work hard to stamp this out.

Question on Notice No 8.8

Madam ACTING CHAIR: Member for Spillett would you like to repeat the part of the question you want to put on notice?

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Thank you Madam Acting Chair. For the 2017 year and Term 1, 2018, could you please provide the number of students across the Territory who have reported as being bullied, broken down into primary, middle and senior school?

Madam ACTING CHAIR: Minister, do you accept the question?

Ms LAWLER: Yes, Madam Acting Chair.

Madam ACTING CHAIR: It has been allocated number 8.8.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Minister, what is the prevalence, if any, of substance abuse in primary school?

Ms LAWLER: Member for Spillett, I will probably have to pass to the CE. When you talk about substance abuse, are you talking about alcohol or cigarettes?

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: I suppose any illegal substance.

Ms LAWLER: Cigarettes are not illegal.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: They are at that age.

Ms LAWLER: So you are talking about all?

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Yes that is right.

Ms LAWLER: Cigarettes and alcohol?

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Cigarettes, alcohol ...

Ms LAWLER: Member for Spillett, I am sure there is some data because if the school knew about them, they would be suspended for that behaviour and the department would have that data. The data is so volatile. It could be one student today, or three. I will pass to Vicki Baylis to talk about the data.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: If it is easier to link it with suspensions ...

Ms LAWLER: I would presume if you are caught smoking in primary school, you would be suspended. If you are caught with alcohol or anything—well, you would be suspended. You would think so.

Ms BAYLIS: Member for Spillett, I do not have it broken down into primary schools, but I can give you data across the Territory if that helps. We can take the breakdown of that into the primary-aged students on notice.

If we talk about Term 1, the number of incidents around substance use or possession that resulted in suspension, there were 27 individual students. In Term 2 there were 46 individual students in 2017. In Term 3 there were 72 individual students, and in Term 4 there were 31 individual students.

For 2018 there were 19 individual students who were involved in a suspension as a result of substance use or possession. That is across both primary and secondary, so we would need to get that breakdown for primary-aged.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Thank you.

Question on Notice No 8.9

Madam CHAIR: Member for Spillett, can you repeat the part of the question you want to put on notice, please.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: For the school year 2017 and Term 1 2018, could you please provide the breakdown for primary, middle and senior students who were suspended or expelled for substance abuse or misuse.

Ms LAWLER: It would only be suspended. We have not expelled students.

Madam CHAIR: Minister, do you accept the question?

Ms LAWLER: Yes.

Madam CHAIR: It has been allocated the number 8.9.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: So no students have been expelled for any reason?

Ms LAWLER: No, I am just trying to think. I do not think we have had an expulsion. It is government work; we are talking about the government system?

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Yes.

Ms LAWLER: We take all comers and we keep all comers. We are not a private school. I probably would have to search back ...

Mr WOOD: There is nothing wrong with private schools, is there?

Ms LAWLER: We will not go there, Member for Nelson.

Mr WOOD: I have heard you in parliament.

Ms LAWLER: I reckon there probably has not been an expulsion for 20 years in the Northern Territory. It is about working with those kids. If you are expelled from a government school, where do you actually go in the Territory? It is about making sure those kids get a chance to get a great education. The maximum suspension in the Territory is 20 days.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: I do not know if the department keeps records of this, but how many times were police called to schools to address any sort of student-led problem, whether it was a behavioural problem or ...

Ms LAWLER: We would not have that data, but the minister for Police may have that data.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Why is it that the department does not keep data like that? From an education perspective, knowing how many times ...

Ms LAWLER: The school may have that data, so the individual school could possibly—most schools keep information on students and their behaviours. Also, positive—whether they are getting awards and things like that. So they would have data about suspension because we have that centrally, but I do not know. As I said, it is about minimising. These things are not regular occurrences, absolutely not.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: I just wanted to go back—sorry, I did ask a question about bullying and I have a separate question later on about Safe Schools, but I just wanted to ask—you may have answered it—what budget has been allocated to address bullying specifically for primary schools?

Ms LAWLER: It is difficult to look at specifics on that because there are so many layers to it. As I said, schools are implementing a social emotional learning curriculum. If you are talking about addressing bullying, that is at the curriculum level. Schools have policies on behaviour management that include bullying. Whether there is a cost involved in developing a policy ...

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Is that something the department leads, or each school develops their own policy?

Ms LAWLER: You may be aware, but there is the National Safe Schools framework. At the highest level, federal government in 2003 and then updated in 2011—the National Safe Schools Framework is the overarching. It has guiding principles that all schools in Australia must adhere to, basically, or implement and action. It has elements which are all about the policies, the procedures, what is expected regarding managing student wellbeing or focusing on student wellbeing, professional learning and behaviour management. That is the highest level for every school in Australia. It was agreed to by education ministers at the Ministerial Council meetings many years ago.

Underneath that top layer is department policy. It is about policy, curriculum, partnerships with parents and communities. Underneath that is the resources that departments provide. There are things such as MindMatters and KidsMatter. Then there are lots of other resources—we have the Social and Emotional Learning curriculum.

Probably every second day, Member for Spillett, someone writes to me to say, 'I have an amazing program that will address bullying. It will only cost you \$1m'—or whatever else it is. There are those layers with regard to bullying. We can all understand that it is something that no one wants to see. You could come up with an estimate on the cost. There are then specifics about counsellors who are in schools. Part of their work would

be to work with certain kids who had been bullied or were bullies, as well as the other amounts of counselling they do. You would have to apportion a certain amount of cost for that.

There are whole days of action to address bullying. Again, there would be an associated cost with that. It is probably a figure I could not really give you for that, but it is a lot of money, I can tell you, that is spent either indirectly or directly to address the issue of bullying. We would love to see that cost eliminated.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Thank you, minister.

Ms LAWLER: Vicki will add something.

Ms BAYLIS: Member for Spillett, there are tiers of intervention, as you would have heard, that we talk about. If we go the budget line, it would be about behaviour. This is across all Territory government schools. It supports the positive behaviour and wellbeing policy and provides some of the support for the targeted programs, not the writing of curriculum.

We would say for 2017–18 our budget figure was \$1.5m. It is anticipated in 2018–19 that the budget will be \$2.2m.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Thank you. Is the department providing educators in detention the information on a detainee's educational history, as is recommended by the Royal Commission at 16.1?

Ms LAWLER: Yes, it is. All the recommendations of the Royal Commission are being implemented by the department. But ...

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: And that one has already been implemented?

Ms LAWLER: Yes, but it is about making sure that every student who comes out of detention has an education program as well. Vicki can provide more details, but it is about having that wraparound support for that student who comes out of detention to go to the next step—whether it is going into some training or going to a re-engagement centre. In Alice Springs there is a place called Alice Outcomes. I acknowledge the Alice Springs people who I know are listening in to this broadcast.

It is a pathway for those students and making sure the courses they have completed—when they were in detention they may have done a White Card, some VET, depending on the length of time they were in detention. It is about making sure that follows them and they follow through.

I will pass to Vicki.

Ms BAYLIS: Thank you, minister. Member for Spillett, we have accepted the recommendations in the Royal Commission report and are implementing those recommendations within our existing budget. The opportunities it has provided continue to be about working with other agencies. The education programs are there. They continue to be case managed as young people transition out of detention back into their community, whether that is formally into another school setting or a flexible learning program beyond that.

We have ensured our teachers have had access to high-quality training on trauma-informed practise so they understand what young people are likely to be bringing with them and their history. We have also made sure both detention centres are engaging with our Northern Territory Indigenous Languages and Cultures curriculum. They are working on how they will best implement that given that young people in detention are sometimes on remand and sometimes sentenced for a period of time.

We need to be flexible in how we meet those young people's language backgrounds. We will continue to use, where appropriate, Aboriginal language speakers to support them with their learning.

The other part of the work that is under way and continues to be developed is vocational education programs to ensure these people have an opportunity to experience success. Further to that, some of these people come with an undiagnosed disability, so we are working closely with the Department of Health and practitioners to make sure the medical and psychological screening which might be pertinent to informing the educational program is undertaken.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: I think I moved into Output 1.4, Middle Years. I am happy to keep going, but I did not want to cut off the Member for Nelson.

Madam CHAIR: Thank you, Member for Spillett. We appreciate your honesty. We will ask any further questions on Output 1.3.

Mr WOOD: Do we have a record of how many people do home schooling?

Ms LAWLER: Yes, we do. There is a rigorous process for that. Children are home schooled for a range of reasons. I will pass to the CE, who can give you the data.

Ms BAYLIS: We currently have 94 students involved in home schooling across the Northern Territory. Of those, there are six new students in Alice Springs, with 27 continuing. There are no new students in the Arnhem region, with only one student continuing. In the Darwin region we have two students who are new to home schooling, with 13 continuing. In the Katherine region there is one new student and 17 continuing. In Palmerston and Rural region we have 12 new students and 15 who are continuing.

In total that is 21 new students in the reporting period for this estimates, and 73 continuing. All up that is 94 students in home schooling.

When compared to other years that is not so different. In 2017 we had 100 students in total undertaking home schooling; in 2016 it was 82; in 2015 it was 86; and in 2014 it was 89. They are around the same numbers. They move through where families are and the different phases of learning and their reasons for home schooling.

Mr WOOD: Are they able to obtain any financial assistance or is it purely a decision they make on their own?

Ms BAYLIS: It is a decision they make. They go through a process for accessing those things. Sometimes these families might access some part School of the Air or vocational program. That taps into existing—if they are in a vicinity where they can do that. They get the normal allowances other families get through the government sub-processes of vouchers and things like that.

Mr WOOD: I know it is a relatively small number, but have you ever analysed the number of children who have been home schooled and their academic achievements?

Ms LAWLER: I can say anecdotally there are some who have done very well, and some families we know—you know as well, Member for Nelson. One of the scholarships that Engineers Australia gave out last year was to a girl who had been home schooled in the rural area and had achieved exceptionally well. I think you would find that the continuum may be swayed to similar to elsewhere because the children are home-schooled for a variety of reasons, as we can imagine. There is parental choice, but sometimes it is about high anxiety or students who have severe health issues as well. There has not been—not that I know of—there might have been a PhD student or a Masters student who might have done that research at some time but I do not think that the department has done that. My expectation would be that you would see the spread of a bell curve that we see in all schools.

Mr WOOD: A more technical question. Have we got any new primary schools, either government or non-government—I do not call them private unless they are Xavier College or something—have you got any new ones planned for the Northern Territory and more specifically the Darwin region?

Ms LAWLER: That is a roundabout way of—so one of the things actually, Member for Nelson—some of the work that we have done is around some demographics. Just recently, CDU briefed me on some demographic work that we asked to be done. I think it was 2012 or 2011 was the last time some demographic work was done so it is important to actually have a really clear, as much as we can, picture of where we do need to build next. We have our 10-year plan for school builds but there are some hotspots and Vicki can probably go through some of those.

One of the things that we have done, as a government, is put some money into transportables and putting some dollars into some really quality transportables. But we do have hotspots and it is a matter of having a good look at that to see what the solution is for those. As you know, in your electorate, Girraween is one of those hotspots. But then you look at Bees Creek and Howard Springs and they are not. It is not taken lightly, it probably costs between \$20m and \$30m to build a primary school and a bit more than that to build a middle years so it is not one that you make a decision on a whim about.

The other hotspots we have is in the CBD around Stuart Park, Parap, Larrakeyah and Darwin Middle School, which is why we have put some upgrade dollars, about \$6m into Ludmilla. If we can revitalise that school presumably we can pull some students back to that. Leanyer is starting to grow because you have Muirhead

as well as Lyons and then we have some very solid hotspots in the beautiful Palmerston region—Rosebery, Bakewell, Driver, Durack and Berrimah Farm is another one we are watching as well. It can turn quite quickly as we age it seems quicker.

I tell the story of Stuart Park, about 15–20 years ago having only about 80–100 kids. The government at the time was thinking of shutting Stuart Park or coming up with other options. Then Bayview was built and Stuart Park has been filled. Some of those big blocks have been subdivided, there are duplexes and units and now Stuart Park is full and we are putting transportables there.

At Berrimah, we handed—or somebody handed Berrimah to the Catholics who then—we will not look at anybody in particular—Tiwi as well, Rapid Creek, so Kargaru in Tennant Creek so it is one of those ones that—and I love it, I am fascinated by that sort of demographics because I am a Territorian. So there has been some work done around the demographics so we may as well move into it, Member for Spillett. We will talk about the Z word.

We have, on our 10-year plan, to build a new school at Zuccoli. Whether we like it or not, and the Member for Blain will jump in and say it is political, but the previous government gave \$21.2m to Catholic Education to build a Catholic school.

I would have built a government school first, but that is a Labor government's way, to build a government school. A Catholic school was built. The early childhood is up and running. They only have about 38 kids at the moment. They are going to have their upper primary completed by the middle of this year. I am hoping the school will fill. For \$21m you would want a couple of hundred kids in it.

We are committed to joint facilities there, but I am also looking closely at whether we can bring forward a new build at Zuccoli for a government school. Bakewell is full. We are putting extra demountables at Bakewell. There are two demountables at Bakewell and another two coming in this year, so they will have a total of five from 2016 to 2018–19. Rosebery is full.

I had hoped we might have been able to hold off for another year or two with Zuccoli, but I do not think we can. Throw into that mix the shutdown of INPEX. I know they are all FIFOs but what is the knock-on effect of some of those families leaving? Will it have an impact in some of those newer areas like Johnston, Farrar and Zuccoli?

It is a tricky one but the first cab off the rank for a government school would be Zuccoli, although the Treasurer is probably listening. I know she is very keen to see one out at Muirhead and Lyons as well, because that is another hot spot.

Mr WOOD: Would it have been better to look at more central schools rather than neighbourhood schools? Was that an option?

Ms LAWLER: The trouble is, it is the culture in the Territory, especially in Darwin. Everybody wants a school in their neighbourhood.

We have seen places like Alawa and Jingili with a decline in student numbers a few years ago, but they are now having a resurgence. What you see is a 30-year, almost two generation pattern, where the families grow up and mum and dad hold on to the house for a while, but then they retire and decide to sell. You then see the next young families moving in. Jingili and Alawa are now turning into hot spots.

When a school gets to 85% of their capacity, they have to have priority enrolment, so they can only enrol from their enrolment zone. The brakes are put on, and they have to leave that buffer for kids in their area. Places like Jingili and Alawa are now having priority enrolment. We have the same in Alice Springs with Ross Park.

Mr WOOD: Are you looking at changing the boundaries? Girraween keeps growing, but Howard Springs is smaller. Humpty Doo has reduced a bit from what it was. Do you look at the possibility of shifting the boundaries?

Ms LAWLER: Yes, we look at that, but you have to be pretty brave. People have bought houses and word of mouth is the biggest marketing strategy. We have great schools across the Territory. We will have to look at some of those boundaries around some of those schools. It is a big spend for government to build a new school.

The other issue is that we do not want young children riding bikes crossing main roads. You want them to be able to get to the age of about nine or 10 where mum and dad can go to work and wave goodbye at the gate and they can ride or walk safely to school.

When you have central schools and students have to cross main roads, you then have to look at overpasses or safe routes to school. A bit of a long response, but Zuccoli, is the next cab off the rank.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Durack does need some attention.

Ms LAWLER: Absolutely. Durack is an interesting story because it was big. Then the first cavalry left overnight and literally Education did not even get a heads up about it. It dropped about 120 kids and it was a school that was like, 'Oh, what is going to happen here?' It is a pretty landlocked suburb with the main road, University Avenue. But now you have Durack Heights being built. All of us who drive that road can see the suburb extending out.

The price of rent has come down in Durack. A lot of those Defence people have moved to Lyons. People can afford to rent in Durack. It is probably about \$400 or \$500, Member for Spillett, where rent used to be \$700 sometimes in Durack. You have more young families moving back into Durack. Durack is now having to get a transportable. Five or six years ago if you asked us that we probably would not have seen that one coming.

It is one where you have to keep a close eye and do that demographic work and trust that demographic work. The sticking point for us is around INPEX because if that group of people leave, for example, then what is the knock-on effect? Coles may need one less checkout person, or three less people working at the pub or in retail. That impacts on those families who then might go elsewhere looking for work. So we are watching very closely.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Just to follow on from that, has Charles Darwin University finished its student demographic study for the Palmerston area?

Ms LAWLER: Yes, they have. They have given me a verbal briefing. Vicki can tell us if the final reports—I am happy to share that.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Will that be made public?

Ms LAWLER: Yes. I got a verbal briefing the other day because I wanted to actually be very clear about decisions regarding Zuccoli because we have \$9m and \$6m, that is just \$15m, which is a good, solid amount of money. Can we then top that up to look at a new school build sooner rather than later in the Zuccoli area. I am very happy to give you a briefing or provide that report. I will pass to the CE.

Ms BAYLIS: We are expecting the final report from Charles Darwin on the demographic work at the end of this month, Member for Spillett. But, as the minister said, there have been some verbal briefings, and we have gone back with further questions where we have asked for further clarification, which the demographers are putting into the report so that we will have that filed in the report due to the department at the end of this month.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Great, thank you. I am looking forward to that.

Ms LAWLER: Yes, it is fascinating stuff.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Yes. Minister, you did touch in your answer to an earlier question. In this budget you revoted from last budget \$8.985m and then this year there is new money of \$6m. That is a significant amount of money when you think Mother Teresa Catholic Primary School has been able to be built for in that \$20m range. At the moment, the government has only committed to commencing stage one, I think you said, in the first quarter of 2019. Stage one is really an oval and some shared facilities. I know your department is being able to deliver an oval in Elliott for \$500 000.

I have a number of questions. Firstly, why is it going to take so long to get that oval under way? Why is it going to start next year, not now?

Ms LAWLER: Member for Spillett, that is what I am alluding to or saying to you. My decision would have been for that \$21m to build a government school, and then have the Catholics follow through a different process. Looking at that \$9m and knowing the \$6m and \$9m—I am concerned that is a lot of money for some

joint facilities. I want to have a good look. That is why I was asking for this demographic work to be done—is a better spend of that money first and foremost, and that may not be exactly what Catholic Education wants.

There is a project team that is having those conversations as well so it is not just me making this decision. There is a project team that is involving people on the ground but is a better spend to look—to go to Cabinet to look for more money, to do similar to what the Catholics have done. Build an early childhood first and foremost then put in an upper primary. Because at the moment we have Rosebery and Bakewell full and kids going to Woodroffe, which is a long way away, that is not ideal—we all agree on that.

Is a better spend of that to use that money first and foremost to build a government school? I think, and as I said, I have had a couple of visits to Zuccoli, to Mother Teresa's Catholic School. They have a lovely, big undercover area and a big library area. Can they get by—I think they can get by very well probably—without necessarily building the oval straight away and us using prioritising that money to benefit the families in Zuccoli who want to go to a government school?

You have people approach you, I am sure, Member for Spillett, I have approach me as well, about wanting to send their children to a government school. That is people's views. They are the decisions that I need to make and I consult with people on the ground but I also get advice obviously from the people in the department on what the best use of public money is—I am leaning towards as these numbers continue to grow.

So late last year—which is why I did not rush in to spending the money—was, let us have a look when the Catholics open. I think I answered a question to you in the House about that. Let us see when Mother Teresa opens, let us see how many kids they pull. I had hoped that they might have pulled say 60 kids from Bakewell and another 60 from Rosebery—and that is four classes, which is two less classes at Bakewell, two less classes at Rosebery that means two less demountables we have to put in, it means more space in those places—that did not happen.

I think it is for a variety of reasons—but people have to pay to get a private, a non-government education. People necessarily—if you have bought a new house, if you are paying off a house most of us can understand that cash is short, you cannot necessarily afford to pay for your child to get a private education—also when you have Rosebery and Bakewell, which have both got fantastic reputations and are good schools.

It is not simple. The answer is that I think it was about holding on and revoting those funds not blowing them straight away. I could easily have said, spend it but let us look at a better spend, prioritising that to get some classrooms in, an admin block, car parking, those sorts of things and then look at an oval at a later date. There can be cheaper versions of that, or whatever else it can be, or something further down the track.

A long answer, but it is complex. When you are making \$20m decisions—I will be political, I think it was the wrong decision to make to allocate a Catholic school. If you look at the demographics of Zuccoli. They are young families, most of those probably not able to afford, particularly in the current economic climate, to send their kids to a private school.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Thank you, minister. I suppose irrespective of what decisions would be made differently there are some ...

Ms LAWLER: Yes, that is right we have got it.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: ...understandings. I would have thought that if you can deliver an oval in Elliott for \$500 000 then, if it is your intention potentially to actually start construction on the government school not just stage one, which was the oval and shared services—the inclusion of an oval is not so out of reach.

Ms LAWLER: No. As I said, I agree. I think we got some costings on the oval, I think was about \$1m or \$1.2m for the oval. I think you end up with much more—I mean an urban oval is probably very different to a remote one because you have to look at car parking. I do not know the lay of the land around—the underneath, all of the prep work, there is probably no water—there are lots of reasons around those sorts of things and they are they are the experts that need to get in to that.

That money was for, I presume, a whole heap of other services that would go into it. You would probably end up with ablution blocks or something like that—similar to what you have at Gray oval or other ovals where you have toilet blocks and a whole heap of community things.

Mr WOOD: Can I just ask—it is a primary school. I would imagine the oval is not a full-sized oval like—St Francis of Assisi has a medium-sized oval and other primary schools have small ovals. One point five million dollars sounds—I must admit, I have had a little to do with ovals at Bathurst Island. Unless the ground is sloped and you have to cut into the hill—I am not sure if the land is like. I know it could be sloppy, but it sounds like a lot of money to produce a circle covered in grass with some irrigation.

Ms LAWLER: I agree, Member for Nelson. One of the things we are seeing is schools not really wanting to own those ovals as well because of the costs of them and the cost of watering and maintenance. As I said, it is an issue with ovals. Even in the northern suburbs, a lot of government schools have put fences around their schools and cut off the ovals.

They might use the oval for sports day of specific PE lessons, but they do not let kids on the oval at recess or lunch time. The kids play in the—as you say, there is a grassed area that is maybe the size of a soccer pitch or half a soccer field where they can kick a ball around. I am getting advice that it was going to be a larger community oval. It is in the Education budget.

Mr WOOD: If that is the case, then should it be just the Education budget?

Ms LAWLER: Yes.

Mr WOOD: I do not know who the other half of the oval would be paid for by—the council? I do not know.

Ms LAWLER: The council, yes.

Mr WOOD: I like the idea of shared ovals, but I have to say ...

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: To provide a level of amenity to that entire side of Palmerston.

Ms LAWLER: Yes. That is one of the issues schools find when they try to fence an oval. They may decide they want to make it safer for kids and things like that. If they have teachers on yard duty and there is only one teacher and a big oval, if it is fenced then you can make it safer around a whole heap of things. Then you run into issues with the community, walking their dogs at night or wanting to be able to use that facility and rightly so. Schools are only using those facilities 40 weeks of the year. For 12 weeks, they are not there.

Anyway, it is an interesting one. We will keep you posted. You will see the media release on our decision, I am sure, but we will also look at the costings of the oval to minimise it.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Has Catholic Education been consulted on the potential changes? If it was always understood it would be a shared oval and facilities—if that is not how it will pan out, one would think you are consulting with them.

Ms LAWLER: Member for Spillett, you are getting the news first. There is a project group looking at those joint facilities. We will have to have conversations with all of those users. It will be about council as well as Catholic Education and Mother Teresa Catholic Primary School regarding how we can come up with something that is usable and useful for all of us. What are the expectations for a playing field? You are talking about the size of those things. The conversations with the council on that—any of the sporting groups that may want to use those facilities as well.

These are conversations that need to be had. As I said, I am just talking about these now and my thoughts around these things because I think it is important that, instead of just going ahead with what we had planned, there needs to be conversations about all of those things. This is part of those conversations, to really have a good discussion with the community.

I hear that people want a government school there. The reality is that government only has a certain amount of money. There is a considerable amount of money there for some joint facilities. Is that the best option? We need to look at that.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: So no decision has been made. It is still—the project team will work with the stakeholders to find the best outcome

Ms LAWLER: No decision has been made. Yes.

As I said, we are getting close to that INPEX time as well. We need to take into account a lot of things around these decisions. It is not straightforward.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Has the Zuccoli government school or even just the oval and shared services been designed?

Ms LAWLER: Yes, there has been work on design. That has involved project group, too.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Are they publicly available?

Ms LAWLER: No, not yet. We will wait until we have made a decision and when the time is right.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: One would assume you have to show those documents to the stakeholders.

Ms LAWLER: Yes.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Has that happened yet?

Ms LAWLER: No, a design has been done so that we can cost things.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: But the stakeholder engagement on that design has not been done?

Ms LAWLER: The stakeholders would have had input to that regarding spaces and places, but I do not believe they have ...

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Is Catholic Education included in that?

Ms LAWLER: They have some concept designs for if we go one way and what we need to do, and previously, regarding the oval and things like that, concept designs have been done.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Have Catholic Education and other stakeholders seen those proposals or had input to those designs?

Ms LAWLER: No, we have been waiting for the demographic work. They have been waiting to brief me on that work to have those conversations.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Okay. That would be why no tenders have been released in relation to Zuccoli school.

Ms LAWLER: No tenders have been released.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Following on work the demographic work—transportable classrooms—will Rosebery be receiving transportables?

Ms LAWLER: Yes, Rosebery is receiving two transportables, which will take their total to four.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: You mentioned Durack will be receiving transportables as well?

Ms LAWLER: Durack is getting one transportable, planned for 2018–19.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Okay. In relation to the Zuccoli public school, have any transport assessments in regard to bus routes been prepared yet?

Ms LAWLER: No.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: I am happy to move on to 1.5.

Ms LAWLER: I have responses to some questions on notice.

Madam CHAIR: Would you like to read or table them, minister?

Ms LAWLER: I can table them; that is quicker. They are in response to water safety and life skills program and the early childhood numbers.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Minister, seeing as there is an hour to go, and we have moved into Output 3.1, are you happy to take roaming questions from now on?

Ms LAWLER: Yes. Members for Nelson and Spillett, we love talking about education. To us it is the number one portfolio of any government. We are very happy, at any time, to brief you or have the CE brief you.

Madam CHAIR: For clarity, Member for Spillett, do you have further questions for Output 1.3?

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: No, not for 1.3. And then we are not going to close off any other output, if that is okay with you, Madam Chair.

Mr WOOD: I have a crossover question. The department has set aside \$89 000 to introduce computer coding training—you know my knowledge of that—to primary and secondary schools. What is this money being spent on and what coverage will be achieved? I note that this is a key existing initiative that follows on from \$0.5m in Budget 2017–18 to upskill teachers in digital literacy.

What is upskilling teachers in digital literacy about?

Ms LAWLER: You have probably heard us talk about STEM—you were at the opening of STEM. It is about building the skills of our teachers so they can lead their teaching. I will pass to the Deputy Chief Executive School Education, Marion Guppy. She will be able to give a rundown.

Ms GUPPY: Thank you, Member for Nelson. You have raised the issue of STEM and coding and there is substantial work that has been undertaken within the department to provide and make sure that children are exposed to and well prepared for the digital and technological world that they are already part of and that continues to develop at pace.

In the Northern Territory, the National Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics or STEM schools education strategy ...

Mr WOOD: STEAM in some schools.

Ms GUPPY: STEAM in some, but STEM in the majority but you are quite right. The arts in some schools also is included in with those other subjects and an integrated approach is often taken. For the NT, we have contextualised and we have done that for a number of reasons. One is to do with our economy of scale in regard to some of the programs that are on offer and also, in terms of the mode of delivery that we use to upskill our staff and keep our staff current in the ongoing development taking place in this part of education.

Mr WOOD: So will that \$89 000, will that employ one person to help with the training? Is that what it is meant to do?

Ms GUPPY: Yes.

Ms BAYLIS: Member for Nelson, we are actually working in partnership with some of the universities and some of the other industry areas to work on that. We share, and partially fund, a position jointly so that we have the expertise that comes into all this. We have one officer who is based in our curriculum team and also have a number of officers that are based in our IT team so that we have—we already had pre-existing resources, this is additional to that pre-existing resource so that we can focus on that.

When we are talking the technology, the bit that you are talking about with coding, that is where the \$89 000 is but we have consultants who pick up the sciences and the maths components of it as well. If we continue, what does that look like? There is professional learning for our teachers that is available for them to do in intense courses. There is the ongoing work that happens through our RoboCup challenges, and you might have seen some of those happen in Parliament House and we have another suite of that ...

Mr WOOD: Out in the rural area.

Ms BAYLIS: Yes, out in the rural area. It is about giving kids that opportunity to be involved. The other component in that area is that there is some national work that goes up and there is a range of expos that we run to be able to grow digital literacy and capability of our workforce. We continue to do this through different phases of schooling. What you would see at Girraween with their little Bee-Bots and what they are doing with their coding—then you would get into what are we doing in our vocational education and training with drones through to—it is the full range and gamut when we start to get into this area of what this looks

like. It will depend on the subject area as well as the age and phase of learning that the students are in and then the technical expertise of our teaching staff in that area. Marion has a little more about what we are doing with computer labs and computer clubs and things like that.

Ms GUPPY: For instance, Member for Nelson, we collaborate with Microsoft to hold free teaching and technology boot camps for teachers during periods of stand down. We have 330 teachers enrolled in online professional learning courses. We had 15 particular professional learning events this year with 206 teachers participating in those. There is a national lending library and we have 12 of our NT schools accessing the national lending library to bring the resource to the students. We also have, in some of our remote communities, enterprise ventures that are introducing them to knowledge and skills in some of the new emerging industries.

The picture we are painting is one where there is an enormous amount of drive and energy being invested with the infrastructure that has been put into a number of our very large schools so they can better provide STEM education. Also more broadly in the upskilling of our staff, so they are able to carry that into the classroom.

Mr WOOD: My little knowledge of coding—is there a danger of private self-interest driving some of this program, as against purely an academic reason for looking at coding?

Ms GUPPY: I would not think of it terms of private self-interest ...

Mr WOOD: It is companies I am talking about.

Ms GUPPY: Yes. Certainly there are any number of companies that see an opportunity in this area of education—or many areas of education. In one of the previous responses, there were many approaches made by many different groups and companies that have resources or services they want to offer up to schools. But our schools and our approach is quite savvy.

We have the opportunity to provide good advice to our principals about wise investment in these resources and the way they go about it.

Mr WOOD: Thank you.

Ms BAYLIS: Can I add to that? Member for Nelson, we also have schools that are beginning to work with their student, where they actually want to register their products they are designing and creating and protect their intellectual property. This is a very new area where we have students—and the first primary school that is doing that is doing all of that is Leanyer. Those students have picked up on some of the opportunities around natural disasters and have been heavily involved through their science technology engineering and maths approaches about how we could better facilitate things. They are ready to go and have been recognised nationally for their thinking about that. They now want to get in and start to register their work and protect their IP.

It is exciting and new, but there are a lot of controls and mechanisms for our workforce and our students to ensure it is a safe environment in which they are all operating.

Mr WOOD: Thank you.

Ms GUPPY: Additionally, I add that we have two very active professional associations—the Science Teachers Association and the Mathematics Teachers Association. Both of those associations offer competitions for children at various camps built around getting into the fun of their subject area and exploring it in a very creative way. There is a great deal going on.

Ms LAWLER: Member for Nelson, I am with you in that I want this to be across all schools, not just the urban schools. It was reassuring to be at Titjikala recently seeing them doing coding as well and using, as Vicki said, the Bot. It is also a great tool to engage remote students as well, so it is not just the urbans. I do not want the divide between the haves and have nots to grow any further.

Mr WOOD: As long as they can still read and write and add up.

Ms LAWLER: That is one of the most engaging things, it is about problem solving. When you look at coding it is about, literally, writing and transforming and thinking skills.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Thank you.

Mr WOOD: Thank you.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Minister, I want to go back to Zuccoli government school. I am pleased you have recognised the need for a Zuccoli government school and that the parents and people who live at Farrar, Johnston and Zuccoli have been heard. Clearly, on that entire side of Palmerston, we are lacking any services school facility.

That is why the combination of the Zuccoli Catholic school, with the oval and shared facilities, and the government school, will be such a complete and important contribution to that whole side of Palmerston, which is thousands of people who have not had anything like it before.

You are correct, the \$15m does need to be spent well, but it needs to make a real impact on our community. In a sense it will be a community hub for a large number of people in Palmerston. Stakeholders like Catholic Education need to be involved in that process because Zuccoli, Johnston and Farrar parents, whether they want to send their kids to Mother Teresa or to the Zuccoli government school, need that choice and opportunity.

Woodroffe is not a practical solution for families on that side of Palmerston. I wanted to reiterate the importance of both of them together; the importance of that oval and associated community facilities as an anchor for the entire community. Ensuring that Catholic Education are part of that conversation, because it will be a precinct, if you like.

Ms LAWLER: Absolutely, you are not telling me nothing, Member for Spillett. It is frustrating that you were not able to convince Minister Chandler about building a school at Johnston, Farrar or Zuccoli three or four years ago.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: It was not my electorate, Member for Drysdale.

Ms LAWLER: Yes. It is what we all want. We want to have vibrant communities and that is what people deserve. Tony Sievers and I push hard to sell the message that Palmerston is the family place in the Territory. There are now 38 000 people in Palmerston. They are young families. It is a great place.

We have a new hospital coming, a new police station. We need a new school in that area.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: It is the fastest growing area in the Territory.

Ms LAWLER: We have great sporting facilities, but there are still other sports as well, there is interest in hockey and that might be something we need to look at for that site as well.

We are in tough economic times, so how do we get the best bang for our buck for you, for me and every single person that is a wonderful facility into the future? I give you my word that is my focus. How do we get something that is fantastic? Zuccoli is a beautiful suburb. It is lovely. You have Mitchell Creek, it is very nice.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: It is a great site, yes.

Ms LAWLER: We need to make sure we get the best out of it, and we will do that.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Is there a time frame for this?

Ms LAWLER: These decisions have to go to Cabinet and there has to be discussions. There is \$15m on the table now. The discussion is around how we step that out. I would hope by the end of this year, otherwise we are revoting money again and do not want to do that. It is also about jobs. A lot of our infrastructure spend is about making sure there are jobs for people. We will work as quickly as we can around that.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: So the rest of the year is for planning, consultation and the final decision?

Ms LAWLER: I am just giving some time, but it needs to be as fast as possible.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Okay, thank you.

Minister, in regard to retention rates for teachers, specifically teachers who have been verbally abused or assaulted by students. What is the disciplinary policy of the department? It might not be a department issue, it might be a school issue for students who abuse their teachers. How many teachers have resigned, citing abuse from a student as their grounds for leaving?

Ms LAWLER: I will pass to Vicki but first of all positive, respectful behaviour is expected of everyone in our school community including students, staff and families. Truly, most children absolutely do the right thing. That is what schooling is about, really. That is why you give merit awards and stickers and stars and all of those things. It is about building generations into the future, building good community citizens.

Violence in school is not condoned. Schools are supported to address violent behaviours with things like these national Safe School frameworks. From the highest levels of government through—schools are microcosms of society. There are times where there are behaviour incidences, where there are kids who are violent. Sometimes it is around undiagnosed disabilities as well, or things that escalate.

I will pass to Vicki to give some exact facts and figures and what the department has put in place. There is a large amount of work done to make sure schools are safe places for staff. It is their work environment. Nobody wants to go to school or any work place and be assaulted.

Ms BAYLIS: Member for Spillett, thank you for the question. I will give you some information but I am not sure that I will be able to give you the number of resignations based on assaults by students. That might be one where we would have to go back and check the data.

Our work health and safety data would say that we had 218 incidents where people had reported that they were assaulted by a person or persons. I need to be clear that assault may be physical or it may be verbal. That is not all necessarily the same thing.

As the minister indicated, some of those assaults would be where we have young people who have a diagnosis of oppositional defiant disorder who may be in special schools, they may be FASD students or have limited self-regulatory behaviour. We require all of our staff to record those. Whether it is intentional or not, it is not shown in the work health and safety data. It is recorded as an assault.

What we need to remember is in a learning institution we have different capacities for our young people to self-regulate, but we require that our workforce indicate all that.

From a protective process for where we are as an organisation, there are things that we put in place. One of them is managing aggression or potential aggression. We refer to that training and that is really important for our teachers who have young people they know are likely to escalate quite quickly. Therefore, what we need to be able to do is make sure there is clear instruction around how they de-escalate that particular behaviour and what they do. For our very extreme young people. We need a process in place that is negotiated with their families and is clear, known and consistently applied to support that young person as a learner.

Across the overall duty of care that we have as an agency, the Principal Wellbeing framework has been established, the minister launched that last year. That provides our school leaders with an opportunity to access the physical and mental wellbeing support that they might want. We also have a policy in place where we have employee assistance support for our teaching staff and out support staff that they can go to.

Predominantly, what we find is that it will be a suspension if it is a student assault and not one of those where it is just a meltdown. It is not acceptable. We do not accept that any person should be in a workplace and not safe. Then it is a re-entry plan with their family about what they do when they come back, so that we have that particular component there.

I expect that all of our staff should be able to access a safe and supportive workplace. It is not always students who are aggressive though. We know that we have families where there are things going on external to the school environment where a member of a family will arrive and be aggressive towards a member of staff that is their relation. We also put in place some trespass mechanisms to say that is not acceptable behaviour. The predominant number of those assaults though is physical. What I do not have for you though is the breakdown of whether that has resulted in a resignation.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: No that is fine, thank you. Minister, I refer to answer to written question 200, page 29-30. There were 25 stress-related matters reported during 2017–18 with 12 claims of workers' compensation lodged. Can you please provide an update on the reported stress matters and the cost to the agency?

Ms LAWLER: Yes, Member for Spillett. I will pass to the Executive Director, Corporate Services who has done a great job all night passing bits of paper so here is her big chance to talk now.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: She has been practicing all year for this moment, minister.

Ms ALDENHOVEN: The written question identified that at the time. Since then, updated numbers show there have been 28. At the point in time we pulled that report for written questions, it identified 25, so now further ones have come through for that time period.

In relation to the costs involved, I do not have the costs with me. I would have to think about how we would go about that. It is possible, due to calculating the quantum of the time they are off work with the impact of the arrangements behind that person—it is up to you, minister.

Ms LAWLER: It is a difficult one to measure but 28 staff is 28 staff too many. None of us want to see any staff on stress leave but that said, we actually acknowledge that teaching is a damn hard job. So when you talk about those 28, it is then the backfill, because you have to have a teacher in front of a class. If they are all classroom teachers, it would be their replacements as well. The average wage of a teacher is between \$65 000 and \$100 000 and then it is about workers' comp. Depending on the injury, what support that person needs—counselling—then how long they are off work, a week, three weeks, 12 months or longer. Rather difficult but we would probably have to go to the insurer to get some details on that. As you said the cost is ...

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: So there are 28 currently.

Ms ALDENHOVEN: That is 28 individual counts. The mechanism essentially is called mental factors so it relates to stress or exposure to a traumatic event, various other mental stress factors are the breakdown there.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: How many claims of bullying were lodged by employees of the agency in 2017–18?

Ms ALDENHOVEN: The data that I have at the moment—it is within that 28—we have work-related harassment and/or workplace bullying is nil for the period to the end of March.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Minister, Queensland, South Australia and New South Wales provide a living away from home allowance for students who board interstate. Given the limited boarding options in the Territory, interstate are options are often the best option for some remote Territory families. Minister, will you introduce an allowance for rural and remote Territory students boarding interstate and will you replace the supplementary boarding allowance with a living away from home allowance for students boarding in the Territory?

Ms LAWLER: Thank you, Member for Spillett, I know who you have been talking to because I meet with them too and they are such a fabulous group the ICPA, they do a very good job.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: I have my mug.

Ms LAWLER: I hope you have put that on your gift register. They are a fantastic group but we do need to also acknowledge that Indigenous students who attend boarding schools interstate, or regionally have an ABSTUDY allowance. I will pass to Vicki Baylis because there is some good news around some of these things. Agreed, we are not the only state—there are other states—but we have a number of student who, for whatever reasons, choose not to do School of the Air or Distance Learning. I can understand how difficult it would be to do those sorts of studies. Their parents choose to send them interstate to boarding.

I will get Vicki Baylis to give a run through of those benefits and support.

Ms BAYLIS: I will hand over to the CFO for the dollar figure very shortly, so Brett will get his moment because he has to sit at the front table and have an opportunity as well.

There are a number of allowances that families who live in isolated communities can access. One of them is to support their travel but the other one is the allowance we have been talking about. We have been working with the ICPA to develop a policy and schedule for what that would look like. We have further work to go through with the range of allowances that are available in the Northern Territory.

Information has been progressed to the minister about what the options are and what they may be to increase allowances to support young people travelling interstate for boarding. That is for the minister to make a final decision. It has only just left my desk so I am not sure the minister actually has it yet ...

Ms LAWLER: No, I will not make an announcement.

Ms BAYLIS: It is for the minister when she gets past estimates to start to think about the rest of the work I have given her to sign off and approve.

Brett, can I hand across to you for you to provide some information on what our current payments are. Note that we still have work under way in amongst all of that.

Mr ROACH: Brett Roach, Chief Financial Officer.

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: Excuse me, Mr Roach, could you make sure your microphone is on.

Mr ROACH: Sorry. If you want some detail about what we are currently doing, particularly with a focus on Aboriginal boarding students because we are doing more in that space, we have six non-government schools in the Northern Territory receiving boarding services for about 400 Aboriginal students. The total boarding funding for Aboriginal boarding students at the moment is about \$4.9m. That is the plan for 2018–19.

We also have the isolated student education allowance. The 2018–19 budget for that allowance is \$1.9m.

We also have \$1.15m in 2017–18 that we pay out as a supplementary subsidy to three boarding colleges.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: What are those three colleges?

Mr ROACH: St Philip's, Haileybury and Yirara.

Ms BAYLIS: Can I add to that, Member for Spillett? We are in conversation with all of the boarding providers in the Northern Territory. That is a historical allocation of funding and we are looking to realign the funding so that it caters for all of the Northern Territory boarding facilities, and from within, looking to supplement a little more money into that to support boarding for Territory students in the Territory so that the Territory government's commitment is equitably shared across all boarding providers, not just the three that have been identified by the CFO.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Thank you. On a similar line of questioning, the Student Assistance Scheme subsidises four trips a year at 45c a kilometre. That figure has not changed since 2015, but it is meant to change with CPI over time. Is that under review?

Mr ROACH: Yes, I am just on the fly trying to see if I can find my details on those allowances. Off the top of my head, you are right. They are supposed to increase by CPI.

Ms BAYLIS: We have been working with ICPA on a range of allowances. That is an incremental process so we can look at all those things so that if we touch something we are within our budget parameters to change anything we are doing. They have identified their first priority, so we will continue to work through. All the allowances are on the nt.gov website, so that is publicly available for families.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: I do not need the breakdown. I was more wondering whether that figure was under review.

Ms BAYLIS: It will be looked at, but we are working on the priorities at the moment, as we have informed the ICPA. They are active in their involvement with us to prioritise this.

Madam CHAIR: I have a similar question regarding the Remote Indigenous Parents Association. Is there is a similar supporting relationship with the RIPA?

Ms BAYLIS: I invite Tony Considine to address that for us, please.

Mr CONSIDINE: Member for Arnhem, thank you for that question. The Remote Indigenous Parents Association started as a group with Boarding Australia. It seems to have moved a bit in that space. We maintain a strong link with them, but as yet they have not put any case to us about any funding support they want.

I think they are in an establishment phase. We think that establishment phase is a great thing because it is the first national support for Indigenous kids in boarding. It has come out of the Roper region, your electorate, and it is great to see that happening.

As soon as we have requests from them we will action them. I note that they have been very active initially, particularly over the Royal Commission into institutional responses. I was there with them.

Mr WOOD: I have a question regarding secondary schools. Are there plans for a new secondary school in the rural area considering the size Taminmin has gotten to?

Ms LAWLER: Weddell high?

Mr WOOD: It could be Berry Springs north.

Ms LAWLER: I have not asked about the demographics, but at this stage there is not. I will check with Vicki Baylis. In the current 10-year plan there is nothing there for the rural area for a secondary school.

Ms BAYLIS: The demographic data would indicate at the moment, with the additional infrastructure we have put in at Taminmin, that we have capacity there. That has created almost 300 additional student places. When we did the analysis on usage, we would say they are at about an 82% capacity. We have asked the school to start to work on an enrolment management priority process to have a plan in place to manage and take from within their catchment and not end up with other students coming in, unless they have particular reasons.

Mr WOOD: The department is quite happy to pay for some more car parking? That is what the school always needs.

The department provides funding to Charles Darwin University to support the tertiary education sector for almost \$10m with \$7.3m as an operating grant and \$2.1m to CDU Waterfront campus. What does the university use this funding for?

Ms LAWLER: I could pass to Vicki Baylis to see what they spend their money on. I meet every two months with the vice chancellor. I am not sure about the actual specifics of how they spend their money. Are you talking about the—I mean, some of it goes into maintenance. I think some of our allocation goes towards upkeep and maintenance of the facility.

I will pass to Vicki Baylis to see if she knows any more specifics about that. I think the Waterfront was about providing that provision for those hospitality and business students down there.

Mr WOOD: I suppose from a budget perspective, I am saying we give them \$10m so what is the outcome?

Ms BAYLIS: Good question.

Ms LAWLER: The outcome is the provision of education services to vocational education students, as well as all of our undergraduate and postgraduate students.

Mr WOOD: There are six and a half ovals in Zuccoli.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: That is right.

Ms LAWLER: We love having a vibrant university.

Ms BAYLIS: Thank you, minister. Member for Nelson, the funding that we give to Charles Darwin University is the Territory government's contribution to their operational costs for both of those sites. That meets their overheads and operational costs overall for those areas. That is the purpose we give that grant funding to them for.

Ms LAWLER: I know it is getting towards the end of the night, so we are getting a bit more flippant. It truly is vital for us in the Northern Territory, in Alice Springs and Darwin, to have a quality university that keeps kids in the Territory. We see that. The kids that go down south—I say 'kids', but our young Territorians who graduate from Year 12—have some amazing ATAR scores every year. Those student who leave, often do not return.

We have that brain drain. It is about government as well, offering scholarships and traineeships to make sure that we get some of our best and brightest back to the Territory. I am a firm believer that the kids who have grown up in the Territory understand it so much better than people we bring in. Apologies to people who have come from elsewhere. They are also committed and will stay in the Territory. They understand the multicultural nature, they have a passion and they care about the Territory.

I know we get that from people who come in as well, but I am very biased. I am very strongly committed to making sure—I would love to see our university grow, provide a broader range of courses and keep Territory kids in the Territory. That is what we need in the Territory, intelligent people.

Mr WOOD: Minister, just because I asked the question, it does not mean I do not like the university.

Ms LAWLER: I know.

Mr WOOD: I think it is a fair question. I ask where our money goes. We need our university. That is for sure.

Ms LAWLER: Absolutely. This is by the by, but when you look at Victoria and it's economy, it is on international students. That is how they have done so well financially.

Mr WOOD: Thank you.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Thank you. Minister, as of 31 March 2018, how many schools in the Northern Territory have signed up to the Safe Schools program? Could you list the schools please?

Ms LAWLER: I know people have an interest in the Safe Schools Framework. I am not sure why there seems to be this interest. What I have explained previously is that Safe Schools is a resource. We have the National Safe Schools Framework, this document that is above everything.

Underneath that are a range of resources that schools can use to address the principles and elements of the National Safe Schools Framework. Safe Schools is just one of those resources. The Safe Schools Coalition is just an element of that. There are a number of teachers who have undertaken professional development around those resources, just as there are teachers who have used MindMatters and KidsMatter. The first and foremost that we have in the Northern Territory is the Social and Emotional Learning curriculum.

I will pass to Vicki Baylis to provide more details on that. It is about just being a resource that schools can use. The other thing I would love to emphasise strongly is that all children and young people in the Territory need to be able to feel safe within their schools and school communities. As an education system, we welcome and value the diversity of our students. We think that something that is vitally important in the Territory as well is that all our students feel safe. When we talk about bullying, about identity, when we talk about these things one of our key platforms as a government is to make sure every one of our kids belong in our schools. I will pass to Vicki.

Ms BAYLIS: Thank you, minister.

Member for Spillett, there has been a change around the language in the Safe Schools Coalition Australia. They have rebadged and reworked, given the history in recent times. Their website is now called the student wellbeing hub, which is funded under the Australian Government Department of Education and Training.

The only school in 2015 we are aware of that was a member school of the Safe Schools Coalition was Centralian Senior College, however that no longer exists on their website. There is no detail we can find on the list of schools that have signed up to any of that. It is a school decision, in collaboration with their school council and parents.

For the schools that the minister mentioned participated in the professional learning, which does not mean they have signed up to anything, they have just found out about what resources are available and may be able to access should they need to, we had 30 schools across the Northern Territory participate in that work.

It was a combination of government and non-government schools, not just the government schooling sector. They were a mix of primary, middle, secondary and senior secondary schools, so a full range and cross section of schools.

Do you want further information?"

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: No, that is fine, thank you.

Minister, school-based constables are something people have been talking about. Certainly COGSO are championing the cause. Will you be reintroducing school-based constables, and could you please provide an update of where this is at?

Ms LAWLER: I am passionate about having school-based constables back in schools. But I am not the minister for police. I do not manage police resources, probably fortunately for them. Otherwise I would have a lot more police in my electorate.

I have been working closely with COGSO. I know they are keen to see school-based constables or police officers having a greater presence in schools. It was a decision of your government in June 2016 to cut that program.

I know the Chief Minister, as the minister for police, has also been lobbied about school-based constables. The Chief Minister's view was the community engagement police officers needed to be given a chance. They have had a solid school year where they have been working in our communities. We have seen them down at basketball and in our community, but it was an initiative—let us have a good look at it and see how it goes.

We have done that. I have met with COGSO. I have met with the minister for police. We are keen to see a resource or a number of resources put back into schools. I have asked the department to work with police on taking that forward.

COGSO have met with the Chief Minister, myself and the minister for police. Executives from police and the Department of Education were also involved. Does it need to be exactly the same as previously? Probably not, because government decided it may not have been the perfect model.

We need to look at something going forward. I know COGSO have done quite a bit of research on models in the UK, for example. At this stage it is with the department and NT Police to look at how we can come up with something that hits the mark and achieves what we want it to achieve.

I will pass to the Deputy Chief Executive, Marion Guppy, to add more information.

Ms GUPPY: Member for Spillett, a working group is being established with representation from police, from the Department of Education executive, also with representation from COGSO and principals, to be able to co-design a model that will meet the needs of all parties and stakeholders involved to develop that model and then it has been agreed to trial it. As the minister said we have to develop approaches, try them, give them a chance to see how they are operating, whether they are producing the outcome that we look for and adjust and adapt as necessary.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Thank you. My last question, given the time and the Member for Nelson probably has a last question as well—I wanted to ask about rooftop solar. I know solar panels in schools was an election commitment of this government—how many schools have received solar panels and how many will be receiving solar panels?

Ms LAWLER: Thank you, Member for Spillett for the question. Yes, roof top solar is an election commitment of ours and there is \$1.5m—I think off the top of my head without flicking through—allocated in 2018–19 and \$1.5 in 2019–20 and \$2m in 2020–21 for the rooftop solar for schools program but I will hand to Adam Walding. I will give him a guernsey as well on the front desk here—he is the General Manager of Infrastructure.

Mr WALDING: It is \$5m over the three financial years, \$1.5m next financial year 2018–19; 2019–20, \$1.5m; 2020–21, \$2m. Basically we will target the top 25 users of electricity of the schools and progress through that way. We are in the process of doing the audits on the top 10 users so we will work with department of Infrastructure on that.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: You are approaching the schools that have that top usage?

Mr WALDING: Yes, we will be. We have not done that yet—just openly. As we do that the top 10 will get the audits done so we can define the scopes, make sure the roofs are strong enough. The longevity of the roof structure should be structurally sound so we are going to have to replace the iron sheets, for example, two years after we put them on and get the effectiveness along those ways.

Part of what we are trying to do as well is define the solar installation policy, obviously through school councils. The schools are wanting to go through their different school councils about purchase agreement-type situations. So we are trying to put some framework around that and what that means.

Under their global school budgets, schools get their electricity component in that. They get their savings through that but there are also additional maintenance costs that comes with the solar systems, understanding what that means and getting the clear roles and responsibilities between the school councils, the schools, us, and the Department of Infrastructure from the maintenance progress. We are in the process of doing that as well.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: So it will only be those high users who receive the solar panels.

Ms LAWLER: Member for Spillett, there are schools that already have solar. Millner school, I know off the top of my head.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: But out of this program.

Ms LAWLER: Yes.

Madam CHAIR: Can I ask, just on the back of the solar. Thank you, as Chair hopefully I can ask a question, too. In terms of the 10 high users, do you have a regional break down? Are they urban, regional or remote, do you have that information or is that something that is still being conducted in terms of the audit?

Mr WALDING: Yes, there is a mixture of remote, a couple are very remote and town, so scattered across the Territory. It is not just Darwin schools.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: So you have done the audit, you have done the report?

Mr WALDING: I have got an idea of the top 25 of the electricity users. I just want to go through due process internally and let people know.

Mr WOOD: Girraween Primary School, the minister said is expanding. Last year's budget there was also money allocated to upgrade the sewerage system (inaudible).

Ms LAWLER: Member for Nelson, as you say there were upgrades to those classrooms and there is a transportable going in there. I might have to take the upgrade, just in the interest of them flicking through papers and looking—we will get back to you about the sewerage.

Question on Notice No 8.10

Mr WOOD: Minister, could you give us an update of the upgrade to the sewerage system at Girraween Primary School.

Ms LAWLER: I accept the question.

Madam CHAIR: The question on notice has been allocated the number 8.10.

Mr WOOD: Minister, are there ongoing discussions with your department and Humpty Doo Primary School about the never-ending problem of car parking?

Ms LAWLER: Yes, there is, Member for Nelson. I was at Humpty Doo. It had changed since I worked out there probably 20 years ago. But there are concerns with car parking. It is one of those really difficult ones. I, or the Department of Education, could probably spend hundreds of millions of dollars on car parking for teachers and students as well as Kiss N Go and drop-off zones, but for zero improvements in educational outcomes of students, really. Let us face it.

Mr WOOD: Minister, a school is no different than a supermarket. A school is required to provide ancillary services, not just desks and solar panels. It is meant to have adequate parking for people.

Ms LAWLER: Exactly. It has had extended car parking at Humpty Doo over the years, but schools do grow and fluctuate. All I am trying to say is we could spend a hell of a lot of money; we do not have a hell of a lot

of money. I would love to have a hell of a lot of money, but I would prefer to put in some new classrooms and additional teachers before I put in car parks where a car sits in the sun for six or eight hours and everybody travels by themselves to those places.

It is an issue—car parking, I know that. It is an issue in a number of places, but there is work to be done.

Mr WOOD: It is an issue at that school because the car parking where the parents drop off their kids and go to the assembly is on the wrong side of the road. There is land on the corner of Challoner Circuit, and Freds Pass Road that is not being used ...

Ms LAWLER: Literally, tomorrow morning at 8.30, I think it is, I am at the child care centre.

Mr WOOD: Have a look at the front of the child care centre.

Ms LAWLER: I know, but I am giving them money to build a car park at the car park. Tomorrow morning I am going to be doing a little Facebook video about me giving some money at the child care centre.

Mr WOOD: Is that a shared car park?

Ms LAWLER: Well, maybe we can look at a shared car park as well.

Mr WOOD: It looks like I got in a bit late there.

Ms LAWLER: We might have to come into underground car parks at schools maybe as well. I will talk to you about that one and we will catch up on that.

Madam CHAIR: I think we have time for one more question, Member for Nelson.

Mr WOOD: I have run out of questions.

Ms LAWLER: I will hand to the Executive Director of Corporate Services. She has one slight correction to make.

Ms ALDERHOVEN: Member for Spillett, the question earlier when you talked about bullying, the information I was reading from related to the stress-related work health and safety incidents that have been reported. That is answer is nil. I am aware of one matter that was raised as a complaint and understand that has been resolved, just to correct the record.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Thank you.

Madam CHAIR: That concludes the time for consideration of outputs relating to the Department of Education. On behalf of the committee I would like to thank the minister for attending and departmental officers for the advice that they have provided the minister today.

Ms LAWLER: I would also like to thank the department staff who are here but also the department staff back in their offices who have been out late and doing all the work in the preparation. I also thank the Independents and opposition for your questions—good questions. I think estimates is a great process for both sides to get our houses in order and have a good think. Also, thank you to the Labor members who have been here very late, as well as staff from Legislative Assembly and Hansard.

Madam CHAIR: Thank you, minister. A big thank you to you and your staff for staying out late on a school night.

That concludes the estimates hearing for today. Hearings will recommence tomorrow morning, Wednesday 20 June at 8 am with questions of the Minister for Territory Families.

The committee suspended.
