

The committee convened at 8.30 am.

Mr CHAIR: Good morning, everyone. I welcome everybody to the public hearing of the Estimates Committee.

I acknowledge that we gather this morning on the land of the Larrakia people and pay my respects to their elders past, present and emerging.

This is the 22nd year of the Estimates Committee process. The procedure of the committee has become well established over time and are outlined in the Estimates information manual, which is available on the Assembly's website.

I will highlight a few key procedural points. The Estimates hearing agenda gives the order that outputs will be considered. I remind members to seek clarification from the minister at the beginning of the hearing if they are unsure of which output the matter falls under.

It is important that each question on notice is given a number and repeated so its terms are clear. I will interrupt whenever a question is taken on notice to ensure this occurs. I may also interrupt when answers are required to clarify the question it refers to. Questions on notice must be answered by 17 July 2023. Under the Assembly's resolution the committee is not able to accept any answers after that date.

I ask that agency staff leave promptly when the hearing is completed so that we can admit the next agency. There will be a short break between each agency for transition and changing of the name plates.

The committee will now proceed with the consideration of the estimates of proposed expenditure in the order set out in the Estimates hearing agenda commencing with the Deputy Chief Minister.

MINISTER MANISON'S PORTFOLIOS

TOURISM AND HOSPITALITY

MINING AND INDUSTRY

NORTHERN AUSTRALIA AND TRADE

DEPARTMENT OF INDUSTRY, TOURISM AND TRADE

Mr CHAIR: I welcome you, Deputy Chief Minister, to today's hearing and invite you to introduce the officials accompanying you and make an opening statement regarding your portfolios of Mining and Industry, Tourism and Hospitality and Northern Australia and Trade.

Mrs MANISON: Mr Chair, I thank the committee for accommodating a few changes in the schedule this year. The Chief Minister has had to take some personal leave, and her son, Henry, is in all of our hearts today.

I am here as the minister for jobs, jobs and more jobs to talk about some of the great things in the Department of Industry, Tourism and Trade to create jobs for Territorians and more opportunities for local businesses and industry.

Opening statements are limited to five minutes, so I will be brief. I will talk about Mining and Industry, as it is the first output group. We are coming off a great year. Exploration expenditure was up at \$198m invested in exploration in 2022. Significantly, \$82m of that was spent exploring critical minerals, something I am very excited about.

The mining industry is already the Northern Territory's largest industry and single largest generator of export revenue to the Territory. It delivered close to \$4.9bn in total mineral production in the Territory last year and directly employs over 3,500 people across the Territory.

There are currently 19 mining projects in the pipeline worth over \$8bn. They have the potential to create almost 6,000 construction jobs and up to 4,000 ongoing jobs for Territorians. The Arafura rare earths project started construction and Core Lithium opened, started exporting and got approval for their second lithium mine, BP33.

The \$2bn expansion of Newmont Tanami continues. We have approved the final recommendations of the Pepper inquiry and the final report, making way for an onshore gas industry in the Beetaloo.

Avenira has a 'do not deal' provision at a block at Middle Arm Sustainable Development Precinct, where it intends to manufacture lithium ferro phosphate cathode batteries to power electric vehicles and batteries of the future, using Northern Territory phosphate.

Titan is under new management and has a space at Middle Arm to become a global powerhouse in vanadium production. These are a few examples of our projects to be very excited about.

Our vision for the mining industry is to make it even stronger, grow jobs and make the Territory a globally competitive and world-class destination for resources investment. We are delivering the recommendations of the Mineral Development Taskforce report to help achieve that vision.

A key recommendation of that report was reforming the Northern Territory royalties regime and moving to an ad valorem scheme. Over the next year we will embark on the body of work to finalise what the best model of ad valorem is for the Northern Territory.

If you do not already know, the Northern Territory was recently ranked as the leading jurisdiction in the world for mining potential—number one in the world under the Fraser Institute mining survey.

In addition, the Northern Territory has moved into the top 10 in the world for its attractiveness for exploration and mining investment, which is a massive jump. Mineral exploration and production has soared and we will keep it going. There are very strong results already through our initiative to increase the Resourcing the Territory program to \$9.5m every year to help industry find what it needs to grow. The bigger and better Resourcing the Territory program is already paying off and we cannot wait to see how far it will take the mining industry in the Northern Territory.

Mining provides well-paying jobs, supports local businesses, builds better infrastructure for our remote areas and backs Territorians.

To meet our climate change goals we need emissions-reducing technology, but we need to mine the materials to tackle the issue of climate change—lithium, rare earths, vanadium, copper and more are some of the critical minerals we need. We have 15 known and 13 prospective critical minerals which are key requirements for a renewable energy future in the Northern Territory.

This year our Northern Territory critical minerals guide, a document showcasing the critical minerals we have, was released. I hold it up; it is a document I am proud of about which I get great feedback from investors and industry. We have the critical minerals the world needs. It will be a strong ongoing focus of this government going forward.

In addition to the minerals resources, the Northern Territory Government has released its final implementation report into the Scientific Inquiry into Hydraulic Fracturing. For the last five years we have worked to implement all 135 recommendations of the final report by developing a world-class regulation and monitoring system to support the development of the onshore gas industry. We can now move forward to develop the onshore gas industry with confidence about a strengthened regulatory framework. We can provide certainty with clear environmental commitments and very important processes that have been put through thanks to the 135 recommendations.

The Beetaloo Sub-basin has the potential to create thousands of jobs generating millions in royalties and improved infrastructure in our regional areas. There is so much more to talk about and I also look forward to updating the panel about Tourism and Hospitality and Northern Australian and Trade as part of my portfolios.

I look forward to taking the committee's questions and talking about jobs, jobs, jobs. I introduce our team from the Department of Industry, Tourism and Trade accompanying me today, which is Mr Shaun Drabsch, Chief Executive Officer; Ms Joanna Frankenfeld, Chief Financial Officer; Ms Anne Tan, Deputy Chief Executive Officer Mining and Energy; and Dr Ian Scrimgeour, Senior Executive Director Northern Territory Geological Survey.

We also have available later today Mr Armando Padovan, Senior Executive Director Mines; Mr James Pratt, Senior Executive Director Energy Development; Luis Da Rocha, General Manager Strategy and Policy; and Mr Scott Lovett, Deputy Chief Executive Officer Tourism, Services and Hospitality.

I welcome the committee's questions.

Mr CHAIR: Are there any questions relating to the opening statement?

Mr EDGINGTON: I welcome everybody here to the 2023 Estimates and thank the Estimates Committee for everything it has done so far. Thanks for the opening statement, minister. I want to touch on a couple of points from it. One of the interesting things that you said was jobs, jobs, jobs. I think last year you said that there were 21 mining projects, and if I heard you right, you said there are 19 in the pipeline. Of the 21 working towards final investment decision, how many of those have reached that decision?

Mrs MANISON: We are moving through the list. Two of the most significant projects are Core Lithium moving to production and the BP33 mine signed off. We are moving through it. BP33 is exciting; it will be their first underground mine. We cannot underestimate the success of the Core Finnis Lithium project, which has gone from development to approval and exporting spodumene in under five years. We are proud of that.

The hottest topic in the mining sector with investors and trade partners is lithium. If we had another 10 lithium mines ready to go tomorrow, investors would be lined up. The demand for critical minerals is huge. A lot of countries are lined up to secure a source of lithium.

There is a lot of lithium exploration at the moment. We are encouraging it through the Resourcing the Territory initiative. I have made it clear to the department that we have had over-subscription for the program and more demand than we have allocated ...

Mr EDGINGTON: All I am after is how many have reached final investment decision from last year?

Mrs MANISON: I have answered that question.

Mr EDGINGTON: It is one?

Mrs MANISON: We have two. Core Lithium is in production at Finnis, and there is BP33.

Mr EDGINGTON: How many more do you expect this year?

Mrs MANISON: The biggest and most significant one would be Arafura Resources. It is well overdue for a final investment decision, but it has not stopped it from making significant investment with construction of its workers' camp. We are talking millions of dollars.

It has agreements for its rare earths project in place, which are growing by the day. It is about rare earths magnet feed, which are important components of electric vehicles and batteries. It has agreements in place with Hyundai and Kia. I had the privilege of meeting with Hyundai. We have also negotiated with Siemens in Germany for wind turbines.

It has increased its funding source through the Northern Australia Infrastructure Facility and EFA and is close to a final investment decision. I regularly speak to Arafura Resources, as this is an exciting project. It is a critical minerals project situated an hour outside Alice Springs that will put the Northern Territory on the map. There will be great flow-on effects and benefits for the local community.

Mr EDGINGTON: Have any mines been added to the major projects list over the last year?

Mrs MANISON: I have a few more I can talk about as well. There is a lot of exciting activity happening ...

Mr EDGINGTON: The question is specific. How many have been added to the major project list over the last 12 months?

Mrs MANISON: We have not had any new ones on the list. I will talk about some that are coming closer ...

Mr EDGINGTON: You have answered my question.

Mrs MANISON: Can I give some context about that?

Mr CHAIR: Member for Barkly, please let her answer.

Mr EDGINGTON: The question was simple: how many have been added to the major project list? The answer was zero.

Mr CHAIR: It is 8.44 am, and we have been going for 15 minutes. Let the Deputy Chief Minister answer your question. If it goes on too long, I am happy to bring it back.

Mrs MANISON: I wanted to talk about Jervois—which is near and dear to your heart—the copper project with KGL Resources. It has four mining approvals. I met with Dennis last week, who is closing in the finance to get closer to construction. Copper is important to the electrification of the world as we try to tackle emissions reduction and climate change. It is edging closer to get that mine off the ground. I am excited about this project.

I met with Newmont Tanami two weeks ago—another one close to your heart. The \$2bn expansion to build its shaft is huge ...

Mr EDGINGTON: Have any been added to the major project list over the last 12 months?

Mrs MANISON: I answered the question. I want to talk a bit about other exciting mining projects. A \$2bn expansion is beautiful ...

Mr EDGINGTON: That is all I need.

You mentioned onshore gas. When do you expect the first production licence to be granted in the Beetaloo?

Mrs MANISON: We have gone through a rigorous process implementing the full 135 recommendations of the Pepper inquiry. We have had a huge body of work across the public service and I thank our incredible public service for its work. Public servants from the Department of Industry, Tourism and Trade did an immense amount of work. Public servants from DEPWS made sure that we had the environmental regulation right.

One of the classiest pieces of work I have seen in my time in government was what SREBA did into the Beetaloo Sub-basin. You cannot underestimate the value that having a baseline set of data gives the industry. A few people do not like gas, and their views cannot be changed.

The government's job is to make sure we have sound science and strong regulation behind the industry so Territorians can know that gas is being developed in a sustainable and responsible way. That is why it was important to diligently apply the Pepper inquiry recommendations. Staff from Chief Minister and Cabinet worked through those recommendations as well.

In the interim, exploration activity has still been happening in the Beetaloo. Santos, Empire and formerly Origin—which is now with Tamboran and Sweetpea—have been exploring in the Beetaloo. All of the feedback is that they have been getting positive results. They are firming up their exploration results.

We gave firm commitments that until the full 135 recommendations of the Pepper inquiry were in place, production licences would not be granted. We are now in a position where that can go forward. Companies are working towards that. Initially, there will be pilot-style production which is looking to firm up those resources.

I will get Mr James Pratt to the table, who is our gas expert from the department. He can give you more context on where each of those companies are at and what pilot production looks like for them to firm it up before they get to the point of full production.

Mr PRATT: At the moment, industry is still in the exploration appraisal phase in the Beetaloo Sub-basin. It is an exciting time for the industry. There have been good results emanating from explorers in the region.

Empire Energy has released ASX announcements in the past few months, indicating wells producing between two-and-a-half and three terajoules per day, which is exciting. It is verging on a production scale flow test. Empire Energy is considering frontend engineering and design activities at present. That also includes approvals such as Aboriginal agreements, ordering long-lead items and seeking approvals from the department of Environment for its EMPs. It is on the cusp of making crucial decisions later this year. Naturally, these are all subject to the flow test results coming from these wells.

It has Carpentaria-3 now in flow testing, and Carpentaria-2 was shut in recently. That is the one that has been subject to positive ASX announcements. Subject to positive flow test results, board FIDs and environmental approvals, we expect that Empire could be applying for a production licence late this year or early next year.

Mrs MANISON: It is important to recognise that there are rigorous environmental assessments for all of these things.

Mr EDGINGTON: Are there any outstanding issues that need to be addressed before the first production licences can be issued for onshore gas?

Mrs MANISON: We wanted to make sure we put the full 135 recommendations of the Pepper inquiry in place and address that final report.

Mr EDGINGTON: There is nothing outstanding?

Mrs MANISON: It is in the company's hands. It has to make sure it meets its legislative and regulatory requirements that are in place in order to continue going forward. We have a strong system in place with world-class regulations. It has a fantastic body of work, particularly in the SREBA, which sets a baseline.

It has been a huge body of work over the years of which government should be proud because it was so rigorous.

Mr EDGINGTON: I think you said that Empire was looking towards a production licence. Have any final investment decisions been made about onshore gas projects at this point?

Mrs MANISON: Yes. It has been getting excellent results. When I meet with Empire and Tamboran, I note both companies are very excited about their future. They have significant plans for what they are doing. There is a lot to be excited about on that front. They have not gone to the point of approval, but I can assure you that there has been a huge amount of investment and work through the exploration phase.

During my last meetings with them at APPEA I was told there were serious decisions being made. APA, the pipeline group, opened another big office last week which is another clear sign of optimism concerning the investment environment going forward.

Mr PRATT: Regarding your question about final investment decision, it is critical that companies continue to flow test these wells and drill more exploration wells. It is too early for some of these companies to making FID but they are doing the planning and preparations for it.

Tamboran acquired all of Origin Energy's permits recently, which is a cumulative spend of \$400m that Origin has invested on ground. Tamboran is now the recipient of those permits and is undertaking more drilling this year. It is expected to drill three more wells in the Beetaloo this year. That will be flow tested throughout November to March, and it will then seek flow test results. It then puts it in an ideal position to make considered decisions concerning FID, infrastructure needed—it is a huge commitment moving to production. It is not just put one well into the pipeline and away we go.

These FIDs will seek investment from all around the world. Both of the companies I have mentioned are ASX listed as well, so they will have activity there. These decisions are not taken lightly by these companies. Exploration investment is huge and the FID for production is even larger.

Mr EDGINGTON: You touched on royalty reform. It is great that you finally listened to the CLP and are intending to scrap that hybrid mining tax. When do you anticipate the ad valorem mining tax will come into play?

Mrs MANISON: I like to call it a royalties regime. We have made a commitment to do that within 12 months. Treasury leads that process. We are working closely with them and lending the expertise we have in the team set up within the department to implement the Mineral Development Taskforce report recommendations. It includes former Treasury staff with significant expertise in royalties regimes in the Northern Territory. It is fair to say that Treasury is match-fit in this space at the moment. It has just undergone a very extensive process through the petroleum royalties amendments. That was an outdated royalties scheme that was in place. As you know, that went through parliament recently, which was important for the development of our onshore gas industry to make sure that everybody had a clear understanding of the royalties regime.

We are undertaking that ad valorem process. We are doing that in consultation with industry and land councils as they want a say on that because it can impact the royalties that flow through to the Aboriginal benefits account, which helps fund the land councils.

Mr EDGINGTON: Who is doing that consultation? Is that Treasury or DITT?

Mrs MANISON: Treasury is taking the lead on that, and DITT is working as part of that team. That needs to be done and finalised within 12 months. As Mining minister, I want certainty for projects and investment so we need to pad that down. That is an extensive body of work.

Treasury has just undergone that with petroleum. It is already a step forward because the Mineral Development Taskforce did extensive modelling for that report, so it is well positioned to go forward with the implementation of the ad valorem scheme.

I want to stress to people who have concerns or are opposed to moving to an ad valorem scheme that we want to make the Northern Territory as attractive as possible for investment. Mining royalties and the flow-on effects from mining in the Northern Territory are huge. Mining has a huge impact on jobs, supply chains, infrastructure and business development. It goes well beyond just the royalty paid to the Northern Territory Government or traditional owners, so we need to stimulate more activity.

Some of our big mines are coming to the end of their lives. ERA in Jabiru has already moved from an operating mine to a mine in rehabilitation, which is also a world-class project. The mine in Nhulunbuy is heading towards the end of its life in 2027 or 2028. GEMCO at Groote Eylandt will follow after that.

We need the next wave of modern mines in the Northern Territory. Newmont Tanami is investing strongly into the future, with the \$2bn expansion and the further exploration work at Oberon. However, it is the new era of modern mines that we need in place, particularly critical minerals mines. We have a lot to be excited about on that front.

Mr EDGINGTON: Has there been any modelling on how much investment the hybrid mining tax has actually cost the Territory in lost investment and revenue over the past six years?

Mrs MANISON: I speak to mining companies and investors regularly, and that has not cost us investment. It is important to recognise that mining projects are big, complex and need a hell of a lot of capital behind them. A lot of finance is needed to get off the ground, as well as the work with exploration, engineering, design and prefeasibility studies. It is not a straightforward path.

We had such great success with Core Lithium so quickly because it is next to a major capital city with all the infrastructure in place. The population is down the road, and it is close to get the product to market.

Importantly, you need agreements in place with traditional owners in order to mine in the Northern Territory. If that can be negotiated swiftly, that helps the process.

Mr EDGINGTON: How many mines have raised future investment regarding the hybrid mining tax with you?

Mrs MANISON: It would be fair to say that every mining company wants to pay the lowest amount of royalties possible. I do not think that will come as a surprise to you, Member for Barkly. It is probably like people with income and business tax and so forth. It has not stopped investment.

I want to ramp up the message to people who come here that this is the place to invest and not look to Western Australia and Queensland. It is all about trying to make it as competitive as possible to take eyes off Western Australia and Queensland and get them on the Northern Territory. The feedback I get regularly from a national level and investors that work across the country is that they are taking notice of the Northern Territory and the message is getting out. I am relentless in sending that message, as you know. I am passionate about this industry because it will make such a fundamental difference to the quality life of all Territorians.

Mr EDGINGTON: Has Core Lithium and BP33 been subject to this hybrid mining tax?

Mrs MANISON: Core is paying under the current royalty regime.

Mrs LAMBLEY: You said that you adopted all 135 recommendations of the Pepper inquiry, yet a lot of Territorians do not believe you, including the Labor Member for Lingiari, Marion Scrymgour. She is concerned about recommendation 7.3 of the Pepper inquiry. She claims that it still has not been implemented.

This recommendation requires the Commonwealth to amend the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act* to put a water trigger in place, which would protect water resources from shale gas operations. Currently a water trigger is only in place for coal seam gas operations.

The legislative change was aimed at allowing a fully independent federal process of scrutiny over water use in the Beetaloo Sub-basin. This is yet to be implemented. so you have not implemented all 135 recommendations. Is that true?

Mrs MANISON: We have implemented the full 135 recommendations. We are working closely with the Commonwealth on its areas of responsibility.

Mrs LAMBLEY: Recommendation 7.3 has not been implemented yet. Federal environment minister Tanya Plibersek said that this would happen before the end of 2023. Even the federal minister said that she has not implemented recommendation 7.3 from the Pepper inquiry and neither have you. Are you misleading Territorians?

Mrs MANISON: No. We have implemented the recommendations of the Pepper inquiry. We have been doing what the Northern Territory Government needs to do to give Territorians assurances about the world-class regulatory system we have in place. We are working with the Commonwealth Government on areas of policy. That includes the work it is doing on the water trigger.

Mrs LAMBLEY: How do you explain this anomaly on recommendation 7.3 regarding the water trigger? The Commonwealth Government has not implemented the legislation required, so how are you explaining this away?

Mrs MANISON: The Northern Territory Government has put in place the full 135 recommendations. We are working with the Commonwealth Government which is also implementing its policies that will be in place.

Mrs LAMBLEY: The other concern about the recommendations of the Pepper inquiry includes recommendation 9.8, which requires emissions from the extraction and use of the Beetaloo gas to be fully offset. This has not been completed either. This is contingent upon gas being stored in the Middle Arm gas sustainable development precinct in Darwin, which does not exist yet. How will you capture and store gas without the facilities in place?

Mrs MANISON: We believe that recommendation 9.8 has been met. It is important to recognise that the Beetaloo will be subject to safeguard mechanisms in place from the Commonwealth Government. Those proponents must demonstrate that they are meeting emissions reduction targets.

Mrs LAMBLEY: In your undertaking to capture and store gas in the Northern Territory once gas production commences—which Mr Pratt just said could commence as early as the end of the year or the beginning of next year—how will the government attend to this? You have not completed or resolved this recommendation as you said you have.

Mrs MANISON: We are excited about the prospects of carbon capture and storage and the opportunities that it presents to the Northern Territory. I went to Korea and Japan in April. In talking to everybody, one of the top topics was carbon capture and storage and the opportunities going forward working with the Northern Territory. We have two exciting projects under development: the Bayu-Undan project with Santos and the Petrel Sub-basin in the Bonaparte project that INPEX is driving with its partners, Woodside. These will be important.

Last week I met with a delegation of about 30 people from significant companies from Korea and Japan who are here to look at the CCS opportunities in the Northern Territory. Some I had already met in their countries. The feedback was right time, right place of where they want to be because they want to work with us in partnership on those projects.

There are great opportunities for carbon capture and storage. It is important that our Beetaloo proponents are working to the safeguard mechanisms. They have strong plans in place when it comes to abatement and the work they are doing. DEPWS has played a strong role in this as well.

Mrs LAMBLEY: When will the ability for the Northern Territory Government to capture and store carbon happen? When will we have the capacity to do that? Obviously, you do not have it now, despite the fact that you said you have completed this recommendation.

Mrs MANISON: It is important to recognise that CCS is part of the mix, but not necessarily for the Beetaloo projects. A lot of their work will go to offshore projects, which is important to recognise.

Those projects are in development with the Bayu-Undan work. We are still having gas supplied. The plan is that once that is depleted for Santos to work towards making it a CCS project, which will require negotiation between the Australian Government and the government of Timor-Leste. The INPEX project, with its partners, is in Australian waters. It is in development and we are not there yet. We still have years to go. They are looking exciting heading towards 2030.

Mr CHAIR: How confident is industry in CCS and abatement? Obviously, they talk about it.

Mrs MANISON: Yes. This is another topic that tends to frustrate me. There are many people who will try to tell you that CCS is a hoax and not a proven technology. To that I say rubbish; have a look at what has happened in the Northern Hemisphere of the world for some time.

Our national science agency, the CSIRO, has been here over the last week. We are working in partnership with it to make the Northern Territory a CCS hub with those important projects.

CCS is a proven technology. I applaud APPEA for its appointment of Ms Sam McCulloch as its chief executive, who came from the International Energy Agency as a CCS expert. We need to have more conversation with the Australian community about CCS and the technology. When it comes to tackling climate change, you have to use every tool available. CCS will play an important role in that.

The forecast growth of demand for CCS projects is large. You will see a ramp-up of that around the world, in many more Australian projects as well, with much more focus on it from governments. You will see a huge amount of growth in the US as well. I believe the US *Inflation Reduction Act* is also driving a lot more work in that space.

Mrs LAMBLEY: We are talking CCS but there is no action in the Northern Territory.

Mrs MANISON: Santos and INPEX would dispute that.

Mrs LAMBLEY: Marion Scrymgour is concerned about the Chief Minister saying that traditional owners could veto gas production or exploration on their land. The Chief Minister disputed that. She said they can have consideration of the project and be consulted, but they cannot veto that project.

Could you clarify what this statement from the Chief Minister meant and how traditional owners can veto a project?

Mrs MANISON: I will be clear up front that if a traditional owner does not want onshore gas development on their country, it will not happen. It is not just for the gas industry.

Mrs LAMBLEY: How do they go about vetoing it?

Mrs MANISON: I have an answer for you. I will get to it.

Mrs LAMBLEY: That is good. People will be listening.

Mrs MANISON: When we are talking about onshore gas, a lot of people listen.

It is not just about onshore gas, it is also about other industries. We are serious in the Northern Territory that we want to see the development of these projects truly benefit Aboriginal people socially and economically. It is their land and if they do not want development there then it should not happen.

It is important that project proponents work very hard with those TOs to make sure they have their trust and information and that it is not lip service but a genuine partnership that feeds down genuine benefit to those traditional owners.

Mrs LAMBLEY: All they have to do is say no and that is it?

Mrs MANISON: Can I please go through the ALRA and the native title issues? I will ask Mr Pratt to go over it as well. Under the *Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act 1976* traditional owners can veto the grant of a petroleum permit for gas development on ALRA land for a period of five years. Following a five-

year moratorium traditional owners can exercise the right to veto the grant of the permit again, or traditional owners may agree to the grant of a permit. The veto is when traditional owners, through the relevant Aboriginal land council, do not give consent for approval to future petroleum activities on ALRA land or are not satisfied with the terms of any proposed agreement from the petroleum company.

Aboriginal land councils are established under the *Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act 1976*. Their functions include identifying who the traditional owners of land are. Land councils also negotiate on behalf of traditional owners when petroleum companies are attempting to reach an agreement for the grant of a petroleum exploration permit.

Agreements for the grant of petroleum exploration permits on ALRA land typically deal with a large number of topics including sacred sites protection, compensation, training and employment, environmental matters and the terms and conditions of future agreements if petroleum companies progress to production.

I now turn to native title land. I stress that there is a robust process that means if a traditional owner does not want development to happen on their country, it will not happen. Under the *Native Title Act 1993* traditional owners and petroleum companies are required to reach an agreement before an exploration permit, retention licence or production licence are granted under the *Petroleum Act 1984*.

Aboriginal land councils also have roles under the *Native Title Act* and negotiate on behalf of traditional owners when petroleum companies are attempting to reach an agreement. Under the *Native Title Act* there is not the same right of veto. However, if a petroleum company cannot reach an agreement with traditional owners through the relevant Aboriginal land council then a petroleum company can either walk away from their efforts to obtain petroleum tenure or seek a determination from the National Native Title Tribunal. We would not approve that if they do not have ...

Mrs LAMBLEY: You just contradicted yourself.

Mrs MANISON: Can you listen to me, please?

Mrs LAMBLEY: I am listening. You contradicted yourself.

Mr CHAIR: Let the minister continue to answer the question.

Mrs MANISON: We would not approve that if a traditional owner does not support it. A petroleum company seeking to change tenure from an exploration permit to a retention or production licence will need to obtain agreement or consent under the *Native Title Act* from traditional owners through the relevant Aboriginal land council.

Mrs LAMBLEY: It is not as simple as just saying 'no', is it? That is a lot of hoops to jump through.

Mrs MANISON: They can say no and there is a robust process ...

Mrs LAMBLEY: You told us this morning that you have not implemented recommendations 7.3 and 9.8 of the Pepper inquiry. Is it any wonder that Territorians do not believe you?

Mr CHAIR: Member for Araluen, that is not what she said. There is *Hansard*. We will continue on to the outputs. We have spoken on the opening statement ...

Mrs LAMBLEY: I have one question on the opening statement.

Mr CHAIR: No, we will carry on with the outputs. There will be a bunch of outputs related to the HFI. Member for Brennan, you may ask a follow-on question as you have not asked one as yet.

Mrs LAMBLEY: Mr Chair, I have not finished. I have one more question to ask.

Mr CHAIR: We are going off topic; we will go to the outputs.

Mrs LAMBLEY: This is extraordinary, we can stay on the opening statement for hours. You are an inexperienced Chair; you do not know how this works.

Mr CHAIR: Member for Araluen, you need to have some decorum ...

Mrs LAMBLEY: You need to have some respect, because this is not necessarily ...

Mr CHAIR: This is earlier than I thought, but if we continue down this path you will be put on a warning. We need to get through the opening statement and move on to the outputs.

Mrs LAMBLEY: I have not finished my questions on the opening statement. Will you respect me as a non-government member of the committee who has a right to ask questions in budget Estimates hearings of the minister about her opening statement?

Mr CHAIR: We have indulged you, Member for Araluen. You have put words in her mouth that were not said. We will move on, as she has answered the question. You can ask it 50 different ways, but she has answered the question.

Mrs LAMBLEY: I have a different question on a different aspect of the opening statement.

Mr CHAIR: Member for Brennan, you have the call. We will not go over this anymore, Member for Araluen.

Mrs LAMBLEY: I have a different question.

Mr CHAIR: That is fine. She jumped in while you were looking for your question, and I gave her the call.

Mrs LAMBLEY: Can you come back to me afterwards?

Mr CHAIR: If you let her answer the question, we will discuss it from there.

Ms BOOTHBY: How many times has a veto by traditional owners stopped a mine?

Mrs MANISON: I will take that question on notice.

Question on Notice No 1.1

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

Ms BOOTHBY: How many times has a veto by traditional owners stopped a mine?

Mr CHAIR: Minister, do you accept the question?

Mrs MANISON: Yes.

Mr CHAIR: The question asked by the Member for Brennan has been allocated the number 1.1.

Mrs LAMBLEY: This is a different question on a different aspect of the opening statement.

Minister, you said that there are 21 mines on the drawing board for approval. I understand that there are eight working mines currently in the Northern Territory. How many mines were working when you came to government in 2016?

Mrs MANISON: I will take that question on notice, but Jabiru is one that has closed.

Question on Notice No 1.2

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

Mrs LAMBLEY: There are eight working mines currently in the Northern Territory. How many working mines were in the Northern Territory in 2016 when this government came to power?

Mr CHAIR: Minister, do you accept the question?

Mrs MANISON: Yes.

Mr CHAIR: The question asked by the Member for Brennan has been allocated the number 1.2.

Mr EDGINGTON: Have any royalties been collected from Core Lithium at this point?

Mrs MANISON: Unfortunately, I cannot disclose the individual mine royalties which are paid; that is a Treasury matter and there are agreements in place about what they can release. We report in the budget papers, through Treasury, the annual amount of royalties which have come to the Northern Territory. However, individual royalty payments—if my memory serves me right—cannot be disclosed by the government. If a company chooses to disclose that through their annual report they can do so.

Mr EDGINGTON: You confirmed that they are subject to the current royalty regime, which is the hybrid mining tax. Is Arafura subject to the hybrid mining tax?

Mrs MANISON: It is not mining anything at the moment.

Mr EDGINGTON: What about approvals? Are all of the approvals in place for the Arafura mine?

Mrs MANISON: Yes. It has been a good year. After some great work, its water licence was the last thing to get over the line. All approvals are now in place. It is about them getting finance to get the FID. We continue discussions with them. We are excited about what Arafura will deliver. We are talking about an estimated capital expenditure of \$1.6bn, approximately 680 construction jobs and 370 ongoing jobs over a 38-year mine life. It will be a big deal.

Mr EDGINGTON: In regard to the current royalty scheme, is there any opportunity for your government to give a waiver when it comes to hybrid mining tax?

Mrs MANISON: You have to talk to Treasury.

Mr EDGINGTON: Are you not aware of how the royalty scheme works in your department?

Mrs MANISON: Yes, but Treasury determines royalty regimes. Generally, companies understand the rules of engagement with any government around the country and pay their royalties under those existing schemes.

Mr EDGINGTON: Have you had conversations regarding Core Lithium establishing an office or headquarters in Darwin?

Mrs MANISON: Core Lithium has a huge local workforce. However, I was disappointed that it did not set up a head office here.

Mr EDGINGTON: Why not?

Mrs MANISON: It decided to move from Adelaide to Perth. That is a decision of its board. My main concern is not the people who sit in its executive office, but the people on the ground who do the work each day. It has a strong localised workforce there.

Mr EDGINGTON: Does it have any operational mines in Perth or Western Australia?

Mrs MANISON: I do not believe it does.

Mr EDGINGTON: What are the barriers to establishing in Darwin?

Mrs MANISON: That is a question you need to ask Core Lithium. I have made my views clear.

Mr CHAIR: Member for Barkly, let us try to keep it targeted to the opening statement. I would love to get to the outputs where you can have all the time in the world to go through these. We are digressing from the opening statement.

Mr EDGINGTON: We kept that to the opening statement. I have a couple more questions on the ...

Mr CHAIR: We are digressing from the budget and operational activities of the department. Let us keep it on point. I would love to get to the outputs.

Mr EDGINGTON: We will get there; it is only 9.25 am. I want to talk about the Fraser Institute survey, which you spoke about in your opening statement. One company president that responded to the Fraser Institute survey stated that regulatory duplication works are a deterrent to investment. Do you agree with that statement?

Mrs MANISON: We have just undergone a significant process to try to further streamline our regulatory processes in the Territory. Since I have been minister, we have done a huge amount of work to streamline regulatory processes and mine management plans to reduce the reams of paper that companies used to have to produce for little benefit. It is streamlined and based on the level of risk. The department had done a significant amount of work in that space already.

We also did the Mineral Development Taskforce work because I wanted to make sure we had the best system in place. We will see further streamlining and reforming from the process.

Mr EDGINGTON: At the moment, the Fraser Institute survey shows that regulatory duplication and inconsistencies are a particular problem. The Territory is ranked 27th in that metric. This shows that red tape is holding the mining industry back.

Mrs MANISON: Look at the other areas of the Fraser Institute survey where globally for investment attractiveness we came sixth, which is second in Australia. For mineral potential, we came first in the world and first in Australia.

Mr EDGINGTON: What is being done about duplication and inconsistencies? What plans are in place to get rid of duplication?

Mrs MANISON: Did you not listen to my opening statement and what I just said? We have the Mineral Development Taskforce in place ...

Mr EDGINGTON: What are they doing about it? Why are these things not happening at the moment?

Mrs MANISON: Can I answer the question, please? We have just gone through a public process doing the Mineral Development Taskforce report. I spoke to the mining club where I released and launched that report, much to the delight of industry. We are finalising those recommendations which government has agreed, in principle, to all of them.

We have said that will be put in place. We have a significant budget contribution of about \$6m to implement it; that body of work is being finalised. We will then finalise the acceptance of the recommendations and have our project plan in place, and we have put a budget allocation there to implement that over the next few years.

Mr EDGINGTON: What are the time frames?

Mrs MANISON: That is what we are finalising. We need to finalise the recommendations, which is happening now. We already have our skates on by getting a budget allocation and putting a team on it to put an implementation plan in place.

Mr EDGINGTON: The NT was ranked 32 when it comes to the taxation regime. How long before the new CLP ad valorem tax regime comes into play?

Mrs MANISON: It will happen over the next 12 months.

Mr EDGINGTON: Are you certain that it will be over the next 12 months?

Mrs MANISON: I spoke to you in a fair bit of detail about 10 minutes ago about the different work that Treasury has done in the space of petroleum. Now they are implementing it for mining.

Mr EDGINGTON: The crime crisis has clearly reached the mining sector with Territory ranked 34 on security. What do you have to say about that?

Mrs MANISON: That is not the feedback I get from the mining industry. If you meet the mining industry you might hear the same.

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

Mr CHAIR: The committee will now consider the estimates proposed expenditure contained in the Appropriation (2023–24) Bill as it relates to the portfolios of Mining and Industry, Tourism and Hospitality and Northern Australia and Trade. Are there any agency-related whole-of-government questions on budget and fiscal strategy?

That now concludes questions on agency-related whole-of-government questions on the budget and fiscal strategy.

OUTPUT GROUP 1.0 – MINING AND ENERGY **Output 1.1 – Resource Industry Development Services**

Mr EDGINGTON: Mining royalties are predicted to decrease by about \$100m per year over the forward estimates. Can you please explain what is driving this drastic decrease in royalties?

Mrs MANISON: If you look at budget papers over the years you will see that Treasury tends to be very conservative in its forecasting. For the ins and outs of how it forecasts, you will need to ask in the Treasurer's section. Treasury does not make a habit of being overly optimistic because it wants to make sure responsible budgets are delivered.

Mr EDGINGTON: What is the estimated contribution of the new lithium mine to the mining royalties profile over the forward estimates?

Mrs MANISON: You will need to ask Treasury that question because it is the one that goes through with the individual agreements.

Mr EDGINGTON: We just spoke about the ad valorem tax. Why has it taken so long for you to finally admit that the CLPs policy was the right way forward?

Mrs MANISON: We have gone through a strong process through the Mineral Development Taskforce. As part of that we had a raft of experts from large to small mining stakeholders. Mr Drabsch chaired the Minerals Council of Australia when it looked at how it can make us a more attractive destination for mining across the globe and Australia and how we can be competitive moving this industry forward. I have made no apology in my ambitions for mining in the Northern Territory; I want to take it to Western Australia to become a more attractive destination for investment. It did the modelling, consulted with industry and had a good look at this properly. That was the recommendation that came through. We took its expert advice.

Mr EDGINGTON: Has any review of the effect of the world's first—and I touched on this before ...

Mrs MANISON: Yes, you asked that one.

Mr EDGINGTON: Has it been performed by your department? Can you give us a bit more clarity on that? Was there modelling done on that or not?

Mrs MANISON: Yes, there was modelling. My answer does to change from before.

Mr EDGINGTON: Let us go to mining exploration. How long is the average time to get a mining exploration licence under your government?

Mrs MANISON: We will go through this again. An important fact about mining exploration is our government processing times are great. We get our part of it done efficiently, properly and on time. I will get the agency to talk about the process again, about ALRA and native title land. I have no doubt you have read the Mineral Development Taskforce report and would have seen the detailed information about time lines and assessment.

I expressed in parliament at budget time that I was concerned about the Leader of the Opposition who basically said that we should not be consulting with traditional owners and that the time for this and what it takes, in her view, was not acceptable.

Our government's times for processing are as good as anywhere else. Where it takes more time is when work needs to happen with traditional owners and land councils in order to get approvals. We are serious

about making sure that any development in the Northern Territory is done in partnership with and with consent from traditional owners about their country. I will get ...

Mr EDGINGTON: What is the average time to get a mining exploration licence?

Mrs MANISON: I will get Anne to speak about what our government time and processing is, which you know is efficient. ALRA versus native land is a different process it goes to ...

Mr EDGINGTON: I am interested in the average time altogether to get a mining exploration licence.

Mrs MANISON: I have to show you what the Northern Territory Government processing time is versus the time to work with traditional owners to get clearance because ...

Mr EDGINGTON: I am just interested in the average time to get an exploration licence. Do you have those statistics?

Mrs MANISON: Yes, but I will not let you put a big base number on it because you need to understand the context of the work that happens with traditional owners ...

Mr EDGINGTON: We understand that. Can you just give us the average time? That is all I am after.

Mrs MANISON: We are just about to explain that to you. I want to go through the native title and ALRA processes because it is important for you to understand ...

Mr EDGINGTON: I have a fair idea. All I am after is the average time to get a mining exploration licence.

Mrs MANISON: I will go through this. Just one moment, I am making sure I have my information.

Mr EDGINGTON: We do not have time to go through all of these issues in detail. I am just after the average time.

Mrs MANISON: Just one moment, please. I will go through the times, then I will get Ms Tan to explain the difference between ALRA ...

Mr EDGINGTON: I do not need that. My question was just the average time.

Mr CHAIR: Let the minister finish, and we can go back to supplementary.

Mrs MANISON: It is important to understand the context. Page 37 of the Mineral Development Taskforce report, which I know you have read, gives you the context and talks about the important work that, when you do business in the Northern Territory—just like gas it also applies to mining—you have to work with Aboriginal people, because it is important. It is their country ...

Mr EDGINGTON: We know all that. I am just after the average time.

Mrs MANISON: I know, but I want to make sure that you are clear about this ...

Mr EDGINGTON: We are all clear. Can you just give us the average time so we can move on?

Mrs MANISON: I am looking at the differences because there are different processes and it is important to recognise that. This is why I want to give you context for the benefit of the *Hansard*.

Mr EDGINGTON: You mentioned that it is in the task force report. I am just after the average time.

Mrs MANISON: Yes, but approvals happen at different times. I will go through an exploration licence ...

Mr EDGINGTON: Do you have those statistics? Do you have the average time to get a mining exploration licence?

Mrs MANISON: Mr Chair, will he let me answer the question?

Mr CHAIR: Member for Barkly, let her answer the question. If you do not get the answer you are after, the benefit we have is questions on notice. Let us just get to this.

Mr EDGINGTON: All I am saying, Mr Chair, is we do not need all the explanation behind it; we just need the average time.

Mr CHAIR: I completely understand; you want to get the data. I get that.

Mr EDGINGTON: We have lots of questions today. We need to work through this. This is time wasting.

Mr CHAIR: Just let her answer the question.

Mrs MANISON: An exploration licence on native title land is eight to nine months, but there is a different process when it comes to the next stage of issuing mining approval. However, on Aboriginal land, that exploration licence can take three to five years because pretty much when you give permission to the exploration licence, you are making way for mining production. These are different processes, as you know, Member for Barkly. Government processing times are just as good as anywhere else around the nation.

Mr GUYULA: How do the Beetaloo Sub-basin TOs veto fracking, as they state they never gave free, prior or informed consent?

Mrs MANISON: I am happy to answer those questions, but I suggest that we do so when we get to output 1.3. We will go through in the output order. I am happy to answer it at that output group.

Mr GUYULA: I was under the impression to ask that question here.

Mrs MANISON: I want to give some further clarity around it, so I am glad you are asking it.

Ms BOOTHBY: You did not know the number of mines that had been vetoed by traditional owners. How many exploration licence applications are in the system under the two time frames that you described? You have one under native title, then you have the other. How many are in each pot, if you like.

Mrs MANISON: We will get that for you. It happens from time to time, but it is not common. It is something that traditional owners want certainty over. It is their right; it is their country.

Ms BOOTHBY: Are you talking about just a handful?

Mrs MANISON: We will get that for you. It is not often, though.

Ms BOOTHBY: You do not know those details either?

Mr CHAIR: Sorry, Member for Brennan; let us do that through questions on notice because she said she would get it to you. Can you restate the question?

Mrs MANISON: We are happy to get that information for you, but it would be nice to have a time frame for it.

Question on Notice No 1.3

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

Ms BOOTHBY: How many exploration licence applications are there currently in the two streams that the minister mentioned; one the native title stream and the other stream?

Mr CHAIR: Minister, do you accept the question?

Mrs MANISON: I am happy to accept it, Mr Chair.

Mr CHAIR: The question asked by the Member for Brennan has been allocated the number 1.3.

Mr EDGINGTON: You touched on the processing time as eight or nine months for exploration licences under native title, and three to five years under ALRA. You were about to talk about the government processing time. What is the government processing time?

Mrs MANISON: Usually it takes about seven months; that is what we aim for. Sometimes it can go up to nine months, but that is based on the quality of the information of the applicant.

Mr EDGINGTON: Given those statistics—eight or nine months, three to five years under ALRA and seven to nine months under government—how does that compare with other resource jurisdictions, such as Western Australia?

Mrs MANISON: Very competitively—and like.

Mr EDGINGTON: Really? I think their average is about 286 days. You just told me that ...

Mrs MANISON: Do your calculations.

Mr EDGINGTON: ... some of yours are three to five years. I did the calculations, and there was quite a substantial difference.

Mrs MANISON: The advice I have is that from 1 July to 3 September 2022, WA was nine months and the NT was 9.3; and from 1 October to 31 December, WA was 8.4 months and the Territory was 9.7.

Mr EDGINGTON: Is that to issue the mining exploration licence?

Ms TAN: That is more generically an average across all our exploration licence approval processes. We have not, in these statistics, distinguished between ALRA land or native title land.

Mr EDGINGTON: Given that some of it appears to take quite a bit of time, has any review been conducted of the approval process?

Mrs MANISON: We have done the Mineral Development Taskforce report, which we will further streamline. It is important that within the processes government controls we keep them as streamlined as possible and process them quickly. We have further complexity in the Northern Territory—to put it in a straightforward way—as we must do these things with provision for traditional owners. There are different processes for ALRA and native title land.

Mr EDGINGTON: Are you doing any work with the land councils to try to streamline that process? What conversations happen between you and the land councils in regard to exploration licences?

Mrs MANISON: I give the respect to the land councils that they deserve in their job. As a bush member, you know better than I that you cannot say one group of traditional owners has the same views as another group. It is important that consultation is genuine, factual and involves a strong relationship of facts, evidence and trust.

I meet with the land councils from time to time. We went to the full meeting of the Northern Land Council, Central Land Council, Anindilyakwa Land Council and Tiwi Land Council at Barunga last week. It was fantastic to go, as a Cabinet, and hear from all those traditional owners about what is important to them.

They are part of the conversation and were very much consulted as part of the MDT work. That consultation will be ongoing.

Mr EDGINGTON: I am not sure if these questions come in here. There is an additional \$2.3m in the resource industry development services allocation. Is that additional to the \$2.8m for the Mineral Development Taskforce, or is the task force money subsumed in that increase?

Mrs MANISON: In the year coming up, there is \$2.8m allocated to that task force report, which we anticipate will take place over the next few years. Clearly, there is funding that needs to go through Treasury as well.

Mr EDGINGTON: There is a separate \$2.3m for the resource industry development services allocation. What will that be used for?

Mrs MANISON: There is \$2.8m that goes to the Mineral Development Taskforce in 2023–24.

Mr EDGINGTON: Yes. I think the budget papers indicate an extra \$2.3m in the resources industry development services.

Mr DRABSCH: The funding allocated for Mineral Development Taskforce implementation for this coming budget year is \$2.82m, but the net amount of \$2.3m in the increase reflects the fact that there was funding in last year's budget which was one-off and does not carry forward into this budget.

The one-off funding for the undertaking of the Mineral Development Taskforce of \$420,000 was in last year's budget. It does not follow through into this year's budget. That balance does not carry over. It takes away from the \$2.8m and a number of other minor adjustments of resourcing the Territory and so forth, which netted out to a \$2.3m increase compared to the last budget.

Mr EDGINGTON: What is the overall staffing in the mining and energy management team in the Department of Industry, Tourism and Trade?

Mr DRABSCH: In the Mines and Energy Division resource and industry development services has 49 FTE. There is a further 66 FTE in the mine services area, which is the regulatory function. In the petroleum space of the energy development branch of the division there are 22.

Mr EDGINGTON: How many positions are vacant throughout those three areas?

Mr DRABSCH: I will have to take that on notice.

Question on Notice No 1.4

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

Mr EDGINGTON: How many positions are currently vacant in the mining and energy management team in the Department of Industry, Tourism and Trade?

Mr CHAIR: Minister, do you accept the question?

Mrs MANISON: I accept the question, Mr Chair.

Mr CHAIR: The question asked by the Member for Barkly to the minister has been allocated the number 1.4.

Mr BROWN: You mentioned \$87m spent on exploring critical minerals. How has the increased Resourcing the Territory initiative contributed to increasing our profile for critical minerals?

Mrs MANISON: We increased the Resourcing the Territory initiative from \$6.5m a year to \$9.5m. We also increased it from greenfield sites, which it previously was, to brownfield sites. It is about trying to get more mining projects off the ground as quickly as possible.

There has been more demand for Resourcing the Territory. There has been a huge leap in critical mineral exploration, which is great news. I want to see things like lithium prioritised in grants that go out.

Importantly, it is great to see that it is the second-largest exploration fund in the nation. Western Australia is higher than the Northern Territory—no surprises!—but we have a larger exploration program fund to get eyes on the Northern Territory than they have in Queensland or South Australia. We are serious about it.

Geoscience Australia is funding us, which is great. Importantly, a mix of small exploration companies through to some of the largest mining companies in the nation go into partnership to do exploration work. It is a very exciting program.

We had a record attendance at AGES this year in Alice Springs. There are many eyes on the Northern Territory right now. We also regularly receive strong feedback from industry that the quality of geoscience and data they get through Dr Scrimgeour's group is second to none. The quality of information and data that we have available to companies wanting to explore in the Northern Territory is world class. It is important to recognise that we have 1.3 million square kilometres of land and there is still a lot of the Northern Territory that remains underexplored. There has been a significant growth in exploration and licence tenure in the Northern Territory over recent years and it is great to see critical minerals really ramping up.

Mr CHAIR: What kind of projects are being rolled out across the Territory following receipt of the Resourcing the Territory funding? Shall we go through those a bit more?

Mrs LAMBLEY: Is it time for a dixer?

Mr CHAIR: We all should be pretty excited to understand what is going on, Member for Araluen.

Mrs MANISON: We just released our latest round of Geophysics and Drilling Collaboration grants. They were warmly received. We have had a huge number of licences. We are very pleased that we have had a lot of grants taken up. We are getting more demand than we have money to allocate.

Mr CHAIR: That is a good position to be in.

That concludes consideration of Output 1.1.

Output 1.2 – Mines Services

Mr CHAIR: The committee will now consider Output 1.2, Mines Services.

Mr EDGINGTON: Last year, we spoke about the Mining Remediation Fund. It had a balance of approximately \$61m last year. What is the balance today?

Mrs MANISON: The balance of that fund sits at \$74.2m.

Mr EDGINGTON: That is an increase of \$13.2m. In a Question on Notice—this is a bit unbelievable—we learned that the Mining Remediation Fund is held in a non-interest bearing account. Is that still true?

Mrs MANISON: No, there is interest. We are using some of that fund to increase the staffing in the Legacy Mines Unit. In this budget, we have allocated more resources to that unit. It was very slim.

As we discussed last year, there is an immense amount of planning work in trying to get the best value for money when it comes to doing important work regarding mining remediation. We will increase the staffing resource so we can start getting more of that money allocated to projects.

This is exclusive of the work happening at Rum Jungle. That is federally funded. We are talking about a huge budget allocation over 10 years. It is federally funded because it was a project that took place prior to self-government. Those remediation costs go through to the federal government. There is great progress.

I will hand over to our team to talk a bit more about some of the legacy mine work, to give you more detail of what you are after?

Mr EDGINGTON: You are talking about Rum Jungle. Where is it up to at the moment? How many extra staff are going into that remediation unit?

Mrs MANISON: The federal funding agreement was executed between our government and the federal government on 31 January 2022 to support construction and rehabilitation projects. Pending all approvals, the on-ground works are expected to start later this year and peak site employment is expected to reach about 50 FTE over a six-year construction period. Northern Territory environmental approval has been granted and Commonwealth environmental approval is anticipated very shortly. There has been ...

Mr EDGINGTON: It has not started yet?

Mrs MANISON: It is about to get going. I will talk you through some of the packages we have.

Major procurement activities have commenced to refine construction of the works and identify key contractors with the water remediation and the pit backfill package, which is valued at over \$60m. The civil works and remediation package is valued at over \$100m.

Due to the operational complexity, procurement for the water package has been through early contractor involvement, but there has been a lot of interest for the civil package that was published on 28 April 2023. The value of that package is over \$100m and the successful tenderer is expected to be sorted out in the fourth quarter of this year.

There has been work with traditional owners on the ground to make sure there is local employment and traineeships as well. The project aims to achieve 25% Aboriginal employment and is currently achieving 48% during the preliminary phase.

Mr EDGINGTON: The agreement was signed on 31 January 2022, so we are approaching 18 months. In reality there are lots of plans under way, but nothing has actually commenced on the ground?

Mrs MANISON: I do not think that is a fair assessment. There has been a huge amount of work and planning to secure that funding. This has taken years ...

Mr EDGINGTON: That is what I am talking about—work and planning. How many shovels have hit the ground at this point?

Mrs MANISON: If you spend hundreds of millions of dollars on a legacy issue that has happened prior to self-government, then you want to make sure you get it right. You have to do it in consultation with the traditional owners or get that handed back to them.

Yes, this is complex. It requires environmental engineers, mining engineers and construction experts. No, you cannot just do it overnight.

We also had to do an extensive body of work to make sure that the federal government agency funded it. There is a lot to be proud of. Our public servant leading this work won a public service award for the huge amount and body of work that has been done on this. This project is actually a real highlight, and you will see significant work ramp up ...

Mr EDGINGTON: When will that tender be awarded?

Mrs MANISON: If you heard me—for the third time now—the fourth quarter of this year.

Mr EDGINGTON: How certain are you of that?

Mrs MANISON: I am very certain; that is the advice I have.

Mr EDGINGTON: Good. I am looking forward to seeing that. Getting back to the remediation, you mentioned that there was additional staff being put on. How many staff?

Mrs MANISON: I will get Ms Tan to answer that question and talk about how that will be funded. We determined that we need additional people to get more of the projects off the ground. I reassure you that they are working on a range of projects.

Ms TAN: The first question you had was interest associated with the funding for the legacy mines?

Mr EDGINGTON: Yes, I touched on interest. It is interesting to know how much interest has accrued for that fund. I am also interested to know how many additional staff will be placed into the remediation area.

Ms TAN: The interest that has been collected by the fund is now going back into the fund. That was a decision made by the Treasurer in the middle of last year, July 2022. The interest earned on the mining remediation fund to 31 May 2023 was \$1.4m.

Additional funding was provided to the Mining Remediation Fund and Legacy Mines Unit in the 2023 budget for the number of staff allocated to that program. The additional funding will expand the LMU from five to 10 positions. Three additional positions will be filled in 2023–24 and an additional two positions in 2024–25.

Mr EDGINGTON: I am glad to hear that it is now accruing interest. There was \$61m last year and \$74.2m this year, which includes \$1.4m accrued interest. Whilst the amount is going up in that fund, how much is being allocated to remediation projects and what are the projects?

Mrs MANISON: We have a few important bodies of work included in this. First and foremost we have a strategic plan and an advisory panel which looks at what is the best use of getting the money out the door. We will have more people in the department to do that.

A project which will be near and dear to your heart is Sandy Flat Mine. Work and planning has happened. Work has been completed over the last year, including progressing a groundwater and surface water

modelling assessment and remediation options; installation of additional groundwater wells; and awarding a contract for engineering design options for assessment and preliminary costing in February 2023.

The Small Mines Safety Program is looking at Tennant Creek, which is important work. This is to make sure we have a sound audit of some places. We are expecting to have the team in place and get more money out the door.

Mr EDGINGTON: How much was spent over the last 12 months?

Mrs MANISON: Not enough.

Mr EDGINGTON: We had the conversation last year that there was not enough going out the door. There was \$61m last year, and it has increased rather than decreased.

Mrs MANISON: We had \$1.1m go out the door this year. Next year we forecast expenditure of \$4.5m. That does not include Rum Jungle, which is in the vicinity of hundreds of millions of dollars.

Mr EDGINGTON: Given the legacy issues in the Territory at the moment, surely we could be using more of that remediation fund—\$4.5m next year and only \$1m last year? Why is it so low?

Mrs MANISON: We have had a few people dedicated to this work and we will increase the size of that team. The plan is in place and we have the advisory panel in place. I anticipate that will ramp up.

Mr EDGINGTON: I would have to go back through the record, but I can recall a similar conversation last year and nothing seems to have changed.

Mrs MANISON: So do I, which is why there has been a budget allocated and more people put towards this task.

Mr EDGINGTON: What are you doing to oversee this? Where is your input?

Mrs MANISON: My duty has been to increase the size of the team and to get something through the budget Cabinet and ensure we have more resources allocated.

Mr EDGINGTON: That \$1.1m is clearly not enough being spent on remediation. We have \$74m; why is it only \$1.1m given all the issues in the Territory?

Mrs MANISON: There has been a lot of planning work and we now have more people to get the projects out the door. My department has been under no misunderstanding about my feelings about this.

Mr EDGINGTON: These were your feelings last year. Next year, you are planning on—was the figure \$4.5m?

Mrs MANISON: Yes, \$4.5m. Hold me to account on that next year.

Mr EDGINGTON: Why can we not spend more than \$4.4m, out of \$74m? We may end up with more money in the fund if interest rates continue to go up.

Mrs MANISON: Because we are working to a plan and there will be more people to implement the plan and do it well.

Mr CHAIR: Some mines do not get remediated and tailings leach out. We recently saw Peko mine tailings being exported. Do we see any of those coming online to increase our revenue? Do we see legacy mines being brought online with the change in rare earth critical mineral pricing in the market?

Mrs MANISON: Of the two exciting projects the Peko project is seeing Elmore going through, reprocessing the tailings and dealing with a legacy environmental issue—and making some money out of it, which is good for the town of Tennant Creek and everybody in the Territory.

Northern Iron is doing significant work with the Warrego tailings. We are expecting more progress on that throughout this year.

Those are a couple of projects where we are seeing real value in the reprocessing of tailings for magnetite and a few other materials they are looking to expand on.

Elmore is looking for copper and cobalt out of the tailings they are producing. We are positive about that going through. We are seeing other projects like that in Pine Creek as well.

Mr EDGINGTON: Where is the Northern Iron project up to?

Mrs MANISON: I have met with Northern Iron people a few times this year already, as I am sure you have as well. They are positive about where they are heading. Last I saw, they locked in a few important amounts of finance. It was looking positive for exports happening soon.

Mr EDGINGTON: Have you discussed any royalty arrangement with Northern Iron?

Mrs MANISON: These companies pay royalties to the Northern Territory under the existing regime.

Mr EDGINGTON: Warrego is what I would describe as a rehabilitation project. It will still be subject to the royalty scheme as it is?

Mrs MANISON: Yes.

Mr EDGINGTON: There are no discounts to clean up a mess that has been there for many years?

Mrs MANISON: They are going in with material sitting there that has already been mined and reprocessing. They get additional value out of it; it is a wonderful thing.

Mr EDGINGTON: What about Tennant Creek mining? I understand that will also involve reprocessing tailings at the Nobles Nob mine. Where is that up to?

Mrs MANISON: It is exciting to see that collective activity happening on the ground in Tennant Creek between Northern Iron, Elmore and the Tennant Creek mining group. They have undertaken the feasibility and planning for the establishment of the gold processing plant at Nobles Nob site, along with advanced mining studies at a number of proposed small mines.

Assessment of the MMP was completed in August 2022. Operation was authorised, and we are edging closer to construction and commissioning. We have been working with them closely. Like you, I love seeing shovels in the ground when they get going. I appreciate the complexity that comes with getting finance and projects off the ground. I am positive about where they are heading.

Mr EDGINGTON: Has final investment decision been made on the Tennant Creek mining project?

Mrs MANISON: Not as yet; but they are edging closer.

Mr EDGINGTON: On that, from your perspective, are all the approvals in place for that to proceed?

Mrs MANISON: Yes.

Mrs LAMBLEY: Have you or your department been lobbied by or discussed projects or proposals with former Chief Minister, Michael Gunner, in his current position?

Mrs MANISON: In my role, no.

Mrs LAMBLEY: What about in the department?

Mrs MANISON: The department has an energy unit, so I cannot answer on behalf of mining and industry.

Mrs LAMBLEY: No-one within your jurisdiction as Mining minister, to your knowledge, has had discussions with the former Chief Minister?

Mrs MANISON: In Mining and Industry, no. That is not for Major Projects and energy divisions. When I say energy divisions, I mean under Minister Uibo.

Mrs LAMBLEY: The former Chief Minister has not lobbied you at all on behalf of his company?

Mrs MANISON: Not me.

Mr CHAIR: That concludes Output 1.2. I appreciate, Member for Mulka, you have a questions related to Output 1.3. Morning tea has arrived. I propose a 10-minute break. As soon as we come back, the first question is related to Output 1.3.

The committee suspended.

Output 1.3 – Energy Development

Mr CHAIR: The committee will now move to Output 1.3, Energy development. I will hand to the Member for Mulka for his question but, as I found out recently, the Barunga spear-throwing champion is now on the *Hansard* record.

Mr GUYULA: How do the Beetaloo Sub-basin TOs veto fracking, as they state they never gave free, prior or informed consent?

Mrs MANISON: I go back to the opening statement and the questions the Member for Araluen was asking. If a traditional owner does not want onshore gas activity on their country, it will not happen—full stop. It is important to recognise that.

I will make clear about agreements and the powers traditional owners have with having a say on their country under native title. Native title recognises the rights and interests to land and waters. Native title owners have a right to negotiate. Native title traditional owners negotiate the terms of the agreement. If there is no agreement, a permit cannot be issued. If there is no evidence provided to the minister that an agreement has been reached, the minister cannot sign a permit for onshore gas development.

Mr GUYULA: Could you provide clarity about how recommendation 9.8 of the Pepper inquiry has been met to ensure that there is no net increase in the life cycle of greenhouse gas emissions in Australia from any onshore shale gas produced in the NT?

Mrs MANISON: There has been significant work by the Northern Territory Government and the federal government on emissions reductions. In the Northern Territory we have our Large Emitters Policy. The federal government introduced its safeguard mechanism, just to name a couple. There has been a huge body of work done in dealing with emissions.

Mr GUYULA: I should have added to that question. Dr Richie's final report stated there has been no progress on the crux of this recommendation. Could you provide an outline of how scope one, two and three emissions will be offset?

Mrs MANISON: I go back to the fact that a huge amount of work has been done on our Large Emitters Policy in the Territory, a safeguard mechanism that has been implemented about emissions reduction.

Mr GUYULA: Since 2016, how much government or in-kind funding has been provided to businesses that are pursuing fracking development in the NT? Please name the businesses and what funding or in-kind funding they have received or will receive in this budget, such as \$214m that has been announced for the gas industry roads in Budget and Regional Overview on page six.

Mrs MANISON: It is important to place on the record that the Pepper inquiry recommended a cost recovery model for the onshore gas industry, which we have implemented. That means the onshore gas companies will need to pay for the work government does and for the work they are doing.

There has been investment in the Carpentaria Highway, which we warmly welcome, because it is not just about the Beetaloo; it is about people in Borroloola. It is about the pastoral, mining and tourism sectors and people who live in that region having a decent road. That road is not in particularly good condition, as you know.

There are multiple beneficiaries to upgrading roads in any part of the Northern Territory. It is not specifically for gas. There was about \$150m that the feds committed. We tend to do a 80:20 deal on that. We will take money when it is on the table where there are multiple industries, as well as residents who deserve to get to their homes and communities safely. That is important to us. That is one area where there has been a benefit.

Under the Morrison government there had been exploration drilling grants through the federal programs, but the Northern Territory was implementing a cost-recovery system. Does anybody else have anything to add to that?

Mr DRABSCH: To confirm, we were not administering any grants programs in favour of that activity.

Mr GUYULA: Budget 2023–24 shows a decrease in the funding for regulation and assessment of fracking by approximately \$779,000. Why is there a decrease in funding for this monitoring if the government has given approval for fracking to go ahead? What funding is allocated in this budget to ensure that any fracking that occurs is regulated, assessed and monitored properly?

Mrs MANISON: I will get the agency to answer your question. We have seen an increase overall of about \$1.9m. In this budget, the portfolio that received additional money when it came to the regulation and monitoring of the onshore gas industry was DEPWS. It received significant additional funding in the budget on top of the existing funding for monitoring and environmental compliance.

Mr DRABSCH: The energy development output budget is \$7.6m. That is an increase of \$1.976m compared to the 2023 revised budget. The increase predominately relates to allocation of funds into this year to deal with onshore petroleum regulatory activities, which will be funded in the interim by the cost recovery fund. The extra costs that will occur are all to do with regulating petroleum exploration and production activities, as officials deal with the applications that come before them.

Ms BOOTHBY: I am a little confused by the minister's comments about the Member for Mulka's question. I want to confirm if the Beetaloo will not go ahead because TOs have not given consent?

Mrs MANISON: No.

Mr CHAIR: That answers your question, Member for Brennan.

Mrs LAMBLEY: I also have a follow-on question. You gave us a description earlier in your presentation about the different approaches that could be taken to veto mining exploration or production in the Northern Territory. You mentioned that under Indigenous Land Use Agreements, after a five-year moratorium, Aboriginal owners could then veto production or explorations. Are you aware that there is any sort of moratorium in place at the moment? That is what I heard you say this morning.

Mrs MANISON: Mr Pratt, the question is: are we aware of any moratoriums in the Beetaloo?

Mrs LAMBLEY: You said that for the Indigenous Land Use Agreements, after a five-year moratorium, Aboriginal owners or Indigenous owners ...

Mrs MANISON: We are talking about ALRA land?

Mrs LAMBLEY: Yes. ... they could veto. Is there any moratorium in place at the moment?

Mr PRATT: In the Beetaloo Sub-basin, there is no ALRA land under permit, and there is no moratorium or veto for five years, as described earlier.

Mrs LAMBLEY: The Beetaloo comes under the *Native Title Act*? Are there any plans afoot that you are aware of to veto gas exploration or production in the Beetaloo under the *Native Title Act*?

Mrs MANISON: Again, I stress that native title holders get the say on what happens on their country. Negotiations happen with native title holders, who are deemed the appropriate people to talk to, through the land councils.

Is there anything further to add, Mr Pratt, in regard to some of those discussions that we are across?

Mr PRATT: I can confirm that all exploration permits in the Beetaloo Sub-basin have a native title agreement as determined by the Northern Land Council, with traditional owners and the gas company.

Mrs LAMBLEY: To your knowledge there is no resistance by Indigenous owners to explore or produce gas in the Beetaloo?

Mrs MANISON: It important to note that the land councils work to determine the appropriate traditional owners to speak to with regard to the different areas. Discussions that take place with those deemed to be the rightful native title holders, the traditional owners for that country.

I will ask Mr Drabsch. Sometimes you hear other groups voice concerns, but at times they are not speaking for that particular country.

Mr DRABSCH: There have been a number of Aboriginal people who have made comments about gas exploration and development in the Beetaloo. It came to the point that the Northern Land Council issued a media statement to clarify that the work on the Beetaloo was through agreements endorsed by them as the land council, with the appropriate traditional owners' approval.

Ms BOOTHBY: TOs could veto in five years? If not, when can they veto?

Mrs MANISON: ALRA land is where those veto provisions apply. For native title land, the native title holders have the right to negotiate. The native title traditional owners negotiate the terms of the agreement. If there is no agreement a permit cannot be issued. If there is no evidence provided to the minister that an agreement has been reached, then the minister cannot sign the permit.

Ms BOOTHBY: When can it be vetoed in the time frame you are talking about?

Mrs MANISON: We were talking about ALRA land. We have gone through those.

Ms BOOTHBY: That it could be vetoed?

Mrs MANISON: Yes.

Ms BOOTHBY: When could it be vetoed?

Mr PRATT: The veto under ALRA occurs before the grant of a permit. When a gas company submits an application for an exploration permit, there are discussions with the relevant land council and the gas company about getting traditional owner approval or consent for the granting of that permit.

When those discussions take place with the land council and the gas company on behalf of the traditional owners, that is the period the traditional owners can say they do not want the grant of this permit at that point in time. That moratorium applies for five years; prior to the grant of an exploration permit. Without the exploration permit there is no legal activity that can occur on that land for petroleum exploration.

Ms BOOTHBY: What happens when the application goes longer than five years?

Mr PRATT: Under the provisions of ALRA, gas companies and the land councils recommence those negotiations. Again, the traditional owners through the land council can say, no thank you or they can consider what is before them and make an alternate decision.

Mr GUYULA: I have met with the TOs and they do not want it.

Since this is a question that goes with Middle Arm in this Output 1.3 ...

Mrs MANISON: Did you say Middle Arm?

Mr GUYULA: Yes.

Mrs MANISON: I will see how I go with this. The Minister for Territory Development, Minister Lawler, is driving Middle Arm. We will see where the question goes and if I can answer. I will endeavour to give you an answer.

Mr GUYULA: You want me to go ahead with these questions?

Mrs MANISON: Yes.

Mr GUYULA: Overall, since 2020, how much government funding has been allocated in the Middle Arm precinct development?

Mrs MANISON: The specifics of the budgetary expenditure will go to outputs for Minister Lawler. I do not have that information under my portfolios.

There is huge interest in the Middle Arm development. It will be great for the people of the Northern Territory. It is being developed with circular economy principles to be a sustainable development precinct.

This will be great for local jobs and being able to establish a renewable hydrogen industry. It will be fantastic for critical minerals processing to produce the things we need in the world. On the do-not-deal commitment, Avenir had land aside to look at the LFP battery production. It is incredibly exciting to think of electric vehicle batteries being produced in Darwin. It is a fantastic project. There will be a CCS hub. LNG facilities have been there for some time through Darwin LNG and INPEX. Tamboran has some interests as well.

It is important to recognise that we need a fuel of transition as we tackle the issue of climate change. We have a nation that is 50% reliant on coal-fired power. We are not quite there with renewable energy or green hydrogen yet. It is important to have a fuel of transition, which is gas.

That goes for our partners globally as well. We alone cannot tackle climate change. Every nation around the world has a duty. I would rather not see them driving towards more coal-fired power stations.

Mr EDGINGTON: Is it fair to say that gas production in the Beetaloo will require processing facilities at Middle Arm?

Mrs MANISON: Tamboran is having a look at what facilities can be utilised. It is also important to recognise that we also have Darwin LNG and INPEX there.

Mr EDGINGTON: So far there are roughly 12 companies that have signed exclusive agreements with the government at Middle Arm. How many of those are utilising natural gas as a feedstock power or heating source?

Mrs MANISON: I do not have 12. I am not quite sure where that is from. The conversation that I have with project proponents that are looking for processing and to set up shop is that they are having conversations with some of the renewable energy producers. We know of one major project that has come out of EA recently that would have a significant amount of power available to local proponents. It had a deep commitment to the Northern Territory.

Companies are actively talking renewable energy first and foremost, whether they are doing it themselves by building power plants or working with other big project proponents with renewable energy being available. That is where the conversations are leading.

Gas will still play a role; it will not go away overnight. Predominantly, all of the conversations I have with these companies now—which are being driven by shareholders and government policy—are that they are all looking first and foremost to ways in which they can utilise the renewable energy potential in the Northern Territory.

Mr EDGINGTON: Gas is a vital component to the development of Middle Arm, is it not?

Mrs MANISON: We already have INPEX and Darwin LNG there. Even those companies are looking at their footprint and energy requirements and what they utilise, going forward.

The Middle Arm Sustainable Development Precinct is an exciting development. The Northern Territory is on the cusp of wonderful things through solar energy and renewable green hydrogen.

There is another exciting development. You are very fortunate, Member for Barkly, because you come from a world-class destination for sunshine and wind. That will provide a very exciting future for us all through clean, green, renewable energy.

Mr EDGINGTON: Renewables are increasingly important, but for Middle Arm to be sustainable at the moment, that cannot be done without natural gas. Would you agree with that?

Mrs MANISON: There will always be some components going forward that will need firming. I would rather see that done through gas than through coal. A long time ago, the former Member for Barkly was named as a visionary for choosing to put the Northern Territory onto gas rather than moving to more diesel or coal-fired power stations. Gas will still play a role when it comes to firming.

Mr EDGINGTON: Recommendation 9.8 of the Pepper review has received a lot of attention in the past year. Last year we clarified that Territory producers will need to offset only emissions resulting from gas utilised in the Territory. What role will the Territory government have in ensuring that those emissions are effectively measured and offset?

Mrs MANISON: I will give a general high-level response, but then you will need to talk to DEPWS when it comes in with Minister Moss to go into how it regulates, monitors and enforces compliance on these matters. We have done a huge amount of work when it comes to our Large Emitters Policy and a raft of environmental reform this term.

Mr EDGINGTON: I think we touched on this before. How long will it take for a production licence to make it through? How long do you anticipate that process will take?

Mrs MANISON: Mr Pratt can talk about the process and what these companies need to do in order to get to the point of production.

Mr PRATT: If we take the assumption that the company has drilled enough wells and has the right results and a financial investment decision has been made by its board to proceed to production, its next activities are for regulatory approvals.

Companies would need to apply to this department for a production licence, which is a change of tenure from an exploration permit. That process requires some regulatory approvals, which include companies providing information that they are fit and proper. A fit-and-proper person's test in accordance with the act requires them to provide agreements from either under the ALRA or the *Native Title Act*, as we have discussed earlier, and matters of the like that they have been compliant with their regulatory obligations.

Minister Manison then makes the decision on whether to grant that production licence. If we assume that she does, that changes the tenure from exploration to production.

Companies then need to apply for production approvals through an environment management plan with the Department of Environment, Parks and Water Security. That is the document that says how many wells they want to drill, the mitigation of risks and the stakeholder engagement with pastoralists, if that is relevant. DEPWS will assess that. It takes into account greenhouse gas abatement plans and Large Emitters Policy regarding greenhouse gas emissions and the like.

Subject to that being approved, companies then start commencing their production activities. It is likely they will also need further infrastructure for production activities; that is, connecting to pipelines or movable storage to get gas to market.

Mr EDGINGTON: Have you put an estimate on the time line to get that production licence? It sounds like there is a lot of things to be done. What is the estimated time frame?

Mrs MANISON: It must be done properly, but we have had positive conversations with companies that have been talking about pilot production in the near future.

Mr Pratt can again update you, particularly about where Empire and Tamboran were last because they will be the first movers.

Mr EDGINGTON: In doing that could we understand the pilot licence versus production licence? Where does all that fit in together?

Mr PRATT: Pilot production and production are one and the same thing. It is an interchangeable term. You need a production licence to commercially produce gas at a broad scale.

Empire Energy has said publicly and through ASX that it is reviewing its results. It had some interim results from the Carpentaria-2H well, which is promising. It is flow-testing the Carpentaria-3H well again, after a period of it being shut in to improve performance.

Subject to results being made public in the coming months, they are also commencing front-end engineering and design. They are planning for these production activities at their own end in regard to what engineering requirements and production facilities they will need. I am not across the company's activities, but they will

need some type of gas sales agreement in place to sell the gas, which is nothing to do with our regulatory responsibility.

There is a lot of planning, thinking, funding and investment required at their end. Empire has made it clear that it hopes to be in a situation by year's end to make such a decision about FID. Once it does, it is up to it to apply to the department, through the minister, for production licence approval. I suspect that could be late this year, or it could be quarter two next year.

Mr EDGINGTON: What are the real threats regarding the Territory onshore gas industry, and how are they being tackled?

Mrs MANISON: As I said last year, misinformation. I stick by that answer. Without a doubt, more and more people are becoming conscious about climate change and its challenges. Most people recognise that there must be a staged, reliable and sensible approach to tackling that challenge. As we all aspire for 100% renewable energy, it will not happen overnight.

The east coast is a good experience of the challenges being faced, trying to implement the staged transition phase. If the wind is not blowing or the sun is not out, you still need to be ready to go with the generators. It will take time to get there.

Misinformation is still being peddled at a rate of knots. It is difficult to have a conversation with somebody who is completely anti-gas about the staged transition and how to get to 100% renewable energy.

Mr EDGINGTON: How do you have that conversation in the Labor Party, given it does not support the onshore gas industry?

Mrs MANISON: A lot of people see onshore gas as an important part of the mix in how we work towards a renewable energy future, in the meantime supplying affordable, reliable power supply to people.

Mr EDGINGTON: Labor does not support the onshore gas industry. Do you regard that as a threat? You seem to be on your own, so to speak, when it comes to supporting the industry. Why does Labor not support it?

Mrs MANISON: I would say that is rubbish. You can see through our policies that we have taken a pragmatic approach based on science.

Mr EDGINGTON: Your party does not support it, minister.

Mr CHAIR: Member for Barkly, keep the questions related to the budget and policy positions. Rightly pointed out by the Member for Brennan in the week that was, she made comment that the Labor Party supports the onshore gas industry in the parliamentary wing. If we can get back to the budget, that would be fantastic.

Mr EDGINGTON: It is pretty clear that I asked about some of the threats ...

Mr CHAIR: We will not go around in circles on this, Member for Barkly. We will go back to the questions.

Mrs LAMBLEY: The Chair does not have to defend the government.

Mr CHAIR: I am just saying we need to keep the questions to the budget.

Mr EDGINGTON: My question was about the threats; that is what I am getting at. One of the biggest threats appears to be the Labor Party, which clearly opposed the onshore gas industry. I was asking the minister how they are dealing with that.

Mr CHAIR: She answered it. I am happy to keep going on Output 1.3. The question is answered.

Mr EDGINGTON: What is the government doing publicly to support the gas industry at the moment?

Mrs MANISON: Speaking, using facts.

Mr EDGINGTON: You said people were putting out misinformation. Are you running any educational programs that might change some of those thoughts?

Mrs MANISON: All the information about the work we have done with regard to the Pepper inquiry is publicly available. I speak in a raft of different forums and am asked a raft of different questions all the time, as do other government ministers.

There is a huge amount of public information that is available with regard to onshore gas and the work of the Northern Territory Government. It is probably one of the most scrutinised areas of Northern Territory Government work over the last five years.

Mr EDGINGTON: It certainly is. What I am getting at is there is a lot of information. If you worked your way through the Internet, you might be able to find it. Is there any media educational programs to get the message out about the gas industry?

Mrs MANISON: We have public information that is available. I do not think this is purely a government job. Industry has a lot to do as well ...

Mr EDGINGTON: I would think you were working together with industry to get that out.

Mrs MANISON: I do not know if you have noticed, but recently APPEA has launched a raft of new advertising across the nation which goes to this very point.

Mr EDGINGTON: What proposals have been made for pipelines in the Territory? What stage is the planning process at?

Mrs MANISON: You will need to ask Minister Lawler questions with regard to that because DIPL is driving a range of work with regard to pipeline corridors.

APA and Jemena are actively looking at the Northern Territory and working with some of these proponents about requirements and different scenarios going forward. It is fair to say there is a lot of active interest. APA, which has been a longstanding partner in the Northern Territory, opened a new office last week. There is a lot of eyes on the Northern Territory. It is also important to recognise that gas pipelines are highly regulated by the federal government as well.

Mr EDGINGTON: The Commonwealth parliament passed the federal safeguard mechanism in March, implementing a pledge to cut emissions. Has any analysis been done on the effect of this on the development of Beetaloo?

Mrs MANISON: When the safeguard mechanism was released, the Beetaloo proponents had already been working towards that outcome. That was no news to them. They were already well and truly in a comfortable position to deal with it, despite what the Greens might have said.

Mr EDGINGTON: You are confident that potential producers will be able to successfully offset all of their emissions in the Territory?

Mrs MANISON: Under the safeguard mechanisms and the settings we have in the Northern Territory for the Beetaloo, yes.

Mr EDGINGTON: That is a net zero policy, is it not?

Mrs MANISON: Yes.

Mrs LAMBLEY: The volume of emissions from large-scale production in the Beetaloo is expected to be massive, with doubts raised within government about whether there are enough available carbon offsets, even within Australia. This is the view of an expert who was quoted in the media recently—I am sure you have read about it.

You are saying that the emissions can be offset, minister?

Mrs MANISON: There are a lot of experts out there. With regard to ...

Mrs LAMBLEY: What expert is informing you that you can offset all the carbon emissions from the Beetaloo Sub-basin going forward?

Mrs MANISON: We listen to our policy experts within our departments. We have some great people in the department of Environment in particular, who do a huge amount of work in this space.

We have our proponents in the Beetaloo who have been working to government policy on large emitters and through to the safeguard mechanisms.

Mrs LAMBLEY: What is the government's plan for horizontal factoring outside of the Beetaloo?

Mrs MANISON: As you know, we have conventional gas in Central Australia which has been providing the energy supply to the Northern Territory for a long time, but we are not talking about fracked gas. The only place at the moment that is being looked at for the process of hydraulic fracturing is the Beetaloo.

Mrs LAMBLEY: Is that the plan of your government going forward?

Mrs MANISON: The government has just worked through one of the most extensive bodies of work we have ever done in the history of the Northern Territory on that process of onshore gas. That was to deal with the demand and the exciting prospects of the Beetaloo.

Mrs LAMBLEY: Members of your government campaigned against fracking going into the 2016 election. Why should Territorians believe what you say? You are fracking the Beetaloo. Some of your colleagues said that you would not frack at all.

Mrs MANISON: Since 2016 that there has been consistent policy from the government in this space.

Mr EDGINGTON: Have the current producers in Central Australia reached a net zero for emissions?

Mrs MANISON: It is important to recognise that Central Petroleum, the Amadeus builds, Palm Valley and Mereenie have been up and running and operating for a long time. They continue to source and find new gas. They are important to the mix in the Northern Territory.

Mr PRATT: Central Petroleum's activities in Central Australia are covered under an environment management plan or production approvals, depending on if it is exploration or production. They will be captured by the Department of Environment, Parks and Water Security's Large Emitters Policy, not directly the safeguard, as that was in an application for the Beetaloo. Any of their activities will be capped and have the Large Emitters Policy threshold of 100,000 tonne applied to it. Any activity they do will need to address their emissions through their environmental approvals with DEPWS.

Mr EDGINGTON: Those rules appear to be different to what will be in place at the Beetaloo. Is that right?

Mrs MANISON: They are existing long-term builds, and the safeguard mechanism was tackling some of the new development.

Mr EDGINGTON: What will happen with existing development? Are there plans in place to get to zero net emissions?

Mrs MANISON: There would not be any gas companies that are not working towards reducing their emissions because they see it as their responsibility. They also see the writing on the wall with government policy—globally—which is adopting net zero positions that they will have to comply with.

Mr EDGINGTON: I am more interested in what the government is doing about it.

Mr PRATT: The process for Central Petroleum will be to comply with the Large Emitters Policy. I suggest putting that question to DEPWS when they are here with Minister Moss later in the week. It is not appropriate that I answer further regarding their environmental policies.

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

OUTPUT GROUP 2.0 – INDUSTRY STRATEGY

Output 2.1 – Industry Development and Economic Analysis

Mr CHAIR: The committee will now consider Output Group 2.0, Industry Strategy, Output 2.1, Industry Development and Economic Analysis. Before we go on, minister, please introduce the new team who have arrived at the table.

Mrs MANISON: I will give Mr Drabsch the honour.

Mr DRABSCH: I introduce Luis Da Rocha, who is the General Manager Strategy and Policy in our department; and Joe Kuhn the Senior Director Industry Strategy.

Mr EDGINGTON: Over the last year Deloitte consistently predicted the Territory would have the weakest economic growth of any Australian jurisdiction for 2022–23. Is that accurate?

Mrs MANISON: The papers I look to are our budget papers, first and foremost. These are questions more for the Treasurer. State final demand, about our domestic economy, is positive moving forward. Our export trade remains strong built off the back of LNG and our cattle industry, which are our main points of export. Global gas demand has been particularly strong. I am optimistic about where we are heading especially when you see the future of what we have. We already have our traditional economic base built off mining, gas, agriculture and Defence, particularly with the Defence strategic review. It is fair to say that additional activity will happen in the Northern Territory as our focus continues. Our job in the department is also to look at ways in which we can diversify our economy.

I will give a few examples of some of the work we are doing. In one area we have charge of the circular economy development piece. We have been giving out grants for that, which is about how we recycle our waste and make it into a new product like tyres. How do we apply circular economy principles in reusing and repurposing, recycling building materials, building waste and that type of thing?

We looked at the space industry and its growth. There have been some wonderful success stories that have happened of ELA at Nhulunbuy with NASA doing its first launches. We have big plans for expansion there. There have been a lot of potential clients they have been speaking to. We have a drone strategy in development.

There is great opportunity in renewable energy sectors such as hydrogen, solar and wind, to name a few. I am positive about where we are heading in the Northern Territory. I stress the importance of diversification to make sure there are more jobs in different areas. For too long we have been reliant on a small number of sectors that have determined the economic growth in this place. Diversification is important. We have a vast amount of land and are so resource rich; we have everything that the world needs. It is about turning those into real life projects and getting capital into them.

Mr EDGINGTON: The *State of the States* report has ranked the Territory last in economic performance for the last 18 straight quarters. Do you take any notice of that report?

Mrs MANISON: We have great political brawls about this, but I believe that report is useless in the Northern Territory context.

Mr EDGINGTON: You do not read it or take any notice of it?

Mrs MANISON: Let us put it into context. We have a small economy in the Northern Territory. We have this discussion every year. The report looks at the last 10 years and factors in the INPEX project, which was large. We are talking USD50bn on a tiny economy like the Northern Territory. That sends economic growth off the charts for a few years. That is what it is compared to, with those averages factored in.

It is difficult when trying to factor in what was, at the time, one of the largest construction projects in the Southern Hemisphere. You cannot underestimate the size of the INPEX project, especially when you go to Japan and see how big that country is and realise that we provide 10% of their LNG through that one project. That is extraordinary.

Mr EDGINGTON: Investors are taking notice of this *State of the States* report. We have had 18 straight quarters of coming last in economic performance. Is that not having an impact on the Territory?

Mrs MANISON: Serious investors and economists would look at that and understand the basic economics in it and say, 'This is irrelevant'.

Ms BOOTHBY: It seems that you do not follow any of the *State of the States* reports. I heard that you do not follow Deloitte either. Next year, Deloitte predicts the economy will grow at 1.6%, which is quite a bit lower than the 2.7% estimate in the budget papers. You said that you follow your budget papers. How do you explain that discrepancy?

Mrs MANISON: We have access to our latest projections through Treasury. Treasury tends to be conservative in its forecast. It has its hands on a lot of localised information. There is a raft of different reports that come out throughout the year that have different assessments regarding how they go about looking at economic growth and historical forecasts and times of economic activity, such as the CommSec report.

When you talk to people in business and industry, they are feeling positive about going forward. The level of economic activity we see around the place in construction shows the level of confidence. Our business confidence surveys are coming back strongly. As a local member, I am not getting complaints from tradies, small business owners and major industry groups that they are concerned about the amount of work they have in the pipeline or what they have at the moment.

Ms BOOTHBY: Are you only guided by your government's reports, or do you listen to the likes of CommSec and Deloitte, which are economists for Australia?

Mrs MANISON: I have explained why I think that CommSec report is not useful in being able to assess economic activity in the Northern Territory. Of course, we look at reports and see what data is coming in. These are more or less questions for Treasury about how it forecasts and crunches the GSP and SFD numbers.

Mr CHAIR: That concludes consideration of Output 2.1.

Output 2.2 – Northern Australia Development and Strategic Engagement

Mr CHAIR: The committee will now consider Output 2.2, Northern Australia Development and Strategic Engagement.

Mr EDGINGTON: How many FTEs are tied to Developing the North, and what are those roles?

Mrs MANISON: Mr Drabsch will talk about that and the different jobs that staff members do.

There is also the federal Northern Australian agency as well. We have a localised workforce that sits with the federal agency. Last week the Northern Australia Ministerial Forum was held in Kununurra. Unfortunately, I was unable to attend. Mr Chair attended on my behalf with Minister King.

I had great feedback from Minister King on how the meeting went and the white paper refresh that we are currently doing. I applaud Minister King because she has brought the Northern Australia forum back. Previously, we had Minister Canavan when this kicked off, and you could see real passion and drive. It got a bit lost under Minister Pitt, but Minister King has brought it back.

The Northern Australia conference is also coming up in July in Darwin. It was at Mackay last year. This is another important opportunity to come together to look at the areas of interest where we work together and, importantly, keep the Northern Australia agenda on the federal government's radar.

We have few representatives in Northern Australia compared to down south with elected members. It is important that we keep that agenda going.

Mr EDGINGTON: How many staff?

Mr DRABSCH: In the Northern Australia Development and Strategic Engagement output group we have nine full-time equivalent employees. That branch leads the coordination of the whole-of-government strategic and diplomatic engagement to facilitate a stable economic growth and to promote the Northern Australia Development agenda.

Mr CHAIR: That concludes consideration of Output 2.2 and Output Group 2.0. I thank the departmental staff for attending.

OUTPUT GROUP 3.0 – TOURISM, SERVICES AND HOSPITALITY

Output 3.1 – Tourism

Mr CHAIR: The committee will consider Output Group 3.0, Tourism Services and Hospitality, Output 3.1, Tourism. Minister, please introduce your departmental staff attending.

Mrs MANISON: I welcome Mr Scott Lovett, Deputy Chief Executive Officer, Tourism, Services and Hospitality.

Ms BOOTHBY: Minister, you would have heard Territorians saying to you that our city streets and regional town centres are very quiet and asking where the caravans are. Can you admit that, in our peak season, there is a visible reduction in caravans?

Mrs MANISON: Before I talk about caravans, it is important to set the context of what is happening nationally and within the Northern Territory and what the sector looks like.

We have come off the back of COVID and much building over those years. Our government did everything we could to give the industry a lifeline to get them through and ensure that they would still be there after COVID and ready to go. This was to save those businesses as tourism is a huge employer in the Northern Territory and a large economic driver. Many of them are mum-and-dad businesses, not huge corporate giants.

Coming out of COVID, airline staff were decimated and many chose to leave the sector. In 2022 we had an incredibly strong year. It was wonderful to see the vibrancy, hotels booked, tours running, a record spend of \$3.1bn and people spending more and staying longer.

Unfortunately, during that time the airline services have not returned but the international market has started to grow and we are competing on a national scale with international competition. People have found confidence to go overseas ...

Ms BOOTHBY: With respect, minister, I am asking about the caravans rather than the international markets.

Mrs MANISON: I am about to get into that. I will use my wonderful parents as an example, when talking about what we are competing with.

My parents are of retirement age. When they save up their cash, they like to travel overseas, spending those golden years together going on cruise ships and those types of things, which many retirees enjoy doing. It is fair to say people have found their confidence to do those things again around the world.

In the Northern Territory, we had a very big Wet Season which impacted the Kimberley. Many people who come to the Northern Territory will do a trip here then go to the Kimberley. There was a loss of confidence in the Western Australia region. I am hearing mixed feedback about some parks doing quite well and others not doing well when it comes to caravans.

Mr Lovett can speak about the current caravan environment and what we are seeing across the board.

Mr LOVETT: Backing up what the minister just said, it has been a softer start to the season for the drive market. The Kimberley has the crossing over the Fitzroy River; the damaged bridge has had an impact.

We hear anecdotally from the caravan and camping shows—which is a fair proxy for what is coming forward—that people are still willing to travel but delaying those travel plans. Last week in Alice Springs, I spoke to a couple of caravan park operators. Some of them are going okay. It is fair to say the drive market is down on last year.

The minister talked about some of the macro conditions. We have had 12 interest rate rises in a row and cost-of-living pressures on people, so the pool of people with the capacity to travel is reduced. Of that pool, there is an increased propensity to travel outbound.

Ms BOOTHBY: Are those caravan owners who have the desire to travel Australia going elsewhere?

Mrs MANISON: We are dealing with cost-of-living pressures and people who are choosing to take the holidays they might have postponed; that is, again jumping on cruise ships and going overseas. We have not stopped the work we do to attract people to the Northern Territory.

We have been very successful with our Roadhouse to Recovery grants, VEEP grants and drive strategy. We have put out our campaign and driven it pretty hard.

Ms BOOTHBY: Do you have the data on what you are talking about with regard to caravans not coming to Darwin because they might be going on cruise ships and overseas? Do you have data to support that evidence?

Mrs MANISON: We have a raft of different points of data in regard to visitation. Tourism is a very data-rich industry. We look at that data. Clearly, it is not live, but as soon as we get it, we have a look and make sure it is meeting expectations. We also look at trends and see how we can appropriately market to that.

As Mr Lovett said, a fair amount of work is done by just talking to stakeholders and industry. Since I became the Tourism minister, I am pleased to see how much firsthand engagement is done by talking to industry and businesses—whether it is someone like Scott, with all his strong tourism networks and experiences chatting. It would be fair to say there is regular communication with our visitor centres and tourism groups such as Tourism Top End and Tourism Central Australia. They do brilliant advocacy so we can keep the finger on the pulse.

It is also about having a look to see what is going through the Territory. I went to Barunga last week and had a hell of an issue with plenty of caravans on the road. I do not underestimate the feedback from parks saying they simply are not seeing the level of business they expected, whilst others are doing okay.

Ms BOOTHBY: We are used to seeing caravan after caravan. You announced \$35m to market harder. I am cautious of this and concerned that any amount of money that you spend on marketing without a reduction in crime is a waste. Where is this money being used? Can you explain to me exactly where the \$35m will be spent?

Mrs MANISON: I table the media release we issued at the time, Member for Brennan, so you can have a look at that while you continue with your questions.

We have put additional money into supporting the region of Alice Springs because we know it was a difficult start to the year. We put in additional marketing funds. We do not apologise for marketing the amazing products and experiences that people will have in the Northern Territory. It is important to be in the market because it is so competitive nationally and internationally. We have to do what we can.

When I announced this money, it was interesting. I was speaking to one of our leading tourism and hospitality owners who had just attended the biggest national conference on the Gold Coast. Scott, is that the ATEC?

Mr LOVETT: Australian Tourism Exchange, ATE.

Mrs MANISON: ATE. He said that he had in the vicinity of 70 meetings. This is a prominent local business identity. He said in those meetings the issue of crime did not come up.

I appreciate that it is a difficult issue we deal with in the Northern Territory, but I make no apologies for telling the good stories about why the Northern Territory is a beautiful, magnificent place to come and have a holiday.

Even the TCA membership was discussing this point recently and want to tell the good stories about Central Australia. We have amazing tourism operators across the Northern Territory. The big investors who have been coming to the Northern Territory recently and the ones who do their own ongoing big national and global product into the Northern Territory are optimistic about the Territory, the products we have here and the demand for it.

Ms BOOTHBY: How much of that \$35m been spent so far?

Mrs MANISON: It was announced for the start of 1 July.

Ms BOOTHBY: There has been no extra money?

Mrs MANISON: When does the financial year start, Member for Brennan?

Ms BOOTHBY: You have not put anything extra into tourism, and it is not due to start until 1 July, halfway through our Dry Season?

Mrs MANISON: We put additional funding at the start of the year into Central Australia. It is important to recognise the campaigns we have had running and talk about the financial year we have just gone through.

We did the Summer Starts Early in the NT campaign, which was to extend our shoulder season, from which we had huge success. We believe it contributed to the great 2022 we had. We will be doing that again, where

we market to people who are sitting in cold, miserable weather, contemplating how miserable their life is down south and show them a great holiday in the Northern Territory in our shoulder season.

It is good for our operators as well, because we know they are at full peak in the Dry Season, but also in the middle of the year in Central Australia. It helps them keep their staff on for longer and extend their season. We had great success.

We also launched our Drive and Seek Different campaigns. We know that most people who come to the Northern Territory are seeking an Aboriginal cultural experience, so we have an Aboriginal marketing campaign as well as the other events. These campaigns continue.

It is a data-rich department that looks at trends and opportunities. The Vivid event was just held in Sydney; it was a huge show. I do not know whether you saw the beautiful adverts that we had our department launch. Mr Lovett will talk through it. These are examples of where we find opportunities. Some of that marketing money is there to react, respond and see opportunities. In that case, there was a beautiful campaign off the back of Vivid to get people to the Northern Territory.

Ms BOOTHBY: With all due respect, can I go back to the \$35m, because we are very aware of the campaigns that you have done? How many brochures will that \$35m produce? How many Facebook ads and Instagram ads will be boosted on social media? Will these be seen by people living interstate or overseas?

Mrs MANISON: When you visit Tourism and meet with our hardworking public servants, you see a diverse range of skill sets in marketing expertise. Some of that expertise is in big marketing campaigns and knowing how to market to certain age brackets and sectors in Australia and internationally. You will hear about the other campaigns they are doing and the different influencers they are working with—oh, to be an influencer in the tourism sector looks like a pretty good gig to me!—and how they are getting that across social media platforms.

Social media is playing a bigger role in marketing. We are selective and targeted about who we use those platforms for and the right medium to get the best value for money.

Ms BOOTHBY: I am keen to know how much of the \$35m will be specifically for brochures and social media campaigns, or will it be for something else as well?

Mrs MANISON: Mr Lovett can go into it.

Mr LOVETT: In broad terms, from a marketing perspective, most of the money goes into what they call top of funnel, which is an awareness-type activity. The Vivid campaign is a great example of that, where we are trying to open the minds of Australians about the potential and experiences of travel. We do that through out-of-home advertising that you see on billboards or the side of buildings, as it was for Vivid. We also do more traditional newspaper-type activity. Yes, we run social campaigns across Facebook, Instagram et cetera. That is one part of it.

Then we get to what the marketing people call the mid-funnel activity, which is where we work with trade partners—for example, Flight Centre or Webjet. People might have seen the ad at Vivid. We have done a whole bunch of digital marketing activity, which is quite neat. As people scroll around the Internet, they will see deals pop up on their browsers. We know that they are interested in the Northern Territory, so we feed them deals from Webjet or flightcentre.com. That is what we call our mid-funnel activity, which brings them into the conversion piece, where they click and book or visit a retail travel agency. That is domestically.

Internationally it works a little differently. We have trade representation. A lot of the activity we do internationally is working with our trade partners. For example, we have a campaign with STA Travel in Germany and Trailfinders in the United Kingdom. We partner with them with the Northern Territory product. Our reps work with those specific trade partners so we get our product overseas. For example, we took 12 operators to Singapore to meet with the trade because they are the ones they will do the deal with.

Yes, we do some brochure activity that is probably more in the remit of the drive market. At caravan and camping shows people consume that sort of product. It is probably fair to say that most tourism consumers are now consuming information digitally. They are getting most of their information from Google, TripAdvisor or travel review sites and doing their travel planning that way.

Ms BOOTHBY: You mentioned the campaign Vivid. How much was spent on that campaign, and how is the success measured?

Mrs MANISON: I am happy to take that one on notice ...

Ms BOOTHBY: You do not know how much it costs?

Mrs MANISON: No, because we have multiple campaigns that run at any given time. I am happy to take that on notice.

It is important to recognise that there is also a raft of other funding that goes into tourism, not just the budget announced funding we have day to day that deals with things such as brand marketing and major campaign activities like Seek Different, youth drive and brand campaigns content creation. We have events, sponsorships, major campaigns, PR and social media campaigns and trade and industry work with major campaigns. We have low-season marketing campaigns. Mr Lovett spoke about international bodies of work we do as well.

Ms BOOTHBY: How was the Vivid campaign success measured?

Mrs MANISON: Mr Lovett will speak about that.

Mr CHAIR: Sorry, before we continue, there was a question that was to be taken on notice.

Mrs MANISON: Yes, let us put it on notice.

Question on Notice No 1.5

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

Ms BOOTHBY: How much was spent on the Vivid campaign?

Mr CHAIR: Minister, do you accept the question?

Mrs MANISON: Yes.

Mr CHAIR: The question asked by the Member for Brennan has been allocated the number 1.5.

Mr LOVETT: An awareness campaign like Vivid will be measured by the lift of awareness. We will seek to see a bunch of digital metrics set against it—how much we are driving back to our website activity. We are looking to grow the percentage of people who are aware of the Northern Territory as a holiday destination.

That is one campaign amongst a bunch of other more tactical activities and other awareness activities the minister was just mentioning about PR and other media activities. All combined, the way we measure success or otherwise is through the awareness number.

Ms BOOTHBY: For want of a better term, why are bums on seats not measured? Would that not be a direct correlation of the visitors to the Territory based on all your campaigns?

Mrs MANISON: We look at different data about how many people we get in. There is a raft of different research work that takes place to understand the motivating factors.

If you do nothing and everybody else is telling their story, you will not get people to come here. You have to be right out there. We get strong feedback from industry that they want us to do that and be out there actively marketing tourism and putting serious commitments into it.

The other important thing to note is, as I said earlier, there are lots of small mum-and-dad businesses that simply do not have a marketing budget or capacity themselves. These are the people we champion and support through the activities we do.

Regarding measurement and how tourism looks at those things with the different sources of data they utilise, the return for investment—they are big on RFI in tourism—I will get Mr Lovett to talk you through a bit of that detail. We have a duty to market. The world is marketing. Our marketing budget in comparison to some other jurisdictions is nowhere near the size, but we need to do our bit.

Mr LOVETT: The question is dead right. Heads on beds, bums on seats is the ultimate measure; we are conscious of that. That comes through our TRA data—Tourism Research Australia’s national visitor survey and international visitor survey which come out on a quarterly basis.

It is extremely important for us to understand the effectiveness of our marketing activity, so we run a very comprehensive quarterly report for the market tracking survey, which looks at all of our activities and how well that is received in the market—making sure our message is right, we are serving the right imagery and we have the right deal in front of people. Ultimately, it is about awareness. Once people are aware and they intend to travel, they start planning, ‘We will go here, then we will go there’, then they travel. We monitor people all the way through that travel funnel to make sure our marketing activity is right.

The wider we can get that funnel up the top from an awareness perspective, the bigger we will have, theoretically, heads on beds, bums on seats.

Ms BOOTHBY: What impact is crime having on our tourism industry?

Mrs MANISON: Right now the biggest impact we have on our tourism industry is cost-of-living competing factors and the fact that people now have the freedom to go overseas. The competition across the nation is the biggest impact we are seeing.

Mrs LAMBLEY: Where does crime sit?

Mrs MANISON: We listen to industry about some of the experiences some people have. We want to make sure that when people come here they have a fantastic experience. We put in that extra funding at the start of the year in Central Australia in particular, because it got some national coverage, as we know.

For some people, I am sure that has had an impact on the decision-making, but we are hearing that the majority of those pressures are coming from are interest rate rises, trying to pay the bills, and having more choice now about where people can go, with more cruise ships back up and running, airline connectivity and those things.

Mrs LAMBLEY: Do you do any modelling on the impact of crime on tourism?

Mrs MANISON: As Mt Lovett just said, our modelling looks at the data of how many passengers are coming in, what our hotels are looking like—those types of things. There is some surveying that takes place. Mr Lovett will go into further detail about that.

Mr LOVETT: Yes, again as the minister said, we survey. Tourism is probably one of the richest data sources we have for both actual visitation and sentiment from our consumers and operators. At a national level Tourism Australia publishes a bunch of data sets. Destination safety ranks high; that is a fact. That is looked at on a global stage.

What ranks high at the moment is affordability. They are looking for experience. Affordability is the biggest challenge we have ...

Mrs LAMBLEY: More than crime?

Mr LOVETT: Yes, right now.

Mrs LAMBLEY: Can we talk a little specifically about Alice Springs? It is broadly recognised that we are in the middle of a crime crisis. As the former minister for Police from 2016 to 2020, you presided over that horrific escalation in crime in Central Australia, so you know all about the impact of crime in Central Australia and just how dire it is.

Do you do modelling on the impact of crime in particular areas? Mr Lovett talked about destination safety. Alice Springs features very high on the unsafe list always; it always gets a mention. To minimise the impact of crime on the tourism industry in Central Australia is doing us all a disservice.

Can you talk a little about what you are doing in that space, as the former minister for Police who was required to keep us safe and did not do a very good job and now is talking about tourism? Give us a bit of perspective on what you are doing about the crime crisis in Central Australia and our slump in tourism. Tourism operators have told me that Alice Springs is having the slowest start they have ever seen to the tourist season.

Mrs MANISON: For tourism, the biggest factors are the cost of living and international availability ...

Mrs LAMBLEY: In Alice Springs?

Mrs MANISON: We listen to industry and to people on the ground and what they are concerned about. Earlier this year, I was in Alice Springs for the 2030 conference with the industry. We always get strong attendance. It was important to make sure they realised that they were being listened to. That is where we made the announcements about the response package for Alice Springs, particularly after some of the national media coverage that had taken place over the summer.

We continue to listen to people on the ground and to their real-life experiences, and what the industry concerns are—for example, the membership of organisations like Tourism Central Australia. The advice I had back from the last TCA meeting—which happened last week or the week before—from the people in the industry was a strong message about wanting to see strong marketing and work done to promote the region.

Mrs LAMBLEY: That makes perfect sense. When you have a crime crisis in your town and clearly tourism has been impacted by that crime crisis, then marketing is essential. I agree. Together with that, you have to do something about crime too, which you did not do for four years.

Do you take any responsibility for the fact that tourism in Central Australia is probably at one of its lowest points?

Mrs MANISON: There are positive forward bookings and investment going to Central Australia.

Mrs LAMBLEY: Where do you get that data from? It contradicts what I am hearing.

Mrs MANISON: We have had some great turnouts and results over the weekend. We have had a great Parrtjima. We just had significant new product being launched with Voyages through Wintjiri Wiru which is a world-class product.

Mrs LAMBLEY: What about the Finke weekend in Alice Springs? Beds were available throughout town. We have never seen that before. We had the highest rate of bed vacancy that the Finke Desert Race has ever seen. It is the busiest weekend in Alice Springs. How do you explain that?

You work so hard to minimise the crime crisis and now the impact of crime on tourism. I find it almost insulting. I am sure people are listening today, feeling, 'What is this woman thinking? What is this woman talking about?' You are minimising something that is concerning and bad, which is the correlation between crime and the slump in tourism in Central Australia. Are you telling me that I am wrong? Is that it?

Mrs MANISON: I am trying to talk about the positive investments that we have seen to promote Central Australia as a place where people can have an amazing holiday or trip. This is what industry wants us to do. This is the strong feedback that TCA had from its direct membership at its last meeting. That is something I respect dearly.

We will always work hard to deal with those crime issues. I do not disregard those or try to minimise them at all. I reassure you that there is a huge amount of work that is happening. You will be sitting down with the Police minister later this week to ask some further questions regarding what is happening there.

In regard to some of those investments, there are huge redevelopment plans for Lasseters; there is the national Aboriginal art gallery ...

Mrs LAMBLEY: If it happens. Seven years later and there is zero progress.

Mrs MANISON: ... the G'day Group; and the wonderful Bruce Munro installation which is now up and running. Investment will go into the sealing of the Mereenie Loop.

There is wonderful investment into the future of tourism because of the natural environment, the history, the art, culture and the sporting community. There is a lot to be celebrated in Central Australia. Our job is to focus on getting even more tourists into Central Australia and to grow the industry. That is very much what we are trying to do.

Mrs LAMBLEY: Before I come to Estimates, I routinely canvass people across my community for questions and comments. I will read to you what a long-term tourism provider in Alice Springs sent me last night. This person said:

'This is one of the worst starts to a tourism season I can remember.'

This guy has been around forever.

'The big issues are state of the economy, cost of airfares, airline seat reduction and crime. Coupled with this, it is extremely hard to attract staff to the region. We are short-staffed for the first time ever. When we do attract staff, they are lured to a Northern Territory Government job, as they pay better.'

'I just can't win. Crime cost my businesses an enormous amount of time and money. Every time an incident happens near my place of business, the police will request footage and there are no permanent police cameras near me, so I have to spend a lot of time downloading footage. The police officer who sits with me gets paid, but I don't. This costs me every time and it happens very often.'

'A few days ago, teenagers entered my business premises during my regular operating hours. One of them accessed the till and was captured on CCTV camera. The one who tried to access the till is wearing an ankle bracelet so is supposed to be being monitored.'

He went on and on, basically describing with a great deal of clarity and no uncertainty that he, as a long-term tourism business operator in Alice Springs, is not doing well. Numbers are down and crime is impairing his ability to conduct his business.

Things are tough. If you talked to people one on one, you would get a slightly different perspective. I had feedback from the TCA meeting you referred to. It was not very well attended because the general feeling was that people are so stretched and under the pump trying to make ends meet and get on with delivering their product in Central Australia ...

Mr CHAIR: Member for Araluen, is there a question at the end of this?

Mrs LAMBLEY: I will get to the question.

Mr CHAIR: I am asking because a lot has been spoken.

Mrs LAMBLEY: What do you think of that?

Mrs MANISON: I do not doubt the individual operator you have spoken to has had a terrible experience. I do not doubt that they have taken the time to write to you as their local member to express those concerns because they have gone through a hard time.

What I will say, though, about Central Australia is that some businesses are reporting that they are having a great season and they are doing well. Other businesses are saying that they are down on the year before. There is still a lot to be optimistic about in that region, especially when you see the strong investment taking place.

We want more airlines going into Central Australia. That is one area where I believe there are more opportunities. We are pursuing that because we want to see more people coming in on those seats, as well as local residents having the opportunity to visit other people around the country, which is strong feedback we get.

We continue to talk to industry and businesses to see how they are travelling along. We will continue to do what we can to support the Central Australian tourism industry, particularly in Alice Springs.

Mr CHAIR: On the airlines, everyone agrees we need competition. What are we doing around that space, from a government point of view?

Mrs MANISON: Residents in Alice Springs get residential fares through Virgin and Qantas, but the loud and clear feedback is that people want more airlines, cheaper options and more availability.

We are in conversations with different airlines about trying to bring some of these to reality. It has been disappointing to see that some of our major airlines are simply not prioritising the Northern Territory as

I believe they should. We are seeing a strong focus on the high-yielding markets where they make their money, which is Brisbane, Sydney and Melbourne.

We have been actively talking to them in partnership with the Airport Development Group in regard to landing fees. What people pay to go through the airports per passenger has a big impact on some of the airlines' decision-making.

The other thing we are competing with is the fact that some of the bigger jurisdictions which have—aside from more profitable routes for these airlines—very large and aggressive aviation funds that are often co-funded by local government and the airports, where they are literally paying airlines to come to their destination.

We are having positive conversations and we are working hard to get more airlines into the Northern Territory.

Ms BOOTHBY: Would you name the business you are speaking with, which said it has had a great tourism season in Alice Springs this year?

Mrs MANISON: I will not individually name these people, but we have several conversations regularly with different stakeholders. We make the effort to visit people. My office picks up the phone to see how things are going. Sometimes you ring up and some people say they are experiencing positive forward bookings.

Ms BOOTHBY: You cannot name just one?

Mrs MANISON: I will not put the individual businesses on the record, but it is fair to say ...

Ms BOOTHBY: They are tourism operators, though, saying they are having a great season in Central Australia?

Mrs MANISON: Different businesses have different responses.

Ms BOOTHBY: I want to go back to the rich data you spoke about. Given there is so much data, you would be well aware that crime is having an impact on these tourism operators across the Territory, and that time after time on travel blogs and social media, people are being warned against coming to the Northern Territory.

Last year you attempted to minimise the impact of the crime crisis by stating that when people go to visit the Eiffel Tower, they know it is notorious for pickpockets, and that people in the Northern Territory should lock things up. Those were your words. The situation is a bit more serious than that, is it not? Do you stand by those comments and that by you minimising the levels of crime this year, you accept the out-of-control level of crime impacting our tourism operators?

Mrs MANISON: We are listening to people on the ground. A raft of action is being taken with regard to community safety. The Chief Minister, as well as the Police and Territory Families minister, will speak about those specific actions.

I stress that it is important for us to tell good stories. Businesses are aware that ratings and reviews play an important role in people's decisions about where they go and stay. In our personal experiences of booking trips, we look at these things. Our department does a lot of work on this with those companies, because it is an important factor in decision-making.

Mr CHAIR: I remind committee members that when we are quoting someone as a position of fact, we need to be able to substantiate those comments. I am not saying that it did or did not happen; I am just saying that in future, to assist the committee, an extract of *Hansard*, for example, would suffice. I am not saying that it did not happen; it is just for future reference for everyone, if we can follow that and substantiate any comments before we put it on the public record.

Ms BOOTHBY: What did you do over the last 12 months to make our tourists safer when they visit the Territory?

Mrs MANISON: I have supported work that the government has done on community safety which is important. In regard to the work on some of those safety initiatives, you will have in-depth conversations with the minister for Police and Territory Families as well as the Chief Minister.

Ms BOOTHBY: What did you specifically do to make tourists safer?

Mrs MANISON: I am part of a government that has put into place a raft of community safety initiatives targeted at Alice Springs.

Ms BOOTHBY: Do you admit that crime figures that impact our tourists have escalated?

Mrs MANISON: There were activities over the summer in particular that were completely unacceptable. We have responded from a tourism front by putting more support in to the Central Australia tourism region.

Ms BOOTHBY: What are you doing to ensure that when tourists research destinations to visit, they do not see an environment considered to be too dangerous?

Mrs MANISON: Mr Lovett can talk about the work we do on online platforms, reviews and monitoring that type of work. We have put in significant additional campaigns and resourcing to ensure wonderful stories about Central Australian holidays are being told as well.

Ms BOOTHBY: What about the rest of the Territory, not just Central Australia?

Mrs MANISON: Yes, that is where we have our campaigns. We also have our market, which is our Seek Different campaign, Road Trip Differently campaign, Aboriginal Culture campaign and some of the individual campaigns. Do you want Mr Lovett to talk a bit about the monitoring of reviews and the work that we do on reviews and so forth?

Ms BOOTHBY: I welcome investment into the tourism sector for marketing, but I am still wondering, as many tourism businesses are, how that \$35m will generate so many positive Google and TripAdvisor reviews, so that no-one from interstate researching Darwin, Katherine, Tennant Creek or Alice Springs will see that there are youths terrorising our streets late at night and people being stabbed to death in broad daylight. How will that practically work?

Mrs MANISON: Mr Lovett will speak about the reviews and the body of work we have done, working with businesses and industry about growing demand to ensure that we have plans in place to generate positive reviews.

Mr LOVETT: Ultimately, we cannot influence what reviews go on Google or TripAdvisor—that would defeat the whole integrity of the platforms—but we invest into a platform called ReviewPro. That basically scrapes—for want of a better term—all of the reviews by product. We offer that data to every registered tourism business in the Northern Territory. That provides a GRI, a global review index, which is an index out of 100 which shows satisfaction with a particular product or service in the tourism industry. It categorises everything from food, service, beverage, safety and anything to do with a particular product.

That is powerful data. It provides key word searches. If somewhere is considered a great place to swim or that there has been a break-in, that all gets registered. The individual businesses have access to that. Businesses in Alice Springs can log on to ReviewPro.

From a development sense we work with tourism businesses to ensure that they have access to the platform and they are responding to the reviews. As you would know from a personal perspective, when you are researching holidays you look at those reviews and are making your purchase decision based on what other people are saying. It is important that businesses are taking responsibility for their own online presence and reviews.

Ms BOOTHBY: Can the ReviewPro report be tabled here so that we can see all the details of it?

Mr LOVETT: It would be a privacy issue, but there would be nothing stopping you seeking that data from tourism businesses.

Ms BOOTHBY: You would not have a holistic approach to a report which covers ...

Mr CHAIR: The question was discussed off-mic and it will need to be taken on notice.

Question on Notice No 1.6

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

Ms BOOTHBY: Can you table the ReviewPro reports?

Mr CHAIR: Minister, do you accept the question?

Mrs MANISON: Yes.

Mr CHAIR: The question asked by the Member for Brennan has been allocated the number 1.6.

Ms BOOTHBY: The tourism season has started slowly. If you are expecting 83,000 more tourists compared to last year, according to your budget, is that a cost of \$421 per tourist, given the budget is \$35m?

Mrs MANISON: That is an interesting breakdown. We will always work to get as many people to the Northern Territory as possible. We continue to ensure that we put good money into marketing to be competitive and drive our tourists to the Northern Territory and not to other destinations.

To do the alternative would mean not to run joint campaigns and target particular markets that have good sources of tourists and not speak to the caravaners and the people who want a cultural experience or do some spectacular walks in our parks.

We took the advice of our department and tourism board which suggested the amount of money we needed to be competitive. That is what we have backed and funded through this budget.

Ms BOOTHBY: How much did you spend per tourist last year to attract the 1.6 million tourists to the Territory?

Mrs MANISON: That figure is in the budget paper. BP3 will tell you what we spent.

Ms BOOTHBY: Just on the visitation numbers?

Mrs MANISON: That will tell you the budget for the agency. Mr Lovett, do you want to go into the visitation numbers further?

Mr LOVETT: Breaking down the visitation stats by expenditure is challenging for the Northern Territory because of our unique dynamic. Our visitation is split into four, as can be seen on our reports: holiday, VFR—visiting friends and relatives—business and other.

We share, with Tasmania, the highest proportion of leisure or holiday travel. We have the lowest proportion of visiting friends and relatives travel, which is purely a function of our smaller population.

Other larger destinations such as Victoria and New South Wales with larger population bases get many more visiting friends-and-relatives traffic for obvious reasons. That blows their numbers out. They also get more business travel by volume.

State tourism organisations do not target visiting friends and relatives and business travel specifically. It makes our job extraordinarily difficult when we look at the per visitor expenditure number.

Ms BOOTHBY: Would that number be much higher, given you do not target those two smaller sectors or marketplaces?

Mr LOVETT: Yes. It is probably the wrong wording. We obviously target all travellers, but visiting friends and relatives from the south are not necessarily coming to see you because of our campaign. Through our visitor information service, we will show them all the wonderful experiences they can have whilst they are here. They may visit a jumping croc cruise, Litchfield or Nitmiluk National Park et cetera. The majority of our marketing dollars are spent on attracting domestic holiday visitors.

When you see that 1.6 million total visitors, it is challenging to look at a per capita visitor spend across other jurisdictions.

Ms BOOTHBY: Given what Mr Lovett just said, it probably is more than \$421 per tourist that you are using to attract these people. How does that compare to other states in regard to what they spend, per tourist, to attract them to their state?

Mrs MANISON: I will get Mr Lovett to speak a bit more about that. It is important to recognise that the Territory has a much smaller budget than larger jurisdictions.

Ms BOOTHBY: Per tourist?

Mrs MANISON: We will get to that.

They have much bigger budgets and more capacity to market their product domestically and internationally. We do what we can within the capacity of the Territory budget to put in what we think is a competitive target. The important thing is that we are targeted in what we do with our marketing to get the tourists to make the decision to come to the Northern Territory.

It is fair to say the Seek Different campaign shows the type of tourist we are trying to attract to the Territory, because these are the people who will make the financial commitment and decision to take the trip here.

Mr Lovett can speak a bit more about the tourist per-capita funding.

Mr LOVETT: Tourism NT holds not only marketing but industry development functions of supply and demand. Not all jurisdictions have that. Most others have that separated, so it is challenging to do a jurisdictional comparison.

From a comparative perspective, when we do our cooperative campaigns with Webjet, for example—and my other state and territory colleagues will not like me saying this—we traditionally punch well above our weight in regard to our campaign advocacy and activity. The return on investment we get is our benchmark sits at about 1:10, but we often achieve upwards of 40:1 or 50:1 in some of our campaign activities.

Ms BOOTHBY: Can you please clarify that for me? We punch above our weight as far as campaigns go, which is awareness, but as far as return on investment we do not do so well?

Mr LOVETT: When I say campaigns, I mean trade campaigns, which is Flight Centre, Luxury Escapes, Webjet—those types of conversion ...

Ms BOOTHBY: We do well on those, but not on return on investment?

Mr LOVETT: No, we do well on those from a return on investment. Awareness is a broad category to say what the return is. The return is the lift in awareness, but as the minister was saying, there is huge competition for domestic visitors and international destinations pulling Australians out.

I talk to my team constantly about making sure the commercial returns in the market are as strong as they possibly can be.

Ms BOOTHBY: Where did you get the 83,000 new tourists figure from, or did you make it up?

Mrs MANISON: We work through our advice and media releases with the department, which gets that information from a range of resources and forecasting.

Ms BOOTHBY: Where did the 83,000 number come from?

Mr LOVETT: They are forecasts. Every year we look at our actual visitation that has come and forward sentiment. There is a tourism forecasting group which sits nationally which looks at a range of macroeconomic factors and sets a growth rate target for us. We adjust those for Territory conditions and what we think the market is doing and not doing. It is not an exact science, much like other forecasting, but it is a good guesstimate to see what we think will happen.

There are factors in the market at play which will happen at much shorter notice. By the time we write these KPIs to the end of the reporting period is often 18 months to two years. It is a forecast.

Ms BOOTHBY: Given that Territory conditions and forward sentiment are included when looking at these growth figures of tourism into the Territory, surely crime would rate somewhere in the Territory conditions and those forward sentiments. That being the case, would we normally expect a much higher growth rate than the 83,000 we have seen this year because of the impact of crime?

Mrs MANISON: We have gone through this in a bit of detail over the last hour. The advice we are getting back is cost-of-living options in line with availability of international travel. We are not taking for granted media coverage we saw earlier this year in particular, hence we put additional resourcing into Central Australia and Alice Springs to deal with that.

Ms BOOTHBY: What about the crime in Katherine and in Darwin?

Mrs MANISON: The biggest impacts we are hearing are on cost of living, availability of airline seats and availability to do other things overseas again.

Mrs LAMBLEY: I do not think you are being honest, minister. With people getting stabbed and killed in Darwin, Alice Springs and throughout the Northern Territory, I fail to believe what you are saying. You are being disingenuous.

Mr CHAIR: Is that a question?

Mrs LAMBLEY: No, it is not.

Mr CHAIR: Continue on, Member for Brennan.

Ms BOOTHBY: On this same theme, small business owners who own the Katherine Motel, as an example, said they had a dramatic drop in occupancy rates compared to last year. The occupancy rate this year is 10% compared to 70% last year. They believe it is a direct result of crime and antisocial behaviour in Katherine.

They also said that online bookings would come through, then a call would follow just before they were due to arrive and that booking was cancelled. They were citing crime as the reason for the cancellation.

How will that \$35m in marketing mean that the owners of the Katherine Motel and other hotels and motels can enjoy a position where bookings are cancelled less than they are now?

Mrs MANISON: We do not want to see that type of thing happen. On top of what we already do in our day-to-day business of the tourism agency, this is giving more grunt into our marketing and our work of telling those great stories about those regions.

Industry has been loud and clear that they want us to tell those stories so they can get more activity, bookings and make sure that people understand the wonderful holiday options they have in the Territory.

Ms BOOTHBY: Is there more that you can do for people like the owners of Katherine Motel in your position as minister for Tourism, on crime given that it is the number one thing that these businesses in Darwin, Katherine and Alice Springs are talking about?

Mrs MANISON: Supporting the community safety initiative we have in place—you will be able to speak to those ministers later on in the week—and definitely backing them with resourcing and the work they are doing is important. There are also options for those businesses to work with our small business champions. As a department we are always happy to reach out and have those conversations and work with them.

Ms BOOTHBY: Going back to that sentiment analysis that says that crime is not high ranking compared to cost of living, like you said, are you willing to release that data to us, as I am keen to see what that looks like?

Mrs MANISON: This is the work that we do to understand feedback directly from industry with the national tourism meetings that take place. This is the feedback and information we get clearly across the board.

Ms BOOTHBY: Does your department have analysis of this feedback that it can pull together in a report to show that crime is not high ranking, like you just said?

Mrs LAMBLEY: Where is the evidence?

Mrs MANISON: This is the feedback we have been getting from industry and consumers. I do not know whether Mr Lovett has anything further to add to that.

Ms BOOTHBY: Is there a report that can show us to this?

Mrs MANISON: Mr Lovett is saying you can put that on notice and we can get some data together for you.

Question on Notice No 1.7

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

Ms BOOTHBY: Can you release any of your sentiment analysis that says crime is not a high-ranking issue?

Mr CHAIR: Minister, do you accept the question?

Mrs MANISON: Yes.

Mr CHAIR: The question asked by the Member for Brennan has been allocated the number 1.7.

Ms BOOTHBY: Consistent with the NT master plan for mountain biking, which was released in 2016, the NT Government commenced the construction of bike trails in Litchfield that will link the new Central Valley area to Florence Falls, but also access new swimming hikes that are currently inaccessible.

Trail construction commenced but was stalled during COVID, which was over two years ago. Given this will be a magnificent tourism attraction—I am sure you agree—have these works recommenced and when can operation or completion be expected?

Mrs MANISON: Can we talk about this in the Parks and Wildlife output, please?

Ms BOOTHBY: Okay. In 2019, you announced that a \$12m tender was awarded for the Red Centre Adventure Ride project, a 200-kilometre bike trail between Alice Springs and Glen Helen. The project was expected to be completed by late 2020. This \$12m in funding was allocated by the NTG in 2018. It is now 2023 and still nothing has happened. What were the reasons why this project was not completed?

Mrs MANISON: This project is being managed through Parks and Wildlife, so when we come to that output, we can talk about it. I am ready for a lengthy conversation, but effectively the issue has been getting traditional owner consent in order to go forward. We have had some good progress recently.

Mr CHAIR: At the risk of going outside the output, can we hold that until we come to Parks and Wildlife and focus on Output 3.1?

Mrs MANISON: I expect the Member for Namatjira to ask me a lot of questions about it then.

Mr YAN: I have some questions on this issue involving tourism going forward. This announcement was made a number of years ago, and mountain biking in Central Australia was to be a centrepiece of tourism. Considering this is a major tourism project for Central Australia, why was the announcement made without all the due diligence behind the scenes in the first place to make sure the project would happen?

Mrs MANISON: We wanted to put together some strong new tourism products utilising the magnificent natural assets of Central Australia. It does not get much better than West MacDonnell. The Larapinta is already there. Mountain biking tourists are high-spending tourists; we like that they spend their money. A beautiful product is on offer. At the time, the government wanted to make a commitment to show that this is a project we want on the books.

Unfortunately, we went through COVID, which stalled the ability to get out on country for meetings and conversations. There has been other preliminary design work taking place. We have multiple TO groups out that way and, ideally, we want to get the whole project done. We are finalising some consent agreements, which Parks and Rangers can talk to you more about where it is up to.

It was about getting some money into the budget to show that we were serious about this and to get a project onto the books. Those negotiations have taken some time. It is important that we get them right because we have to get traditional owner consent to do it.

Mrs LAMBLEY: When was it first put in the budget?

Mrs MANISON: I will have to get that to you, Member for Araluen.

Mrs LAMBLEY: It must be at least five or six years ago.

Mrs MANISON: It has been a while, yes.

Mr YAN: My concern is that this government has announced a major tourism project for Central Australia without the ability to deliver on it. That shows a lack of foresight from government, particularly about Central Australia and the ability to deliver a project. You have announced that you will deliver this major, great, wonderful project for Central Australia and you do not have the ability to deliver it because due diligence was not done in the first place.

Mrs MANISON: Consider it the other way, Member for Namatjira. If you do not show the financial commitment, it is hard to make that real and tangible sometimes, because there are negotiations that had to have taken place with those traditional owner groups. Getting that commitment on the table tasked our agencies to start that work and show that we are serious about it with the Central Land Council and those traditional owners. Those conversations are continuing.

In the meantime, we have also tasked DIPL with some of that early design work.

We want to deliver this. There have been significant conversations this year with the Central Land Council and traditional owner groups. We are edging closer to that important consent agreement.

Mr YAN: I will reserve the rest of my questions for Parks.

Mr GUYULA: A little on tourism, taking care of country and wildlife. As government encourages more tourism to our remote areas, what is being provided to our rangers, whose jobs are growing as they must look after our visitors and protect country?

I add onto that. I have talked about the sand dunes and other off-road areas where tourists or some locals are driving recklessly along the beach. It is like Mandorah Beach and Dundee Beach damage. There are a lot of turtle nesting areas in the sand dunes. How can we control that and make tourists have part of their journey here but also look after our wildlife and country as well?

Mrs MANISON: When we get to Output 6.1 for Parks and Rangers, we will be able to talk more about the work that rangers do, and the funding programs and the Aboriginal ranger grants we make.

It is expected, but unfortunately not all people get the message. We see some terrible behaviour in different parts of the Northern Territory, particularly with quad bikes and big four-wheel drive utes. There are a few notorious parts of the Northern Territory where a long weekend brings out the worst behaviour you can imagine on beaches and country.

I remind people that when you get the privilege to some of these incredible spots, do the right thing, pick up your rubbish, respect country, do not trash the place with four-wheel drives and quad bikes, tear it up and have a big party.

People die every year from drinking and doing inappropriate dangerous things in the night. Again, I remind people that we have a beautiful place here. Let us all take care of each other and do the right thing.

Mr GUYULA: There is ...

Mr CHAIR: We have hit 12.30 pm. Do you have a closing ...

Mr GUYULA: A quick one, yes. I have been driving up and down the road to Katherine on the Central Arnhem Road and have seen lots of animals like wallabies that have been run over. Whether people are doing it purposely or the population in animals ...

Mrs MANISON: I question the behaviour of the wallabies, though; they like hanging around the side of the road and jumping in front of cars sometimes, too.

Mr GUYULA: I hope it only happens that way and not deliberately. I have seen a lot of dead animals.

Mrs MANISON: I agree. You are driving at the right time, trying to avoid dusk and dawn when we know that a lot of those animals are on the side of the road. I have not heard reports. We will ask Parks and Rangers

when they are in about people intentionally stalking and doing bad things to those animals. We have all seen buffaloes, cows and wallabies on the side of the road. It is a pretty common sight in the Territory.

The committee suspended.

Mr CHAIR: We will continue Output Group 3.0, Tourism, Services and Hospitality, Output 3.1, Tourism.

Ms BOOTHBY: The new tourism information centre for Alice Springs was announced in Budget 2022–23 as a \$5m project. This project has not as yet commenced and there is no mention of it in this year's budget despite tourism in Central Australia being on its knees. I cannot see it on the DIPL projects list with a status update. What is the hold up?

Mrs MANISON: I had a brief with DIPL to get an understanding of where things are at.

First, a huge thank you to Patrick and Danial of Tourism Central Australia, for their incredible job of advocating for their membership. They are always directly accessible to me, my office and this agency. Mr Lovett spends a lot of time on the phone to them, as do my staff. They have their finger on the pulse.

The visitor information centre is timely and important. A big part of it is having a place where people can easily pull up, park and access them. We have put a budget allocation for a new visitor centre at the base of Anzac Hill. It is a good site but it has many historic issues from previous usage.

The Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Logistics has carriage of this project. The latest update I have—it might be worthwhile re-clarifying with the minister—is that procurement for site investigations, including significant environmental assessments, is under way. These investigations are expected to be completed in quarter three of 2023.

The design of the new visitor information centre will be undertaken concurrently with the site investigations. Subject to the outcome of the site assessment, construction is aiming to commence around quarter one of 2024. A project control group has been established that includes Tourism Central Australia representation.

I am under no illusions here, Member for Brennan, of the historic nature and usage of this site and what environmental assessments may uncover because, traditionally, there has been a heavy industry-type use in town.

Danial and Patrick have expressed their concerns about slippage on deadlines for delivery and what that means for them and their current lease arrangements. We take them seriously. It is important that they have a voice on that project control group. Every time I have met with them it is something they raised.

Ms BOOTHBY: You were the minister who announced that tourism information centre. I think you were standing on the site that you were talking about a year ago.

Given that tourism in Central Australia is on its knees and this could be a boost to the Centre, why would you not do your due diligence about the site beforehand?

Mrs MANISON: First, I dispute that the industry is on its knees.

The site is a prime spot going into the CBD on the side of the Stuart Highway. It is an excellent site; however, it had other commercial usages over time. Everybody went into this with eyes wide open. The biggest risk to this project will be the environmental reclamation work and what you need to do to make sure that you can build and construct on this site.

Ms BOOTHBY: Will the tourism information centre take as long, if not longer, as the Aboriginal art gallery in Alice Springs?

Mrs MANISON: I have just given you the latest time line on what we have been provided through DIPL and what it is aiming for.

Ms BOOTHBY: When will it be completed?

Mrs MANISON: I will have to get the information from DIPL. I do not have that information at hand. When Minister Lawler is up tomorrow, you will be able to ask that question.

Ms BOOTHBY: I go back to you disputing that the industry is on its knees. I have a copy of the Alice Springs and MacDonnell Ranges region destination management plan Annual Report Card 2022. If I am reading this correctly, it clearly says that visitors are down 44% and expenditure is down 45%. Do you not agree that this demonstrates this industry is on its knees?

Mrs MANISON: I would have to see what you have there, but we are not getting the same information. We are not having as big a year as we had last year, yes, I will agree. That the industry is on its knees is not the feedback we are getting.

Ms BOOTHBY: Who are you speaking to about that feedback saying it is not on its knees?

Mrs MANISON: We speak to different people across industry and businesses and small to very large companies as well.

Ms BOOTHBY: This is your report. It is the Alice Springs and MacDonnell Ranges region destination management plan. It clearly shows me a downturn, yet you are saying that when you speak to the people you speak to, that is not the case. Where is the evidence that you can demonstrate to us and to Territorians that they are having an okay tourism season in Alice Springs?

Mrs MANISON: Mr Lovett will speak to some of that, Member for Brennan.

Ms BOOTHBY: With respect, you are the minister. Do you not know that answer?

Mrs MANISON: With respect, I do not have the document you are looking at in front of me.

Mr CHAIR: Member for Brennan, I remind you that your question goes to the minister and she has the ability to defer to the department. If she wants to defer to the department, that is why they are here.

Ms BOOTHBY: Would you like me to table this?

Mrs MANISON: Yes.

Mr CHAIR: If you would like to, that would be good.

Mrs MANISON: Yes. In the meantime Mr Lovett will speak to it.

Mr LOVETT: It is great to see that the report card is being read. That data is year ending June 2022. That takes into account 1 July 2021 through to 2022. They are COVID affected ...

Mrs MANISON: We expect to see different data.

Mr LOVETT: They are COVID-affected years. Any other significant impact there is basically zero international travel because the borders were closed for a majority of that period. That is why the numbers were down in visitors and expenditure.

Since that time it has grown, and international is starting to come back. No doubt in Central Australia it is still below where it was in 2019, but it is building back up.

Ms BOOTHBY: What are the numbers up to now for Central Australia? What do the tourism numbers look like?

Mrs MANISON: They will look a lot stronger because we were not dealing with COVID. Plus we came off a huge year when you look at the entirety of the last year's expenditure. If you talk to anyone, last year was very strong.

Mrs LAMBLEY: Those figures say that between 2019 and 2022—you can see the graph that is in front of you—there has been almost a halving of visitor numbers.

Mrs MANISON: As you can see, it is year ending to June 2019, year ending to June 2021 and year ending to June 2022. What happened in those periods of time? I remind you where we were at the start of 2022.

Mrs LAMBLEY: I remind you of what you have told us today, minister; that last year was a good year. This year is 2023, and last year was 2022, which is what that graph is referring to. You told us today, several times, that last year was good and we have slumped this year.

Can you give us hard figures on what we visitor numbers we are talking about here? The MacDonnell shire came up with some numbers. Can we see some numbers? The media is reporting similar slumps. A couple of weeks ago, the *NT News* ran a story about how bed vacancy in Darwin was down by about 25%, and in Central Australia it was down by about 35%.

Everyone is saying the same thing apart from you, minister. Can you provide us some hard data please?

Mrs MANISON: Mr Lovett and I are going over where the year ended according to IBS and NBS. Mr Lovett will talk through why they are important snapshots of what was going on with the combined domestic and international snapshot, which informed us that we had a record year at \$3.12bn of visitor expenditure and people were staying on average 7.4 nights. The average spend was \$1,875 per person in comparison to the same year ending the year before of \$1,439. That is some of the statistical data that was provided at the end of last year, which was a record visitor spend in the Northern Territory. That goes to the year to end of December 2022.

Mrs LAMBLEY: A record spend. Are we getting fewer visitors but they are spending more? Mr Lovett is nodding.

Mrs MANISON: Yes, we still have some time to go. There was a higher spend and longer nights staying, yes. We are still building and still have some time to go.

Mrs LAMBLEY: What is the next highest spend? Are you saying that over \$3bn is the record spend? When was that?

Mrs MANISON: Off the top of my head, it was about \$2.6bn, but we will get confirmation of that.

Mrs LAMBLEY: What year was that?

Mrs MANISON: Pre-COVID.

Mrs LAMBLEY: Three years on, add a bit of inflation—and by God, we have seen a bit—that could explain the extra \$700,000 spent.

Mrs MANISON: We are seeing more nights being spent, which was very positive, too.

Mrs LAMBLEY: How do you explain why Bali is booming and—although I cannot dispute the figures that you have given—the numbers are not good for us?

Mrs MANISON: The advice I am getting is that across the nation there are similar issues compared with last year because people are doing exactly what you are saying; they are jumping on the plane, going back to Bali and enjoying those experiences that they had pre-COVID. People are starting to go back to their normal patterns of travel.

The other point that is important to remember is that pre-pandemic Australians spent more. We made less money from people coming in to visit Australia than Australians spent outside this country. During the pandemic, people buckled down and tried to increase domestic visitation.

Australians fell in love with their own country again. It has definitely changed people's views of even doing intra-Territory travel now. Everybody has discovered or rediscovered some beautiful places. As we have been speaking about this whole Estimates period, we are seeing a resurgence in Australians leaving the country and going back to some of their old travel patterns, hence why we have to stay in the market and do what we can to get them to choose a domestic holiday, as well as getting the internationals as they come back.

A prime example I use is Japan. When I was over there, I had a tourism discussion particularly focused on Uluru with a group of Japanese tourism agents and operators who have a big interest in the Northern Territory. People were still wearing masks in Japan. They were saying they had a huge number of inbound Australians coming to ski, yet the Japanese were not at that point where they had the confidence to

go back out and explore the world again. We saw those numbers with the Japanese, but things are changing now. People are really starting to find their feet with confidence again.

Mr CHAIR: I have a follow-on question in relation to what has been tabled. Probably Mr Lovett will confirm it for me, but this data goes until only the end of the financial year last year. What we are referring to does not include this financial year. You are saying that the numbers are up for December. Would it be fair to say that during COVID, because people could not travel internationally, we saw an influx? Is there anecdotal data to say we saw an influx because of where we could travel to and now it has gone back to what we would say is normal international travel?

Mrs MANISON: This is what we have been saying most of this Estimates. We are having discussions about this at Tourism ministers' meetings. This is a live issue, hence Tourism Australia went out very hard into the market at the end of last year with its new campaign to remind people to come to Australia because it knew international visitation is coming back and we need a slice of that.

We are under no illusions; we know that Australians are starting to go back to their old travel habits. It has always been a matter of not if, but when. A big point of discussion throughout the pandemic was when people would start hitting 'Go' and return to their old travel habits. We are starting to see that.

Mrs LAMBLEY: Those figures say that from 2019 to December 2022 there has been only a \$500m increase in tourism dollars which, over three years, is really not that impressive, is it?

Mrs MANISON: I will not say no to \$500m going into the Northern Territory economy.

Ms BOOTHBY: I go back to the extra spending from a reduced number of tourists. Does that not just show how high the cost of living is, resulting in the tourists who come here having to fork out more for the same experiences?

Mrs MANISON: We are positive about seeing people spend more visitor nights. We are seeing more opportunity to get them out to go on those tours and experiences. Yes, there will be some inflationary elements to that which will definitely impact it, but more visitor nights mean more visitor spend.

Ms BOOTHBY: Can you confirm what that percentage of uptick was of the nights?

Mrs MANISON: This will be year ending 2021 to year ending 2022. It was 6.5 to 7.4 nights—not a huge amount.

Ms BOOTHBY: Not a huge amount?

Mrs LAMBLEY: That is less than a day.

Ms BOOTHBY: That is not a huge uptick at all then.

Mrs MANISON: I am being told by the tourism expert that it is statistically significant.

Ms BOOTHBY: Those figures were nearly a year ago now. As the minister for Tourism, you would have some idea of what those figures would be looking like today?

Mrs MANISON: Visitor nights going back up to 2019 were about 6.2 nights; that is pre-pandemic. We are talking about an extra day, which Mr Lovett tells me is statistically significant.

Ms BOOTHBY: What about in the last 12 months? Even though we are not quite at the end of the financial year yet, you would still have an idea of what those night increases would be—you keep saying how it looks really positive—and what that spending has been over the last 12 months. You would have some idea, given that you are the Tourism minister. Do you have that information?

Mrs MANISON: The information I have at hand at the moment ...

Ms BOOTHBY: You only have information up to June 2022, which is a year ago.

Mrs MANISON: December.

Ms BOOTHBY: What about the last six months?

Mrs MANISON: We are in the start of June now. When is the next round due?

Mr LOVETT: There would be coming to us on ...

Mrs MANISON: That will be March? There you go. We will get the March figures later in the week. They will be released the week after?

Mr LOVETT: No, three weeks. It comes from the federal government.

Mrs MANISON: Do you want to explain that, Mr Lovett?

Mr LOVETT: It is TRI data. It comes out and we will receive that under embargo this week, then the federal minister will announce the numbers, probably in about two to three weeks' time after that.

Mrs MANISON: That is standard process, Member for Brennan.

Mrs LAMBLEY: What did you make of the article in the *NT News* the other week about vacancies being quite high this time of year in Darwin and Alice Springs?

Mrs MANISON: Throughout the pandemic, I was glad to see that a lot of businesses invested in renovating—using that difficult time to improve the product they had while they could.

We have also seen, in Central Australia for example, accommodation that we were using for the pandemic coming back online, which was important.

When I first came to the role, the conversations I had with TCA were about hurrying up and getting the hotels back online. We needed the accommodation, particularly when those peak events come to town that drive things through the roof, which can be very difficult.

Mrs LAMBLEY: We have just gone back to normal, minister.

Mrs MANISON: Those statistics are lower than we were seeing last year, which was a huge year. Looking specifically at quarter one 2023—this is the advice I have just been handed by my department. Do you want to go through that please? I will get the department to go through what they have been seeing and the advice we have.

Mr LOVETT: The TRA data talks about visitor numbers. We get data on the actual hotel performance as well. It does not include caravan park sites et cetera, but it will include roofed accommodation for those who subscribe to STR, which all hotels in Alice Springs and Darwin do.

What was reported in the *NT News* that occupancy dropped was right, but supply was greater. In Alice Springs, Mercure came back online and what is now known as Stay or was the old Aurora ...

Mrs LAMBLEY: We have also had several closures.

Mr LOVETT: In that time period, though. We are showing from quarter one 2023 to quarter one 2022 that demand was up 4%. Anecdotally, we are hearing that in January, February and March we were pretty good for the hotels in Alice Springs. April was not good, but it is always a funny month for hoteliers because it is highly dependent on when Easter falls. Last year, we had the unicorn moment when Anzac Day and Easter fell within a reasonable proximity of each other so they really benefited. Nationally, there was a similar story.

You are right. There are other hotels, going back previously, that have growth. Looking at year to year—2022 to 2023—there is more demand, albeit the occupancy has dropped. That is purely just a function of supply.

Mrs LAMBLEY: The *NT News* was not reporting correctly. Is that what you are saying?

Mr LOVETT: No. It was just not reporting the full context. What they reported was absolutely right. The occupancy rate has dropped but occupancy is only one measure of hotel performance. They will all look at revenue per available room.

Mrs LAMBLEY: Do you ever admit that there is a problem? The consistent message we have heard today is, 'There is nothing to see here. Crime is not a problem. Occupancy rate is just a bit of a perceptual thing.

There is data here, there and everywhere which can back up the story. Invariably, it is all good and there is nothing to see.'

Most Territorians can see for themselves that we are really not back to where we were pre-COVID times and that there is a bit of stress and strain happening in most places in the Territory due to crime and cost-of-living pressures on tourists, I will grant you that. I just do not feel that there is any admission at all that there could be a problem somewhere in the Territory when it comes to tourism. Am I right?

Mrs MANISON: We look at the data and talk to industry and businesses ...

Mrs LAMBLEY: Through your political lens. It is a good story you are telling us.

Mrs MANISON: It would be fair to say that you have a political lens too. I will leave it at that.

Mrs LAMBLEY: I sit in the truth in Alice Springs. I can see for myself clearly what is happening. I do not know about up here. We have no agenda.

Ms BOOTHBY: Have you fought boldly with airlines to bring more flights to the Territory with competitive airfares?

Mrs MANISON: We have had numerous meetings and discussions. The agency is tasked to do a raft of work as well. It is fair to say that we should be getting a better deal in the Territory. Some of the major airlines let us down. I get very frustrated when they change their airline schedules. The impact on a place that is very isolated, like the Northern Territory, with a much smaller population, is far greater than what they would feel if they decide to tinker with a couple of the Sydney, Melbourne or Brisbane routes.

We are in regular conversation with the major airlines as well as the Airport Development Group which is very much a part of this conversation about how we get more airlines to come here. We have had some positive conversations with some other airlines, which I am hoping will bear some good results for the Northern Territory. We are very serious about it.

It is difficult to compete with aviation funds like the one in Queensland where you see large cashed-up local government organisations that can put serious money on the table. If you were to ask the City of Darwin or the Alice Springs Town Council if they would be able to match those types of funds, it would be a very difficult ask, given their small ratepayer base.

We are having some very positive conversations at the moment. I hope to have more good news to come.

Ms BOOTHBY: Which airlines have you had meetings with?

Mrs MANISON: We regularly communicate with Qantas and Virgin. Clearly Airnorth is in our back yard. It would be fair to say that there have been conversation with other airlines. Jetstar is included in Qantas. We have had several engagements with Jetstar Asia.

There is a raft of different conversations happening with other operators in the Australian market. We have spoken to Rex and Bonza, and they are continuing conversations. There are other international airlines as well.

Ms BOOTHBY: When was the last time you spoke with the likes of Rex or Bonza?

Mrs MANISON: I spoke to them recently.

Ms BOOTHBY: When was recently?

Mrs MANISON: I will not go into those discussions, but we spoke to Rex and Bonza this year.

Ms BOOTHBY: This year? How about Scoot airlines, Singapore Airlines or AirAsia?

Mrs MANISON: Yes, there are conversations with those types of airlines.

Ms BOOTHBY: Have you spoken to them recently?

Mrs MANISON: Mr Lovett has taken trips to Singapore, where he engages regularly with Asian airlines.

Ms BOOTHBY: Have you spoken to them as the Tourism minister?

Mrs MANISON: I have tasked Mr Lovett to speak to some of those airlines, and other conversations are afoot at the moment.

Ms BOOTHBY: Have you been lobbying these airlines yourself, as the Tourism minister—the one responsible for tourism in the Northern Territory?

Mrs MANISON: As Tourism minister, I task an agency as well as the conversations I have.

Ms BOOTHBY: You outsource that from your ministry?

Mrs MANISON: I do some of the lobbying, and I make sure our aviation section—with distinct expertise—also does, as well as leaning on the expertise of somebody with the renowned aviation reputation such as Michael Bridge, who is the chair of our Tourism committee.

Ms BOOTHBY: When was the last time you sat down, as the Tourism minister, in one of those meetings with any of those airline carriers?

Mrs MANISON: A few weeks ago.

Ms BOOTHBY: Who was that? You cannot recall? There are only a few to choose from.

Mrs MANISON: No, we have some exciting live conversations happening.

Ms BOOTHBY: The ACCC has called on airlines to pass on lower fuel costs to travellers. Have you taken any action to call on the Albanese Labor government to take action to bring down the cost of travel for Territorians and visitors?

Mrs MANISON: When I catch up with Minister Farrell, aviation is always on the agenda. It is a point of discussion at the Tourism ministers' meeting. The other big jurisdictions say that they are doing it hard, and I say to them that they have no idea what it is like to be in the Northern Territory because we simply do not have the economies of scale, so it has a far greater impact. It means when the airlines are looking to turn a profit and make some money, they look to the golden triangle of Brisbane, Melbourne and Sydney.

We are working hard and having the right conversations to see the introduction of more services to the Territory.

Ms BOOTHBY: When was the last time you had the meeting with the federal ministers about the airline carriers?

Mrs MANISON: We have a Tourism ministers' meeting twice a year, generally.

Ms BOOTHBY: When was the last one?

Mrs MANISON: In Adelaide. Then there were Trades ministers in Townsville. I have seen Minister Farrell regularly.

Ms BOOTHBY: The ACCC report was only handed down last week, I believe. Have you taken the action and called on the Albanese Labor government federally to take action to bring down the cost of travel for Territorians and visitors?

Mrs MANISON: We always advocate for ...

Ms BOOTHBY: Have you met with him since the report?

Mrs MANISON: Have I met the Prime Minister since the report was handed down last week?

Ms BOOTHBY: Have you met the Prime Minister since the report last week? Would this not be a priority? We are trying to get visitors to the Territory. We are broke, and we are broken. You are not lobbying the Prime Minister? That is what we should be doing.

Mrs MANISON: I am starting to see some good theatre here ...

Mrs LAMBLEY: He came to Alice Springs on short notice.

Mrs MANISON: ... but I assure the Member for Brennan that we lobby the federal government very hard.

Ms BOOTHBY: Twice a year is what you told me.

Mr CHAIR: Member for Brennan, let her finish.

Mrs MANISON: Most importantly, we lobby the airlines directly. I love the energy you are bringing here, Member for Brennan.

Ms BOOTHBY: Twice a year you meet with your federal counterparts to lobby for a better deal for Territorians as far as airline carriers, additional flights and a fair go on prices?

Mrs MANISON: We have stated that a lot of work is happening.

Ms BOOTHBY: What is that work?

Mrs MANISON: We have just gone through that with you.

Ms BOOTHBY: I did not hear any work there.

Mrs MANISON: Okay.

Mr CHAIR: I am comfortable that the minister has answered your question. You can ask in a different frame and we will continue on the same line of questioning, but she has responded.

Ms BOOTHBY: In the past, the government has provided incentives to bring new carriers to the Territory. Are you talking to additional providers like Rex and Bonza?

Mrs MANISON: We are talking to other airlines, as I stated. As I have said in previous output groups, we are competing with other big funds where we have to pay the airlines to come. We are either doing it by paying the airline or working with airports to lower their landing fees and the fees charged per passenger at the airports—it is a combination. We are doing this work now to attract more airlines to the Northern Territory.

Ms BOOTHBY: You have provided those incentives where the airline is paid to come here. You have done that before; is it something you will be doing in the future?

Mrs MANISON: We are looking at a raft of different strategies to get more airlines to the Northern Territory. It is a live conversation which is happening now. We are working closely with the Airport Development Group as we want more airlines coming in to Alice Springs, Yulara and Darwin.

Ms BOOTHBY: Regarding those incentives to bring the new carriers, who are you meeting with?

Mrs MANISON: We have talked about the emerging airlines in the country with a lower cost, as that is what Territorians tell us they want. They want affordable options to travel. If the big companies such as Qantas and Virgin do not reduce their cost for Territorians and visitors, we are also talking to international airlines.

Ms BOOTHBY: Will any of the \$35m for marketing over the two years be used as incentives for new carriers or air routes in and out of the Territory?

Mrs MANISON: That is not the purpose of those funds. We have other conversations occurring with airlines to attract them to the Northern Territory.

Ms BOOTHBY: On 23 February 2018, the Labor government announced \$5.5m in Turbocharging Tourism funding for investment in tourism infrastructure to revitalise and improve the visitor experience in Tennant Creek. Of the \$5.5m allocated over five years ago, how much has been spent and on what?

Mrs MANISON: Works to revitalise the Battery Hill Mining Centre were placed on hold in 2019 due to the association handing back its lease of 91 hectare of Crown land to the government. Further conversations have taken place over the years.

I visited Battery Hill and met with Tourism Central Australia, and saw firsthand the plans to revitalise the place. They do a good job with visitor information services. I have had discussions with another organisation in town which would like them placed on the Stuart Highway. Battery Hill is a success story; Tourism Central Australia believes it works and is a wonderful experience.

Further repairs, maintenance and infrastructure upgrades of the Visitor Information Centre and associated buildings are planned for this year, totalling \$1.9m. Heavy rainfall this summer caused some damage to one of the underground mining areas. A structural assessment has been undertaken on the mine tour tunnel which confirmed that there is no structural impediment to occupation. It is expected to recommence. Contractors from DIPL were quoting required works in late April.

The entry statement has had an interesting history. I have seen a picture of the head of one of the entry statements, and they look spectacular. The Welcome to Tennant Creek signage was installed in August 2021. The sculptures are forecast to be completed and installed in mid-2023. We are hoping to see that happen. There has been a dispute, but the DIPL minister will be able to go into greater detail about the reasons behind that.

The streetscaping project was announced as part of that. The Barkly Regional Council confirmed additional budget for the streetscape as well as beautification works. The total budget there is \$2.95m. The streetscape works are focused on main through-roads of Paterson Street and Peko Road that incorporate shade and cooling initiatives, and improving wayfinding signage, interpretive displays and landscaping. It is anticipated construction tenders will be released in the fourth quarter of 2023. DIPL is currently conducting survey work in that area. These are, again, more questions for DIPL.

Ms BOOTHBY: You mentioned the Battery Hill mining and visitor centre. The Labor government continues to drag its heels with this tourist attraction. Why is the stamp battery still sitting idle and the underground mine tour closed?

Mrs MANISON: I just went into the water issues. I will read that again. Heavy rainfall this summer also caused damage to the underground mine. A structural assessment has been undertaken on the mine tunnel which has confirmed that there is no structural impediment to occupation. It is expected that the mine tour will recommence in coming weeks.

Ms BOOTHBY: Is the funding for the repair of that water damage at Battery Hill coming from the \$5.5m of Turbocharging Tourism funding in 2018?

Mrs MANISON: The repair work of \$1.9m, yes, but not the underground mine part.

Ms BOOTHBY: Yes. Is that the reason why that underground mine remains closed?

Mrs MANISON: No, I just said literally heavy rainfall this summer has also caused damage to the underground mine. A structural assessment has been undertaken.

Ms BOOTHBY: What about prior to that? It has been closed for a long time. What has taken so long for it to be opened before the water damage from the rainfall this season?

Mrs MANISON: Do you have advice on this one?

Mrs MANISON: Mr Lovett is saying it is about staffing issues with TCA—having the staff there to operate it at the time. It is a wonderful little tour.

Ms BOOTHBY: On 12 July 2018, which is about five years ago—and you mentioned this before about the total sum of \$2.95m being committed to the Tennant Creek streetscape project. How much of that money has been spent so far?

Mrs MANISON: Again, I just stated in my answer with regard to those DIPL time lines.

Ms BOOTHBY: Can you tell me how much has been spent so far?

Mrs MANISON: I do not have a figure in this brief from DIPL. You will have to confirm that with the minister. On face value, it looks like it has all been design work and construction tenders that will go out later this year.

Ms BOOTHBY: We spoke about this last year, minister. There were delays then as well. I believe it was because there was a survey going out to the community—if I remember correctly. Are you saying that has not been done yet and will be done in the fourth quarter?

Mrs MANISON: I am saying that the construction tender is due to go out ...

Ms BOOTHBY: In the fourth quarter?

Mrs MANISON: Yes.

Ms BOOTHBY: That survey we spoke about last year has all been done?

Mrs MANISON: I will have to go back through that. I will take it on notice for you because I do not have an answer. Otherwise, you can put that to the DIPL minister tomorrow.

Ms BOOTHBY: I will put it on notice, please.

Question on Notice No 1.8

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

Ms BOOTHBY: Last year during Estimates, the minister mentioned that the Tennant Creek streetscape project went to a survey to the community about what was wanted. I would like an update on that survey and the result.

Mr CHAIR: Minister, do you accept the question?

Mrs MANISON: Yes.

Mr CHAIR: The question asked by the Member for Brennan has been allocated the number 1.8.

Ms BOOTHBY: On 15 March 2022 a tender for a consultancy master plan for visitor services at Newcastle Waters historic township was awarded to TRC Tourism Pty Ltd. What was the total cost of the consultancy and when will the master plan be made available to the public?

Mrs MANISON: I have met with Territory legend Mr Wayne Kraft about the views of the organisation that he is working with that is advocating for increased investment in Newcastle Waters to see it become a tourism precinct. It is next to a magnificent station but the infrastructure on the heritage site is very old. Mr Lovett will speak about that work. If we made the full investment, it could be a very costly operation.

Mr LOVETT: The Mates of the Murrarji is led by Mr Wayne Kraft, the legend. The redevelopment of Newcastle Waters township is listed as a potential project in the destination management plan for the broader Barkly region. Mr Kraft and his Mates of the Murrarji were very active in that. Our team worked with TRC to get a master plan done of the township area. That work was completed last year and it has now gone on to the Mates of the Murrarji.

We need to be careful because it has the potential for a lot of money attached to it. You could spend significant swathes of money. It needs to be done in a staged approach. That is something that the Mates of the Murrarji is working through with our team in Central Australia.

Ms BOOTHBY: Was that report paid for by government? Why would that report not be made public? Why has it been kept secret?

Mrs MANISON: If we do not have any contractual reasons not to, I have no problem providing that.

Ms BOOTHBY: Is it on a website somewhere for anyone to see?

Mrs MANISON: No. We have just provided it back to the Mates for further consultation. I do not have a problem with releasing that. It is important for people to understand the context of that work and some of the potential costs associated with it. People can assess whether this is the top of the priority list in tourism

or if there are other ways in which we can work to preserve some of the important historic and heritage elements of that area.

Ms BOOTHBY: When will you release it? If it has gone back to one group for consultation, when will it be released to the public?

Mrs MANISON: I do not have a time line on that, but I see no problem with putting it out for public release. As long as it is within the contract and the tender, it is okay.

Mr LOVETT: Yes, the consultancy period is over. It is done.

Ms BOOTHBY: Could you upload that on the website today?

Mrs MANISON: Yes. The purpose of it was to work with the Mates to look at the potential of the site. I do not see a problem with that being released because the more debate about it and the more informed the tourism and heritage community is, the better the decision we can make about whether it is the top priority in tourism investment and value for money, or there are other historic and heritage elements that we should be prioritising.

I have no problem with providing that to you, Member for Brennan.

Ms BOOTHBY: Will you commit to releasing that publicly?

Mrs MANISON: Yes. I am fine with it, as long as we have no contractual issues. I do not see any problem with it.

Ms BOOTHBY: Will you release it, then?

Mrs MANISON: Yes, based on what I have just said.

Ms BOOTHBY: In August 2016, the Labor government announced \$10m funding for investment into the Nyinkka Nyunyu Art and Culture Centre to improve the visitor experience in Tennant Creek. How much money has been spent on the project so far? Given Tennant Creek people have been waiting seven years, can you advise the reasons for the delay and the date when this project will be completed?

Mrs MANISON: I do not have a brief on that. You will have to talk to the Arts minister who has carriage of the arts trail. I visited them late last year and had a discussion about that, the plans and how they would be investing in the site using that money.

It is a spectacular art centre for the Warumungu people. It has a beautiful cafe area and historic presentation for tourists. One of my bugbears with the place is the signage and notification so people know where it is, it is open and they are encouraged to come along.

The Arts minister will give you an update on how that project is progressing. I am pleased that since we came to government several art centres on the arts trail have come to fruition and have been delivered, but this one is important.

Ms BOOTHBY: Seven years is an extraordinary amount of time. You mentioned that it attracts tourist to Tennant Creek. Why has it taken so long? Why do you not already have the brief? You knew that we would ask about the Barkly—we do so every year—so why are you not prepared?

Mrs MANISON: It is the Arts minister's responsibility for delivering this project. I have gathered some of the other briefs from DIPL I thought would be topical, but the Arts minister will give you a full and wholesome response on this.

Mr CHAIR: Member for Brennan, if you are happy, we will hold off any questions in relation to that for the Minister for Arts who comes next Tuesday.

Ms BOOTHBY: What have you done to address gamba grass strangling our tourist destinations and putting them at risk of destruction by fire?

Mrs MANISON: Gamba sits within Parks and Rangers and the responsibility for managing gamba across the Northern Territory is with DEPWS. Can I suggest that we wait until the further output later on?

Ms BOOTHBY: I would like to hear from you as the minister for Tourism about what you are doing in relation to the gamba grass and our tourist destinations. Litchfield is a prime example. Can you talk to us about what you have done to address that?

Mr CHAIR: Before we go to that question, I remind the committee that when we talk about tourism we are talking about the desire of visitor destination and facilitating sustainable growth in the tourism industry. I understand your point, but it is better asked of the minister who is responsible for gamba and the gamba army.

Ms BOOTHBY: Can we not ask the Tourism minister about the tourism destinations and gamba?

Mr CHAIR: If you are referring to the budget in itself and the policy, if there is no

Ms BOOTHBY: No.

Mr CHAIR: That is what we are here to do in Estimates, Member for Brennan. If there is no line item relating to fighting gamba under DITT, then it is probably your last question.

Ms BOOTHBY: There is a whole Tourism output.

Mr CHAIR: We will hold that off until the relevant minister and the relevant output.

Ms BOOTHBY: I have been thinking about the ReviewPro reports that we have been discussing. I am curious that the department has mentioned that when reviews are collated from Google or TripAdvisor, if it is a negative review, it is the businesses' responsibility to deal with it. If it is to do with crime, as an example, would that not be something your government could address rather than putting responsibility back onto the businesses?

Mrs MANISON: Government has a responsibility to work towards community safety, back initiatives to counteract crime, fight crime in our community, have the right legislative basis to tackle issues with crime and antisocial behaviour and resource these things—whether it is more police, working to support Night Patrols, sobering-up shelters and all of those things.

We have a responsibility to listen to our tourism operators about the issues impacting them and work as a government to tackle those issues. We have spoken about crime, and there will be many more questions about crime this week—two different output groups as well.

Reviews are another part of how people make their decisions about where they travel. This is a growing sector of the tourism market. It is very data rich and tourism operators take it very seriously.

Mr Lovett said before it is all about being authentic and verified, not corrupted by trolls or professional hackers online and making sure businesses are not trying to give themselves any false assessments and ratings. I will get Mr Lovett to speak a bit about the work that we do with industry regarding reviews.

When I became minister, the biggest point for me was making sure that businesses acknowledge and follow their reviews. There are some businesses that do not want to engage with that type of information. There has been a lot of work to try to help and support them to understand and how to best engage with that type of information and deal with the new age of online reviews.

Mr LOVETT: There are probably 30 to 40 different categories in reviews in ReviewPro that different products are judged upon. We do not necessarily put the onus back on the business. We try to get businesses to be aware of what people are saying about them in the online reviews and use it as a feedback opportunity for them to improve their product. Most businesses are very good at this.

The challenge with online reviews is they are in everyone's face. We try to make sure that the businesses are aware of the feedback coming through and take action regarding that.

Mrs HERSEY: How many people are currently employed directly in the tourism industry?

Mrs MANISON: I am getting the latest figure for you. It is one of our largest direct and indirect employers in the Northern Territory. Our latest figures from the agency indicate that we are employing about 6,800 people directly and 8,800 indirectly.

Mrs HERSEY: The numbers are a bit confusing. In a media release on 8 May 2023, you said that there were 6,800 employed directly in the tourism industry, which you have just stated. However, a media release that you issued in June 2022 said that the number was about 12,500. As tourism is important for employment, can you confirm those figures for me, please?

Mrs MANISON: Mr Lovett is just going through a bit of the data. The latest figures that we have are 6,800 direct and 8,800 indirectly. Clearly, numbers will vary over time. They are the latest figures that we have.

Mrs LAMBLEY: What does directly and indirectly mean?

Mrs MANISON: Directly means working for a tourism business. Indirectly is a business that could benefit through that, whether that be a supply service or a restaurant—those types of things.

Mrs LAMBLEY: To clarify, 8,800 directly ...

Mrs MANISON: Indirectly.

Mrs LAMBLEY: Indirectly and another 12,500 directly.

Mrs MANISON: That would be 6,800 directly.

Mrs LAMBLEY: Where did the 12,500 come into it?

Mrs MANISON: It is the total, direct and indirect.

Mrs HERSEY: That was from a media release.

Mr CHAIR: Did you hear she clarified that, Member for Katherine? She answered that. Are you happy that she clarified that the number was indirect and direct, being that 12,000?

Mrs HERSEY: Yes. In that media release you were saying there were 12,500 jobs. Do the direct and indirect figures you have given—15,600 both together—mean there are 3,000 more people? Where are those extra figures coming from?

Mrs MANISON: It would have been using data that was available at that time. Whenever we send out a media release, we have it checked off by the Tourism agency and it gives us whatever the latest data is.

Mrs LAMBLEY: When you say 'indirect suppliers', is that like Coles dropping off food? What are you talking about?

Mrs MANISON: A job that is associated directly with the tourism business supports it and helps make sure that it can function. They need to co-exist, as opposed to a tourism guide, someone selling a tourism product or someone having a direct tourism business.

Mrs LAMBLEY: Is there a threshold for that? Coles might be delivering 10% of its food to tourism outlets but 90% to the prison and the hospital and average people. What is the definition?

Mrs MANISON: They will talk through the data they use.

Mr DRABSCH: Direct employment is activities directly related to tourism businesses. Cleaners, for example, in a hotel would be tourism employees in a direct sense, as would chefs, wait staff, people working in pubs and so forth because it is for tourism and hospitality.

Then there is the whole service and supply sector, which supports the activities of tourism businesses. That could be laundries, transport services delivering alcohol and other provisions, food suppliers with vegetables and so forth. These indirect jobs are modelled through an established formula that relates to the level of direct activity.

Mrs LAMBLEY: What is the level?

Mr DRABSCH: The level of direct activity is measured by the number of direct ...

Mrs LAMBLEY: Indirect, sorry.

Mr DRABSCH: It was 8,800. Do you want a value of production?

Mrs LAMBLEY: If you have a food supplier supplying 10% of what they have to tourism operators but the other 90% to other customers ...

Mr DRABSCH: We do not count the full 100%. There is a calculation.

Mrs LAMBLEY: It could be one to 100%. As long as they supply a service in some capacity, have you included that in the indirect number?

Mr DRABSCH: Yes, there is economic modelling that looks at how those proportions are shared across industries.

Mr LOVETT: It is a global standard. This data comes from Tourism Research Australia from the tourism satellite account. Tourism is not a national account, to use economists' terms; it is a modelled account. It takes off the national account things like food service, transportation and accommodation, so it is using percentages. Tourism Research Australia, working with its international counterparts, has developed the formula for the tourism satellite account.

Mrs LAMBLEY: If you are including an indirect service or supplier that services the tourism industry with only the equivalent of 1% of their capacity, that is pretty meaningless, is it not?

Mr DRABSCH: If the tourism activity was not occurring, the demand for those services by businesses would be less. The idea is that if the demand is there, it is supporting that activity and allowing the maintenance of those jobs.

Ms BOOTHBY: Will you be utilising the park fees you introduced for tourists to access our national parks and reserves towards the \$35m to market harder to our tourists?

Mrs MANISON: No. Parks and Rangers will be happy to answer questions about the park pass and park fees.

Ms BOOTHBY: It will not be used towards the \$35m?

Mrs MANISON: No.

Ms BOOTHBY: Where did the additional funding of \$35m come from? Which budget was cut so that we could spend more in marketing for tourism?

Mrs MANISON: It was not cut, it was a budget priority.

Ms BOOTHBY: Do you want tourists to choose the Territory over other destinations in Australia? I am sure you will say 'yes'. Why are you adding more barriers and costs by introducing more expenses by way of park fees for them to visit the Territory? Do you admit that when you run out of money, you go after the tourist dollar?

Mrs MANISON: That is a garbage question! I am happy to talk about the park pass and the park fee in the next output. To say that doing what most other jurisdictions do in order to maintain, take care of and invest in a park and offer more tourism product for interstate or international visitors is not the right thing to do. I find that interesting.

This is a good, sound system so we can put more money into preserving our parks and, importantly, activate our parks for more tourists.

Ms BOOTHBY: You mentioned influencers. How much are taxpayers paying for the influencers we are currently using in the Northern Territory?

Mrs MANISON: Yes, influencers—what a world we live in these days. Being a tourism influencer looks like a good gig to me.

Mrs LAMBLEY: You could be an influencer, you would be good at it.

Mrs MANISON: No, these people have a certain look and story and it ain't me.

Ms BOOTHBY: You have a certain story.

Mrs LAMBLEY: Sell snow to the Eskimos.

Mr CHAIR: We will keep our questions to the output.

Mrs MANISON: There are different influencers for different markets. I have heard of some glorious people in their older years who are influencers and have been working with the department. I will ask Mr Lovett to talk about how influencers are engaged and talk about the costs.

Ms BOOTHBY: I know how they are engaged, but I would love to know how much it costs the taxpayer.

Mrs MANISON: We will get the number on notice.

Ms BOOTHBY: You do not know the cost of the influencers?

Mrs MANISON: We have multiple campaigns that run across this agency; I do not have an exact fee for that.

Ms BOOTHBY: I asked you about influencers last year; I thought you may have that prepared?

Question on Notice No 1.9

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

Ms BOOTHBY: How many taxpayer dollars are being used for the influencers in the Territory?

Mr CHAIR: Minister, do you accept the question?

Mrs MANISON: Yes.

Mr CHAIR: The question asked by the Member for Brennan has been allocated the number 1.9.

Ms BOOTHBY: What are the names of the influencers you are using?

Mrs MANISON: We will take that question on notice.

Question on Notice No 1.10

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

Ms BOOTHBY: What are the names of these influencers?

Mr CHAIR: Minister, do you accept the question?

Mrs MANISON: Yes.

Mr CHAIR: The question asked by the Member for Brennan has been allocated the number 1.10.

Mrs LAMBLEY: Are the influencers Territorian?

Mr LOVETT: Not generally. We are looking for influencers in the various travel spheres. The example the minister was referring to—I think their names are Nev and Jill—are older influencers.

Mrs MANISON: Mature influencers. Everyone is on Insta.

Mr LOVETT: Mature influencers. We are partnering *MasterChef*, for example. We have used Lynton Tapp in the past, who is a Territorian. We have Daniel, a local firey, who is an influencer we use. We have used Jimmy Shu in the past, with his work on the SBS food channel, and a local food identity who is well known in Central Australia and the Top End.

We use some Northern Territory influencers who have scope outside the Northern Territory. It would be fair to say that by far we use a majority of people from outside the Northern Territory who have big travel audiences in the demographics we are looking for.

Ms BOOTHBY: Do we not have any mature Territorians with the right look?

Mrs MANISON: How many followers do they have? That is the question! They can have all the right looks, but do they have the followers?

Ms BOOTHBY: How much are you paying *MasterChef*?

Mrs MANISON: We do multiple different campaigns. Mr Lovett, would you like to talk through how we work with these programs? It is not just *MasterChef*; we do live broadcasts often with some of the morning shows that are popular. A range of different partnerships take place.

You have seen shows like *The Amazing Race* happen here in the past. *Married at First Sight* and *The Bachelor*—wonderful shows ...

Mrs HERSEY: Who watches that?

Mrs MANISON: I am sure you know nothing about. I will get Mr Lovett to speak about how these partnerships work.

Mr LOVETT: Each partnership is a bit different. In something like an SBS food or *MasterChef*-type arrangement, they will shoot in iconic places and showcase local food around the Territory. We did this with *MasterChef* last year and got the judges talking about the food and travel experiences they had, as well as the contestants. If there are Territory contestants on it, we will use them.

We tie up media with Channel 10—in the *MasterChef* example—to further extend the reach. We may look at trade partnerships—I am not sure whether we did this with *MasterChef*, but we have done it for others. For example, 'Come and win a *MasterChef* travel experience'.

There is a bunch of PR—the awareness, top-of-the-funnel stuff, which is what we are all after—then it moves down mid-funnel and down to conversion.

Ms BOOTHBY: If you do not have what we are paying *MasterChef* or the others you mentioned, can I put that question on notice?

Mr CHAIR: She will give you the list of all of them. That is the way we interpreted it originally, correct?

Ms BOOTHBY: Okay, so I will ask the question for the record.

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

Ms BOOTHBY: How much do you pay each influencer or TV show for promoting the Territory—and the breakdown, please?

Mr CHAIR: Before we go on, I think you asked that under Question on Notice 1.9. You asked for the funding that Tourism pays to influencers. We can add to that and ask for the breakdown.

Minister, do you accept the addition to question 1.9, about the breakdown?

Mrs MANISON: Yes.

Ms BOOTHBY: That includes the names of the influencers?

Mr CHAIR: Minister, you will be able to provide the names of those organisations if there is no confidentiality agreement, I would think. Are you happy that is on the record now?

Ms BOOTHBY: Yes. I am curious about these influencers. I believe you would be getting sentiment analysis done on the positive stories those influencers deliver for the Territory. There are also influencers we do not pay—I hope we do not—who are on the negative side on social media and even in the media. Surely, you would be monitoring those travel blogs or social media sites to see what sentiment the negative influencing has had.

Mrs MANISON: A lot of work is done to monitor sentiment. Anybody the department engages to do the work of Tourism NT needs to be seen to have the same goals we set out to achieve, which is to drive tourism demand in the Northern Territory. We need to make sure they are meeting the same objectives we are after, if we are to engage them in one of our campaigns.

Ms BOOTHBY: Do you review that negative sentiment to then look at maybe pivoting policies or speaking to your colleagues about how we can improve tourism, given that the impact of crime and other negative things about the Territory are obviously being reported across Australia?

Mrs MANISON: We have a talented team working in Tourism NT that comes with some well-honed, experienced backgrounds in tourism marketing, public relations and social media expertise. Tourism NT has the best of the best working for them within the Northern Territory Government when it comes to this expertise. They come from a broad range of backgrounds outside of government before they tend to land here, often with practical industry experience. Having them is truly an asset.

We listen to those experts and the advice they give. Many of them are engaged in national groups of fellow marketing experts of different industry bodies to hone their skill set and make sure they keep up with contemporary marketing practices, social media trends and using the information that is available to them.

Is there anything you would like to add to that, Mr Lovett?

Mr LOVETT: Yes, I 100% support that. The expertise driving the Tourism NT machine in its PR and media activities is significant and very impressive. This PR and media activity is critical to our business and is done extraordinarily well. We are in a globally competitive marketplace.

No, we do not channel energy and attention into a range of other negative platforms or accounts that might be out there. Our job is to position the Northern Territory as a desirable place to spend your time—and it is. We do that constantly through a range of traditional and new media sources. I am happy to provide further detail on that if required.

Mr CHAIR: As a follow-on from that, wherever you see a negative, you obviously have a positive. We pick the target areas we think are growth. Where do you see the next target area of growth for us in the Territory? What sort of market are we seeing going forward?

Mrs MANISON: It is important to recognise that the Northern Territory has a distinct brand strategy that is based on a deep level of research about the people you can convert to invest in a holiday or experience here. That is work we do with our Seek Different campaign and our branding in the Northern Territory.

Mr Lovett, do you want to speak a bit more about the type of tourist we are going after?

Mr LOVETT: Traditionally, we have had an older, more mature demographic who visit the Northern Territory. We are working extraordinarily hard to lower that.

One of the big issues we have is getting repeat visitation because the Northern Territory has always been seen as the bucket-list destination, 'We will get there one day. We will go to Kakadu, Litchfield, the Tiwis, Uluru, Alice Springs and West Macs one day'. We are using all that PR, media and trade activity to try to knock that down the list so they come here younger, have a great time and then return visit.

We want to make sure we give people compelling reasons to visit this great place—whether it is Central Australia, Top End or throughout our regions. We are targeting a younger demographic, using a variety of sources and media to get to them. We use different media sources—for example, PEDESTRIAN.TV.

Not being the culture vulture that I should be, the marketing team provides me with briefings on this type of activity and where we are capturing the attention of the younger demographic because we want them back. We want them here as younger people, then as a young family and then later in their lives.

Ms BOOTHBY: You are always focusing on only the positive sentiment as the Tourism minister. As we know there is a problem for our tourism reputation regarding crime. Who is monitoring the negative sentiment so you can then acknowledge that there is a problem and address it?

Mrs MANISON: We have had some extensive conversations regarding that today. We speak to businesses and industry groups to get a good feel for what they are hearing and feeling, and we hear and see as well. We respond to that and make sure we put plans in place. If we have to react, we react.

At the start of the year, we put significant resources of extra money and work into the Alice Springs Central Australian marketing strategy.

I come back to the point that this is tourism. As an agency, we need to have direct responsibility for showcasing to people the amazing destination the Northern Territory is for a holiday and to motivate them with a huge number of choices. How we narrow that choice and make them pick the Northern Territory as their holiday destination is our key responsibility—to make the Northern Territory a destination they commit to.

Mrs HERSEY: From talking to businesses in the area there is a downturn in tourism with the crime and antisocial behaviour in Katherine. Are you doing anything to bolster tourism in the Katherine region?

Mrs MANISON: We have our Seek Different and Road Trip Differently campaigns and Katherine material that goes out to market the area. We are expecting a good Dry Season and plenty of tourists coming there. We have worked to get the message out that Katherine is open for business, despite what we are seeing in the Kimberley. That has impacted on some people's decisions. The agency has been actively working to get the message out that the Northern Territory is very much open for business.

Ms BOOTHBY: Is that more than you were already doing in Katherine to try to attract tourists to that region? The Member for Katherine talked about recent events that have affected the tourism industry. You said you would be monitoring the negative sentiment and then changing what you do, such as what you did in Alice Springs in December. What have you done for Katherine tourism over and above what you were already doing?

Mrs MANISON: A few months ago I had the first discussion about the Kimberley impacts and some of the concerns industry in Katherine was raising directly with me about making sure the message is out loud and clear about accessibility to town. If you are not going to the Kimberley it does not mean that you cannot get access to the Northern Territory. Our agency has been working to get that message out. We will continue working with and listening to people in your local tourism industry. If the message from them is that they want to see more done, I am prepared to do more.

Ms BOOTHBY: You mentioned that there is a problem with the Territory being a repeat destination because it is on someone's bucket list. How do you know that is the case and why they do not return? Could it be possible that they are not returning due to an experience they have had as a result of crime?

Mrs MANISON: It is the tyranny of distance. There are 250,000 of us in the Territory. We are far away by most east coast standards, so it is a distance costing and competing priorities for people. That tends to be why the repeat issue is there.

Ms BOOTHBY: Do you have any data or evidence to support that theory?

Mrs MANISON: I will ask Mr Lovett and Mr Drabsch to talk about it but we do not come up with these ideas out of the blue. Tourism is one of the most research-rich, data-driven, decision-making agencies that we have. This is based on years of research, evidence and corporate knowledge.

Mr LOVETT: The Tourism 2030 strategy lays out clearly that long term the Territory has a low repeat visitation model for the reasons the minister just said. It is not a new phenomenon. I do not have the number of repeat visitation in front of me or what the latest number is. It would be easy to get.

The reason for it is everything the minister just said. The important part is that we are marketing as hard as we possibly can to showcase—through influencers and other media and marketing activity—all the great experiences that you can have throughout the Northern Territory, from Katherine to Alice Springs and everywhere in between.

Mrs LAMBLEY: In September last year Tourism Central Australia moved a motion urging the Northern Territory Government to take immediate action to enforce law and order in Alice Springs, saying that crime was reaching crisis levels. That was during the period in which your government endorsed the lifting of the Stronger Futures alcohol restrictions and all hell broke loose throughout Central Australia. Grog was running freely, and crime was spiralling out of control. What did you do then in response to Tourism Central Australia and the concerns it expressed about the escalating crime crisis that we are still facing in Alice Springs?

Mrs MANISON: I have had the privilege to have a strong, open and frank working relationship for some time with Patrick, Danial and Karl, when he stepped in and assisted at TCA. I have always made myself available to them to have the hard conversations and to do whatever I can to try to get action for them ...

Mrs LAMBLEY: What did you do, minister?

Mrs MANISON: As Tourism minister I make direct representations to the Cabinet about the feedback I am getting and the action I think needs to be taken. I take that seriously ...

Mrs LAMBLEY: What did you do exactly?

Mrs MANISON: I always back our police and the issue of community safety wherever I can.

Mrs LAMBLEY: What has changed since September when TCA came to you with those grave concerns?

Mrs MANISON: A response of additional policing resources was sent and SORT has been put in place. We regularly speak with Tourism Central Australia and listen to those concerns.

As well as being a member of the Cabinet to back community safety initiatives, I have another job to be the Tourism minister and tell people the compelling reasons they should come to the Northern Territory for a holiday—the amazing nature, landscapes and experiences of people and culture they will experience by coming to the Northern Territory. That is a prime part of my job description as the minister for Tourism.

I note that the shadow minister for Tourism and the Leader of the Opposition attended the last TCA meeting, the membership of which moved a motion stating they wanted to see more work done to tell the positive stories about tourism in Alice Springs and Central Australia. I believe the motion went through clearly. It wanted to make sure the industry was talking about the amazing experiences people can have. I take that seriously.

No, you do not put your head in the sand and deny the problems; you work hard to try to put more resourcing into those problems and back those community safety initiatives. I have a strong responsibility in this role to help get their product out, marketing opportunities to come to the Northern Territory and have an incredible experience and holiday. That is an important part of my role.

Mrs LAMBLEY: If you google Alice Springs, tourism and crime, which I did earlier today, you are told that Alice Springs is the number one crime capital in Australia in some forums. Other forums might rate it a bit lower than that. How do you combat that as the Tourism minister?

That is the reality of where I live, in Central Australia. That is our experience. Tourism operators live and work there, and they experience crime and lawlessness like the rest of us.

You are saying we have to talk up places like Central Australia—of course you do, to try to sell their product—but how do you do that? Surely, your words are lost in the ether when the reality of what you are talking about is so different from the ideal image you are trying to portray.

People are mugged and assaulted in shops in Alice Springs. It is still everywhere. I sat in the car in the Coles car park the other day, waiting for my friend to shop. It was all on display in our peak tourist weekend with people driving in and fuelling up for Finke or getting their food and grog. How do you reconcile that and manage it?

All the talk in the world does not take away the reality or the context of the fitful state of lawlessness in Alice Springs.

Mrs MANISON: Alice Springs is a magnificent place.

Mrs LAMBLEY: You do not need to tell me that, minister.

Mrs MANISON: It is a beautiful place. Yes, there are some challenges in the community. There have been for a long time. We work as hard as we can to tackle those challenges, as you know ...

Mrs LAMBLEY: You have not, have you? Four years as Police minister, you failed ...

Mr CHAIR: Member for Araluen, let her answer the question. It was a long question.

Mrs LAMBLEY: It is the truth.

Mrs MANISON: I will do everything I can to boost jobs and grow the economy in Alice Springs, because that is good for everyone ...

Mrs LAMBLEY: And ignore crime, which is what you did as Police minister, and you are doing it now.

Mr CHAIR: Member for Araluen! Let her answer your question, then you get your chance to respond.

Mrs LAMBLEY: It creates a lot of emotion in people.

Mr CHAIR: I completely get it, and I am happy for the question to continue ...

Mrs LAMBLEY: This woman has control of our lives. She did when she was Police minister and she does now.

Mr CHAIR: Member for Araluen!

Mrs LAMBLEY: I do not think she realises.

Mr CHAIR: I do, because I have let it go on. You need to let the minister answer the question.

Mrs LAMBLEY: I will. My apologies.

Mrs MANISON: I feel like I have articulated myself a few times in regard to how seriously I take the role of community safety as well as the role of getting tourists to the Northern Territory to experience this magnificent place. The vast majority will have a wonderful time, and I do not think you can deny that.

Mr CHAIR: Before we continue, for everyone on the Estimates Committee, there is a manner in which you need to ask a question. It needs to be related to the budget and the operation of the department. I understand people get emotional with particular questions, but there needs to be a succinct question for the minister to respond to.

Are there any other questions relating to Output 3.1 for Tourism?

Ms BOOTHBY: Mr Chair, I am quite conscious of time. The shadow minister wants to get to parks and wildlife, so I have no further questions.

Mr CHAIR: That concludes consideration of Output 3.1.

Outputs 3.2, 3.4 and 3.5 are the responsibility of other ministers.

Output 3.3 – Screen Sector

No questions.

Mr CHAIR: That concludes consideration of Output Group 3.0. This concludes consideration of outputs relating to Mining and Industry, Tourism and Hospitality, and Northern Australia and Trade.

On behalf of the committee, I thank the officers who assisted the minister today. The committee will now move on to questions on Advanced Manufacturing.

Mrs MANISON: Mr Chair, I take the opportunity to thank the incredible staff from the Department of Industry, Tourism and Trade for all the work they do. They are committed to creating jobs, supporting industry and

making sure we represent the Northern Territory well on a worldwide scale. Thank you, Mr Drabsch, and your team for the work you have done preparing for Estimates.

Mr CHAIR: We will take a five-minute break while we wait for the Major Projects Commissioner to come in for Advanced Manufacturing.

The committee suspended.

ADVANCED MANUFACTURING

DEPARTMENT OF THE CHIEF MINISTER AND CABINET

OUTPUT GROUP 4.0 – INVESTMENT TERRITORY

Output 4.1 – Major, Significant and Government-Facilitated Projects

Mr CHAIR: Minister, I invite you to introduce the officials who accompany you today.

Mrs MANISON: Would you like me to make an opening statement?

Mr CHAIR: You can do that first.

Mrs MANISON: Today I have with me the Major Projects Commissioner, Mr Jason Schoolmeester.

As the Minister for Advanced Manufacturing I am supported by Chief Minister and Cabinet, which coordinates and drives advanced manufacturing projects, collaborations and partnerships.

The Territory Investment Commissioner, Major Projects Commissioner and broader Investment Territory team are directing their efforts to grow a sustainable and diverse \$40bn Territory economy by 2030, including a strong focus on capturing more value from the supply chains in key areas such as critical minerals, renewable energy, Defence and aerospace.

Manufacturing is undergoing an historic transformation across the industrialised world. It has become increasingly integrated with services, design and digital technologies. Advanced manufacturing involves a holistic approach to the way a manufacturing business operates, with high levels of technology and enterprise applied at every step of the value chain. In short, advanced manufacturing is not about what you make but rather how you make it.

In the Territory we have an abundance of raw resources and local knowledge. Growing our advanced manufacturing capability is about building on these strengths. It is about doing more locally with these raw resources, capturing the local benefit, growing our skills base locally, building around our existing sectors and growing capability into the future in emerging areas.

The Territory has great potential to improve sustainable economic outcomes and jobs through the integration of advanced manufacturing across our existing industry base and by capturing more of the value chain in our priority sectors.

We are now into the third year of our partnership with the Advanced Manufacturing Growth Centre. This partnership is already delivering results by growing the NT Advanced Manufacturing Ecosystem, working with existing Territory businesses and attracting new businesses to the Territory. The Advanced Manufacturing Growth Centre is administering this \$7.5m Northern Territory Advanced Manufacturing Ecosystem fund which has now made investments worth approximately \$2.4m supporting total projects worth \$11.8m.

These investments are supporting and scaling our local capability. For example, Corrosion Instruments has been supported to establish a local production, testing and optimisation facility for its Smart Cathodic Protection Monitoring System and Air Tip, based in Central Australia, is being supported to scale its world-first haulage trailers.

These investments are also bringing new businesses and their capability to the Territory through partnerships with our local businesses and institutions. For example, Diverseco has established a robotics and automation services hub in collaboration with Charles Darwin University and is now delivering robotics micro-credentials.

The Local Jobs Fund has also invested \$12.4m of its \$35m portfolio to support growing advanced manufacturing with \$10m for Amphibian Aerospace Industries and \$2.4m into the Headland Food Group.

The recently-held Darwin Dialogue sponsored by the Territory and convened by the Australian Strategic Policy Institute confirmed the strong interest from countries such as Japan, United States, India and the Netherlands in our critical minerals and mineral processing potential. This interest will further drive investment in the Territory, particularly in minerals processing and the energy infrastructure needed to drive this industry.

We have been working to drive and support industry, development, growth and awareness of the Territory's existing capability and to identify more opportunities to grow advanced manufacturing capability and projects across the Northern Territory.

We are now happy to take questions.

Mr YAN: Has the Investment Commissioner position been filled after the departure of Andy Cowan late last year?

Mrs MANISON: That is a question for the Chief Minister during her outputs next week.

Mr YAN: You mentioned AAI. How much has the Northern Territory Government, directly or indirectly, provided to Amphibian Aerospace Industries in cash or in-kind funding?

Mrs MANISON: That would be a question for the Chief Minister through her segment. The advanced manufacturing grant distributed to the AMGC does not cover that. That is a Local Jobs Fund which sits with the Chief Minister.

Mr YAN: Last December AAI shipped an Albatross G-111 in pieces to Darwin. Has that been put together and flown?

Mrs MANISON: These are questions you need to ask the Chief Minister as part of the Investment Territory and Local Jobs Fund questions. I have been to the Darwin Airport and seen the body of the plane. It is very exciting what AAI is working towards this year.

Mr YAN: Do we have a time line when AAI will start producing in the Territory?

Mrs MANISON: I do not have that in front of me. I ask you to defer that question for the Chief Minister and the Local Jobs Fund.

Mr CHAIR: For those who were not in attendance, can you outline a bit more of the Darwin dialogue you were talking about with ASPI and what that means from an advanced manufacturing perspective?

Mrs MANISON: I am thrilled that with our Advanced Manufacturing Ecosystem Fund the Northern Territory was the first mover in partnering up with the Advanced Manufacturing Growth Centre. Jens Goennemann, the chief executive was here last week; I think it was his third trip. His passion for growing the advanced manufacturing capability in the Northern Territory is wonderful to see.

With great interest other jurisdictions are looking to follow the model of the Northern Territory. We have been providing them advice on how their partnerships can work, because people can see it gets results.

Charmaine Phillips from the Advanced Manufacturing Growth Centre works with us in partnership through Jason's team. If we back these advanced manufacturing projects they identify and assess the real value add and how they increase the capability of advanced manufacturing in the Territory. This is fundamentally about enhancing the manufacturing capability and the ecosystem in the Northern Territory so we do not have to send jobs and material supplies interstate and overseas. Hopefully, as well as creating more jobs in different areas, we can drive down the cost of doing business in the Northern Territory for some of these projects.

We are thrilled that it has been getting results. The Darwin Dialogue took place in April. It was wonderful to see so many international partners come to the Northern Territory. The message is very clear—they want our critical minerals, to shore up their supply chains and they want them secured. They see us as a strong, stable and reliable partner and Darwin as a place where they can do business and invest with confidence with like-minded interests.

We need to increase our advanced manufacturing capability because there will be more opportunities through critical mineral supply to the globe, producing materials that the globe needs in order to tackle climate change and for other security reasons.

Ms PURICK: Can you tell me if the government has had any discussions in recent times with Darwin Clean Fuels in regard to a condensate plant being built here? This has been ongoing for 10-plus years. Have there been any recent discussions in regard to getting them to locate here as opposed to somewhere in Queensland?

Mrs MANISON: I am sorry, Member for Goyder, that question has to be put to the Chief Minister on Tuesday as part of the investment.

Ms PURICK: It is a major project.

Mrs MANISON: Yes, but I do not have Major Projects here. Right now we are going through Advanced Manufacturing. Major Projects will be through the Chief Minister on Tuesday.

Mr CHAIR: To clarify the output ...

Mrs MANISON: I apologise; the Major Projects Commissioner is here because he helps manage the Advanced Manufacturing Ecosystem Fund.

Ms PURICK: Can you talk about possible ability with Sunrise gas to shore?

Mrs MANISON: That would be one for the Chief Minister. It would have been handy in the Industry section.

Mr CHAIR: Are you comfortable with that, Member for Goyder?

Ms PURICK: Yes, that is fine.

Mr CHAIR: That concludes consideration of Output Group 4.0, Investment Territory, in relation to Advanced Manufacturing. Thank you for coming in, Mr Schoolmeester.

Mrs MANISON: Thank you, Mr Schoolmeester, for all the work that you are doing in the Advanced Manufacturing space, and to Luana Cormac for all the work she did in the time that she was with us.

Mr CHAIR: We will take a short break for the next departmental staff for Parks.

The committee suspended.

PARKS AND RANGERS

DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENT, PARKS AND WATER SECURITY

Mr CHAIR: Good afternoon, everyone. Minister, I invite you to make an opening statement and introduce the officials who have come in this afternoon.

Mrs MANISON: As the Minister for Parks and Rangers, I am responsible for the management of 85 parks, reserves and other conservation areas with a total land area of almost 50,000 square kilometres, the equivalent to three-quarters of the size of Tasmania.

It is a fair comment that the Territory is home to some of the most magnificent landscapes, from rugged ranges to rolling desert plains, savannah woodlands and tropical patches, all with enchanting flora and fauna and rich in Aboriginal culture.

People travel from across Australia and the world to connect with nature and culture across the Territory, but importantly, the Territory parks are important to Territorians. It is our back yard. We grew up camping and exploring our great national parks and reserves.

Our parks estate contributes so much to our Territory lifestyle and it supports jobs and economic outcomes in our regional areas. That is why this Territory government is shaping the future of our parks and reserves

through the development of the 30-year master plan that was launched earlier this year with the 10-year parks activation plan that will set the agenda for investment into our parks into the future.

Most importantly, it will ensure continued visitor enjoyment and provide certainty to traditional owners, businesses and investment on the future development options and plans for our parks.

Preserving natural biodiversity and cultural heritage so that the Territory's parks estate will be passed well onto future generations is also our priority. Increasing opportunities for the development of tourism is something we want to see more of in our parks.

The master plan is that essential foundation to build public and investor confidence in our parks and reserves and certainty for all including traditional owners, industry stakeholders, potential investors and visitors.

Confidence and enthusiasm is growing with more concessionaries and tour operators operating in our parks this Dry Season. An increase of 14 businesses on last year, taking the number to 154 tour operators operating on parks, means jobs.

The master plan is underpinned by the NT Parks online booking system and a package of revenue measures that will improve access to and management of the parks into the future years. I know this committee will have plenty of questions for me about that.

The online system is enabling visitor data, numbers and satisfaction to be captured, which will improve the department's capacity to refine the parks and reserves offering to meet future visitor and tourism sector needs. Importantly, the system will ensure the Northern Territory meets contemporary levels of service offered by other jurisdictions. It also provides modern tools for visitors to manage their holiday and recreation bookings.

This is the first time the department has had access to real data so that we can make more evidence-based decisions on future investment in our parks.

As you can see, this government is focused on maintaining our reputation for offering world-class nature experiences and improving the visitor experience.

I now turn our attention to the 47 Aboriginal ranger groups operating throughout the NT. This government introduced the Aboriginal Ranger Grants Program as part of the Protecting Country, Creating Jobs policy initiative commencing in 2017. The program continues to be one of the most successful grants program delivered by this government. Government has committed over \$23m in capital and project funding over eight years to those Aboriginal ranger groups.

We remain committed to addressing the resourcing of ranger groups that has been long recognised as a significant limitation faced by ranger groups. The grants complement other funding sources the ranger groups can access.

We understand that becoming an Aboriginal ranger is aspirational for young kids in the bush. There is great meaning and status to be caring for country and culture.

From 2021 capital grants have assisted 20 ranger groups with the provision of essential equipment and facilities to support the work by rangers, including four-wheel drive, all-terrain vehicles; trailers; fire and weed spray units; outboards; work sheds; and other infrastructure. Land management grants have funded 31 projects to support Aboriginal ranger groups monitor and manage feral animals; fire and weeds; protection of rock art and cultural sites; development of plans of management and healthy country plans; and training and capacity building for rangers and land managers. This is great news for jobs for Aboriginal Territorians working on country, for the economy and supporting stronger communities across the Territory.

This government is preserving our great Territory lifestyle and growing jobs at the same time. Over the coming years the Parks and Rangers portfolio will continue to deliver investment in our parks, improve liveability for Territorians and attract more visitors to the Territory.

I welcome the opportunity to discuss my portfolio in more detail with the Estimates Committee. Joining me is Ms Joanne Townsend, the Chief Executive Officer; Ms Rikki Lee Goldfinch, the Chief Financial Officer; Ms Sally Egan, the Executive Director of Parks and Wildlife; and Mr Alaric Fisher, the Executive Director of Flora and Fauna. I look forward to the committee's questions.

Mr YAN: I note that the parks pass was introduced on 3 April this year for interstate and international visitors. How many visitors have been fined for not holding a parks pass since its introduction on 3 April this year?

Mrs MANISON: We have not had any, Member for Namatjira.

This is about bedding in a new system and a new way of doing things in the Northern Territory. We have taken an education-first approach with people to make sure they understand that this is new, and to help educate them in the reasons why it is important to make their contribution because it is invested directly back into our parks. I do not know if there is anything you would like to add, Ms Townsend.

Mr YAN: If we have introduced it and the education was there, people who are coming into our parks are aware that if they do not have a pass they will not be fined. You said we have not fined anybody as yet.

Mrs MANISON: I would rather take education over enforcement any day.

Mr YAN: Also in April you said that the park fees were part of the NT Government's plan to repair the regions debt-stricken budget. During that consultation process earlier in the development of the parks pass with stakeholders, they were assured that 100% of the fees would go back into those parks. Can you confirm or deny if any of the revenue will be going back into the government's coffers to help repair the budget?

Mrs MANISON: Implementing this system has been important for multiple reasons. First and foremost is to get real data about where people go in the Northern Territory and what the numbers are to make sure we know the usage and where we need to guide future investment. That is very important.

The online booking system gives people certainty. As a mum of three kids, the last thing I want to do is pack them all up in a car and drive to a very remote location, only to get there and have no options for accommodation or no spot. It gives people certainty so they can have a nice, orderly trip that everybody will enjoy. Most importantly, it is about data and putting more money back into our parks.

I will get Ms Townsend to speak about how our investment will work and what we are seeing initially from the parks pass through our camping and walking fees. I assure you that the money will be reinvested into our parks or with traditional owner groups where there are joint management arrangements in place. It is a very important point to know that some of this money will go directly to TOs who will be able to look at ways in which they can utilise it as well.

Mr YAN: Before Ms Townsend starts, my question was whether 100% of the fees will be going back to Parks and not be used to assist the Territory economy with the debt we are now facing. Is that correct?

Mrs MANISON: It will be going back into parks and reserves. We will be determining how we best use that funding. There will be a measure of that going to traditional owners as well. I will get Ms Townsend to go through that with you.

Ms TOWNSEND: The online booking system commenced in March 2022 for the increase in camping fees and the new walking fees. As you mentioned, the online booking system applied to interstate and international visitors for park visits in April.

The forward BP3 papers make it very clear that there is a reinvestment of that money back into our budget through an increase in revenue. We need to share some of that revenue with traditional owners. There is currently a 50:50 split being proposed for the parks passes. We can be a bit more nuanced with the split of the revenue from camping and walking because we can assign it back to the park where it took place.

The department has been very frank that it will be preparing an investment strategy that will make it very clear how that revenue is being reinvested back into the park. The master plan sets the agenda for that. We are pretty excited to use some of that increased revenue so we can look at flexible employment programs for Aboriginal Territorians working in the parks, increase our land management activities and put it into new visitor experiences in the parks.

Mr YAN: I remember from last Estimates there was a discussion about the confirmation about the split in revenue from parks passes between Territory government and traditional owners. I am glad to see that 50% has been confirmed now.

If a parks pass is purchased and the purchaser is to visit more than one park that falls into more than one traditional owner group, how will that revenue be distributed to the parks, the TOs and the land councils?

Mrs MANISON: Ms Sally Egan can answer your question.

Ms EGAN: We have left the matter of distribution to the land councils. There are two parts to that—how it is distributed between land councils and what model they might like to use to distribute that to traditional owners. It is a matter between them and traditional owners.

Mr YAN: In effect, the parks pass money comes in. Is there a way that it is then split up between those land councils, knowing that there is a number of different ones? You have Central, Northern, maybe Tiwi and maybe Anindilyakwa. Is there a way that determines whether people are visiting different areas, or does it come in and is then just broken up?

Ms EGAN: We are just taking 50% aside and holding it, and leaving that conversation about how it should be distributed across the Territory to be decided by land councils. It is just the two, CLC and NLC. We have no estate anywhere else. They will subsequently decide on their distribution model within that. We are not determining how it gets distributed to traditional owners; we are only determining that it is 50%.

Mr YAN: My only concern is if there are more visitors to one area than to another, some areas are missing out and some not. You are saying that the government has not made that determination; it is just giving 50% to the land councils and they are then determining how that is distributed to the traditional owners of those areas?

Mrs MANISON: Yes. It is important to note this is a new system. There will be learnings as we implement this system. At the moment we are working closely with land councils to ensure we get the maximum benefit to people across the Territory. It is our priority. Rather than us dictating to them, we believe they are best placed to talk about how this distribution works and provide this advice back to us so this can be done accordingly.

Mr YAN: Do we have a revenue to date, or for the reporting period since the pass system has come into place?

Mrs MANISON: I will get Ms Townsend to go through the numbers.

Mr YAN: It may be a question on notice because I would also like to know what that revenue is and the breakdown by regions.

Mrs MANISON: We will give you what we have at the moment. What we cannot answer, we are happy to take on notice and get back to you.

Ms TOWNSEND: We currently have about \$0.5m that was received in parks pass bookings, noting that has been in effect since early April and it does not yet apply to tourism businesses. We are expecting and planned for a transitioned start. The full effect of the revenue will not be experienced this financial year; it will come into effect the following financial year. You can see that in the revenue figures.

Mr YAN: We spoke about exactly the same thing last year. We should have been seeing either an increase or decrease in our revenue stream because people were starting to book last year. That number is pretty well the same as the number we spoke about last year. Has there been an increase in that revenue stream or not?

Mrs MANISON: That will kick in later this year for the tourism operators. We will get some more solid figures when we sit down at Estimates this time next year to get a real understanding of how things are looking.

Ms TOWNSEND: We have had a full year of bookings for camping and walking. We have received \$2.2m in that revenue, some of which will be distributed to traditional owners. We have had more revenue than we expected for camping and walking, which suggests that previously perhaps people were not paying camping fees.

The walking fee, of course, is new. That has exceeded our expectations, but we will not see the full effect of the parks pass until next financial year.

Mr YAN: Am I able to get a breakdown, please, of that \$500,000 from the parks pass this year by region?

Mrs MANISON: Ms Egan will answer that.

Ms EGAN: We cannot do parks pass by region because you just buy a parks pass and that means you can visit any Territory park. We can do the camping and multi-day walking figures by region, however.

Mr YAN: I will take the camping and multi-day walking.

Ms EGAN: Perhaps take that on notice?

Question on Notice No 1.11

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

Mr YAN: Can I have a breakdown by region of the fees received for camping and walking for the reporting period?

Mr CHAIR: Minister, do you accept the question?

Mrs MANISON: Yes.

Mr CHAIR: The question asked by the Member for Namatjira has been allocated the number 1.11.

Mr YAN: Are the funds coming in through Treasury and distributed back to parks and traditional owners annually, monthly or quarterly?

Ms EGAN: It comes direct to us. It goes through the online booking system and banks directly to a departmental account. We will be distributing that to land councils quarterly.

Mr YAN: Of the \$500,000 received for the reporting period since the operation of the park pass, \$250,000 will go to the land councils as the government's contribution to the park pass. Is there a distribution of the \$2.2m funds for camping and walking fees to the land councils?

Ms EGAN: Yes. Of the \$2.2m, about \$600,000 is payable to land councils.

Mr YAN: They are not under the same 50:50 split as the park pass? Is there a different formula for determining the split?

Ms EGAN: No, it is 50% for a joint managed park, the same as the parks pass. That camping and walking product is not all on a joint managed park so it works out to a different overall percentage.

Mr YAN: You talked about having certainty for when you are camping and knowing you will have a spot. I am sad to say that is not correct.

Mrs MANISON: You had some stories last year, too!

Mr YAN: Yes, and I have another one for this year that I received only last week. I have also had a number of them over the recent months.

An interstate family booked and paid to stay at Towns River Campground and they found their campsite was taken. There was nowhere else to camp because the entire site was chock-a-block. They contacted Parks by phone and were told there were no rangers to assist and they would have to go somewhere else.

This is happening all over the place. We spoke about it last year. It is happening in our region in Ormiston Gorge and similar places. I believe it is that people book campsites and other people move in. Regularly, there are no rangers in the area to deal with the problem and it is creating conflict in our parks and damaging our product. What is Parks doing to rectify this and what you are doing to police this?

Mrs MANISON: We do not want those experiences. As time goes by and people become attuned to the system we have in place, the better it will get. Will we capture every booking and get it 100% right? In all honesty, no, and we both know that. We are in remote parts and some people are more switched on than others. We also know that some people are completely comfortable to break the rules and do not give a stuff about others.

Where we have rangers, they can work with those people to try to resolve the matter. I will ask Ms Egan to speak about our complaints process.

The feedback is that we do not tend to receive a huge number of these complaints. If people are experiencing these things, we want to know about it so we can fix it. We have strong communication within our regions with our rangers and management structures.

Ms EGAN: It is only in a fully-subscribed campground that this would occur. The number of campgrounds that are 100% occupied throughout the season is not the majority of our offering. There are some in Central Australia—Ormiston Gorge, Redbank Gorge, Ellery Creek and Palm Valley—that completely book out through June and July.

Rangers are about as much as they possibly can be. It is possible that they were not about as much as they would ordinarily be because we have had the same staffing shortages as the rest of the Territory has had throughout the last year. They should be back up to speed now and should be out. The options are to get rangers involved to contact the customer service team, and we will do whatever it is we can to sort that out. We cannot necessarily create space where there is none. If there is no-one then people will have to make another arrangement.

We have had reports of that come to our customer service team a few times. We run the phone lines seven days a week and the website with the email address to try to capture that. The best thing we can do is to know about it and then we can make some arrangements and ramp it up if we have locations that we know have particular problems. It is likely at Litchfield, for example. We put a big effort in at Litchfield on long weekends and holidays.

Mr YAN: How many complaints has the department received in relation to campgrounds and the parks pass?

Mrs MANISON: If people are having these issues, we want to hear about them. If we think it will become problematic in areas where this happened often, we can put extra resources in to resolve it.

We do not have that exact number here but we are happy to take the question on notice and get a response back to you.

Question on Notice No 1.12

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

Mr YAN: Can you please provide the number of complaints that you received in relation to camping and parks passes for the reporting period?

Mr CHAIR: Minister, do you accept the question?

Mrs MANISON: Yes.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR: The question asked by the Member for Namatjira has been allocated the number 1.12.

Mr YAN: I have a couple of quick questions; I am aware of time.

There has been quite a bit of discussion regarding gamba grass in our state and national parks. There was a 2022 report that the cost of not acting and delaying invasive grass management increases the cost and threatens flora and fauna in our parks. What processes does Parks currently have in place, and what are you doing to manage the invasion of gamba grass in our Territory parks?

Mrs MANISON: We want to make sure that we stop the spread of gamba grass where we can. It is a difficult issue across the Territory. We have done important work in Litchfield National Park that we have co-funded, where we have collected a range of important scientific data about how we best mitigate and control the spread of gamba going forward. This is the agency with responsibility for gamba and weeds management as well.

It is clear from the latest research that has been released that we have issues in Litchfield. We allocate resources for tackling gamba. Ms Townsend can speak a bit further about the work happening regarding gamba grass in our parks, the gamba army and some of the research projects that we have been involved in.

Ms TOWNSEND: Gamba is funded through the department generally, which also funds the gamba army. The gamba army priority areas are Knuckey Lagoon, Litchfield, Casuarina Coastal Reserve and Charles Darwin National Park. That funding is prioritising our national parks.

We also have dedicated funding in Parks and Wildlife to undertake strategic fire and weed management at Litchfield, which is \$177,000 in cash and in-kind. That effort is prioritised to protect assets and areas where we have the most visitors.

As the minister mentioned, we were a partner in the research undertaken by Charles Darwin University. We are also in receipt of federal funding for pest and weeds to tackle gamba in Litchfield this year and next year. That is another \$200,000.

Mr YAN: Talking about that funding allocation specifically, I understand there has been a \$200,000 reduction in funding to the gamba army in this budget.

Mrs MANISON: That is not the advice I have. I need you to put that question to Minister Moss when she is here, because she has direct responsibility for that line item.

Mr YAN: As far as Parks and Wildlife is concerned, do you have a funding line apart from what you just spoke about with the \$177,000? Is there a specific funding allocation to deal with gamba in our Territory parks?

Mrs MANISON: Ms Townsend or Ms Egan can answer that question.

Weeds management is part of the work of our rangers. As we know, they work incredibly hard. They have a hell of a job, though, because they cover a lot of terrain and distance in their activities keeping our parks accessible and safe. Management of parks and working with other rangers groups sometimes comes into it as well. Ms Egan can go into some of that weed management work for gamba.

Ms EGAN: We set a strategic pest and weed fund, as Jo referred to. We set aside a certain amount of money for across the Territory. Projects come into that fund and are assessed within the department. We know how much cash we have available and how much in-kind ranger time we use. That is the \$177,000 figure.

We also have a lot of volunteer effort on Litchfield, about which we do not have any way of capturing cost. There is a new group that has established called the Litchfield Weedwalkers, which is primarily focused on gamba grass. They are working hard and doing great stuff there. There are various other ongoing volunteer projects and partnerships that are in place for which we do not have a line item.

You wanted a dead-set accurate figure for how much investment is going on gamba in Litchfield, but it is a challenge to get that figure. I know how much we spend on it and how much the federal funding is.

Mr CHAIR: Before we continue, the Member for Mulka has a question. Are you happy for me to hand over to him and come back?

Ms PURICK: Are we still on the opening statement?

Mr CHAIR: We are still on the opening statement.

Mrs MANISON: We have 10 minutes and I note that there are two Independents here who may have questions as well.

Mr GUYULA: After legislative changes in 2019, there was a great hope that rangers would have increased powers to patrol our areas. This was a promise from 2016. I am disappointed to hear that to do training to become a conservation officer has been very difficult. It is too expensive and no rangers in my region have completed this training. Could you advise how many rangers have become conservation officers across the NT and in the regions?

Mrs MANISON: Over our time in government, we have increased powers for rangers. This government and I are firm believers that rangers know more about what is happening on their country than anyone else and

have more knowledge about land and sea management of the cultural, historic, heritage and sacred sites. They are important in making sure their country is maintained and managed properly. If people are not doing the right thing, we have given them more mechanisms to deal with that.

If you are saying that the training is not helping them exercise that power, I am very open to having further conversations about that.

Ms Egan can speak about it because, ultimately, we put these powers in place because these are very remote and isolated parts of the Northern Territory. We want rangers to feel empowered to use those tools we have for them to help protect and care for country.

Ms EGAN: Yes, the legislative changes went through and we then started the work of trying to get the training packages together. They needed to be created from scratch. What we had was not suitable to roll out to Aboriginal rangers. We soon realised that we would have to get extra resources within the department.

Last year we got approval to put on extra money from this government and to put on a specific officer who would work on those training packages and work out the framework to deliver that. That work is well advanced, and there should be some movement in the next little while, but I appreciate it has been slower than everyone expected.

Mr GUYULA: Once these rangers have become trained, can you explain what extra resources have been provided to increase the capacity to patrol and protect country and waterways?

Mrs MANISON: I will get Dr Fisher to go through it. As I said in my opening statement, we are proud that our Aboriginal Ranger Grants have been a huge success in trying to get more equipment, materials and resources that our ranger groups need to operate on country.

Dr FISHER: The Aboriginal Ranger Grants Program provides a \$12m program over a four-year period. It provides about \$3m a year. The scope of that program in what ranger groups can apply for is broad and flexible. We have deliberately recognised that Aboriginal ranger activities cover many areas, including looking after country in an environmental way but also things like compliance and cultural management.

Funding is also there for the capital equipment that is really important. We have in the past funded vehicles and boats for ranger groups which has, in some cases, greatly increased their capacity for fee-for-service operations.

Looking to the future, if individual ranger groups identify the need for additional resources to improve their compliance activities, then the Aboriginal Ranger Grants Program would be a suitable place to apply for such funding.

Ms PURICK: You mentioned half the money from the park pass goes back into reserves and parks. Does money go back into the hunting reserves to improve them? If not, do you work on finding new reserves, because it is a reserve?

Mrs MANISON: As part of the 30-year master plan we issued, we put in a guide of the next 10 years of where we are going in our investment, which outlines the priorities for each of our parks. Off the top of my head, I cannot remember where hunting reserves are.

Ms PURICK: It sounds like money does not go to the hunting reserves, because if it did you would know it was going there to improve facilities.

Mrs MANISON: I will get Sally to put a bit more context around it, Member for Goyder.

Ms EGAN: The investment strategy will do more than just infrastructure. It will talk about what percentage of parks pass money will be spent on infrastructure. It will also increase the number of rangers and improve our operational capacity more broadly, as well as put money back into our ability to fund joint management on the ground.

I expect that hunting reserves will benefit from that sort of increase in operational capacity, just like the rest of the parks estate is managed by us. It will not be tied to a particular park; it will grow our capacity more broadly.

Ms PURICK: Regarding Litchfield but also elsewhere, are you still managing and coordinating the back-of-house pig hunting program?

Mrs MANISON: I am not across this. I am interested because we do not want feral pigs running around. I will ask Ms Egan to respond.

Ms EGAN: Yes, we are.

Mr YAN: I would like an update on the Red Centre out past Ormiston ...

Mrs MANISON: We will quickly get cracking on this so we can give as much data as possible.

This is Ms Egan's last Estimates. Unfortunately, she will be departing us for Queensland to be closer to family. One of her core jobs, prior to leaving, is to get us closer to the consent agreement. As I outlined in the last sector, multiple media interviews and in parliament, we are committed to the ride. We cannot do it without the permission of the traditional owners. We have multiple family groups to work with and COVID definitely set us back.

Ms Egan or Ms Townsend can update us on where things are and how they have progressed in the latest round of conversations with the traditional owners and the Central Land Council.

Mr YAN: I have lots of anticipation.

Ms EGAN: It is good news. The consent process is afoot. There will be preliminary meetings in Alice Springs tomorrow and Thursday with the Central Land Council. Our expectations from that were that we will get an early indication about how people are feeling about the project. At worst, it should be resolved completely—consent with a 'yes' or 'no' by August this year. This is a huge outcome and something we have been negotiating very hard for some time.

Mr YAN: I appreciate that and I hope we get some good outcomes.

Mr CHAIR: Noting it is 3.30 pm, that completes the global time for the minister. We did not make it past the opening statement, but that concludes consideration of Output 5.1 and Output Group 6.0.

On behalf of the committee, I thank the agency officers for coming in to assist the minister today. The committee will not proceed to do Territory Wildlife Park's business line as the time has concluded. That completes the Estimates hearing today for the Deputy Chief Minister.

Mrs MANISON: I thank the wonderful staff from DEPWS for all the work they do in making sure our parks are fantastic places for everybody to enjoy. I thank them for all their work towards Estimates. All the best on your new adventure, Ms Egan.

The committee concluded.
