

The Estimates Committee convened at 8 am.

## MINISTER FYLES' PORTFOLIOS

### DEPARTMENT OF THE ATTORNEY-GENERAL AND JUSTICE

**Madam CHAIR:** Good morning and welcome to today's Estimates Committee hearing. I acknowledge that we gather this morning on the land of the Larrakia people and I pay my respects to elders past, present and emerging.

I welcome you, Attorney-General and Minister for Justice. We invite you to introduce the officials accompanying you today.

**Ms FYLES:** Thank you, Madam Chair and committee members. Firstly, I would like to introduce those sitting at the table with me. I have the Acting Chief Executive of the Department of the Attorney-General and Justice, Ms Meredith Day; the Chief Financial Officer, Ms Jacqui Dowling; and the Acting Deputy Chief Executive, Mr Craig Smyth. I also have the Acting Executive Director of Legal Services, Ms Jenni Daniel-Yee. I also wish to advise that the directors responsible for each output group will join me at the table if required.

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

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

Attorney-General, do you wish to make an opening statement regarding the Department of the Attorney-General and Justice?

**Ms FYLES:** Thank you, Madam Chair, I do. Budget 2018–19 is about more jobs, more people and a brighter future for the Northern Territory. The Department of the Attorney-General and Justice is progressing many of the government's key priorities and reforms so that our government can deliver on those priorities for the benefit of all Territorians.

From the commencement of 2017–18, the Department of the Attorney-General and Justice overall base budget has increased by \$1.595m to a total of \$384.518m in 2018–19. This increase allows the Department of the Attorney-General and Justice to continue to focus on delivering legal services to government, supporting the government's legislative program, providing support to victims of crime, and administering a strong and responsive justice system.

In addition, the department will continue to promote community safety through correctional interventions, regulate workplace health and safety, and administer the Territory's licensing regime for gaming, liquor, racing, consumer and trading activities.

A key driver of many of these functions is to help our government deliver safer communities. Budget 2018–19 invests in community safety. This is why we have allocated \$4.3m over two years with \$3.73m of that ongoing funding to strengthen Community Corrections and for electronic monitoring services. This will also include a new regional manager position in Tennant Creek to manage the Community Corrections office.

In addition to the \$3.73m ongoing funding for electronic monitoring, an additional \$0.29m in 2018–19 and 2019–20 has been allocated to trial a more robust and sustainable model for managing on-call requirements. Further, an additional \$0.28m in 2018–19 and 2019–20 has been allocated to develop and release a joint public tender with the Department of the Attorney-General and Justice, Northern Territory Police and Territory Families for electronic monitoring services for a period of up to five years.

Budget 2018–19 also brings forward \$4.2m to complete the upgrade to the Alice Springs Correctional Centre fence, including the Honeywell security system. The current fence and technology are part of the original build for the prison and this funding represents an investment in improving security.

Importantly, as well as investing in key community safety initiatives like electronic monitoring and our new correctional centres, Budget 2018–19 also invests in a new and innovative approach for our justice system. Our government has committed to developing an Aboriginal Justice Agreement to deliver better justice outcomes for Aboriginal Territorians. This work is being driven by the Department of the Attorney-General and Justice and Aboriginal Justice Unit, which sits within the agency.

Budget 2018–19 provides \$1.1m ongoing funding for the AJU, for the work on the Aboriginal Justice Agreement. The work of the AJU is already creating positive outcomes and our government is investing in initiatives that have come up through the grassroots consultation that the AJU has been leading. I spoke about these on the weekend at the Barunga Festival.

Budget 2018–19 provides \$5.5m over three years to trial two alternatives to prison sites, one in Central Australia and one in the north. The alternatives to prison project will focus on intervention for those Aboriginal Territorians who are at risk of incarceration, and we all know those way too high figures.

The alternatives to prison project is just one example of the many initiatives of our government and this department in trying to drive generational change. The generational change is required to tackle the harm that is caused by alcohol abuse. The challenges are a big part of the department's ongoing work.

In recent times the department has been instrumental in establishing the independent Liquor Commission and implementing the recommendations of the Riley review through significant legislative changes. The department is also currently leading the re-write of the *Liquor Act*.

Budget 2018–19 continues to invest in the department's role in reducing alcohol-related harm in the Northern Territory. There is \$6m in Budget 2018–19 for the department of Justice to operate and maintain the Banned Drinker Register. This is ongoing funding for the operation of the technology across the Northern Territory. Through technology we are also driving better data collection to help implement and monitor alcohol reforms.

Budget 2018–19 also funds \$.235m in one-off funding to develop a data collection regime to support the upcoming floor price and \$185 000 for Licensing NT to develop a data collection regime and identify the information technology upgrade needed to support data collection and collation.

Madam Chair, I also wanted to explain and highlight another area where we are trying to drive generational change, reducing domestic and family violence. Budget 2018–19 provides \$7m for upgrades to the Youth and Domestic Violence Courts in Alice Springs so that our government can deliver a specialised Domestic Violence Court and improve access for people with disabilities.

We hope to see from this investment changes that will be in place at the Alice Springs Local Court—will deliver improved safety for all victims, increased accountability for offenders and a reduction in the occurrence of domestic violence over the long-term. In particular, there will be fast-tracking of all domestic violence matters, with a particular emphasis on improving the speed of handling criminal matters. Budget 2018–19 therefore delivers significant new investment in to the Territory's justice system, particularly on frontline programs and infrastructure.

For the benefit of the committee I would also like to give a brief explanation of the Department of the Attorney-General and Justice and the output groups to be discussed today. The department encompasses seven output groups. The first being Legal Services, which provides government with quality legal advice, representation, policy development, supports victims of crime and conducts important research in to the criminal justice system.

The department continues its work in the area of legislative reform including court reform, criminal procedure, vulnerable witnesses, victims of crime and fines recovery. Legal services also administers a number of grants, including the continued funding to the Northern Territory Legal Aid Commission. This ensures that Legal Aid can continue to provide appropriate and timely representation to Territorians.

The Correctional Services output group provides a safe and secure and humane custodial service that targets reoffending through focus programs, education and training. Correctional services is responsible for monitoring and supervising community-based offenders to ensure compliance with the orders of the courts and the Parole Board of the Northern Territory. In addition, correctional services provides secretariat support to the parole board and related administrative duties.

The Court and Tribunal Support Services output group provides administrative support services to enable delivery of justice to the Territory community by courts and tribunals. It is also important to note that while the

CEO is the accountable officer under the *Financial Management Act* and the *Public Sector Employment and Management Act* the administration of the department in many of its arms are independent in their delivery by their functions by virtue of statutory appointment.

The Director of Public Prosecutions is one such statutory office. The DPP continues to provide an independent public prosecution service to the Territory and support witnesses and victims through the criminal justice process.

The Independent Offices output group, which includes a range of independent statutory bodies, continues the important role of protecting the community's legal rights and property interests, and providing important legislative drafting services to progress the government's legislative reform agenda.

As a matter of brief housekeeping, Sally Sievers is involved in estimates as both the Anti-Discrimination Commissioner and through the Health portfolio as the Community Visitor for mental health and disability. If it was possible, Madam Chair, I would request of the committee, if they could ask questions for both those when she attends this session as the Department of the Attorney-General and Justice. Of course, we are in the committee's hands.

I note that Output 5.6, Health and Community Services Complaints Commissioner, comes under my portfolio responsibilities as Minister for Health, and questions should be directed at that point in the schedule.

In relation to Output 5.7, Children's Commissioner, the Minister for Territory Families has overall responsibility for the *Care and Protection of Children Act* but sits within this portfolio in terms of budget output.

There is also the Regulatory Services Group which consists of Licensing NT, Output 6.1, and NT WorkSafe, Output 6.2.

Licensing NT administers the Territory's licensing regimes for a range of gaming, liquor, racing, consumer and trading activities. Community harm is minimised through targeted compliance activity of high-risk areas and administration of funding for support of gambling-related research, amelioration and community not-for-profit groups.

NT WorkSafe ensures that businesses and workers meet their responsibilities under the law in regard to workplace health and safety. NT WorkSafe also provides assistance to businesses and workers throughout the Territory to meet their responsibilities through workplace site visits, advice, audits and inspections.

Finally, the Corporate and Governance output group continues to deliver high-quality support services to the department, with a continued focus on increasing efficiencies and streamlining internal service delivery.

I now welcome questions from the committee, Madam Chair.

**Madam CHAIR:** Thank you, Attorney-General. Are there any questions relating to the Attorney-General's statement?

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** I have no questions in respect to the statement. Thank you, Attorney-General. Thank you to all of the Attorney-General and Justice staff. We understand a lot of work and preparation has gone into today and we are very much looking forward to the hours that are in front of us. Thank you very much.

**Mr WOOD:** I would like to ask a few questions because that was a very broad statement. I would like the opportunity to get some questions in. In regard to electronic monitoring, could you give us ...

**Madam CHAIR:** Member for Nelson, could you ensure your microphone is on.

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

You mentioned electronic monitoring. Have there been issues with electronic monitoring devices being removed from—I will not say prisoners because they are not necessarily prisoners—people's wrists or ankles or wherever they are attached. Have they been cut off or have they simply been removed? If there have been problems, how have we gotten around them?

**Ms FYLES:** As you would be aware, Member for Nelson—and thank you for your question—electronic monitoring is an additional tool for Community Corrections, the Parole Board, Police and a number of other

government agencies. It is not the only method of monitoring people that the courts or those pathways have deemed to be able to integrate into our community but they need some monitoring.

The best advantage of electronic monitoring is that for decades people have been allowed to reintegrate into community—as you would very well know. If they breach electronic monitoring we are alerted immediately. Also, if they attempt to remove or do remove the bracelet we are automatically made aware of that. That is the advantage.

It is not the only method, but in terms of people trying to breach their conditions and remove that bracelet, we are alerted through electronic monitoring immediately.

**Mr WOOD:** My understanding is some people on bail have removed them. Have you any idea how many of those devices have been removed? Have you looked at ways of making sure they cannot be removed?

**Ms FYLES:** We always work with the providers. I spoke in my opening statement about the contract that is currently in place and that will expire in 2019. Obviously, we will put that contract back out to tender. We always look for the best technology, the best bracelets that potentially cannot be removed. We would always aim for that, but it is not the only tool for monitoring someone who is on parole or a Community Corrections order. If they do breach that order by removing or attempting to remove it, we are notified immediately.

**Mr WOOD:** But if the contract will not be renewed until 2019 and if there are issues with those devices being removed, are you putting anything into place which might limit that happening? It seems that if you are putting people on bail and the idea is to have a tracking device, but that tracking device is being removed, then something would need to be done to stop that.

**Ms FYLES:** Sorry, I should have been more clear; we do not believe there is a problem with the bracelets. I was saying that we are always looking towards more modern technology and products. But as I said, it is not the only method of monitoring someone. These are people who have been deemed by our courts or the Parole Board to be able to be in our community.

It is an additional tool. Previously, with someone being monitored, they would have to be sighted and they would have to report in. That still may be the case for some people, but the electronic monitoring allows people to, for example, go in to some remote communities and we can visit them. I know in Arnhem Land there is a Community Corrections officer based in Jabiru and they do a circuit of visiting people. These are people who have been assessed as reasonably safe to be in our community, and this helps them comply with those orders.

**Mr WOOD:** I am not against the principle. I think it is a good idea, but I was under the understanding that quite a few young people had removed them and I was hoping that you would be able to give some advice as to how have you approached that issue. Have you done something to make sure that it is much more difficult for those devices to be removed?

**Ms FYLES:** In terms of police and youth, those questions might be better pointed to their ministers, if they have been doing any additional work around those people. Someone who is on electronic monitoring has gone through a process, so the court or Community Corrections or whatever it may be have said that they would be suitable for that.

**Mr WOOD:** Yes, I have not got a problem with that. The police have gone; they went yesterday.

Minister, you did mention that there were two alternative sites you were looking for. I do not know whether you call them prison sites, but alternative to prison sites. Could you give us some idea what sites you have been looking at and could you also indicate if these will be work camps, which was a policy of your government when you were previously in power. Are they similar to what you had with the Barkly work camp?

**Ms FYLES:** I know this is an area that you are very passionate about, Member for Nelson, in terms of corrections overall and the pathways within that. The key difference of these alternatives to prison is a loose name that we are using for now. They may be a cultural re-engagement centre; we have not worked through that. We are consulting and the Aboriginal Justice Unit is driving that work. I think it is particularly important that community have that ownership and drive it.

The big difference with these sites is that they will be community run; they will not be corrections facilities. There could be a number of pathways for someone who is at risk, the community feels, of going off the

tracks—someone who is trying to reintegrate into the community. The focus of the alternatives to prison is that they will be community run, not corrections run.

**Mr WOOD:** I know we will get into more specifics in a little while. In relation to data, I think you mentioned a figure for collection of data in relation to changes to the floor price. What sort of data are you actually going to be looking for?

**Ms FYLES:** The role of the Department of the Attorney-General and Justice would be similar to the BDR. They run the program, the scanners, the responsibility of justice and maintaining those and the information. With the floor price, it will be collating that data and collecting it, and then we will feed it into the evaluations that will be more health focused. It is making sure the products are sold at that price and that there is compliance. The department of Justice role will be around that, having databases to ensure the compliance.

**Mr WOOD:** I am not sure whether we can get into more detail on that later, but I would be interested to see how that would actually work and is the data also—because we know that you are introducing a policy which you are hoping will make change. What baseline data have you collected before this particular piece of legislation comes into play?

**Ms FYLES:** I would be happy to go into details, perhaps under the justice or health outputs. It is important to note that not one measure is going to solve the Northern Territory's alcohol problems. The floor price modelling shows it will affect about 25 products in Darwin and Alice Springs. It is about removing that really cheap grog that we see, the \$4 and \$5 bottles of wine that are cheaper than water. That is the aim of the floor price. The floor price alone will not tackle the issues. It is about compliance and having those rehabilitation pathways. I am sure, through both my portfolios, we will have lots of questions.

**Mr WOOD:** The independent scrutiny committee has been going around to the local bottle shops checking the number of standard drinks in various products.

**Ms FYLES:** Just to let you know, Member for Nelson—I know you are very passionate about these issues—we wrote to the ACCC some months ago, saying the Northern Territory was on a path to introducing a floor price and if they could monitor this. We do not want to see those products that are perhaps at \$7 or \$8 pushed up to that \$9.23 mark. So ACCC and Consumer Affairs are monitoring the prices of products now and we have been doing that work.

It was some months ago that I wrote to them so that, ahead of the introduction later this year, we would be fully across what was previously charged and then the new price.

**Mr WOOD:** Can I just get clarification through you, Madam Chair. If we wanted to discuss this issue—two issues—where would we discuss it? In Justice?

**Ms FYLES:** I would think Health under the alcohol policy. The other issue is—a technical issue ...

**Madam CHAIR:** Member for Nelson, most likely Community Treatment and Extended Care in the Health portfolio, Output 10.1, Alcohol and Other Drugs.

**Mr WOOD:** Who has carriage of that legislation?

**Ms FYLES:** The floor price?

**Mr WOOD:** Yes, the Health minister or Attorney-General?

**Ms FYLES:** Attorney-General and Justice has the legislation, but the policy area sits within Health. It actually sits in DCM.

**Mr WOOD:** It is just a technical question. Because there is a piece of legislation coming before parliament, are we able to discuss or debate that issue before this Estimates Committee?

**Ms FYLES:** Madam Chair, just by way of suggestion, we could talk about it under 1.2, Legal Policy.

**Mr WOOD:** My question is, because we have this before parliament as a piece of legislation and normally we are not allowed to debate something before that—does this apply, Madam Chair, to the restriction on the debate about that piece of legislation?

**Ms FYLES:** Or we could talk about it under licensing.

**Madam CHAIR:** I would like to keep to the outputs, so if you can find the correct output. There is 6.1, Licensing NT. That might be the correct time to bring it up, Member for Nelson. I am sure the Member for Spillett will have many questions as well.

**Mr WOOD:** Okay, I will leave it at that. I grabbed an opportunity while I could.

**Madam CHAIR:** Are there any further questions regarding the Attorney-General's statement?

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

**Madam CHAIR:** The committee will now consider the estimates of proposed procedure contained in the Appropriation Bill 2018–19 as they relate to the Department of the Attorney-General and Justice.

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

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

#### **OUTPUT GROUP 1.0 – LEGAL SERVICES Output 1.1 – Solicitor for the Northern Territory**

**Madam CHAIR:** The committee will now continue to Output Group 1.0, Legal Services, Output 1.1, Solicitor for the Northern Territory. Are there any questions for the Attorney-General?

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

Attorney-General, how many hours were spent by SFNT staff dealing with the litigation arising from the challenge to the 400 square metre floor space regulation for liquor outlets that was instituted by government in January 2017?

**Ms FYLES:** Thank you, Deputy Leader of the Opposition. I will seek advice to see if we have specific figures for that. We do not have the specific figures here. We could take that question on notice and provide it to you. As with everything, the hours are recorded, but I do not have that, I apologise, with us today.

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#### **Question on Notice No 4.1**

**Madam CHAIR:** Member for Spillett, could you please repeat the question for the record?

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** How many hours were spent by SFNT staff dealing with the litigation arising from the challenge to the 400 square metre floor space regulation for liquor outlets that was instituted by the government in January 2017?

**Madam CHAIR:** Attorney-General, do you accept the question?

**Ms FYLES:** We would be happy to provide the response within the appropriate budget papers that we are looking at. It was quite a broad question, but we can certainly provide that, thank you.

**Madam CHAIR:** Thank you. The Member for Spillett's question has been allocated the number 4.1.

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**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** Attorney-General, how many unfilled solicitor positions does SFNT have, whether contract, temporary or permanent?

**Ms FYLES:** Deputy Leader of the Opposition, it is quite a specific question. We would be happy to provide that. Just to give you—the Solicitor for the Northern Territory, SFNT, the component, there is around 70 FTE, but that includes administrative officers through to graduate positions, so it includes a range. Just to give you that ballpark figure, it is around 70 positions. We would be happy to give you that specific breakdown.

The information I have before me is broken only into administrative officer, executive officer contracts, professional, so we would just have to get that clarification for you. We can try to do that this morning while we are speaking.

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**Question on Notice No 4.2**

**Madam CHAIR:** Member for Spillett, can you please repeat the question for the record?

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** How many unfilled solicitor positions does SFNT currently have, whether they be contract, temporary or permanent?

**Madam CHAIR:** Attorney-General, do you accept the question?

**Ms FYLES:** Of course.

**Madam CHAIR:** The Member for Spillett's question has been allocated the number 4.2.

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**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** Attorney-General, has SFNT estimated the potential value of a class action brought by Maurice Blackburn on behalf of former detainees at Don Dale? If so, what is that estimate and when is this action expected to go to trial?

**Ms FYLES:** As you would be well aware, Deputy Leader of the Opposition, there were a number of class actions. They commenced under the Giles government and continued with the Gunner government. I think we have been on the record acknowledging the issues that we saw within the Don Dale detention facility. We would not provide that information because those class actions are ongoing presently, but I think we can all agree that we have the Royal Commission and implementing its recommendations is key for this government and for Territorians.

We need young people that do the wrong thing to understand the consequences of their behaviour, but what we saw, those images—I have said it before publicly—were unacceptable. Those cases are ongoing so we would not provide that information.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** My question was just going to whether or not the department has an estimate of any potential value to build that into the budget. So you are not able to confirm whether that is even being accounted for?

**Ms FYLES:** We would not ever provide those figures. Clearly, as a government, the Northern Territory in responsibility—if courts order us through that process to make payments then that is done, we meet those obligations, but we would never provide those estimates for the process that is still going through the courts.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** Attorney-General, how many matters involving unions, industrial relations or collective bargaining is SFNT currently dealing with, and how many lawyer hours were spent dealing with such actions in the last financial year?

**Ms FYLES:** The actual bargaining and the industrial relations component fits with the Minister for Public Employment. The role of the department of Justice would be at times if we are asked for our legal opinion we would provide that, but that would be all that we would do.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** Do you have the breakdown of hours for that type of service or the number of instances?

**Ms FYLES:** Deputy Leader of the Opposition, OCPD would generate a legal request and that would come across to this department, so perhaps your question could be better placed to them, asking how many legal requests they have placed across. If that does not suffice, I would be happy to take a written question.

Going back to that second point, it would just be how many times a legal request has come through. As an agency, we provide legal service right across the government and some of that could be fairly brief and others could be quite a detailed body of work.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** Attorney-General, how many matters is SFNT currently dealing with concerning challenges to provisions of the application of the *Mineral Royalty Act* or the *Petroleum Act*?

**Ms FYLES:** It is probably a question better placed to the minister responsible who would be instructing the lawyers. I point back to my further request, I do not mean to be sounding repetitive, but it is providing that service. Perhaps the minister for mining may be able to give you some clarity. I suggest if that does not suffice, a written question.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** How many claims of breach of contract is the Northern Territory Government currently facing and how does that compare with the previous financial year?

**Ms FYLES:** Contracts could be anything. I am not sure if it would be best directed at OCE or breaking it down to different government agencies. For example, off the top of my head, was DIPL facing something for a break of contract—different agencies. We again just provide that advice. It is not our business to be keeping track of those types of issues.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** When a department uses its lawyers, who are seconded from AGJ to the department, then any matters that they are dealing with is a matter for the department. It is not necessarily—I am just trying to understand where the line is.

**Ms FYLES:** Could you repeat your question please? I am just getting some clarification.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** I was trying to work out what information AGJ would hold as opposed to the department when it comes to utilising departmental legal services.

**Ms FYLES:** By way of explanation, three departments have SFNT lawyers that sit within them and they maintain files, as you would be very familiar with. That is Education, Police and Health. The other agencies may have lawyers but they are not part of the SFNT process. Those three agencies have lawyers that are SFNT and would keep files as such. Agencies could come through a number of ways to seek the advice of the department of Justice.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** Education, Police and Health have SFNT lawyers, but the other departments?

**Ms FYLES:** They may have lawyers within them who would give them some legal advice. If they were in a legal matter, they perhaps would come across to SFNT. It might be advice by email or a briefing or it could be right through to representing that agency in court.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** My last question for this output—how many claims of breached administrative laws is the Northern Territory Government currently facing, and how does that number compare with the previous year? I suspect similar answers to the question before.

**Ms FYLES:** I apologise, Deputy Leader of the Opposition, it is a very broad question as I think you would be aware. I am not sure if you could refine that down to be any more specific? We do not have the information here. I am happy to take it on notice, but that is a very broad question for the agency.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** I suppose what we are asking is, how many claims is the Territory—it might be a large number, it might be not be—subject to, or being brought upon them, for admin law?

**Ms FYLES:** Is it issues? Is it matters that go to court? Is there a more specific definition that we could have?

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** I just thought the whole lot and then you guys could break it down.

**Ms FYLES:** The agency just all had a heart attack, but that is okay.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** What court matters or the number of court matters?

**Ms FYLES:** We do not have that information on us but we are happy to take the court matters as a question on notice. Perhaps we can provide some preliminary information back to the member and that might ...

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** Would that help in answering my previous questions around breach of contract that the Territory is in court for?

**Ms FYLES:** That would again go back to the specific agencies.



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**Question on Notice No 4.3**

**Madam CHAIR:** Member for Spillett, can you please repeat your question for the record.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** How many court actions is the Northern Territory Government currently facing for administrative law, and how does that compare for the previous financial year?

**Ms FYLES:** Can I just clarify, is that as of today or over the year?

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** I think until 31 March.

**Ms FYLES:** So from 1 July 2017 to 31 March 2018.

**Madam CHAIR:** The minister accepts the question asked by the Member for Spillett, and it has been allocated 4.3.

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**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** That is all my questions for 1.1. Thank you.

**Madam CHAIR:** Any further questions for Output 1.1?

**Mr WOOD:** Minister, what is the commercial division of SFNT, which I presume is the Solicitor for the Northern Territory acronym? Why do you have a commercial division?

**Ms FYLES:** They are the lawyers within SFNT that advise on commercial matters, so they might look at procurement documents, draft contracts—so in that commercial nature.

**Mr WOOD:** They are not a little business that operates there?

**Ms FYLES:** Well I was trying to sneak it in and just make some money for the Treasurer, but now you have outed me.

**Mr WOOD:** The way it was written, it gave the impression that there was a private section of the Solicitor-General.

**Ms FYLES:** I can absolutely assure you, Member for Nelson, there is no private sections to the Department of the Attorney-General and Justice. They just look after the matters of a commercial nature.

**Mr WOOD:** Maybe re-do the acronym.

As mentioned in your annual report from last year on page 56, there was a case called Amoonguna case. It involved a judicial review application and it was related to a decision of the Central Land Council to direct a grant of leases over Amoonguna Aboriginal Land Trust to various parties, including the Northern Territory and IES. At that stage of the annual report, a decision had not been made. Do you know what the outcome of that court case was?

**Ms FYLES:** Member for Nelson, it was the Amoonguna local government case. I will hand to the Acting Deputy Chief Executive. The matter is subject to appeal but we can update you a little bit.

**Mr SMYTH:** Thank you, Mr Wood. The Amoonguna case was primarily a case brought by representatives of the Amoonguna people against certain actions of the Central Land Council in granting, or purporting to grant, a number of leases in that community. It was heard in the Federal Court. There are about eight or so parties, including the Northern Territory.

The case was determined fairly recently in the Federal Court. The Central Land Council's decisions were upheld and their actions were held to be valid by the Federal Court. However, that matter is now subject to appeal to the Federal Court.

**Mr WOOD:** So it is ongoing, really?

**Mr SMYTH:** Yes, it is.

**Mr WOOD:** Thank you. Minister, what was the role of the Solicitor-General at the Royal Commission? And what was the cost of the Solicitor-General appearing at those Royal Commission hearings?

**Ms FYLES:** The Solicitor-General—there was no cost, obviously apart from her salary. She is in that position. There were some barristers that assisted her.

I will just get clarification on that figure for you, Member for Nelson.

**Mr WOOD:** Okay.

**Ms FYLES:** Member for Nelson, I did answer this question in one of the recent written questions. The specific barristers assisting the Solicitor-General came to around \$260 000. There were a number of costs incurred by the NT Government for support but that specific—sorry, \$360 000 was that figure for the barristers.

**Mr WOOD:** I do not always get around to reading all the written question answers, probably because we do not have the administrative backing that others have. Thank you, that is all the questions I have, Madam Chair.

**Madam CHAIR:** Thank you. That concludes consideration of Output 1.1.

### **Output 1.2 – Legal Policy**

**Madam CHAIR:** The committee will now consider Output 1.2, Legal Policy. Are there any questions?

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Attorney-General, what was the total cost of the Riley review?

**Ms FYLES:** AGD did a good job. They made Health pay for that under alcohol policy, so I would be happy to answer that question in the next session.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** Attorney-General, last year \$1.1m was spent on developing an Aboriginal Justice Agreement. The same has been budgeted for next year and a total of \$3.3m to be spent over three years—when can we expect the finalised agreement to be delivered?

**Ms FYLES:** This was one of the key commitments we had going in to the 2016 election—around delivering better justice outcomes for Aboriginal Territorians. I think we all acknowledge the high rates of incarceration of Aboriginal people, the high rates of Aboriginal Territorians caught up in our criminal justice system.

The draft agreement—we are hopeful that it will be finalised by December this year and then will go back out to consultation. Leanne Liddle and her team within AGD have done an exceptional job. They have done consultation right across the Northern Territory, as you would expect, and they have gone back for follow up consultation. They will continue to do that work.

The advice I have had is that there has been over 50 consultation sessions right across the Northern Territory. For example, they were down at the Barunga Festival on the weekend talking to people.

We have already seen some positive change. For example, an interpreter on the 000—this is a broad ranging review and it is not just looking at the elements of Aboriginal people caught up in the criminal justice system, but what steps can we put in place so they have a far more positive interaction. The birth certificates—I think we saw over 3000 birth certificates or official documentations delivered, and that was when we did a bush circuit, so to speak. That might have been from as drastic as somebody who was never given a birth certificate to just typos on names—which then meant when they go they can easily get a driver's licence.

It is a really broad range of work and it is not always in that negative criminal justice system. It is around engaging Aboriginal Territorians so that we can—more justice of the peace, things like that.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** How many people are part of developing the agreement and running the consultation?

**Ms FYLES:** In terms of developing the agreement, as I said, those 50 consultations right across the Territory—thousands of Territorians are involved. The unit within the Department of the Attorney-General and Justice is around six FTE and, as I mentioned, they are being led by Leanne. They are getting out right

across the Territory, working with the non-government sector, working with Territorians, working with government agencies.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARIO:** Part of the reason for the agreement is to address the awful rates of Aboriginal incarceration in the Territory. This might be a question for corrections, but what percentage of prisoners in the Territory are Aboriginal and what is the recidivism rate for those prisoners?

**Ms FYLES:** Around 85% of people incarcerated in the Northern Territory are Aboriginal Territorians. I am happy under the corrections output to go into that. That is the broader figure that we use.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARIO:** Part of the Aboriginal Justice Agreement is to see those numbers decrease?

**Ms FYLES:** Absolutely. Recently I visited Long Bay Prison in Sydney and I think our Darwin facility is bigger. That highlights that we cannot just keep—community safety is absolutely paramount and that is what this is about. We need to make sure that we have different methods in place, that is, alternatives to prison, giving people that official documentation. We need to understand the issues; we cannot keep doing what we are doing.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARIO:** On that point of alternatives to prison, \$5.5m has been announced over three years for a trial in Alice Springs and East Arnhem. You said in your press release:

*This is a residential based model that relies on the development of facilities to provide employment and training opportunities and deliver intense, targeted and tailored rehabilitation services for clients and their families.*

How will this project help reduce incarceration and recidivism?

**Ms FYLES:** As I answered the Member for Nelson's question before, it is envisaged that this would be a community-based model, not corrections. We really need community—that is where the discussions have been quite detailed. Working in partnership around—we can have facilities that people, if they are at risk or they perhaps have been involved in the justice system and they look like they are at risk of being caught back up again, that they could go to these facilities. These must be community led and community driven.

We are considering two sites. One in the Top End and one in Central Australia. As we get closer to announcing those sites, we will be able to provide operational budgets, time frames. They will be negotiated on a case-by-case basis with those communities. We think that this is a significant step forward as part of the puzzle to solving these issues of the high rates of Aboriginal incarceration.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARIO:** Just to clarify, will these facilities be for people who have been sentenced or for people at risk of interface with the justice system?

**Ms FYLES:** It could be both. I have strong thoughts that crimes such as murder and sexual assault would not be captured in this, but it could be a pathway for our court system. Hopefully it will capture people before they end up doing the wrong thing. That is why it needs to be community driven and that is the information that is flowing back to us from those community consultations. It is giving communities those powers. So often they have people that are on a track to doing something wrong, it ends up that they do something wrong and then go into the police in Alice or Darwin, and that is it.

We want to give communities that opportunity to have their leadership and to have the resources to intervene earlier before people are caught up in the courts. It would be similar to the courts now, where they can remand someone to a specific address or they can put them on certain conditions. They might have to attend a residential treatment facility currently. This would be another pathway for the courts if they thought it appropriate.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARIO:** How do you envisage it working? Could you give us a practical example? If someone in any town or community in the Northern Territory sees someone at risk who presents certain behaviours repeatedly, can you play out how that works? Are we talking about sentencing people to picking up rubbish on the side of the road, helping build community facilities, how in practice would this work?

**Ms FYLES:** The implementation of the models is still being consulted and it would vary in each of the regions, dependent on factors but not limited to the client cohort, access to services, the location, the community and non-government organisations. If somebody was caught or Community Corrections was sent there, there

would be that monitoring from Community Corrections, but corrections is not going to run these facilities—which I said in my answer to the question for the Member for Nelson.

Further consultations with communities and community-based organisations is under way and continuing so that we can identify these sites and the programs. To answer the specifics of your question, once they are established and operational they will be monitored and evaluated to see whether they are working, whether they need changes, whether we expand them into other Aboriginal communities. This is aligning with the recently released Australian Law Reform Commission's report to reduce the rate of Aboriginal people Australia-wide incarcerated.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** Would there be work built into it—meaningful work or training programs?

**Ms FYLES:** Those questions are all under consultation with the community.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** Okay, so it might be that what is delivered in Alice Springs is quite different to what is delivered in the Top End?

**Ms FYLES:** Very much the intention is for them to be community-driven, and I think you would find a vast difference in the needs and wants of a community in Arnhem Land versus Central Australia, and there would be aspects again that would be similar.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** How has the government arrived at the \$5.5m figure if it is obviously still under consultation and the policy or programs are still being developed? Does it mean that the programs or the roll-out of both facilities will have to meet that budget or this is a start-up budget and as everything is finalised government will be increasing the resources provided to them?

**Ms FYLES:** That is a strong signal of our commitment to make these programs work but we have an expectation that community would be involved, land councils, the federal government. It is leveraging perhaps existing programs that are out there. It is a combination. That will not be the amount that will see these centres operational, but as I spoke of, this has been well identified as a tool to reduce that rate of incarceration that will be closely monitored. When you visit community, they want to be at the table participating and this gives them that opportunity through running facilities appropriate to their region.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** So it might not include capital and infrastructure costs?

**Ms FYLES:** Yes, those figures—this is based on that consultation. That is not an insignificant sum but we absolutely have an expectation that others would be coming to the party around whatever it might be.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** How would this program interact with Sentenced to a Job?

**Ms FYLES:** Sentenced to a Job is a corrections program that runs for people who are sentenced prisoners. We might pick up some of the ideas behind that and use them in these facilities, but they are very different facilities. Somebody might, as I said earlier—home detention. Some Aboriginal Territorians do not have a permanent address so that is a factor. Somebody with a fixed address can be sentenced to home detention. This facility might pave that pathway forward for individuals.

It can be quite broad ranging—who and why they can be engaged with these alternatives to prison re-engagement centres, or whatever the final name is we land on. They might have different names in different areas but Sentenced to a Job is a corrections program for sentenced prisoners.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** Thank you, Attorney-General.

**Mr WOOD:** I would like to ask a few questions on that issue. I was just listening to what you were saying. We have work camps which presently exist, which I think the government should consider more often. They are for low-security prisoners. Now you are setting up an alternative to prison. Exactly who will be in there? In other words, will they be people who actually have been sentenced for a criminal offence?

**Ms FYLES:** It would depend on what the community in that region decides they want. So it could be people that the community feels are at risk, and that is a pathway for them. It could be people that are on administrative home detention. It provides another pathway.

I said this earlier to the courts, but if somebody is sentenced to incarceration, this will not be a facility for them. If they are sentenced they will go to whatever facility they are sentenced to. But, equally, if they have

served—you could possibly see people that have served some time incarcerated and then as part of their parole order they could come into this facility.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** So they cannot be sentenced to it. That is not the idea.

**Ms FYLES:** A court—somebody with a fixed address could be sentenced to home detention. An Aboriginal person currently does not have a fixed address so the court has no choice but to sentence them to prison. So they could say, 'We are sentencing you to this facility' as part of their court order, just the same as we see people currently sentenced to home detention or whatever aspect. When you look at the rates of Aboriginal incarceration, these are the reasons why we need to put investment into facilities such as this.

**Mr WOOD:** Are we looking at reducing the number of people who go to prison, whether it is home detention—which is still run by corrections—or are we just trying to reduce the number of people who will go before the courts and be sentenced? There is a clear distinction there, that you could send—you are saying on one hand that we are going to develop a community-based facility and it will not be under corrections, but if you have people who have been sentenced there, surely then corrections will be legally part of that operation, because that is their role.

**Ms FYLES:** Member for Nelson, the court say some people could be on bail but are currently remanded in custody because they have no place to be bailed to. It could capture those people. As I said, it could capture people that the community feels are at risk. It could capture people that are on bail. It could capture people that—and community safety is paramount. That is why in my earlier statements I said I believe there are a couple of areas that would be sort of off. But this is around having pathways that are alternatives to prison when you look at those stats, which I know you all ...

**Mr WOOD:** What worries me—alternatives to prison is generally that we try to not send people to prison in the first place.

**Ms FYLES:** Absolutely.

**Mr WOOD:** Because if people have committed a crime, they are going to have to—legally, something will happen to them whether it is parole or going to a work camp or whatever. They are still under the corrections portfolio. So if you are trying to reduce the number of people using this process, and I refer sometimes to two areas—Wildman River was exactly that type of thing. I am not saying it was community-based, but the idea was to get young people into a place to stop them being at risk and getting into further trouble.

The other one is in Queensland, the Family Responsibilities Commission, which is empowering Aboriginal people in communities to look at problems within their communities before anyone goes within the bigger legal system, if you can call it that, and end up going to prison.

What worries me—that is probably not the right word because I am all for what you are trying to do. But I want to make sure we are not glossing over or window dressing the fact that if you do not want more people in prison then you have to have a process to keep them out of prison. Is this doing that? Will you actually reduce the number of people going to prison or are you just smoothing it over so that it looks like less people are going to prison? Because this will be community-run, not corrections-run.

**Ms FYLES:** Absolutely. That is the aim, to stop the interaction of Aboriginal people with the criminal justice system and to reduce those rates of incarceration. These are not gaols; they are not work camps. I believe these facilities are a gap within our current justice system. It is giving communities options. It is giving the courts another option. They are certainly not a prison or a work camp, to answer the first part of your question.

The aim is very much to—there is a lack of service and support for people that we can see heading off the track, so to speak, and this provides that ability to intervene and give them supports.

**Mr WOOD:** What role will Aboriginal people have in the operations of this facility? And the facility will obviously be on someone's traditional land. Who will be the people that give the okay for the facility to be there in the first place? How will—obviously people in there will come from mixed groups throughout the Top End, in the case of the Top End—the community from where those people come from also be involved? I think that is an important part of trying to keep people out of prison. What is the mix in operating this facility?

**Ms FYLES:** Absolutely. They are community-driven and that is what the consultation to date has shown. We have been out there with over 50 consultations and different communities have come forward with different suggestions. When we started this work initially, we had thoughts and they have shifted because we have

been listening to that community input. As I said with the funding model, it will be government, community and hopefully the federal government, so it would be very much led for them. If a certain area feel that they have a certain cohort that they want to have the resources for, that will be their aim.

**Mr WOOD:** Did the government at least give some consideration to the Family Responsibilities Commission that operates in Queensland? It operates in five Aboriginal communities, and I have them here: Doomadgee is one, which is nearly on our border; Aurukun; Coen ...

**Ms FYLES:** Yes, yes.

**Mr WOOD:** Did they have a look at that?

**Ms FYLES:** That is a different model once again, but we did give consideration to that.

**Mr WOOD:** Have you given that idea away altogether? Because that gives a more community-based option for people to deal with people who may be at risk of going to prison.

**Ms FYLES:** Leanne, who has been doing all the work, is here so I am just going to ask her to come to the table.

Leanne Liddle has joined me at the table. She is the Director of the Aboriginal Justice Unit. Member for Nelson, in your line of questioning, I know it is not to attack—you are very passionate around this so I thought it was appropriate to ask Leanne to answer some of those questions because she and her team have been doing a great body of work across the Territory.

**Ms LIDDLE:** What has been identified as part of the consultations is that there is a lack of access to services that actually target and tailor the criminogenic needs of clients that we intend to place into these facilities. Communities are telling us they are embarrassed to use the health centres to get access to mental health services; they are in constant grief and are unable to access culturally competent services to relieve them of some of the trauma that they have historically or are currently suffering; and that a culturally competent space with access to elders that restore the cultural authority and values of respect, integrity and cultural respect is something that is needed and is eroding away in many communities. That is what is placing Aboriginal people at risk of entering the criminal justice system.

This is a facility that will embrace the entire family unit. It is a facility that will not only focus on the offender, but it will focus on partners and children, providing services to a family unit in the first instance with the support of community. It is about tailoring and targeting people's criminogenic risks and needs and addressing those. Getting assessments medically of those people so they complete rehabilitation programs well and can leave that facility in a position where they no longer can re-offend.

In answer to your question, it will be for people that are at risk and those who the community feel are in need of help. We know from the consults that a lot of children are being affected by witnessing a lot of the violence, and community want to have a say in how we deal with kids at risk, adults at risk, and witnesses and victims to these crimes.

**Mr WOOD:** The question I was asking—and I ask this question because I know this system exists in Queensland, the Family Responsibilities Commission, which empowers people in a community—not a vast community but in their local community—with powers that are legal to help people in regard to people at risk from domestic violence, risk for not looking after their children, not sending kids to school.

Did you look at that model at all? I am not saying it is suitable for the Northern Territory, but did you look at that model which does empower people locally to make decisions locally so that people are reducing their risk of entering criminal activity?

**Ms FYLES:** I will answer the question initially and then will ask Leanne. We looked at that model, and we are looking at what we can do to empower Aboriginal people. The role of Justice of the Peace is really important and the function they can provide. But these facilities are, at this stage, separate to that.

**Ms LIDDLE:** One of the largest research areas we have put in place with this justice agreement is specifically to look at who we are dealing with as Aboriginal people in the Territory who have contact with the criminal justice system and do not have contact with the justice system in the positive sense.

From that we have identified that we are dealing with a completely different cohort of people than those interstate. Whilst we have looked at the models that are on the table from the Family Responsibilities Centres in Queensland, and we have looked at the Bourke models, the Cowra models and overseas models. The statistics and analysis is starting to show us that we have a particular type of Aboriginal person who is in contact with the criminal justice system, and we need to deliver that program and service in a different way according to what the stats are showing us.

When we have gone out and done our consultations, the community have been very clear that they do not want to import interstate models. They do not want a model that has worked elsewhere; they want it site specific and Territory specific. That has come out loud and clear from every cohort we have spoken to. We are listening to the communities to engage in that process and deliver this model that accommodates those needs.

**Mr WOOD:** That is what I wanted to hear. I am not saying that model in Queensland would be ideal for the Territory. In fact, the people involved in it say the same thing. They are just saying it is a model that has some benefits.

I will promote whatever you are doing to reduce the number of Aboriginal people going to gaol, but the proof in the pudding will be if it works. It will take years, but we will—through the Estimates Committee—keep an eye on if it is working. We all want it to work. It is a matter of whether we have the right model to make it work.

Aboriginal people have to be at the forefront; they have to lead in this way, not me. But we have to be there to see that it is working.

**Ms LIDDLE:** We looked at all the other justice agreements nationally, and assessed them and looked at what was happening in that space before moving forward and starting conversation with communities.

**Ms FYLES:** Thank you, Leanne, for that explanation. I offer the committee and any members—this is a huge body of work; it is really important. I thank you for your interest, Member for Nelson. And I thank the Member for Spillett for her questions.

Leanne and her team, in getting out across the Territory—it is not an easy job at times, but it is an opportunity. We have seen other models in other jurisdictions which work. It is important that we get a model. Community safety is our priority, but it is an exciting body of work.

**Mr GUYULA:** Good morning, Attorney-General and department staff. I am not sure if this question is for this output, but if you could guide me?

**Ms FYLES:** Of course.

**Mr GUYULA:** Could you advise in which output I can ask a question about new alternative prison models.

**Ms FYLES:** That would probably be now, Member for Nhulunbuy.

**Mr GUYULA:** We are keen to keep people out of the prison systems. Many elders want to provide alternatives to prison by providing support on our homelands. In 2013 there was a very positive referral from the courts to the Gunapipi ceremony. A young man spent most of his year attending the ceremony under the authority of Yolngu leaders and was rehabilitated by this experience.

Could you advise what is being provided for the alternative to prison models in East Arnhem Land and whether there is an intention to roll out further alternatives to prison based on what elders of many communities are asking for?

Yuduyudu, in the Gove Peninsula, is one such home town that is working towards providing healing and discipline on country. I would like to see the department meet with the family who are trying to develop this mission.

**Ms FYLES:** Thank you for your question, Member for Nhulunbuy. In looking at this model, clients potentially can be self-referred or nominated by a community, but I will ask Leanne to provide further explanation around those specifics and around what consultation has been done, particularly in your electorate as your question is that specific.

**Ms LIDDLE:** Thank you for that question. As you know, there is two locations that we have identified for alternatives to prison across the Northern Territory. One is for Aboriginal females in Central Australia and the other one is in Arnhem Land.

We are still under consultation as to the specifics around that location and we are working with the community in regard to who should be eligible to enter that re-engagement cultural centre, as some people are naming it.

What we have recognised is that every community wants one. We have done over 54 consults and every community wants an alternative to prison. The reality is that there has to be a need for that inner community, and again we go back to evidence-based data and say, are there enough numbers there? What is the cost that we have with our limited budget to be able to deliver specialised services in to this facility that will make a difference to people's lives and create safer communities?

We are currently working with the land councils in your region. We are currently working with the communities and we are moving strongly forward to make these things happen. We are recruiting for project officers to deliver these alternatives to prisons, but every community and every consult that we have done so far is that everybody wants one.

The reality is that we do not have enough money for these to be in every community. There may be a different type of model that gets rolled out in a smaller-type arrangement in communities, but the recognition that it has to be the contribution from government from all the agencies lining up together delivering the services from health, school, education, justice, police—we all need to be there, working in and out of this facility to deliver our services in a coordinated fashion.

That also means that communities need to come together. They also need to be coordinated, aligned and committed to running the program because we want this to work and it is a partnership. We want Aboriginal people to be the ones running these facilities.

So, yes, there are two—one in your region. They are pilot programs but we only have a limited amount of money to roll those two out.

**Ms FYLES:** To pick up further on what Leanne is saying, they are pilot projects and equally we will be evaluating them closely. We know the high cost of incarceration both economic and on community, so we need to get it right, refine the model—but I hope this is a step in a very different way for the Territory justice system and upholds that community safety. We have community leadership coming through and being a part of reducing those unacceptably high rates of incarceration of your people and Aboriginal people across the Territory.

**Mr GUYULA:** It would be good to see it happen—now that government are supporting it—maybe in those places like Arnhem Land. But in the end, maybe family members within their own clan groups would like to do it properly.

**Ms FYLES:** This body of work—Member for Nhulunbuy, sorry, I did not mean to cut you off. It is not just about these two alternatives to prison—for lack of a better name at the moment—it is around the whole justice system. With those 3000 birth certificates, there were often changes to names and spelling, empowering people to have a positive interaction with our justice system whilst respecting Aboriginal communities.

**Mr GUYULA:** Yes. I would like to be kept up to date so we know what is happening, because around in Arnhem Land, someone I know—his family are getting together trying to work on a camp. I mention Yudu Yudu, which is on the other side of Melville Bay on the Gove Peninsula. There was one that I mentioned around that Milingimbi VSA camp—it is probably a VSA person maybe that can be involved in that area. That is where those people have already had a vision to take their family and children out. When it starts to come that the government has started to get involved, maybe we can get together, talk about it and work on the site around Arnhem Land.

**Ms FYLES:** Absolutely. That is what the unit has been established for, to get out there with the detailed consultation to talk to community and allow community that opportunity to lead and have their voice heard—still respecting the justice system. As I point out earlier, it is a completely different pathway for justice in the Territory. We very much want all members to encourage their communities to continue to work. Leanne has done very detailed consultation at over 50 places across the Territory. That unit's work will continue.



**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** Can I ask one final question on that topic? People could be made to go to the facility by the court. Then there is voluntary—I think you mentioned—self-referral. Is it envisaged then that there would be that traditional authority when communities identify, as you said, a cohort or an individual who is on a path that needs to be intervened upon—that traditional authority would come in and those people or person would have to utilise the services of the facility because of that authority?

**Ms FYLES:** I will ask Leanne to provide a little more detail about that, but yes.

**Ms LIDDLE:** We cannot run these centres without Aboriginal people and cultural authority within these places. We cannot move anywhere in the justice agreement and deliver on our aims without Aboriginal people being front and centre and working with us to deliver these outcomes. For us, Aboriginal people will be working inside running these facilities, monitored, overseen and audited by Correctional Services to comply with orders.

As I have heard before, people will be able to be self-referred if they are at risk—referred by the community. They will be able to be diverted from court, police bail and other options. Again, that is under consultation with the community and in line with relevant legislation.

The culture authority that exists in communities, the strong leadership we have seen as we have done the consultations is what we want in these facilities so we can build back and stop the erosion of some of that culture that is happening in communities and placing Aboriginal people at risk of being in contact with the criminal justice system.

**Mr GUYULA:** Most of the discipline that would happen—ceremonies is where the traditional education, discipline and rehabilitation is normally happening. If we are not talking about ceremonies then we can use ceremonies to rehabilitate people. This is how it has been happening for a long time so it is part of culture. We see ceremonies like in festivals—just dances and stuff—but at a higher level it is education where young men and women take up leadership and learn to be who they are. We would like to consider ceremonies are most important—that it is made for young leaders to become elders of the future, who have key roles in their areas.

**Mr WOOD:** One follow-up question. It reminded me ...

**Ms FYLES:** (inaudible – mic off)

**Mr WOOD:** I did. Well, sometimes discussion brings on other discussion. I know my sisters-in-law have, for many years, believed the value of healing centres are important. They have used their facility—which is not a facility, it is just an old shed at Bulgul which is near Channel Point—where people have come, for whatever reason—it could be they are having trouble in their family or people knowing they are on their last day or it could be young people who are mixed up.

Have we looked at places—not just one place—where people can have these healing centres, where people can go to refresh themselves, to get away from their problems? Because I know there has been some money set aside by the Commonwealth Government for healing centres, but I have not heard much of it operating in the Northern Territory. Is that an option the government is looking at and would consider helping communities? It is not a very costly option. It is a matter of just some accommodation with some toilets and showers, where people can reflect on where they are going in their life.

**Ms FYLES:** I will ask Leanne to provide explanation to answer your question, Member for Nelson.

**Ms LIDDLE:** These facilities would accommodate that need. There is recognition up front that is loud and clear when we look at the cohort of people that would access this facility, which is that we need to bring in the assessments of people with the history of trauma and issues around mental health, cognitive disabilities, FASD, all those issues—and place that alongside with all the other areas that we have been talking about here this morning around the ceremonial culture authority, the healing, the mentorship and leadership we want to bring back into communities. All that is packaged into this space.

We have been very clear that we cannot isolate one from the other. As well, these facilities will enable people to get employment into their communities if they so wish to be employed. Whilst you are getting addressed for your health needs and criminogenic risks and needs, you will also be channelled back into a community into employment if that is what you so desire.

It is cutting off so many of the pressure points that place people at risk of returning back to the criminal justice system, and packaging these with all those other agencies together with communities, with elders, with families all being part of the solution.

**Mr WOOD:** I think the idea of a healing centre was not to have one particular place; it was that communities had a spot where people could—it is similar to a retreat, but not as formal as a retreat. It is a place where people, with the support of the people in that community—and it might be people who have gotten into trouble, but it is not a specialist where you have people with qualifications necessarily running it. It is just people who are concerned about family—that is the broad family—having a place away from all the temptations, you might say, of where they come from, to give them time to work out where they are going in life.

A lot of that is about bringing them back on a straight path. I did not know whether there was any government policy which looks at the possibility of expanding the healing centre concept, which has been around a while. The Commonwealth Government, I think, allowed some funding for it. But I am just wondering whether the government has looked at that process as well as what you are doing, but separate from what you are doing.

**Ms LIDDLE:** That is certainly part of the research. We have looked into those areas. It has not been something that has been front and centre in the consultations, but the need has been raised to care for elders on issues around elder abuse and caring for the family, and looking after victims and witnesses of crime, giving people relief and tools to support the person and family who may be at risk. It has not been discounted at all. It has just not been front and centre. As we are moving forward we will be developing the models according to the cohort of the people that are in those particular communities.

**Madam CHAIR:** Are there any further questions for Output 1.2?

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** Yes, Madam Chair. Attorney-General, has a review of the Biz Secure program been initiated in order to determine whether not-for-profit or home businesses should be included in that program?

**Ms FYLES:** Deputy Leader of the Opposition, Biz Secure I understand is the department of business.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** So the review is not ...

**Ms FYLES:** No.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** Okay, thank you. Minister, how many reviews, inquiries and consultations were undertaken by legal policy last financial year?

**Ms FYLES:** There was a written question on that. We will just find the answer. We are just having a look. We are happy to either take that on notice or bear with us for a second.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** That is fine.

**Ms FYLES:** Sorry, Member for Spillett, departmental or legal policy reviews? There was a written question on departmental.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** Yes, legal policy.

**Ms FYLES:** Just in answering your question, Member for Spillett, do you mean reviews of legislation, review of the *Liquor Act*, the *Information Act*? Is that the type of ...

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** Yes, it is broad I imagine.

**Ms FYLES:** What I have before me is some information around legal policy and licensing. So for example, the *Liquor Act*, the *Information Act*, the *Anti-Discrimination Act*, the *Sentencing Act*, the *Bail Act*, the *Victims of Crime Assistance Act*, one-punch legislation; *Domestic and Family Violence Act*, which does sit with us but Minister Wakefield has the ministerial lead; the *Residential Tenancies Act*, the *Trespass Act*, and the *Racing and Betting Act*. I think that is all.

There might be some that I have missed but I am happy to provide further response or follow up if you want. I am not sure if you had any questions off those?

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** So then any broader reviews—like the Riley review, for example; that is health?

**Ms FYLES:** Yes.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** In general, Attorney-General, when Cabinet has given approval for the drafting of legislation, what direction is given to legal policy as to consultation that should take place with stakeholders outside of government, for example, with NGOs or service providers?

**Ms FYLES:** There is not a general specific rule as such. It would vary greatly to what the issue is. With every piece of legislation that is introduced, it goes through the parliamentary process. Statute law reviews are fairly vanilla so to speak—without any disrespect to them—versus the other issues that we talk about in the Chamber. Sometimes it is a full public consultation; other times it is targeted around key stakeholders. It really would vary. The Cabinet process is around drafting and then it would be the responsibility of the minister around the consultation.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** That answered my question, thank you. Attorney-General, what is the status of the review of the *Anti-Discrimination Act*, and will the government be responding to the submissions and consultations that took place last year?

**Ms FYLES:** Absolutely. The *Anti-Discrimination Act*—we saw a discussion paper seeking public submissions and comments which was released on 3 September 2017. We initially had a due date around 3 December for responses to be provided, and we extended that to 31 January. I met with many stakeholders and interested parties, and people felt that if they could have that period through December and January, it would allow them, particularly NGOs and people that are in busy roles—that they could take some time to write that submission, and we felt that was appropriate.

I have not got the specific figure, but I think 140-odd submissions were received. The discussion paper—which you would be familiar with, Member for Spillett—looked at the modernisation across a broad range of parts of the act. Those submissions are being worked through.

**Mr WOOD:** Will those submissions be made public, minister?

**Ms FYLES:** Similar to other reviews, with the consent of the submitter, they will be made public. It is anticipated in the next month or so that the report on the consultation will be completed, which would then inform the drafting of amendments.

Members for Nelson and Spillett, once those consultations are worked through, it is envisaged that there will be recommendations for drafting instructions, and there was thought around an exposure draft bill. I think that the consultation to date has been very detailed, and I am not trying to be disrespectful to that, but once we have a draft bill we can then work through that. It is a very large piece of work, but an important piece of work, to modernise that act. I think it was 1993 was when the act was introduced.

**Mr WOOD:** There has been a lot of concern about it. I can tell you that I have probably received the biggest number of letters and emails in regard to that proposal. You are saying that at least there will be a draft piece of legislation out there for comment. That is the one thing that has also been asked, that people would like to see you are actually going to do.

**Ms FYLES:** The act really needs to be brought into the 21<sup>st</sup> century and I think that there is certainly a lot of comment by community. This does not cover the definitions of—at the moment it is only a guide dog, not other types of therapy animals. You would hope commonsense would step in, but currently under our law people who are using perhaps a dog for hearing or therapy are not protected.

**Mr WOOD:** They are the minor parts. There are some very major parts of this legislation.

**Ms FYLES:** I do not think that any part of it is minor. If you ask the individual that is impacted, it is a huge impact. There were a lot of aspects to this that people with a disability, victims of domestic and family violence—and the biggest areas of complaint in the last three years, through the Anti-Discrimination Commissioner, have been around disability discrimination and the fact that there is no modern terminology.

We are conscious that this is a very emotive piece of work and we have been meeting with a broad range of stakeholders from across the Northern Territory. It is intended that we will present, with the approval of my Cabinet colleagues, an exposure draft bill so people can see actually in that piece of legislation what the proposed changes will be. I am sure that we will continue the questions and the debate beyond that. Even within this room there will be very broad views and, as the minister responsible, it is making sure that we have an *Anti-Discrimination Act* that protects our most vulnerable Territorians.

**Mr WOOD:** Just one question on that. What did you say was the main complaint to the Anti-Discrimination Commissioner?

**Ms FYLES:** The advice I have is the biggest area of complaint in the last three years has been disability discrimination, as there is no modern terminology for disability included in the act.

**Mr WOOD:** That is right, but you said this legislation goes much further than that. This is about the freedom of speech and it is also about freedom for people to keep their faith in their schools. It is a lot bigger than what you just said, and that is what concerns me and many other people about this particular modernisation move.

**Ms FYLES:** Member for Nelson, I very much respect your personal views, but we need to move this legislation ...

**Mr WOOD:** They are not my personal views only. Many other people ...

**Ms FYLES:** No, no. It is not just your views but we need to bring this legislation into the 21<sup>st</sup> century. We need to acknowledge the LGQBTI community.

**Mr WOOD:** That was not one of the complaints the commissioner received. You just said what the majority of complaints were.

**Ms FYLES:** Madam Chair, I feel like we are back on the floor of Chamber. I do very much respect the Member for Nelson, but going back to the question from the Member for Spillett, this is a huge body of work. I thank the department. There have been a significant number of submissions received—very detailed. As minister leading this, I have met with a broad range of groups and various views that are very black and white different. But, I think, in terms of the Northern Territory having a modern act, it is a piece of work we need to do. It has not been reviewed since 1993.

We will certainly keep the parliament and the community updated. We will not be rushing this through. We are not going to please everybody, but we will see a draft bill. It will go through the parliamentary process. I am sure, unless there are any more specific questions, we can continue that debate another day.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** Attorney-General, I did have a few more questions on that. You mentioned there will be a report on the consultation; that will be published and public?

**Ms FYLES:** What is intended is that the report—so summarising the submissions. That will guide the recommendations for drafting the rewrite of the act.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** So that will not be public?

**Ms FYLES:** It depends what—‘report’ is probably not the right word to use. It is probably a summary of the submissions. As I said, if the submitters are happy for them to be public, we would do so. We have done that previously with the medical termination of pregnancy, for example. Those people that provided permission, we published those. There will certainly be information available to the community around what guides us. We will then have that draft piece of legislation.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** So the next time members of the public will be able to contribute on the *Anti-Discrimination Act* will be when the exposure draft bill is released, obviously pending Cabinet approval that an exposure draft will be released.

**Ms FYLES:** Members of the public can contribute at any point. We have continued to meet with people and have conversations. It is something that comes up regularly in my role. I imagine the next sort of critical point will be a bill. Many of the conversations I have had with people have been around specifics; they want to see how that is interpreted. They have very much let the government know their thoughts around specific issues, so it is now about how that ends up in the drafting process.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** Can you confirm, to the best of your ability, that there will be an exposure draft circulated publicly?

**Ms FYLES:** Yes, it has been the intention of the government to do an exposure draft. I think it is one of those bills—and we can all have a point of view, but once we see that in legislation. So there will be an exposure draft and then it will go through the parliamentary process.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** In terms of the parliamentary process, can you commit that that will go through scrutiny committee?

**Ms FYLES:** I would imagine—unless there is a significant view otherwise—that it would go through a scrutiny committee. I think that would be very appropriate.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** Final question—what was the cost of conducting the consultation on the discussion paper?

**Ms FYLES:** It was done by staff so there would probably be some travel. They definitely went out across the Territory but, again, I think employees that work for the Department of the Attorney-General and Justice—there is a view that part of their role is to get out across the Territory. We can come back on some specific figures.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** Would you have the lawyer hours?

**Ms FYLES:** I think this is core business of government. I do not think you can break it down. This is reviewing a key piece of legislation, which is what people are employed to do. I would see it as core business of the department.

**Madam CHAIR:** Member for Spillett, do you want the specific costs?

**Ms FYLES:** Madam Chair, I do not think we would be able to provide that. This is core business of the agency.

**Mr WOOD:** Who actually had the input into the discussion paper? Was it just the legal section of your department or who else?

**Ms FYLES:** It was based on legal policy, the Anti-Discrimination Commissioner and our election commitments. We looked at other reviews and this is something each jurisdiction reviews, then we start the cycle again. I think we are very much at the—we are probably the last jurisdiction that has reviewed their act recently. But it was those three things: legal policy; the Anti-Discrimination Commissioner; and our commitments prior to the election.

**Mr WOOD:** This was raised with me at a recent discussion over this bill, or this particular change to the act—was if the Anti-Discrimination Commissioner had a role to play in the development of the discussion paper and the Anti-Discrimination Commissioner—if you look at what the changes could imply—would be making decisions, for instance, on whether people could be exempted from this act.

Is there a possibility that by being involved in setting up this discussion paper and then later on being involved in making a judgment about this bill or act, that there is a conflict of interest?

**Ms FYLES:** I think it is really important to have the Anti-Discrimination Commissioner because they are the one that would be able to shape to us what have been the biggest areas of complaints. I would like to note that our *Anti-Discrimination Act* does not comply with the federal government's Sex Discrimination Amendment, so it is a very antiquated bill. I know it is very emotive for people. As minister ...

**Ms NELSON:** It is over 25 years old. It needs to be modernised.

**Mr WOOD:** Age does not always necessarily mean a particular act ...

**Ms FYLES:** Absolutely not, Member for Nelson.

**Madam CHAIR:** Order! Please stick to questions rather than debate, thank you.

**Mr WOOD:** I am not saying we should not review the act. The age of an act does not necessarily mean it is bad. I am not saying it should not be reviewed, but to keep saying it all should be modernised for the sake of modernisation is not the issue; it is whether we have an act that is respectful of people's views et cetera.

All I am asking in this case is if the Anti-Discrimination Commissioner is involved—and this was put to me, I did not even think of this before, but I am putting this as a case by a lawyer. He said that if that person is involved in the development of the discussion paper, is there a conflict of interest if that person then later on

will be the person that makes a judgment over whether some people can be exempt from some particular facets of this particular bill or act?

**Ms FYLES:** Just to highlight for people listening in and watching, this act refers to sheltered workshop, handicap, impairments—modern terminology for disability—but somebody that would be in that position would have to comply with the act. In terms of a new going forward, they would have to comply with what that act is, and that is going through the process which I have outlined this morning.

**Mr WOOD:** I do not think that is quite the answer but I will leave it at that.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** Attorney-General, is there a review of mandatory sentencing in the Northern Territory currently being undertaken by legal policy? If so, when will that review be completed and possible reforms provided for a decision by Cabinet?

**Ms FYLES:** Member for Spillett, as I am sure you are well aware, the term ‘mandatory sentencing’ is a number of acts. We are reviewing mandatory sentencing laws across a number of acts in the Northern Territory, and I think we were quite clear about that in the lead-up to the election.

Community safety is absolutely first and paramount. The Australian Law Reform Commission report, *Pathways to Justice*, enquiring in to the incarceration rate of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, was published earlier this year and has recommendations around repealing mandatory sentencing.

In the Territory, some of it sits under the *Sentencing Act*, but we have been quite up-front. It was around one of our commitments leading in to the election—the work we are doing with the Aboriginal Justice Agreement. This is not just one thing we need to—it needs to be through the prism of victims and putting victims first but making sure that our justice system works for the Territory. Certainly around mandatory sentencing we have been quite open around reviewing what pieces of legislation in the Territory currently have a mandatory sentence through that prism of community safety and community expectation.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** When will that review be completed?

**Ms FYLES:** The way we have come at it is we are not just looking at mandatory sentences and the legislation that has mandatory sentences. It is through that wider justice reform. As I said in my opening remarks about victims of crime and making sure they are put first, there has been significant work done in the victims of crime space which I am sure we will touch on later in this morning’s questioning.

It is having a justice system that works for Territorians. Some victims wait an incredibly long period of time to have their voices heard. It is through that broad prism; it is not just simply removing certain items of mandatory sentencing.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** So there is no time frame for completion of the review?

**Ms FYLES:** It is not something we have a fixed time line on. There has been work to date around victims of crime. We are providing that support and we have seen some changes already. I would like to see more changes in that space, but it is quite broad and encompassing. It is something I have not put a specific, ‘It will be completed by 31 March’.

It might also be picking up on some of the other recommendations. It is coming up with that aim for the Northern Territory of supporting victims, putting community safety first, but making sure our justice system works. There might be some elements introduced sooner and then down the track other pieces of legislation are changed.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** As pieces of legislation are proposed to be changed by the government, or those repeals of mandatory sentences removed et cetera, will there be public consultation coinciding with the reforms?

**Ms FYLES:** Absolutely. We are continually consulting with the public. Every piece of legislation that comes before the House is obviously consulted. We are reconsidering all aspects of our justice system. We have seen that today through the work around the Aboriginal Justice Agreement, alternatives to prison—I am sure we will come to corrections and some of the work we are doing there for people who are already incarcerated. It is law sentencing, rehabilitation and diversion; it is a broad body of work.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** Just to confirm—that consultation will be department-led consultation and then, obviously, consultation through the parliamentary process?

**Ms FYLES:** It will be a mixture. It will be community organisations that work in this space, reaching out with ideas. It will be consultation as policies are to be implemented. I do not think it is one specific—you cannot put it all in one box.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** There is no standard or clear opportunity for Territorians to have input in the reforms the government is planning on taking place. There is no clear strategy around that; it is more as pieces of legislation come up, it will be decided whether or not ...

**Ms FYLES:** No, I completely disagree with that comment. There is ample opportunity. We are continually listening to Territorians—people who have been engaged as a victim, working with the victim support unit within the department. There is a broad range of ...

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** But will there be a discussion paper? How will Territorians en masse be able to contribute to your review of mandatory sentencing?

**Ms FYLES:** This is the issue with the words 'mandatory sentencing'. Mandatory sentencing in the technical term is within legislation such as the *Sentencing Act* and other legislation. It is a mandatory minimum sentence. It is not simply changing one piece of legislation that would completely scrap mandatory sentencing. It is around looking through our justice system and making sure it works for Territorians.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** So there is no commitment to consultation?

**Ms FYLES:** I completely disagree with that comment. There is a ...

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** Well, you have not been able to say whether or not there would be a discussion paper, or if there will always be departmental-led consultation followed by the parliamentary process. I am trying to ascertain how Territorians will be able to be involved.

**Ms FYLES:** To reiterate, the consultation is around all aspects of this. That consultation takes place every day from department, from ministers, from members of this parliament. It is a broad range of aspects around our justice system and making sure that works for Territorians.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** I have no further questions on that output, Madam Chair.

**Madam CHAIR:** Are there any further questions on Output 1.2, Legal Policy? That concludes consideration of Output 1.2.

### **Output 1.3 – Crime Victims Services Unit**

**Madam CHAIR:** I will now call for questions on Output 1.3, Crime Victims Services Unit. Are there any questions?

**Ms FYLES:** Madam Chair, I might just ask for a change of departmental officers. Ros Chenoweth has just joined us. She is Director Crime Victims Services Unit.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** The Safe at Home Program makes a significant contribution to the government's support framework for victims of crime. Has recurrent funding been continued into the next financial year, 2018–19, and if so, what is the amount of recurrent funding?

**Ms FYLES:** Thank you for your question. A further three-year agreement was signed in 2016 for a period through to 30 June 2019 with a value of \$2.9m, excluding GST, over that three-year period.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** Many Territorians are very concerned about crime that has been continuing for months and years now. Obviously, the demand for services for victims of crime has been high, one could deduce. Has Victims of Crime been properly resourced to meet the additional demand as a result of the fact there are now more victims in our community?

**Ms FYLES:** Absolutely. Victims of Crime is a priority for this government. I note that in 2013 the Department of the Attorney-General and Justice conducted a consultation and reviewed the *Victims of Crime Assistance Act*. The review focused on operational issues and ways to improve that scheme. It was a shame that the

then CLP government did absolutely nothing with that report. It was prepared and never released. When we came to this position it was so outdated we were unable to use it.

We have been looking at a charter of victims' rights and how we can make the Victims of Crime support unit more functional so we can ensure victims of crime get the support and services they need up front.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** Have additional resources been provided to victims of crime to fund participation in victim conferencing, and how many conferences have been convened last financial year?

**Ms FYLES:** The victim conferencing falls within Territory Families, so they will be able to provide you with specific figures for youth justice.

We have created two new positions for Victims of Crime NT, one in Darwin and one in Alice Springs. The focus of these positions will be providing ongoing support of victims of crime, particularly in the youth justice conferencing process. The Alice Springs position will have the capacity to provide some core victim services in Central Australia.

**Mr MILLS:** Thank you, Attorney-General. I noted you made reference to a review that had been conducted by the previous government which is now outdated and of no further use. Has that been made public and if not, would you make it public?

**Ms FYLES:** A draft report was prepared but not approved for release prior to the change of government in 2016.

**Mr MILLS:** Well if you say it is of no further use and it is irrelevant, would it be no concern for it to be released so that we can confirm?

**Ms FYLES:** Yes, I would be happy, Member for Blain, to consider that request and provide you with advice around that report.

**Mr MILLS:** Sorry, what does that mean? You will consider it?

**Ms FYLES:** I will consider your request.

**Mr MILLS:** Right, that is nice. Okay. To be continued, thank you.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** Attorney-General, does that mean any other questions around victim conferencing should be directed at Territory Families?

**Ms FYLES:** Can I answer the Member for Blain's question? So it went to key stakeholders. We made it available to the Crime Victims Advisory Committee so I cannot see that as a member of parliament—I would be happy to seek further clarification.

**Mr MILLS:** I think it would be useful, thank you.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** So other victim conferencing questions go to Territory Families?

**Ms FYLES:** Victim support sits within the department of Justice; the conferencing of youth is Territory Families.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** So if I ask about how government is measuring KPIs for victim conferencing?

**Ms FYLES:** Territory Families.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** Does your department have the stats on how many victims are choosing to participate as opposed to declining the opportunity?

**Ms FYLES:** Of victim conferencing?

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** Yes.



**Ms FYLES:** So Territory Families would provide you perhaps with some specifics. We are overall looking at victims of crime and the pathways that support them. We are collecting overall stats but it is too early, I am advised, to provide that in relation to victims.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** In terms of the grants and other services that Victims of Crime provide, are there any plans to change those, bolster them, provide different supports to victims than the suite that is already being provided?

**Ms FYLES:** We are always reviewing the services to victims. You want to have, not only the practical information that somebody—the support they can get at the time. We want to prevent crime from occurring in the first place—but we are aware the pathways for people in providing that support and that is quite broad.

We have reshaped the unit recently—I am not sure if Ros wants to provide any detail on that—to try to make it an efficient and more supportive service for victims from the first interaction with our agency.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** How many people in your agency are in the Crime Victims Services Unit?

**Ms FYLES:** There is ongoing work because the redress scheme changes will fit into this unit. It is around 15 staff.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** These staff are on the frontline in terms of having that public interface with victims of crime?

**Ms FYLES:** It is a mixture. Some are support staff and some are frontline.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** What type of roles do those 15 staff—are we talking about counselling roles?

**Ms FYLES:** There is the Witness Assistance Program that sits within DPP and there is this Crime Victims Services Unit around support. I will just ask Ros to explain a little bit of detail for you.

**Ms CHENOWETH:** As the Minister said, the DPP provides that witness assistance service. My unit currently provides assistance to and processes applications for financial assistance. We also have the victims register, which can assist victims to track their offenders through the correctional service. That is our main role as well as coordinating services and we oversee the grants program for the counselling for victims of crime, which is currently under contract to CatholicCare Territory-wide. We also oversee the grant process for Victims of Crime NT, which is their core services; the Safe at Home Program; as well as youth offender conferencing and victims support.

**Ms FYLES:** There are a number of elements, as you would be aware.

**Ms CHENOWETH:** We will be taking on the redress scheme as well.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** Your team helps victims track offenders through the system?

**Ms CHENOWETH:** Through the victims register. If somebody wants to be on the register they can apply to go on the register if their offender is under sentence of imprisonment. They can be advised of things like when they are up for parole, and they can make a submission to the Parole Board.

**Ms FYLES:** Previously people might have read in the paper or heard through the exceptional media we have in Darwin that somebody is coming up, and that can be quite distressing. This process provides them, if they choose, to be on that register and they can be provided of key dates around parole or release.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** Does that support and advice start right from the offence that has taken place? For example, my house is broken into today, tomorrow I contact the unit.

**Ms FYLES:** That is where Victims of Crime NT would provide that initial support. We are also looking at how we can provide more support.

Member for Blain, you have had some suggestions and have been quite vocal in this space around why people who commit the crime cannot go and help clean up. We have a justice system that somebody is innocent until proven guilty, but through corrections we are looking at the work parties, whether there could be a team that is available seven days a week, that could provide—you may not be dealing with the matter you caused because we need to allow our justice process, but part of your rehabilitation is to go out and help.

That is one aspect. Then it is right through the system, engaging with the Crime Victims Services Unit to be updated—as well as support around witness services when the matter goes to court.

There are a number of different elements. We acknowledge that and we have made reforms to date, most recently reshaping that unit—whether we have the overall victims' charter. Having the pathways for victims—they are obviously going through a distressing time—so that they can clearly understand the supports that are available because sometimes the resources are there.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** I have no further questions on Output 1.3.

**Mr WOOD:** The Member for Spillett mentioned cleaning up. I will give you a case where— I wonder whether you are talking about trying to avoid people going to gaol.

I remember some years ago, just about the whole of the Humpty Doo shopping centre was graffitied. People just wrote things over nearly every wall. The police intervened at that stage and they found out who it was. It was not very hard to find out who did it in Humpty Doo. They went down that next Saturday and, in public, cleaned every wall. The police helped as well. They cleaned every wall and had to have a written apology back to Woolworths, and that place has never been graffitied ever again.

I wonder whether you get places that have been smashed up in Palmerston, where they have overturned tables and chairs and broken windows—do you look at the option of getting the people who did it before they go to court? You might have to say it has to go to court. Can you divert people before they go to court to clean up a person's premises so they immediately understand the anguish that has been caused to that business?

**Ms FYLES:** The specific that you just raised—I do not want to comment on the specifics, I am not aware of it. Whether it was a police diversion, I am not sure.

**Mr WOOD:** It was police using commonsense to try to find a solution before it went further. They intervened early. Whether there is a possibility of that type of intervention being something that would help the victim—it may not always suit the victim, but it might help the victim and also reinforce the despair that some of those businesses had because of what has been done to their premises.

**Ms FYLES:** There is the ability for police diversion, the youth victims conferencing—which I have heard some very successful stories in that sense for both the victim and the perpetrator—and broadly, the work that is providing support to those victims and also through our work parties. If it is not always possible for that police diversion or for that response, that you have just explained, can we have an alternative measure that provides support to those businesses and not-for-profit groups at the time.

**Mr WOOD:** I think the benefit for the victim is the intermediacy of what happened. The mess is there ...

**Mr MILLS:** And the offender.

**Mr WOOD:** And the offender goes back and says, 'Look at the mess I caused. Look at the pain I have caused. Look at the destruction I have caused.'

**Ms FYLES:** That is the aim in terms of the youth—that that process is there.

**Mr WOOD:** Not only the youth, of course.

**Ms FYLES:** I know. It really depends on the different offences—a violent offence versus a property offence. That police diversion and the acknowledgment—you know, somebody is denying that they did it then we have to allow our justice process to go forward, but in the meantime can we have another step that supports that victim.

**Mr WOOD:** I just remembered that little cafe down at the botanical gardens.

**Ms FYLES:** Just using examples such as that—if an incident takes place, we have to respect the police's investigative processes and all that is taking place. Through our open and low-security rated prisoners that currently perform tasks, can they come in and assist? That is what we are looking at in that space. We are still respecting the justice system and allowing people to take the time to do that properly, but is there some alternative that we can provide as a pathway of support.

**Mr WOOD:** I suppose I was saying, in the light of a new day and doing something immediately might have a greater effect on reducing that offense being repeated.

My other question may have been covered by the Member for Spillett, but in relation to the Crime Victims Services—I raised this with the Ombudsman. He did a report on the Crime Victims Services and it had a number of recommendations.

Have most of those recommendations been looked into and responded to, and where is that up to?

**Ms FYLES:** You are referring to the Ombudsman's annual report?

**Mr WOOD:** It was not his annual report. He actually did, I think, a separate report because he had received so many complaints about the Crime Victims Services Unit.

**Ms FYLES:** I think it was the annual report. The agency and part of their restructure that we have seen to the Crime Victims Services Unit, we have been working with the Ombudsman around those recommendations and how we can improve the service to support people. We have doubled the output, for example, but very much acknowledge that there was a body of work that was basically sat on by the previous government. We have certainly moved swiftly.

**Mr WOOD:** From what the Ombudsman said yesterday, I would presume he will be keeping an eye on the processes.

**Ms FYLES:** The advice I have is that the director of the unit meets regularly, and we very much want to provide that improvement.

**Madam CHAIR:** Any further questions for Output 1.3? That concludes consideration of Output 1.3.

#### **Output 1.4 – Criminal Justice Research and Statistics**

**Madam CHAIR:** I will now call for questions on Output 1.4, Criminal Justice Research and Statistics. Are there any questions?

**Mr WOOD:** Minister, what statistics do you keep and research, and where do you find them?

**Ms FYLES:** We collect statistics around crimes, courts, the information in IJIS—the system we use—and they are obviously available for us to analyse and look at if there is a specific area that needs to be targeted. I am not sure if that answers your question.

**Mr WOOD:** Sometimes it is very hard to find statistics. One, which I will probably mention a bit later, was trying to find the exact numbers of people in prison up to date. I checked this morning to look up, for instance, how many people are in our prisons in the Northern Territory, and I could get as far as 2015. After that, my computer would not let me find any more statistics.

**Ms FYLES:** Maybe you need a new computer.

**Mr WOOD:** Well, of course, if we had more research people. That was just an aside, Madam Chair. I am finding out where all the research and statistics go to.

**Ms FYLES:** We have noted your concerns and wishes.

**Mr WOOD:** I will bring it up later in Correctional Services.

**Madam CHAIR:** Any further questions in regard to Output 1.4? That concludes consideration of Output 1.4, and Output Group 1.0. I will now call a 10-minute recess for the committee, and we will recommence at 10.20 am. Thank you.

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The committee suspended.

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**OUTPUT GROUP 2.0 – CORRECTIONAL SERVICES**  
**Output 2.1 – Custodial Services**

**Madam CHAIR:** We will now continue with our questioning. We will now proceed to Output Group 2.0, Correctional Services, Output 2.1, Custodial Services. I note that while the Minister for Territory Families has overall responsibility for youth justice under the *Youth Justice Act*, the Attorney-General and Minister for Justice is responsible for Part 4 of the act relating to Youth Justice Court. Are there any questions?

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** Yes ...

**Ms FYLES:** Sorry, Member for Spillett. Rob Steer, the Acting Commissioner Northern Territory Correctional Services has joined us at the table. Sorry, I just wanted to introduce him. I apologise.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** No, no, thank you very much, Attorney-General. On that topic, my first question is, has the government selected its new Corrections Commissioner?

**Ms FYLES:** The recruitment process is still ongoing. It is under way ...

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** Is there a time frame for that?

**Ms FYLES:** I do not have a specific time frame but I assume in the next couple of months.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** Mr Steer is Acting Commissioner?

**Ms FYLES:** Capably acting in the position.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** I am sure. There is a \$4.755m decrease for custodial services in the 2018–19 budget. How will that decrease in funding impact the already overcrowded prison system in the Northern Territory?

**Mr WOOD:** Could I just ask the Member for Spillett, where are you looking for that figure. I am looking at page 107 of the budget papers.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** Page 107, did you say?

**Mr WOOD:** Yes, in the breakdown. I see a \$13m difference.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** I guess we can agree that any reduction in the budget ...

**Mr WOOD:** I would like you to explain where that figure is so I can comment on it.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** In custodial services. I think you might be looking at the estimate.

**Mr WOOD:** I have a figure of \$188.086m for 2017–18 estimate and a budget of \$175m, which is a deficit of \$13m. I am not sure—I am trying to follow your figures, Member for Spillett.

**Ms FYLES:** Member for Spillett, the figures I have are BP3 in 2017–18 was \$204 418 and then 2017–18 the final estimate we think will be \$211 000. Obviously corrections is a delivery agency, so we need to provide those services.

For BP3 2018–19 we are looking at \$200 446 but obviously that will depend—there are some one-off Commonwealth. There are bits and pieces that impact year to year. We did see some transition of corporate services with the amalgamation with the Department of corrections into the Department of the Attorney-General and Justice. There were some transfers of NT Property Management. There was also a little bit of a transfer for electronic monitoring for youth to Territory Families. So there are variations within that. They are the figures that we had, so I am not sure where your figures come from.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** I am just looking at page 107, custodial services, 2018–19 budget, \$175 408.

**Mr WOOD:** (Inaudible –mic off)

**Ms FYLES:** The figure that I just read out—a further breakdown of the custodial services was \$180 000 in BP3 in Budget 2017–18. Our estimate is \$188 000 on that. In BP3 for the 2018–19 budget we are saying \$175 000. It is an operational frontline service. We will be delivering those services as needed.

There are some adjustments with some of the programs, some of the infrastructure programs. There are some changes—I think we have spoken about this previously—around industry. The term ‘correctional industries’ has been used broadly and it encompasses things that I think we all agree are essential services such as kitchen, laundry, things like that. There has certainly been a lot of work since the Department of corrections came into the Department of the Attorney-General and Justice over making sure that we are allocating funds wisely—taxpayer funds—but also that things we believe are essential services to running the prison, such as the kitchen and the food, are classified as such. Then correctional industries, which is a program—equally there is clear oversight. I know the Member for Nelson and I have spoken at length about this.

**Mr WOOD:** Minister, that is a \$14m decrease in custodial services from the estimated figure of last year and even if you did not take that into consideration, it is a drop of at least \$5m from the budgeted. So where have those cuts come from? Can you identify, for instance, why it is \$14m less than the estimate? Something would have had to have been cut fairly substantially—not just a few variations—to achieve that figure.

**Ms FYLES:** As I was explaining previously, there is a breakdown; there are a number of elements to those figures. I spoke around the financial lease adjustment around the DPP at the prison. There are some infrastructure program works adjustments. We have been clear that there were agency savings measures over all government agencies being fiscally responsible in the tight financial times that we are in and also a better oversight of what essential services and programs are working.

As referred to in my written questions, KPMG has been working with corrections. Prior to the change of government, corrections was a standalone agency. We have brought that in under the Department of the Attorney-General and Justice. There have been different reviews to date, and we have done a KPMG report more recently, looking at the different services across the Territory.

We need to make sure we provide those custodial services and are conscious that we make sure the resources and taxpayer dollars are best directed.

**Mr WOOD:** Is it possible to get a full breakdown of what the \$188m is spent on, and then compare it with the full breakdown of what the \$175m expenditure will be for? You have a budget of \$188m. I presume the department can show us a breakdown of what the money was used for and what the new budget allocation will be used for, for the same breakdowns.

**Ms FYLES:** That would be BP No 3.

**Mr WOOD:** I presume the breakdown would have things like wages, industry, costs involved in running the prisons ...

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** BP No 3 says custodial services include targeted programs, education and training. If there has been a cut to custodial services, presumably a program, education or training has been cut.

**Mr WOOD:** Can you give a more detailed breakdown of the budget?

**Ms FYLES:** For 2017–18 it is there—the breakdown of the budget. We are still working through 2018–19. With the reviews that have been taking place, we are looking into that. We are getting clear oversight of what is spent where and then working out a budget within that.

**Mr WOOD:** As an Estimates Committee, can I ask that we have a breakdown of what the \$188m is spent on individually? What it was spent on in regard to wages, industry, uniforms or other things—then the same breakdown of what you have budgeted for to see where the change in the budget has occurred and in which areas. Is it possible to get a much more detailed breakdown of the budget?

**Ms FYLES:** As I answered just a moment ago, for 2017–18 yes, and then 2018–19 we are still working through. We have the overall budget and higher level, but we are still working through—noting the huge bodies of work that have been done reviewing correctional services and making sure we deliver programs within that budget. We have a higher level breakdown but not in detail yet.

**Mr WOOD:** Could we get a breakdown of the 2017–18 budget and the 2017–18 estimates to see where the changes occurred?

**Ms FYLES:** Yes. We can take that on notice.

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**Question on Notice No 4.4**

**Madam CHAIR:** Member for Nelson, can you repeat the question for the record.

**Mr WOOD:** Can we have a breakdown of the custodial services budget for 2017–18 and the estimate for 2017–18?

**Madam CHAIR:** Attorney-General, do you accept the question?

**Ms FYLES:** Yes, I do, Madam Chair.

**Madam CHAIR:** The question has been allocated the number 4.4.

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**Mr WOOD:** I have a general question. Out of this whole booklet you have 17 pages on corrections. Once upon a time, the annual report for the department of corrections 2015–16 was 224 pages. Why do we have such a small annual report for such an important part of government responsibility?

**Ms FYLES:** As I said earlier, it is part of a larger agency now. We made those changes when we came to government.

**Mr WOOD:** This 16 pages does not give me, as a member of this Estimates Committee, a document I can get my teeth into. The detail that was in previous reports is certainly not in 16 pages of this report.

**Ms FYLES:** We are always available for briefings, for information—we did go through the annual report's estimates last year.

**Mr WOOD:** I realise that.

**Ms FYLES:** I take on board your feedback that you want to see more pages but I have provided way of explanation.

**Mr WOOD:** No. I do not want to see pages for pages sake. This is a huge budget. It is \$200m worth of expenditure for a very large and important portfolio, and 16 pages compared to 224, to me, is not being open and transparent, which is the government's policy. It is much tighter for people to get information now.

**Ms FYLES:** I think, Member for Nelson, we made those changes, the machinery of government changes, when we came in to government around that corrections sits within the Department of the Attorney-General and Justice. We are not trying to hide anything from you. We are here answering questions. We take on board that you would like to see more pages of corrections in the annual report.

**Mr WOOD:** No, I did not say that. That is not what I said. I am not there just to print pages. I am saying the information now that we are getting is nowhere near the information we got before. For a government that said it would be open and transparent, this is not the way to go.

All I am saying is that I would ask you, minister, that you reconsider that corrections has its own separate annual report. It would still be within your portfolio because you have other areas under your portfolio such as the Children's Commissioner information and Public Interest Disclosure Commission—all have annual reports.

**Ms FYLES:** With all due respect, Member for Nelson, they are independent statutory bodies that sit outside Department of the Attorney-General and Justice. I think you are being a little unfair. We made significant machinery of government changes. You may disagree or agree with those; that is your opinion. But we believe that having a standalone—I think it was around 30 agencies—was not a good use of taxpayer dollars and that is why we made those changes. You can see that through the figures we are talking about now.

Some of the elements—human resources have come in to the department more broadly rather than sit duplicating services out in corrections. It is a point of difference. I am happy to disagree.

**Mr WOOD:** It is more than a point of difference because you have limited the amount of information. I am not saying you should not combine departments. That is always government. How many years have I been in parliament I have seen ...

**Ms FYLES:** Just a second ago you said that.

**Mr WOOD:** No. I am not against you combining the departments. I am saying that the annual report now has far less information because you have combined it. Why have you lost all that information? Simply because you have combined all the departments? That is not an excuse for giving me less information. Out of that whole stack of paper there—16 pages.

**Ms FYLES:** Madam Chair, I think that I have answered the question. We clearly have a point of difference.

**Mr WOOD:** It is more than a point of difference; it is a point of governance and that is the problem.

**Madam CHAIR:** Are there any further questions for Output 2.1?

**MRS FINOCCHIARO:** Yes. Thank you, Madam Chair. I wanted to ask on the point of custodial services, have any prison programs been cut back from the previous financial year? I am thinking of things like Sentenced to a Job, the seniors mowing program, perhaps trades and services.

**Ms FYLES:** The savings target of \$3m over two financial years—we have been quite open about that. In terms of programs, there have been no changes to programs such as Sentenced to a Job. The work parties that provide the mowing of lawns, two pensioners and those people that are eligible as well as support more broadly in the community, their support to councils, post major events—that was left unfunded by the previous government. We have made sure that that funding is there and has continued.

I think it is a really important program and we have talked earlier around people that have committed an offence being able to give something back to the community, and that is an important element. The program is limited in a sense to the number of open and low classified prisoners, so everything in this prison has to be through community safety. We cannot have those prisoners that are unsuitably classified participating.

Another factor is those open and low security ratings is the turnover of prisoners, but we certainly have provided the support to the work parties and it is something we are looking at around offering more services. I suspect that would be within the limited resources that we have, not from a financial point of view but from the point of view of prisoners meeting that classification.

But no, there have been no changes to Sentenced to a Job or the community work parties. As I said to you, there has been—trying to get an understanding. In the written questions we talked about the report work that has been done. There has been significant work on looking at efficiencies within the department of corrections and when we say that we want to make sure we are using taxpayer dollars wisely that we are providing the custodial services that Territorians expect

Mr Wood was on the PAC with me when we went and looked at a number of the correctional industries, and we had concerns around whether those were an essential service, correctional industries and programs that people would be able to participate in once they were reintegrated into communities. With the report work that has been done, we are assessing all our programs to ascertain whether they meet the rehabilitative requirements of prisoners. It is likely, I am guessing, that there will be changes, but they will keep communicating what that is.

We have had a number of reports into corrections. The Hamburger Report was done under the previous government, and we released it upon coming into government. Since then we have been doing work with KPMG—quite detailed work—so we have clear oversight.

Going back to the conversation we had earlier that our numbers keep rising. We have less financial resources. We need to be putting community safety first, but what are our alternative pathways? That was a really informative discussion this morning around work we can do. Sadly, there will always be people that break the law and have to have that consequence.

I hope that provides a sort of overview around what we are doing within corrections.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** Attorney-General, what was the overspend for correctional services in the last financial year, and how much of that was attributable to overtime for correctional officers and expenses connected to overcrowding at both the Holtze prison and Alice Springs Correctional Centre?

**Ms FYLES:** The figures I have on overtime, Member for Spillett—the year to date, 2018, was \$8.739m. The year to date, March 2017, was \$7.212m. So it was quite significant and one of the areas we are looking at to make sure we are supporting our hard-working prison officers and at the same time looking at the costs of overtime. I have breakdowns. The overspend is food, transport ...

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** Do you have that global figure for correctional services overspend?

**Ms FYLES:** Are they not the figures we spoke about earlier? The 204, the 211 and the 200.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** Thank you. Attorney-General, what changes in security procedures, if any, have been introduced in the Alice Springs Correctional Centre and Darwin Correctional Centre following the escape of two detainees, who escaped from secure care in Alice Springs last April?

**Ms FYLES:** That is Health, Member for Spillett.

Just for members listening in and members present today, there have been no abscondments from behind the wire, so to speak. We often have the open and low classification prisoners in the cottages or at the work camps, and they have been assessed through process of the courts to be in those facilities, and it is part of their rehabilitation and reintegration. But I can absolutely assure people that has been no, from behind the wire at the main Alice Springs or Darwin—it has been those surrounding sort of facilities.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** Has there been any changes in procedures surrounding public notification then—my guess is you are saying there are not any, but I would have to ask Health that question around secure care?

**Ms FYLES:** We acknowledge the community's wish to know information and police provide that lead. From a community safety perspective, if somebody does abscond or they report back late, if they are coming off a work program, for example, we notify police immediately. Police will assess the situation, so obviously the capture of the person is the priority so police are right to do that for community safety.

They will make an assessment. Do they know where the person is? Sometimes they put out a public message because they believe that is helpful. Other times they feel they can recapture the person. So we very much take the police's lead and try to issue information to the public. In being open, the processes have been clarified. There were some grey areas and we accept the community's wish to know more but it is through that prism of police advice.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** Thank you, Attorney-General. On 22 January this year, the Chief Minister announced there would be an audit into complex offenders in supervised care. Is that a question for Health?

**Ms FYLES:** Yes.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** Consider yourself notified. I look forward to the answer, if there is not one it will be disappointing. Going back to talking about overtime. What restrictions, if any, are put on overtime for correctional officers?

**Ms FYLES:** It is a frontline service delivery agency so we cannot simply—we need to provide those services so that is where overtime comes into it. That is difficult but it has been consistently high and this is something that we are looking at through the reviews we are doing.

A couple of areas where we do see excessive use of staff resources is with off-site hospital visits. We need to make sure that the public is safe, so they need to be escorted appropriately. But using modern technology such as video link, is one of the ways we can do that better—so keep people at the facility. It is a real balance to providing the health services. It does not matter whether someone is detained or not; they have a human right to access those.

Less so, interactions with the courts but also just trying to fine tune that so that people that are leaving premise, particularly leaving Alice Springs which is—well, even Darwin is a bit of a distance. Looking at those aspects and that is something—I recently went to Long Bay prison hospital. It is different because although the Long Bay prison is on that site, the hospital—so aged care, renal. They can send inmates from all over New South Wales into that facility.



Looking at what services perhaps—and I have been talking to health around are there certain services that could be provided at the prison to help save on those overtime rates. It is complex but it is a body of work. The new facility—I am sure when you have been there you have looked at that health facility on site, so that does stop the need for transfers. But there is certainly a very high figure of hospital escorts, but at the same time we cannot not provide that escort because it is community safety.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** On the escorts, you need, I suppose, a minimum of two correctional officers with any prisoner at any one time.

**Ms FYLES:** I have just had pointed out to me that the other factor in overtime, of course, is staff shortages. We have been trying to recruit. You would have seen the recruitment campaigns that have been running across social media, for example, making sure we have that appropriate baseline level of staff and we can fill those positions.

Generally, yes—going back to your question—if people need to go to hospital, it depends on their security classification, but it would be a minimum of two escorts.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** Does the department keep records on how much time, the cost or the overtime cost of hospital visits? Is there any data you can provide about what that looks like for the department?

**Ms FYLES:** We do not have it here today, but we can provide that.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** If I ask it a bit broadly, then you can provide that?

**Ms FYLES:** Yes.

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#### Question on Notice No 4.5

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** My question on notice is: could the department please provide a breakdown of the cost to the department in time, overtime or financial impact that hospital transfers of prisoners cost the department?

**Madam CHAIR:** Attorney-General, do you accept the question?

**Ms FYLES:** Yes. It was interesting to look at the facility in Sydney where they have the hospital within the prison. We thought renal might be an area, sadly, that could be—but the advice I have had is that it is not huge numbers. Looking at the services, do we make that investment into the prison health facility to then save? That is work between both corrections and Health, coming back to that point that people have ...

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** So, that work has been done ...

**Madam CHAIR:** Before we continue on, the Member for Spillett's question has been allocated the number 4.5.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** So that analysis is taking place at the moment between the two departments?

**Ms FYLES:** It is in progress. When you look at those overtime figures with hospital exports you cannot ignore that.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** Okay, thank you. What steps, if any, are currently being taken to address overcrowding in both the Darwin and Alice Springs correctional centres?

**Ms FYLES:** I guess there are the long-term measures, which I will not go over because we have spoken about those in detail already this morning. Looking at the high number of Indigenous Territorians who are in prison—reducing that rate. Also the work we are doing as a government around that early childhood development—we know the strong correlations between investing in the early years and the child protection system, the youth justice system and, in turn, adult corrections.

In terms of more short-term measures, we are able to place more beds within the facilities. We can do that to increase the operational capacity. Facilities have a design and operational capacity, so we will not be in a

situation. Those numbers have risen across the Territory over many decades and we need to put in place those long-term measures to decrease them.

But we can assure the public that, from a community safety perspective, we have put in place measures to make sure we can cater for the number of prisoners at any one time.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** Correct me if I am wrong, but there is probably an ideal maximum for both facilities and then there is a maximum, maximum. Do you have those figures? Once you have added the additional beds, is that open-ended?

**Ms FYLES:** There is an operational figure and then there are design capacities. We cannot put a figure on it because—obviously, you have been out to the facility—you have the main wire and then you have the sections. We can keep providing resources into them to cater for the need. But we look at that growing cost and we have to say, as a community and society, ‘Stop. We need to have some alternatives in early interventions.’ Community safety is always that priority.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** For the foreseeable future, we will not run out of prison space?

**Mr WOOD:** On that point, in the figures I have been able to get from a previous, previous year, the design capacity for Alice Springs is 500 in 2015–16, but the daily average was 603.

**Ms FYLES:** That comes back to design versus operational capacity.

**Mr WOOD:** But does it affect the safety of prison officers if you have an increased number of prisoners in a prison that was designed for 500?

**Ms FYLES:** We always staff the facilities accordingly, so we either place additional shifts on or when they consistently run over, we have positions above that. There are numbers that the operational guidelines of prisons adhere to.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** What VET training and work experience programs are currently available at the Darwin and Alice Springs centres?

**Ms FYLES:** I do not mean to not specifically answer your question initially, but there are a range of education and training programs available to people in custody. Some of those are basic literacy and numeracy skills, right through to accredited courses and higher education.

There are short courses; for example, forklift licence, food handling, money matters and white cards. There are a number of certificates available. For example, in Alice Springs we have Cert I access to vocational pathways. There is Cert I in construction, engineering, visual arts; and Cert II in visual arts and furniture making. At Darwin there is Cert I in agrifoods, business, engineering, visual arts; and Cert II in family wellbeing, skills for work and vocational pathways, and health support.

There are different programs operating within the facility. There are also relationships with Batchelor, so people can start a program while incarcerated and continue it once they have served their time. I have been to the graduations on-site. We are looking at what we offer. Is it the best model of offering that, particularly with the shorter sentences—that they can continue outside the facility. There are different programs through BIITE as well as the certificates.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** Is that voluntary and optional? People can opt in or opt out? How do you end up in one of these streams?

**Ms FYLES:** It is voluntary for people to participate. We actively encourage people to participate, and that participation is recognised. As I mentioned, there are graduation ceremonies to try to build self-esteem and that they have achieved something.

In correctional industries we want to separate the essential services to the prison, and then what types of industries. When we went to Alice Springs there were some industries that you could see them being able to work in once they reintegrated into the community, and there were others that were a bit unrealistic. We are making sure the pathways we offer do support people to employment and further education when they leave correctional facilities.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** Do you have the figures for last financial year for how many people participated in a program as compared to how many did not, and how many people completed a program?

**Ms FYLES:** We have different figures—perhaps I could provide them, as there is quite a number. They are not straightforward. They are broken down into people who completed and enrolled, and there are the BIITE courses as well as the work camp short courses, as well as QuickSmart in the University of Southern Queensland. I am happy to provide all of that. I would table this but there is a bit more to it.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** So it is best to take it on notice?

**Ms FYLES:** Yes, I would appreciate it.

**Madam CHAIR:** Attorney-General, would you like to table the document?

**Ms FYLES:** No, I think I would prefer to have a question on notice and we can provide the full table.

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#### Question on Notice No 4.6

**Madam CHAIR:** Please restate the question for the record.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** How many prisoners or detainees are currently participating in a VET or work experience or other skills program within our correctional facilities? How many are enrolled, how many have actually completed those programs and how many are not participating in anything at all?

**Madam CHAIR:** Attorney-General, do you accept the question?

**Ms FYLES:** Yes, of course.

**Madam CHAIR:** The Member for Spillett's question has been allocated the number 4.6.

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**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** I know we talked about Sentenced to a Job a little bit earlier, but I am hoping you have a few figures. How many prisoners participated in Sentenced to a Job in 2017–18, and how does that compare to 2016–17?

**Ms FYLES:** The figures I have in front of me—as of 31 March, it is under the heading 'Paid Employment' but I am being advised that for Sentenced to a Job there are 285, and that is to 31 March this year. There is also 315 involuntary employment.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** That is as of 31 March. So what were the figures for previous years?

**Ms FYLES:** In 2013–14 it was 190; 2014–15 was 313; 355; 347. They are the full year figures and then 285 as of 31 March.

**Mr WOOD:** Could I just go back to the issue of statistics? I had trouble finding statistics that were up to date. I might be wrong here. I know why you would say that, minister. That is the only article I could find—Northern Territory Correctional Services and youth justice annual stats for 2015–16, Department of the Attorney-General. Has that changed, do you know? Is there an up-to-date 2016–17?

**Ms FYLES:** I am not sure what document you are reading off. I am happy if you forward that to my office we can let you know if there is a more modern version. I also remind members of the committee that all the statistics are in the report on government services, which is published. I am happy to also look at the document the member has.

The figures within correctional facilities vary greatly. It is something we are not denying. There has not been an increase year on year, every year, but it is something we have grappled with. They can vary significantly from yesterday to today, and equally they can vary from this morning to this afternoon because we might have—for example, when I was at the Alice Springs facility, there were about 28 people that had gone into the courts for hearings. Of those, a portion come back and then there are new inmates.

So, trying to provide that information—I note your comments, Member for Nelson, around the annual report and then that information. I would be happy to ask the agency to perhaps come up with a process that does give the information to the community on the numbers of prisoners, particularly as we embark on programs such as the Aboriginal Justice Agreement, and hoping we can reduce those figures. I think we would all agree we would like to see those figures as even a basic oversight.

**Mr WOOD:** They have been available before.

**Ms FYLES:** On the website—and you will probably say you it is because you do not have enough helpers and it is technology, but if you go...

**Mr WOOD:** No, I have worn that out. The Member for Sanderson said, 'Leave it'.

**Ms FYLES:** On the Department of the Attorney-General website, under statistics and strategies, there are figures and they are broken down and there is correctional facilities. I am happy to work with you, Member of Nelson. I think it is particularly important.

**Mr WOOD:** It is and that is why corrections needs its own annual report within your portfolio; I am not saying it should be outside. If we are to compare government policy about trying to reduce the numbers of prisoners in incarceration, we need to look at trends. You need to look at trends also from the point of view of whether you need more facilities. If I am to look at whether we have overcrowding, whether we need more work camps, in line with your question about prison industries, we need statistics and they are not that easy to come by from my point of view.

**Ms FYLES:** I know. I do not want to imply that you cannot use the Department of the Attorney-General's website but somebody has just brought them up for me and they are all there—the Department of Correctional Services annual statistics going right back to 2004. We will send you the link and perhaps take it offline for you.

**Mr WOOD:** I might make comment on the changes to the government website, which you are not to blame for. But the changes to the government website was not a positive change.

**Ms FYLES:** I thought you were going to blame me for changes in technology.

**Mr WOOD:** No, not changes in technology. The government website—for not only your department but a lot of departments—is useless. It is very difficult to find stuff.

**Ms FYLES:** Google.

**Mr WOOD:** That is exactly what I did, and you would think the 2016–17 would come up on that and it did not.

**Madam CHAIRMAN:** Member for Nelson, any further questions?

**Mr WOOD:** Yes. I will have a look at the statistics on that other method.

I would like to talk about work camps. I think work camps are something that should be expanded. As you know, I did visit work camps in Western Australia. Your government introduced the one at Barkly and the previous government introduced one out near Nhulunbuy, the Datjala Work Camp.

In relation to the Datjala Work Camp, there was some concern about its sighting at that time. I think the then Member for Nhulunbuy raised some concerns. What is the general consensus about that work camp now and has the community endorsed it as an important part of their community?

**Ms FYLES:** We have the Barkly Work Camp and the Datjala Work Camp.

You would know this better than me, Member for Nelson; you were a member of the Legislative Assembly. The Barkly work camp was an initiative under the previous government. It was consulted with the community.

The Datjala Work Camp was the then minister for corrections using a health facility in that small community, and overnight turning it into a work camp facility. Rightly so, people were concerned. I know that the work camp provides a lot of assistance into the surrounding communities and, from the information I have before me, there has been a lot of support into the Nhulunbuy region. The Member for Nhulunbuy, who was just

with us, might have been able to provide a bit of detail around his thoughts on that work camp and its acceptance into the community.

**Mr WOOD:** I know you do not want me to harp on something, but in your previous annual report it gave me information about what that work camp did, where it worked and programs. That is what is missing now. I think it is sad, not because I want to be whinger but people need to know if you are doing good things—for example, what are those work camps doing? That information was in older reports but it is not in this report.

**Ms FYLES:** The Datjala Work Camp has a 50-bed open security rating for prisoners. I know you are calling for more work camps but we need to make sure that we are not putting community safety at risk by the classification of the prisoners that are sent there.

**Mr WOOD:** I think they are both nearly full. Well, Barkly is full.

**Ms FYLES:** I think they are both at capacity. I am not denying that there might not be room for more, but the prisoners going in and out of the facility, I am not sure of the numbers—we do have the open classified prisoners that are based in Darwin and Alice Springs that provide those outreach services. In Nhulunbuy they certainly provide a lot of support to the community. I am not sure. I cannot provide an opinion. We have a directive that there are no sexual offenders or violent ...

**Mr WOOD:** I will get into that. I have a question about that in a minute.

I am looking at government policy on work camps. One of the, I believe, promises by your government when we built Holtz prison was that you would look at a work camp at Katherine. There was also to be a prison farm. Both governments seem to have put that on the too-hard shelf at the moment.

**Ms FYLES:** Absolutely. We lost government in 2012. I was not part of the government prior to that; I came in at the 2012 election. But Territorians voted. When they voted to turn out the Labor government at the time, those policies also went. The government of the day did not go ahead with it. It was not a work camp but some type of facility for Katherine ...

**Mr WOOD:** There were two, a work camp and prison farm.

**Ms FYLES:** Now our policy and direction is particularly around these alternatives to prison. We went into that in greater detail this morning. I know you have very strong views on that. The government changed. We did not commit to that leading into the 2016 election. We committed to an Aboriginal Justice Agreement and those pathways and that is what we are delivering.

**Mr WOOD:** The two have different roles. One is for people who have actually been sentenced.

I should ask, do you know when the next open day is for the Barkly work camp?

**Ms FYLES:** I know I am going there in a couple of weeks. Saturday 7 July, the day after the Tennant Creek Show. But if you would like to visit—as would any member—at any time ...

**Mr WOOD:** I was down there when it was being built and I have not been back since. I still think they play an important role. The government perhaps should look at the option of mobile work camps which they use in Western Australia, so people go out to national parks and work out there as a work camp, but it is a mobile work camp.

**Ms FYLES:** The Barkly work camp inmates contributed close to 22 000 hours of community work. That, obviously, is a successful program in their reintegration. But as I said, the policy of our government is around those Aboriginal justice community re-engagement alternatives to prison.

**Mr WOOD:** You just raised a minute ago about sex offenders not being allowed to work in outside programs. Your government was instrumental in stopping sex offenders working in programs outside of prison. In fact, we lost a commissioner because of that debate. Minister, does that mean that you regard all sex offences as the same, regardless of the detail of a particular case, and therefore, punish everyone regardless of the circumstances of the crime?

Obviously, the words 'sex offence' puts a lot of fear into some people, but it does not mean that every offence is exactly the same or it may have occurred many years ago. Is it just a blanket ban on anyone with a sex offence can work outside a prison?

**Ms FYLES:** We, as a government, have a policy directive that we believe violent offenders and sex offenders should not be in those facilities. We think community has an expectation and that is the policy we have.

**Mr WOOD:** I suppose the basic part of my question was, did you regard all sex offences as the same?

**Ms FYLES:** Madam Deputy Chair, I feel I have answered the question. The Chief Minister and I have been very much on the record, both in opposition and government ...

**Mr WOOD:** I know what your policy is, but I am asking for a definition. Do you think all sex offences are the same?

**Madam DEPUTY CHAIR:** So you are asking for the Attorney-General's personal opinion on that policy?

**Mr WOOD:** No.

**Madam DEPUTY CHAIR:** She has answered it.

**Mr WOOD:** I am actually asking a legal question.

**Ms FYLES:** Madam Chair—who has now returned—we have been very clear in both opposition and government. It was certainly no surprise when we came to government—both the Chief Minister and me. It is consistent policy.

**Mr WOOD:** Okay, so there is no answer to that simple question. I will move on.

**Ms FYLES:** I disagree, Madam Chair.

**Mr WOOD:** No, you did not answer the question.

**Ms FYLES:** I have answered the question with the government's policy.

**Mr WOOD:** No, you did not. You used a technique that you use all the time.

**Madam CHAIR:** Member for Nelson, any further questions?

**Mr WOOD:** I have been here long enough, I know what the technique is—avoid it by saying, 'I have answered it'.

Anyway, you can tell me whether I should be asking this question here or in the Parole Board discussion. Has the HOPE program been introduced into our prisons?

**Ms FYLES:** HOPE is the Hawaii model. In the Territory we have COMMIT. We passed legislation in the House about a year ago. I did acknowledge the previous Attorney-General and also the Chief Judge of the Local Court and the Chairman of the Parole Board. For committee members who might not be familiar with the program COMMIT, we have a declining number of prisoners taking parole. They are choosing to serve out their full sentence which means once they are released, they are released into the community.

What the COMMIT program does is have certain sanctions, swift and fair sanctions, that they understand. We are hoping that there will be more people taking parole but they can reintegrate into the community with some guidance.

This program started in Hawaii, which is where the name HOPE comes from, and is in over 30 states in America. It is something that we have trialled here in the Territory under that previous government and we made amendments to the *Parole Act* to expand the COMMIT program so it is swift, certain and fair. If someone goes on parole and they breach their parole, they would go back to prison for the remainder of their sentence. What this does is it looks at the breach of the parole and then they would get a sanction. We very much support that program.

I just spoke on a little there but the sanctions matrix was published when that legislation was passed. As of 3 May, the Parole Board has approved 59 offenders to participate in that. There have been 11 orders that have been revoked. It is in its early days but it is something we support.

**Mr WOOD:** Where are your statistics from, minister?

**Ms FYLES:** From the esteemed Department of the Attorney-General and Justice.

**Mr WOOD:** I have the Parole Board.

**Ms FYLES:** Yes, the stats I have—different timeframes I imagine.

**Mr WOOD:** The 2017 has not been completed yet. It is hard.

**Ms FYLES:** The figures I have are from 1 July 2017.

**Mr WOOD:** I rang the Parole Board and they said no, you have to tick off on it yet.

**Ms FYLES:** They are blaming me.

**Mr WOOD:** No they are not blaming you. That is just the process. It uses a calendar year rather than a financial year.

**Ms FYLES:** I think we can—it is a successful program. In the Northern Territory's context, it is reducing those rates of incarceration and encouraging people to take up parole.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** That probably should have been in Output 2.2 or at least that is where I have it. Can we move onto 2.2 then, Member for Nelson?

**Mr WOOD:** Yes, well I was not sure where it went actually; it is also in parole.

Can I just ask one other question then in regard to—should I ask you about the bracelets again in this section? I am just trying to find out how many people ...

**Ms FYLES:** I think they are 2.2 as well.

**Mr WOOD:** We did not quite get the answer about how many bracelets, for instance, have been removed from people in custody? It could be under custodial services too.

**Ms FYLES:** If you are locked up in gaol you do not have a bracelet.

**Mr WOOD:** But you go out. Do any prisoners go out?

**Ms FYLES:** You are getting to me, Member for Nelson. Do you mean the work camps?

**Mr WOOD:** Well, even people on parole.

**Ms FYLES:** But that is Community Corrections, 2.2.

**Madam CHAIR:** There are no further questions? That concludes consideration of Output 2.1.

### **Output 2.2 – Community Corrections**

**Madam CHAIR:** I will now call for questions on Output 2.2, Community Corrections. Are there any questions?

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** Thank you. A few weeks ago it was reported that there was a Telstra blackout which obviously affected the electronic monitoring, and the department as a result lost track of offenders. Are you able to go into more detail on that and explain the back-up procedures or what the procedures are when an event out of the department's control takes place?

**Ms FYLES:** Electronic monitoring, as I explained earlier this morning, is an additional tool for Community Corrections to monitor those people who the courts or the Parole Board, for example, have assessed as safe to reintegrate or live within our community. This would still happen for people who have to report to police or Community Corrections officers at certain times; they have restrictions.

Electronic monitoring allows us to instantly know if there has been a breach. Equally, at times when we see outages of the mobile phone network, there are still measures in place that Community Corrections would continue to use—sightings or actually visiting people's homes or workplaces et cetera.

I went through that. At the time there were some media questions around that. It was an additional tool in, I think, about 2011—it might have been a bit later. Prior to that we had other measures and those measures continue.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** So during that blackout period, did corrections officers proactively go and make contact and monitor those who would otherwise have been on the bracelets?

**Ms FYLES:** Yes. They do that anyway. Electronic monitoring is an additional tool for them. But, yes, when there is a blackout they continue and make sure that they diligently follow through.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** My last question for this output, because I am conscious of time—what is the total amount budgeted for alternative bail accommodation, boot camps or other alternatives to traditional detention for 2017–18, broken down by category of provider and tender process?

**Ms FYLES:** Do you mind repeating your question please?

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** What is the total amount budgeted for alternative bail accommodation? So that is youth justice.

**Ms FYLES:** Youth justice would be for the Minister for Territory Families.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** Thank you. I have no further questions.

**Mr WOOD:** How many people have electronic monitoring, and how many people have actually removed those electronic monitoring devices?

**Ms FYLES:** As of 1 June 2018, there were 173 community-based offenders that were being electronically monitored. As I pointed out in answering previous questions, it is a tool. It is one part of it. All prisoners at the work camps have electronic monitoring fitted. In terms of if the strap has been tampered with, I will ask the acting commissioner to perhaps find a little bit more.

**Mr STEER:** I want to pick up on a couple of things. The electronic monitoring devices are actually cut off when we are removing them from an offender when they have actually finished their term. Some of those devices at times get loose, the clips might weaken, so we will replace them. We do not actually have active data on those. To answer your question, all of them are actually cut; that is the first part of it.

In terms of there being an active tamper, where the control centre will ring us and say there is an active tamper—what we do then is go out and check that particular offender. We do a risk assessment to see if it is legitimate, and if not we will work with the offender to comply with the conditions. If it is, it is referred to the police.

**Mr WOOD:** If you are cutting them off and they are not cheap, can they be reused?

**Mr STEER:** No, we have investigated the reuse of it and it is not cost effective to reuse them.

**Mr WOOD:** So how much are they worth, approximately? Any idea?

**Mr STEER:** I cannot off the top give you a break down on that.

**Mr FYLES:** The device is put back on another strap.

**Mr STEER:** The device can be used again.

**Mr WOOD:** I was going to say, this is going to be expensive. I am just reading something about the electronic monitoring—is it able to monitor alcohol consumption?

**Mr STEER:** There is a device called SCRAM. I think we have two or three offenders on SCRAM, but we are predominantly using the other devices.

**Mr WOOD:** Does that work well?

**Mr STEER:** Just the numbers on the main devices indicate how well those work, and the Community Corrections officers do breath testing on those offenders on a regular basis as part of the compliance.



**Mr WOOD:** Perhaps we could put them on an offending drivers.

Minister, on another question, what is the recidivism rate for people who have completed a Community Corrections order? Only 68% of people completed their community order so what happens to them if they have not completed their community work order? There are two questions there.

**Ms FYLES:** We do not have the recidivism rate on us. What was the second question, sorry.

**Mr WOOD:** Only 68% of people completed their community work order. What happens to the ones that have not?

**Ms FYLES:** It would be a matter for the courts or the Parole Board.

**Mr WOOD:** They go back to the court, is that correct?

**Ms FYLES:** It would depend on the pathway to the community order in the first place.

**Mr WOOD:** Thank you. That is all the questions I have.

**Madam CHAIR:** Any further questions for Output 2.2, Community Corrections? That concludes consideration of Output 2.2.

### **Output 2.3 – Parole Board Secretariat**

**Madam CHAIR:** The committee will now move on to Output 2.3, Parole Board Secretariat. Are there any questions? That concludes Output 2.3 and Output Group 2.0.

## **OUTPUT GROUP 3.0 – COURT AND TRIBUNAL SUPPORT SERVICES**

### **Output Group 3.1 – Higher Courts**

**Madam CHAIR:** I now call for questions on Output Group 3.0, Court and Tribunal Support Services, Output 3.1, Higher Courts. Are there any questions?

**Ms FYLES:** We just need to change some staff over.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** You might not need to Attorney-General, in interest of time, no questions for 3.1 or 3.2.

**Mr WOOD:** I have not got any questions on this section.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** I am happy to move to 3.3 if it is the will of the committee.

**Mr WOOD:** Yes, I am happy to do that.

**Madam CHAIR:** That concludes consideration of Output 3.1. We might just take a quick a five-minute recess and recommence at 11.33 am.

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The committee suspended.

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### **Output 3.2 – Lower Courts and Tribunals**

**Madam CHAIR:** The committee will now consider Output 3.2, Lower Courts and Tribunals. Are there any questions? That concludes consideration of Output 3.2.

### **Output 3.3 – Fines Recovery Unit**

**Madam CHAIR:** The committee now proceed to Output 3.3, Fines Recovery Unit. Are there any questions?

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** Yes, thank you. I just have one question. There is a budgeted reduction in the funding for the Fines Recovery Unit of approximately \$628 000. I just wanted to know what accounts for that reduction.

**Ms FYLES:** Madam Chair, I will just introduce Chris Cox, Executive Director of Courts and Tribunals, who has joined us at the table.

The explanation for that, Member for Spillett, is there is agency own-source revenue, so the fines coming through. That was not accounted for so it looks like that is a reduction but it has recently been put back in— not necessarily all of it to the same amount, but at the time of printing of budget papers we had to be factually correct at that point. I am happy to follow that up, but the advice I have is that it has recently been put back in.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** Thank you. I have no further questions, Madam Chair.

**Madam CHAIR:** Thank you. That concludes consideration of Output 3.3.

### **Output 3.4 – Integrated Justice Information System**

**Madam CHAIR:** The committee will now consider Output 3.4, Integrated Justice Information System. Are there any questions?

That concludes consideration of Output 3.4 and Output Group 3.0.

### **OUTPUT GROUP 4.0 - DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC PROSECUTIONS**

#### **Output 4.1 - Director of Public Prosecutions**

**Madam CHAIR:** I now call for questions on Output Group 4.0, Director of Public Prosecutions, Output 4.1, Director of Public Prosecutions. Are there any questions?

**Ms FYLES:** Madam Chair, for Hansard, Matt Nathan joins us at the table. He is the Deputy Director of DPP. I thank Chris Cox for answering previous questions.

**Madam CHAIR:** Thank you. I believe the committee does not have any questions for Output 4.1. That concludes consideration of Output 4.1 and Output Group 4.0. Thank you, Mr Nathan.

### **OUTPUT GROUP 5.0 - INDEPENDENT OFFICES**

#### **Output 5.1 - Consumer Affairs**

**Madam CHAIR:** We will now move on to consider Output Group 5.0, Independent Offices, Output 5.1, Consumer Affairs. Are there any questions?

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** What was the actual total cost in dollars and staff hours to implement and administer the MyFuel program and its website in 2017–18?

**Ms FYLES:** NT Consumer Affairs received \$250 000 along with an additional staff member for the implementation of the recommendation of the ACCC report.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** Are there any plans to review the MyFuel program in order to determine whether there are more effective measures to reduce fuel prices that could be put in place?

**Ms FYLES:** It is probably a question that was better directed at the Treasurer yesterday. I am trying to recollect. I answered some questions in the media recently about the ACCC continuing to monitor fuel prices and we would further implement any recommendations from ACCC. Perhaps I can take that as a specific question on notice if that answer does not suffice. It was a recommendation of the ACCC report and was \$250 000 plus one FTE ...

**Ms DAY:** The \$250 000 included the FTE.

**Ms FYLES:** The \$250 000 includes the FTE, sorry. We certainly want to monitor fuel prices ongoing and put in place any recommendations that might see Territorians be able to access cheaper fuel.

**Madam CHAIR:** Member for Spillett, are you satisfied with the answer or would you like to place it on notice?

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** That is fine, thank you. That is all my questions for the output.

**Madam CHAIR:** Any further questions for Output 5.1, Consumer Affairs? That concludes consideration of Output 5.1.

### **Output 5.2 – Anti-Discrimination Commission**

**Madam CHAIR:** The committee will now consider Output 5.2, Anti-Discrimination Commission. Welcome, Commissioner Sievers.

**Ms FYLES:** For Hansard, Sally Sievers, the Anti-Discrimination Commissioner, has joined us and I welcome any questions.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** The Member for Nelson and I spoke—a lot of our questions were answered earlier. Any additional questions the opposition has, we will put in writing, given the time. Thank you, commissioner, though, for your preparation and attendance.

**Madam CHAIR:** Thank you, commissioner. That concludes consideration of Output 5.2.

### **Output 5.3 – Information and Public Interest Disclosures Commission**

**Madam CHAIR:** I will now call for questions for Output 5.3, Information and Public Interest Disclosures Commission. Are there any questions.

**Ms FYLES:** For the record for Hansard, Ms Brenda Monaghan, Information and Public Interest Disclosures Commissioner, has joined us.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** Thank you, minister and commissioner. How many investigations are under way? The reason I ask that is because I would like to know how they will be affected when the ICAC begins operating.

**Ms MONAGHAN:** Thank you for the question, Member for Spillett. I am assuming you are meaning public interest disclosure complaints?

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** Yes, thank you.

**Ms MONAGHAN:** My understanding is that currently there are 14 matters under way. We have been really trying to keep the numbers down as low as possible. Our hope is that ideally there would be no matters that needed to be transferred across to the ICAC. Obviously, that may not be possible. We spoke to the new ICAC commissioner the day before yesterday, not about the detail of the complaint—he was only sworn in yesterday—but through that that is what we want. We are certainly putting all our energies into making sure there are as few as possible to transfer. If they do transfer then they become ICAC investigations.

We leave all of the public interest disclosures, completed files or partially completed files—they remain with the ICAC. They become part of the ICAC and it is a matter for the ICAC commissioner then for the future.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** Your staff will become ICAC staff once it is operating?

**Ms MONAGHAN:** The public interest disclosure staff will. At present there are three positions: a chief investigation officer and two senior investigation officers, who will become part of the new ICAC.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** Thank you. Commissioner, was your office consulted on the appointment of the ICAC commissioner process?

**Ms MONAGHAN:** No.

**Mr WOOD:** I might be a bit confused now. I thought I asked a question to the Auditor-General about what is happening to your role. Are you being absorbed into something else now?

**Ms MONAGHAN:** I think you might have asked it of the Ombudsman.

**Mr WOOD:** Ombudsman—sorry.

**Ms MONAGHAN:** Mr Peter Shoyer. When the Martin report came down two years ago there was obviously the recommendation for the establishment of the ICAC and there was also a recommendation in there that the FOI and privacy functions of the office, the Information Commissioner's functions, would be transferred to the Ombudsman's office. We have been working towards that.

There are discussions happening obviously in regard to different things, but we are very much working towards that. It is a matter where there may well be final Cabinet discussions that need to happen, but from my perspective it appears to be a (inaudible). We are certainly, comfortably and proactively working with the Ombudsman's office to make sure that occurs.

**Mr WOOD:** So where does the commissioner go now? To the ICAC or to the Ombudsman area?

**Ms MONAGHAN:** The Information Commissioner's functions will transfer together with the act. The Information Commissioner will become part of the Ombudsman.

**Mr WOOD:** Will you have a job still?

**Ms MONAGHAN:** Really, I am the commissioner. I am appointed commissioner. Anything that happens will happen with my consent. There are obviously matters under discussion at the moment, but that is really as much as I can say.

**Mr WOOD:** In regard to those 14 complaints you had, do you report on where they are at? Because some of them are fairly serious issues. We have issues regarding bribery, leading to the inappropriate issuing of industry licences, conflict of interest and inappropriate bias and tendering process in recruitment and the use of consultants. There has been substantial maladministration and substantial misuse of public resources.

Where do we find out where it is at? Obviously these are complaints, but they are only complaints, so where do we find out what the result of those complaints will be?

**Ms MONAGHAN:** Member for Nelson, they are very confidential investigations. The whole way the *Public Interest Disclosure Act* has been set up is to make sure that if there is going to be a public outing of someone for some sort of misconduct or criminal behaviour, that should happen when they are dismissed from their employment or alternatively that should happen through the court process when they are convicted.

Our reporting process is reporting to the agency and if there is a disciplinary matter for the CEO to deal with; if it is a criminal matter we will refer that matter to police.

The only public reporting that we do is the de-identified reporting and the details that we give are in our annual report. So we give numbers under our (inaudible) and types of matters but we do not give personal information or detailed information about the investigations.

**Mr WOOD:** From a parliamentary point of view, if we were told that there was substantial maladministration and substantial misuse of public resources, as a member of parliament I would want to know what that is.

I am not saying I need to know the detailed information at this moment but if that was proven to be the case how would I be able to find out in a relatively easy way—if we have to wait for the court I might not even know that it is going to court—how would I find out that that actually was found out to be true?

**Ms MONAGHAN:** If it is a matter of substantial maladministration, the relevant minister is advised. Recommendations are made by me at present, as the Commissioner, in the final report to the responsible authority, who would be the minister, about my concerns and about what I require to be done.

If, as commissioner, I am not satisfied with the compliance of those recommendation by the relevant agency then the act provides that I can table a public report. To date I have not tabled a public report because on each occasion the CEO and the relevant minister has said, 'That is completely unacceptable. We will do something about it.'

That is the reality of the process that is there at the moment.

**Mr WOOD:** What is the process? I am not trying to be super detective here, but if there is maladministration I think a member for parliament should be able to at least look at that information and find out what caused that et cetera.

How do we find through you minister if something has occurred, a department has been notified of and has acted upon, and we can find out what has actually been done to rectify substantial maladministration and substantial misuse of public resources?

**Ms FYLES:** The checks and balances is if the commissioner felt that as a minister and as a chief executive we had not dealt with a matter appropriately, she could table that report. Equally, there is provision for me if I felt as a minister specifically, or any minister, that a matter should be talked about, there is provision to talk about that in an appropriate context.

There is two parts to your question—two possible answers. Is there anything preventing me from sharing with the community broadly? And that is how you would handle that. But equally, how do you trust that we are talking about or we have dealt with an issue? That is the checks and balance of the commissioner.

**Mr WOOD:** That is right. I wanted to make sure that the department actually did something.

**Ms FYLES:** Correct, and that is coming back to the point the commissioner made that if she felt that the CEO or the minister and the agency had not dealt with a matter, she could table that report.

**Mr WOOD:** But how do I know that you have done something?

**Ms FYLES:** That I have done something? Because the Information Commissioner, if she has an issue or an investigation that needs to be dealt with, she comes to us and we deal with that. If it is not dealt satisfactorily she would table that report.

**Mr WOOD:** But if it is dealt satisfactorily that means you have done it. How do I find out that you have done it? Where is the public disclosure that if there was something done that was really serious—how do I find out that the department has actually ...

**Ms FYLES:** That is the process that has been in place to date. I guess the ICAC is in one sense an extension of that and more transparency for the Territory. But to date, it has been the Independent Commissioner, if they feel that a minister or agency has not dealt with it then they can table that report.

**Ms MONAGHAN:** Two further matters, just to clarify—we have to give details in the annual report. We do not give all the confidential details, but we give details of the outcome and the recommendations. We set a time frame for those recommendations to be complied with. We very much oversee what happens as a result of the recommendations made, and I do not sign off unless I am satisfied.

We speak to other agencies, such as the Auditor-General, and on some occasions we refer that matter to the Auditor-General so they can continue to monitor, if we think it is more appropriate.

**Mr WOOD:** On your final annual report—because this will be the last one, I presume—will you identify which matters have gone to ICAC if there are any unresolved?

**Ms MONAGHAN:** We will identify in an unidentified form.

**Mr WOOD:** As in, equivalent to the dot points you have here.

**Ms MONAGHAN:** Yes, very much. Absolutely. We give the statistical details and what sorts of matters they relate to.

**Madam CHAIR:** Any further questions for Output 5.3? Thank you, commissioner. That concludes consideration of Output 5.3.

#### **Output 5.4 – Registrar-General**

**Madam CHAIR:** I will now call for questions on Output 5.4, Registrar-General. Are there any questions?

That concludes consideration of Output 5.4.

#### **Output 5.5 – Public Trustee**

**Madam CHAIR:** I will now call for questions on Output 5.5, Public Trustee. Are there any questions?

**Ms FYLES:** For the purposes of Hansard, I thank Jim Laouris, who fulfils both positions. Thank you for taking the time even though there are no questions.

**Madam CHAIR:** That concludes consideration of Output 5.5.

### **Output 5.6 – Health and Community Services Complaints Commission**

**Madam CHAIR:** I note that questions regarding Output 5.6, Health and Community Services Complaints Commission will be answered by the Minister for Health later today.

### **Output 5.7 – Children’s Commissioner**

**Madam CHAIR:** The committee will move on to Output 5.7, Children’s Commissioner.

**Ms FYLES:** For the purposes of Hansard, the Children’s Commissioner, Colleen Gwynne, is joining us for any questions the members may have.

**Madam CHAIR:** Thank you, Attorney-General. While the Minister for Territory Families has overall responsibility for the care and protection of children under the *Care and Protection of Children Act*, I note that the Attorney-General and Minister for Justice is responsible for Part 3.3 of the act, relating to the prevention of child deaths.

Are there any questions?

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** Thank you, Madam Chair and commissioner.

Minister, what role, if any, will the Children’s Commissioner play in reforming the child protection system going forward?

**Ms FYLES:** I will ask the Children’s Commissioner to answer that question.

**Ms GWYNNE:** My role is primarily around the independent monitoring of the systems going forward. Part of that has already been—we are well into planning the first part of that. Under phase one we have started recruitment action. There is a renewed structure with the CE for consideration.

My role is primarily as an independent, reviewing child protection and youth justice systems, which includes monitoring and auditing of those systems after the new positions come on board.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** Commissioner, will you be undertaking an audit into the outcomes of notifications reported to the child intake team, as was recommended in your own initiative report to reform the data recording processes?

**Ms GWYNNE:** You are talking about the most recent own initiative report?

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** Yes.

**Ms GWYNNE:** My role is then to monitor the recommendations out of that. Every quarter we will receive reports from the departments responsible for those particular recommendations. I guess the answer is yes, as an oversight.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** Fantastic, thank you. Have you been asked to help implement any of the other recommendations of your reports or do you wait until the department actions them and then monitor that?

**Ms GWYNNE:** The departments are mandated to report the status of their implementation in terms of those recommendations. We receive those reports every quarter and, as you can imagine, in between those times there is general discussion with the departments around the progress of those recommendations. It is almost a weekly thing.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** Are you then able to provide feedback to help inform that process?

**Ms GWYNNE:** Absolutely, yes.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** Okay, thank you. That is the crux of my questions to the commissioner.

**Mr WOOD:** Commissioner, your predecessor also did a report on child welfare and it had a whole series of recommendations. Do you monitor whether those recommendations have been achieved?

**Ms FYLES:** The Board of Inquiry Bath report?

**Ms GWYNNE:** I understand that prior to my appointment, the monitoring of that report was part of the functions of the office. That was removed some years ago, so the answer is no, I do not.

**Ms FYLES:** It was removed, I think, under the previous CLP government.

**Mr WOOD:** Regardless of that, do you use that as a, you might say, lever for improvements in the system?

**Ms GWYNNE:** I find it as an excellent reference manual. It is something that is still very relevant and I often read parts of that report.

**Mr WOOD:** Well it was done by some very good people.

**Ms GWYNNE:** Absolutely.

**Mr WOOD:** That is all.

**Madam CHAIR:** Any further questions for the Children's Commissioner?

**Mr MILLS:** Yes. I have a question, commissioner, and through you, minister. You refer to your role as being monitoring and auditing systems, which I assume means you are able to stand outside and gain an objective view of the system. When you consider a young girl in Tennant Creek with 52 notifications surrounding attempts to protect her, I start to wonder about how many man hours have been involved in this exercise concerning that family.

What is the cost associated with the attempt to deliver care to that particular girl? Is that the sort of role you would take from your objective position of monitoring and auditing the system to see how much is actually spent? Because government speaks about investment, but the return is really a critical element when government talks about evidence-based approaches.

**Ms GWYNNE:** So your question is, would we go into that sort of detail in our monitoring?

**Mr MILLS:** Yes.

**Ms GWYNNE:** Probably not. I think that in terms of—the reason why monitoring and auditing is so important is that you hope to get in front of the game. That particular own initiative report showed some significant gaps in our system, there is no doubt about that, and I do not think anyone in this room disagrees with that. The reason why monitoring is so important—and we will have the capacity to undertake that in the future—is that it enables you to look at the systemic gaps in all the systems before there is something like this occurring.

If I could give you an example. If you had a region where there were a low number of care plans associated with particular kids who were within the child protection system then you would want to know why that is occurring and you would want to fix it immediately. Having said that, monitoring and auditing is not new to my office so if you look at any annual report that we have produced, and before me Howard Bath, that part of our annual report is a monitoring of the *Care and Protection of Children Act* in terms of how the department deals with all of their functions around child protection. Every year, I release those statistics in my annual report.

The monitoring and auditing is not new. What it will allow us to do is make it more of an everyday part of our business and what we do.

**Mr MILLS:** The assumption then, commissioner, is that the objective view that you are required to take as the commissioner, is not really to question the system but just to monitor the system. Consequently, no one receives any sanction as a result of the failure to provide care in using the case of the girl in Tennant Creek.

**Ms GWYNNE:** My role is to present the evidence. In terms of sanctions, I think that is more a matter for the departments. I base my findings on evidence and if you look at previous own initiative reports, that is what we present, the evidence. I do not think it is my role to determine sanctions in relation to that.

**Mr MILLS:** But recommend sanctions?

**Ms GWYNNE:** To recommend sanctions—if you found that person or persons had failed to undertake their role in compliance with legislation, we will highlight where their deficiencies are, but I do not think it is my role to determine what happens from there.

**Mr MILLS:** I understand that. I am talking about the role of monitoring and auditing surely would go, not just to the observation of the machinery in play but whether that has actually resulted in delivery of care. I can understand that that body of reporting would then require a political decision or a message to be sent that this has not occurred. The child has not been protected. I understand what you say.

**Madam CHAIR:** Are there any further questions for the Children's Commissioner? If so, I would like to let her know she should return after lunch. If not, we will need to break.

**Mrs LAMBLEY:** I have one, could I squeeze that in? One of the original roles of the Children's Commissioner, when it was established, was to monitor the implementation of the recommendations of the Little Children are Sacred report. Will that be one of your roles with the new Royal Commission report? Will you be monitoring the implementation of all those recommendations?

**Ms GWYNNE:** No, it is not a role of my office. I think there will be a separate office that will monitor how those recommendations are rolled out.

**Mrs LAMBLEY:** Is that something that you will be overseeing and taking command of?

**Ms FYLES:** It will be a question for Minister for Territory Families. I know there were substantial changes made. I am not sure if it was when you were the minister, Member for Araluen.

**Mrs LAMBLEY:** I am just asking the independent Children's Commissioner whether or not her office will be monitoring the implementation of those recommendations.

**Ms GWYNNE:** No, that is not a function.

**Mrs LAMBLEY:** Thank you.

**Madam CHAIR:** If there are no further questions, that concludes consideration of Output 5.7, Output Group 5.0. Thank you, commissioner. We will now break for lunch and return at 12.30 pm.

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The committee suspended

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## **OUTPUT GROUP 6.0 – REGULATORY SERVICES**

### **Output 6.2 Licensing NT**

**Madam CHAIR:** The committee will now proceed to Output Group 6.0, Regulatory Services, Output 6.1, Licensing. NT. Are there any questions?

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** I have a couple of questions, Madam Chair.

**Ms FYLES:** Sorry, Member for Spillett. Sally Ozolins, the Director-General of Licensing NT joins us.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** Thank you. Minister, was legal opinion sought on whether section 16(2) of the *Liquor Act* requires the commission to conduct a hearing where a decision is to be made under the act?

**Ms FYLES:** Are you able to provide any clarification on what type of context?

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** The context is Tennant Creek with the liquor restrictions.

**Ms FYLES:** On whether the Director-General, myself or the independent commission?

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** Sorry, from?

**Ms FYLES:** Which specific—because there were emergency restrictions put in by the Director-General and then there was restrictions by myself and then the independent commission. Which?

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** Well, from the commission.

**Ms FYLES:** Member for Spillett, not to my knowledge, but that would be a question better directed to the independent Liquor Commission. They would be able to answer it.



**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** Does an application for a special liquor licence require the matter to be heard by the Liquor Commission based on section 50 of the *Liquor Act*? Is a public hearing required?

**Ms FYLES:** No they did not.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** No they do not? They do not have to provide a hearing?

**Ms FYLES:** No.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** Was it not the intention of the commission to hold public hearings? Is that not an important function of the commission?

**Ms FYLES:** It is a matter for the Liquor Commission. So in setting up the Liquor Commission, they are able to set their own processes. All major decisions have public hearings and then the more minor matters are matters for the commission. Not sure if that responds to your questions.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** Thank you. The Member for Nelson has a question.

**Mr WOOD:** Commissioner, what is the role of the commission in relation to the functioning of the BDR—as from monitoring it is working, in regard to any complaints perhaps about its operation. Do you have any role in that at all?

**Ms FYLES:** There is no role in terms of the BDR. The BDR is set up with the BDR Registrar and there is an appeals process through that. There is no role between the commission and the BDR.

**Mr WOOD:** It is just that it was mentioned in the annual report.

**Ms FYLES:** Sally is not from the commission; she is from the Department of Licensing.

**Mr WOOD:** I am reading the licensing.

**Ms FYLES:** The function of the department of Justice is the administration of the BDR, the technical aspect. Further to that, the way the Banned Drinker Register is set up is there is a registrar who would, if people want to appeal being put on the BDR et cetera. They are Department of Health, so perhaps under Health.

**Mr WOOD:** It was in the report and I thought there might be a role.

**Ms FYLES:** No.

**Mr WOOD:** My other question is in relation to statistics again. Minister, in this annual report there is a list of the clubs and pubs which says, 'Licensed clubs based on machine gaming metered win for 2016–17,' and the other one is, 'Licensed hotels/taverns based on machine gaming metered win for 2016–17'.

Last year I tried to get the figures for those same pubs and clubs. I had to write to you to get those details because, for some reason, the amount of money that pubs and clubs show as metered wins and gaming tax and the number of machines, has now been deleted from annual reports.

I followed this for a long time and I was always able to get the figures. These figures are now not part of the annual report and they were not part of the annual report last year. Why have the figures been removed which tells me what particular club makes what amount of money from their poker machines?

**Ms FYLES:** We would have to take that question on notice, around the specifics. Sorry, the department officials with me are unaware of those specifics.

**Mr WOOD:** They have been in annual reports year in, year out.

**Ms FYLES:** It is not any information that we have before us.

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#### Question on Notice No 4.7

**Madam CHAIR:** Member for Nelson, could you please repeat the question for the record?

**Mr WOOD:** Minister, could you explain why over the last two financial years there has been no reporting of the individual amounts of metered wins and the amount of gaming tax per licensed premises?

**Ms FYLES:** Which annual report are you referring to?

**Mr WOOD:** I have last year's, but we had to write to you to get them.

**Ms FYLES:** Which annual report?

**Mr WOOD:** The latest one.

**Ms FYLES:** From which agency? The licensing one?

**Mr WOOD:** The Director-General of Licensing.

**Madam CHAIR:** Attorney-General, do you accept the question?

**Ms FYLES:** Yes.

**Madam CHAIR:** Member for Nelson's question has been allocated the number 4.7.

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**Mr WOOD:** That is all the questions I have. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**Madam CHAIR:** Any further questions, Member for Spillett?

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** No, I do not have any further questions for the Attorney-General, but I would like to thank everyone for their hard work and contribution today.

**Mr WOOD:** Hear, hear.

**Madam CHAIR:** That concludes consideration of Output 6.1.

#### **Output 6.2 – NT Worksafe**

**Madam CHAIR:** Consideration of Output 6.2, NT Worksafe. Are there any questions?

That concludes consideration of Output 6.2 and Output Group 6.0.

### **OUTPUT GROUP 7.0 – CORPORATE AND GOVERNANCE**

#### **Output 7.1 – Corporate and Governance**

**Madam CHAIR:** We will now consider Output Group 7.0, Corporate and Governance, Output 7.1, Corporate and Governance. Are there any questions?

That concludes consideration of Output 7.1.

#### **Output 7.2 Shared Services Received**

**Madam CHAIR:** We will now consider Output 7.2, Shared Services Received. Are there any questions?

That concludes consideration of Output 7.2 and Output Group 7.0.

#### **Non-Output Specific Budget-Related Questions**

**Madam CHAIR:** Are there any non-output specific budget-related questions for the Attorney-General?

This concludes consideration of all output groups relating to the Department of the Attorney-General and Justice. On behalf of the committee, I would like to thank the officers who provided advice to the Attorney-General today.

The committee will now move on to consider outputs related to the Department of Health.

**Ms FYLES:** Madam Chair, if I could also put on the Hansard record my appreciation of all the agency staff, not only those who have sat with me but those behind the scenes and back at the agency in providing information. We will endeavour to follow up those outstanding questions and provide that to the committee as soon as possible. Thank you.

**Madam CHAIR:** Thank you, Attorney-General. We are allowed two minutes for you to swap over into your ministerial Health role.

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The committee suspended.

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## DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

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

**Ms FYLES:** Madam Chair, I introduce the Department of Health officials who are joining me today: Professor Catherine Stoddart, the Chief Executive of the Department of Health; Dr Maggie Jamieson, Acting Deputy Chief Executive Health Policy and Strategy; Ms Sue Korner, Chief Operating Officer with the Central Australia Health Service; Mr Michael Kalimnios, Chief Operating Officer Top End Health Service; and Mr Nick Good, Chief Financial Officer.

Would you like me to go on with my opening statement now?

**Madam CHAIR:** Yes, thank you. Sorry, minister, your microphone is not on.

**Ms FYLES:** Sorry. You would think I had enough practice this morning.

With the consent of the committee, I ask that any questions for the Office of the Public Guardian and Health and Community Services Complaints Commission NT are asked at the end of the Health outputs. I am in the hands of the committee.

**Madam CHAIR:** Yes, that is fine, thank you.

**Ms FYLES:** Thank you. In 2017–18 we saw changes to the governance structure of the NT public health system, which included the appointment of service administrators in each Health services. These appointments will continue until the end of 2018, while the final governance structure is being implemented.

Mr Paul Tyrrell AO has been with Top End Health Service and Ms Pat Miller AO for the Central Australia Health Service as the service administrators. Their experience and knowledge is providing expert leadership to the health services during this transitional phase.

As reported in Budget 2018–19, the budget of Northern Territory Health is a significant investment in the health of Territorians and includes new funding to deliver our government's commitments and priorities. I will provide some further information on the Department of Health's budget and estimate figures for 2017–18 and 2018–19 as stated in Budget Paper No 3.

There has been an overall increase of budget between 2017–18 from \$1.45bn to \$1.54bn in 2018–19, an increase in the order of \$85.5m. The 2017–18 estimate figure of \$1.59bn represents the additional funding in revenue from a variety of sources provided to the department over the course of 2017–18. As stated in the budget papers, many Commonwealth agreements were still in the process of negotiation when the budget papers were being prepared. I spoke about that in parliament.

As these arrangements are finalised throughout the year, their respective amounts are included in the revised estimate. Additional NTG funding may also be approved depending on government decisions. We expect the 2018–19 budget figure will increase during the course of the new financial year as the Commonwealth and other funding sources are confirmed. This will be reflected in due course.

The government's election commitment to reintroduce the Banned Drinker Register was implemented on 1 September 2017. We all know the cost of alcohol-related harm is too high in the Northern Territory. Our government is taking assertive action with a range of coordinated strategies guided by the Alcohol Harm Minimisation Action Plan to reduce the harms.

This year, \$15.5m is provided for health-related activities to support the Banned Drinker Register and the generational change that we need to ensure Territorians have a bright future. This funding supports assessment withdrawal and specialised alcohol treatment services to assist people with alcohol misuse issues and dependence.

Since the commencement, a total of 5054 people have been on the BDR. As of 30 April, there were 3247 on the Banned Drinker Register, with an average of 300 new bans being issued each month of its operation. We are preparing the formal evaluations of the Banned Drinker Register after six months of operations to ensure it is rolling out the way it was intended to and that it is achieving the best possible results. This report will hopefully be available by the end of the month. I look forward to sharing that with the community.

To ensure our NT health system is fit for the future, our government has commissioned best-practice health and infrastructure plans to deliver an integrated plan involving the development of a clinical services plan for the Central Australia Health Service and the Top End Health Service, with 15-year outlooks based on in-depth demand analysis and forecasting, hospital master planning based on infrastructure needs identified by the clinical services plan so that Health infrastructure spending can be targeted where it is most needed and based on needs assessments and evidence. The project is aiming for both Royal Darwin Hospital and Alice Springs Hospital masterplans to be finished for the next capital works planning cycle.

In 2017–18 a major suite of infrastructure projects were progressed or are significantly under way. These key projects will improve the efficiency of our health services as well as the amenity for patients, families, carers, visitors and of course, hard-working staff across the Northern Territory. The largest one of these is the \$170m Palmerston Regional Hospital that is currently in the commissioning phase by Top End Health Service for opening later this year. Operational funding has been allocated in Budget 2018–19 with \$24m to commence the hospital's operations. There will be services transferred from Royal Darwin Hospital as well as activity-based funding.

Like many other hospital openings in Australia, services at the Palmerston Regional Hospital will be phased in and expanded to full capacity over time. The phased opening of services will ensure hospital staff can manage patient care and safety, which is of course our priority. There will be approximately 450 staff at the Palmerston Regional Hospital and 300 of those are new positions. I can advise the committee that recruitment is on track with around 80% of nursing positions and 85% of medical positions filled to date.

The construction of the multistorey car park at Royal Darwin Hospital, the \$12m project, is well under way. Sunbuild are progressing with the construction of the six-storey car park, which will provide 450 car parking spaces to the campus. This will provide free parking to patients, visitors and staff, delivering on our election commitment. The construction of the PET scanner facility to the main ward of the Royal Darwin Hospital block is progressing well and, I am advised, is on track for completion later this year.

Budget 2018–19 provides \$5.9m in 2018–19, increasing to \$8.6m in 2023–24 to support the expansion of cancer services in the Territory. This will enable additional capacity at the Alan Walker Cancer Care Centre with a 12-chair addition, increasing capacity from eight to 20 chairs over five years, and providing the related Allied Health clinical trial and care coordination support. This will also include funding for the Northern Territory's first PET scanner and the establishment of a cyclotron and radio pharmacy facility at Royal Darwin Hospital.

Budget 2018–19 supports Northern Territory Health with a major focus of putting children at the heart of our government; providing safer, vibrant communities; and investing across the bush and regional areas. Our government's 10-year early childhood development plan is supported with an investment of \$35.6m over four years. This is to commence the strategies we need for generational change to improve the health and wellbeing outcomes for children.

In 2018–19 we have allocated \$2.3m for health initiatives such as the Health Under 5 Kids partnering with families, hearing health and the hearing health joint venture with academic and business sectors, just to name a few. In addition, \$2m is allocated to support the delivery of sustained nurse home visiting programs for vulnerable families. The NT Aboriginal Health Forum has endorsed the roll-out of the program, with service providers in Barkly, East Arnhem and the Katherine regions. Two models will be available in the Northern Territory and we look forward to the roll-out of these programs and their evaluation.

We are also delivering on our commitment to provide support for people in public housing who have a mental health issue. Budget 2018–19 provides \$900 000 to the trial of the Housing Accommodation Support Initiative, or HASI, as it is more commonly known. Our government has committed \$3m over four years to trial HASI and a collaborative project with the Department of Health and the Department of Housing and

Community Development working closely with the non-government sector. I am pleased to update the committee that Anglicare NT has commenced delivering the services.

Madam Chair, I look forward to questions. In closing, as in previous years, the department is negotiating with the Australian Government and other external funding providers on a range of agreements that will affect our funding in 2018–19. We expect these negotiations will be finalised shortly. As that is done, those variations will be incorporated into the 2018–19 budget through the Treasurer's mid-year report.

The budget for Northern Territory Health 2018–19 is the largest of any Northern Territory Government agency, and this government continues its commitment to bolster the health services for all Territorians.

I thank you, Madam Chair and members of the committee, and I welcome questions.

**Madam CHAIR:** Thank you, minister. Are there any questions relating to the minister's statement? The committee will now proceed to consider the estimates of proposed expenditure contained in the Appropriation Bill 2018–19 as they relate to the Department of Health.

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

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

I have one, minister, that I would like to ask at this point. It is in regard to government employee housing for non-clinical staff. At the end of last there were some issues with non-clinical staff in the Jabiru clinic obtaining accommodation to retain their positions at the clinic and to remain residents of Jabiru. It was quite concerning. It was reported and written to the minister's office as an urgent issue. It took two months to resolve.

Yesterday, we heard from the Chief Minister that the government is committed to the sustainability and provision of services in Jabiru. I am interested, from you and your department, why these issues take that long to resolve and what will happen in the future for residents of Jabiru who find themselves in this position again?

**Ms FYLES:** Thank you for your question. Obviously, as an agency, we work with the department of Housing to try to provide housing to employees, particularly in our remote and regional areas so we can provide that delivery of healthcare to Territorians. We work in with that agency.

I will ask Michael Kalimnios, as the Chief Operating Officer, if he could provide any further information on that specific question.

**Mr KALIMNIOS:** Thank you, minister. In terms of the two people who were subject to that, there was a long process that we negotiated through. As the minister said, that was sorting out issues between us and housing. The two people who were involved—one is currently in the accommodation, the other one has elected not to take up the accommodation we offered and has found alternative accommodation at Jabiru.

We remain open where those issues manifest themselves to work it through with staff to ensure we can maintain appropriate services and staff in Jabiru.

**Madam CHAIR:** Thank you. It is my understanding as local member that the department decided to return the housing that was not undertaken by one of the staff. My understanding, from speaking with staff and personnel at the Jabiru clinic, was that accommodation could have been used for another non-clinical staff member at the cost of the non-clinical staff member's expense and no extra cost to the department. Why was that accommodation returned and not utilised by the Department of Health?

**Ms FYLES:** That is probably a question better directed to the department of Housing. We are working there around ...

**Madam CHAIR:** No. I have spoken with the department of Housing and it is a question for the Department of Health of why it was returned from Health as an asset back to department of Housing.

**Ms FYLES:** I believe, Madam Chair, that I have provided an explanation. We are working with the department of Housing. We need to make sure we have housing for employees across the Territory. At times it is tricky, but I believe we have provided an explanation.

**Madam CHAIR:** Just for the record, Jabiru health clinic would have utilised that accommodation, so support from the department. In future it would be very much appreciated. Thank you.

Are there any further questions? Thank you. That concludes consideration of agency-related whole-of-government questions on budget and fiscal strategy.

**OUTPUT GROUP 8.0 – COMMUNITY SERVICES**  
**Output 8.1 – Community Services**

**Madam CHAIR:** The committee will now proceed to Output Group 8.0, Community Services, Output 8.1, Community Services. Are there any questions?

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you to the departmental staff who have put a lot of work in today and who are appearing here today.

Minister, how many new health clinics have been built in the Territory since 30 August 2016? How much did they cost?

**Ms FYLES:** Member for Spillett, there have been at least four clinics opened that I am aware of. We are just getting some specific information. I am happy to come back to that if we get it within—the Northern Territory Government works with our non-government organisations, the (inaudible) medical services within the Territory, as well as the federal government, which has the responsibility with primary healthcare.

The clinics that have been upgraded in more recent times—Canteen Creek was a new build. Docker River was upgraded to existing facilities. Elliott was a new build. Galiwinku was a new build. Maningrida had upgrades. Ngukurr—I was out there just a couple of weeks ago—is a completely new clinic. Numbulwar—Papunya was an upgrade to existing. Robinson River opened in April; Minister McCarthy attended that on my behalf. Titjikala had some upgrades.

Fifty-million dollars was allocated from the Australian Government. I think that money did come back in quite some time ago. It has been worked through with the department around those facilities. We continue to work with our federal government as well as making sure minor works are completed within our Top End and Central Australian health services.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** You went a little quick. Was that seven new clinics and three upgrades?

**Ms FYLES:** Yes, seven new builds and three upgrades, on the information I have before me.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** At a total cost of \$50m, which was federal funding?

**Ms FYLES:** I would have to get a breakdown of the funding. It was not all federal; there was some NTG.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** Would you like me to take that on notice?

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**Question on Notice No 4.8**

**Madam CHAIR:** Member for Spillett, would you like to repeat the question for the record.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** Could the department please provide the cost breakdown for each of the new health clinics that have been delivered since 30 August 2016, and for the upgrades to health clinics since 30 August 2016. In that breakdown, please identify the split between federal and Territory funding.

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

**Ms FYLES:** Yes. The information I have before me is the health and hospitals fund, but I am happy to get the breakdown.

**Madam CHAIR:** The Member for Spillett's question has been allocated the number 4.8.

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**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** Minister, how many health clinics have been transferred to Aboriginal community control since 30 August 2016? If you could, please let me know their locations and the names of the organisations managing them.

**Ms FYLES:** Pathways to community control is a shared policy of the Northern Territory Aboriginal Health Forum, the Aboriginal Medical Services Alliance, the NT and Commonwealth departments of Health, the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet, and the Northern Territory Primary Health Network. It is quite a process to transition those clinics. We need to make sure there is the long-term resource and supports. But I think we certainly see significant outcomes when we have particularly remote clinics that are being locally controlled.

I was at the Barunga clinic just last Friday. It was fantastic to see local members of that community actively running their health services and supporting their community. There are four stages outlined in the pathways to community control document: the development; the consolidation; the implementation; the evaluation. Working through those stages can take anywhere from 12 to 24 months. Within regions there can be anywhere between one to six clinics or programs to transition. Some of our NGOs operate a hub and spoke model.

We are working through three priority regions: East Arnhem; West Arnhem; Maningrida; and some of the clinics in Central Australia. There has been none transitioned to date, but I expect we would meet that election commitment of four over the term of our government.

We have been very consistent in saying it would not be one a year, that we need to do the work, do the planning and make sure we transition those appropriately, ensuring that there is only an increase in health services to those communities.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** Are you able to identify which clinics are advanced in that process on the pathway to transferral?

**Ms FYLES:** As I said, each one of those stages can take 12 to 24 months, I do not want to provide information that might misrepresent into the future. We have a number of Aboriginal medical services across the Territory and I do not want it to reflect that one is more advanced.

I am actively following this. I am visiting a number of remote communities and will continue to do so. Within those stages of 12–24 months, we might feel that one clinic is going to transition but then the next stage takes a lot longer. We are actively working with the existing medical services, who can provide the capability and support, but the work is on track to deliver the four over the term of this government.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** 30 August this year will be the 24 months. Is it envisaged that there will be one by the end of the year?

**Ms FYLES:** It is when it is appropriate and clinically safe and in the interest of the community. We are not going to put time frames or provide detailed explanation. This is a process that we have seen clinics transfer and we have that strong commitment of making sure that people, particularly in remote areas, can access health services that they are in control of.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** Does that foreseeably or reasonably mean that if you have a commitment to deliver four by the end of your term, which would be four years, if moving through those processes has not worked out you might not be able to reach your election commitment?

**Ms FYLES:** No. As I have said numerous times in responding to the question, we are very much on track to deliver four over this term of government.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** What help has the department offered Lifeline to assist them in keeping their doors open and to reopen their doors in the Territory?

**Ms FYLES:** This was an issue very early on, in late 2016—working with Lifeline here in the Territory. We have provided funding to Lifeline nationally. Lifeline in the Territory, at the changeover of government, closed its doors.

More recently, I have met with advocates for Lifeline NT and reiterated that door is always open if they wish to work with Lifeline Australia around setting up an NT board and services again. We have made sure, as a Territory government, we have met our obligation of providing funding. The Lifeline number works in the

Northern Territory and the Northern Territory Government provides funding. As I said, I recently met with representatives—if they wish to re-engage with their national board and set up a service in the Territory.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** How much will the government's response to the \$65 000 review of the St John Ambulance service cost the government to implement?

**Ms FYLES:** St John Ambulance has provided services in the Northern Territory for over 20 years. The service level agreement with St John Ambulance (NT) for the provision of ambulance services—as you would be aware, Member for Spillett—was executed on 1 February 2016 for a five-year period with an option of a further five years. That contract provides for crewed ambulance services across Darwin, Katherine and Alice Springs and a combination in Tennant Creek.

St John recently had a new Chief Executive and I have met with her numerous times. A review was held into the services by Professor Neale Fong. That report was handed to government in December last year and since that time I have been working with key stakeholders. In fact, as late as last week, I met with St John and I have also been talking to the unions. It outlines a number of areas of improvement on all parties and we are certainly working towards a formal response that will be presented in the near future.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** So there is no time frame for that response as yet?

**Ms FYLES:** I would expect that the recommendations of how we will address that report would be made public by the end of August.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** Thank you. Has a budget been set aside to implement your implementation plan as a result of the review?

**Ms FYLES:** That is the detail we are working through, as well as working with the key stakeholders. It was obviously quite a broad review and encompassed a number of areas. I think the support that the St John Ambulance, a non-government organisation, provides in the Northern Territory—we recognise that. It is an exciting opportunity to work through that detail to make sure we have a safe working environment for those hard-working paramedics and deliver those emergency services to Territorians.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** Thank you, minister. What funding, if any, has been allocated to the implementation of the *Termination of Pregnancy Law Reform Act*?

**Ms FYLES:** We have allocated funds. I do not have the information at hand; we would have to come back to you. The changes in the legislation have certainly changed the way that healthcare for women has been delivered in the Territory.

Data from a six-month reporting period from 1 July to 31 December 2017 shows that terminations of pregnancy are being performed in accordance with the legislation and regulations, and that the rates of termination have not changed significantly. They are similar to those in Western Australia and South Australia; they are the only other jurisdictions that we can compare data to. However, a significant number are now early medical terminations, which clinically is pregnancies of less than nine weeks or 63 days.

Top End Health Service has continued to fund Family Planning Welfare Association Northern Territory to provide low-complexity early termination of pregnancy services in Darwin and Palmerston, and I think some outreach to Katherine—I am not 100% sure of that.

In Central Australia there are different organisations that also provide that.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** Did you say, minister, that you have a breakdown of the rates?

**Ms FYLES:** A breakdown of the early termination versus surgical—is that the question?

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** Thank you.

**Ms FYLES:** A total of 567, and 405 were early medical terminations—so less than nine weeks clinically—and then 161 were surgical.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** Are you able to repeat those numbers again?

**Ms FYLES:** Of course. There were 567 in total—405, so about 71%; and 161, which is about 28%.



**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** Across the Territory, were you saying that is happening in Darwin, Katherine and Alice Springs? Is that correct?

**Ms FYLES:** Yes. Since the change in legislation from 1 July last year, there have been information sessions to over 250 health practitioners. The clinical guidelines are now coming up for a review, 12 months after operation. An expert working group made up of senior clinicians, managers, legal advisers and consumer representatives will work and provide recommendations to the Chief Health Officer.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** Will there be any public opportunity to comment on the clinical guidelines?

**Ms FYLES:** It is a clinical decision. Previously, we had clinical input.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** Okay. If it was something of great interest to an organisation or stakeholder, could they provide their comments to that review panel?

**Ms FYLES:** Yes.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** Okay, thank you. Could you please provide a status update on the implementation of the Northern Territory renal services strategy?

**Ms FYLES:** There have been significant changes recently in renal services. We launched the Northern Territory renal services strategy 2017–22 with priorities for prevention of kidney disease, care closer to home, early intervention, coordinated treatment, consumer participation in service development, and skilled and culturally inclusive workforce. We have a renal ready rooms program which provides upgrades to health clinics so there is the capacity, if that community has renal patient, for them to self-care dialysis at that centre.

We lobbied the federal government. Professor Alan Cass from Menzies was on the working group. I acknowledge all the hard work around the recent decision by the Australian Government to provide a new remote renal dialysis item in the Medicare MBS—and not just that they have acknowledged that with the item, but the amount is \$592 per treatment in very remote locations.

This is a significant change to renal treatment. We now have the opportunity to work with a non-government organisation, our Aboriginal medical services, as well as our department, to put further expansion of the model of the renal ready rooms for people in remote communities.

As we head towards 2023, when it is expected that more than 1000 Territorians will require renal replacement therapy, this is an exciting development. That renal strategy we launched late last year, with this new Medicare item, will continue to work with the two health services and non-government organisations around the delivery of care, as well as the Nightcliff Renal Unit, which is being rebuilt. That work is also on the way.

**Madam CHAIR:** I have a question, minister, in regard to implementation of the strategy. How much of the budget is being used for that implementation process? How much is allocated?

**Ms FYLES:** I do not have that specific figure. The figure I have in front of me—there is a combination of federal and Territory government. I know that the Nightcliff Renal Unit is around \$10m. There is \$4.9m for Top End Health Service. I would be happy to take that on notice and come back to you with both health services' figures, if you like.

**Madam CHAIR:** Thank you. I will put that on notice.

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#### Question on Notice No 4.9

**Madam CHAIR:** Minister, can you please provide the figures of the budget which is spent on the implementation of the renal strategy across the Northern Territory.

**Ms FYLES:** Of course.

**Madam CHAIR:** My question is being allocated the number 4.9.

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**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** Were you continuing, Attorney-General?

**Ms FYLES:** Pardon?

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** I was not sure if you had finished answering. You were generally giving an update on your renal services strategy.

**Ms FYLES:** Yes.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** Thank you. You might have mentioned it before, but how many Territorians are currently on renal dialysis?

**Ms FYLES:** The advice is 700 currently and it is expected to climb, sadly, to more than 1000 by 2023. That is why we are doing not only the work in having treatment options, but also that early childhood investment, which is so important, as well as working with women when they are pregnant. We know that lifting the birth weight of babies can have a significant outcome. That is why we are also working closely with partners, such as Menzies, who lead across Australia in work to address kidney disease and prevent progression to end stage, improving the journey for patients with models of care and facilitating patient voices to inform policy and practice.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** That is a significant increase by 2023, and that is even with your strategy in place. Presumably there was modelling done prior to the strategy that showed it would have been even higher?

**Ms FYLES:** Yes, the modelling with renal is that—we are modelling through not only the work we have done, but also the clinical services plan. We can project that even with interventions, it will still climb drastically.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** Do you happen to have the figure of what it would have been had you not implemented the strategy?

**Ms FYLES:** No, we do not have that. It is, sadly, an illness that we see far too often in the Territory, particularly around our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander patients. There are some factors, but we know it is long-term work to reduce those rates.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** Thank you, minister.

**Ms FYLES:** If you want more information—Dr Maggie Jamieson can provide more explanation on that modelling.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** Sure. I will not say no.

**Ms JAMIESON:** For the clinical services plan, part of the projection is using both the number of people currently in treatment and projected numbers in treatment against the population base, both in north and south. We then cast that against the census figures. We know there are problems with that in some ways, but we have also used it as a baseline across other rural areas in Australia.

Our projections are fairly sound in terms of the group. Unfortunately, the projections only indicate a rise in renal disease over time. That is for multiple factors, which will take a considerable amount of time to address. It will take a long time to change that pattern, unfortunately.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** Presumably, this figure is essentially a KPI on the strategy. If we get to 2023 and there are 1500, then I suppose it is a reflection on whether or not the renal strategy had an impact.

**Ms FYLES:** I will disagree that it is a KPI. It is our estimate of the clinical services that we will need in the Territory. There was no work done over the CLP government around planning it and a way forward. I think we have seen significant work done. The federal government are now our partners—and Menzies. Clinically, the numbers will continue to grow. We know that; we are just estimating. We really need to tackle those social determinants to reduce those rates in the long term.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** What would be a KPI on the renal strategy?

**Ms FYLES:** I would suggest that a KPI that would be worth looking into would be that care and dialysis closer to home. We know that most people come to Alice Springs or Darwin for treatment. The work with the new MBS and the renal strategy around delivering services in remote locations—clinically, the numbers will continue to increase until we attack those social determinants. A KPI will be the care available to patients closer to home.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** Do you have the breakdown then of people receiving treatment in Darwin and Alice Springs?

**Ms FYLES:** Yes, we would have that. We might be able to get it while we are talking but we definitely have it. We know the numbers.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** Perhaps we will take it on notice and if you answer it we can just tick that one off.

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**Question on Notice No 4.10**

**Madam CHAIR:** Member for Spillett, please repeat your question for the record.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** Could you please provide the breakdown of people currently receiving renal dialysis in Darwin and in Alice Springs.

**Ms FYLES:** Of course.

**Madam CHAIR:** Thank you. The Member for Spillett's question has been allocated the number 4.10.

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**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** My next question might fall into the Member for Arnhem's question that you took on notice. It is about budgets to implement the strategies. In terms of renal infrastructure required, what budget has been allocated to that? Integrating services, education, about treatment options with that focus on patient choice—are you able to give a breakdown on how the budget will be split?

**Ms FYLES:** There is the \$11.1m for the Nightcliff renal unit. I think that work is encompassed in the question the Member for Arnhem asked.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** Thank you. What is the comparison of the cost per patient for those who undertake renal home care compared to those who undertake renal care in a hospital or a medical clinic?

**Ms FYLES:** We would have to take that on notice. We do not have that before us.

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**Question on Notice No 4.11**

**Madam CHAIR:** Could you please repeat for the record, Member for Spillett.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** Could you please provide the comparison of cost per patient for those undertaking renal home care compared to those undertaking renal care in a hospital, medical clinic or medical unit?

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

**Ms FYLES:** Of course. It is important to note too that we very much want to keep people closer to home so they can get the treatment they need. There is the added economic cost if they need to be rehoused in an urban centre but also that emotional cost. Some of the ladies last week said they have to travel for treatment. That is why we have launched that strategy and are building on those renal remote rooms. We will get that information.

**Madam CHAIR:** The Member for Spillett's question has been allocated the number 4.11.

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**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** There is a budget of \$1.2m for renal ready rooms in remote communities ...

**Ms FYLES:** That is to build two renal ready rooms for self-dialysis. It is to have the physical redoing of the building so we can put the chairs in there, depending on patient and community need.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** Where will that be?

**Ms FYLES:** We have announced one that is at Pirlangimpi. The other one is in Central Australia but I do not think we have finalised the location. We are working with some of the Aboriginal community organisations there for the best location.

But there are additional rooms in other communities. There was another one recently opened in Robinson River clinic. They are in a number of clinics already.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** Thank you. Those are my questions for that output.

**Madam CHAIR:** Thank you, Member for Spillett. Minister, I will continue on a couple of specific renal questions. As you know, I talk about it quite a bit in parliament.

How much of the renal implementation money is being used towards research for transplantation, particularly for Aboriginal Territorians to receive organ donations for kidneys?

**Ms FYLES:** That would go to Menzies; it would not come specifically to us. It would be Menzies working in partnership with the department.

**Madam CHAIR:** So, a separate budget allocation from Health? Okay, thank you.

As you mentioned before—patient travel. I have written to your office a bit about constituents in the outer Katherine region who need to travel in from their communities. There is no patient travel provided by the Department of Health. I understand there is a small reimbursement. The issue is in regard to reliable transport and the safety of a patient having to transport themselves after they have been on four or five hours of renal treatment, being very tired—the blood has been drained from your whole body.

I am wondering if the department is putting any of its implementation strategy towards supporting—while there is not renal services available or staffed renal services available in those smaller communities out of Katherine.

**Ms FYLES:** It is a really difficult issue. I thank the Member for Araluen. She undertook the last review into patient assisted travel. That is the key point. It is assistance for people to travel. It will never fully cover the cost. We have 80-odd remote clinics—50 of them NTG—to run. It is a balance in trying to provide as many services close to home for people.

There is a review in progress—or there will be going forward in 2018–19—for the Patient Assisted Travel Scheme. We are also looking at, with our clinic delivery, the hub and spoke model. If a service is offered in one location but it is not meeting the needs of that community, where do they travel into? We can encompass it into that.

It is a very difficult balance in providing as many services as possible across the Territory and as close to home as possible for people.

**Madam CHAIR:** In regard to Aboriginal health practitioner training to become renal support staff, how much of the budget is being invested into that type of training for local people working in their own communities in the health system?

**Ms FYLES:** The changes that we saw recently and the funding that the Commonwealth Government has provided to Purple House in Central Australia in the APY Lands is something we will work specifically with them around. Now that there is the MBS Medicare item, we really hope that will shift the delivery of services. In terms of Aboriginal health practitioners—making sure there are pathways and then providing the support so people can do that training.

**Madam CHAIR:** You mentioned Purple House, and that was my next question. In regard to partnership with Purple House and delivery and other NGOs delivering that respite care in places like Elcho and Groote Eylandt, how much of the department is investing in those partnerships with the NGOs to deliver services on country?

**Ms FYLES:** Now that it is financially viable for those services to be offered, I think that is where significant work will take place. We started with Purple House but then we will look across the Territory, working with other NGO partners around that.

**Madam CHAIR:** Are there any costings in terms of actual budget allocation for that?

**Ms FYLES:** Yes, we are doing that work presently.

**Madam CHAIR:** My last question—there is a renal ready room that is not utilised anymore at Ngukurr because of the new clinic. What will happen to that?

**Ms FYLES:** When I was at Ngukurr I met with Sunrise. There is the old clinic site. There is one building that will be transported over to the new clinic site and then the remainder of the old clinic site—I know the aged and disability centre was looking at whether it would be useful in terms of providing their services, so that scoping work is being undertaken. My understanding is that at the back of the new clinic, one of the buildings will be transported there, and the previous ...

**Madam CHAIR:** That would be the renal ready room?

**Ms FYLES:** I think the renal ready room is staying.

**Madam CHAIR:** There is only one transportable building, which would be the renal ready room at Ngukurr, the old clinic.

**Ms FYLES:** The renal ready room there will go to another clinic because there is space within the current clinic for renal.

**Madam CHAIR:** That is what I wanted to ask, if it is being utilised.

**Ms FYLES:** But there are two other portables that will go across—you have the clinic, the renal ready room and the two portable-type buildings. They are going to the Ngukurr clinic. The renal ready room will go to another clinic.

**Madam CHAIR:** That is great. That is what I wanted to know, that it was being utilised by another community so they do not miss out.

Minister, can I get your advice on remote morgues. Will that be in this output or in something like health services, Output 13?

**Ms FYLES:** Output 14 is the advice I have.

**Madam CHAIR:** That concludes consideration of Output Group 8.0.

## **OUTPUT GROUP 9.0 – DISEASE PREVENTION AND HEALTH PROTECTION**

### **Output 9.1 – Environmental Health**

**Madam CHAIR:** We will now move on to Output Group 9.0, Disease Prevention and Health Protection, Output 9.1, Environmental Health. Are there any questions?

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** Minister, will you please advise what the role is of the environmental health section over matters such as PFAS and asbestos?

**Ms FYLES:** I will ask Xavier Schoben to come up and join me. I have to throw someone off the table, so they can work that out. Thanks, Sue. Sorry, can you repeat the question, Member for Spillett?

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** Would you please advise what the role of environmental health is over matters such as PFAS and asbestos?

**Mr SCHOBEN:** Member for Spillett, environmental health basically has authorised officers (inaudible – mic off) so PFAS is environmental containment. (Inaudible – mic off) health clinic, but importantly, we play a role with other agencies. So, particularly at the moment with the Australian Department of Defence, we have 23 sites across Australia and in particular three sites here in the Northern Territory.

At the moment we have done the RAAF base Darwin, Robertson Barracks and (inaudible – mic off), but we also work with Air Services Australia who are also doing their independent assessments of the airports across the Territory. We provide advice. We do a health risk assessment on the results of testing. So if they exceed environmental parameters it may become a health issue ...

**Madam CHAIR:** Excuse me. Could you please turn your microphone on? Thank you.

**Mr SCHOBEN:** Sorry about that. We provide advice based on the information and the test results that we get from the various agencies and if there is a need to do public health messaging we will do that, as we are doing at the moment with RAAF Base Darwin and RAAF Base Tindal.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** Your work is more of a front line role with the community around those issues—you are working with residents?

**Ms FYLES:** The role of Health is to provide the analysis. We may conduct the testing or the testing may be conducted by Power and Water, for example, and Health provide the advice back.

**Mr SCHOBEN:** Just an addendum to that, minister—there are various agencies across the Territory, and indeed across the nation, who are at the moment undertaking investigations. Some of them are government bodies and some are private sector bodies. Whoever owns the infrastructure is responsible for the identification of contamination on their site and ultimately for potential remediation. At the moment we are dealing mainly with other agencies, particularly federal government agencies, and looking at ways of trying to minimise that contamination and, importantly, to protect the public through public health messaging.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** If there was a risk to the public, that is where you would kick in, in terms of that messaging and what to do, when to do it, how to avoid exposure et cetera?

**Mr SCHOBEN:** That is correct. For instance, in the past—the minister has released these reports—we contracted Charles Darwin University and the University of Queensland to undertake studies for us of Rapid Creek, to test the aquatic foods there to see what danger, if any, they posed to people that may harvest those foods.

Similarly, we did the same thing with fish from the Daly River. We are now working with Coffey, which is the environmental consultant employed by the Australian Department of Defence, to look at their results with contracted Food Standards Australia New Zealand, to do the number crunching on that so we can provide advice on how many serves of fish or other foods people can have in affected areas.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** Thank you.

**Madam CHAIR:** If there are no further questions then that concludes consideration of Output 9.1.

### **Output 9.2 – Disease Control**

**Madam CHAIR:** I will now call for questions on Output 9.2, Disease Control.

**Ms FYLES:** I will just get Hugh Heggie, the Chief Health Officer.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** I want to ask about the cost to health for the meningococcal vaccine roll-out. Is there a breakdown of those costs?

**Ms FYLES:** Could you say the question again?

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** The meningococcal vaccine roll-outs to children—I would like a cost breakdown on that program.

**Ms FYLES:** In terms of ACYW?

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** Yes.

**Ms FYLES:** The Northern Territory changed in December last year to go from the single variant to the quad vaccination, and as at 30 May the cost to date was \$1.2m in the 2017–18 financial year.

I am not sure if you would like to add to that?

**Madam CHAIR:** Could you state your full name and position for the record.

**Dr HEGGIE:** Dr Hugh Heggie, Chief Health Officer of the Northern Territory.

No, I do not have any further breakdown on the cost. We can get that for you. I would like to note that this was taken on at the government's expense in the absence of Commonwealth funding. Since then the cost of

the age group of 12 months now has become federally funded. That involved a complex application and processing of the provider of the vaccine.

That will assist ongoing to reduce the risk of vulnerable persons across the whole population. It also assists because it reduces carrier rates and increases herd immunity against this particular serotype.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** Going forward, it will not be a cost to the Territory government for those 12 months injections?

**Ms FYLES:** No, from 1 July the Commonwealth will fund that for children aged from 12 months. It is on the national immunisation register.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** How many children were vaccinated under the program? Do you have a breakdown across the Territory by region or town?

**Ms FYLES:** As of 21 March this year there was an estimated 17 869 doses of the meningococcal ACYW vaccine which had been administered in the Territory—that is going back to February 2017—to people aged one to 19 years on the NT Immunisation Register. That covers all areas: Alice Springs; remote; Tennant Creek; Barkly; Katherine ...

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** You do not have a breakdown of per region?

**Ms FYLES:** Not before me, no.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** Is that something ...

**Ms FYLES:** We can look at whether we have that breakdown. Was there reasoning ...

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** Just out of interest to see the spread across the Territory—was it concentrated in Darwin?

What funding has the department allocated towards treatment of young people who have contracted STIs?

**Ms FYLES:** For disease control more broadly, the budget is \$19m in 2018–19, up from \$17m in 2017–18. The Territory has the highest rates in the country of a number of sexually transmitted diseases and blood-borne viruses.

The NT Department of Health Centre for Disease Control works with a range of government and non-government organisations to raise awareness and promote prevention. CDC holds regular syphilis outbreak response and hepatitis steering group meetings, and provides ongoing support.

I am not sure if that answers your question or if there is anything more specific ...

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** It does, minister. It goes part-way, I suppose. Are the education and prevention programs run through the Centre for Disease Control as well?

**Ms FYLES:** Yes. Regular clinical education is provided to a range of healthcare stakeholders including primary care clinicians, secondary care clinicians, ED, midwifery, obstetrics, gynaecological, paediatrics and infectious diseases on diagnosis, investigation and clinical management. Education is also delivered through other stakeholders such as Family Planning NT, SARC—sexual assault referral centre—and the NT AIDS and Hepatitis Council.

CDC runs specialised sexual health services through Clinic 34 in Darwin, Alice Springs, Katherine, Gove and Tennant Creek.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** Is there specific funding allocated to CDC for treatment, education and prevention? Or does it just come within their budget?

**Ms FYLES:** There is a specific allocation within CDC's budget for education, but that would encompass a number of those. That is where the \$17m figure ...

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** It would be education more broadly, rather than specifically?

**Ms FYLES:** It might not be education specifically as going out to X, Y and Z and holding forums. It might be through what I talked about before—providing professional development to staff in those areas.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** In respect to treatment, how would funding for that be allocated?

**Ms FYLES:** The CDC register records treatment and testing follow-up for syphilis, and provides support to clinicians for appropriate management and follow-up, and again through the non-government organisations and health clinics.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** Would I be able to get a breakdown of funding allocated towards that?

**Ms FYLES:** It would be very difficult to provide that because it is across different areas.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** But the CDC is responsible for prevention, education and treatment?

**Ms FYLES:** But not alone. You have your primary healthcare providers et cetera.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** Okay, thank you. Minister, I have written to you about this, but it was interesting, come flu season, that in other jurisdictions children aged six months to five years are able to get a flu shot. I wondered if you could explain why the Territory is not in line with that and how much—I do not know if the department has done an analysis—that would cost?

**Ms FYLES:** It is available for some at-risk groups but it is not provided across the population of the Territory.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** Why is that for the Territory?

**Ms FYLES:** We have not seen the same epidemic levels here in the Territory. People can get the flu shot through their GP. For some at-risk age groups, it is balancing clinical evidence where we spend our investment.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** Has any analysis been done on how much it might cost?

**Ms FYLES:** We provide to a significant part of the population that are considered at risk, but we do not have those figures in front of us.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** So you could provide the figures of those who are eligible for it?

**Ms FYLES:** We could provide the figures of those who are eligible.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** Okay. But has no modelling been done to look at whether or not, if the Territory offered it to everyone in that age group—there is no data on that?

**Ms FYLES:** Because we have not had the outbreak groups, we have not done that.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** Is it something the department would look at if there was a significant increase in that age group?

**Ms FYLES:** We are always monitoring the risk. If there was a risk we would do that modelling. But at present, we have not.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** From memory, we are the only jurisdiction that does not.

**Ms FYLES:** We very much listen to clinical advice. The clinical advice to date is we have not seen those huge outbreaks so we are managing where we put our resources to target what is best for the Territory.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** Okay, thank you. I will ask that specific question on notice then, if that is all right, Madam Chair?

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#### Question on Notice No 4.12

**Madam CHAIR:** Member for Spillett, please repeat your question for the record.



**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** How much does it cost to provide flu shots to at-risk children who are eligible?

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

**Ms FYLES:** Yes.

**Madam CHAIR:** The Member for Spillett's question has been allocated the number 4.12.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** The Commonwealth Government recently announced an \$8m task force to look at HTLV-1 and other emerging communicable diseases in remote communities. What Territory government funding has been set aside for this awful ...

**Ms FYLES:** There has been none at this stage, but we welcome that announcement from the federal government. We are monitoring and will look at that analysis once it is taking place. We have met with some people in Central Australia about that research that is relatively new. I completely agree with you—awful.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** Those are my questions for that output. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**Madam CHAIR:** Any further questions? That concludes consideration of Output 9.2, Output Group 9.0.

### **OUTPUT GROUP 10.0 – COMMUNITY TREATMENT AND EXTENDED CARE** **Output 10.1 – Alcohol and Other Drugs**

**Madam CHAIR:** The committee will now move on to Output Group 10.0, Community Treatment and Extended Care, Output 10.1, Alcohol and Other Drugs. Are there any questions?

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** Minister, in the 2017–18 budget there was a \$3m shortfall in funding from the previous year for alcohol and other drugs. How did alcohol and other drugs end up coping with that shortfall? Did it have to cut programs or make any other sacrifices?

**Ms FYLES:** The decrease mainly relates to the reduction in funding for the national partnership agreement of the Northern Territory Remote Aboriginal Investment community safety implementation plan. There is a slight variation around transfer of Banned Drinker Register funding to the Top End and Central Australia Health Services, but the main part is the decrease in that national partnership funding.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** Okay. Were any programs cut?

**Ms FYLES:** Not by Health. The \$37m down to \$35m is the figure you are—BP3?

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** That was for the last financial year. In this budget it is \$2.3m.

**Ms FYLES:** Yes. That is what I have just answered.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** Were any programs cut in the previous year?

**Ms FYLES:** Alcohol mandatory treatment.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** From alcohol and other drugs?

**Ms FYLES:** Yes, AMT.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** Yes, sorry. AMT reflects that cut.

**Ms FYLES:** Yes. Well, no. Sorry. The reason for the cut is what I have explained. When you said 'programs', we transferred from AMT to our model, which I think we have ...

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** Okay. Minister, in AGJ I asked you incorrectly about the Riley review, so now is the time to ask about that.

**Ms FYLES:** Yes—no, it was in justice.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** Do not do that to me. What was the total cost of the Riley review?

**Ms FYLES:** I am advised it was \$472 000.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** Referring to the Riley review recommendations, how many alcohol management plans are currently operating across the Northern Territory?

**Ms FYLES:** There are 28 communities that currently have alcohol management plans: Ali Curung; Alice Springs; Tennant Creek; Katherine; Jabiru; Tiwi Islands; and then a number of communities ...

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** They are all current? They are not expired; they are current, relevant alcohol management plans?

**Ms FYLES:** This advice I have is yes.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** Thank you. What is the status of the baseline survey and demand study that was outlined in the recommendations and then supported by the government's Alcohol Harm Minimisation Action Plan of 2018–19? Who is conducting that survey and study? What is the budgeted cost for that work?

**Ms FYLES:** It is a partnership with Menzies School of Health Research and the National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre. They are being funded for \$400 000 over two years. The consultation is beginning in July.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** That work has not begun yet; it starts in July?

**Ms FYLES:** There has been preliminary work. The plan has been drafted.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** Thank you. What is the cost to the department for its partnership in the data linkage project outlined in the Riley review recommendations? That project was initially ending in 2017, so where is it at today?

**Ms FYLES:** I am advised that there is no cost to the department. We have reallocated some resources internally, but there is no financial figure.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** Okay, thank you. Has the Cardiff Model trial begun? What has been allocated to that?

**Ms FYLES:** No, not yet. That recommendation has not commenced.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** Is there a time frame for that?

**Ms FYLES:** Working with the two health services to working with the ED department—we do not want to make it a cumbersome process. We know that some data is already collected, so what adaption needs to be made around that—also, with the new clinical core system computer coming online too. So it has not begun yet but they are certainly working through the implementation of it.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** Is there a specific budget allocated to that project?

**Ms FYLES:** Apart from the alcohol reforms there will not be a budget item because it will be something that the ED clinicians and staff incorporate as they enter other data for patients. There is already some collected but it is not consistent across the Territory amongst the EDs or the health services.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** Who is reviewing the Territory's sobering up shelters and at what cost?

**Ms FYLES:** PricewaterhouseCoopers' Indigenous Consulting, and it is approximately \$65 000. The work has begun and we are hopeful we will have that information by the end of the year.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** Then that review will be made public? Thank you.

Minister, what is the status of the targeted education campaigns that focus on at-risk groups? Who is developing those, and at what cost?

**Ms FYLES:** DCM are leading the alcohol reform implementation work. I can advise you that Education, Territory Families and Police have formed a working group and begun that work.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** How many organisations have been given alcohol and other drugs youth grants, for what amounts and what projects and activities? If that is too exhaustive of a list, perhaps it could be tabled, but we need to see the breakdown.

**Ms FYLES:** I have been provided with a summary of the alcohol and other drugs youth grants that were provided in 2017–18, so I am happy to table that for you.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** Great, thank you. What will happen to the funds raised through the minimum floor price?

**Ms FYLES:** We very much wanted to see a volumetric tax in place in the Northern Territory. That is what we lobbied for. We had conversations with both the federal government and the federal opposition. As for the reasons, I am sure you are well aware that neither party was interested in that. The federal government only has the domain of a volumetric tax, which any increase in profit would go back to the community.

The floor price affects around 25 items in Darwin and Alice Springs, so it is a minimal number. It aims to get rid of that really cheap wine that we see for sale, the \$4 and \$5 products. The minimum floor price will go to retailers, but it is important to note that we are shifting to a risk-based licensing model, so they will see an increase of licensing fees. Currently a licence is \$200 in the Territory, and that is it. So we have been working with industry.

Our risk-based model is not designed to recoup all costs, but it is designed to acknowledge the profit that is made and the impact of alcohol on community. We are still working through that detail. We are finalising the categories of licences and then the fees.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** Minister, what budget and investment has been made into therapeutic services for alcohol and other drugs treatment right across the Northern Territory?

**Ms FYLES:** Over \$20m is provided in grants to non-government organisations to provide rehabilitation therapeutic pathways.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** Sorry, could you say that again?

**Ms FYLES:** Over \$20m is provided in grants and funding contracts in terms of alcohol and other drugs in the Territory by the department.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** Do you have the breakdown of that?

**Ms FYLES:** We can provide that, if you want.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** Sure.

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#### Question on Notice No 4.13

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

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** Could you please provide a breakdown of the \$20m budget for therapeutic services for alcohol and other drug treatment across the Territory.

**Ms FYLES:** Yes, of course. I will take the question on notice, but in the Darwin region there are 115 beds, which is around \$6.2m; Katherine has 20 beds, which is around \$0.5m in funding; Tennant Creek is close to \$1m for 20 beds; Alice Springs has 54 beds, which is \$3.5m. That is just in funding for beds for rehabilitation and sobering up. We will provide the full breakdown of grants.

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

**Ms FYLES:** Yes.

**Madam DEPUTY CHAIR:** The question asked by the Member for Spillett has been allocated the number 4.13.

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**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** You might have touched on this earlier, but how much has government saved through closing alcohol mandatory treatment?

**Ms FYLES:** The average cost per episode under alcohol mandatory treatment was \$57 731, and the average cost of a closed episode of completed treatment under community is \$17 830. We can see it is 21% of the cost of alcohol mandatory treatment, which is quite a significant saving. We can provide five times as many beds for the same amount of money.

I do not have the breakdown of the previous budget figures.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** Is it the case that you are able to get more people in beds, or are there fewer people receiving treatment because it is voluntary?

**Ms FYLES:** No, we have seen a 49% increase in people seeking help for their alcohol use compared to the same time last year. I was at the Stringybark centre yesterday and we are starting to see the full cycle of people coming through the sobering-up shelter, going into the rehabilitation services and coming out the other side, for lack of a better term, meaningfully engaged in community and employment. We are seeing that pathway take effect—and that 49% increase of people seeking help for alcohol abuse.

**Mrs LAMBLEY:** How many people have you had participate in a 12-week rehabilitation program? When we researched alcohol mandatory treatment that was seen as the minimum period.

**Ms FYLES:** That is the same information from yesterday when I was at Stringybark. It is a 12-week program.

**Mrs LAMBLEY:** How many people have you had go through that since you abolished AMT on 1 September?

**Ms FYLES:** We have assessments and therapeutic support, so I do not have that specific figure, but I am happy to take that on notice.

**Mrs LAMBLEY:** Are you saying that you are providing a 12-week alcohol rehabilitation program for much cheaper than what was provided previously?

**Ms FYLES:** Yes.

**Mrs LAMBLEY:** How are you doing that?

**Ms FYLES:** The community model versus a mandatory treatment is significantly cheaper. That was the figure I read out to you—\$57 000 down to \$17 000.

**Mrs LAMBLEY:** They are not in residential care?

**Ms FYLES:** They are in residential care, but it is not mandatory.

**Mrs LAMBLEY:** How does that stack up? You need to explain how you have made it cheaper. Essentially it is the same service. What cuts have you made to alcohol mandatory treatment in order to make this cost saving?

**Ms FYLES:** Those figures are derived from the independent report we have commissioned. The reduction is not having to mandatorily enforce to keep people there.

**Mrs LAMBLEY:** Did you answer the question before? How much did you save?

**Ms FYLES:** The independent report that was done on AMT compared to community based was that figure of \$57 000 down to \$17 000.

**Mrs LAMBLEY:** So, overall from a budgetary perspective, you are making savings in Alcohol and Other Drugs?

**Ms FYLES:** We always said we would step away from the mandatory treatment model. When we were in opposition coming into government, we always said we would go down this community ...

**Mrs LAMBLEY:** Are you making savings across the board though? Are you spending less in this area than ...

**Ms FYLES:** There is the \$3m impact, but the rest of it is being repurposed within the same Alcohol and Other Drugs.

**Mrs LAMBLEY:** What do you mean by a \$3m impact?

**Ms FYLES:** The \$3m less than what you spent on alcohol mandatory treatment. Because the cost is less per episode, more people are able to go through that treatment.

**Mrs LAMBLEY:** You criticised alcohol mandatory treatment quite harshly ...

**Ms FYLES:** Absolutely, because that cost there ...

**Mrs LAMBLEY:** ... and you are saying you have made a \$3m saving ...

**Ms FYLES:** No, no, no. The cost ...

**Mrs LAMBLEY:** ... across the board.

**Ms FYLES:** No, you are not comparing apples with apples. The cost of a mandatory treatment is around \$57 000. The cost of a community treatment is \$17 000.

**Mrs LAMBLEY:** But overall, you have saved \$3m from this exercise of abolishing alcohol mandatory treatment?

**Ms FYLES:** No. Far more people have gone through. There are far more treatment options.

**Mrs LAMBLEY:** So the savings are virtually negligible—\$3m? Can I also ask another question?

**Ms FYLES:** Yes.

**Mrs LAMBLEY:** At any given point in time there was probably between—I do not know—60, maybe 100 people in alcohol mandatory treatment. They were picked up. There were at least 20 people in Alice Springs, sometimes 30, 40 people in Darwin and probably up to 10 in—well, show the figures. You are all grimacing, all looking at me as if I have made it up, but I was the minister responsible for a while. So, between 60 and 100 is some latitude.

**Ms FYLES:** We will let you have some latitude.

**Mrs LAMBLEY:** You have scrapped that program. From an Alice Springs perspective, I know that those 20 people who were pretty much always in alcohol mandatory treatment in Alice Springs are now on the streets not receiving treatment. They are the type of people who would never voluntarily access alcohol rehabilitation. A lot of them have had cognitive impairment.

As the Health minister, where are those people now, and what sort of effort are you making to assist those people who were so extremely debilitated by their alcohol addiction, who were receiving a lot of care and support through alcohol mandatory treatment? What has happened to those people?

**Ms FYLES:** Madam Chair, this is a point of difference. We were very clear in opposition that we treated alcoholism as a health-based issue, which evidence and professionals around the world will tell you is the right approach—to not criminalise it.

The occupancy rates—I have the percentages here—year to date, March 2018, show that the beds available in Alice Springs were 86% of people receiving treatment. We have talked about this in the Chamber before and debated it. We are coming at it from a different perspective. We believe in evidence-based on health rather than criminalising.

**Mrs LAMBLEY:** We certainly respect that, minister. Yes. I am just asking where are those people?

**Ms FYLES:** We have 86% occupancy in Alice Springs, which is the example that you ...

**Mrs LAMBLEY:** I am asking the question, where are the people who would normally have gone into rehab? Are they just sitting on the street not serviced?

**Ms FYLES:** The figures we have is 86% of the beds in Alice Springs are being utilised for alcohol treatment. We have come at it from a different approach.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** But what is the completion rate because that is important. You can, at any one time, have high occupancy, but if people are not completing the program then you are just cycling through.

**Ms FYLES:** We would argue the same points about alcohol mandatory treatment. There was no evidence to show—even when people completed the treatment—that as soon as they finished that episode that they did not re-engage with harmful behaviour.

**Mrs LAMBLEY:** You will find the same thing, minister.

**Ms FYLES:** Yes.

**Mrs LAMBLEY:** People just cycle through alcohol rehabilitation, whatever you call it—that is the nature of the beast, isn't it?

**Ms FYLES:** That is why there is a broad body of work we need to do around alcohol—the 219 recommendations. We cannot just tackle it from the BDR or from alcohol mandatory treatment where you have compliance. We need to have education and health messaging. It is a complex, deep social issue that we do not—I was talking to the WA Deputy Premier yesterday. It is not just an issue in the Territory. But the Riley review provides that strong framework and most definitely the treatment.

We have gone with a community-based health approach and we have to disagree once again about the AMT.

**Mrs LAMBLEY:** An occasion of service under AMT was clearly a 12-week residential rehab program. What is the minimum occasion of service that you call a rehab? I remember in November when we asked you questions around this, you were saying if someone came in and had a one-off counselling session that was considered rehab. If that is still the case then you are comparing apples with pears or bananas or whatever.

**Ms FYLES:** I do not have those figures before me, but I know with Alice Springs—the advice that I have and the information handed to me—there were never 20 at one time with AMT in Alice Springs. I guess this comes back to the point that...

**Mrs LAMBLEY:** I dispute that.

**Ms FYLES:** We say that AMT was a punitive approach that criminalised alcoholism. We have been around this and around this, and I very much respect everybody in this room. We want to tackle these issues and that is why we have an opportunity with the Riley review and its all-encompassing recommendations. There are absolutely the assessment services and the treatment pathways for Territorians that want to partake.

**Mrs LAMBLEY:** Could you just answer the question for me—the minimum amount of intervention that you would call a rehab occasion of service or rehab?

**Ms FYLES:** I think the evidence clinically shows you that when you talk to providers in the community sector, it would take somebody up to 12 times to rehabilitate. In alcohol mandatory treatment, if someone has completed the treatment we do not know whether they in fact did not go back out.

**Mrs LAMBLEY:** Why are you not answering the question, minister?

**Ms FYLES:** I am answering the question, Member for Araluen.

**Mrs LAMBLEY:** I am asking you a specific question: what is the minimum amount of intervention that you would call rehab under this model or an episode?

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** I think you call it an episode of care.

**Mrs LAMBLEY:** What are the stats that you are collecting? If someone comes in and sees a counsellor or has contact with an alcohol service, is that a rehab occasion of service?

**Ms FYLES:** There are different episodes. It might be a counsellor. It does not necessarily have to be residential rehabilitation. It could be counselling. There are a number of factors. There is a nationally consistent framework which I am happy ...

**Mrs LAMBLEY:** You are comparing a 12-week residential program with perhaps a one-off 45-minute intervention with a counsellor?

**Ms FYLES:** We can compare residential to residential.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** For \$17 000 per person, you can put through people for a 12-week residential program and as a result you can process 49% more people. What are the completion rates, given it is voluntary? What percentage of those people are completing the 12 weeks?

**Ms FYLES:** We are doing a six-month review. That is what we spoke about before.

**Mrs LAMBLEY:** It seems to me that your stats are a little bit misleading. You are not being really clear about what an occasion of service rehab is. There are obviously different categories.

**Ms FYLES:** We have a fundamental point of difference.

**Mrs LAMBLEY:** I am just asking you a question.

**Ms FYLES:** You believe in criminalising alcohol management treatment. We were very up front leading into the election that that was not a model that we would support. We left that model in place whilst there was an alternative being developed. We did not want to have the mistake that we saw in 2012 where there was absolutely nothing in place. We are coming at it from a number of factors across the board with compliance, education as well as having therapeutic treatment pathways.

**Mrs LAMBLEY:** A one-off counselling session with an alcohol rehab counsellor is equivalent to someone going on a 12-week residential rehab program?

**Madam DEPUTY CHAIR:** That is not what she is saying, Member for Araluen.

**Mrs LAMBLEY:** I do not feel I am clear enough on this. Are they both one occasions of service?

**Ms FYLES:** No, they are different. But what I was saying to you is, it is a national approach. There are a number of interactions that can be classified as an episode of service but we are not comparing those figures.

**Mrs LAMBLEY:** For Territorians listening, they want to understand what you are talking about and if I do not understand, the chances are that people will not either. If you are satisfied with your communication strategy around this, so be it.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** Minister, would you mind answering my question around success rates. We have a 12-week residential program that can be delivered for \$17 000 per person. Are you able to provide the completion rates for that program? I know you mentioned there is a six-month review, which is quite distinct from how many people have actually completed the program.

**Ms FYLES:** The six-month review will identify those success rates.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** It is not something the government is keeping track of as people graduate?

**Ms FYLES:** We are, but it will be fed into that six-month review.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** When is that review coming out?

**Mr FYLES:** Can you repeat the question?

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** I just want to know what the success rate of the 12-week program is. How many people actually stay in residential rehab for the full 12-week period? If 100 people have been put into your 12-week program ...

**Ms FYLES:** You would need to talk to the NGOs that provide the services.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** They do not report back to government?

**Ms FYLES:** Not on that specific question.

**Mrs LAMBLEY:** Could you take that on notice?

**Ms FYLES:** Yes.

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**Question on Notice No 4.14**

**Madam CHAIR:** Member for Spillett, could you please repeat the question for the record.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** For the 12-week residential rehabilitation program, please detail how many people have been put into the program and how many people have successfully completed the full 12-week program.

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

**Ms FYLES:** Yes.

**Madam CHAIR:** The question is number 4.14.

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**Ms FYLES:** There is a difference—alcohol mandatory treatment obviously mandates that length of treatment. In the community sector it is an episode of treatment and they would close that episode of treatment. I just want to make that apparently clear in terms of the data. It is not comparing apples with apples because the model that is alcohol mandatory treatment is a different model, and we have debated that in and out.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** But you would still know how many people have finished the 12 weeks and how many thought after four weeks ...

**Ms FYLES:** They may not need the 12 weeks. It is a closed episode of treatment. That is why I am making that clear.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** When you say 'closed episode of treatment' you are saying it is, in a sense, successful completion of the program for that person?

**Ms FYLES:** Correct—discharge for that person.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** Perhaps that could be ...

**Ms FYLES:** That is what we will do but I wanted to point that out.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** How many referrals has the Department of Health made to the Banned Drinker Register?

**Ms FYLES:** For the pathways with the Banned Drinker Register—there are the four pathways. We have the police, courts, corrections and then the authorised person/self-referral. So there are 90 authorised person referrals. That might not necessarily be the Department of Health people. It might be a GP or counsellor. It is an authorised person. That is something that we are looking at in the initial review and evaluation around, is the BDR working in the sense of the technical aspect? Those pathways—looking at the figures of people coming through.

So on the police pathway, if someone is charged it is an automatic pathway, but police can actually refer someone to the BDR without charging. Say they go to a location and pick up someone two or three times. They can make a referral to the BDR without having to charge that person. This is where it comes back to that fundamental point of different with the health-based approach, not criminalising—working with clinicians around making sure that they know there is that pathway there and that they can authorise people to go onto the BDR. But some clinicians feel that even the BDR would be categorised as criminalising what is a health issue.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** I have to disagree, minister. I know you speak at length and very often about not criminalising alcohol, but we know police are doing the heavy lifting when it comes to referring people to the Banned Drinker Register. Are you telling me that the Department of Health has made less than 90 referrals to the BDR when we know ...



**Ms FYLES:** What I am explaining to you is that we are evaluating the pathways and we know that there are those four pathways. So courts can, when they are sentencing someone ...

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** And one is other persons, of which there has been 90, of which some of those might be people from the Department of Health?

**Ms FYLES:** Yes. You asked for what are the pathways, and I was explaining to you ...

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** No, I asked how many referrals the Department of Health has made to the Banned Drinker Register. So it is less than 90, even though there is a health approach to alcohol.

**Ms NELSON:** Can I just make a comment to that?

**Madam CHAIR:** Do you have a question for the minister?

**Ms NELSON:** I have a question as well.

**Madam CHAIR:** Member for Katherine, what is your question?

**Ms NELSON:** My question is, how does the Department of Health have access to people that they can then refer to the BDR?

**Ms FYLES:** It is up to individual clinicians. It is up to doctors, nurses, health practitioners and those authorised persons, which is the definition for it. It is up to them to make a decision to refer someone to the BDR. There is self-referral, authorised persons, corrections, the court and police.

Part of the evaluation is looking at—we know there are a number of offences under Police; do we need to capture more? Is there an offence we are missing that would benefit the community? We have been open about that. Someone can self-refer. The courts and corrections all have that option. It is about making sure that people understand those pathways.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** Would it not be fair to say that health clinics, the hospital, emergency and all these public health interfaces that they would have with chronic alcoholics, people presenting certain behaviours who would benefit from being on the Banned Drinker Register—is it not ...

**Ms FYLES:** Just remember, Member for Spillett, that you do not have to go through the Banned Drinker Register to get help. I think this is the vast difference between a mandatory treatment option and clinicians having other therapeutic pathways they can refer people to. They do not necessarily ...

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** But if there is a health focus, is it not—this is your policy. You are the minister who has championed the Banned Drinker Register. You have had carriage of it and talked about it being a health approach, yet Health are not really making any referrals.

**Ms FYLES:** I think—to cut in to that—the Banned Drinker Register is a simple point of sale intervention. What is done is that there are currently around 3200 people banned from purchasing alcohol. In April alone, 600 people who were banned attempted to purchase alcohol.

It is one point of supply measure to stop them getting alcohol. We know we need to strengthen compliance. With the Banned Drinker Register, it is just stopping that point of sale for takeaway alcohol. We know it is not the be-all and end-all. We have said that many times. You do not have to be on the BDR to get health treatment supports. They are very different issues and policies.

**Mrs LAMBLEY:** Minister, it sounds to me like you are backing away from your support for the Banned Drinker Register.

**Ms FYLES:** Absolutely not.

**Mrs LAMBLEY:** You have gone from selling it in the lead-up to the 2016 election, and now your whole language and demeanour towards it has changed.

**Madam CHAIR:** Put your question in please, Member for Araluen, rather than debate.

**Ms FYLES:** I completely disagree with that comment.

**Mrs LAMBLEY:** Just because you do not like what I am saying, it does not mean—this is a legitimate question.

**Ms FYLES:** What is the question?

**Madam CHAIR:** Ask your question please.

**Mrs LAMBLEY:** Well, if you would let me ask it, I will.

**Ms NELSON:** Without the preamble, please.

**Mrs LAMBLEY:** My question is, what are you going to do with it? You were on the news recently, calling it simplistic. I think that is the word you used.

**Ms FYLES:** No, you ...

**Mrs LAMBLEY:** Well, if it was not exactly 'simplistic', that was the meaning I construed.

**Ms FYLES:** That is not correct.

**Mrs LAMBLEY:** What is the future of the Banned Drinker Register? It has been a flop so far. It certainly has not had any effect whatsoever in Alice Springs.

**Ms NELSON:** That is a personal opinion though.

**Mrs LAMBLEY:** What is the future of the Banned Drinker Register?

**Ms FYLES:** With 3200 people—and they are the figures from April—on the Banned Drinker Register across the Territory, over 5000 people have been on it since 1 September last year. Those numbers are continuing. It is a relatively small inconvenience at the point of sale that stops the supply of alcohol which causes harm in the community.

We need to acknowledge that it is a tool that works. Those figures in April alone—600 people who were banned attempted to purchase alcohol. Not only that, but there are also those people who were banned and did not attempt to purchase it. What we are doing in the evaluation is looking at the pathways and roll-out of the BDR. It is absolutely here to stay.

We were asked by the media recently if we would scrap it. No, we want to look at those pathways. I think we will all agree that it is not that difficult to show your licence when you get your other credit cards out to purchase alcohol. The large inconvenience is the harm we see every day on our streets; it outweighs that.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** With those pathways, are you wanting to increase pathways so that you can increase referrals to the Banned Drinker Register? You want to take a health approach to alcohol. Would the message not be going through the health system that people are to make referrals to the Banned Drinker Register?

**Ms FYLES:** I think that comes back to that you do not have to go on the Banned Drinker Register to be referred to Health. They are different things. The Banned Drinker Register is a point of sale intervention ...

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** I am not saying the Banned Drinker Register gives you health treatment.

**Ms FYLES:** We are trying to merge the two issues.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** No, you are saying, 'This is a health approach. We know police and others put the vast majority of people on the Banned Drinker Register.' You have also said publicly that you are looking at expanding those methods of referral. I would have thought people who are in contact with our most chronically affected alcoholics would also be making those referrals. I do not understand why—I was not expecting the number to be that low.

**Ms FYLES:** The BDR is a point of sale intervention to stop the supply of alcohol to those people who cause harm. Alcoholism is a complex issue—the harms across our community. That is what we are addressing through a multifaceted approach.

**Mrs LAMBLEY:** I have a question on a slightly different topic, if that is okay. In Alice Springs we have 10 takeaway liquor outlets. Two of those are Coles and Woolworths. They are multinational companies; they take a fortune out of the economy of Alice Springs, which is not unusual around Australia. Those two outlets sell the most alcohol of any of the liquor outlets in Alice Springs.

I know your government is looking at reducing the number of liquor outlets in Alice Springs and perhaps more broadly in other communities. Will you target Woolworths and Coles first, rather than targeting locally owned and operated takeaway liquor outlets in Alice Springs that keep money in the town?

**Ms FYLES:** I am happy to answer, but this question would have been better placed under licensing. We want compliance. We want strong measures in place, such as a floor price, to get rid of the cheap booze that we know causes harm. That booze is purposely made—plastic bottles and all—to go into our community and cause harm. That is why we put in place measures such as a floor price.

We do not want to pick on one particular outlet. Many people who sell alcohol are hard-working businesses of all different sizes. We want compliance, and we want government to provide that. That is why you are seeing a complete rewrite of the *Liquor Act*.

**Mrs LAMBLEY:** Will you consider reducing the number of liquor outlets throughout the Northern Territory, particularly in places like Tennant Creek, Katherine and Alice Springs?

**Ms FYLES:** We have a very high per capita number of takeaway liquor licences in the Territory. We have put that moratorium in place. We will not be buying back licences. The Chief Minister and I have been quite strong on that point, but we will ensure there is strict compliance. That is why a risk-based licensing model which looks at different factors such as compliance; antisocial behaviour; police issues regarding hospitalisations; the Cardiff Model, which started this line of questioning—we will be looking at all those factors in regard to the licence fee. Each year a licence will come up for review.

We need to have strength and compliance with licensing. I believe we have been tackling alcohol—whether we agree or not on the method—from a health and a police perspective rather than up-front, having the fence at the top of the cliff before people fall over it. We are trying to get more ED staff to deal with it.

That is where we are coming from. We have been very open about that. It will not be targeting particular outlets. It is overall compliance and strength—looking at outlets that put in place CCTV. There is a social responsibility. I was saying that in the last parliamentary sittings. That social responsibility with alcohol does not end at the point of sale; it goes far beyond that. That will be taken into account with liquor licences in the Territory.

**Mrs LAMBLEY:** You definitely will not be looking to specifically reduce the number of liquor outlets as a strategy in itself?

**Ms FYLES:** I think we acknowledge that there are too many takeaway liquor outlets in the Northern Territory. We have put that moratorium in place through compliance.

**Mrs LAMBLEY:** What will you do about that?

**Ms FYLES:** We will not be buying them back; we will be making sure outlets comply, with a strong licensing regime and a risk-based model, to protect Territorians.

**Mrs LAMBLEY:** So, you might look at reducing the number through non-compliance issues?

**Ms FYLES:** If everybody complied with their liquor licence we would see a lot of these issues go a long way to creating safe and more vibrant communities.

**Mrs LAMBLEY:** Okay, thank you.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** What has been the cost of implementing the Banned Drinker Register?

**Ms FYLES:** That is a question for Licensing NT, because they have the technical roll-out of the machinery and the database. I am just trying to think off the top of my head if I have ...

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** Does it include the ongoing cost of operation?

**Ms FYLES:** Yes.

**Madam CHAIR:** Just to remind the committee, we are on Output Group 10.0, Community Treatment and Extended Care, Output 10.1, Alcohol and Other Drugs.

**Ms FYLES:** I do not have the information. I am sorry. It is Licensing who provided the equipment across the Territory. They ensure the database is kept up to date and were involved with the physical roll-out of the technology.

**Madam CHAIR:** Are there any more questions for Output 10.1? That concludes consideration of Output 10.1.

### **Output 10.2 – Disability Services**

**Madam CHAIR:** The committee will now consider Output 10.2, Disability Services. Are there any questions?

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** The extra \$38m for disability services from the Disability Care Australia Fund—how can you use that fund to grow disability industries in the Northern Territory?

**Ms FYLES:** It is quite technical. With the NDIS and the transition to it, we provide a contribution into the Commonwealth and then the Commonwealth will provide the services or the funding through NDIS. As we transition more parts of the Territory over to NDIS—I will get Nick to explain the figure of \$30m.

**Mr GOOD:** Nick Good, Chief Financial Officer. Through the funding collected through an increase in the Medicare levy that was implemented a number of years ago, the Commonwealth has accumulated a fund that was created for the purpose of supporting disability at the time NDIS was conceived.

An unused component of this funding is being distributed to states and territories over a period of a number of years—two to three years. The largest share affecting the Territory is coming in the 2018–19 financial year and there is a smaller amount in the following financial years.

That is one lot of money that is coming in from the Commonwealth. On the other hand, as the implementation of the NDIS gathers momentum and more disabled clients are on the books of NDIS, if you like, the Territory's payment to NDIS will increase.

Basically, there is one lot of money coming in and there is another lot of money coming out. In the 2018–19 year, those amounts of money are actually quite similar. Unfortunately, in later years, the amount of money that will have to go out from the Territory will be vastly greater than the amount coming in because the \$39m—this amount of money will drop off and eventually get to nil, whereas the amount we need to pay as our share of the cost of looking after NDIS clients will increase every year into the future.

Unfortunately, this is not a fund that is available to allocate to other budget items, basically.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** Okay.

**Ms FYLES:** And eventually, it is the transition where clients will be funded through the NDIS rather than currently the services are provided through the Office of Disability. Does that answer your question?

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** That does, thank you.

**Ms FYLES:** Sorry about the time it took to get that information. It is complex.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** No, no, that is fine. It is.

**Madam CHAIR:** Member for Katherine, do you have something on this?

**Ms NELSON:** Yes, I have an NDIS question. Do you have more to go?

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** I do, yes.

**Ms NELSON:** Go ahead. I will wait until the end. Do not forget me.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** I would never forget you. With the transitioning of clients to the NDIS, is the Health department maintaining support services in order to fill the gap? Is the Department of Health still the service provider of last resort?

**Ms FYLES:** Yes. Obviously there has been quite a bit of work done, and we acknowledge the Australian Government, who have been helping build capacity—programs such as the innovation grants, looking at building capacity within the Territory.

We acknowledge in our context there will be—provider of last resort sounds dramatic, but the Office of Disability will provide function to some aged care patients who do not meet the age requirements for NDIS and—equally on the other side—early intervention supports for people who are not eligible for an NDIS package but still require disability services.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** If someone has been provided with an NDIS care package but for whatever reason—it might be due to remoteness, isolation, where they live or the services they need—that service cannot be provided, so is not being expended, and that person was previously receiving that care when they were getting it from the department, is the department then backfilling that role?

**Ms FYLES:** It is probably not. There are people who are not eligible for NDIS, for the reasons I pointed out previously. In terms of people who receive a package for NDIS, they are funded and we need to build that capability within the sector to provide those services.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** So until there is capability, some people may not be receiving services?

**Ms FYLES:** There are always exceptions to that. That is why innovation and building capacity within the sector are so important. We already have aged and disability services right across the Territory in remote settings. Sometimes they are offered through the shires.

At the moment the focus is getting as many people on packages, getting the most resources they can be funded for. As an agency we feel the gap will be with those people who are not eligible for NDIS, not so much people that are eligible for NDIS and then cannot find services. That will be a factor, but we are more focused on the other aspects.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** What is the budget for the Disability Equipment Program this year, and how does that compare to the last three years?

**Ms FYLES:** Is that the time scheme, Member for Spillett? I will have to get that; we do not have that with us, sorry.

**Madam CHAIR:** Member for Spillett do you want to put that question on notice?

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** Yes, thank you.

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#### Question on Notice No 4.15

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** What is the budget for the Disability Equipment Program this year, and how does that compare to the last three years?

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

**Ms FYLES:** Yes.

**Madam CHAIR:** The Member for Spillett's question has been allocated the number 4.15.

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**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** Minister, you mentioned earlier in an answer to a previous question that you are building that innovation and capacity so that disability services can be provided across the Territory. What funding is the Territory contributing towards developing disability services?

**Ms FYLES:** We had \$2.2m through the federal government for innovation grants. Those grants were looking at solutions and identifying test opportunities and choice for NDIS participants, especially for those living in remote areas. So, making sure there were pathways of support.

The department of Business partnered with us so we could look at that opportunity, particularly in remote and regional areas, around developing business capacity based around the NDIS but from a business perspective.

**Ms NELSON:** Could I just lead into that and ask if you could provide a little bit of information? It is a great lead-in question to what I had, which is to ask about some of the projects that have been developed and rolled out.

**Ms FYLES:** There were 17 successful applicants with a range of projects including remote wheelchair maintenance, remote allied health services, transport services in Tennant Creek and peer support for NDIS applicants with a psychosocial disability. There was a unique application for the use of a 3D printer to make parts for wheelchairs and walking frames—where it is either inexpensive or they are unable to obtain parts. There was a focus around developing an NDIS readiness in communities but there was some innovation.

**Ms NELSON:** That was shared funding?

**Ms FYLES:** There was round one and then round two. Round one was in December with 15 successful applicants and round two was in March with 17 successful applicants—with all federal government funding.

**Madam CHAIR:** Any further questions for Output 10.2? This concludes consideration of Output 10.2.

### Output 10.3 – Mental Health

**Madam CHAIR:** I will now call for questions on 10.3, Mental Health. Are there questions?

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** What budget has been set aside for the implementation of the suicide prevention strategy?

**Ms FYLES:** The funding to date—the development has been done within budget, but as we progress the implementation plan that will identify areas that will need to be funded. We will work through those.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** When you say ‘progress the implementation plan’, do you mean progress the development?

**Ms FYLES:** The recommendations, sorry.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** Rolling them out?

**Ms FYLES:** Yes.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** What has been the cost to develop the suicide prevention strategy?

**Ms FYLES:** It was within the department’s budget. That was the consultation undertaken last year—travelling to the regional centres. We went back to Katherine for a second round of consultation. We have since been working together through the implementation plan.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** When will we see a copy of the strategy?

**Ms FYLES:** We have done the consultation to come up with the strategy. We now have a consultant—I will be able to get you that figure—working with clinicians around the implementation plans. It has been partnered together through those three steps.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** Will the government be going back to consultation on the implementation plan?

**Ms FYLES:** No. All the consultation through the lived experience and those forums was held last year. We have been working with clinicians around implementation, and that is being pulled together by a consultant so we have the clinical knowledge based off of the consultation around the implementation plan.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** The strategy and the implementation plan will be launched as a package?

**Ms FYLES:** Yes. We are aiming for September.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** There is no new money?

**Ms FYLES:** From the implementation plan, no. I assume we will identify projects in need.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** When you launch the strategy and implementation plan, there will be money attached to implementation?

**Ms FYLES:** There will be the pathway, and we can step it up from there.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** Thank you. The Complex Behaviour Unit at the Doug Owston Correctional Centre ...

**Ms FYLES:** Who has changed the name?

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** I will just call it Holtze. I know it is a corrections facility, but is there a role for Health and health services at that unit?

**Ms FYLES:** Health run the clinic, so to speak, within the prison that we were talking about earlier. The CBU is run by Corrections but it is through the body of work that we have been doing. Through the forensic health review we have been looking at that. We have been looking at those complex clients and what pathways of treatment would be best.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** Health does provide some services at the unit?

**Ms FYLES:** Mainly mental health, but it is Corrections-run.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** So they are not from the Department of Health?

**Ms FYLES:** The Department of Health go in there and provide some mental health support, but the CBU is run by Corrections. Have you been out—so there is the clinic that is behind the main wire and to the side is the CBU. That is run by Corrections.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** But health professionals are providing services.

**Ms FYLES:** Yes.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** Is there a budget for the provision of those services?

**Ms FYLES:** Yes, it is in our core budget of Top End Health Service. Certain supports go out as appropriate to the clients that are there at the time.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** There is no fixed budget?

**Ms FYLES:** No. It would be the same—the prisoners are there, so they get the health service, but then somebody in the community equally. The supports there would work both behind the wire and out in the community.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** Is there any infrastructure program within the Department of Health to create additional mental health facilities or upgrade existing facilities?

**Ms FYLES:** Currently there is just repairs and maintenance to the current facility—so, Tamarind, Joan Ridley and Cowdy. But this is something that the broader review—and as a government we have identified, in terms of health facilities for mental health, the need for services across the Northern Territory in a cohesive manner. It is something I have been working on with the assistance minister, looking at facilities interstate. It is an area, sadly, that has grown considerably, and equally there are very different methods of delivery of service.

We certainly have a very hard-working team that provide outreach and residential, but it is an area that, apart from repairs and maintenance, in this budget there are no specifics, but it is something we have been looking at.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** Minister, you announced a \$3m housing initiative to support Territorians with ongoing mental illness under the Housing Accommodation Support Initiative. I understand that is starting this year. Can you tell us how many clients will be helped through that initiative?

**Ms FYLES:** The HASI program, as it is more commonly known, is around \$3m over four years to provide wraparound support to help people maintain a tendency and to give them the psychosocial supports for people with a mental illness living in public housing in Darwin and Palmerston. So it is not around providing new housing. It is for existing public housing or clients that are eligible for public housing. The service has begun and there are seven individuals who are currently receiving supports.

Anglicare NT was announced as the successful provider in December to work alongside the Top End mental health service and Department of Housing and Community Development to provide those wraparound supports to eligible individuals.

**Ms NELSON:** I know it is an issue throughout all of the Northern Territory, particularly in remote and regional areas, mental health services and provision of mental health support—I was just wondering if you could tell us a little bit about the challenges and actually recruiting professional staff or a psychologist or psychiatrist.

**Mr KALIMNIOS:** Michael Kalimnios, Chief Operating Officer Top End Health Service. Mental health generally is a difficult area to recruit to—acute and non-acute community-based. The existence of community psychiatry capacity in services is fairly low, certainly in the Top End. The availability of clinicians across Australia in that space is challenging, particularly to work in the kind of communities we have.

In regard to how our funding works in the Top End, it is very much focused on the acute side. And the primary healthcare side—we are working on expanding capacity in that sector to actually encompass that emotional and social wellbeing aspect of mental health.

There is work going on to upskill existing clinical staff so clinics have a mental health capacity in regard to their day-to-day work—as well as recruiting specialist mental health capacity there. It is an ongoing challenge. It is an area we continue to focus on. There is work happening in the Top End where we are working with NGO partners and the Primary Healthcare Network to increase that capacity.

The workforce issue is challenging, and that is not uncommon across Australia, particularly in remote communities.

**Ms NELSON:** I agree with you. It is challenging in Katherine. We have one registered psychiatrist in Katherine to service the entire region. It is very challenging.

I have another quick question. Katherine regional hospital provides services to the entire Katherine region—a population up to 24 000—yet we do not have secure mental health rooms. Has there been any consideration into establishing that at the hospital?

**Ms FYLES:** The forensic mental health review and clinical service planning will, I assume, identify what you are saying. That can feed into planning in the future.

**Ms NELSON:** Great, thank you very much.

**Madam CHAIR:** In regard to the budget allocated for mental health, how much is spent on mental health services and support for remote Territorians?

**Ms FYLES:** We would have to take that on notice because it would be a combination of both health services, which we do not have broken down here.

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#### Question on Notice No 4.16

**Madam CHAIR:** Minister, can you please provide the breakdown of mental health services in the budget that are provided to remote Territorians for remote service delivery?

That question has been allocated the number 4.16.

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**Madam CHAIR:** That concludes consideration of Output 10.3, and Output Group 10.0.

**OUTPUT GROUP 11.0 – NATIONAL CRITICAL CARE AND TRAUMA RESPONSE**  
**Output 11.1 – National Critical Care and Trauma Response**

**Madam CHAIR:** The committee will now consider Output Group 11.0, National Critical Care and Trauma Response, Output 11.1, National Critical Care and Trauma Response. Are there any questions?

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** I just wanted to know if the National Critical Care and Trauma Response facilities had ever been used to help address bed-block at Royal Darwin Hospital?

**Ms FYLES:** Len Notaras from the National Critical Care and Trauma Response Centre has joined us. I will let him answer the first part and then I will provide some follow-up.

**Mr NOTARAS:** In the first instance, thank you for the question. I acknowledge our minister and CEO as firm supporters of the National Critical Care and Trauma Response Centre. They have done a fabulous job in supporting—as Prince Charles said only a couple of weeks ago, the work we do is not only locally acknowledged, but nationally and internationally.

**Ms FYLES:** First royal mention in *Hansard*.

**Mr NOTARAS:** With the matter of bed-block, it is an issue that has confronted a number of the facilities across the nation. Having said that, the staff at the National Critical Care and Trauma Response Centre—formed through the federal funding and through the amount of money we provide through an MOU to Royal Darwin Hospital—provide additional staff to the hospital and support staff for an area such as the trauma service.

In the event of a bed-block or an issue concerning constraints on beds, we work with the hospital management and clinicians to ensure safe outcomes for patients. That is our priority—patients, clients and their relatives.

There are a number of other ways that we support the hospital. Member for Spillett, you mentioned earlier when you were talking about alcohol initiatives—one of those alcohol initiatives is the P.A.R.T.Y program, which we are involved with. Our colleagues in Alcohol and Other Drugs are here today. That has addressed training and an awareness program for up to 190 young people about the risks of alcohol and the harm that can be done, trauma and so forth.

That said, the National Critical Care and Trauma Response Centre is federally funded. A lot of our work involves international, national and local responses. Clearly, from our international responses, we learn lessons on how other jurisdictions deal with the challenges that we would deal with as well.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** Thank you very much.

**Ms FYLES:** Member for Spillett, we obviously see bed-block and issues—we try to tackle them through a number of measures. Your question was around whether we used the National Critical Care and Trauma Response Centre and I think Len has responded to that. At times we buy into beds at the private hospital to relieve those pressures. I acknowledge all our hard-working staff because when we hit those times they work very efficiently and there are methods we put in place across the hospitals to try not to reach them, but they certainly clear those loads.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** There is no question about that. Thank you very much. That is my only question for that output.

**Madam CHAIR:** No further questions? That concludes consideration of Output Group 11.0.

**OUTPUT GROUP 12.0 – OFFICE OF THE PUBLIC GUARDIAN**  
**Output 12.1 – Office of the Public Guardian**

**Madam CHAIR:** The committee will now proceed to Output Group 12.0, Office of the Public Guardian and Output 12.1, Office of the Public Guardian. Are there any questions?

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** I am just conscious of the time, Madam Chair, so I will not have any.

**Madam CHAIR:** Are there any further questions? That concludes consideration of Output Group 12.0.

**OUTPUT GROUP 13.0 – HEALTH SERVICES**  
**Output 13.1 – Top End and Central Australia Health Services**

**Madam CHAIR:** The committee will now proceed to Output Group 13.0, Health Services, Output 13.1, Top End and Central Australia Health Services. Are there any questions?

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** I believe this is where I asked this question of a previous department, and I think it fits in this are about secure care, minister?

**Ms FYLES:** That was in the previous department.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** Did I already ask that?

**Ms FYLES:** It is fine, just ask it. It should have been in the previous department, but that is alright.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** 13.1?

**Ms FYLES:** (inaudible – mic off)

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** Okay. Is that fine?

**Madam CHAIR:** Minister, will you answer the question?

**Ms FYLES:** (inaudible – mic off)

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** What changes in security procedures, if any, have been introduced at the Alice Springs Correctional Centre and Darwin Correctional Centre following the escape of detainees from the secure care unit in Alice Springs?

**Ms FYLES:** The facilities are on the campus of the Alice Springs and Darwin prisons but they are not behind the wire, so to speak. Following the incident at Alice Springs, it was evaluated that procedures had not been followed. It was followed up with all staff to ensure that they had appropriate knowledge of the procedures and they were following them through. It is a retraining, so to speak.

Secondly, the forensic review that is currently being undertaken will review everything—all encompassing. It identified the point and ensured that staff were provided with the knowledge and there was some retraining. The forensic review will cover everything.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** That is the review that the Chief Minister announced in January?

**Ms FYLES:** Correct.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** Yes, okay. Is there a timetable for that review?

**Ms FYLES:** Sorry, Member for Spillett. I was just getting my facts correct.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** That is okay.

**Ms FYLES:** There was an audit of the incident. That will then encompass into a larger whole-of-forensic mental health review. The terms of reference for that, we expect, will be released in the very near future. Then, in due course, the review, once it is completed, will be released. There was an audit of the incident which will provide feedback, but it will also fold into a whole-of-forensic ...

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** The other review?

**Ms FYLES:** Yes.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** Okay. And there is no time line for that larger review?

**Ms FYLES:** The terms of reference, I am very hopeful, will be available very soon. It has just been working through that. Then, once we have the terms of reference and the review started, we can get a sense of the

time frame. We are working as efficiently and urgently as we can, but it is not straightforward paths we are stepping through.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** Minister, how many medical misdiagnosis complaints have there been in this reporting period?

**Ms FYLES:** Do you mean specifically information that the two health services would compile, or Health Complaints Commissioner?

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** I was not thinking Health Complaints Commissioner because that is coming up later.

**Ms FYLES:** I will seek some advice.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** I imagine that would be split.

**Ms FYLES:** Yes, because the two health services—and often someone may have a complaint, but it is not registered formally as such. They work with the patient advocate to overcome their concerns. But I will get some advice for you.

They can provide it, I am assured. They do not have it here. Obviously, the Health Complaints Commissioner is separate.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** Fantastic, thank you.

**Ms FYLES:** I am happy to take that on notice for you.

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#### Question on Notice No 4.17

**Madam CHAIR:** Member for Spillett, could you please repeat for the record.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** How many medical misdiagnosis complaints have been received for the reporting period for Top End and Central Australia Health Services?

**Madam CHAIR:** The Health minister accepts the question and it has been allocated the number 4.17.

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**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** Minister, can I clarify—you made a comment before, but I may have misinterpreted it. My question is, are patient advocate complaints registered? I think you might have said something like it depends if they went to the patient advocate and if it is then resolved.

**Ms FYLES:** We only register formal complaints and they go to the Health Complaints Commissioner. We get people who ring us with positive stories. I do get stopped with positive stories. Sometimes we focus on the negativity. We have seen letters to the editor regularly where people have had a positive interaction with the hospital.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** And in my electorate office we have people coming in saying they have had a great experience.

**Ms FYLES:** We get people who question the process or are concerned, so we try to resolve that through the patient advocates. We encourage anyone in hospital or in ED to talk to the clinical nurse managers, and the patient advocates are there to advocate for them.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** But with people presenting to them, that data is not captured in any way?

**Ms FYLES:** No, it is only formal complaints, and they go to the Health Complaints Commissioner.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** Perhaps the patient advocate might work with someone to make a formal complaint, or otherwise it is dealt with that way. I understand.

In an election commitment, Labor said it would undertake detailed business planning in its first term for a new hospital to replace Royal Darwin Hospital into the future. I am wondering what the status of that planning is, and has any funding been identified to replace RDH?

**Ms FYLES:** That is the clinical services planning that I spoke about in my opening statement, as well as the master plan for RDH. There has been significant investment at RDH to date. We will do that clinical planning going forward regarding patient needs for 15 years, then the master planning for Royal Darwin and likewise for Alice Springs Hospital.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** What meeting fees are paid to the health advisory committees for the Top End and Central Australian committees?

**Ms FYLES:** I do not have a breakdown of individual payments, but the Central Australian Health Service advisory committee has 10 members. The committee has met three times to date and the total cost is \$14 000 approximately. The Top End Health Service has 11 members, including the Chair, and has met three times, the cost being \$20 000 to 31 March.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** When were they established? When was their first meeting?

**Ms FYLES:** I think it was established around November or December last year.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** How many times a year is it envisaged they would meet? Is it prescribed?

**Ms FYLES:** It is envisaged they would meet four times a year. That is why you have seen three. They had an initial planning day then two subsequent meetings. They could work on projects away from those meetings and come together—acknowledging some are from regional areas.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** What meeting fees are paid to the Clinical Senate?

**Ms FYLES:** We just reimburse travel costs. Those positions provide a forum for clinical experts to come together in a comfortable setting to talk about issues overall. We reimburse travel and accommodation costs, but they are not paid specifically.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** Is there a figure of what has been paid to date?

**Ms FYLES:** We can get that. The advice I have is about \$20 000, but it might be best to take it on notice so we can give an accurate figure.

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#### Question on Notice No 4.18

**Madam CHAIR:** Member for Spillett, can you please repeat the question for the record.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** What fees have been paid associated with the meetings of the Clinical Senate to date?

**Madam CHAIR:** The minister accepts the question, so it has been allocated the number 4.18.

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**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** How many meetings has the Clinical Senate had?

**Ms FYLES:** Three meetings.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** When was that first meeting?

**Ms FYLES:** November 2017 was the first meeting. They have met twice since this year. A couple of weeks ago was the most recent meeting.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** How often are they prescribed?

**Ms FYLES:** Four times a year.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** What fees are paid to the service administrators and what are their roles in this governance model?

**Ms FYLES:** The service administrators are paid fees in line with NTG policies for the Chair of a board. The Top End health administrator is \$82 000 per annum and the same for the Central Australian position.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** So it is \$164 000 in total. What are the roles in the governance model?

**Ms FYLES:** When we stepped away from the health boards, we stepped away from the board's structure to the health service administrators. As I said in my opening statement, it is envisaged that they will stay in place until the end of the year. Those changes were made under regulation and then we would look at legislative changes.

It must be noted that in 2011, when the national health partnership agreements were put in place, it was always noted that the Northern Territory had a unique context with our small population size. In the bigger jurisdictions, for example in the Sydney region, there are a number of health services—we only had two Territory-wide. It was noted, even going back to the partnerships agreements, that the Territory model would likely be different. A couple of other jurisdictions have also stepped away.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** How is the new model working? What recommendations have been made by the Clinical Senate and have those recommendations been implemented?

**Ms FYLES:** There are two different issues here. The health advisory committees provide community input into our health services, and you have the service administrators that fulfil a regulatory and legislative function; and the Clinical Senate is completely different. It is a pathway for clinicians to come together and discuss shared issues away from government policy.

The issues are such that they might not be policy or practice of the day but are emerging issues or issues of concern for clinicians. They can come together and bounce that around between disciplines.

Does that provide enough information?

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** There is no follow-through to government? Is it just an opportunity to get together and discuss practice?

**Ms FYLES:** It goes to the chief executive, so I will ask Professor Catherine Stoddart to explain more.

**Professor STODDART:** Catherine Stoddart, CEO of Health. The Clinical Senate provides a forum for the clinicians to discuss issues of clinical concern. For example, in the May debate—it is formed as a debate with recommendations—the discussion was around what is called the atlas of clinical variation. So, why there are differences between clinical practices, not just in the Northern Territory but in all jurisdictions.

The Clinical Senate, through their executive, will then make recommendations to me that I will discuss with the executive within the Northern Territory Health Oversight Committee. We will implement those recommendations and provide information to the minister around those recommendations that are perhaps implementable—some may not be reasonable. I will feedback at the following Clinical Senate those that we have accepted, those we have accepted in-principle and those we can delay or are not consistent with the direction.

**Ms FYLES:** Often you will have the different colleges and subspecialty sections will debate and talk about issues—it brings all that together.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** Given they have had three meetings, have there been three or two sets of recommendations coming up to the CEO?

**Professor STODDART:** There will be multiple recommendations at each forum. The first one was around establishing the senate, and we invited the West Australian Clinical Senate to come and explain how one would work. The second one has been developmental, and the third one has the strongest group of recommendations; although, there will be some from the second as well. I am expecting a combined set of recommendations by the end of this month.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** From both?

**Professor STODDART:** From two and three.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** So you have not had an opportunity to see any recommendations yet and work out which ones you have or have not knocked out?

**Professor STODDART:** Yes.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** In regard to the Dundee health centre, minister, in November last year your department was undertaking a needs analysis, I believe you said, to determine if a health centre is necessary. Dundee residents were told just last month, in May, that the needs analysis had begun. Community members and the public health network met earlier this month to develop and finalise the needs assessment.

Why has it taken six months to start when in November you said it was under way? How long will it take for the analysis to be done, and when will you be releasing those results?

**Ms FYLES:** One could ask why the previous government said there was not a viable option, but we have moved on from that.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** Have you though?

**Ms FYLES:** I just had to put that in there.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** I know you did.

**Ms FYLES:** The Dundee Progress Association ran a volunteer first aid post in Dundee for around 10 years, and then they advised the Department of Health that they would no longer be in a position to continue that service. When the volunteer service operated, the Department of Health supported the post with a grant for consumables and a building and a helipad.

We have listened to the concerns of the community, and the NT primary healthcare network, as you have said, undertook a regional health needs analysis regarding the needs of those community members. The PHN will provide further updates for this needs assessment once the data is complete.

I will ask Michael Kalimnios if there is anything more, as the Chief Operating Officer of Top End.

**Mr KALIMNIOS:** The PHN, as the minister said, is leading the process. We continue to work with both the community and the PHN to make sure that we get an appropriate outcome, but it is a PHN-led process at the moment.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** Does the department have any idea on the time frame for this analysis work?

**Ms FYLES:** We have not been advised by PHN for a time frame.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** So the department is not really ...

**Ms FYLES:** We need to complete the needs assessment, so once they have the data on what they need (inaudible – mic off). We know historically Dundee (inaudible – mic off) now has a number of permanent residents. But there are facilities (inaudible – mic off) Berry Springs and then (inaudible – mic off) further into Darwin (inaudible – mic off) services, so it is just getting an understanding from PHN around what the assessment needs ...

**Madam CHAIR:** Excuse me, minister. Your microphone is not on.

**Ms FYLES:** Sorry.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** I heard you. The department is taking a bit of a hands-off approach. It is in the hands of the public health network, but now they will conduct the analysis.

**Ms FYLES:** Primary healthcare is the responsibility of the federal government, the Australian Government, so it is very much appropriate that PHN—Michael might add a little bit more.

**Mr KALIMNIOS:** Just to clarify, we are not taking a hands-off approach. We continue to maintain emergency services there and ensure people can access good clinical care. We are working with the PHN to ensure that

we get a resolution. It is the PHN that are leading it though. But we do have a strong interest in maintaining good service to that community.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** The Jabiru health clinic—on the weekend there were reports that the township has been without a full-time GP since April. Besides the locums, what other steps is the department taking to have another full-time doctor out at Jabiru?

**Madam CHAIR:** Thank you. You asked my question for me, Member for Spillett.

**Ms NELSON:** Mine too!

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** I have your back, guys.

**Ms FYLES:** Jabiru, like many of our clinics—we struggle in the Territory at times to have recruitment to those positions. We are actively recruiting and the community is being serviced by locum positions whilst we undertake that recruitment. So, locums in the short term.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** So the recruitment is under way; it is just a matter of finding someone wanting to ...

**Ms FYLES:** Correct. We often see this across the Territory—positions unfilled, not through lack of funding but through people wishing to go to those areas.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** Thank you. How many full-time equivalents are attached to the Top End and Central Australia Health Services? What is the breakdown of those positions?

**Ms FYLES:** The full-time equivalents as at pay 19, 2018—Top End was 4259 and Central Australia was 1812.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** Are you able to break that down into positions?

**Ms FYLES:** No, it is quite extensive.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** Can we take that on notice?

**Ms FYLES:** We provided that as a whole-of-government response already in the written questions.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** It is in the written questions?

**Ms FYLES:** Yes. Just for comparison, Top End Health, as of 2016, had 4129 and Central Australia had 1791—a slight increase very similar to the previous year.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** Yes, okay, no problem. Well, conscious of the time with five minutes ...

**Madam CHAIR:** Eight minutes—nine actually.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** No, that is fine. I was just wondering whether we—in the budget under the previous government, \$8.3m was earmarked for the establishment of cardiothoracic and neurological services at Royal Darwin Hospital. I understand there are cardiothoracic services in the NT. What future funding has been committed to these services?

**Ms FYLES:** Phase one, stage one is 2018–19. That is what is being undertaken currently. We will commence to a low-risk and low-volume service with an estimated two to three patients per week—around 100 to 150 a year. Patients requiring more complex services will still need to travel, along with paediatric patients, so we will be setting this up and being supported by interstate cardiothoracic surgical unit as stipulated by the guidelines within the Australia New Zealand Society of Cardiac and Thoracic Surgery guidelines.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** In phase one, stage one, what types of services might be available in the Territory?

**Ms FYLES:** It would be minor cardiac surgery, as clinically assessed.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** Okay. What does the phase up look like? When is phase two, stage two, or phase two, stage one?

**Ms FYLES:** We need to bed down that. It will be when it is clinically safe.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** So, how would that ordinarily work? You run a certain level of service for a period of time, then how do you inform the development of that service?

**Ms FYLES:** You need to bed down—evaluate the clinical risks and outcomes and go from there, looking at staffing levels.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** The demand for the service would feed into that?

**Ms FYLES:** It would always be through the prism of clinical safety.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** Yes, of course. For paediatrics and other more complex or higher risk, they would still be having to travel interstate with PATS? Okay, thank you. That is my questions in that output.

**Madam CHAIR:** This concludes consideration of Output Group 13.0.

### **OUTPUT GROUP 14.0 – CORPORATE AND GOVERNANCE** **Output 14.1 – Corporate and Governance**

**Madam CHAIR:** The committee will now proceed to Output Group 14.0, Corporate and Governance, Output 14.1, Corporate and Governance. Any questions, Member for Spillett?

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** Yes, thank you. Under 'budget improvement and other measures', in the 2017–18 budget papers there was a budget improvement measures listed. For the Department of Health, \$6.1m was lost under operational reforms. I am just wondering what those reforms were and if the savings were achieved.

**Ms FYLES:** It is looking at staffing models and the delivery of care, making sure that we maximise the opportunities within those staffing models, and also staff travel.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** What do you mean by staffing models?

**Ms FYLES:** Using less locum staff, for example, and using more local recruitment, maximising shifts, putting in place measures to try and have more patients turning up for appointments—being prepared rather than having slippage there, having a better use of staff resources.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** Were those savings realised? Were they achieved?

**Ms FYLES:** We expect to get close to that estimation.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** Under the same budget improvement measures, \$700 000 was lost under a program of rationalisation. Which programs were rationalised?

**Ms FYLES:** We would have to look at specifics but that was around duplication of services between the two health services and the department—corporate services to try and reduce that duplication.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** Were those savings achieved?

**Ms FYLES:** We hope so—moving towards it.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** On track for that? No problem.

Minister, what are the definitions of 'urban, rural and remote' in your agency for staff and for clients? I am trying to ascertain if they are the same descriptors for clients are the same descriptors used for staff?

**Ms FYLES:** Yes.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** When you have a staff member categorised as rural then you have patients rural, that is all the same?

**Ms FYLES:** Yes.



**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** Are there any differences between the definitions in your agency and the definitions in the Commonwealth relative agency?

**Ms FYLES:** There would be around remoteness.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** There is?

**Ms FYLES:** Yes.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** How does that get rationalised? How does that get sorted through if the Commonwealth are funding for one category that does not match up to your category?

**Ms FYLES:** We have to accept their classifications of categories. MBS for renal, for example, is for a very remote context, but we might classify that as remote. For Canberra, it is very remote and for us it is remote, and we have to accept that.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** Questions further to answers provided in the global questions—how many full-time equivalents are currently employed within the agency, broken down by output and business unit? You were not able to provide that at this point.

**Ms FYLES:** We answered in the written questions for the global questions.

**Ms FYLES:** Palmerston hospital—did you want to ask about that?

**Madam CHAIR:** Member for Spillett, there is one minute remaining.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** Minister, this is a fantastic project. I think you could find it within your heart to thank the previous government for starting that initiative. The people in Palmerston are looking forward to it. When will the open day be for people to tour through the facility?

**Ms FYLES:** We are going through the commissioning phase and we are being led by clinicians. We have not finalised those dates. We are hopeful that the facility will open in August, but we need to make sure that everything is clinically safe. We will give people notice of that. We look forward to it. We have been providing updates and taking different groups through the facility. It has come a long way from the concrete debacle.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** I thank the department for all their work in the lead up to estimates and your attendance this afternoon. It has been valuable, and thank you.

**Madam CHAIR:** That concludes consideration of outputs relating to the Department of Health. On behalf of the committee, I thank departmental officers and the Minister for Health, and those who have assisted the minister today. The Minister for Health's time has now expired. Thank you, minister, for appearing in front of the Estimates Committee.

**Ms FYLES:** Thank you, and may I take the opportunity to thank the staff, not only here today at the hearings but all the staff right across the Territory—not only for their work every day, but for the information they have provided. Territorians can be assured there is a very hard-working team delivering health services.

**Madam CHAIR:** The committee will now have a 10-minute recess and recommence at 3:40 pm.

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The committee suspended.

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## MINISTER MCCARTHY'S PORTFOLIOS

### HOUSING AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

**Madam DEPUTY CHAIR:** I welcome you, Minister McCarthy, and invite you to introduce the officials accompanying you.

**Mr MCCARTHY:** Thank you, Madam Deputy Chair. I would like to introduce Mr Jamie Chalker, Chief Executive of the Department of Housing and Community Development. I ask Mr Chalker to introduce our officials.

**Mr CHALKER:** Thank you, minister and Madam Deputy Chair. Welcome, Madam Chair.

**Madam CHAIR:** Thank you, Mr Chalker.

**Mr CHALKER:** To my left I have Deputy CEO Jim Bamber, who is responsible for housing services, local government and community development. Next to him is Deputy Chief Executive Officer Dwayne McInnes, who looks after our remote program delivery office and the community services area, which includes Land Tenure Unit, homelands and also our Aboriginal Interpreter Service and Interpreting and Translating Service NT.

Mrs Karen Elligett is Executive Director of our corporate services area. Mr Ken Tinkham to my right is our Chief Financial Officer. I also have a number of witnesses which represents the broadness and diversity of our wonderful department.

**Mr McCARTHY:** Madam Chair, I acknowledge our officers here today and thank them for their presence and all the incredible work they do in the Department of Housing and Community Development. I put out a big shout out to my wife, Dawn McCarthy, who will be monitoring this broadcast in Tennant Creek via the Legislative Assembly website.

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

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

Minister do you wish to make an opening statement regarding the Department of Housing and Community Development?

**Mr McCARTHY:** Yes, thank you, Madam Chair. Having access to decent housing is critical for the physical, emotional and social health and wellbeing of Territorians. A home is the foundation for people to connect and contribute to society.

The Northern Territory has significant housing problems that have severely impacted on many Territorians for too long, something this government is addressing. As you would all be aware, the government is working on improving access to housing, reducing overcrowding and improving access to education, health and other government services for Territorians.

The Department of Housing and Community Development is currently delivering a \$69m stimulus package focused on urban housing and the urban and regional construction sector. This package is delivering much-needed repairs, maintenance and upgrades to public housing, and aims to create an immediate economic injection into the construction sector and support local jobs.

New kitchens; wet areas; concrete driveways; refurbishments; painting; and upgrades, including kitchens and roofing, add to the many and varied approaches to improve individual residences and complexes. The works are touching seniors, villages, town camps, units and houses.

These improvements add value in respect of the life extension of these properties, improve liveability and have provided a sense of pride that comes with a place that realises a great outcome from appropriate investment. The works are improving the lives of Territorians.

Solutions to housing problems are no longer just focused on the assets, but also on improved service delivery and engagement in all of the work we are doing across the Northern Territory to ensure that we are working and consulting with the people who rely on our services every day.

In addition, this government is working to improve community development and local decision-making. We have listened to remote communities about the need for better engagement and more consultation, and increasing the role of local decision-making in developing government policy and programs.

Under the joint Northern Territory and Australian Government funded National Partnership Agreement on Remote Indigenous Housing, and remote Australia strategies, since 1 September 2016 we have delivered 168 new dwellings, with 114 currently under way. In addition to new houses, 608 upgrades have been completed, with 263 currently under way.

Under the Territory government's Room to Breathe, 117 dwellings have been completed, delivering 74 additional bedrooms and 74 additional living spaces. Further works under the Room to Breathe program are progressing well, with 108 dwellings scoped in consultation with local decision-makers and residents.

It is this government's belief that local people make the best decisions about their future and the issues that impact on them, and consultations are ongoing across the Territory to plan future works in remote housing.

Since mid-July 2017, a total of 72 community visits have taken place to plan works under Room to Breathe, HomeBuild NT and for land servicing. As at March 2018, engagement of engineering consultants and surveyors has been completed to undertake design of proposed subdivision works in 11 remote communities.

The progress of subdivisions will be subject to input through local decision-making on design, location and layouts, and securing of tenure from land councils. Through the first two years of our land servicing program we are aiming for around 450 new service lots. Service land was not addressed under the previous remote housing program, and unfortunately the Commonwealth have again chosen not to contribute in this space. But we cannot build new houses without sufficient service land to put them on.

Briefs to deliver 73 new NT Government-funded remote houses have been provided to the Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Logistics in 20 communities. By 30 June 2018, it is anticipated that 73 dwellings will be under way or contractually awarded, with a further 41 dwellings at various stages of procurement.

Revote is a necessary component of the Northern Territory Government capital works program, which gives agencies the authority to progress capital programs while acknowledging that cash expenditure will be incurred across financial years, consummate with the anticipated roll-out of capital works projects.

The construction time frame across most of the Territory lines up with the Dry Season, which crosses financial years. The Remote Housing Investment Package commenced in July 2017. Consistent with government's local decision-making agenda, the 2017–18 program has been heavily focused on planning and community engagement. As a result, it was estimated that \$30m of actual expenditure would be achieved in 2017–18 against the total approved Remote Housing Investment Package and the related land servicing program.

The department is on track to achieve the predicted level of expenditure, with the remaining expenditure to be achieved in 2018–19. From 2018–19 cash expenditure will average around \$100m annually, limiting the amount of revote over the remaining term of the program.

Government has continued to support local government with \$96.8m in this year's budget. These funds support jobs, boost local economies and strengthen communities across the Northern Territory. I would like to acknowledge the work that the local government sector does, and we strongly support this important work to deliver services and appropriate community infrastructure that improves the lives of Territorians.

Madam Chair, with our commitments and programs across the Department of Housing and Community Development, we will create jobs and opportunities for economic development across the Northern Territory, as well as address the needs of our most disadvantaged citizens. We are going through challenging economic times, and it is important that during these times we do not shy away from supporting those who are disadvantaged or at risk in our society.

Budget 2018 will assist in meeting those challenges and has the potential to make a real difference to the lives of not only remote Territorians, but all Territorians.

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

**Mr HIGGINS:** I thank the minister for that statement. It contained a lot of figures and numbers in it. I am sorry but I may come back and actually re-ask what those numbers were during questioning today. But thank you very much for that update.

I would like to thank all the staff you have around you and all the people behind you that did a lot of work in answering our global questions that we submitted in April. Thank you very much. It is much appreciated. We

might have some follow-up with that, but at this point I would rather leave the questions until we get to the output areas, if that is okay.

**Madam CHAIR:** Are there any questions on the statement? Thank you.

### **Agency-Related Whole-of-Government Question on Budget and Fiscal Strategy**

**Madam CHAIR:** The committee will now proceed to consider the estimates of proposed expenditure contained in the Appropriation Bill 2018–19 as they related to the Department of Housing and Community Development. Are there any agency-related whole-of-government questions on budget and fiscal strategy?

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

**Madam CHAIR:** The committee will now proceed to Output 1.0.

**Mr WOOD:** Just a point of clarification—aged care. Which section will that come under? Will it be this one? I am just making sure.

**Madam CHAIR:** You do not want to miss out, Member for Nelson.

**Mr WOOD:** I learned the hard way.

**Madam CHAIR:** Minister, can you provide that advice? We are looking for aged care. I believe it would be under Local Government and Community Development, Output 1.4.

**Mr McCARTHY:** In terms of service delivery, Madam Chair, but I am not sure what the Member for Nelson is interested in asking.

**Mr WOOD:** I am probably looking at what the government is doing in that space in relation to providing more homes for the aged, whether private or government. I want to know what is happening in that space.

**Mr McCARTHY:** The first response I will give in terms of the Department of Housing and Community Development is in terms of our urban housing strategy and the focus on social head leasing. We have negotiated quite a number of opportunities so far. We have a good track record in terms of housing for seniors.

This new approach to looking at a number of dynamics to deliver better public housing outcomes is around leveraging investment from the private sector then accommodating people on low incomes, with disabilities or senior Territorians. We have a suite of initiatives that are growing and developing across the Northern Territory in an urban context. I am not sure if Mr Chalker wants to add to that.

**Mr CHALKER:** The Department of Trade, Business and Innovation have had a consultation paper out around aged care working with the sector and the private sector in particular. They are the ones who have been primarily leading the engagement as it relates to the aged care sector. We provide accommodation for aged care. We have that information provided to us by DTBI through that process.

**Mr WOOD:** Alright. I will come to that later and ask you what information you have in relation to your role in providing aged care.

**Mr CHALKER:** Sure.

**Mr WOOD:** Okay, I do not want to jump the gun. Leader of the Opposition?

**Mr HIGGINS:** I think we are going to 1.1.

**Madam CHAIR:** Yes, we are.

### **OUTPUT GROUP 1.0 – HOUSING AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT** **Output 1.1 – Housing Services Delivery**

**Madam CHAIR:** The committee will now consider Output Group 1.0, Housing and Community Development, Output 1.1, Housing Services Delivery. Are there any questions?

**Mr WOOD:** Output 1.1 is where I ask the questions. That is what I was originally trying to figure out, about aged care—when I get my turn.

**Madam CHAIR:** Yes, it will be after the shadow minister. We will not miss you, Member for Nelson.

**Mr WOOD:** That is all right.

**Madam CHAIR:** We will let the shadow minister ask his question.

**Mr HIGGINS:** Minister, in your opening address you spoke about the \$69m. Can you list the work packages that were released under the government's \$69m public housing repairs and maintenance program announced earlier this year, and the value of those work packages? You may not have that there at the moment.

**Mr McCARTHY:** We have this listed. It is comprehensive information that has been provided by the department. Let me start with a broad statement around that \$69m stimulus strategy from the Labor government.

In terms of an investment in public housing, it is phenomenal. In terms of the work the department is doing with design and delivery, it is very significant. I am very pleased to say that a government that chooses to not only look at good, sound economic outcomes—but where that investment crosses over to the most vulnerable Territorians. That is a good policy progression.

I will go to Mr Chalker to provide you with the details of the program.

**Mr CHALKER:** Thank you, minister. Member for Daly, thanks for the question. It has been a wonderful shot in the arm for public housing assets, the \$69m urban stimulus package. I will have Jim Bamber speak more to the breakdown that you have just requested.

Jim Bamber, Dwayne McInnes and I went for a drive today with Brian McClurg, who is leading the program for delivery in not only the town camps work, but also as part of the stimulus program here for the complexes. We went past Shiers Street. We visited complexes in Parap. Just about every housing complex currently under our tenancies has a multitude of contractors well and truly actively engaged. We know that has had a very positive impact on the industry. The contractors are providing that service delivery for us.

I will ask Jim to give you the further breakdown.

**Mr HIGGINS:** It is all yours, Jim.

**Mr BAMBER:** Thank you, Mr Higgins. The \$69m stimulus program is a once in a generation opportunity for us. Obviously as a public housing agency, we operate under constrained finances and so we do what we can with the capital program, minor works and R&M program that we have allocated to us.

Having the benefit of this stimulus program available to us both to upgrade our assets—which I will go through in some detail in a minute—to benefit our tenants, particularly to benefit our tenants in complexes, to uplift the amenity of the complexes, but also to provide benefit to the construction industry on our panel contracts and also on the stimulus register from when we went out and invited people to be interested in partaking in the stimulus program.

The breakdown of the program—we had allocated \$20m for complex upgrades because we obviously have a wide range of complexes throughout the Northern Territory and the breakdown roughly was Darwin complexes, \$12m; Katherine complexes, \$2m; Tennant Creek complexes, \$1.5m; and Alice Springs complexes, \$4.5m.

**Mr WOOD:** Does that also include Palmerston, the Darwin figure?

**Mr BAMBER:** Greater Darwin, yes.

We had then programmed additional minor new works and vacates because we still did have a range of long vacant houses that we did not have the money to put back into stock. This has given us that opportunity to finally clear all those vacates. We had allocated \$15m for that, spread again throughout the Territory. Town camps we had allocated \$10m for town camp upgrades. Obviously that is in addition to the \$14m that was

already programmed arising from the town camps review. So there is a total of \$24m going into town camps over the two years, this year and next year.

We had also allocated \$2m for industry housing upgrades. We have got about 560 dwellings that we allocate to the NGO sector. They use them to serve mutual clients, so it is your Salvation Army, St Vinnies, all of those guys. So we had allocated \$2m to provide upgrades to those properties as well.

Roofing upgrades—we had a bit of a maintenance liability in rooves because tin rooves over time deteriorate; you have to replace them. We did not have the money for that. This gave us the money for that. We have allocated \$5m for roofing upgrades again throughout the Territory. Also back in the day they had installed tiles. Tiles do not last. So we have been completely able to replace those tiles, particularly in some of the complexes.

We had also allocated \$1m for upgrade of community halls in complexes, including seniors' complexes, which I am sure the minister will come to. We allocated another \$2m for remote preventative programs, particularly pest control, so whole-of-community pest control—just to completely eradicate. The minister will appreciate from visiting communities, it is not good enough to do one house; you actually have to do the whole community if you are going to eradicate pests. We allocated \$2m for that.

We also allocated another \$2m for GEH security upgrades. Government employee housing out in remote communities—some of the remote communities suffer from break-ins so we allocated \$2m for enhanced security for government employee housing.

We had also allocated \$7m for a replacement of the Laramba water supply. So the Laramba water supply is an asbestos cement main that runs from the bore field to Laramba—decades old. It really did need replacing. The problem with the asbestos water mains is you cannot replace the section; as soon as you touch it, it crumbles. This was to replace the whole lot.

We allocated another \$2m for IS water meters. There are a number of remote communities which are water-stressed, so if you cannot augment the supply, what you do is work on the demand. The best way to do that is to put smart water meters on the houses and at significant points within the remote communities so you can see where water leaks are occurring and where water waste is occurring and really draw down on it. We are able to do that, between us and Power and Water, to great effect in Milingimbi, for example. We cut the water wastage by 30% by that kind of program. We allocated our money to that program. It also forestalls water damage and having to find additional bore fields to augment the supply.

We also allocated an additional \$1.5m for the Room to Breathe program, primarily for one like Santa Teresa, because even though there is a 100-house upgrade going on in the community, there is still room for additional Room to Breathe work on existing houses. We have allocated \$1m for transitional accommodation because if you are working on that many houses and that many complexes all at the same time, you have to have somewhere for the tenants to go while a roof is being replaced, a house is being gutted ...

**Mr McCARTHY:** We will not ask any questions on that one. Continue on.

**Mr BAMBER:** We set aside money for that. That is at a high level, so in terms—did you want to go into more detail?

**Mr HIGGINS:** If I just ask some other questions and then you may get there. I presume all of that is going to add up to close to your \$69m, but I did not sit there adding it all up as you went along, so I presume it will come close to that. I think you might have mentioned some extras in there as well.

**Mr BAMBER:** The amounts I have read out add up to that \$68.5m. So we then—because it was announced in early March—have gone through a process of allocating the work. You have to scope the works. You have to award the works and go through procurement to get the works out there. It took longer than we hoped to agree on a procurement process with DTVI for allocating works to contractors who are not in panel contracts already—off the stimulus register. It is a different form of procurement, so we had to make sure it was done right.

**Mr HIGGINS:** When you talk about that \$69m, how much of that do you predict will get out this year? I know we have spoken about revoting, so carrying into next year. How much of the \$69m do we expect to be spent by the end of two weeks from now?

**Mr BAMBER:** We have \$55m awarded, scoped. I would say we will have about \$35m to \$40m actually paid out by then, because we have been going gangbusters since.

**Mr HIGGINS:** Roughly half.

**Mr BAMBER:** Treasury have given us that commitment that whatever we commit as of 30 June, they will cover for 2018–19.

**Mr McCARTHY:** That is the security, Member for Daly, for the Territory economy. For our construction sector, Treasury have committed that and the works will be ongoing.

**Mr HIGGINS:** The carry forward will be in addition to the \$100m you were talking about earlier. So when you carry money forward that is not going to reduce your \$100m, so next year you would be aiming for—say you got \$35m carried over, you will aim to spend the \$135m next year.

**Mr BAMBER:** Yes.

**Mr HIGGINS:** When we talk about the stimulus, are we able to get a list of all the businesses, whether they are Territory or interstate, that have won work under those contracts or work programs that have been added to our list?

**Mr BAMBER:** We have certainly been tracking all the contractors that we have allocated the works to.

**Mr HIGGINS:** I did not ask for amounts. I just said which companies.

**Mr BAMBER:** We have been tracking both the works against the dwellings and assets and complexes, and also who is getting those works, so that we can track that there is benefit occurring.

**Mr HIGGINS:** Would we be able to ask that question to get that given to us?

**Mr McCARTHY:** We will supply that, absolutely.

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#### Question on Notice No 5.1

**Madam CHAIR:** Member for Daly, please repeat the question for the record.

**Mr HIGGINS:** Can you provide a list of all the businesses both in the Territory and interstate that have won work through this stimulus package?

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

**Mr McCARTHY:** Yes.

**Madam CHAIR:** The Member for Daly's question has been allocated the number 5.1.

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**Mr CHALKER:** Member for Daly, I can already advise you that no interstate contractors have been awarded. It is all inter-Territory.

**Mr BAMBER:** We targeted local industry.

**Mr HIGGINS:** My written question does not specify interstate but I thought I would just check on that one, just to keep you on your toes right at the beginning.

**Mr CHALKER:** Some of the contractors, the tenders that we are putting out, we are actually getting some new returns from contractors citing how busy they currently are due to the program already.

**Mr HIGGINS:** We could get into whether they are Territory businesses or not, but we will leave that out of it.

**Mr BAMBER:** One of the other benefits we have had, particularly for the town council work, is that we have been working through the relevant housing association because we do not have a direct relationship with the northern town camps. For example, we have been extensively with Yilli Rreung Housing association.

**Mr HIGGINS:** I can tell that you are enthralled by this project. That is good. I am glad to see the excitement. Having you known you for years, I have not seen you so excited in years.

**Mr BAMBER:** This is a once in a generation opportunity. This is changing people's lives in the camps. It is amazing.

**Madam CHAIR:** Member for Daly, you have the call for questions.

**Mr HIGGINS:** In the 2017 budget, we put \$3m into the implementation of a housing accommodation support initiative that was going to be over three years. Where are we at with that?

It was a trial for the implementation of housing accommodation support. There was \$3m provided over four years.

**Mr BAMBER:** The homelessness innovation program came out of the urban housing strategy. What we were looking for with that was—we already had the \$22m a year going out through the NGO homelessness sector for provision of long-term accommodation, transitional accommodation, tenancy support et cetera. This was looking for innovation. We deliberately set out and invited from the sector what they could put forward that was not a current product.

The three initiatives that did get up were the Salvation Army's Katherine Doorways Hub which offers referral to support services in the Katherine region to assist homeless people and ensure their needs are met. The hub also provides access to dignity services through a day centre, including showers and washing facilities, for people experiencing homelessness.

**Ms NELSON:** It is a great program.

**Mr BAMBER:** It has had a very high uptake.

In Darwin, we went with the Salvation Army's the Nest, which provides a private rental housing program with case management, mentoring and personal development to support a participant's transition to independent living. This was done in partnership with the NT Thunder football club. It also offered social and recreational opportunities for participants.

In Alice Springs, we sponsored the Central Australian Affordable Housing Company's My Place initiative, which consisted of two dedicated programs. The first program was a subsidised private rental program which provides a rental subsidy to support people in need to secure a private rental and intensive wraparound support to ensure that tenants maintain stable housing. This program focuses on assisting people experiencing mental health issues or escaping domestic violence.

The other dedicated program under CAAH was the private rental liaison program, which assists people on low to moderate incomes but are facing challenges to secure a lease for a property in the private rental market. The program provides ongoing support for 12 months to ensure tenants maintain stable housing.

They were successful programs, particularly in Katherine and Alice Springs.

**Mr HIGGINS:** How much of the \$3m has been used so far? Or is that work going to continue?

**Mr CHALKER:** They did not expend the full allocation so we have rolled over the continuation of that funding into the next financial year. That was negotiated with the relevant sector so they will continue those programs. It is worthwhile to note that we are also looking to launch our five-year homelessness strategy, and that will form a part of that as we see the effectiveness of that program as it aligns to the new grants that commenced on 1 July 2017—which we have moved to five-year grants with the broader sector.

**Mr HIGGINS:** When we look at that \$3m, how much was allocated in that year for that? We are talking about \$3m over four years for the trial. I am trying to get a handle on whether we have used all of the \$3m and if the four-year trial is going to continue, whether we are going to seek more money for it. I am not doubting the success of it. Jim, you have already rattled off four or five projects there.



**Mr BAMBER:** Yes.

**Mr McCARTHY:** So far, Member for Daly, we have expended \$1m of that. It links now to what the Department of Housing and Community Development is doing, which is innovative in itself. As Mr Chalker just mentioned, it is around our five-year plan around housing and homelessness. We have identified quite unique indicators of Territorians who are homeless and at risk of homelessness.

With the grant program now, and my position in this, it was good that we signed an agreement with the Commonwealth. The unfortunate part is, it was the same amount of funding, so we did not see an increase in funding.

From a policy position, I am saying let us look at innovation and what works. This has been particularly good research and targeted investment, because we are starting to see where the innovation can be incorporated into that delivery.

I will make mention for the panel one of the examples—which was a letter written to me by Central Australian Affordable Housing Company on the innovations project My Place—that is, wrapping around services and support to vulnerable Territorians to get them into the private rental market. This is where I want to keep the emphasis, because we have a community, non-government sector and to some degree a legal sector that is fixated on the only housing option is a public house, when it is not. There are real opportunities to stimulate the economy, leverage private sector investment and house vulnerable Territorians. This program, My Place, has been showing us how that works.

It is not only with the assistance to get a vulnerable family—the letter I received provided a case study around a single mum with two kids who was really struggling to do business in the private sector. With this support, these references and the financial support around that, this family was placed in the private rental market and then the wraparound support was provided to make sure they survived.

The letter also made very positive mention of the real estate agent who determined—they were very nervous about this but were prepared to go down this road of innovation. Now they are fully convinced that we should continue this.

There is the link with the ongoing program for me and the department—that targeted research and we have certainly learned very valuable lessons. As I said, I want to dispel this myth that a public house is the only house. When you have these long wait lists and these other challenges, people really should be exploring alternative support.

**Mr HIGGINS:** We have another \$1m this year, I presume, then another \$1m the year after. That is what I have got out of that answer.

**Mr CHALKER:** No, Member for Daly. Originally it was \$2m. This is the final year of the second \$1m, but we have managed to, through working with the relevant entities that have been awarded the grants—they have been quite fiscally responsible in the execution of that. There have been leftovers, so as opposed to ceasing the programs we are extending them. It looks like we will get through to at least December at this point in time.

As I said, with the work we have been doing with the new grants program, depending on the evaluations that occur from those, there may be an opportunity for a continuation if they are proving as effective as we believe they are.

**Mr BAMBER:** The intent was always that these were trials. If they are successful then they become part of the standard product, if you like. This is about what works.

**Mr HIGGINS:** You have already mentioned the homelessness strategy. According to the answers to some of the global questions, Ernst & Young was paid \$72 812 for the strategy and a five-year action plan. You also paid PWC Indigenous Consulting \$17 000 to facilitate stakeholder consultation forums on the strategy and plans. Where is all this at the moment—the strategy, plans and forums?

**Mr McCARTHY:** The strategy has been presented to me. I am very impressed with not only the work that has been done and the research that underpins it, but how it really tells a unique Territory story, which is what I brought into the conversation. I think we need to hone in on homelessness and that risk of homelessness in a Territory context.

Part of that research you have quoted, Member for Daly, is a survey of rough sleepers in the CBD area of Darwin, for instance. That is with me now and I am looking forward to the launch and the progress of that strategy.

**Mr HIGGINS:** When do we think we might see that launch, roughly? Two weeks? Two months?

**Mr McCARTHY:** We are progressing it through, first of all, the Children's Sub-Committee of Cabinet. Then it will be on a Cabinet list for approval. Then you will see the roll-out.

**Mr HIGGINS:** There does not seem to be any increase in funding for homelessness services in the budget this year, so will there be something in that submission?

**Mr McCARTHY:** I will start, and Mr Chalker can pick up on my input.

It was fortunate that we signed an agreement with the Commonwealth on addressing homelessness and at risk of homelessness in the Northern Territory; however, it was tied to the remote housing agreement and some high-level Treasury outcomes in terms of the Territory's fiscal position. It was a complicated set of negotiations, the way it was presented. For me, as the Minister for Housing and Community Development, I was disappointed that we did not see an increase in the Commonwealth's contribution, which we depend on. So we have a similar amount of money to work with.

We are now looking at innovation and how we can address the research in terms of those unique indicators. Mr Chalker has been doing tireless work in terms of the Commonwealth negotiations with the department. He might like to make further comment.

**Mr CHALKER:** Thank you, minister. Member for Daly, the whole concept of where we have been working with the homelessness fund is knowing, pretty much, that we have almost a frozen financial environment with the Commonwealth. The commitment made with the new national housing and homelessness agreement is that the funding will not increase outside CPI.

The truth of that is, for the Territory, we get about 0.6% of the total Australian Government contribution to all jurisdictions as it relates to national housing and homelessness. We are, in fact, 12 times higher than the national average for homelessness in the Northern Territory. If you then start targeting Aboriginal people exclusively, that extends the figures. Approximately 47 per 10 000 are identified nationally as being homeless. If you are Aboriginal Territorian, that goes out to in excess of 2080 per 10 000. So that work continues more broadly into what we are doing with the conversation around the future of the \$110m over the next five years the Commonwealth is talking about providing.

The bigger work we have been doing in preparation for the strategy has been working with the sector. We also committed to the sector to move towards five-year grants and committed that they would know what the grants were going to look like by March this year. We met that deadline and have awarded that. Those grants will come into effect on 1 July for a period of five years.

The strength, which will come through when the strategy is formally announced, is how we continue to work in that environment so that we can test and flex what is being effective and what is not—and being able to work with the sector and relevant contracted entities to be able to move to target the issues, as opposed to remaining stagnant in pre-defined agreements over a five-year period.

**Mr HIGGINS:** I presume from that answer that there is no additional funding and we are not going to see it as part of that Cabinet submission from the Territory.

**Mr CHALKER:** Not at this point in time.

**Madam CHAIR:** Member for Sanderson, I believe you have a related question?

**Mrs WORDEN:** I have a question about crisis accommodation. You might have covered it a bit already.

One of the things we hear a fair bit, particularly in cases of domestic violence, is that women with more than one child find it extremely difficult to find short-term, gap accommodation.

I had some discussions with accommodation providers, NGOs, that are looking in that area. Can you let the committee know what sort of work might be going on in that area, particularly around women fleeing domestic violence with more than one child?

**Mr McCARTHY:** Thank you, Member for Sanderson, for the question. That is one of the indicators of homelessness and at-risk of homelessness that has come up in the research and consequently in the strategy. These are the real Territory examples that I talk about.

In terms of the five-year plan, as Mr Chalker outlined, it is about working with that non-government sector, the providers, to deliver this. We have a very strong partnership with Territory Families as well, in terms of that funding. In terms of any further details, I will hand to the CE.

**Mr CHALKER:** Thank you, minister. Member for Sanderson, as part of the homelessness strategy work we have been working with Territory Families around where the funding models are that they have specifically targeting families and vulnerable family units, as well as comparing that to our data as it relates to access to housing and homelessness services. That body of work is certainly not far away from being finalised, and that will be presented to the sub-committee of Cabinet for children.

I think the important part to highlight is the theme of where we are trying to go with this is to actually understand the totality of funding from a whole-of-government perspective—not just a whole of Northern Territory Government perspective, but also the Commonwealth Government and its investment across the whole of the Territory.

That has certainly been highlighted in more recent work that has occurred in Tennant Creek where representatives from the Prime Minister and Cabinet have started to actually provide the Northern Territory representatives on the ground in Tennant Creek with the quantum of money and who they are servicing so true service mapping can occur. We hope that will extend across the whole Territory.

**Ms NELSON:** That would be a first.

**Mr McCARTHY:** For the committee as a whole—I am certainly acknowledging the questions from the Leader of the Opposition—part of the real challenge for the Northern Territory is remote Indigenous housing. Part of the analysis of why we are 15 times higher than any other jurisdiction is related to overcrowding. I am talking about 15 times in terms of homelessness rates—is in relation to overcrowding in the remote communities.

You have to remember that in parallel with what the department is doing around housing and homelessness is also our \$1.1bn 10-year program for the remotes. That will have a major impact on homelessness and people at risk of homelessness across the Northern Territory.

**Mr HIGGINS:** I think the fact is that your seat is very similar to mine in having that problem. We are both very aware of it.

How many new public housing dwellings are planned to be built in Darwin, Palmerston, Katherine, Tennant Creek and Alice Springs over the next 12 months?

**Mr McCARTHY:** So in 2018–19, Member for Daly?

**Mr HIGGINS:** Yes.

**Mr BAMBER:** One thing I can start with is that in Tennant Creek we have committed to 10 additional dwellings—five we are hoping to kick off very soon and then another five by the end of 2018–19.

**Mr McCARTHY:** May I say, Mr Bamber, that was a good start.

**Mr HIGGINS:** Five is not many. Can you give us the rest, please?

**Mr BAMBER:** Five now and five by the end of 2018–19—so we are focusing on Tennant Creek in particular because unlike Darwin and Alice Springs to a lesser extent, Tennant Creek does not have much of a private market, so they do not have many alternatives, whereas in Darwin there is the potential for private market.

**Mr HIGGINS:** We definitely need priority in Tennant Creek. While you are looking for those ones I might give you the next question so someone might be able to look these ones up for you too. With the redevelopment of John Stokes Square, how many public housing tenants, or say dwellings, will it cater for and where will the current tenants be located in that? So that is a sub to the other question.

**Mr BAMBER:** In 2017–18 we constructed/replaced 22 new urban public dwellings across the Territory. So three in Alice, two in Katherine, five in Darwin, nine in Palmerston and three in Tennant Creek. These were

replacement dwellings. We have released tenders for the construction of a further 52 dwellings in 2017–18 with an anticipated completion in the 2018–19 year.

So that is 14 in Alice Springs. It was nine but is now 14 in Tennant Creek because we have added the additional five. Five in Katherine and 24 in Darwin and Palmerston region—and we are also completely refurbishing four dwellings in Nhulunbuy. That is our intended program.

Does that cover your question?

**Mr HIGGINS:** Yes, that answers it. So then John Stokes Square.

**Mr BAMBER:** We are looking for a like-for-like replacement of dwellings. With John Stokes Square, the proposal is to take a complex that really is at end of its life, as Kurringal and others were before it—it is actually quite a sizeable allotment there. What we are proposing is, there is to be an area there for the Nightcliff police complex, and we are also looking for a like-for-like replacement for our social housing dwellings. Then on the ground floor and next level we would be looking for services—wraparound services, clinical services, medical services or other support services.

The other benefit of the John Stokes complex is that at the moment you have what was the drive-in area, the Nightcliff supermarket, and then you have Pavonia Place, Nightcliff shopping area, but they are separated. The design that we are putting forward—and we are working with DIPL and the police on this—is that we open up that area so then you have a throughway between the Nightcliff supermarket and the Pavonia Place shops. So you really then activate that whole area. You have the police complex. You have our replacement dwellings, which will look quite a bit different from the dwellings that are there now.

**Mr HIGGINS:** How many dwellings are there now?

**Mr BAMBER:** Eighty-four—all public.

**Mr HIGGINS:** When it is completed how many dwellings will be there? We will get the 84. Will there be any additional ones?

**Mr BAMBER:** That is what we are looking at, at the moment. We are cautious of not having too high of a density. We are working with DIPL at the moment in terms of the yield. They actually think that there is a much greater yield than we probably go to in terms of the number of units we turn off.

We are not looking for towers. There is a complex in Palmerston, 127 Flynn, that probably gives you the best idea of the kind of residence we are looking at, which is three levels, under cover parking and also services on the ground floor. That probably gives you the best idea of what we are aiming for. As I said, we are negotiating with DIPL and police on the masterplan.

**Mr HIGGINS:** What is our plan then? I am not talking tenants. I specifically said dwellings. I do not know how many of those current dwellings are occupied, but it is presumably 84. What are we going to do as the replacement for those in the interim? What is our plan there?

**Mr BAMBER:** There are currently eight vacant. The money does not come on until 2019–20 so we really have 12 months to plan. In the interim we are still utilising the dwellings for accommodation. We may utilise it down the track for transitional accommodation as we are doing work on other complexes and houses. But apart from that, as with Kurringal, the tenants of those dwellings—we have 3500 dwellings in greater Darwin, as we do with Kurringal, as we do with other complexes.

**Mr HIGGINS:** What sort of time frame? Effectively you might be losing 80 dwellings out of the market for a period. How long a period is it going to take to actually build?

**Mr BAMBER:** Yes. Again, that is what we are negotiating with DIPL. The money does not come on until 2019–20 so we have that time to get it right with appropriate community consultation.

**Mr HIGGINS:** This time next year you will be able to tell us how long it is going to take. Well what you do is actually say this is how long DIPL told you it is going to take to build. There may be two different answers there.

**Mr BAMBER:** We will have a really good idea by then.

**Mr WOOD:** The replacement will be 84 minimum of public housing, so it is not going to be necessarily salt and pepper like Kurringal was?

**Mr BAMBER:** No, not necessarily.

**Mr WOOD:** But it will still have 84. You will not be losing ...

**Mr BAMBER:** No.

**Mr WOOD:** If you are going to put those people out into the broader areas, what is going to happen to the wait list? Is it going to increase for people who are thinking they are going to get a house tomorrow? Is it going to affect that?

**Mr BAMBER:** The answer is yes, inevitably. If we are addressing transfers then we are not addressing the external wait list. The same thing happened with Kurringal. When Kurringal was knocked down we had to find alternative accommodation within the 3500 dwellings for the people who lived in Kurringal.

**Mr CHALKER:** Member for Nelson, I can probably add some further information. Although the actual public housing assets we own might not increase necessarily while we do the decanting of those 84, we are increasing our social headleasing footprint as well as bringing a significant number of our long-term vacant properties back in. The balance will be more in advance of available accommodation and tenancies.

This year, for example, we have increased the number of assets we have but also managed to increase the number of tenancies across the whole of the Territory.

**Ms NELSON:** I want to piggyback on the Member for Nelson's question about the waiting list.

I just heard you say that if you are addressing Kurringal Flats and the tenants there, that will add to the waiting list inevitably—not add but extend the waiting time. How are you managing that waiting list and what is the percentage of people on that list? What is the waiting time frame right now?

**Mr BAMBER:** If I can augment what Mr Chalker said—we knew we would have a reduction in dwellings that we own while we went through this complex redevelopment. We were budgeted for 250 social headleases for five years, which meant that we went out to tender looking for those 250 social headleases to be filled by developers. We would lease their properties for at least six, with the option for another three years. That would help us get over the reduction in dwellings. But if we are transferring rather than bringing people off the waiting list, it will slow down the waiting list.

**Ms NELSON:** Of course. What about long-term tenancy? How are we managing that?

**Mr McCARTHY:** I do not want to lose your question, because I want the opportunity to explain to the committee about waiting lists for public houses. It is a good opportunity because there are so many variables in that, yet there is so little understanding by the public and elected community officials in some respect.

**Mr HIGGINS:** It would be good if we can start with the number on the waiting list, though.

**Mr WOOD:** I was going to get onto the broader wait list. I was just using the example of this particular case. Can I just finish off on John Stokes? I am happy to get back to the waiting list ...

**Madam CHAIR:** How about the Chair rules and the minister answers the end of that question for the Member for Katherine. We will go back to you, Member for Nelson, if the minister finishes answering the question.

**Mr WOOD:** The Opposition Leader has questions on it too, so we can all be involved in that discussion.

**Mr McCARTHY:** We will not lose it.

**Mr HIGGINS:** I guarantee I will bring it up for you.

**Mr WOOD:** In relation to John Stokes—you mentioned the design. Will this have to go before the DCA?

**Mr BAMBER:** Yes—any major redevelopment.

**Mr WOOD:** So, issues about how this is developed and the services needed, such as roads, and the effect on the local community et cetera—all that will come up before the DCA?

**Mr BAMBER:** Yes.

**Mr WOOD:** I did not know if you might have pre-existing, non-conforming rights—and just build it smack on top of the existing building and said that is okay. There will be changes you put forward.

**Mr BAMBER:** We have already met in consultation with surrounding businesses, for example. If we are opening a throughway between the Nightcliff supermarket and Aralia Street shops, you would want to engage with all the affected stakeholders.

**Mr WOOD:** You are actually demolishing a bit of history. When the drive-in was there, people would sit on their back balconies and watch the movies. That was a long time ago, but that is about when that complex was built.

**Mr HIGGINS:** My first date with my wife was at the drive-in.

**Mr McCARTHY:** Did you ever drive off with the speaker still on the door?

**Mr HIGGINS:** Yes!

**Mr McCARTHY:** Now we are showing our age.

Member for Katherine, I will come back to your question. As a regional remote member, once again, I acknowledge the government's \$69m stimulus program that is bringing a significant number of public housing dwellings into the market.

I was privileged to tour with the department officials in Alice Springs where that stimulus will bring back on 75 public housing dwellings. Tennant Creek will benefit. Katherine and the greater Darwin area are going to benefit. So when we talk about wait lists, that policy position has so many benefits down the line.

I would like Mr Bamber to explain about wait lists, and the variables and complexities around what it means when you look at the website and you see a table with some quite challenging numbers.

**Mr HIGGINS:** Can we leave the wait list until further down, as the Member for Nelson said he has some questions, and I have some questions.

**Mr WOOD:** I finished on John Stokes. I do have other questions on accommodation, but I was going to wait my turn.

**Ms NELSON:** I am happy to leave it further down as long as we do not forget, because I really do need to know about ...

**Mr HIGGINS:** We will not forget.

**Ms NELSON:** I am really good at reminding people.

**Madam CHAIR:** Member for Daly, further questions, please.

**Mr HIGGINS:** Last year you told us that the government was developing a masterplan for using Territory housing properties as emergency women's shelters. Where is the masterplan at, at the moment, and do we have any funding attached to that? Is it going to cost us anything?

**Mr BAMBER:** I do not have a specific update on it at the moment, but the masterplan was specifically for shelters that we have allocated as industry housing, so it was not every single shelter in the Territory. The masterplan was specifically around those houses that we allocated to—Dawn House, for example, to the Alice Springs Women's Shelter. I do not have that detail. Could I provide that as an update?

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#### Question on Notice No 5.2

**Madam CHAIR:** Member for Daly, would you like to repeat your question for the record.

**Mr HIGGINS:** Last year you told this committee that the government was still developing a masterplan for using Territory housing properties as emergency women's shelters. When will that masterplan be released, and what funding is attached to it?

**Madam CHAIR:** Minister, are you happy to accept that question on notice?

**Mr McCARTHY:** Yes, Madam Chair.

**Madam CHAIR:** The Member for Daly's question has been allocated the number 5.2.

**Mr HIGGINS:** Following on from that, have any housing properties been transferred to non-government organisations since March 2017? If so, which ones to whom and for what purpose?

**Mr BAMBER:** In title or in management?

**Mr HIGGINS:** Management, and then in title if there is any in that category. I am implying (inaudible).

**Mr BAMBER:** There is one property that is being transferred in title. I will start with that one because it is the easiest. That is the Alice Springs Women's Shelter, for which a \$6m grant was provided to contribute to a refurbishment of that facility. The issue they had was that it makes much more economic sense if they have title of that. We effected that title transfer. It will never be anything but a women's shelter. It is not like down the tracks it will turn into anything else other than that, so it made sense to transfer in title.

With regard to transfer of management, I referenced the number of industry housing assets that we have, where they are actually public housing, which we have allocated to the NGO sector. I do not have the specific detail on how many we transferred for that purpose, so I would have to take that on notice. But we have 560 industry housing assistant scheme dwellings now throughout the Territory, which we allocate to the NGO sector, including for the purpose of emergency women's shelter. For example, Dawn House has a number of our dwellings at highly subsidised rent. That is in addition to the funding they receive from Territory Families, for example.

I do not have the details in terms of how many we transferred in management for that purpose. We would have to take that on notice.

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### Question on Notice No 5.3

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

**Mr HIGGINS:** Have any housing properties been transferred to non-government organisations since 31 March 2017? If so, which ones to whom and for what purpose?

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

**Mr McCARTHY:** Yes.

**Madam CHAIR:** The question has been allocated the number 5.3.

**Mr BAMBER:** Last year was 548. This year it is 560. So the total is an increase of 12. I will just have to get you the details.

**Mr HIGGINS:** How many additional public safety officers in Katherine and Tennant Creek will that \$860 000 provided in Budget Paper No 3 on page 153 give us?

**Mr McCARTHY:** I acknowledge this as a great initiative from Michael Gunner's Labor government on behalf of Tennant Creek and Katherine. I have personally witnessed this successful initiative. There will be six officers.

Mr Bamber will give a rundown on those programs.

**Mr BAMBER:** We have had the good fortune to have funding provided to us for three public housing safety officers in Tennant Creek and three in Katherine. We are going through the recruitment process now and are looking primarily for local applicants which we have received. Once we have completed the selection process they need to undergo a training program.

The training program is a mix of a subset of the police training—which all the PHSOs get—internal training and external training. It also includes the six new recruits riding along with experienced PHSOs in Alice Springs and Darwin. We need to make sure they understand how things work on the street because when they are out there, they are in patrols of two. They will then be signed off by the experienced PHSO and their coordinators to start work in Katherine and Tennant Creek. Early August is what we are aiming for.

**Mr HIGGINS:** With those three additional, how many will we end up with? Can I get a breakdown of how many safety officers we are going to have in Darwin, Palmerston, Katherine, Tennant Creek, Alice Springs and Nhulunbuy?

**Mr BAMBER:** We have 14 in Darwin, six in Alice Springs, three in Tennant Creek and three in Katherine. The 14 in Darwin and six in Alice Springs cover three shifts—morning, afternoon and evening shift—between 7.30 to 1 am or 2 am in the morning, depending on the town.

**Mr HIGGINS:** So there are none at Nhulunbuy?

**Mr BAMBER:** No.

**Mr HIGGINS:** Is Palmerston covered by those in Darwin?

**Mr BAMBER:** The greater Darwin region is covered by those 14. They operate in two patrols. With those 14 and the six, we are able to cover shifts throughout the week. With having three allocated to us in Katherine and Tennant Creek, we cannot cover a morning, afternoon and evening shift; it just does not work. We are aiming for five shifts through the week and will work with the community and the police in terms of allocating those shifts—the time of day and day of the week when the PHSOs will be best served without burning them out.

**Mr HIGGINS:** Will the public housing safety strategy need reviewing following the Riley review? Specifically, there is a recommendation about restricted premises and these safety officers being able to nominate those.

**Mr BAMBER:** The public housing safety strategy is now in its sixth year, so it is definitely due for a review, particularly in light of the recent reviews and associated recommendations.

**Mr HIGGINS:** Is someone taking action in regard to that? Do we know what change that will bring about? This is one where the safety officers can nominate the building?

**Mr BAMBER:** Yes. This is something we are getting legal opinion on. You have the *Housing Act*, which empowers the PHSOs, and then there are other acts like the *Liquor Act*. We need to get legal opinion on that. I am on the working group for the alcohol harm minimisation response that came out of the Riley review.

**Mr HIGGINS:** You have been active in ensuring that you get a slice of the money that the Chief Minister has to implement these recommendations.

**Mr BAMBER:** We have been blessed with the stimulus money, additional PHSOs and other programs that have come our way.

**Mr McCARTHY:** That is a good comment, Member for Daly. Let us focus on a couple of regional towns like Katherine and Tennant Creek, and the Chief Minister's commitment and initiative around the police auxiliaries.

When we talk about our regions, we are smaller communities and know each other. We know the rhythms of the community, and when we find our community resources working together—police auxiliaries working with our public housing safety officers in partnership with Territory Families and the Department of Housing and Community Development—we are going to be able to normalise alcohol use and the other issues around antisocial behaviour. We will be able to target one of our biggest challenges in public housing, and this goes to the greater Darwin area and Alice Springs, and that is visitor management.



These resources are shared resources. I envisage that close partnership, particularly in smaller regions and Alice Springs. We are going to start to realise some really good results in terms of working together, understanding the people, understanding the families, having that close relationship between public housing tenants and police and associated support agencies.

We are looking forward to it. We have a share in that resource with the allocation for public housing safety officers, but the Chief Minister's initiatives will be significant in addressing what has been decades of challenges across alcohol harm and misuse.

**Mr CHALKER:** It is important to add, Member for Daly, that we have representation in the Territory Intelligence Co-ordination Centre that is run by Police, Fire and Emergency Services. They have a direct conduit to our public housing safety officers, so they have access to more intelligence and share more information which is then being used in deployment of collective resources across the board.

**Mr BAMBER:** In addition, the cross over families was another output from our reform management office. This is all the community facing organisations getting together on a regular basis in Darwin and Alice Springs. We all have clients in common. Rather than address them in silos, we are all getting together on a regular basis at the service delivery level to identify complex tenancies and work on those complex tenancies together.

**Ms NELSON:** That sounds almost like case management work.

**Mr BAMBER:** There is a high degree of collaboration and we are already seeing good results from that.

Could I correct the record? I had a niggle in my head with regard to the 84. The 84 units was Kurringal. It is 75 units in John Stokes.

**Mr HIGGINS:** So we replace the 84 with 75, okay.

**Mr BAMBER:** Kurringal is 84, and John Stokes is 75.

**Mr HIGGINS:** Hansard will correct those if they can.

**Mr BAMBER:** Thank you, Hansard.

**Mr HIGGINS:** How will you spend the \$747 000 on access to stabilised accommodation for young people transitioning from OOHC? You might want to explain exactly what stabilised accommodation is. I have my interpretation.

**Mr McCARTHY:** I will start once again. That crosses over into two areas. One is addressing the recommendations of the Royal Commission, and the other one is identified in our housing and homelessness five-year strategy.

Stabilising the life of an 18-year-old coming out of out-of-home care is underpinned by the philosophy and ideology of this department, that housing is the minimum support mechanism needed. With the strategy around that, I will get the officials to put some substance into it. But an 18-year-old Territorian transitioning out of out-of-home-care with stabilised accommodation, a stabilised home, will definitely be on the right track to continue to see success in their life as opposed to the risks.

Mr Chalker, would you like to add to that?

**Mr CHALKER:** Thank you. Member for Daly, as part of the Children and Families cluster group of agencies, we have been quite heavily involved with working with Territory Families in response to the Royal Commission.

Jim has been taking the lead in respect to our engagement there. It is a heavy focus for us, looking at these groups of people who are leaving the normal care facility. The evidence is clear that those up to 25 years old struggle and then become either on a criminal justice pathway and/or homelessness and other related social issues. Our focus will be about providing them with a pathway that is a gradual build up. You will see that the budget does increase in the outer years as well as we get the capacity yet.

Jim will be able to give you more detail on the latest concepts.

**Mr BAMBER:** One of the findings of the Royal Commission was that people leaving care of the CEO of Territory Families after 18 were overrepresented in homelessness, which includes couch surfing and other forms. One of the responses from the NT Government was to turn to us because obviously we fund or manage all forms of accommodation. They have asked us to work with the NGO sector to put together an NGO brokerage service where the NGO sector will provide secure accommodation and then provide support services for people leaving care at 18 up to the age of 25.

It was one of the recommendations from the Royal Commission which has been taken up. So we have been asked to put that product together and then to work with the NGO sector and also with Territory Families to ensure that it is a success. Obviously we have other housing products that we allocate, so it fits in well with what we already do, but this is additional funding.

**Mr HIGGINS:** If I just go back to the housing safety officers—do we keep statistics like how many times they get called out for assistance? Do we keep those sorts of figures and the number of properties that—we talked about 14 in Darwin and Palmerston. How many houses are they covering compared to the ones in Katherine where we have the three? Have we got those figures?

**Mr BAMBER:** The 14 PHSOs in greater Darwin are covering 3500 tenancies, as an example. Obviously with those 3500 tenancies, they are not all problematic tenancies. It is not like they have to patrol every one of those 3500 houses every night. The complexes get attention, but there also may be houses where perhaps the tenant is having difficulty with managing visitors, invited or otherwise, and so what we offer is the opportunity for our PHSOs to drop by and check in, to do hot-spotting—just to check in on those complexes, check in on specific tenancies to see how they are travelling, to see if we can provide assistance either directly or through referral.

**Mr HIGGINS:** How do we work out how many numbers we would need in each area? You are saying you have 14 in Darwin; you have 3500 properties; I do not know how many you have in Katherine; and you have the three coming in. If we are not working on properties, we must have figures on how many properties are actually a problem to us.

I am trying to get a feel for the workload, the distribution between those in Alice Springs and Tennant Creek compared to Darwin. I agree, it should not just be you have 14 to look after 3500 because a hell of a lot of them in Darwin will not be a problem, but you would find that a lot of them would be a problem in say Tennant Creek. Alice Springs—we do not have the member for Alice Springs here, so they are a problem down there. I am just trying to get a feel on the workload that might be put on these and how we balance that. Do we have some figures on that?

**Mr BAMBER:** We did not do a mathematical calculation that said here is how many tenancies there are to cover. It was more geared around the need to cover the shifts. We had to be pragmatic with regard to the three in Katherine and the three in Tennant Creek. We were more looking at if we could provide five shifts of focus between the three PHSOs, allowing for leave and sickness and other absences. Could we provide five shifts to cover our complexes and our tenancies who have a need for attention? What is the minimum number that will do that?

We landed on three, keeping in mind that we are working closely with the police and the NGO sector in the towns also. The police actually have the PHSO powers; they have far greater powers, but they also have the PHSO powers. The benefit they get from the PHSO team is that the PHSO team is more of a community engagement force; it is not an enforcement force. They do not have any weapons. What they do is go in and engage with the tenants and the visitors and with the general neighbourhood to help to bring peace and ...

**Mr HIGGINS:** Tranquillity.

**Mr BAMBER:** ...tranquillity in the neighbourhood.

**Ms NELSON:** So it is a far more collaborative effort in the regional areas?

**Mr BAMBER:** It always is.

**Ms NELSON:** Yes, exactly. It always is compared to more densely populated urban areas like Darwin or Palmerston.

**Mr BAMBER:** That is correct, yes, to the extent that the police actually dispatch us. It is VK Dispatch who triage the incident and decide whether it is a police response or a PHSO response.

**Mr HIGGINS:** You would be collecting statistics on how many call-outs they get and to how many properties? I presume over a period you will then evaluate that. Will we be able to get figures that tell us a breakdown on how many houses these officers look after, how many of those properties they get call-outs for, and how many call-outs they get, so we get a feel of the workload distribution across those?

**Mr CHALKER:** Member for Daly, I can give you some overarching figures as they relate to call-out. For the 2017–18 period they received 6008 allegations of antisocial behaviour. They were able to substantiate 2611 of those. They confirmed 389 trespass allegations and 349 allegations relating to alcohol restricted premises. The number of unwanted visitors removed from public housing premises was 5705. The number of members of the general public removed from public housing premises was 2138. The number of tenancies issued with demerit points was 281. That was 281 out of in excess of 3000 assets ...

**Mr HIGGINS:** Could we get those figures for those regions where you have those officers? That is what I am after.

**Mr CHALKER:** We can break it down into the regions.

**Mr HIGGINS:** Would we be able to get that breakdown?

**Mr WOOD:** Could I ask a question on that? My area has the 15 Mile and Knuckey Lagoon. Of course, you have the One Mile and other communities like Bagot. Do these officers—if I can call them that—have power over those houses in those areas?

**Mr BAMBER:** Under the *Housing Act*, the PHSOs only have powers over land we own. We do not have a landlord relationship with those out there. We do in Alice Springs and in Tennant Creek.

**Mr WOOD:** So there is an MOU or an agreement between the government and the people who run those town camps?

**Mr BAMBER:** It is actually the *Housing Act* that says ...

**Madam CHAIR:** Sorry, Mr Bamber, your microphone is not on.

**Mr BAMBER:** Sorry. It is actually the *Housing Act* that says that the PHSO powers extend to land we own or dwellings we own or manage. We do not do that in those cases.

**Mr WOOD:** How does it work in Alice Springs?

**Mr BAMBER:** We have a lease relationship with the 285 dwellings in the 18 town camps. Then we go for Tennant Creek.

**Ms NELSON:** It will be the same as at Kalano community or Binjari?

**Mr BAMBER:** We have no relationship. There is no ownership, if you like, of those dwellings so we have no powers as a result.

**Mr CHALKER:** In essence, Member for Nelson, the statutory role of CEO Housing NT, as long as there is a tenancy agreement and/or lease in place, that in effect gives us the enforceable element of the public housing safety officers. That is not applicable on every town camp across the Northern Territory.

**Mr WOOD:** I understood that. I just was not sure whether their powers crossed over those different leases.

**Madam CHAIR:** Member for Nhulunbuy, do you have a question related to this?

**Mr GUYULA:** Yes. I have one about houses that are almost abandoned or are not being looked after by anyone in the community.

Sorry, good afternoon, minister and the department.

Could you advise me what is happening for the residents of Birritjimi, which is on Wallaby Beach, and Galupa housing on Melville Bay, which was once Rio housing and is where many Yolngu families now reside in asbestos housing? What about the families living in Galupa as well, as there is concern there?

**Mr McCARTHY:** Thank you, Member for Nhulunbuy. The CE, Mr Chalker, has been involved in lots of negotiations work around this. I will pass to him to provide your answers.

**Mr CHALKER:** Thank you, Member for Nhulunbuy. Those localities create some issues for us because the Northern Territory Government has no lawful authority to access or do any works on those programs—at Birritjimi in particular. An agreement was reached with the Northern Land Council, which is acting on behalf of the TOs in that location—noting the health issues. I visited them last year. We had some engagement with the Australian Government and \$1m was contributed to the Northern Land Council. We are effectively doing the project management for them.

We are working with the relevant people who are residing in those places, assisting them into other accommodation alternatives, whether it is public housing or homelands. As they are leaving those asbestos riddled homes, those homes are being secured so no further tenants can move in.

That is the complexity of our arrangements; we can only lawfully act where we have the authority to do so, and in those locations we do not.

**Mr GUYULA:** If I remember rightly, those people living in Birritjimi are the Galupa clan. I have been hearing that is their homeland and where they want to stay, especially the one at Galupa. They do not want to move anywhere else. Is there anything the government can do—maybe move them temporarily somewhere else while they demolish and replace Birritjimi?

**Mr CHALKER:** The history of Birritjimi is that on that site the mine built the accommodation, and they have clearly deteriorated and are posing a significant health issue. There is a strong likelihood that asbestos has contaminated the land around there as well, so to repatriate that piece of land once the places are demolished would be a significant amount of money.

We have not had any formal approach from the Northern Land Council on behalf of the traditional owners in respect of the future development of that, as far as I am aware.

**Mr GUYULA:** I clearly know the people have been going this way or that way to find out how they can be supported. There are many concerns in Nhulunbuy about the future of the town because of mining. Can you advise of the progress of the negotiations for the town lease?

**Mr McCARTHY:** Thank you for that question. I am not sure we have the details you require. I will ask which agency—the Department of the Chief Minister. Member for Nhulunbuy, if you table that as a written question to the Department of the Chief Minister, you will receive an appropriate response.

**Mr GUYULA:** Okay, thank you.

**Mr HIGGINS:** I have a fair few more, but I will ask one and let the Member for Nelson ask because I know he has a few. It is way past his bedtime.

**Mr WOOD:** I will not comment.

**Madam CHAIR:** Member for Daly, please ask your question.

**Mr HIGGINS:** How many people are currently on the wait list for public housing in urban areas?

**Ms NELSON:** And then regional areas, thank you.

**Mr CHALKER:** As of 31 March there was a total of 3710 applicants on the urban wait list, which was an increase of 67 compared to the previous reporting period to 31 March 2017. The important part to highlight is that from 31 March 2017 to 31 March 2018 we actually had 50 more tenancies. There is no direct correlation between the number of tenancies we provide, realising a direct reduction in the wait list.

The waiting list, to a certain degree, is beyond our control. People who choose to apply for it—that is something we normally have a sense of influence or control over, apart from the fact we clearly go through our relevant processes to receive the application, assist people making the application and then prioritise that as it is relevant to their particular circumstance.

We have more assets in the field. We have more coming on, particularly with our social headleasing environment, but we are not seeing a diminishment in our wait list. We are seeing continuing applications for

the waiting list, and because of that—depending on the priority and assessment of that tenancy—that will all be considered in respect of who is ultimately allocated. We try to ensure the priority is the cadre that is treated sooner rather than later.

**Mr HIGGINS:** How many people drop off the wait list in the sense of not notifying you, but people that you then go and tell, 'We have a house for you,' and you cannot find them?

**Mr CHALKER:** For this last year we had 3364 active applicants and 346 deferred applicants.

**Mr HIGGINS:** Is that number increasing, do you think?

**Mr BAMBER:** The 346 deferred applicants—of those about 223 are incarcerated, so they are currently accommodated and not in a position to take up accommodation that we offer. We do have a program of reviewing that wait list and contacting people on the wait list on a regular basis to confirm that they are still in the Territory.

When we first did that a few years ago the wait list actually dropped by about 20%, as an example. There is now a rolling audit of the wait list to confirm they are still in a position, still require accommodation. I also point out that the wait list includes 414 transfer applicants—so, in housing and want to move to other housing.

**Mr McCARTHY:** Can I just come in there for the committee in terms of putting the dynamics around this because you will see the website; you will see these numbers published and they are big numbers and very challenging. There is no other way to put it. A constituent recently challenged me about the time that person had been on a wait list. That person was under 25, had a good job, had accommodation appropriated through the non-government organisation that they worked for, but was on a wait list and wanted to know why there was this long period to wait.

My conversation with that young person was, 'If your employment circumstances ever changed and you did not have that accommodation entitlement, then I encourage you to come to the Department of Housing and Community Development and look at our support programs around bond assistance, rental assistance, wraparound services into the private rental market and the assistance that we provide in terms of liaison with the private real estate market.'

That younger person interpreted that information, took it on board, but said, 'No, I want a public house'. Now, Mr Bamber mentioned about people that are incarcerated—I can give you a myriad of stories around constituents who I direct to the Department of Housing and Community Development who make an application, leave town and no longer reside in the Northern Territory.

I can give you examples of people that progress through the list and get to a point where we contact them and they are uncontactable. I can give you examples of people that get to the top of the list, we contact them, they do not have the financial resources or the support networks about how to access that public house, so we move into another area of supporting them.

It is a very complex business. I would just like to outline for the committee that these are the dynamics that you really do need to understand, and you really only understand them, as a layperson like me, when you work with these good people and they teach you, because it is a complex business.

**Ms NELSON:** On the Department of Housing and Community Development website, it has estimated wait times for public housing. For Katherine, for example, it says, 'One bedroom, four to six years', 'two bedroom' yadda, yadda. But there is no actual breakdown. You just mentioned that on the wait list there was 360 that do not live here anymore, 220 are incarcerated, 180 do not really need public housing anymore.

There is no breakdown of that on the website. As an average Joe looking at the wait list, I am thinking there are 3000 people waiting to get into public housing, that are disadvantaged and sleeping it rough. But in reality that is not the case. Maybe we need to work on that website to give the real picture.

**Mr BAMBER:** Yes, that is probably a good point. We provide wait times just to give people who are on the wait list a broad indication of the average wait time for one or two or three bedrooms in each of the towns. But you are right; maybe if we provided more information about the categories of people on the wait list that might help manage expectation but also to manage community understanding of that wait list.

**Ms NELSON:** That is the thing. We hear in the media constantly about how the Northern Territory has the longest wait times for public housing in all of Australia. In some media outlets it is like throughout the whole

western world, but there is no context behind those wait times. When you break it all down, yes it is a huge amount of time, a lot of years on the wait list, but it is really not as bad as it is portrayed to be.

The other question I was going to ask was about long-term tenancy with public housing residents. Can you fill me in on that? What is the department of Housing doing to manage that?

**Mr McCARTHY:** In terms of long-term tenancies?

**Ms NELSON:** Yes.

**Mr McCARTHY:** Or are we talking about ineligible tenancies?

**Ms NELSON:** I think both. We have some tenants that have been in public housing for 30 or 40 years. If the idea is that we are transitioning, providing public housing and supporting tenants to transition into private accommodation, how are we managing that and has that dropped down those numbers?

**Mr McCARTHY:** From my perspective first, and then I will get the officials to elaborate on this—very much we liaise with our clients. We are a very supportive agency and we have great relationships with our clients. When we identify that inappropriate housing mix—where the senior person's children have all grown up and left home and they are still occupying a three-bedroom house—we negotiate with them. We currently are in a Cabinet process where we are looking at a more formal way of being able to proceed with this, but at the moment we negotiate with them and offer them alternatives.

Some people choose to take those alternatives, but we continually come up with a cultural challenge of it being considered the family home. The family has been there and the children were raised there. So this is an emotional set. There are other parameters around the age and the situation of the public housing tenant. This an area that we are working on and we have real opportunities.

As a minister learning about this, we were looking at a specific demographic in the greater Darwin area—a senior demographic that fits this description—to transition to Akoya, seniors' accommodation in Fannie Bay, with the real sea change. Yet, I still came up against that cultural obstacle where people did not want to leave the suburbs, did not want to leave that traditional house when there were these brand new, well-appointed units in Fannie Bay with all the security and other aspects around them. That is a good question and that is something, Member for Katherine, we are working toward and the details can be elaborated on.

The ineligible is where the public housing tenant ends up in a situation where they are paying market rent for the public housing house which is really for the vulnerable, the disadvantaged. Once again, we have a Cabinet submission we are working on to present to Cabinet about better ways of addressing those issues as well, so the public housing really then underpins its true ideology around supporting the most disadvantaged in our community and that stepping stone through what is a continuum.

**Ms NELSON:** I guess that is where social impact housing and social enterprise can aid that.

**Mr McCARTHY:** Sure. Mr Chalker, did you want to add to that?

**Mr CHALKER:** It goes to what we are trying to look at more broadly about the provision of social housing because for every circumstance there will be a nuance or a further consideration. I am sure all your three various electorate offices have had a number of approaches from current tenants and those seeking to be tenants who have a story to tell that is unique to them and provides those issues.

We also have to bear in mind that there are stories you have to take into some level of consideration. For example, there is a single mum who has just left a violent relationship. She has two kids that she is raising. She has secured full-time work that would push her into the balance of being ineligible. She now has to wrestle with the decision as to whether she takes full-time work that makes her ineligible and leaves the safety blanket that the accommodation provides—and then has the fear that if things go awry in her life and she has to resign, can she ever get back into public housing?

There is a social thread that we have to consider. But, as you can see from the wait list, we have significant demand. Those are applications we always have to consider, and people breakdown to where they want to stay. It is never a case that 3000 people at any given point in time want to move into a single location. They have preferred sites and locations because of established family networks or whatever the case may be.

There is a whole range of deeper detail that comes into what impacts. We see significant deferrals because when we approach people they might not be ready from a bond perspective. We then offer our services for bond assistance. They might not have the money with them for the first periods of rent or the time is not right for them so they choose to defer.

There are a whole range of things we do through the case management approach that our front line service delivery staff do with people to try to work out who has the greatest need and ensure the priority is there.

**Mrs WORDEN:** Can I add a further question, Madam Chair?

**Madam CHAIR:** Yes.

**Mrs WORDEN:** It is a really interesting area that you are heading into because in one moment you talked about paying full market rent, but if the whole of public housing is only geared towards people at the lowest economic level then the money coming through—rent is very diminished and it is nowhere near being clearly outlined enough. Are there any bigger strategies around that, such as possibly keeping some people in aged public dwellings but at full market rent to subsidise the rest of the system? Other states have thought about that quandary before.

Forty years ago our public housing was full of government employees on great money with plenty of money coming into the system. Forty years is not a long time in which to transition to a situation that essentially every one of your tenants could be paying just \$40 a week in rent.

**Mr McCARTHY:** That is good analogy, Member for Sanderson. There are a lot wiser heads than me, but I would like to address that firstly, from my learnings. The outcomes that we deliver are the bigger, holistic, social and wellbeing outcomes of public housing. If you go back and look at homelessness and the cost to a government in terms of having homeless people who are at risk of chronic disease, antisocial behaviour and all those elements—alcohol harm and misuse.

We can look at an economic model of having a quantum of ineligible clients that will subsidise our programs or we can look at housing the most vulnerable and disadvantaged, which will deliver in the bigger picture. As a government we are focused on the bigger picture. The ineligible tenants are an interesting dynamic in themselves; we hope to have some movement in that space.

That is my take on it and where I come from as the minister in the policy position. I will pass to the officials for further comment.

**Mr CHALKER:** Member for Sanderson, part of what we are also looking at are the other accommodation pathways available for those people. Our social housing headleasing, as we have touched on, is a pathway. We also have to bear in mind what is occurring nationally; we have a higher density than anywhere else in terms of representation to acquire social housing.

The Productivity Commission has more recently started to espouse the concept of Commonwealth rent assistance being made available to government as opposed to purely the domain of community housing providers. That is going to be an interesting space for us. The Commonwealth is also currently working on legislation that relates to the automatic rent deduction scheme, which will eliminate the practice of signing up and a week later ceasing the deductions and moving into immediate debt deficit.

There are quite a few levers at play at the moment, as the minister spoke about. The ineligibles is one he has to consider and discuss going forward. We are trying to ensure that we are releasing as much available social housing across the whole of the Territory to those most in need.

**Mr BAMBER:** If I can provide a statistic, we have reduced the ineligibles from 10% to 5% in the last five years through the practices the minister has outlined, through bond assistance to moving into affordable housing, even to the point of helping them pack and move if that is an impediment—also, attracting them out of under-utilised housing, where they are the only person left in a four-bedroom house, into housing that is more suitable. For example, age accommodation set up for people who require that kind of support.

**Madam CHAIR:** Thank you. I know there are a lot more questions on those outputs, so I propose a five-minute recess and we will resume at 5.30.

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The committee suspended.

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**Madam CHAIR:** Thank you, everyone. We will resume the hearing. We are still considering Output 1.1. Member for Nelson, I believe you have some questions.

**Mr WOOD:** I have. Mine are a mixed bag, but I will go back to the waiting list. I thank the department and minister for explaining all the intricacies. I know some of those intricacies, especially about people who do not want to leave their premises, maybe because their earnings were higher than what should be permitted in those places.

I got the NT Shelter's newsletter and it states the following—which I think might also relate to another issue about the amount of public housing stock. It says:

*Public housing wait times have increased by between nearly 200% and 580% over the past ten years in Darwin and Casuarina.*

*Public housing wait times have increased by between a staggering 1016% and 2800% over the past ten years in Katherine – the highest rate of increase for any regional centre over the last ten years.*

*Public housing wait times have increased by between 327% and 464% over the past ten years in Nhulunbuy.*

*Public housing wait times have increased by between 250% and 387% over the past ten years in Tennant Creek.*

*Public housing wait times have increased by between 105% and 238% over the past three years in Alice Springs.*

They brought out this figure here, which was a graph of—in our (inaudible) it is 2015. Maybe that is the latest they could get. It showed there was a shortfall of 669 houses since 2003–04 to that time in 2015.

I suppose what concerns me is that I have been following waiting lists a long time through estimates, and nothing has really changed. I appreciate what the minister has said, that we can get people onto other ways of not relying on public housing. I say the same thing with Aboriginal housing. I have said before that we need to find other ways of producing houses besides relying on Commonwealth and Territory funding. We do not seem to get any further in this process. Is there any way we will ever reduce the waiting lists, or will it just be an ongoing issue that people will have to live with?

I also should note that in my area, one of the good programs is the Australian Government's rental assistance scheme. There are people in Coolalinga with flats that come under that scheme. I think it is an excellent scheme. The reality is that nothing seems to be changing from the point of view of wait lists.

**Mr McCARTHY:** Can I just start with that, Member for Nelson. Thanks for the question. The officials will expand on it. The changes we are seeing now are quite significant and they reflect other jurisdictions in Australia. You will see in the public housing sector, we are starting to now look at innovation like social housing headleases, like the community housing model and sector.

They are very successful initiatives in other jurisdictions. We are taking on board the innovation, but we are challenged with the economics. You need to have a funding stream to support any area of public housing. Whilst these are good programs and new innovations, they are challenging from a Territory perspective. You are seeing them as new ways of addressing exactly what you are talking about in terms of the need.

The officials will be able to throw more light onto that.

**Mr CHALKER:** Member for Nelson, there are a whole raft of issues. The Territory is one that can be so heavily skewed by various policy changes. If we go back 10 years, probably the most significant event that was occurring across the Northern Territory was the Northern Territory National Emergency Response. We saw a significant displacement effect from those who were living in remote communities into the major centres.



We have seen a transition and growth in the actual representation of people who identify as Aboriginal. In our urban tenancies, they are now in excess of 50%. Our remote tenancies continue to sit as close to 100% as possible, clearly given the density that occurs out there.

We have that competing issue, but if I talk about the number of tenancies, we had 504 urban tenancies ceased during the last financial year. We allocated 313 new tenancies. A lot of the times we see, particularly with long-term tenancies, those properties will actually be out of action for a significant period of months because we have had little ability to actually go in and do significant upgrade works to those homes. We have this duality of an impact of trying to keep minor new works and repairs and maintenance in a place while it is still currently being tenanted and then when it is ultimately relinquished, particularly given some are 30 or 40 years of age we have those pressures.

But equally we moved—we had 458 remote tenancies cease and 323 new tenancies come through in that pathway. We are seeing people choose to transition out. It is not as if we are staying completely static and once people are going in to the tenancies they are staying there.

With the Territory, there are a number of other policies that are in place. Ineligibles have previously proved very hard to move and, of course, they still make up a number. But as Mr Bamber just pointed out, we have seen a reduction in our ineligibles.

We also have an over 55 policy, which some could contend is akin to once you have hit over 55 and you are in a public housing dwelling you then have that asset, really for the remains of your days irrespective of your means testing.

They are all part of the picture that we are trying to pull together. The one thing we cannot go past is the gap that exists in remote housing. The latest Commonwealth expert review found that we have more than half the need of 5500 new homes across the whole of regional Australia for Indigenous remote housing.

At that very basic cut of in excess of 50%, that is 2750 new homes that need to be put in to the Northern Territory across remote locations by 2028.

**Mr WOOD:** Can I just butt in there? That excludes homelands or outstations?

**Mr CHALKER:** It excludes homelands. When you have that vast gap and then our homelessness deficit, particularly if you are an Aboriginal Territorian, 2080-plus out of 10 000—there is no other demographic close to that in Australia.

The need is very, very clear. We are still trying to settle what the \$110m per annum commitment from the Commonwealth is going to be, and we continue to engage them to come on board and join our program. We have a single focus program trying to address that need but also provide support to those existing assets, because their expert review also finds that there needs to be a shift in to more protection of those assets but also a lot more tenancy support, which historically has unfortunately been what has hit the budget cutting room floor in the past.

All those levers have a direct impact in to our broad issues with wait lists. I say again, our issue of controlling a wait list is quite limited. The people who find themselves in that socioeconomic cadre that have the ability to apply and ultimately be provided access is a significant reflection of the broader issue—social, economic, family, whatever the case may be. They are things that we have little to no influence over but are trying to ensure we are providing the most appropriate accommodation to those in most need at that point in time.

Yes, once we get the issue of asset numbers in remotes balanced, I think we will see a balancing of that impact across the whole of the Northern Territory, particularly pressure on the urban centres.

**Mr WOOD:** Do you see a role for people like Venture Housing? Minister, you were there, I think, at the opening at Venture Housing at Palmerston. Are there more opportunities for companies like that to fill some of that gap?

**Mr McCARTHY:** Yes. From my perspective, that is one of the new innovative models that we are working with; however, in the Territory that means a relationship with an asset transfer. Whilst that is a good relationship in terms of the management of tenants and the better management of housing, we need to continue to lever investment and continue to lever private sector investment.

Anybody that wants to come to Tennant Creek and invest in housing can deliver the best economic return as an investor in the Northern Territory, if not most jurisdictions in Australia, because of the headleasing opportunities. We have land and the supportive community; we need private sector investment.

This is a way that we are looking at the public housing sector. That is where people like Venture come in and governments have levers that they can use such as land. In Tennant Creek we have land. Venture community housing is one part of that new model.

**Mr BAMBER:** Organisations such as Venture can access Commonwealth rent assistance, which provides a 30% top-up on the rent. At this stage we cannot access that.

**Mr WOOD:** Do you have any idea what the rent for a two-bedroom or a single-bedroom public house is compared to the private market with that assistance from the Commonwealth Government? Is there a big difference between the two? Does anyone know the actual amount?

So if I was to get a public house, I would have to pay rent. Say it is a two-bedroom house in Palmerston; what would that cost? What would it cost for a two-bedroom unit that Venture Housing put up with the subsidy from the Commonwealth Government? We are talking about this being a substitute, but can you compare the actual figures people would have to pay? How real is that option?

**Mr CHALKER:** Member for Nelson, we have been heavily engaged in looking at the community housing provider model. We have 750 assets the election commitment has been transferring to that sector. We have a consultant on board working not only with us, but with the sector, and also making inquiries interstate with other jurisdictions who have been going through the community housing provider model.

We are learning the lessons of many of those, and interestingly the feedback from many is that they probably took on too much too early, and it nearly put them to the wall, and they have had a significant number of issues embedding that into place.

We are fortunate we have two Tier 2 registered community housing providers, Venture being one of them and also the Central Australian Affordable Housing Corporation in Alice Springs. There are obviously other people in the market based in the Territory who are keen to move into that place as well.

We have had to look at all the modelling around the best outcome of those 750 assets, because if we take 750 assets off the bottom line of our asset base at the moment, there would potentially be a direct correlation to our waiting list, unless we can include the community housing provider's tenancies as part of our tenancies for those on the waiting list.

There is a raft of work we are doing around it. There has been modelling on the income stream. As I say, part of that is working out the profit margin for those types of entities to at least run cost neutral, because clearly the preference is not to run a cost deficit, because that cost deficit will immediately come back to government as an enduring, recurrent cost.

**Mr WOOD:** Minister, on a slightly different note—and you may have heard me speak about this before—the YMCA facility is going to close down on the 29<sup>th</sup> of this month, and my understanding is that quite a few people are going to have to find somewhere else to live.

It is a low cost accommodation facility, which I recently visited. It is a clean, secure facility, central to the CBD. It provides basic accommodation, yet it is closing down for reasons I am not able to find out from the YMCA, except they said it was not sustainable; although, they recently spent quite a bit of money doing it up.

Do you have any knowledge about the closing of this facility, and is there any way of keeping this facility open?

Its closure will put a further burden on public housing, because these people are going to have to find a place. Some of these people have lived there for 30 years and would regard it as their home and are now going to have to be shifted to a place where they do not know the people, to a different community. Do you have any update on the closure of this facility, and is there any chance of keeping it open?

**Mr CHALKER:** Member for Nelson, I met with the YMCA at their request earlier this year, where they told me about their plans. They did not request additional funding at that point in time. They were looking to go into a consolidation phase and they had some plans for future development of that site.

More recently, I understand the likelihood of those redevelopments is somewhat restricted, and that opportunity may not present itself. So there has now formally been a request to the government, which is under consideration.

What I will say is that we committed to visit relevant tenants to assist any who might be applying for public housing. We also had an understanding of what the current rents were that were being charged to individuals there. Notably, some were actually higher than current private market rents, so the accessibility option for those people opened quite considerably, knowing what that cost outlay per week is compared to being able to enter into the private market. We are able to assist and provide some of that balance of information at the moment.

But that is the latest that I have—given the fact that their redevelopment opportunities might not realise as they had hoped, that the conversation is now back at the table with the Northern Territory Government.

**Mr WOOD:** It is my understanding that it is a perpetual list, so any redevelopment of that particular site would have to get approval from the government because it would not be for what it was originally given for. Would that be correct?

**Mr CHALKER:** I do not know the deeper intricacies about the limitations on that particular site apart from just understanding the messaging from them—what they had hoped to do. They have met some limitations in respect of that land and their ability to redevelop at that site.

**Mr WOOD:** So there may be a glimmer of hope?

**Mr CHALKER:** Certainly the lines of communication are well and truly open, and we are ensuring that any tenants there are supported where we can provide that support, but we have also gone above and beyond to ensure that they do have a pathway to access a private market rent environment that may even actually realise a saving for them if they choose to move.

**Mr WOOD:** Thank you for that. That is at least something more than I have known previously.

I know that the Member for Sanderson will be interested in this, and I raised this during parliamentary questions. You sold the Narrows facility near the Winnellie shopping centre, so it is still sitting there like a desert. What is actually happening to it? Is it going to be developed for housing, because it seems we knocked it down, sold it and then—do you have any idea what is going to happen to that parcel of land?

**Mr BAMBER:** That was a straight sale at auction, so there were no caveats from us. So it is bought by a developer and they have not developed that land. But there is no expectation. When we sold Kurringal there was an expectation that we would eventually get affordable housing accommodation back, and we would get social headleasing accommodation back, which we have. There was not a similar constraint put on the Fenton Flats but they were like 2014–15, I think, when that occurred. Fenton Flats is what ...

**Mr WOOD:** Is that in the Narrows?

**Mr BAMBER:** Yes.

**Mr HIGGINS:** Is that the Shiers Street complex?

**Mr BAMBER:** No, Shiers Street is on the other side of the park. Fenton Flats is right near the old RAAF gates.

**Mr WOOD:** So those people were absorbed into—it might have increased the waiting list.

**Mr BAMBER:** Temporarily slowed the wait list.

**Mr WOOD:** If I jump around a bit, you can tell me if I am in the wrong place. On page 62 of your annual report you talked about secure tenure arrangements are required before significant infrastructure works can commence in remote locations. 'During 2016–17, 64 community housing leases over the equivalent of 4200 parcels of land occupied by public housing and remote communities across the NT were negotiated. Long-term leases were negotiated over 1029 parcels of land occupied by NT Government infrastructure in remote communities.'

The bit I am interested in is, it says on the list of those communities—one of those leases listed mentioned was Nauiyu. Could you explain what that particular lease is all about, and will it mean that now you can get some new houses in a place where for many years they have not had new houses? At one stage they probably led most communities in the Northern Territory in housing. Will that mean there is a chance that that community will at last get the possibility of having new houses?

**Mr BAMBER:** I am afraid you are going to have to repeat that. That is probably more Output 1.2.

**Mr WOOD:** Is it? I was not sure where some of those ones go so I can jump back to 1.2 and at least you may be able to get some information before that time. I will try to go into areas that are still in 1.1. The town camp review will be in what section?

**Mr BAMBER:** That is Output 1.3.

**Mr HIGGINS:** Are you asking about the one at Nauiyu? I think the issue there that you might want to just check, I could be wrong, but my understanding is it was owned by the Catholic Church and unless it is actually surveyed you cannot do leases longer than 12 years. That was then surveyed in the last couple of years which enables them to do leases longer than that which enables them to get money for housing.

**Mr BAMBER:** That is correct.

**Mr HIGGINS:** I should be sitting at your table.

**Mr BAMBER:** We were waiting for Output 1.2. That is all.

**Mr CHALKER:** We are just double checking. I am querying whether it is related to a community land use plan. Under page 62 of the annual report it is actually the work of the land tenure unit, which they have been looking at all of those issues. A lot of those communities do have intricate leasing issues and the Member for Daly is clearly well across that.

**Mr WOOD:** I used to live there so I know.

**Mr CHALKER:** That is the issue but we will get that further clarity for you.

**Madam CHAIR:** That will go under 1.2. Go ahead, Member for Nelson.

**Mr WOOD:** You mentioned the money stimulus package for housing of \$64.5m, and you mentioned the issue of replacing rooves on public housing. I did get a complaint from a contractor who was concerned about the conditions of the contract which said, 'Contractor shall visit the site to survey dwelling from outside the property boundary'. It goes on to say, 'Contractor shall visit the site to survey each dwelling from outside the property boundary to inform themselves of all measurements, quantities and requirements to carry out the works required by the RFQ'.

I know that has been changed but the issue I have is, who would have written that condition? Because there is no way a contractor can stand on the street, look at a house and then say, 'Here is my quote for the roof'. I am just wondering how that occurred? Was it a genuine mistake or was it just someone trying to restrict movement onto the property?

**Mr BAMBER:** That was a genuine mistake; it was a miscommunication and we clarified it with our contractor. So the contractor also made contact with us directly.

**Mr WOOD:** I gathered it would have been on all contracts for that. I thought it was a bit strange.

**Mr BAMBER:** There was pressure on us to get moving with the stimulus program, but we need them to be able to inspect the property to be able to form a quote for the property. We were able to clarify that with that particular contractor.

**Mr WOOD:** Can I ask a question about the aged care side of things? I am not necessarily talking about a fully integrated retirement village with independent, semi-dependent and dependent units, but facilities that perhaps older people can move into, especially in the rural area—where they can have a small unit with a bit of space around it, but they stay within their community.

In the case of if you lived at Howard Springs, you could probably live at Bees Creek, Humpty Doo or even Howard Springs which is a bit limited in land available. Have you looked at those possibilities of opening up Crown land for a private developer to put in those sorts of facilities to retain community?

I have been around a fair while. I am getting nearly old enough to be in one. In the rural area, there is one area that gets dropped off when it comes to caring for older people. Is there anything in the pipeline that you are looking at in that regard?

**Mr CHALKER:** Member for Nelson, I referenced before that DTBI were looking at the election commitment and that work had been ongoing with us as an agency. Following some of the results that they have gathered, we have engaged KPMG in March of this year and they are analysing the demand and supply of housing and supports available to seniors across the Northern Territory.

Once that report is completed and handed to us, we will be looking to release the findings of that towards the end of the year. This time next year we will probably be able to have an even more detailed conversation with a report that you will have to hand.

**Mr WOOD:** Will it be as thick as this one, which has another part to it as well?

**Mr CHALKER:** It will not be as thick as that. I would not like to pre-empt any outcome, Member for Nelson.

**Mr WOOD:** That is a pretty thick report. That is all I have on that section.

**Mr McCARTHY:** Just picking up on that, Member for Nelson, I think you will see some great examples of seniors' housing delivered in Alice Springs, for instance, which seems to fit the concept you are talking about. The message that I am taking on board is for the rural area of Darwin.

**Mr WOOD:** People want a little bit of space. I see developments in Darwin and you are still living this far apart. People want enough room for the tomatoes, maybe the dog and definitely a few chickens. They want some space, just so they have a little bit of independence and still keep a little bit of their rural lifestyle.

**Mr BAMBER:** I have sympathy for that. We grew up out at Darwin River and my father is still out there. He has no intention, I cannot get him into town. He would rather live out in the bush.

**Mr WOOD:** Sensible people.

**Mr CHALKER:** Member for Nelson, we unfortunately do not have a lot of five-acre plus blocks. It would be ideal for us to look at those things, but it is a challenge we are prepared to undertake.

**Mr WOOD:** There is land at Humpty Doo and Bees Creek, which does belong to the government.

**Madam CHAIR:** Member for Nhulunbuy, I believe you have some questions for this output. I know the Member for Daly also has some more questions. Thank you, Member for Nhulunbuy.

**Mr GUYULA:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I have two questions on Output 1.1.

My electorate are telling me very clearly that many families are wanting to go back to homelands to live and bring up children in a safe, healthy environment. Can you advise what funding is available for the development of homeland towns? You might have said something about this already, but for the record, is any of the funding for housing being provided to homelands?

Without houses in homelands, the government is pushing people into spaces that are not healthy. This pressure will have long-term problems for those families who are no longer residing on their country.

That is one question.

**Mr McCARTHY:** Thank you, Member for Nhulunbuy, for the question. It is a great opportunity to talk about homelands, and you outlined succinctly the benefits of homelands for traditional owners and Indigenous families. We have a budget of around \$43.5m to service homelands. That is for municipal and essential services, jobs programs, homelands extra programs around housing maintenance, and grants programs. The problem is around the land tenure.

As you have heard already, just briefly with a solution we have worked hard for Nauiyu—homelands essentially are Aboriginal land and therefore the assets are owned by the Aboriginal traditional owners of those lands.

There is also an interesting historical perspective where the Commonwealth Government, who started the infrastructure developments on homelands, chose in the previous administration to create an agreement and walk away from homelands. So the Northern Territory is on its own. We have had to do some careful planning and programming to continue servicing existing homelands.

We need to look at how we can deliver your objective into the future. The Department of Housing and Community Development, as we spoke about briefly in parliament, are conducting a review. It is well-timed and much-needed. We are conducting a review into homelands, and that will be a logical question about how homelands can look at the development of new housing.

From Barkly to Nhulunbuy, be aware though, when we start to look at this, we also need to consider all the other appropriate services around growing our family strong—our health, which is our clinics and our education, and the other support services that are needed. It is not just about housing; it is about the whole community development aspect.

That is where we are at and a very brief summary of the challenges. If anybody would like to elaborate further from a more technical perspective—I think Mr McInnes is jumping to the mic.

**Mr McINNES:** Thank you, minister. Member for Nhulunbuy, it is a good question. As the minister has pointed out, we are conducting a review of the homelands program. That is not just about the delivery of existing programs into homelands, but also the homelands policy that was produced back in 2013 and was updated, somewhat, in 2015.

It is very timely because we do understand the pressures and the nuances between delivery of housing into remote communities and the more frequent requests that we have had about developing new houses on homelands. With that in mind and with those more frequent requests that we are getting, we are conducting a review. That review will also look into a co-contribution scheme around developing new housing on homelands.

The existing policy really is around a shared responsibility around homelands and an expectation that residents will put some effort—providing some sort of contribution to new housing. That is something we are working on. We will do that with key stakeholders, so it will be a full consultation process in developing the new policy.

One of the tricky things with developing housing on homelands, as I am sure you aware, is not just the wraparound services or access to services as the minister has pointed out, but also the need for or lack of infrastructure in homelands. Many homelands do not have the right access to the essential services required to support additional housing. So it is something that we do struggle with, even just with our existing programs and the existing houses that are on homelands.

**Mr GUYULA:** But the trigger is there. The people are really willing to go back home after being in communities since 2007 or 2010. They realise that it is more free and families can comfortably go back home. They would rather be back home there after finding out that in crowded towns there has been petrol sniffing, some young people that get into—being in Gove area, teenager boys and girls are likely to get into drinking grog. Most of them have found out that families want to take their children back home and some children are wanting to go back home.

They have been telling me that they would rather be out here because there are too many problems and trouble in town. That is why I can understand what your point of view is, and this is what the people are wanting to do, to somehow get some sort of support to go back home.

**Mr McCARTHY:** Member for Nhulunbuy, I will ask for your help in this because as we conduct this review, one of the things I am looking at is—I come from an area where there are very small homelands. Many are abandoned but they are very small entities, and as Mr McInnes said, they do not have supporting infrastructure. When you move into country like yours, you see quite large, well-established homelands.

So let us look at what we have in terms of a more sustainable model with supporting infrastructure that we can present to government to say it is a simple classification issue of a homeland to a community receiving the normal government support.

We could probably start to look at some of those bigger places and add this to the policy discussion. Then it becomes the processes of government, where I, with the department, will be able to put that together into a clear and concise story—a good, strong position—and take it to Cabinet for consideration.

I would be really interested in your advice around what you think you could be those development areas as opposed to just the broader statement that would be giving a lot of false hope to people in homelands. So, the bigger places with supporting infrastructure—let us continue that conversation.

**Mr GUYULA:** Yes, because I am just wondering—I am running around or being in the middle of what people are telling me. One day I want to take you out there again and actually hear from the people what they are saying. We can work things out and maybe find a solution, find a way.

There is incarceration and there are people frustrated about being told to go here and there and they would rather be supported in going back home. I feel a lot better; I was running around the homelands since last month, along the countryside and homelands, and this is what I found out. Even kids are saying, 'We want to go to school here'. We are worried about those children stuck in town who would rather be coming back home. There are lots of issues regarding people going back home, and housing is one of them.

**Mr WOOD:** Can I comment on that? There are different types of homelands. One of the homelands that the Member for Daly will know is Emu Point. I know Emu Point mainly from the people who live there. I was basically brought up with some of them at Daly River. I have raised this with the previous government; once upon a time at Daly River you would see many houses built out of sand from the river. They turned it into bricks and built their own houses out of materials from that community. Emu Point has a limited number of houses because it is regarded as an outstation, but it has a school and an airstrip, yet it has overcrowding.

I am interested to hear what the government thinks about giving people the ability—giving them pride in their community, giving them a job and getting around some of these issues of waiting for government money to build houses. We need to give them the right infrastructure, that is, maybe a truck, a brickmaking machine or a saw mill, like they do at Nhulunbuy. Give them the option to build their own houses in these outstations instead of waiting for the government to come along. I am not blaming the government, because it is difficult as there is an issue regarding money.

People can try to do something themselves to put a shelter over their head and reduce overcrowding—Emu Point is a classic—and give people something to do. When I was there they worked for half a day on CDEP, and the other half of the day they might be smoking ganja or doing something that was not very useful.

**Mr CHALKER:** That does not happen anymore.

**Mr WOOD:** You fixed it?

**Madam CHAIR:** Member for Nelson, do you have a question for the minister?

**Mr WOOD:** Yes, sorry. I had to have a preamble. Minister, is there an option for allowing those communities that are not in the waiting list for houses because they are outstations, of doing something themselves with your help?

**Mr McCARTHY:** Member for Nelson, that was a good preamble and a good question. I will address that first of all with the government's local decision-making processes and policy. We are serious about local decision-making. This department has been very much a leader in that field. You heard in my opening remarks about the 72 consultations we conducted in regard to program delivery.

Emu Point resonates in a number of respects, as I have visited there in a previous capacity as a minister. That is what I was talking to the Member for Nhulunbuy about; if we look at the homelands policy and review about these places being reclassified in terms of communities, then it is a whole different resource package that is available. We need to talk to the people about what they want. We need to then look at the structures and how we can improve it.

Getting to the point of people building out of local materials and creating housing, that is an interesting point. In a homeland you would have a lot less restraints if you went down that pathway. Our policy is based on creating economies. It is also premised on innovative housing design. We are building public assets. We are building to a code, and we have the parameters around the built form as well as essential services and so forth.

I encourage Emu Point to be part of this review—to take the step to look at it being established and classified as a community. Then it becomes part of our programs, and through strong local decision-making we can start to talk about innovative housing design that would suit their community.

In regard to the jobs outcome you talked about, that is exactly what this policy is about. It is about engaging local people in every layer of the housing sector. I have put out to this committee one of my challenges—public housing is not the only housing. The other challenge is that the dialogue, the discourse, the narrative, has to change from only being about building new houses. It is about tenancy management and good cyclical repairs and maintenance. It is about Room to Breathe, which is a very good option for the Emu Point overcrowding situation. It is about customising existing infrastructure, building off existing serviced land and is also about the new builds.

For Emu Point—and if you look at the wider Daly area—creating an economy where Aboriginal people are involved in every layer of that housing sector—in our policy a five-plus-five plan is five years to get that under control, to get people skilled and trained and to get those economies operating. The second five years is about an asset transfer where it becomes a true community housing model.

Whether it is a house built out of local materials or innovative built form that we are using as a public asset, let it take shape based on local decision-making. With innovative built form, the Room to Breathe model is really resonating in the bush. People are interpreting this very complex concept, in terms of construction, through good local decision-making.

Let us look at the serviced lot, at 600 square metres of land that can be very unproductive if it is cluttered with disused vehicles or bulk rubbish—and let us innovate in that serviced lot to create outdoor living areas and extra bedrooms. Let us start revising the traditional thinking of having a bathroom and toilet in the middle of a three bedroom house when there are nine people living in that dwelling. Let us look at independent pods integrated in the house for the elders so they are part of that family but have a private space and lock up space.

The Tiwi women taught me about their lock up spaces; it is not about their groceries but their fishing gear. That is some of the most powerful protein they deliver to their children. When we look at that concept, we have a broad range of skill development to train unskilled workers to bring them in to start to skill them to then maintain and develop the housing.

I am nearly to the point where we can articulate the outdoor living area for an Aboriginal family. They are telling us all this and now we have to translate it to an engineering perspective. My dream is to have the use of local materials in this. I really am pushing this. At the moment, industry cannot really accept it. They are strategic in their thinking and clinical in their delivery.

Your concept is what I want to fuse into what essentially becomes the outdoor living area for the large extended family. This supports cooking, rest and recreation, sleeping for certain months of the year, a large family dynamic and the social aspects of that.

Local materials can be very much a part of this. Local materials represents a labour-intensive approach and skill development. We are on the same page but we are going to have to fuse this in, and there are some significant steps we will have to take.

**Mr GUYULA:** I have one more question. Many developing Aboriginal organisations and businesses may initially employ specialist staff from outside communities. There is a great housing shortage for these purposes. Can you advise if there are any plans to alleviate this pressure?

**Mr McCARTHY:** Member for Nhulunbuy, are we talking about a permanent presence or the contractors that are coming into remote communities? Permanent workforce or the contracting transient workforce?

**Mr GUYULA:** Contracting permanent residents who have special skills that can work on these things. An old man at Garrthalala has built the homelands around Old Man Dhungala and Yirrkala. He is sitting there, wanting to help support with materials. There will be people wanting to learn how to build and create bush timber and material into housing, and people could start to build homes and things like that in the communities. How can we get support? People might come in to do a bit of help around there but the Yolngu on the ground would carry out the work on that stuff.

**Mr McCARTHY:** This is the conversation we were just having to some respect. It is about skilled development, essentially, and good local decision-making. We are getting some great feedback, and a



general sort of summary is that finally a government is listening. We have had some good results in terms of not only land servicing and where we should put service lots, where we can put them in acknowledging all the cultural nuances of the community—it is also about the housing, about the built form, the design, the construction. We are listening and people are advising us.

That is the policy. Now, how do we make that work in your context, supporting the old man who has experience in this? We have programs and we need input from local people, but most importantly we need people that will engage in these programs. Let us establish the workforce. Let us get the people that want to be involved in this, and then let us grow the opportunity, as I said to the Member for Nelson.

In a Room to Breathe example—this is in a community context—the customisation of a house has unlimited potential if we start to use local material and start to manufacture materials. People that want to make blocks make mud bricks. People that want to basically refine timbers—these industries can be a part of it. These industries are what we are growing towards.

At the moment, we are 11 months in to a 10-year program. We have done a lot of work in that 11 months, and mostly in the negotiation, the planning, the discussion, the consultation, then the wider work around the land servicing, the cadastral work around subdivisions. We now are going to start moving into very much more of the construction phase. You will see that this year and you will see that in corresponding years. Now is the time to get those ideas into the policy about how we utilise local labour, utilise local materials and local resources, and we fuse that into this program.

The Room to Breathe—once again, I keep talking about this—is probably the best area to start, because the built form that the housing is very much structured and in such need that we need to start progressing this. We do not have, I suppose, the ability to do this overnight, to start to look at the more local approach. To go back to the Member for Nelson's era—we have the ability to make sure we can do this over the next 10 years.

We look forward to working with you, and we look forward to communities challenging us with ways to work. I will summarise that once again, I will ask for your help. You know what I need? I need an outdoor living area that has local materials that will be good for dust suppression. It will minimise dust. There will be appropriate shade, built form, accredited shade, using local materials. We need good paving. We need landscaping. We need to create cooking areas that are healthy cooking areas to support the family. We need to have areas where people can rest and socialise in a family context.

This can be a lot of local material. This can be a lot of local labour. This customises an existing dwelling. This is where we can start this journey. When we prove to the engineers that these local materials are suitable for the permanent construction in the housing sector, then we can start to look at the drawings and the engineering perspectives to go forward.

It is really revisiting the past, but it is about making sure we engage local people in every aspect of this because if we do not, in 10 years' time nothing much will have changed.

**Mr HIGGINS:** We mentioned before the Shiers Street complex. Is there any plan to renovate that or even redevelop it?

**Mr BAMBER:** I can say that we are definitely doing a renovation through there. There are no immediate plans to redevelop it. I think John Stokes will consume us this year. That is quite a significant redevelopment we will do there.

With Shiers Street, we have a package of options of works we are putting through. They include ...

**Mr HIGGINS:** Will they be put through this year?

**Mr BAMBER:** Yes, they are happening right now. We are ripping out the external facade and are doing a lot of painting. We are going through organising the replacement of fencing. We are applying the CPTED, which is the crime prevention environment analysis—we borrowed that from the police.

We are doing an analysis of the landscaping, the lighting, what we can do for that complex and other complexes to make them more sociable and also to make them safer. We are putting through a lot more lighting. We are taking off those facades and replacing all the wet areas—the bathrooms, kitchens et cetera. It is a major overhaul. We are putting, from memory, about \$1.2m into that complex.

**Mr HIGGINS:** How long will that extend the life of that complex? As you were saying, it will be five years before we have to spend too much more money on this or ...

**Mr BAMBER:** We will get a few more years out of it, but in reality we still need that number of dwellings. The future is we do not have complexes of that density. We get much better outcomes from smaller complexes, which is what we are delivering now.

**Mr HIGGINS:** How many dwellings are in that at the moment?

**Mr BAMBER:** I will have to check because I got that last number wrong.

**Mr HIGGINS:** This will be the 84, will it?

**Mr BAMBER:** No, no, 84 was Kurringal. Let me check so I have it right.

**Mr HIGGINS:** Maybe while you are checking that, Jim, I will get some others out of the way so we can finish this before dinner.

There is an extra \$1.17m allocated to the housing strategy, additional social housing, head lease dwellings. How many additional dwellings will this cover?

**Mr BAMBER:** We are aiming for 250 addition social head leases.

**Mr HIGGINS:** Is that \$1.17m to get to that number, or is that just to top that number up or bring it up to that number?

**Mr BAMBER:** In total over the five years it is \$17m that we have budgeted. We are looking at, with these 250 social head leases that will get us over the issue of—as we demolish and replace complexes.

**Mr HIGGINS:** The 250-odd is over what period?

**Mr BAMBER:** It is over a five-year period. Initially, we were looking at 50, 50, 50 over five years. We are just going to put out for the 250 now and get those buildings going so we can have those social head lease units turning off for ourselves.

**Mr HIGGINS:** Yes. So that \$1.17m is to actually cover the cost for the number this year?

**Mr BAMBER:** Yes, that is right—the leasing costs. As more of these projects get out of the ground and are handed over to us, then their leasing amount increases every year to cover the additional dwellings that are coming off.

**Mr HIGGINS:** Yes.

**Mr BAMBER:** The answer is 76 units.

**Mr HIGGINS:** Seventy-six.

Okay. In the variation notes on Budget Paper No 3, page 155, you talk about the average number of days to occupy vacant urban public housing. I think what you are talking about there—I want to clarify this—is the R&M or upgrades that are holding someone up from going into the house?

**Mr BAMBER:** Yes. A house becomes vacant. It is the time that it takes us to get that vacant house, refurbish it or significantly upgrade it in some cases, and then turn it back over to tenancy to re-tenant.

**Mr HIGGINS:** Also in the same area, you have a figure for social housing headleasing dwellings. There is a reference to planned development that was withdrawn. Do you know what that is?

**Mr BAMBER:** In Alice Springs we had progressed the bowling green site. We expected a number of units to come off the bowling green site. The developer was not able to get approvals for the density or the layout they wanted, so in the end they withdrew.

**Madam CHAIR:** Member for Daly, I will get you to hold your questions. The time being 6.30 pm, we will break for the next 30 minutes and recommence the hearing at 7 pm. Thank you.

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The committee suspended.

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**Madam CHAIR:** Thank you, everyone, and welcome back. We will continue our questioning of Output 1.1.

**Mr HIGGINS:** What funding have you allocated for new and upgraded public housing in Batchelor?

**Mr BAMBER:** We have just done a major vacate for 8 Flynn in Batchelor. That was about \$18 000. One of the things we picked up when we had the \$68.5m stimulus program provided to us—we went through and identified all of the potential work, roofing work and complex upgrades. We identified much more than the \$68.5m but have had to portion throughout all the towns and suburbs.

There is more work that could be done in Batchelor because there are 55 tenancies there, but that is one piece of work that has been awarded and addressed.

**Mr HIGGINS:** Is there any plan to build any new public housing in Batchelor at the moment?

**Mr BAMBER:** Not in Batchelor. Batchelor is an odd one. There are 55 houses there. Part of the problem we have—we have had discussions with Health also—is that Batchelor is out of the way. In terms of access to medical services and specialist services, it does not lend itself to people who may require services. We have problems occupying those 55 houses because we will make an offer and get knocked back on those houses in particular. I would not be looking at any additional housing at this point.

**Mr HIGGINS:** Would it be fair to say that the issue around health—one of the problems that has been there for a while is that the health centre is 2 kilometres short of being classified as remote and therefore they get certain benefits. The bus that picks up people will not come off Crater Lake Road and through Batchelor and out to the highway. It just goes up the highway; people cannot get out there. If we address that problem we might have some potential to build some more houses.

**Mr McCARTHY:** I can share with you some hope. I had a great meeting in Tennant Creek last week with Territory Resources. Once again, it is a story about developing the economy of Batchelor, realising some of the economic development potential around Batchelor and then, as a government, we can grow Batchelor.

**Mr HIGGINS:** I think the issue is more around the public transport. People cannot get from there—it was identified even with the airport.

The public housing that is proposed for Banksia Street in Zuccoli, will that be for seniors or singles accommodation?

**Mr BAMBER:** I am waiting for that confirmation. We have awarded that through DIPL. It will be six one-bedroom units. I am just waiting for confirmation from my guys in terms of the intended use. We have been looking for these smaller complexes as being suitable for seniors. We do have an aging tenant population. It has hit 50% in terms of the numbers of seniors in our housing. We are looking for more seniors' complexes.

**Mr HIGGINS:** How many tenants have been evicted in the reporting period? Do you have the figure on that? How many of them have come about as a result of reports from the public housing safety officers?

**Mr CHALKER:** Member for Daly, I can inform you between 1 July 2017 and 31 March 2018, there were 10 tenancies through orders granted by NTCAT and four tenancies through the issuing of a notice of termination by the department to the tenant.

**Mr HIGGINS:** Fourteen?

**Mr CHALKER:** Yes.

**Mr HIGGINS:** Okay. What has been the expenditure in the reporting period for repairs and maintenance of NT housing stock in Moulden? How many properties are there in Moulden?

**Mr CHALKER:** Member for Daly, we will have to get back to you for figures at the suburb level. We have overarching repairs and maintenance expenditure for this process. We will have to come back to you to break it down to suburb level.

**Mr HIGGINS:** Can we put that one on notice then?

**Mr BAMBER:** To be clear, it is the expenditure of repairs and maintenance and minor works in the suburb of Moulden?

**Mr HIGGINS:** Yes.

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**Question on Notice No 5.4**

**Madam CHAIR:** Member for Daly, I will get you to repeat it now so you can do it all at once.

**Mr HIGGINS:** What has been the expenditure in the reporting period of repairs and maintenance of NT housing stock in Moulden? How many NT housing properties are there in Moulden?

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

**Mr McCARTHY:** Yes.

**Madam CHAIR:** The Member for Daly's question has been allocated the number 5.4.

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**Mr HIGGINS:** In your answer to global questions, it says \$1.4m was paid to Deloitte for the town camp review, but in response to the Public Accounts Committee, we understand you said that it was \$2.4m. Are we talking about how much is paid out in any one year? What was the total of that one? I would just like some clarification on that. How much was that town camp review in total?

**Mr CHALKER:** It was \$2.4m, Member for Daly.

**Mr HIGGINS:** That is all I have for that output area.

**Mr WOOD:** Just following on from the Member for Daly, are there any new houses for Humpty Doo, which I think had one new government duplex in 20 years? I am wondering if there is any move to add to the houses there because they have facilities—public transport, medical services, a pub most importantly, a supermarket and schools.

**Mr BAMBER:** I have to say there are no immediate plans, but we revise our plans from year to year. There are no immediate plans, but I take into account the earlier conversation about accommodation for seniors living in rural areas. It is something we need to revisit.

**Mr HIGGINS:** You will give us that answer when it comes in, Jim?

**Mr BAMBER:** Yes.

**Madam CHAIR:** I have a couple of questions I would like to ask the minister. I want to make sure I am asking in the correct output as well, or if I need to save them for the next output. Driveways in remote communities, is that 1.2? Thank you, I will ask then. Town camps, you said are 1.2? Thank you. Room to Breathe, 1.2? Jabiru town leasing and accommodation, will that be under 1.1? This one? Thank you.

Minister, my question is in regard to the housing situation in Jabiru, which is of course in my electorate. We know we have had some struggles with getting some government employee housing in partnership with the Department of Health, which was asked earlier today. I want to commend your ministerial office and department for assisting those nonclinical staff in making sure they were able to stay in Jabiru and provide the service they deliver at the clinic in Jabiru.

I am just wanting to see what sort of plans the department has for the future of Jabiru, knowing that the Chief Minister is driving the sustainability of the future and supports the sustainable delivery of services in Jabiru. I just want to know more about some solid plans for Jabiru. There is no private rental or public housing.

**Mr McCARTHY:** Member for Arnhem, thank you for the question. Mr Chalker is more qualified to answer this, working with the Chief Minister on the holistic picture about the future of Jabiru.

**Mr CHALKER:** Thank you, minister. Member for Arnhem, DCM is leading the engagement with Gundjeihmi as well as with our own in respect of the future. We have already had some precursor meetings with those entities to talk about future use, and we have opened our door in respect of continuing with that conversation once we get a fulsome understanding from the master plans they are working on, what role they see—I suggest it would predominantly focus on government employee housing, with Gundjeihmi looking at the future use of those programs, arguably akin to a community housing provider model. Bear in mind they will ultimately be their assets.

**Madam CHAIR:** In regard to remote housing government employee, would that be under Output 1.2 as well? I will save it.

**Mr BAMBER:** I have a response to an earlier question from Mr Higgins. What I am told is that there is no specified use for the six one-bedroom complex at Banksia at this point.

**Mr HIGGINS:** Okay, thanks.

**Madam CHAIR:** That concludes consideration of Output 1.1.

### **Output 1.2 – Remote Program Delivery Office**

**Madam CHAIR:** The committee will now consider Output 1.2, Remote Program Delivery Office. Are there any questions?

**Mr HIGGINS:** Can you give us an explanation—there is a \$10.7m drop in funding for this output. It has in the explanation that it is mainly due to the timing of infrastructure grants in remote communities. Can you explain that?

**Mr McCARTHY:** Thank you for the question. I will pass that to Mr McInnes.

**Mr McINNES:** That is largely due to carrying forward some of the remote housing grants from the current year into next year. As part of the budget development process it was evident we would not spend our full property and tenancy management budget for remote areas and we would transfer it from this year to next year. That is timing.

**Mr HIGGINS:** Would that not have an increase, if you are transferring it from this year to next year? It would decrease this year and increase next year?

**Mr McINNES:** It is, only that it has been offset by less available budget from the Commonwealth, so that drops away significantly next year.

**Mr HIGGINS:** How much did the Commonwealth funding drop in this budget?

**Mr McINNES:** It is in the budget papers if you refer to page ...

**Mr HIGGINS:** Another way might be, what would be the revote of the grants going forward?

**Mr CHALKER:** While Mr McInnes is looking for that—the \$110m for the next five years that was committed by the Australian Government was provided to us at the 11.59 hour. In the budget papers it will show \$110m as the bottom line. We did not have sufficient time to disburse it. It equally showed in the Commonwealth 2018 budget as a similar full quantum.

The parameters and prescriptions around what that funding will look like is still yet to be settled with the Commonwealth.

**Mr HIGGINS:** Part of the answer I got before was that there were grants that had not been finalised and were revoted. What is the value of those grants?

**Mr McINNES:** Seventeen million.

**Mr HIGGINS:** We have been told that there is a remote housing project under way in Amanbidji, which is using a Queensland company—this question was passed to you from infrastructure, so I hope you will not tell me to go back to infrastructure. They are using a Queensland company, Rocon Contracting.

How many local workers and Indigenous workers is Rocon using on the project? When did it begin and when will it finish? How much is it worth? How did we end up with a Queensland company? The Indigenous workers, are they local Indigenous workers or Queenslanders?

**Mr McINNES:** If you do not mind we will take that one on notice. I will get the answer for you this evening.

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#### Question on Notice No 5.5

**Madam CHAIR:** Member for Daly, can you please repeat the question.

**Mr HIGGINS:** We have been informed that there has been a remote housing project under way in Amanbidji, which is using a Queensland company, Rocon Contracting. How many local workers and local Indigenous workers is Rocon using on the project? When did it begin? When will it be finalised? How much is it worth? How did a Queensland company win the work over the local contractors?

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

**Mr McCARTHY:** Yes.

**Madam CHAIR:** Member for Daly's question has been allocated the number 5.5.

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**Mr HIGGINS:** The budget paper shows an estimated 50% of the workforce is going to be Indigenous for 2017–18; 2018-19 budget figures against the same measurement are 40%. Why have we got that change?

**Mr McINNES:** Our general target is 30%. We are actually achieving way above in 2017–18; it is at 52%. The 40%, while it is lower, is still a stretch target on the 30% that we include in all our procurement documentation and local contracting requirements.

**Mr HIGGINS:** In 2017–18, you are saying it was 52%?

**Mr McINNES:** Right now at this point in time we are achieving 52%.

**Mr HIGGINS:** It just seems unusual then that we would then be saying the estimate is going to be 40%. Why would we not be attempting to retain?

**Mr McINNES:** We absolutely will be attempting to retain 50%. At the time those targets were set we did have some fluctuations. But knowing what we had in our tender documentation, 52% was a reasonable target for us to revise the current year. Thirty per cent is the standard but we are definitely aiming—we want to achieve 40%, but in real terms we do want to maintain the sustainability in the workforce moving forward. We will certainly be aiming beyond the 40%.

**Mr CHALKER:** Member for Daly, I think it is important also to add that again because of the late notice of what the Commonwealth contribution was going to be, the national partnership agreement that has been in existence recently ceases on 30 June 2018. We pretty much had to prepare our budget papers without any awareness of what the fiscal funding envelope was going to be from the Commonwealth and that only came as I have mentioned right at the eleventh hour, just prior to their 8 May budget announcement.

We had little to no insight in to the reality of whether we were going to be delivering a double the size program, if the match funding was coming through, whether it was potentially going to be triple, which is in essence what the export review would have obligated the Commonwealth to provide.

**Mr HIGGINS:** It just shows how dependent we are on the Commonwealth.

**Mr CHALKER:** Particularly given the legacy items that we got handed just over five years ago from the Commonwealth and the condition they were in.

**Mr HIGGINS:** It goes back 40 years, but anyway.

Is it correct to say you are aiming for improvements of 268 remote dwellings for \$20m in 2018–19? That is roughly \$75 000 per unit. Is that right?

**Mr McINNES:** That is correct. We have done a lot of pre-planning around—that is in particular to the Room to Breathe program. The current year we have achieved 108 dwellings with about 140 additional living spaces—148 I think it is. We have already done our pre-planning for the next five years for the Room to Breathe program, and we do think 268 is achievable.

**Mr HIGGINS:** My question was more around the \$75 000 per unit.

**Mr McINNES:** The cost per unit does vary. It depends on the amount of works or what type of works we undertake on a dwelling. As per the normal local decision-making process, that dictates the level of works we do undertake. We still have the budget parameters, but we do find that the cost of works vary from dwelling to dwelling. So anywhere from \$20 000 up to \$300 000.

**Mr HIGGINS:** Where do we draw the line then to say it is not economically viable to actually improve that? Do we have a value that we work off, or maybe you do not want to make that known here for commercial type reasons or something? I do not know. Is there some cut-off?

**Mr McINNES:** It is a valid question. The cut-off point I think is a question of circumstance. I can give a couple of examples on that. If the dwelling is deemed to be beyond economic repair, we will not do that and we will plan it through our HomeBuild program.

We have had an instance where we have had a dwelling in Weemol. We are spending \$300 000 on that dwelling. It will turn it into a six-bedroom home and it will save us on infrastructure costs. At that point in time there is no way I could get a six-bedroom home in Weemol for less than \$500 000 to \$600 000. It is a question of weighing up those elements, looking at what the available infrastructure is in communities, what the dwellings need to have undertaken on them to resolve overcrowding.

The idea with the Room to Breathe program is not just to create additional living spaces, but to ease the effects of overcrowding as well. We will put in an additional toilet or bathroom if we need to. If it is greater than a three-bedroom dwelling, we will make sure a second toilet or shower goes in. That reduces the effects on all the fixtures and fittings in the existing infrastructure or the house. As I said, it really is a case by case basis and an economic analysis on whether that dwelling is beyond economic repair, should be knocked over or can we get a bigger bang for our buck by adding some more bedrooms.

**Mr HIGGINS:** So who makes that decision, or does it vary depending on the amount?

**Mr McINNES:** It is done in consultation with the residents, individual residents. We know what the make-up of the household is. The residents let us know what they need to improve their living conditions. We have the standards that we do adhere to if we go above three bedrooms or four bedrooms—what else we need to do in terms of the essential services. It is a collective decision.

The recommendation is all put back—and I have a good example here—as a parcel for the community, and we go through that, assess it and say, ‘Yes, that is acceptable,’ or ‘No, we need to revisit this and talk to the tenants and say is it better for us to start again and build you a new house?’

**Mr CHALKER:** Member for Daly, I might just add that this is a lesson learned out of the National Partnership Agreement where the upgrades were capped and housing works were being de-scoped to fit within the cap. We have turned that around, hence the flexibility that the program we are delivering brings to us. We have that flexibility to ensure that we are making an assessment based on what is the structural integrity of that place. If we bring it back up to the new standard, which is the intent of the new program, then we extend the liveability of that home for another 30-plus years.

**Mr WOOD:** Does that mean we will not have houses painted on the inside but not on the outside, as I remember well.

**Mr McCARTHY:** Member for Nelson, I remember that well too. Mr Chalker, would you like to make a comment on that?

**Mr CHALKER:** We do not anticipate seeing those, Member for Nelson. Certainly not while I am around.

**Mr WOOD:** I think I still have the photos.

**Mr HIGGINS:** I have heaps. Regarding the new measures for additional new constructed remote housing dwelling—and that is going from three in 2017–18 to 120 in 2018–19. How are we assessing where they will be built? How many new dwellings do you estimate are actually needed in those remote areas?

**Mr McCARTHY:** If I could ask Mr McInnes to answer that, and could you please make comment around land servicing, land availability, the legacy of that issue and, of course, any substance around the member's question.

**Mr HIGGINS:** So you might actually give us what portion of the NT Government and federal funding for remote housing is going towards each of those as well, so we can bundle it all together.

**Mr McINNES:** Okay. It is a good question. The 2017–18 and 2018–19 programs—the dwellings are targeted at this point in time at those communities where we have the ability to undertake infill works. We had 67 fully serviced lots to be able to start the 2017–18 program, but beyond that we had lots that were in various states of augmentation for service. A lot of them required extensions for sewers, et cetera, so we have to do a lot of investment on those.

The first year of the program was targeted at those we could build without too many impediments. The following years, 2018–19 and 2019–20, are aimed at turning off existing infill lots that require additional infrastructure expenditure.

It has not been rolled out as we would normally do a remote housing program because of the restriction around the available serviced lots. From 2019–20, we have developed our program on a needs base, an outcomes-focused base, so looking at overcrowding and then developing a program that way.

In terms of the 2018–19 and 2019–20 program, we will deliver 128 lots in 2018–19. It is fully NT funded. Those measures in the budget papers are aimed at the NT funded program. The Commonwealth funded program has been removed because of the expectation it is going to finish in 2018–19, so there was no point putting in additional measures around that. We are more than happy to report on the numbers for the Commonwealth, but what you see in the budget papers is NT Government funded numbers.

**Mr HIGGINS:** A bit of clarification on the budget paper figures as they compare to the minister's statement in parliament on 13 March this year—the minister stated in parliament that in their first 15 months, Labor has delivered 131 remote dwellings, with 151 under way under the Remote Housing Investment Package. The figure in Budget Paper No 3 on page 155 shows an estimate of just three new remote dwellings under the program for 2017–18. Can we see how those figures fit together?

**Mr McINNES:** Member for Daly, those numbers would have included the national partnership agreement on new houses as well.

**Mr McCARTHY:** Madam Chair, if I could just round off—the way we talk about remote housing is about the combination of programs, and that is why it is so imperative to get the final Commonwealth decision. The Department of Housing and Community Development, since Labor came to government, has now delivered 1000 either new or fully upgraded homes for remote Indigenous families.

**Mr HIGGINS:** How many was that again—1000?

**Mr McCARTHY:** Yes, 1000.

**Mr HIGGINS:** On 1 May this year, you told parliament that since you came to office you have seen 900 new homes or significantly improved homes for remote Territorians. Again, the figures in Budget Paper No 3 show a different story, with just 108 dwellings receiving additional spaces and just three new dwellings in remote communities. Again, is that a NPARIH discrepancy?

**Mr McINNES:** Yes, Member for Daly, the ones in the budget papers are focused on the NT Remote Housing Investment Package of \$1.1bn.

**Mr HIGGINS:** No problem. Regarding the new measures starting on 1 July for new construction replacing remote housing dwellings—of which you are estimating just six in 2018–19—why are you not considering more replacements given the state of some of the public housing in remote areas? Can you please confirm that these dwellings will be on exactly the same blocks as the dwellings they are replacing?

**Mr McINNES:** That is correct. Those six will replace existing houses.



**Mr HIGGINS:** Do you have plans on where you are going to move those families to while those houses are being replaced? How are you addressing that?

**Mr McINNES:** Using the lessons learned from our Minyerri episode late last year, we have developed a transitional accommodation policy in conjunction with APONT, who were very helpful in putting that together. That policy is now in place. It means that no family, resident or tenant will be forced to sleep rough while their houses are being replaced or dwellings significantly upgraded.

**Mr HIGGINS:** Another clarification—in parliament during budget week the minister stated, ‘I am pleased to see the Labor government has appropriated the necessary funding to deliver about 450 blocks of service land’. But Budget Paper No 3, page 155, again under the key performance indicators, says the department has budgeted to deliver 150 lots. Why do we have that discrepancy? I know the minister said ‘about’.

**Mr McINNES:** We have plans and consultations, briefs and designs in place to deliver 450 new lots over the next 18 to 24 months. Those figures you see in the budget papers are ones that we estimate will be fully complete to be able to build on in that time.

**Mr HIGGINS:** So we are planning to start work on another 300?

**Mr McINNES:** Absolutely. I have some additional details here around the land servicing if you would like me to go through those.

**Mr HIGGINS:** No, that is okay. I know this is a favourite of the minister; can you give us the latest figures for upgrades made under the government’s Room to Breathe program?

**Mr McCARTHY:** Yes.

**Mr HIGGINS:** That has brought a smile to his face.

**Mr McCARTHY:** Certainly. Who would like to supply the Member for Daly with those details? Dwayne?

**Mr McINNES:** The latest figures for the Room to Breathe program are, we have touched 117 dwellings and they have received 148 additional rooms or living spaces. What is not evident in these is ...

**Mr HIGGINS:** On the 148 rooms or living spaces, is that just living spaces or does it include things like toilets and bathrooms?

**Mr McINNES:** That will include things like toilets and bathrooms. What we do not have measured here—it is part of the lessons learned from the earlier works we have done—are some of the better outcomes we have done with the Room to Breathe program. Those are things like disability modifications, concreting driveways, mowing strips and more dust suppression-type things. We are monitoring that as we move forward.

We have also to date scoped another 108 dwellings for the Room to Breathe program. That scoping will continue for the remainder of the year. We will have a number of packages. We have two packages awarded right now; one will start in Areyonga on 25 June. That is progressing well, and we should easily achieve those 268 in the budget papers for next year.

**Mr HIGGINS:** Terrific. You might want to take this one on notice. Can I get a list of all the companies, businesses and organisations that have carried out work under Room to Breathe, the amounts of each contract and whether those companies are local or interstate?

**Mr McCARTHY:** Certainly, Member for Daly.

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#### Question on Notice No 5.6

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

**Mr HIGGINS:** Could I please get a list of all the companies, businesses and organisations that have carried out work under the Room to Breathe program, the amounts of each contract and whether each company, business or organisation is local or interstate?

**Madam CHAIR:** Thank you. The minister has accepted the question and it has been allocated the number 5.6.

**Mr HIGGINS:** Was there any government cost in correcting the sheds in Ali Curung?

**Mr McINNES:** My understanding is no; that was entirely done by the contractor.

**Mr HIGGINS:** Similar to that, I understand the Alice Springs contractor, Ingkerreke Commercial, was engaged for a select tender to carry out the works for the Room to Breathe program at the community. Were Tennant Creek and Barkly region businesses given the chance to be part of the tender selection process for these works? If not, why not?

I understand they were engaged through a select tender, so the question is why did we exclude Tennant Creek and Barkly businesses, or were some of them given the opportunity?

**Mr McINNES:** You are correct, Member for Daly. That was undertaken under a select tender process. Part of the government's initiative around building capacity for Indigenous business enterprises requires that in communities where there is the availability of an Aboriginal business enterprise, that we will go to select to build their capacity. Where there are two or more, we will go to a select tender process. Where there is no existing enterprise in the community or nearby, we will go to an open tender process. Anyone can bid for those works and there is still a requirement for the local Aboriginal employment content.

**Mr HIGGINS:** The select tender went to the Alice Springs contractor. Were any businesses in Tennant Creek or the Barkly region given that opportunity, or are you saying there were not any businesses capable of doing it?

**Mr McINNES:** I would have to check the circumstances on that, but my understanding is that it went to Ingkerreke directly.

**Mr CHALKER:** Member for Daly, the primacy was the focus on Aboriginal business enterprises. At that point in time, the entity that operates in Tennant Creek was under administration. The opportunity presented for Ingkerreke to be engaged and the community were involved with that.

**Mr HIGGINS:** Effectively there was none available in Tennant Creek or the Barkly region?

**Mr CHALKER:** Not that would identify as an Aboriginal business enterprise.

**Mr HIGGINS:** Is part of that tender that local Barkly Aboriginal people would be employed on the works?

**Mr McINNES:** All the tenders—we have strengthened this in our most recent tender documentation—have a requirement for local Aboriginal employment.

**Mr HIGGINS:** How many Room to Breathe work packages have been awarded to business or contractors that are based in communities?

**Mr McINNES:** I will have to take that on notice, but in total 13 Aboriginal business enterprises have conducted works in 17 of the 22 communities that have been completed to date. Whether they were local or nearby, I would have to check that detail.

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#### Question on Notice No 5.7

**Madam CHAIR:** Member for Daly, please repeat the question for the record.

**Mr HIGGINS:** How many Room to Breathe work packages have been awarded to businesses or contractors based in communities?

**Madam CHAIR:** Minister McCarthy, do you accept the question?

**Mr McCARTHY:** I would just like to clarify, that information will be supplied for the earlier question that the Member for Daly has asked.

**Madam CHAIR:** I will allocate the question the number 5.7.

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**Mr HIGGINS:** I can refer back to that. Thank you.

Out of the Room to Breathe work packages and contracts, how many have been made through select tenders as opposed to open tenders?

**Mr CHALKER:** Member for Daly, my memory of it is that of the 17 communities, 13 Aboriginal business enterprises were employed. We will seek confirmation for you shortly.

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#### **Answer to Question on Notice No 5.4**

**Mr CHALKER:** I have the answer to question on notice relating to Moulden, number 5.4. The total number of dwellings in Moulden is 379. The total repairs and maintenance spent for that year was \$1.329m this financial year. The 379 total dwellings includes industry, social and public housing.

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**Mr CHALKER:** Member for Daly, I will have to get some additional information on that.

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#### **Question on Notice No 5.8**

**Mr HIGGINS:** How many of the contractors working in the Room to Breathe projects have been appointed through select tenders as opposed to open tenders?

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

**Mr McCARTHY:** Yes.

**Madam CHAIR:** That question is allocated the number 5.8.

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**Mr HIGGINS:** I am led to believe there is a government house in Wadeye and it is not being used full time. It is there nominally for visiting government officers. My question is, is that correct? If so, why is this much-needed remote housing being used for that purpose, and why are government employees not using commercial accommodation in Wadeye?

**Mr BAMBER:** Without knowing the specifics, I believe there are VOQ houses in Wadeye.

**Mr HIGGINS:** These are separate from the police houses at the VOQ.

**Mr BAMBER:** They are probably part of the police houses. Police, Education and Health—a number of the houses are set aside as VOQs. They go to design where it is like a common area and then several, or three to four, rooms that can be allocated. That is to house, for example, in the case of the police VOQ that will house police who are there spelling, the normal permanent police who are away or had to go for leave or go for training for whatever reason—they are some of the reasons we have VOQs stationed in some of those bigger communities.

**Mr HIGGINS:** I am happy enough with the police one. I know their purpose. This is more a house that is in the new estate at Wadeye. It is primarily left vacant and then people come in. My question is, we have a house that is worth a lot of money in a community that is crying out for houses. It may not be the only one; this is just one that has been pointed out to me. It is not the only community as well.

We have these houses that are sitting there, and there are alternatives. If there was not a commercial accommodation that the government could use, I would maybe accept that. But when we have commercial accommodation and two lots—one run by the council and one run by TDC—and we have at least one house that is there that could be used to prop up our housing shortage.

**Mr CHALKER:** Member for Daly, it could be a case that if we get to understand the actual address we will be able to do the deeper dive for you. But, at times it will either be awarded to another department for the provision of accommodation to their employees. If they are in a transitional phase between recruiting to a permanent and they have transitional staff coming through, we do know that from time to time they do use the vacant home as the temporary accommodation until the permanent employee ultimately arises, which is an inbuilt sort of security protection for that asset as opposed to leaving it vacant for long term.

If we know the actual address we are more than happy to do the deeper dive on that information and engage with the relevant department.

**Mr HIGGINS:** What I would like to know is how many houses we have in these communities that are held in that way. These are houses that for a long time—I am talking in excess of 12 months—have not been allocated to someone. I would like that question answered.

**Mr CHALKER:** That will take a significant period of time, Member for Daly, because it will require us to go in and engage with the relevant departments that we have provided those assets to. I would suggest that on a day-to-day basis that situation could change depending on the availability.

**Mr HIGGINS:** This is not a house that is vacant today, allocated for a special purpose. This is a house that is not allocated. It is a question that has come up from multiple organisations out there, more recently through the Land Council that has not been able to get a house for a Land Council employee in Wadeye. It is not a thing.

I can go back to a period where there was a house that was occupied by the regional director. The thing was, when he was first put in a house out there he was told, 'You cannot even be in the master bedroom', which has the ensuite, because Housing use it and it was padlocked. You went into that house and that door was padlocked. That was his temporary house and it was allocated to Housing.

The question has to be, why?

**Mr CHALKER:** It was Housing allocated ...

**Mr HIGGINS:** That one was then. I am not saying that one still is today.

**Madam CHAIR:** Member for Daly, would you like to put your question on notice?

**Mr McCARTHY:** Madam Chair, if I could just ask, just for some clarification. Before we go exploring all government employee housing...

**Mr HIGGINS:** You can just do it in Wadeye.

**Mr McCARTHY:** Can we ask you to get us the details of the lot number and we will search out that specific example. Then we are happy to address the bigger issue.

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#### Question on Notice No 5.9

**Mr HIGGINS:** In Wadeye, there is a government house—I will supply the lot number to the minister over the period before he answers the question—which is not being used full time. It is nominally for visiting government officers. Why is this much-needed remote public housing dwelling being used for this purpose and not for residents who are needing the houses? Would it not be better for the government to use commercial accommodation available in Wadeye?

**Madam CHAIR:** Thank you, Member for Daly. Minister, do you accept the question?

**Mr McCARTHY:** Yes.

**Madam CHAIR:** The Member for Daly's question has been allocated the number 5.9.

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**Mr HIGGINS:** In which communities has government employee housing been upgraded and/or built since 1 July 2017?

**Mr McCARTHY:** Thank you, Member for Daly. We have those details for you.

**Mr HIGGINS:** Would they include police housing or are they separate? I am not asking for them to be separated, but will it include the police ones?

**Mr McCARTHY:** Member for Daly, I can give you the breakdown of the actual number we are delivering through the 2017–18 program: one at Ramingining; two at Borroloola; two at Lajamanu; two at Mataranka; one at Nganmariyanga; four at Numbulwar; two at Engawala; two at Yuendumu. The actual breakdown of whether they include police—we do seek submissions from police so a number of those would be, but certainly not the majority.

**Mr HIGGINS:** I do not need the breakdown. Can I get a list of all the companies and businesses which have carried out work and the amount of each contract in delivering those houses?

**Mr CHALKER:** We can provide that in written form.

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#### Question on Notice No 5.10

**Madam CHAIR:** Member for Daly, can you repeat the question for the record.

**Mr HIGGINS:** Can I get a list of all the companies, businesses and organisations which have carried out work, and the amounts of each contract for those houses that have been built in communities which are government employee housing or upgrades since 1 July 2017?

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

**Mr McCARTHY:** Yes.

**Madam CHAIR:** The Member for Daly's question has been allocated the number 5.10.

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**Mr HIGGINS:** Can you tell us what the uptake of the government expanded homelands extra funding program has been and how many families that has helped?

**Madam CHAIR:** That will be Output 1.3, the next output.

**Mr HIGGINS:** What work has been done towards the development of an Aboriginal community controlled peak housing body in the NT as promised to the Aboriginal Peak Organisations in the NT? What funding or resources have been allocated towards the development of that peak housing body?

**Mr McCARTHY:** Thank you, Member for Daly. Mr Chalker will respond to that.

**Mr CHALKER:** Member for Daly, I attended the housing forum undertaken and we, as the department, funded the housing forum that Aboriginal Housing NT called for, where they called upon the government in respects of moving towards the community control. That is where we are trying to point this program to ultimately realise.

The history of the inclusion of the Northern Territory Government into the subleases was primarily linked to the lack of capacity and capability of community controlled entities as assets were transitioned from the Commonwealth to the Northern Territory. The enormity of the challenges of those who have gone before us over the last five years—trying to close that gap—has seen a lot more focus on the assets and infrastructure being provided. The opportunity that the 10-year program gives us aligns with what we can secure with the Australian Government as to what the parameters will be around the \$110m per annum for the next five years.

Once we realise that, the next five years will clearly be the body of work—both governments have already stated their intention to work towards community control. That is why we have already started the focus on Aboriginal business enterprises being given select tenders to start moving into that capacity building and capability so we can start transitioning into not only the construction of those homes but tenancy management, as well as the repairs and maintenance ongoing.

Once we get the certainty around the Commonwealth Government commitment for the full five years, that is when I have committed to working with them as well as APONT and Aboriginal Housing NT to realise what that may look like. We anticipate that in some communities there will be some entities that are closer than others. We will have to design a model that allows progress at a time commensurate with the pace the community is willing to undertake through local decision-making.

**Mr HIGGINS:** Effectively, you are saying that there is no funding or resources allocated to that until the Commonwealth makes their commitment?

I know you say we are working on it, but if we actually allocated resources to go towards that—you mentioned that you will not make these people capable of taking this task on. That means you will have to give them some VET training or something like that. Have we allocated anything to that or are we waiting on the Commonwealth?

**Mr CHALKER:** We are going through our own delivery of the program. We are focusing on providing work to Aboriginal business enterprises so the continuity of the employees they have—those skill sets are going. The bigger conversation will be about trying to secure the five-year funding so we can offer a period of procurement that extends over that five-year period. That will then enable the locality and the entity to employ people on a five-year contract commensurate with the funding from the procurement cycle into Aboriginal apprenticeships and the like.

We have representatives from the Department of Trade, Business and Innovation who have joined the Remote Program Delivery Office. That focus is already a key platform of what we have been doing with the program since it commenced on 1 July.

**Mr HIGGINS:** How much money?

**Mr CHALKER:** It is all built into the Remote Program Delivery Office.

**Mr HIGGINS:** It is part of the overall bucket?

**Mr CHALKER:** Yes. Our clear communication when we have engaged not only with Aboriginal Housing NT delegates but with the industry forum we hosted earlier this year, is very much a focus towards community control.

**Mr HIGGINS:** There is \$7.4m under the Remote Housing Investment Package for government employee housing. Is this just for upgrades or will it be new houses, and which communities will get that? I think you gave me some information on that before.

**A WITNESS:** That is correct, Member for Daly. That \$7.4m is covering the communities (inaudible – mic off).

**Mr McCARTHY:** Madam Chair, we have some responses.

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#### **Answer to Question on Notice No 5.5**

**Mr McINNES:** Rocon Construction company has a local presence based at East Arm. The contract was awarded for \$1.962m. While we do not have any details on the Aboriginal employees for Amanbidji, we do have the information that they achieved 50% Indigenous employment. The contractual requirements required 35% Aboriginal employment. Works were awarded 11 September 2017 and were delayed due to the Wet Season. Works were finalised—expected completion in September 2018 as per advice from the Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Logistics.

**Mr HIGGINS:** What was the contract worth again?

**Mr McINNES:** It was \$1.962m.

**Mr HIGGINS:** Thanks for that.

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**Answer to Question on Notice No 5.8**

**Mr McINNES:** There is another answer, regarding the select tenders for the Room to Breathe program. All those first packages were select tender process.

**Mr WOOD:** Just to let the Member for Daly know that I have been awake the whole time, in case he thought otherwise.

The two questions I was to ask in relation to this—one was about the lease arrangement at Nauiyu. Is that correct? Without repeating that—or do I need to repeat it?

**Mr McINNES:** Member for Nelson, with regard to your question about Nauiyu, the land is owned freehold by the Catholic Church. It has granted a 12-year lease to Nauiyu Nambiyu Land Trust. The lease expires on 30 November 2021. The land trust and the Catholic Church are discussing the options of a 99-year lease or a grant of freehold title to the land trust.

The trust granted—initially the Chief Executive Officer of Housing, a sublease over public housing rights in the community of Nauiyu commencing on 27 June 2011. That expired on 18 August 2012. From the expiry date, the CEO Housing has continued to hold over on a yearly tenancy. Tenure arrangements between the Catholic Church and the land trust are to be resolved prior to the NTG being able to enter into further tenure negotiations or arrangements.

The CEO can pursue secure tenure over the remote community housing to align with the future funding agreement of the Australian funding agreement, which is until 2023. But once the funding has been confirmed, we still have negotiations ongoing in that regard.

I can say that while we are not building any new houses in Nauiyu, we have it planned for our Room to Breathe program from 2019–20 over three years.

**Mr WOOD:** What confuses me is that page 62 of the annual report. It would give one the impression that there had been a secure tenure arrangements made. It gave a list of all the places where that occurred. Now you opt out and I thought, 'Here we go', but it is not as simple as that for Nauiyu.

**Mr McINNES:** No, we have to await the outcome of the negotiations between the land trust and the Catholic Church.

**Mr WOOD:** I might have to talk to my shareholders in that business. The other one is—is this the right place to talk about remote home ownership? I am just checking.

**Mr McCARTHY:** Sure, Member for Nelson.

**Mr WOOD:** It is noted that there has only been one property sold at Wurrumiyanga. I will call it Nguiu and I will be happy and so will some of the people there. It is still a point of debate, I believe. There has only been one house sold under that program. Could you give us the reasons why it has not been so successful?

**Mr McCARTHY:** Thank you, Member for Nelson, for the opportunity. First of all, we will put a value statement that this government really aspires to Aboriginal Territorians owning their own homes.

Reality at the moment, in this point in history, is that it is very difficult to achieve home ownership—not so much in terms of buying a home in a remote community but maintaining the home in the remote community because of the nature of the business as we speak.

That is why our 10-year plan is about building the economies of remote communities in every layer of the housing sector, so that if you pick up the phone in a remote community to have a hot water service replaced or repaired, then you will be dealing with a local person, as opposed to that exorbitant cost that will be charged if someone came from a regional centre like Darwin, Katherine or Tennant Creek.

It is a good plan and policy, but it is how to make it realistic for remote community residents in sustaining that home.

**Mr WOOD:** Can you give us the reason why it exists? What is so special about this program, as distinct from just buying a house? What is in here that is different from simply purchasing a house? Is there a benefit for anyone using this program?

**Mr CHALKER:** Thank you, Member for Nelson. The program was designed to try to provide support through the application process and to facilitate access to finance to secure the freehold over the property.

More than one applied for it. From memory, approximately 14 over a number of years tried to go through the process, but at various points of engagement and steps through the process, unfortunately, just kept falling off.

Arguably, part of the challenge at the moment is that, for example, if your neighbour's solar hot water system goes, if there is a major issue from a repairs and maintenance point of view, given the predominance of public housing tenancies that pervade the remote locations, they would ring our department and report that issue either through their tenancy manager or the HMO, and those works would be done.

If you are a private home owner in a remote community, that onus falls on you. So you then will incur the cost of a contractor who more than likely will not be available commercially in your own community. If you have to then bring them from a major centre, you will incur the same costs that we incur to send them out, and probably will not have the ability to disperse the full use of that trade to try to get some return on investment for the transport costs alone.

So irrespective of the supports that were in there to try and help condition people from a financial perspective around being able to save for the odd rainy day, to understand repayments and those types of things—and then I think balancing that against a comparison to your neighbour. If they are still under a tenancy that you may have continued in that very house as a public housing tenant, what really was the benefit for you to go through that and run the risk of, arguably, financial ruin?

That is, I think, part of the maturity of where we have to go. As we start developing more towards community ownership, creating more employment in community that can stay and be viable in a community for a lifetime, then I think we will start to compare apples with apples. Whereas at the moment, we are not playing with the same deck.

**Mr WOOD:** Does it allow a non-resident to purchase a house in a community under this program? So if I wanted to go and live back at Bathurst Island, and I wanted to own my own house there, could that program be used for me if I wanted to buy a house, or is it subject to traditional ownership?

**Mr CHALKER:** No, my understanding is it is for those residents in remote communities who have a cultural obligation to the land and community.

**Mr WOOD:** Has it got any application for people in town communities, town camps, to buy their own house, or is this purely for remote?

**Mr BAMBER:** This remote home ownership program was focused on the longer lease communities, like the 99-year lease communities, because in the end what you are selling is the lease. It is not freehold. So there is no point in picking out communities where it is only a 20-year or a 5-year lease, because that lease expires. So our initial focus was on those long lease communities like Wurrumiyanga, Milikapiti, Angurugu, Umbakumba and Milyakburra. Then we extended it to Kalkarindji and Elliott.

We had not focused on the town camps, although as part of the deed for the Julalikari, for the Tennant Creek CLAs, there was built into that deed of transfer an option for home ownership if any of the tenants wanted to take up that offer.

But it was primarily focused on tenants who had a period of cultural obligations at the community and also had extended a period of tenancy with good repayment. So basically demonstrating they had financial management under control, which you would need if you were taking out a bank loan.

**Mr WOOD:** Are we getting on to town camps in this section, or the next section? I might raise that issue then.

Tell me if I am wrong here. Under table 16 on page 68 of the annual report, it states that in 2016–17, there was supposed to have been \$305m spent on Indigenous housing and infrastructure. In actual fact, the amount was \$70m. Why was the \$305m not spent completely? Can you give us the figure spent so far this year?



That might have been relative to the questions Gary asked about.

**Mr McCARTHY:** Member for Nelson, it is probably more relevant to the government that the Member for Daly was a member of.

**Mr WOOD:** The 2016–17 annual report? I am trying to do my maths backwards. That was your annual report. I can pull it out if you want. I have the annual report here. It is on table 16, expenditure against the infrastructure program. It says, 'Indigenous housing and infrastructure, \$263m. 2016–17 actual expenditure, \$69m or \$70m.'

I was just wondering how that would be such a big drop. There was no explanation on the paper.

**Mr McINNES:** Member for Nelson, you are right. There is actual expenditure of \$69m. The approved cash allocation was \$120m. In fact, they are under by about \$51m. The \$305m would have been all the works they have in tray. Those works have been delivered over the last couple of years. In particular, this current year has been ramping up significantly.

Over the last three years, we have gone from 40 dwellings in 2016–17 to 128 dwellings under the national partnership agreement this year. That expenditure is absolutely going out the door. Just to reiterate, that \$69m actual expenditure should be compared against the \$120m. It is still an underachievement, but given the experience of the last couple of years with the delayed leasing arrangements, infrastructure requirements and all those things, that has added up. It is coming to an end now. As I said, the works have ramped up significantly this year and we are hoping to finish most of the works by December 2018.

For the current year, our program for the remote housing program was \$276m. Our approved cash budget was \$103.7m and we have spent \$102.9m. We have pretty much fully achieved the expenditure we estimated to achieve this year. We have wrapped that up.

**Mr WOOD:** It is not for me to tell you how to do your annual report, but with a big drop in a figure like that, it might have been worth a little notation. That is a fairly big change from one figure to the other.

**Mr McINNES:** Fair point.

**Mr WOOD:** That is all the questions I have.

**Madam CHAIR:** Minister, I have written to your office and spoken to some of your department staff about this. In terms of the remote housing package, what sort of budget allocation do you have, if any, to ensure that remote community new dwellings will have concreted driveways to their house?

**Mr McCARTHY:** Member for Arnhem, thank you for the question. I am not sure. In terms of the building of subdivisions, you are seeing that amenity delivered—as we saw in Ngukurr, with its problems. It has had its problems in the past. We will make sure we learn from that.

In terms of the public housing house, the new deliver, I am very, very big on being able to seal a certain section to prevent unwanted dirt entering the dwelling. Getting down to the actual design and the driveway, I do not know. Mr Chalker, do you want to make a comment on that?

What I bring to the table in terms of design is appropriate aprons around the house to support the dwelling and its amenity as well as its liveability so that you do not see soil washing up the side of houses. Linked to that is the appropriate egress to support residents, particularly seniors or residents with disability and of course that links to the opportunity to deliver driveways as well in the build.

That is the policy position that I bring, and to translate that with a bit of substance I will hand to the CE to explain how we are going to deliver that.

**Mr CHALKER:** Thank you, minister. Member for Arnhem, what we have ultimately got with the NT Government funding envelope is that flexibility that I spoke about before. In many of my community visits you can immediately tell which are pre-existing dwellings—lack of driveways, lack of splash pads under external taps and the like. As we are starting to go through our upgrades as we talk about Room to Breathe work, I have requested that that type of amenity and ground coverings are included in the scoping and the packaging that is going on.

Through the stimulus program as well we have started to touch on those existing tenancies that do not have driveways, where the stimulus money has gone as well as with the town camps—we visited some of those today.

In respect to the new builds, we do not have additional money allocated but the broader presentation of the \$1.1bn provides that flexibility.

What we are also doing is challenging industry about what the true costs of the delivery of a house is. At the industry forum I challenged them about whether \$500 000 is a realistic price for a three-bedroom home delivered in a remote community, particularly when the land is already provided. All they are pretty much putting on the ground is a house.

We believe that through that, in the scoping, that we start going out to tenders with—they will include the relevant driveways, splash pads and the like because the key driver for us is how do we actually improve health outcomes. As the minister touched on, if you build a slab then pretty much the moment you walk off that veranda you are straight back in to the dirt or red dust depending where you are. Then that ultimately travels back in to the home when you return. That is the key focus of what we are trying to do. There is no specific budget allocated to it, but a policy direction change where those are included in the future scopes that will go out to tender.

**Mr WOOD:** Could I piggyback on that question?

**Madam CHAIR:** Of course you can, Member for Nelson.

**Mr WOOD:** Are you saying that you believe the amount of money that is allocated for houses is ample? Because back when the minister and I were looking at housing, I think it was \$545 000 per three-bedroom house, and that would be going back about six or seven years. Are you saying they should be able to build a house cheaper than that?

**Mr CHALKER:** Indeed I am, Member for Nelson. The reason I base that is I actually think given the speed in which homes had to be built, particularly over the last five years, and the amount of money that was thrown at the program and the various approaches, dare I say it, through the alliance model—high demand, high need, high speed obviously came at a premium price.

I also think part of that is influenced by how procurement ultimately occurs. That is why I started the conversation about if we can commit to a community and thereby put a procurement package that might stretch out for five years—to say this is how many homes we might be able to build at a community for five years—the relevant contractor who wins that can engage contractors and apprentices in that community that they can actually invest in over that five-year period. They can buy materials in a greater quantity that they will actually realise a cost return for.

These are the conversations that we are starting have. As I say, the industry forum was an ideal opportunity to push that concept forward. I have to say that the feedback from industry was that they did see that there was a bit of a give from both ways. If government can improve the way it procures and extend the time frames then that can realise a better end product at a more reasonable cost price.

**Mr McCARTHY:** Can I piggyback off that question, Madam Chair?

**Madam CHAIR:** Go ahead, minister.

**Mr McCARTHY:** Mr Chalker, I would like to also make a comment on now the alternative tenders accepted in terms of putting a downward pressure on industry prices over decades.

**Mr CHALKER:** That is the other conversation we have had with industry and already through the NT HomeBuild program, so that is specifically tied to the Northern Territory Government funding as distinct to the Commonwealth funding. We have included alternative tenders as they are going through DIPL, who are our contract manager for those.

We are starting to engage with industry to start presenting to us the validity around their products so that it is no longer just a conversation of bricks and mortar anymore. There have been significant advancements in a lot of materials, and a lot of design focus, particularly since the announcement of the \$1.1bn. Industry have been very active in doing a lot of their own research and development, and have started to come to us on a

very frequent basis to present the types of works and opportunities that they can bring to the table, because bricks and mortar is no longer the stock standard and sole product that we are prepared to listen to.

**Mr WOOD:** It is important because we also went through a phase where Aboriginal housing—they set that price, the same price they set six or seven years ago. My understanding is the way contractors were going to get around that was to make smaller houses, so the rooms would be a fraction smaller just to fit within the price. Did that happen or they managed to somehow build them at that price still?

**Mr McINNES:** Just to reiterate what Mr Chalker was saying, some of the recent tenders that have been awarded, in particular one in Gunbalanya, the prices have come in below \$500 000. There has been no sacrifice on room size.

**Mr WOOD:** Are the houses simply designed? Because the design of a house can make it more expensive. So you have a gable here and a gable there and it is a complicated design. Has there been some discussion about trying to simplify the design to reduce costs as well? Like the one over here you have, which you have not shown us yet. The one sitting on the chair here.

**Mr McINNES:** Member for Nelson, that is a good point. Essentially, as Jamie has indicated, we have had industry come to us. In fact, industry has taken the previous Indigenous housing guidelines and used innovative products to meet those design standards for a lesser price. We are making some great headway in that space, and we will continue to do so.

**Mr WOOD:** I just like the idea of trying to reduce the amount of mud and dirt that comes in. When we went out to Santa Teresa and there were three contracts for the one house there, and one area was you stepped straight out of the shower into dirt and then into the house. I am glad someone at least is trying to turn those around. They are important things.

**Madam CHAIR:** Definitely. Especially in the Wet Season—mud and dirt everywhere.

**Mr WOOD:** Well, Santa Teresa, not much of a Wet Season.

**Mr CHALKER:** I might just add on to that, Member for Nelson. That is a classic treatment that the Room to Breathe program provides for, that we end up bringing those external ablutions in under cover which actually provides far greater privacy and is more culturally appropriate.

**Madam CHAIR:** My next question goes to Room to Breathe. Have there been any granny flats, like individual separate units built on existing lots as part of Room to Breathe yet? I am interested to know as I have not seen any in my electorate.

**Mr McCARTHY:** Thank you, Member for Arnhem, for the question. In terms of the independent living area for seniors integrated into the existing home, no, not yet, because we essentially started this as a new policy, a new program, and the focus has been on the local decision-making component. We have made significant gains in engaging local communities and local people about this as a concept and a design. As Mr McInnes said, we have gotten to quite a sophisticated level in terms of people redesigning and customising existing homes.

It is our job now to take that to the next stage. As local members, we can do this. I would encourage everybody's support. The Member for Arafura has introduced me to many families on the Tiwis, and we have had that discussion there. They are very keen to explore that concept.

Mr McInnes is producing some drawings here. Do you want to add to this?

**Mr McINNES:** Thank you, minister. With the Room to Breathe program, we have learned a lot from the early lessons and the community engagement. The consultation at the resident and tenant level has been a big difference to how we inform this program.

I have examples where we have listened to the tenants and had different pods added onto dwellings. For example in Milyakburra—if I can just lift this up and show you—we have a normal house here with the secured deck area. We have had to make some disabled modifications to this, so we have ramps coming in. We also have pathways going to the clothesline now. Again, that dust suppression but also disabled access to that. We have another bedroom built onto the deck with a disabled accessible bathroom.

So that is all done. All of that moving forward—so certainly they will be coming forward in the new packages. We have listened to community and the program will only get better as it moves forward.

**Madam CHAIR:** Thank you, I appreciate that.

**Mr McCARTHY:** Member for Arnhem, if I could just expand on that. It was a very interesting learning lesson in Ramingining where the family were discussing a number of independent living spaces, a number of independent pods, in terms of customising the house. That would essentially circle an outdoor communal living area.

That concept is starting to grow and now we need to—first of all, the locals need to endorse it, it needs to be representative of their need, and then we can look at the engineering perspectives and start to get drawings and take people to the next step. I really hope to deliver it. Not only is it the Chief Minister's concept of the granny flat, but it is something that senior Territorians in remote communities have been talking to me about.

**Mr HIGGINS:** Just a quick question on that local decision-making that we keep talking about. How many communities—I know there is different levels—have actually formally signed up to that at this point in time? It may be a question for the Chief Minister.

**Mr McCARTHY:** It is important to acknowledge that the Chief Minister's department is leading the government's local decision-making initiative. There is a budget appropriation recorded in the budget papers for that and there is extensive work that is going on right across the Northern Territory.

When the Department of Housing and Community Development talk about local decision-making, we have already conducted 72 remote community visits, and we deal through the housing reference groups and local authorities, as well as talking to individual residents. When I use that term, it is about the policy of government and about the process of engaging with the tenants, with the local families and also through those more structured entities of the housing reference groups and the local authority.

**Mr HIGGINS:** So your reference to local decision-making is different to, in a sense—the Chief Minister talks about formal agreements and different levels of local decision-making, whereas when you talk about local decision-making you are basically talking about consultation.

**Mr McCARTHY:** We are talking about the core business of the Department of Housing and Community Development, yes.

**Mr WOOD:** Can I just ask one technical question. You quoted 1000 houses built, refurbished or having rooms to breathe. Would we be able to have a copy of the breakdown of that exactly and where all those changes have occurred?

**Mr McCARTHY:** Certainly, Member for Nelson. When we talk about that number it is about new and upgraded. So that is not including the Room to Breathe customisations.

**Mr HIGGINS:** Can we have the whole lot then, please?

**Mr McCARTHY:** This is from when we came to government.

**Mr WOOD:** Up to today, basically.

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#### Question on Notice No 5.11

**Madam CHAIR:** Would you please repeat the question, Member for Nelson.

**Mr WOOD:** Minister, could you supply a breakdown of the number of new houses built, refurbished houses and houses that have been part of the Room to Breathe program, and where all those upgrades have occurred in the Northern Territory?

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

**Mr McCARTHY:** I would be honoured, Madam Chair.

**Madam CHAIR:** The Member for Nelson's question has been allocated the number 5.11.

**Madam CHAIR:** I have two other questions, minister, and they both relate to government employee housing in my electorate—some of the remote communities I represent.

One thing I am interested in—and I cannot remember if I asked you last year or not, so I will ask it again anyway—is in regard to government employees who have had access to employee housing, as a local recruit, if there has been a surplus in the community. If a person is retiring—let us say, a long-serving government employee—from a position, is there a plan at all in the department to be able to map and support either a transition of the house they may have occupied for the past five to 10 years to become a community housing asset, or will there be preference given if there is allocation to any new home builds for that long-serving government employee who retires from that position which is attached to a house?

**Mr McCARTHY:** That is a good question, Member for Arnhem. Thank you for that question. Mr Chalker has very much our policy perspective in supporting that person. But, essentially, I have to advise the committee that those decisions are with the Chief Executive of each agency who will be managing this program. However, the Department of Housing and Community Development is planning a contingency to support people in those circumstance and other circumstances. Mr Chalker is well versed to reply.

**Mr CHALKER:** Thank you, minister. Member for Arnhem, it is an issue we are trying to look pretty much from a 360 degree angle as it relates to the life span of a community member locally and how they might transition in and out of government employment and also the times they might migrate in and out of that for various reasons, let alone a retirement issue.

We have been doing significant work with the key major departments that seek government employee housing in communities. We are doing a full audit and analysis, trying to understand what their current demand is in the utilisation so we can paint that more fulsome policy position around how we do that.

We are also working on our five-year plan around infrastructure that we are trying to put out in communities—not only for home builds but specifically for government employees—so we can move to a point of understanding what our quantum will be, then overlay that specifically to a community and ensure we have the right policy framework that sees the likelihood of us having to constantly ask a family to pack up and move because of changing employment and the like diminished as much as we possibly can.

**Madam CHAIR:** Thank you. What are the challenges with your department in negotiating with other departments about government employee housing assets in remote communities?

**Mr McCARTHY:** Thank you, Member for Arnhem, for the question. It is a very proud moment for me as the Minister for Housing and Community Development, that has brought this policy to government, that has been framed in my mind over 39 years—now, I am working with a great team that is delivering it.

We have already had the opportunity to talk about our budget appropriations and what we are building and where we are heading, particularly with the focus on new innovation for the non-local recruit and the application of a better housing outcome for them.

We have been leading this policy and showing the developments on the ground with our programs in construction and our plans going forward. What we need now is for the agencies to engage with us and identify their government employee housing needs. We really need the agencies to now share that information with us. We will be able to then plan, with cross-referencing, around this management of assets.

Essentially, to keep it very simple, it is an asset in the community that represents a three-bedroom home, where it is generally occupied by a single person or a couple that can be reappropriated so the non-Indigenous recruit gets the more appropriate housing mix and the local recruit with the family gets the traditional three-bedroom home. We need to do that cross-reference and map it.

Mr Chalker, would you like to take it one step further? We also have a position to present to our agencies, our colleagues, to possibly streamline this process a little better.

**Mr CHALKER:** Thank you, minister. Member for Arnhem, part of the conversation is obviously whether there is any appetite to centralise the management of government employee housing in its totality, and whether that sits with our agency or whether agencies are comfortable with the status quo where they are managing it.

I think part of the challenge for other agencies at the moment is that housing and asset management is not their business as usual but it has been folded into their business as usual function, particularly as they are placed in remote communities.

That is the kind of conversation that is currently going on between a multitude of those agencies, as they also provide advice back to us and the minister's office in response to the request for information we have put out to them all.

**Madam CHAIR:** Thank you. My final question in regard to government employee housing: are there any forecast plans for more government employee housing in the two communities of Beswick, or Wugularr, and Barunga?

I understand they are under-resourced with housing assets for the Department of Education. They have teachers who are working in Beswick and living in Barunga, which is not an issue when there is road access; however, in the Wet Season those teachers cannot go and teach in Beswick and they end up working as extras in Barunga, whereas Beswick school is left without the staffing numbers they need.

In terms of where the department's priorities might lie in government employee housing, those two communities are of particular concern. I was just wondering if there is anything in relation to our upcoming budget.

**Mr CHALKER:** Member for Arnhem, our decision-making in respect of the priority and placement of government employee housing is pretty much driven following a request each year to other agencies in respect to their priority sites and locations. Off the top of my head I am not completely aware of those locations, but I am hoping that answer will come to you shortly.

**Mr McINNES:** For Beswick and Barunga, we do have demand identified there. I think we have non-local staff—two in Barunga and three in Beswick at this point in time. This information has been supplied as a result of a request put to agencies for their five-year demand estimates.

The 2018–19 program is currently under development and will be considered in terms of the priorities put forward by agencies.

To give you a bit of an idea of the demand over the next five years for local recruits, agencies have identified 250 dwellings required, and for non-local permanent staff it is another 103 dwellings across all remote communities.

**Madam CHAIR:** Thank you for that information. Any further questions on Output 1.2?

That concludes consideration of Output 1.2.

## **OUTPUT GROUP 1.0 – HOUSING AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT**

### **Output 1.3 – Community Services**

**Madam CHAIR:** We will now consider Output 1.3, Community Services. Are there any questions?

**Mr HIGGINS:** I will go back to the ones that were referred, otherwise I will forget them.

What has been the uptake of the government's expanded homelands extra funding program, and how many families has that helped?

**Mr McINNES:** Member for Daly, the homelands extra for 2018–19 has been received very well. We have received in excess of 980 applications in the first nine months of 2017–18, and 815 of these applications have been assessed as eligible for funding. As at 31 March 2018, offers for 722 applications have been provided.

**Mr HIGGINS:** What sort of money are we talking about? Do you have a figure for that?

**Mr McINNES:** Yes. For the 722 applications, it amounts to \$4.35m.

**Mr HIGGINS:** What work has been undertaken regarding the 40-year leases for homelands and outstations? How is that progressing?

**Mr McINNES:** Member for Daly, at this point in time there has not been a lot of discussion around the 40-year leases for homelands and outstations. What we can say is we are progressing lease negotiations for Elliott for a five-plus-five year arrangement there. I think that is about it at this point in time. We have not progressed anything further.

**Mr HIGGINS:** When we start to look at those, are we doing any sort of economic modelling on the veracity of those sorts of leases? Or is it just a straight policy?

**Mr McINNES:** Another good question. Economic modelling is definitely part of the consideration and the government's commitment to empower communities. The idea of that is developing the economic framework and passing that back to communities to deliver.

That will be particularly so when—I am moving on to town camps here—the town camp futures policy unit is up and running. They will be tasked with looking at the town camps and economic development opportunities in each of those. Elliott and Borroloola are another two that we will be working through, considering the economic development opportunities there.

It is a key consideration when we are looking at pursuing leases in those communities. It is also subject to government policy around the homelands policy the minister talked through earlier this evening. Dependent on the outcome of that homelands policy—will also dictate to some extent whether there are lease negotiations going on in those spaces.

**Mr McCARTHY:** Member for Daly, just to add to that, in terms of our policy and the economic modelling around it, it is heading towards true community housing models. We believe, as a government, that this is achievable in a 10-year plan. What we are hearing from the stakeholders is to make sure we get the tenancy and property management, repairs and maintenance and the five-plus-five programs of construction well established in the first five years. Then the second five years is the development of the economy, jobs, Indigenous business enterprises that will then lead to the asset transfer stage.

Stakeholders are very engaged. They say that economically it is a good model if you are planning over a 10-year period. In terms of leasing negotiations, that is what I am very interested in exploring as well.

**Mr HIGGINS:** Just back on the homeland extras funding and application, have we looked at putting a lot of that online through some kind of app or website so that people can actually keep track of these and where they are at?

**Mr McCARTHY:** That is a very good idea, Member for Daly. Thank you for that.

**Mr HIGGINS:** I know Jim would have great delight in being involved in that.

**Mr McCARTHY:** As a regional remote member, I share the complexities around that and the challenges for homelands residents in completing the process. I will add that the Department of Housing and Community Development provides great support. I sat on that side of the estimates process for four years and I brought that to the table. They are similar ideas.

The department started a very good process around making sure that residents had access and support. Sometimes the service provider was not that well equipped to do that. Taking that one step further and looking at innovation, I am sure it is worthy.

What do you think, Mr Chalker?

**Mr CHALKER:** Member for Daly, we do not do that at the moment for the Homelands Extra Allowance. The money is provided to services providers to undertake the program. That said, we are looking in various programs at some of the special tools to put on the web to say where programs are occurring and the values of those programs in individual communities.

**Mr HIGGINS:** That is good. You were talking before about agreements to build new houses et cetera at outstations and homelands where the proponents are prepared to place co-funding into those proposals. Do we have any agreements under that yet?

**Mr McCARTHY:** No, not as yet, Member for Daly.

**Mr HIGGINS:** Do we have any grant programs that might help some of those outstations or homelands in that area? Does that fall under Room to Breathe?

**Mr McCARTHY:** No. The Room to Breathe is separate again; however, we do have a homelands grants program that is available.

**Mr HIGGINS:** So how much money is involved in that grants program, and how much uptake have we had on that one?

**Mr McINNES:** Member for Daly, just to clarify, we are currently considering the co-contribution (inaudible) scheme. It is certainly a commitment by government to look into that scheme. There has been no money allocated per se at this point in time. So that policy is yet to be drawn out and will be done as part of that homelands policy to determine—currently, as the minister mentioned earlier, we have a significant amount of money being directed to homelands, about \$42.5m in the current year. They are for various different programs.

Part of the homelands policy review is looking at the effect of those existing programs and whether they can be used in a different way to get better outcomes on power stations in homelands.

**Mr HIGGINS:** How much have they got?

**Mr McINNES:** There are various figures. Of the \$43m, we have \$21m for municipal and essential services, \$2.7m for town camps municipal essential services, \$7.1m for outstation housing maintenance, \$5.9m for the Homelands Jobs Program, \$6m for Homelands Extra Allowance program, \$4m for Elliott housing refurbishments, and \$1m for Mutitjulu municipal essential services.

**Mr WOOD:** Piggybacking again—is there any money there for basic road infrastructure into those communities?

**Mr McINNES:** Not for basic road infrastructure, just the grading.

**Mr HIGGINS:** Can you give me an explanation as to under Output 1.3 there seems to be an increase of \$6m, if I am reading this correctly. It depends on how you actually want to look at it. If you look at your budget for 2017–18 it was \$56m. The budget next year is \$62m, but your estimate this year \$74m. Can you explain the differences there? If you look at one lot it is an actual increase; if you look at budget to budget it is an increase; if you look estimate to budget it is actually a decrease.

**Mr McINNES:** We do have that information here.

**Mr HIGGINS:** I think in Budget Paper No 3 on page 153, I sort of interpret that as a \$6m reduction in the town camps repairs and maintenance.

**Mr McINNES:** We can explain the variance right now between 2017–18, the revised estimate, and the 2018–19 budget. There are decreases because of the sensation of the one-off infrastructure stimulus package.

**Mr HIGGINS:** How much would that be?

**Mr McINNES:** That was \$10m. There was the use of cash balances in 2016–17, which sort of masks the effect on the 2017–18 number. They are the main ones, essentially. There are various Commonwealth funded items, but not significant. That is offset by an increase of \$4m for the town camps review, an increase of \$1m for the establishment of the dedicated town camps futures unit, then a couple minor of operational adjustments.

**Mr HIGGINS:** How much was that for the town camps futures unit again?

**Mr McINNES:** That is \$1m provided over two years, 2018–19 and 2019–20.

**Mr HIGGINS:** Is that evenly split over the two years?

**Mr McINNES:** Yes, \$1m and \$1m.

**Mr HIGGINS:** What is the actual ongoing funding that is available for town camp repairs and maintenance in 2018–19?



**Mr McINNES:** Ongoing funding—sorry, can I just clarify?

**Mr HIGGINS:** You mentioned a figure before of \$2.7m.

**Mr McINNES:** I beg your pardon; that is the ongoing funding figure for the municipal and essential services. That is \$2.7m ongoing.

**Mr HIGGINS:** Have you employed trained Indigenous interpreters as liaison officers for the housing program. If so, how many and at what cost, and where are they based?

**Mr CHALKER:** Before that is answered, a point of clarification—our Aboriginal interpreters are not liaison officers; they are interpreters. The distinction is that we utilise them as they provide an objective pathway between the translation of one spoken language into another language. We do not use them as a liaison role; they primarily assist with our community engagement teams. That element we can speak about from the community engagement perspective.

**Mr McINNES:** Member for Daly, if you do not mind me reading verbatim from this brief ...

**Mr HIGGINS:** Go for it.

**Mr McINNES:** There is quite a bit of detail in it.

The Aboriginal Interpreter Service would provide an additional \$1m per annum recurrent funding to address demand, supply and need for interpreters to be engaged to support the delivery of the \$1.1bn remote housing program. The first year of the funding was 2017–18, and there has been a 300% increase in the number of interpreting hours conducted for housing engagements and consultations.

Much of the focus in 2017–18 has been expanding the capacity of the Aboriginal Interpreter Service to meet an increased demand for interpreting through the recruitment and training of new interpreters; re-employment of interpreters who have not worked for some time; providing training to department staff on the best ways to maximise the benefits of interpreters; and improving internal AIS systems to provide a more efficient and effective service.

There has been a significant increase in the number of interpreting hours for the housing programs. We make sure that when we go on local decision-making community engagement visits that we have an Aboriginal interpreter with us where we can. It is not always possible, but in most community engagement visits we make sure those interpreters are present.

**Mr HIGGINS:** That will do me for the moment. Member for Nelson, I noticed you were about to nod off, so I thought I had better spark you up a bit.

**Mr WOOD:** I was just reading part of the town camps report. By the way, I must admit it is a very thorough report with detailed information which must be of great assistance to government's plans for the future.

My questions are in relation to that report. The report on town communities has a number of recommendations for change, most of which you have supported—not you personally, the government—and one in particular you have not. That recommendation is about the transitioning of town community people to economic centres.

Not all town communities are the same. Should you have rejected that recommendation outright, or should you have considered it on a case-by-case basis as to whether it is worthy of some consideration? I am not saying I necessarily supported it either, but it was a recommendation of the report.

**Mr McCARTHY:** We respect and acknowledge the wishes of the residents. In regard to any decisions on that recommendation, it would need to be endorsed by residents.

As a government, we have taken a position that people want to remain in town camps. They see the opportunity for their involvement in the wider economy, no matter where they live, and we have valued that.

**Mr WOOD:** I fully respect the idea—you may know that I am so happy this report has eventually come out. I would say this has a long history. We had a request when Labor was in power to start an inquiry into town camps. Unfortunately that died with the change of government. Then I think there was another attempt by the CLP that was never released. Now this one finally came out.

I am grateful that it has come, but for me the most important thing will be that this has is going to change the lives—and I am talking specifically of two communities—of those people. I read this document and I do not have to really read it. I know exactly what happens in those communities, and it is not good. Those people have to have a chance to bring up their families in a good way. I am hoping that this can speed up a bit.

One of my questions will be that you are starting up a town camps unit to look at this and they will report back in mid-2019, so my question is, is it possible for some of the issues raised to go ahead of waiting for 2019?

For instance, land tenure, which has always been an issue; or governance, which always been an issue where, especially the women do not seem to have ever had a chance to have a say in the running of that community. Is it possible, even though you have a town camps unit going to be put in place, that some of the recommendations can be moved forward before that happens?

**Mr McCARTHY:** Member for Nelson, I will pass this over but essentially the reality is that the recommendations are being implemented as we speak and have been worked on now for over a month. There has been significant work in terms of infrastructure and when I say infrastructure, we have started on a case-by-case basis in terms of making sure that the health and safety issues are addressed.

Your greater Darwin region town camps have had some significant work and ongoing work. There is a great story coming out of Bagot community around the Indigenous employment in terms of the upgrades and refurbishments of the housing. So the work has started and it has started because a determined government has appropriated significant resources to get that started.

The town camp futures unit is once again premised on our policy of engaging with local people in terms of that local decision-making. There are two aspects to that. It is about making lives better, but it is also about trying to address this quite diverse land tenure structure that exists right across the Northern Territory. For me as the local member, there is a good example of that in Elliott, where the current Chair of the Northern Land Council took the initiative to bring the Land Council to Elliott and to sit down with the traditional owners.

Now, after 10 years of my struggle to get that to happen, it is starting to take shape in terms of normalising a land tenure model where we can conduct appropriate government investment and we can start to build an economy prefaced on just one aspect of the macroeconomic model, and that is housing. This five-plus-five year lease plan, this Indigenous business enterprise entity—taking over housing in Elliott is a reality. It will underpin a very strong and sustainable microeconomic issue for that town. It will create jobs. It will create meaningful existence for people to run and maintain and to build new assets in their housing.

The town camp futures unit is very much focused on that local content that you speak of, having a voice for the women for example and also on the larger, more complex issues around land tenure. It is going ahead. We have an appropriation of \$24m, and in this tough fiscal time I really acknowledge the government for that and I acknowledge the Cabinet colleagues; however, we cannot do this without the Commonwealth once again. So whilst Mr Chalker is still at the table trying to get some logic into the remote Indigenous housing agreement, we are still pleading and advocating that the Commonwealth needs to support our town camps and our homelands.

We have given up, in a way, on land servicing costs. They do not want to talk about that at all. However, that is also a reality where we need their support. The Chief Minister has provided some negotiating parameters and is prepared to move on our responsibility, but essentially, we cannot address the aspirations you talk of without Commonwealth support in homelands and town camps to make the lives of remote and Indigenous Territorians better.

It is a great start and something, like our stimulus package—we have not seen this level of investment before. It is going to need to be sustained and that is Commonwealth investment.

**Mr WOOD:** We have not seen the depth of analysis of those communities. For the first time someone has dug in deep and in some cases written the bleeding obvious and in other cases raised issues that I would not have looked at in relation to change of land tenure, which is an issue for us. It brings in native title. That in itself can be a political issue that can be very difficult for people living in those communities if someone else owns the land or someone else has an interest. I will not go into it greatly tonight because it is getting late.

I was never allowed to be an observer in some of these reviews. I was refused. It seemed to me that it was terrible that a review was asked for and the previous government said I could not be part of it when all I

wanted was for something to happen in these places. I am very grateful we are at this stage but I will not be happy until there is some real change on the ground.

Will there be some reports coming out of the town camps unit so we can see where they are going and what is happening, as well as an update on what houses are being upgraded? There has been some work done at Knuckey, the 15 Mile. At least it is a little bit different than it has been; there is a new person in charge of Yilli Rreung who I am yet to meet. Hopefully there is some fresh air coming into the place, but it will be a long job. This will not change overnight. If we are heading in the right direction, we hope things will be good for those communities.

**Mr CHALKER:** Member for Nelson, I can attest the fact that the minister will be updating the Legislative Assembly on a frequent basis in respects to the work that the town camp futures unit will be undertaking. We are currently going through the recruitment for that team and aiming to have them commence on 1 July, or as many of them as we can.

One of their key primary focuses will be a fulsome engagement in consultation with the relevant town camp entities now that they have had a sufficient period of time. We have also disseminated USB and printed documents out to town camps so that residents have access to this report themselves. We will then work with them on the prioritisation.

As the minister touched on before, a key partner for this is going to be the Commonwealth, but it will also extend to the Office of Township Leasing as it will to the relevant land councils. Within the current negotiation we are doing with the Commonwealth Government around the remote housing program, we have proposed a concept where we work with them and the relevant land councils to look at land tenure issues. We hope this will overlay into this work as well.

We anticipate that there will be some frequent updates. As you touched on, sometimes the issue of land tenure can hit blockages that we may not be able to fully foresee, but we will be driving towards some bipartisan support to see that we do relinquish all the barriers that have allowed this social issue to rise to the level that it is.

**Madam CHAIR:** Before we proceed, we will recess for 10 minutes and recommence questioning at 9.10 pm.

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The committee suspended.

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**Madam CHAIR:** We shall continue on. We know people are doing the long hours tonight. We will continue with consideration of Output 1.3.

**Mr WOOD:** This will be my last question on this issue. Minister, the town camp report states that to bring houses up to the standards of the *Residential Tenancies Act* would cost \$77m. Is that something that will actually happen, or will it be something that the Commonwealth and you will have to get together to find the money to do that?

**Mr McCARTHY:** Member for Nelson, as I said, there is a significant financial appropriation by the Northern Territory Government to basically address the immediate issues around health, safety and wellbeing to deliver that. As you said, that is a very good report that itemises the real need. We definitely need the Commonwealth investment.

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

**Madam CHAIR:** You are very welcome. Minister, I have one question in regard to Mulgga town camp, which you visited with me last year in May. Is there any forecast for new houses there for this next financial budget year?

**Mr McCARTHY:** There is no budget appropriation for new housing, but I am hoping we have some appropriation around any upgrading in the Mataranka town camp. That is a very timely question, Member for Arnhem. Have we any scoping around the Mulgga town camp?

**Madam CHAIR:** I found out there were eight new stoves replaced last year in December. Thank you to your department for doing that very quickly over the span of about five to seven days. It was completed on request. Mulgga is a small but lovely little place and I want to make sure we look after it.

**Mr BAMBER:** The person who is leading this immediate stimulus program and developing the \$24m program overall, Brian McClurg, is actually travelling down there next week, specifically to put that on. He is also going to Elliott again. He has been up and down the Territory pretty well ever since this was released. He has been responsible for turning out those 74 projects we already have on foot, acquitting the \$10m out of the stimulus program. He is also programming the remaining \$14m. He is visiting there next week.

**Madam CHAIR:** I might get the details through the minister's office, thank you. It is good to hear. Any further questions? That concludes consideration of Output 1.3.

#### **Output 1.4 – Local Government and Community Development**

**Madam CHAIR:** We will now consider Output 1.4, Local Government and Community Development. Are there any questions?

**Mr HIGGINS:** I have a couple of quick ones. I know the Member for Nelson will have heaps on this area, so we will rely on him for this one.

Has the NT Government any funding earmarked for the Palmerston Town Council towards upgrading the Archer recycling centre?

**Mr BAMBER:** Mr Higgins, the answer is no.

**Mr HIGGINS:** Okay, fine. That is a short answer. Can you give us a status update on the review of the *Local Government Act* and where it is at the moment—any time frames around it?

**Mr McCARTHY:** Member for Daly, the *Local Government Act* has been to me, as the minister, and is ready to go to the Parliamentary Counsel. We are now looking at a time frame when we can lodge it with Parliamentary Counsel to have it appropriately drafted. Then, of course, it will be released as an exposure draft in the next round of consultations.

I would hope that it will get its passage through Parliamentary Counsel within the next few months. I have been advised there is an opening for us to get it in to the Parliamentary Counsel and then from there we will progress it.

**Mr HIGGINS:** The last one before I hand over to the Member for Nelson is—can you give us a bit of an update on the status of the proposed local government amalgamation of—and I am not saying all of these are part of it—but Belyuen, Wagait, Coomalie, Dundee and Marrakai and a bit around what consultation has been done and what funding we might have allocated for any such amalgamation if it occurs?

**Mr McCARTHY:** Thank you, Member for Daly, for the question. Let us deal with the first one and that is really a shared services methodology approach between Coomalie and Belyuen. The Department of Housing and Community Development have been providing some resources there to progress that to look at those two councils combining. It is early stages. There is some good dialogue and good negotiation going on between those.

Can somebody supply the details about what we have done to support that?

**Mr BAMBER:** As the minister indicated, there is good will between Belyuen community government council and Coomalie government council. There are monthly meetings with a working group with elected member representatives from both of those councils. They have sought some financial assistance by way of grants to assist with administration support toward that amalgamation process.

**Mr HIGGINS:** Have they been given some of that money and how much?

**Mr BAMBER:** Yes. Coomalie Community Government Council have been provided with a one-off grant of \$100 000 to provide expended administrative capacity to support the development of the merger proposal until the end of June 2018, this month. Additionally, a one-off grant of \$40 590 was provided to the Coomalie government council to enable both councils to undertake a joint asset condition evaluation to assist their merger proposal.

**Mr HIGGINS:** Have we given any consideration to the incorporation of like Dundee and Marrakai in to that sort of discussion in the longer term, and how are we going to get them involved?

**Mr BAMBER:** There have been approaches to Dundee with regard to longer-term incorporation. I would suggest they are early days but we have had representatives from local government division going along to their meetings and making those approaches.

**Mr HIGGINS:** There are a couple of responses that have come back through my office in regard to getting things done at Dundee—they are not from this minister; they are from other ministers—that clearly state, ‘Sorry, we are not going to do anything about that until we have local government in the area’.

Are there discussions with the other ministers? I can pass on these to the minister in the future, but the thing is that response leaves us in limbo. From the people out there, their point of view is that they are not going to get anything done until local government is introduced, but what sort of time frame are we looking for that et cetera? Minister, you might be able to update us a bit on that.

**Mr McCARTHY:** Thanks, Member for Daly. I have asked the Department of Housing and Community Development to prepare a brief for me on all the unincorporated areas. We really need to understand this and we need to understand the residents there, the businesses there and the nature of that in relation to services and the delivery of services.

The department is preparing a lot of that information for me and I am very keen to learn about that and to see what that situation really entails. I am also very keen to continue negotiating with the councils about that working party concept of seeing what they think about those unincorporated areas and how we could progress a better service delivery model for all Territorians.

**Mr HIGGINS:** Following on from what the Member for Nelson was saying before, it would be pretty good if I could be kept informed on where we are with that, even in confidence. As long as I am aware of what is happening it makes it easier for me to answer back. That will be all I will do at this point.

**Mr WOOD:** Minister, I cannot believe that (inaudible – mic off).

**Madam CHAIR:** Member for Nelson, is your microphone on?

**Mr WOOD:** Thank you, minister. My question is, why have we not amalgamated those areas? This goes back a long way. In fact, I stood outside the Corroboree Park hotel in about 1997 as President of Litchfield Shire and got hammered. It was my baptism of fire in politics by the local community, and Barry Coulter, who owned some land out there at that time. When I went out there to ask should you be amalgamated with Litchfield Shire, which is only seven kilometres from their boundary, I was almost roasted, but in the end they shook my hand and bid me farewell. It has been going on and on.

I have been to many meetings at Marrakai and also other meetings, and I wonder why you would suggest that a council that is about 50 kilometres away from Belyuen would make sense, when you have another council right next door and you have the possibility of a council looking over the Cox Peninsula township that is in planning. Why would anyone in their right mind consider that makes sense for those two councils to amalgamate?

Belyuen is an extremely small council. I am not saying it should not exist. Historically it is where it is, but some counsellors got elected by one vote. We are talking about a very small area. I query, minister, why we would spend public money on not leaving the status quo at the present time, until the whole picture was sorted out.

**Mr McCARTHY:** Member for Nelson, I respond to that with, you have a great history with this issue on unincorporated areas and amalgamation.

I am approaching this with a commonsense and good manners approach where we have two councils showing goodwill around this. I am also a believer that Belyuen are very interested in a partnership with Coomalie because they can learn a lot and share a lot of services and will be able to deliver better services for their constituents.

It is a goodwill that is growing and I think that is probably what is missing between your Marrakai episodes, where people were aggressively opposed, and where we need to move it to into the future.

**Mr WOOD:** Minister, there are two different issues. Belyuen has local government; Marrakai does not. I am not saying Marrakai was always totally opposed, because I have been to other meetings where there were people in support as long as they got something for the changeover.

I am also talking geographically. I have always said that if you want an amalgamation with Dundee, Litchfield makes sense. They come straight out through Litchfield. They drop their rubbish, probably, at the Berry Springs transfer station.

I think you have to look at it not only from the perspective of whether one council likes the other, it has to be a commonsense approach based on geographical connections.

**Mr McCARTHY:** Sure.

**Mr WOOD:** There is not an easy geographical connection between Coomalie and Belyuen. To me, the department of local government, whilst it might promote discussion, it also has to make sure any decision made in the long term makes good sense rather than it feels good but it is actually a stupid idea because the councils have to go up this way, around that way, back up this way, through another council and get up there to have a meeting.

Why not just join up with Wagait Shire or Litchfield, or why not leave it as it is for the time being until Cox Peninsula is developed?

**Mr BAMBER:** A couple of things there—Wagait Shire has indicated they are opposed, as you are probably aware.

**Mr WOOD:** Yes, that is why I am saying maybe leave the status quo until a bigger council gets going.

**Mr BAMBER:** The actual connection there is that juxtaposing both of those is the Litchfield National Park and we are looking into whether that could come into it as well. Then you have some contiguous areas.

**Mr WOOD:** I know we are getting a bit off the track but if you look at the Goyder's map, Litchfield goes straight out further, you will see all the Goyder subdivisions. The road to Dundee comes straight through Litchfield. The road through Litchfield National Park goes through Litchfield. There is an area that will make geographical sense to be part of Litchfield.

Now I know Litchfield it depends on who is in the council and has a different view on that, but I sometimes think the department has an overarching body that has to look at this thing from a governance point of view—it also needs to put input into it, not just somebody likes it and somebody does not. I think it has to be done in a commonsense way.

That is why Marrakai made sense. It is only just over the border, not far. It would make sense. They come through and use Humpty Doo and go to work at Middle Point and the kids all go to school at Humpty Doo. You would think that would make commonsense.

It is not that I care whether Litchfield gets bigger or not; I just say, could we work this on a practical point of view as well as dealing with the niceties of it? Because I would not want to see that in the end we have a mishmash of local government. That is my concern.

**Mr McCARTHY:** Absolutely, Member for Nelson. This developing relationship is planning for expansion. They are looking at the practicalities of it and I suppose estimates is a great opportunity because we have important officials here that are listening to you. It is a good chance to hear your advice and your concerns.

**Mr WOOD:** Thanks, minister.

**Mr CHALKER:** Member for Nelson, I might just add that one of the human elements that has actually arisen from this has been the approach between Coomalie and Belyuen and the strength and unity that has occurred between those two. I would suggest almost moving to a formal mentorship arrangement.

Belyuen had been under administration for quite a considerable period of time so the partnership is showing very strong signs of mutual benefit and understanding across both portfolios. I appreciate that some of the geography may not interlace quite as neatly as we might like but the relationships and the strengthening of those two has been bonded by the partnership that is arising. I think it is quite a positive human story and I am quite sure their constituents are benefitting because of the strength of the councils as they continue along this path.

**Mr WOOD:** If I was a ratepayer, I would be asking the question: what is it going to cost? I would have thought that the progress of Coomalie would be to move further south. It already has moved south to some extent,

but you have the Douglas Daly, which I believe is still unincorporated—am I correct there?—around the area of Fleming. So their area is unincorporated. To me that would make far more sense because it is an area of the same sort of social background.

I just raise that because I know that this issue has been around a long time and I wonder why it has never gone anywhere. When it gets close to an election, it will not go anywhere because there are politics involved in this as well.

You answered most of my question. I know it is a difficult area but it does need to be sorted out because a lot of people who pay rates say, 'How come Dundee does not pay rates and they get lovely electricity that goes all the way out there and a beautiful bitumen road?' Other places have to pay something towards all that.

I will get onto rating in another form. Are you reviewing rating for mining leases and pastoral properties?

**Mr McCARTHY:** Yes. In terms of the work, we are in a cross-agency working group with the department of Primary Industry and the department of Natural Resources. We are working together to try to rationalise an approach around the unconditional rating in terms of pastoral properties and mining leases. I think we are at the stage now where we are probably looking at what the recommendation of the Cattlemen's Association was, and that is to look at the pastoral lease—in terms of pastoral properties—fees being the transaction and local government receiving a contribution through that process.

However, I am pushing this. I am promoting this. I am advocating for this rationalisation.

Does anybody want to elaborate on that further in terms of the work we are doing?

**Mr BAMBER:** The minister is correct. We formed a multi-agency working group which is working through all of the issues associated with unconditional rating. We are working towards a Cabinet submission to put back through Cabinet to inform them of available options, but it is still a work in progress.

**Mr WOOD:** Maybe I am all wrong here, but a pastoral property is actually not a freehold property—most of them, there are a few in the Top End. They are actually owned by the Crown. How can you rate the Crown?

**Mr McINNES:** We are inviting Lee Williams to the table. Lee is the acting Executive Director Local Government and Community Development.

**Ms WILLIAMS:** For the purposes of rating, the lesser is defined as the owner of the property. That is the same as other states in Australia.

**Mr WOOD:** So that is why the department of Housing has to pay rates on leases on Aboriginal land?

**Ms WILLIAMS:** That is right.

**Mr WOOD:** It just seems to me that if they were the owners and the other people were leasing it, the owner would then pass the cost on to the lessee, but the problem was that the owner actually could not be rated in the first place. It might sound complicated but that is the way it looked from an outsider's point of view.

You can take this as an out of left field question, minister. With regional councils—I did a rough cost of running a regional council, and they receive \$1.3m in rates, of which \$1.1m comes from residential rates, and I would bet my bottom dollar that that would be mainly housing. They receive \$24m in grants, of which \$16m was from the federal government, meaning the Territory gave them either \$8m or \$9m.

When I did the sums, if you take out the rates that were basically subsidised by the department—point six of their revenue was raised by rates. In the case of Litchfield that would be something like 50%. I am not trying to be smart here but I just want to know, is it worthwhile? Council is bothering to rate people for .6% of their total revenue. We have an administration that goes out and does all this work, and all they do is collect .6% of the entire revenue.

Does it mean that we are really having councils that are propped up—I am not saying we should not have councils, but I am trying to look at this from the point of view that we have councils that are fundamentally funded, nearly totally, by governments, either Commonwealth or the Territory.

Is there any way that that can change? If there is not any way that that can change, is it really worth a council bothering about rates for such a small return?

**Mr McCARTHY:** That is an interesting proposition. I am probably not authorised to make major policy statements here at the table. I will have to check in with my boss. But an interesting point that correlates to some of my learnings from a regional council in Central Australia who said that the issues around the pastoral rates were so frustrating and caused so many anomalies in their record keeping and accounting, that they would prefer to see them scrapped and negotiate a process through the pastoral lease fund.

There is an example of a council that has taken that approach. In terms of rating, I think it is very, very important income to those councils. Although your analysis of it can be very small in some cases. Essentially, they see that as a contribution to service delivery. As you know, as you have been involved with them for a long time, they are a very dedicated part of our community governance. They are generally the first contact with constituents, and they would not give up easily something they have fought hard to maintain.

**Mr WOOD:** I suppose the elephant in the room is that there are no rates paid on Aboriginal land, yet the Aboriginal people receive a service from those councils. Those councils have to pay a rental agreement on land where they have their facilities—council premises and workshops. You are saying to pastoral properties that they have to pay a rate, yet no one pays a rate to council from Aboriginal land.

TOs receive money from Housing that goes on that land. They receive money for facilities used by the local council, yet there is no contribution back into the system as a way of rating Aboriginal land. I know it cannot happen under present legislation, but it seems we have an imbalance where one side collects money and the other side has to pay money. That side hardly has any rates worth running its show. We have 0.6%.

Has the department looked at whether there should be an investigation into whether Aboriginal land should be rateable? That might be a special rate, similar to the way the pastoral properties are rated. Do you think there should be some contribution from the owners of that land?

**Mr McCARTHY:** You are asking for my personal opinions on this. I will ask Lee to comment from a legal perspective.

I will give you my take on that, Member for Nelson. Aboriginal people have fought for their country in the Northern Territory, and I am privileged to be a Territorian who has witnessed that. I have known, lived with and worked with people who have walked on country and fought for that.

Now I see an interesting time in history, where Aboriginal people are fighting for the opportunity to create economic development for their country. When we bridge that gap, the economic development on traditional lands will pay rates and provide that income because it will be a business enterprise operating. It may be a pastoral company, which should pay rates.

**Mr WOOD:** It is a business enterprise because they are raising money through leasing their land, and that is a business. So they are receiving a benefit, which is what you should be able to use your land for. The other side of the coin is that local government is providing a service to that very same community, which is being asked to pay rent for the land they operate that service on.

It seems to be totally one-sided. I agree with what you say in principle, but have we set the right model that if you leave it forever and a day it will never change. Should we be looking at making it more equitable, especially from a local government perspective—provide services for the very people who you said have fought hard. They need to realise that does not come free; there is a cost to that.

That is all I am saying. I do not take anything away from what you have said. Where my family live, if they get put into one of the councils, I would hope they do pay rates. They might get a better road in there.

I am just putting that forward. If we are to believe in regional local government, we need to give it a chance to develop its own income—not relying like the Territory does on GST, or on grants from the Territory or Commonwealth—and self-fund.

**Ms NELSON:** Before Ms Williams responds—does Commonwealth law have anything to do with that? Does it influence whether or not traditional owners pay or do not pay rates?

**Mr McCARTHY:** Thank you, Member for Katherine, because now is the perfect opportunity to pass to Ms Williams.



**Ms WILLIAMS:** Commonwealth law does have a part to play in that because it does come under Commonwealth law, not Northern Territory law. At the moment, housing pay rates is the landlord and commercial rate payers, but I cannot comment on the policy side of it. I understand what you are saying but I cannot comment on the policy side of that.

**Mr WOOD:** That is all right. I put it forward as a concern I have about the future of regional councils. When I see such a low income base, it is not sustainable in the long term.

**Mrs WORDEN:** Given Cyclone Marcus has just come through and, whilst we did not need it this time, I think it gives us a reminder that at some stage in the future we might need an emergency regional waste dump. I understand that TOPROC have still not made a decision. A few years ago there was a site identified, and still nothing.

Minister, do you know how far away we are from resolving that? If Marcus had been upgraded even by half, we might have needed such a facility. Who is responsible? It seems to be swirling and never landing.

**Mr McCARTHY:** Thank you, Member for Sanderson. In my last meeting with TOPROC, this has come back onto the agenda for the reasons you have raised. It is about an emergency. I took that discussion back to work that I was doing as a previous minister for lands and planning about finding the location. We had three potential locations but they were problematic in terms of land tenure issues—two in relation to Aboriginal land.

Whilst I think we agree on the concept and it is back on the agenda after Marcus, it is now resting with the Department for Infrastructure, Planning and Logistics around nailing the location for the facility. In terms of my contribution to debate, it should not just be the emergency green waste management facility, but it should be the regional waste management facility that the greater Darwin area needs now.

**Mrs WORDEN:** To clarify, are you talking about a new Shoal Bay?

**Mr McCARTHY:** Yes, the regional waste management. That was my contribution to the debate.

**Mr WOOD:** Then Litchfield will be able to get money back because they have had to pay to use the Darwin tip. The site is still on maps to be north of Holtze prison farm—that is the site that was chosen 20 years ago.

**Madam CHAIR:** Are there any other questions?

**Mr WOOD:** Has the department been involved in a review of the Thorak Regional Cemetery? It has been a concern of the Litchfield Council about the costs of maintaining it by itself. It mentions there was a review—has there been a result of that review?

**Ms WILLIAMS:** The department did fund the council to do a review of the cemetery some time ago; I do not think it was in this financial year just gone. That review was not substantial enough in relation to going into detail as to options for how the council could save money and make revenue out of the cemetery. We have been encouraging the council to think laterally on ways that it can save money and add value or increase its revenue at the cemetery. That is a work in progress—a conversation that comes and goes with the council.

**Mr McCARTHY:** To add to that, we have a working group that has formed among the councils of Litchfield, Palmerston and the City of Darwin and they are interested in the sustainability of that cemetery and are very interested in a governance model that may be able to progress a sustainable finance and income for the future.

It is great that they are talking together. I only asked the question upon arriving the other day when we were preparing for estimates, what had happened. I was informed that they are meeting again to bring a position back to government to see where we can build on that shared services methodology.

**Mr HIGGINS:** Following on from the global questions, firstly, Victoria Daly Regional Council—there is a \$500 000 difference between the approved and the actual budget assistance funding. Can you tell us what that was? It was \$1m approved, but \$500 000 actual.

**Mr CHALKER:** Member for Daly, it is my understanding that it just had not been paid by that time.

**Mr HIGGINS:** So these are as of 31 March.

**Mr CHALKER:** Correct.

**Mr HIGGINS:** They still have to draw on—\$500 000 has to be paid out.

The other one is similar to that. Nine of the local government entities going to approval under the special purpose grant funding for a whole stack of activities—but they do not appear to have either accessed the funding or spent it. It is the same with the strategic local government infrastructure fund. There seems to be an underspending there. Would that again be because of the—these questions would have been as of at 31 March?

**Mr CHALKER:** Correct.

**Mr HIGGINS:** We would assume they will all draw on that money and spend it?

**Mr CHALKER:** Correct.

**Mr HIGGINS:** That was all.

**Mr McCARTHY:** If they have acquitted all of their previous grants to the Department of Housing and Community Development.

**Mr CHALKER:** Madam Chair, just an update for you. We have allocated \$1m for Mulgga town camp.

**Madam CHAIR:** Wow. That is fantastic. Thank you!

**Mr WOOD:** Is that all you need to get money. Minister, I have a couple of requests.

**Madam CHAIR:** We will just turn his microphone off now. That is fantastic. I am extremely happy to hear that. Thank you, Mr Chalker.

**Mr WOOD:** We are here all day trying our best; someone says one question and gets \$1m.

**Madam CHAIR:** To stop the jealousy we will keep going with the questioning. Member for Port Darwin, you had a question.

**Mr KIRBY:** Not so much of a question but more of a comment and a thank you. We had an issue in Larrakeyah very recently with some elderly constituents who needed to be looked after. They had been moved out to get some works done. I just wanted to commend the department and minister's office for the way they handled that once we were alerted to the problem. It could have been quite dangerous. I thank you for all your hard work.

**Madam CHAIR:** Minister, is this the correct output to talk about remote morgues?

**Mr McCARTHY:** That was 1.2

**Madam CHAIR:** I have missed it. I will keep going and do it in a non-specific output of the budget. We will keep going. If there are no further questions for Output 1.4, that concludes consideration of Output 1.4 and Output Group 1.0.

## **OUTPUT GROUP 2.0 – CORPORATE AND GOVERNANCE**

### **Output 2.1 – Corporate and Governance**

**Madam CHAIR:** The committee will now proceed to Output Group 2.0, Corporate and Governance, Output 2.1, Corporate and Governance. Are there any questions?

**Mr HIGGINS:** I will get through this quickly because the office for public employment people are very keen to come in. The global questions information you supplied on reportable safety issues from 1 July to March—there were 11 slips, trips and falls, costing a total of more than \$320 000 in claims and 48 mental factors, costing a total of about \$24 000.

What measures are we putting in place to ensure these problems do not occur in the future? How many of the 48 mental factors were stress-induced matters? How are we stopping the slips, trips and falls?

**Mr CHALKER:** Interestingly, the reason those rates are as they are is because we have introduced a greater focus on and culture towards health and safety in the workplace. We have brought on board ...

**Mr HIGGINS:** I presume that is the 11 and not the 48.

**Mr CHALKER:** The broader total of all that would have been encompassed in that reply to you, and the myriad of issues. Stress is certainly one that across the board we are seeing. I think that is across the board in most workplaces at the moment.

We have a very strong focus in respect of the mental wellbeing of our staff. We have rolled out a raft of training regimes and workshops including anti-bullying approaches. We have raised the awareness of health and safety. The health and safety committees are meeting regularly, and we have also had a health and safety coordinator who has pretty much been leading that charge for us for the last 12 months.

A lot of awareness is being improved by an assessment of the information following incidents being reported, and then that is assessed as to whether it is rolled out more broadly across the agency, or an issue isolated to the workplace where it occurred, the vehicle or the asset it might have involved, with the staff member.

**Mr HIGGINS:** My concern would be more around the 48 mental factors in there. What percentage of staff does that 48 represent?

**Mr CHALKER:** Probably well under 10%.

**Mr HIGGINS:** Ten per cent?

**Mr CHALKER:** Yes.

**Mr HIGGINS:** And that is presuming that all 48 are 48 different staff members, which would not necessarily be the case, I presume? That is all I have at this point.

**Madam CHAIR:** No further questions for Output 2.1? That will conclude consideration of Output 2.1.

## **OUTPUT GROUP 2.0 – CORPORATE AND GOVERNANCE**

### **Output 2.2 – Shared Services Received**

**Madam CHAIR:** The committee will now proceed to Output 2.2, Shared Services Received. Are there any questions? This concludes consideration of Output 2.2 and Output Group 2.0.

### **Non-Output Specific Budget-Related Questions**

With regard to Output Group 3.0 and 4.0, the NT Electoral Commissioner notes that whilst the Chief Minister is responsible for the NT Electoral Commission responsibilities under the *Electoral Act*, the Minister for Housing and Community Development is responsible for the NT Electoral Commission responsibilities under Chapter 8 of the *Local Government Act*.

However, since questions regarding local government were asked during the Electoral Commissioner's appearance with the Chief Minister, he will not be reappearing.

Are there any non-output specific budget-related questions?

I have a quick one about remote morgues. Minister, whilst your department works closely with the Department of Planning, Infrastructure and Logistics, and the Department of Health in regard to remote morgues, I am wondering in terms of the process of community advocacy to look at the need for developing a remote morgue in an unidentified place—how would that happen through your department, or through one of the other departments?

**Mr CHALKER:** Member for Arnhem, our role would be purely an advocacy pathway. So if it is raised with us through our community development arm or through any of our employees out in the field, through engagement, we would then go and engage with the Department of Health to progress that conversation.

**Madam CHAIR:** Thank you. I will give you a heads up. The community of Gapuwiyak has over 900 people, and they do not have a morgue in their community. Although they are situated relatively close to Nhulunbuy, it is over 200 kilometres on a dirt track.

To fly a body out of Gapuwiyak to Gove costs \$190 one way, and when the Gove morgue is full, it will cost \$3690 to fly a body to Darwin to sit in the Darwin morgue. And of course, upon return that is a cost of \$7380, so Gapuwiyak is in desperate need of a remote morgue. They have not been considered because of their proximity to Nhulunbuy; however, that unfortunately does not always work out with the capacity Nhulunbuy can hold in terms of bodies. So, just wanting to put that on the record on behalf of my constituents. Thank you.

**Mr WOOD:** You will get it. Do not worry, you will get it. Just wait five minutes.

**Madam CHAIR:** Let us hope so. Thank you, everyone. Sorry, Mr Chalker.

**Mr CHALKER:** I am happy to communicate that.

**Madam CHAIR:** Thank you, I appreciate that. I missed out on it with Health because we did not get to the output.

That concludes consideration of outputs relating to the Department of Housing and Community Development. On behalf of the committee I would like to thank departmental officers that attended today.

### OUTPUT GROUP 5.0 – NT HOME OWNERSHIP

**Madam CHAIR:** The committee will now move on to consider NT Home Ownership. Minister, I will invite you to introduce the company officials if they have not changed, and if you wish to make an opening statement regarding NT Home Ownership.

**Mr McCARTHY:** Madam Chair, I do not have an opening statement. We will maintain the same officials.

**Madam CHAIR:** Thank you. Are there any questions for the NT Home Ownership business line?

**Mr WOOD:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Minister, the HomeBuild access scheme has been operating for a number of years. Is it still successful? What does it mean on page 173 of your annual report that 'NT Home Ownership incurred a loss of \$5.22m in fiscal 2017'? I just need an explanation of what that means.

**Mr McCARTHY:** Thank you, Member for Nelson. We will do our best to explain that.

**Mr TINKHAM:** Member for Nelson, it incurred a loss. The loss was mainly made up of a reduction in evaluation of shared equity assets. It basically operates at a break even, but we are in a declining valuation situation, so that has been hitting the last couple of years, and we are incurring a loss on those declining property values—on our share of the declining property values.

**Mr WOOD:** Is it still a successful scheme? Are people still using it?

**Mr TINKHAM:** Yes, we are still issuing loans. Mainly, I understand they are low equity loans. It is mainly for the deposit portion of loans, so mainly smaller loans we are issuing these days.

**Mr WOOD:** I knew when it was introduced it had a lot of fanfare but I had not heard much more since then. So it is filling a gap in allowing people to get into the housing market.

**Mr TINKHAM:** It is pretty stable now in terms of the loan values. There are people paying down their loans and there are some new loans being taken out, but I think the last little surge we had was when Zuccoli was first released a couple of years ago, when there was plenty of affordable land available, I guess.

**Madam CHAIR:** Thank you. Are there any further questions? That concludes consideration of the NT Home Ownership business line. On behalf of the committee, I sincerely thank the officials for your time today, especially with our finishing time tonight, and how you have assisted the minister here today. Thank you on behalf of the committee.

The committee will now consider outputs relating to the Office of the Commissioner of Public Employment, and we will allow a two-minute changeover.

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The committee suspended.

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## OFFICE OF THE COMMISSIONER FOR PUBLIC EMPLOYMENT

**Madam CHAIR:** Minister, I invite you to introduce the officials accompanying you and if you wish to make an opening statement regarding the Office of the Commissioner of Public Employment.

**Mr McCARTHY:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I have the Commissioner of Public Employment with me, Mr Craig Allen.

**Mr ALLEN:** I would like to introduce Mr Robert Csar, who is our Chief Financial Officer.

**Mr McCARTHY:** Madam Chair, I have a very informative opening statement but in the interests of time I will not use the time.

**Madam CHAIR:** Minister, would you like to table your opening statement.

**Mr McCARTHY:** Thank you, Madam Chair, I will.

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

**Madam CHAIR:** The committee will now consider the estimates and proposed expenditure contained in the Appropriation Bill 2018–19 as they relate to the Office of the Commissioner of Public Employment. Are there any agency-related whole-of-government questions on budget and fiscal strategy?

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

### OUTPUT GROUP 6.0 – EMPLOYMENT SERVICES Output 6.1 – Employee and Industrial Relations

**Madam CHAIR:** The committee will now proceed to Output Group 6.0, Employment Services, Output 6.1, Employee and Industrial Relations. Are there any questions?

**Mr HIGGINS:** How many matters involving unions, industrial relations or collective bargaining is the Solicitor for the NT currently dealing with and how many lawyer hours have been spent dealing with such actions in the last financial year?

**Mr ALLEN:** Thank you for the question, Member for Daly. In terms of the lawyer hours for the SFNT, they are nil. We have not requested any assistance. In our whole-of-government questions we would have referred to some legal advice that we got from Clayton Utz and we gave a figure; I think it was around \$14 000 for that.

That legal advice was in relation to the bylaws under PSEMA and it was in response to a request from the unions about whether those bylaws could be incorporated into an enterprise agreement. We sought advice from Clayton Utz because of the constitutional aspect of that question about whether—because bylaws are subordinate legislation under PSEMA—whether they could actually be incorporated into an enterprise bargaining agreement. We received advice back on that question.

**Mr HIGGINS:** Was that done directly with Clayton Utz or is that done through the solicitor?

**Mr ALLEN:** It was done through SFNT. We always go through SFNT and they outsourced it to Clayton Utz because of the constitutional nature of the question.

**Mr KIRBY:** May I ask a technical question on the back of that? What was the advice? Was it that bylaws were allowed to be included?

**Mr ALLEN:** No, because they are subordinate legislation and it takes away the power of the government because it is an act. If they are in an enterprise agreement they can be negotiated out.

**Mr KIRBY:** So they can be called up and referred to but not specifically detailed, so they cannot be adjusted during negotiations. That makes sense. Thank you.

**Mr HIGGINS:** Commissioner, there was an offer of 2.5% to eligible NT general public servants last year in a four-year agreement which was accepted. However, it does not affect the following frontline workers:

corrections officers; firefighters; doctors; nurses; and teachers; and groups that currently have EBAs under negotiation.

Is it true that in your current negotiations for these frontline workers, you are only able to offer 2% per year over three years. What is the reason for the lower offer compared to that offered to the first group?

**Mr ALLEN:** Thank you for the question. The wages policy that was announced by the government indicated that there would be a reduction from 2.5% to 2% and that would come into effect in October 2018. In our current negotiations with those frontline union workers you have indicated, their offer is still 2.5% over ...

**Mr HIGGINS:** Provided they accept it before October.

**Mr ALLEN:** Before October. We are still offering a four-year deal for those. Any of those unions—for example, the teachers came after that. The teachers have accepted in-principle the 2.5%. That goes out to ballot this Friday, which is 15 June, from memory. It is in the next week or so. If that ballot gets up those workers will get 2.5% per annum for four years. That applies to all of the other frontline unions. They have until October. We have spoken to the unions about that and the government has been up front about the change in the wages policy from 2.5% to 2%.

**Mr HIGGINS:** Technically, once we get to October, 2.5% is off the table—2%.

**Mr ALLEN:** Yes.

**Mr HIGGINS:** Right. In any of these negotiations, are we putting any restriction or having part of that a restriction on overtime?

**Mr ALLEN:** No. There has been ...

**Mr HIGGINS:** It is just a question; I am not saying you have.

**Mr ALLEN:** Not as part of any of the negotiations—well, overtime is used for a purpose and a lot of those services are services, for example, in corrections or in fires, where if workers have to work we need to pay them overtime for that period of time.

**Mr HIGGINS:** Why is there 25% of the public service on fixed-term contracts as opposed to being employed on a permanent basis when you compare to the Commonwealth, which is running around 8%?

**Mr ALLEN:** It is a matter of comparing apples with apples and about how the Commonwealth might report on the fixed term contracts. When we report on fixed-term contracts, that also includes everyone who is on an executive contract officer position. There are some 600 of those, so that is a fair chunk of the public service.

**Mr HIGGINS:** What percentage would that be of the total public service? Can someone do a quick calculation on that? How many public servants do we have? We have 600 ...

**Mr ALLEN:** About 20 000, so 600 is probably about ...

**Mr HIGGINS:** Three percent.

**Mr ALLEN:** Yes, 3%. I am using that as an example of where we have that. There are other agencies where there is large fixed-term employment, particularly in Education. However, my office is working with the Department of Education and the Minister for Education around reducing the number of temporary teacher contracts. There has been a significant reduction as a result of that because the levels at the moment are not acceptable in terms of temporary teachers.

We are working across all government agencies about trying to reduce those numbers of fixed terms because of the need to try to increase our permanent workforce.

**Mr HIGGINS:** Am I able to ask if I can get the percentage breakdown? You triggered something when you gave the apples with apples, and then talked about teachers. I presume the federal Department of Education do not employ anywhere near the number of teachers we do. Plus I have heard their Health department does not employ any doctors, which I know we would have a lot on those temporary contracts.

Would I be able to get that percentage excluding those areas where we do have high contract numbers because they are a different category. I understand why we have a lot of temporary contracts for teachers, and the same with doctors and nurses. Can we get a comparison with the rest of the public service?

Twenty-five per cent does not compare with eight—but if we take out Education and Health, how does it compare?

**Mr ALLEN:** Are you asking me as a question on notice? We could provide some information about the temporary employment percentages across agencies, if that is what you are after.

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#### Question on Notice No 5.12

**Madam CHAIR:** Member for Daly, please restate the question for the record.

**Mr HIGGINS:** Can I get a breakdown of the percentage of public servants employed on fixed-term contracts by agency across the service?

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

**Mr McCARTHY:** Yes.

**Madam CHAIR:** The question is allocated the number 5.12.

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**Mr WOOD:** I wanted to ask about the NTES Indigenous employment and career development strategy. Where is that at the moment?

**Mr ALLEN:** The employment strategy commenced in 2016 to 2020. At the moment we are looking at a refresh of that strategy because it has been in progress for the last couple of years. A number of initiatives outlined in that strategy have been implemented. Most recently we have developed and released a cultural competency awareness module that public servants in the Territory can access electronically, which gives every public servant the opportunity to have some basic cultural competency awareness. We thought that was a very important aspect for new public servants, particularly if they are not from the Northern Territory.

That is one initiative coming out of that program, but we are reviewing the strategy and there will be a refreshed strategy released by the minister in the second half of this year.

**Mr WOOD:** Is this the strategy where there were some issues in relation to people who had been on temporary employment—I know one particular case in the Department of Education—for 10 years, and when it came up for renewal the first person who had to be looked at for the role was an Aboriginal?

**Mr ALLEN:** You are talking about special measures?

**Mr WOOD:** Is that part of this strategy?

**Mr ALLEN:** Special measures is part of the overall strategy to increase the number of Aboriginal employees. It is included in this strategy in regard to us trying to move towards 16%. We had a long discussion about this in November of last year.

**Mr WOOD:** I know it has caused concern amongst some people. I am interested to know when you are reviewing this strategy whether that element is reviewed to see if it is working in a fair way. I understand where it is coming from, but it has to be delivered in a way that is fair.

**Mr ALLEN:** I will allay your concerns—there will always be individuals who are impacted. I will give you some data; I know you like data.

A total of 71% of jobs advertised in the last financial year for the public service were advertised under special measures. That means 3121 of 4374 vacancies were advertised under special measures. If an Aboriginal applied and they met the criteria—they have to have more than just applying—they can get the job. Only 461 of those jobs went to Aboriginal people. Only 10% went to Aboriginal people; 90% went to non-Aboriginal people

**Mr WOOD:** Of those 10%, can you give it a length of time those people stayed employed, because one of the issues were people got a job, they got in to the work and then people found that they were not competent for that job. I know you are saying they should be but sometimes people were not competent for the job that they were being asked to do.

**Mr ALLEN:** This last financial year we probably have not got that data about people who have left, but our data generally indicates that the percentage of Aboriginal people leaving the public service is consistent of non-Aboriginal people leaving the public service.

**Ms NELSON:** Mr Allen, did you not just say also that they have to do more than just apply—I mean they have to be more than just Aboriginal to get that job.

**Mr ALLEN:** Yes, absolutely.

**Ms NELSON:** Yes, being Aboriginal and a special measures application—they get like 10 points, that puts them ahead. They get a first look but they have to meet the criteria for that job.

**Mr ALLEN:** Absolutely.

**Ms NELSON:** So it is not to do with incompetency.

**Mr ALLEN:** They have to meet the merit. Panels are very strict on this, Member for Katherine, because the biggest thing that will impact on special measures is if people get jobs who have not got the competency to get the jobs.

**Ms NELSON:** It is another version of affirmative action laws, basically affirmative action laws in the United States.

**Madam CHAIR:** Member for Nelson, do you want to place your question on the record or are you satisfied with the Commissioner's answer?

**Mr WOOD:** I am satisfied. I might be able to ring the Commissioner up and ask him if he has any more details on that because that was an issue raised that people had got the job and within one week they realised that they did not like the job, they were not suitable and they left and of course the person who lost their job was upset that the person who had replaced them had not lasted very long.

I am not saying that applies to everybody. I am just saying the issue—if it is going to be done it has to be done in a way that is transparent and is fair to all those parties, that is all.

**Mr HIGGINS:** Can I just ask another one? I know this question has been asked previously, but how many of those people employed under those special measures were actually employed from remote communities? Do we know?

**Mr ALLEN:** I have not got the detail on that. I would have to take that on notice.

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#### Question on Notice No 5.13

**Madam CHAIR:** Member for Daly, can you repeat the question for the record.

**Mr HIGGINS:** How many Indigenous people employed under the officers special measures were employed from remote communities?

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

**Mr McCARTHY:** Yes.

**Madam CHAIR:** Member for Daly's question has been allocated the number 5.13.

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**Mr ALLEN:** In response to that, we will only be able to answer that question if people have identified that in their application.



**Mr HIGGINS:** Like where they have come from?

**Mr ALLEN:** Yes, where they are from.

**Ms NELSON:** Recently we have seen a lot of states develop, accept and implement some domestic violence leave policies into their employment contracts. Where are we at with that in the NT?

**Mr McCARTHY:** Thank you, Member for Katherine, for your question, and thank you, commissioner, for your advice.

For some years the public sector has provided leave for employees who experience family or domestic violence. Last year we sought some changes to this policy to bring it more into line with contemporary expectations and evidence.

The public sector provides, through PSEMA bylaw 18, an entitlement to leave. This leave can be for as long as needed, and can be used for a range of situations such as attending court, moving house, seeking counselling and so on.

Evidence is required to take this leave, but the evidence is sighted only. This is to protect the privacy of the people experiencing violence. This leave is not intended to be used by perpetrators of violence.

There is also support available in the workplace, which may involve moving an employee's place of work, changing their phone number or email address, and other measures which will ensure those experiencing violence are able to maintain their employment without fear of being disrupted further by violence.

As we negotiate new enterprise agreements, we are adding new model clauses into them to reflect this entitlement for employees. These reforms are leading the way for Australian workplaces and we think this is the right thing to do for our employees. I hope it will encourage other employers to follow our lead. People spend a large portion of their lives at work and need employment to pay rent and bills. Tackling family and domestic violence necessarily involves policies at a workplace level.

**Ms NELSON:** Thank you, minister, for that detailed response.

**Madam CHAIR:** Are there further questions for this output?

**Mr HIGGINS:** How many public servants are currently seconded to NGOs, and what organisations are they seconded to?

**Mr McCARTHY:** I am going to have to take that question on notice.

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#### **Question on Notice No 5.14**

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

**Mr HIGGINS:** How many public servants are currently seconded to NGOs and what are those organisations?

**Madam CHAIR:** Thank you. Minister, do you accept the question?

**Mr McCARTHY:** Yes, Madam Chair.

**Madam CHAIR:** The question asked by the Member for Daly has been allocated the number 5.14.

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**Madam CHAIR:** Any further questions? That concludes consideration of Output 6.1.

#### **Output 6.2 – Workforce Planning and Development**

**Madam CHAIR:** The committee will now proceed to Output 6.2, Workforce Planning and Development. Are there any questions?

**Mr HIGGINS:** Has the overall employment of people with disabilities improved in the last 12 to 18 months?

**Mr ALLEN:** The answer to that question is no. The numbers are still low. In comparison to other jurisdictions they are low. This is a subject that all of the public service commissioners around Australia addressed in the last month about strategies to increase the number of employment opportunities for people with a disability.

We have a strategy around that which was developed in the last six months. We are hoping it will start to have some impact. We have always had our disability employment program, which is one by where agencies contribute dollars so that people can be employed at entry level positions. They are always fully subscribed.

Our data indicates that for people who indicate on their employment record, about 1% of the public service indicate they have a disability. If we ask that question through the People Matter Survey, it increases to 4%, which is probably more accurate but is still well below what the community levels of disability are. It is an area we need to do a lot more work in.

**Mr HIGGINS:** Just following up on that—the department of Housing previously had 48 instances of mental factors in claims. A lot of those were stress induced matters. Does that seem high to you? Can we get a percentage across the departments on how many were occurring in which departments?

**Mr ALLEN:** Was that one of the global questions?

**Mr HIGGINS:** That was housing—I wanted to see if it was consistent across the public sector or whether it specifically relates to certain departments. I am not saying that has got much to do with the performance of the departments, it could just be the work that is being undertaken.

**Mr ALLEN:** I am sorry, Member for Daly, I thought that in the global questions you asked each agency about what there—so have you already got that data?

**Mr HIGGINS:** Not for all of them, no.

**Mr ALLEN:** If you were to indicate to me which agencies that you needed—I can tell you from OCPE, our answer is zero, but if there are agencies that did not provide that in their global response, my office can follow that up.

**Mr HIGGINS:** I think what I would be doing from that is then finding out what percentage of the department, or the numbers of staff—what percentage we are getting with that to do a comparison. I will follow that one up in a written question because it is not an easy question to answer. That is all I have at this point.

**Mr WOOD:** I am ageing and I wanted to know about the ageing workforce policy framework. Exactly what is that about? I might need it.

**Mr HIGGINS:** Yes, can we both get a job?

**Mr ALLEN:** Thank you for the question, Member for Nelson. We are leading the other jurisdictions in the area of ageing workforce policy development. We are a member of National Seniors Australia. We are the only government agency that is a member of National Seniors Australia. That membership allows public servants access to a whole library of literature around transition to retirement, financial planning and a lot of things to do with their personal circumstance.

From a whole-of-government perspective, we value older workers. Their corporate knowledge and expertise is something that is too easily lost when people retire. We are encouraging agencies in flexible work practices for older workers. People might want to work part-time. We are asking agencies to accommodate that, particularly for those transitioning to retirement and for those who have a great deal of corporate knowledge that we cannot afford to lose.

The number of people expected to retire in the next five years is something like 4000 or 5000. People have indicated a retirement in the next five to 10 years, which is a fair percentage of the public service.

**Mr WOOD:** Do you think I would be allowed to have that flexible type of approach to work part time?

**Mr ALLEN:** I think you may have to deal with someone other than me about that.

**Mr KIRBY:** We prefer to be called ‘mature-aged’, not ‘older’ workers.

**Mr ALLEN:** The definition of older worker is someone over 45.

**Mr KIRBY:** I will skate past that pretty well. The Member for Daly over the last couple of days ran a line of questioning around people who permanently reside in the Northern Territory, FIFO managers or workers—bringing the question to a head and concentrating on our population decline, would you have the ability to access data around how many people employed through the public service do not formally live in the Northern Territory?

**Mr ALLEN:** I have access to that data. That data has been requested from me by the budget Cabinet subcommittee. Therefore, I do not think I am in a position to be able to provide that data to you because of the nature of the Cabinet request.

**Mr KIRBY:** Perhaps then I could ask—as some people assume—if there a skill shortage in some areas? Why are we relying on interstate workers to top up some of those senior levels? Do we have plans to train and recruit for those levels?

**Mr ALLEN:** I can talk generally about the response. The number has decreased over the last 12 months. I will provide an example in our payroll area. We have an old payroll system. There are three people in Australia who know the language and system it works in.

**Mr HIGGINS:** (inaudible – mic off).

**Mr ALLEN:** I am not sure. Two of them are located in Sydney and one is located in Perth. They are more mature workers. They are employed under our administrative pay scale arrangements. Employing them under those arrangements is significantly cheaper than employing them as consultants to provide that service.

That is an example of some of that where there might be people who are interstate.

Every agency that has an interstate worker—including my own agency, I have one interstate worker—that have plans in place to transition so that people are based in the Territory. For example, in my agency, a job was advertised at that particular level and there was no one in the Territory who applied who had that particular skillset. We did not fill that job. The arrangement that I had in my office was in place prior to me coming into the position, and we have had discussions that when that person moves on or retires that we obviously will not be continuing in that arrangement. I just want to point out, the numbers are very low.

**Madam CHAIR:** Thank you, Commissioner. That concludes consideration of Output 6.2. The minister has reached his time limit so that concludes consideration of all output groups relating to the Office of the Commissioner for Public Employment.

On behalf of the committee, I would like to thank the minister, the Commissioner and the Chief Financial Officer for attending today and at this late hour, and all the officers that have provided assistance to the minister today.

That concludes the estimate hearings for today. The hearings will recommence Monday 18 June at 8 am with the questions of the Minister for Primary Industry and Resources. Thank you and good night.

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The committee suspended.

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