

The Estimates Committee convened at 8.00 am.

## MINISTER MOSS'S PORTFOLIOS

### DEPARTMENT OF TOURISM, SPORT AND CULTURE

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

Minister, I invite you to introduce the officials accompanying you and to make an opening statement regarding the Department of Tourism, Sport and Culture.

**Ms MOSS:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I have Simonne Shepherd, CEO for the Department of Tourism, Sport and Culture; Joanna Frankenfeld, Chief Financial Officer; Andrew Hopper, Deputy Chief Executive; and Susan Kirkman, Executive Director Strategic Services.

Thank you for the opportunity to make an opening statement this morning. The department is really important in terms of driving quite a large agenda aimed at bringing more people to the Territory, but it is also integral to creating vibrant and liveable communities. It is important to our economic agenda around job creation, the economy and supporting social wellbeing across the community.

We have had a really big focus on delivering a range of significant infrastructure projects over the last 12 months in particular, but there is a number under way and progressing well. We have seen a number delivered over the last 12 months.

In terms of tourism, we have significant investment going in to growing our visitor economy across the Northern Territory with our initial Turbocharging Tourism investment resulting in more than 60 000 additional holiday bookings, which generated more than \$75m in spending.

We saw international visitor numbers up 10% and domestic visitor numbers up 11% in December 2018 in that quarter compared to the same quarter in 2017. The combined visitor figure for both international and national visitation was \$1.9m visitors for the 2018 calendar year spending \$2.4bn.

Over 13 000 delegates booked for 42 business events and conferences expected to spend \$31.8m, \$3m worth of visitor experience enhancement program grants benefited 115 tourism-related businesses and unlocked a further \$11.6m in private investment. We have seen more flights to the Northern Territory and a lot of important events that Territorians and visitors love improved, made bigger and recording some incredible crowds, including across Darwin Festival, BassintheGrass and Parrtjima.

We are keen to continue the momentum that we have built through our Turbo2 investment initiative, which sees a further \$62.8m over the next two years. We are backing that up with investment across our tourism product, particularly across our parks where we have about \$56m rolling out in things like the red centre ride, the Watarrka multi-day walk, the Hermannsburg Historic Precinct investment, Tennant Creek visitor enhancements, Nitmiluk Gorge walk and opening up new visitor experiences in Litchfield and the new visitor and events centre in George Brown Botanic Gardens.

Across sport we have seen more than \$66m going in to new infrastructure, including the new tennis centre, the indoor netball stadium, the new home for rugby league, hockey upgrades, women's soccer change rooms and TIO Stadium upgrades, which have been important particularly in boosting participation from women and girls, attracting some premier sporting events that we have seen recently, and boosting that liveability in our communities we talked about earlier.

Remote communities are also benefiting from this investment. We have seen oval upgrades in Elliott. In Lake Evella and Barunga oval lights are up and running. Nguiu has rec hall upgrades that have been completed and the tender is out for oval upgrades. Mililingimbi has the basketball courts and oval lights complete and there are tenders progressing on a whole range of other commitments that we have made to remote sporting infrastructure.

In Alice Springs we have the \$6.2m worth of sporting infrastructure projects rolling out where we have a number of those complete or under way, such as the construction at the Jim McConville Oval where works are expected to be complete in August this year.

In Barkly, the master planning and early works are under way on the \$9m Purkiss Reserve upgrade, and the Tennant Creek Speedway upgrade will be completed later this year. Katherine is the same story. There is design work under way on the \$4.3m sports grounds upgrade, planning under way for the \$2m showgrounds upgrade and upgrades completed at the speedway.

In the arts, we have seen \$3.6m in grants roll out for 51 projects to remote and regional art galleries, art centres, museums and keeping places. The business cases and options for upgrades are currently under active consideration with Mimi Arts, GYRACC in Katherine and Nyinkka Nyunyu in Tennant Creek. Business cases are to be developed for the Arnhem Land gallery extension projects with consultation under way. We have invested \$1m in an arts trail campaign promoting the Territory. It is the world's biggest art gallery.

There has been plenty said of the National Aboriginal Art Gallery project in Alice Springs. There has been a land swap proposed with the council. Conversations are currently under way with Traditional Owners and custodians of Mbantua, which will give people a reason to visit Alice Springs and, we hope, put a downward pressure on air fares. Those conversations with custodians are continuing.

The National Indigenous Cultural Centre in Alice Springs is also being supported through a national consultation process and early planning. Government has committed \$20m to that project, with approximately \$560 000 invested so far, including for their business case. We are also planning the new art gallery in Darwin, which will be part of the State Square development. The site will be announced as part of the master plan work, with a functional brief under way.

In closing, I take the opportunity to recognise the really hard work of my department, including Simonne Shepherd and the executive team which works across all areas of Tourism, Sports and Culture. It is a big department. It is responsible for a lot of different projects and areas people are very passionate about. They have faced a number of challenges and have worked together to ensure we have a cohesive and effective department that delivers on the economic, social and community agenda we have.

I particularly recognise the work of the Executive Director of Parks and Wildlife, Mark Ashley, who is leaving the department, sadly. He has done a really great job of working with Traditional Owners in ensuring we are strengthening those joint management arrangements across our parks, as well as driving a number of our significant infrastructure projects across parks, overseeing response to bushfires and the weed and pest control work. I put on the record my gratitude for his work. He leaves a really strong and capable team behind in Parks and Wildlife.

I also recognise the hard work of NT Major Events under Tim Watsford who has delivered a number of incredible major events over the past year, and more from a bigger and better base—a better Parrtjima, the Supercars just this weekend, and the Arafura Games.

Thank you and I look forward to the conversation this morning.

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

**Mr HIGGINS:** Yes, I also thank the staff for the work they do. Mark, it is disappointing that you will be leaving. He will leave a big hole. He has done a terrific job, not just regarding bushfires but in parks as well. I agree with the minister's comments.

Tourism is pretty crucial to us. I had a lot of years involved with Tourism and I have always found them to be very hard-working and pleasant to deal with. There is another thing; I never seem to have an argument with that department, as opposed to some of the others in my experience.

I have asked all of the CEs and the ministers this. We have an efficiency dividend; can you tell me what is the total amount of that dividend and how do we plan on finding that? What are we doing? Are we chopping staff, chopping programs, cutting back here? What plan do we have to address that?

**Ms MOSS:** Leader of the Opposition, obviously every department undertook a really rigorous root-and-branch review. The Department of Tourism, Sport and Culture was no exception to that. We had the Langoulant report released in April. As part of that process we, like every other agency, put out a range of measures we would be undertaking in achieving the savings that were set out for DTSC.

In terms of our efficiency dividend for our whole-of-government savings, that amounts to about \$3.58m. It has been applied to all areas of the department's expenditure, including our grants. As I have said previously, we have undertaken a really significant review across the department about where can find savings and

efficiencies across the department.

We will be monitoring really closely those things like travel, vehicles and telecommunications, acknowledging that those things are also critical to the work of our department, particularly when you look at things like Parks and Tourism. We will, like many other agencies I am sure, see a reduction of FTEs, which will be achieved predominantly through not filling positions that have been vacant for a significant length of time. This will be one way that is achieved.

We have an efficiency dividend applied across all of our grants pools. That has been communicated to our stakeholders. It is an efficiency dividend that has obviously been placed on grants programs across government. We will do that work with a really firm view on making sure that we continue to meet our obligations in regard to public safety and our legislative requirements, because we have a number of those things being such a public-facing agency.

**Mr HIGGINS:** The \$3.58m, is that just the first year? Does that increase? I think the first year is 2%, then it goes to 3%, then it drops back to 1% or something. Is that just the 2%?

**Ms MOSS:** The \$3.58m is just the first year, yes.

**Mr HIGGINS:** What is it in the second year? Do we have that figure?

**Ms MOSS:** The efficiency dividend will be around \$7.5m in the 2020–21 year.

**Mr HIGGINS:** After the two years you will be over \$10m. There has been a commitment by government not to cut back on frontline staff. Parks—are the rangers treated as frontline staff? I think they should be.

**Ms MOSS:** They are not, but we are not anticipating that we would see too much impact there in terms of rangers. For example, we have as one of our savings measures that we will see the closure of the Owen Springs Ranger Station. Those two rangers will be relocated. We do not lose those rangers; they are still in the region and will still operate within the region. It is really important that we have those rangers there for the bushfire response, pest and weed management, as well as the whole plethora of work that they do.

**Mr HIGGINS:** I was then going to then going to come to bushfires and say that I treat them as definitely frontline people; hopefully they will not be included in any of those as well and will be treated as frontline staff by government.

**Ms MOSS:** You will need to speak to the Department of Environment and Natural Resources on that.

**Mr HIGGINS:** It was just you mentioned bushfires, so I thought I would get it in there and make the point. I might get an answer for it.

**Ms MOSS:** Absolutely, we acknowledge the importance of those people who are working across the department in things like bushfire response. Obviously we have seen increased investment in things like the HQ for the bushfires team, which I was welcomed by everyone, and you, Leader of the Opposition.

As I have said, we are all very aware of our—particularly our public safety obligations. I have never found any workers across government more aware of that than our rangers, particularly those in remote locations, who are often the first responders for the region as well. They take on a lot of work and a lot of really difficult work at times. We will be looking to make sure we support them. We have been really fortunate in many ways. We have been able to re-invest some of our savings back into Parks.

**Mr HIGGINS:** I get responses from a lot of people, and I agree with them. Our rangers are, as far as they are concerned, frontline staff. There is a lot of criticism on the jobs that they get given, to the extent of some of them actually do rubbish collection, which is not really a job of our rangers. To see any cuts in those rangers or any of those other facilities or services that are provided I think is going to be detrimental to our tourism. I think it is something that people have raised with me on multiple occasions, and more so in the last month or so. I have no more questions on that statement.

**Mr WOOD:** Minister, thank you for your opening statement. My question is about sporting facilities in remote communities. On the weekend I was down at Merrepen Arts Festival. There has been work started at the football ground there, which I think received a grant of \$1m. Much to my surprise, I was told that no locals are employed on the project.

Considering that the government has a policy of basically making sure there is strong Aboriginal employment, especially in local communities, do you know what the terms of that contract were? Would you at least investigate as to why no local people have been employed on that project? Could I just say also, if you have read Miriam-Rose Ungunmerr's article in the *NT News* a couple of weeks ago—her concern about the unemployment numbers at Nauiyu and the problems it is causing.

**Ms MOSS:** Thank you, Member for Nelson. I acknowledge that I think you had this question last night and you did not get the opportunity to ask it. We have given a capital grant to the local council, which is the way we have managed the majority of these remote sporting infrastructure projects. With those capital grants there is an expectation that people will comply with the Buy Local principles, which we have strengthened across government.

**Mr WOOD:** I think it is still a local company, by the way, that has the contract, but not an immediately local one.

**Ms MOSS:** I understand that it is a local company as well, but I absolutely take your point. I am not aware of the details of the individuals working on that job, but there is an expectation that it does comply with Buy Local. Taking your point, I am very happy to have a discussion with council about that and I would encourage you to as well.

I think we all want to see the same thing, which is the whole purpose of the Buy Local principle, to see work going to local people.

**Mr WOOD:** I am not blaming the council. They were given money, but I did not know whether there were any preconditions to that money being given.

**Madam CHAIR:** Any further questions on the opening statement?

**Mrs LAMBLEY:** Minister, in your opening statement you said in regard to the National Indigenous Art Gallery and cultural centre that, 'those conversations are continuing'. We have had essentially three years of conversations. We could continue for another three years with your conversations. When will we seek some action? When will you start construction of the art gallery and the National Indigenous Cultural Centre?

**Ms MOSS:** Thank you, Member for Araluen. I think what is important—and I think much of this is already on the public record. As you know, I have been asked many times by yourself and others. There is an awful lot of work that has already happened in relation to the National Aboriginal Art Gallery, and we have an incredible team on the ground who have had over 65 meetings nationally at all levels of government with different institutions about sharing and showing collections.

We have had a meeting of our national reference group and we expect that will happen again. This is an amazing group of very engaged people who are working to progress work, much of that work being focused on some of those original recommendations of the original steering committee. All of that work continues and a project of that kind requires that level of planning and work.

In relation to my opening statement, we have an in-principle agreement with council. Again, that is very much on the public record. I think the first thing that we all agreed that was that it is absolutely necessary that we went back to the traditional custodians to have discussion with them about this new proposal. That is currently where we are at. We are going through a process with AAPA in terms of having those conversations with traditional custodians. They are happening and I can confirm that there have been meetings through that process. That is where we are at in terms of that element of the National Aboriginal Art Gallery.

I can confirm again that there has been a lot of work under way by that team headed up by Mark Crees in Alice Springs on all other areas of the art gallery project. Desert continues to work on the workforce development plan which I expect will be finalised shortly. I believe they are at an interim plan stage. They are very well respected and do a lot of work with art centres across the region and are very well placed to do that work. I think it is really important we emphasise again that there is a lot of work and a lot that has been achieved in a relatively short amount of time on a project such as this.

I think it is really important given the conversations that we are having with traditional custodians that we are now talking about potential for a land swap and the different elements of that. We will need to revisit that time frame and make sure that we put that out to yourself and to the public. We would hope that we would not need to adjust that time frame too significantly. It is apparent that there have been some complexities in this and we need to make sure we revise that time frame. The money is in the budget as you know for those two

projects.

**Mrs LAMBLEY:** In terms of the money for the construction of the national Indigenous art gallery, that comes online from October. That is just over \$48m. Is it fair to assume that construction will begin any time after October within the next financial year?

**Ms MOSS:** Within the next financial year. I think it would be ideal if that were to happen. I think at that stage we need to revisit that time frame. The money is still in the budget and will remain in the budget for this project.

**Mrs LAMBLEY:** When you say 'revisit', what do you mean?

**Ms MOSS:** As I just explained, we are having conversations with traditional custodians for Mbandia, which is of course where we would prefer to locate the art gallery. We have been very clear about that. Those conversations are under way. We need to give those conversations and consultations with traditional custodians the respect that they deserve.

What I am saying is, I do not anticipate that construction will be starting in October or before the end of the year and we will have a look at that 2021 construction time frame in light of the in-principle agreement that we now have with council and all of the other elements that come with that across a whole range of different areas of government.

We will make sure we put out that new time frame. If that can be achieved, and I think that this proposal is very positive for Alice Springs, being able to achieve the new library and a whole range of other things for the community is really important. We will come together on that. I would hope it would not be pushed out too far.

**Mrs LAMBLEY:** In terms of your negotiation with the Alice Springs Town Council around your proposal to swap land—the Anzac Hill precinct or school site with the Alice Springs Town Council Civic Centre site—will you be providing funding for the Alice Springs Town Council to construct a new civic centre and library at the Anzac Hill site if they should agree to this proposal? Is that a part of the negotiations?

**Ms MOSS:** Those negotiations are under way, but yes I would expect that there would be funding for a new library building. My department is not overseeing the land swap. That is being run through the Department of the Chief Minister. Obviously it is a bigger piece of work that is related to a whole other range of projects as well, so that is being run through the Department of the Chief Minister.

**Mrs LAMBLEY:** A few years ago in the media, you said that the national Indigenous art gallery would cost more than \$150m. We are down to \$48m after spending quite a lot of money on consultation. Where do you propose to get the at least \$102m to build this national Indigenous art gallery in Alice Springs?

**Ms MOSS:** Again, we have always been very clear that we did not anticipate that this would be a project that government would be the sole investor in. We continue to have conversations with our federal counterparts. We have been through an election since then. We will be heading back down to talk to—we now have a new Arts minister federally. The new ministers will continue those conversations federally but we also have a national reference group with an enormous amount of expertise. With them, we are working on things like that philanthropic attraction plan. That is our intention. Government would not be the sole investors in the project like this; it would be a partnership. That remains our view and I think it is important to note that \$50m will have been put up and will continue to be put up by government.

In terms of the money that has been spent so far, which you say is for consultation—it is actually for a whole range of things. As I have said previously, we have a dedicated team on this and we have had this properly resourced. Consultation has been an important part of that but, again, there has been a whole range of other work done that has been properly resourced, which I am sure you will agree is important for a project of this size.

**Mrs LAMBLEY:** With the National Indigenous Cultural Centre, how much will that cost to construct? You have only got less than \$20m available to you now for that, what is the estimated cost of that?

**Ms MOSS:** Again, I think this is also well on the public record. This is not a government-led project, so government is investing \$20m into this project. We are funding the business case. We have put up or spent around \$560 000 on that project so far, which has been led by the steering committee that was formally named the Nganampa Development Corporation. It is leading that project. They have \$20m on the table from

us and they have been undertaking national consultation which is continuing currently and they will be seeking other sources of funding for that project.

As I have said, we are funding the business case for that project and seconded resources for that project for a significant length of time, which we now provide them financial support for and they directly engage a support person to make sure they are developing that project. It is not a government-led project.

**Mrs LAMBLEY:** Could you explain that a bit further? Are you outsourcing it, or is it completely not a government project? Can you tease that out a bit? Exactly what is the role of government in the planning and construction of the National Indigenous Cultural Centre?

**Ms MOSS:** Government has agreed to \$20m worth of investment in that project. We would like to see that project happening in Alice Springs, but it is not a government-led project. It is being led by the National Indigenous Cultural Centre team, the Nganampa team, which has been working with government on a whole range of different issues.

We work very closely with them on getting their business case in place, their concept development and we have been providing support to them in any way we can to help make that project happen. They will be seeking other external funding. It is not a government project; it is an external project.

**Mrs LAMBLEY:** Have you outsourced?

**Ms MOSS:** It is not a government project, Member for Araluen. We have not outsourced; we are providing a commitment to an external project.

**Mrs LAMBLEY:** Did you appoint that group of people? Was it a government-appointed—Nganampa?

**Ms MOSS:** This is not a government-appointed group of people.

**Mrs LAMBLEY:** Okay, that is fascinating.

**Madam CHAIR:** We might move to outputs, if that is all right, Member for Araluen?

**Mr HIGGINS:** May I just ask one more question on the opening statement and the response? We talk about the federal government. Have you been in contact with the new federal minister?

**Ms MOSS:** We are currently writing to them and getting ready to visit.

**Mr HIGGINS:** Do you know who the federal minister is?

**Ms MOSS:** Which one? I have a number of them. We have Paul in Tasmania—a whole range of different ministers for our different portfolios.

**Mr HIGGINS:** The federal minister.

**Ms MOSS:** For what?

**Mr HIGGINS:** Who is the federal minister for Arts?

**Ms MOSS:** We have a whole range of different ministers. Paul, in Tasmania, who we will be dealing with around sport. It is interesting, because we have been dealing with Mitch Fifield across the arts previously and we also need to be dealing with the Infrastructure minister, which we have been doing. There is Fletcher for the Arts and Simon Birmingham for Tourism. We need to be dealing with all of the different federal ministers and also Ken Wyatt from the Indigenous affairs portfolio as well.

**Mr HIGGINS:** I asked that question because I will be there in a couple of weeks. I will be interested to get an update on who we have dealt with and how we have dealt with them since the election. Before I go down there I would appreciate if I could ...

**Ms MOSS:** I would be very happy to provide that to you. We have had meetings with the Infrastructure minister and the Arts minister, Mitch Fifield. Nigel Scullion was part of those meetings too. They will be well aware of the project. But I am very happy to ...

**Mr HIGGINS:** I am hoping to meet with Paul Fletcher. I think Ken Wyatt is here tomorrow.

**Ms MOSS:** I understand he is, yes.

**Mr HIGGINS:** Hopefully you will get a chance to have a chat to him.

**Mr PAECH:** The Boundless Possible campaign—within that campaign, is there any money allocated to the care and protection within national parks to keep them pristine as part of the marketing campaign?

**Ms MOSS:** Under Boundless Possible? That is an interesting question. Not under the expenditure that is put aside for Boundless Possible, which obviously is not through our department. No, there is not specific funding.

**Mr PAECH:** The question is—I am happy to go through it. I did not know where it was appropriate to ask. I am happy to do it in parks and wildlife—around what efforts are being made to keep our national parks in the condition that they are. I mean, maintaining them with basic plant species, trying to eradicate that.

**Ms MOSS:** Sure. We will come to that. A lot of work has been happening across the department. I am very happy to answer that. But it is not funded through Boundless Possible.

**Mr WOOD:** When you spoke about the two rangers being moved from Owen Springs station, what crossed my mind was that we have a wage freeze and you will get some of your cuts by not filling positions. What happens to young people who would like to become a ranger? Will the opportunities now start to decrease for the people who put their hand up to be a ranger because there will be fewer vacancies in that area?

I am one of those who, when I came to the Territory, believe it or not, wanted to be a ranger. I wanted to wear that eagle patch on my shoulder. I would be a retired ranger, or a tired ranger. Are there opportunities for young people who want to come up through the conservation area?

**Ms MOSS:** Yes, Member for Nelson. I anticipate there will still be plenty of opportunities for people who want to take on those conservation roles and become rangers to do so. Obviously this is not isolated to our department; it will be a challenge across government. I anticipate there will still be roles that will need to be filled, particularly across our national parks. As I said, we have re-invested back in to our national parks. They are so important for conservation and locals, but also for tourism. There will always be the need for those roles to continue, which we all agree with.

While we are on that topic, the Junior Ranger program is continuing. I was at a Clontarf employment forum the other day and it was stack heaped with young fellas who wanted to go on to be rangers. It is a brilliant career path.

The other thing that will continue to support those roles is the Department of Environment and Natural Resources. We continue to support the Aboriginal ranger groups across the Northern Territory. It is not just a government employment opportunity in the Territory.

**Madam CHAIR:** The committee will now proceed to consider the estimates of proposed expenditure contained in the Appropriation Bill 2019–20 as they relate to the Department of Tourism, Sport and Culture.

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

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

**Mr HIGGINS:** We have a decrease of \$17.5m from 2018–19 to 2019–20. A lot of those relate to programs that are finished or whatever. I note that \$13m of that is in Tourism, Sport and Culture. Can you give me a rough breakdown on what that \$17m is—which programs have probably finished et cetera?

**Ms MOSS:** Okay. You are correct. Obviously, I understand where you are coming from on this one. We have invested a lot across Tourism, Sport and Culture and we are very proud of that.

**Mr HIGGINS:** I am not accusing government ...

**Ms MOSS:** I know, and the intention is about driving visitation, growing our visitor market in the Territory. That decrease, as you say, is related to one-off funding. Things have happened over the last 12 to 18 months like Bruce Munro: Tropical Light, which has come up for one year but will not be reflected in next year's ...

**Mr HIGGINS:** How much was that?

**Ms MOSS:** It was \$3.5m. That is \$3.5 across the five months. It was obviously a semi-permanent, rather large event, which was exciting.

**Mr HIGGINS:** Enlightening.

**Ms MOSS:** Enlightening! I will use that one, thank you. Thank you for workshopping that. That was good.

The fit-out and all those sorts of things for Megafauna Central have also now occurred, so we can include the operating costs, but we do not necessarily have all the fit-out costs et cetera. I am happy to provide you with a more fulsome breakdown of that if you would like.

**Mr HIGGINS:** Yes, can we get a list of what it is? I am not after you to balance it to the \$42 000 or ...

**Ms MOSS:** I figure I could rattle it off or we could just provide you with a list. If we can take that on ...

**Mr HIGGINS:** Is that all right to table the list or is that ...

**Mr PAECH:** You can either table it or put the question on notice.

**Ms MOSS:** I will hand over to Susan Kirkman and she will go into it.

**Ms KIRKMAN:** The reduction primarily relates to one-off funding, as was just discussed. One-off funding was for: Arafura Games, Masters Games, \$5.723m; Bruce Monro: Tropical Light, \$3.5m; urban oval lights program, \$3.5m; externally funded revenue, \$2.7m; one-off grants including Megafauna Central, Finke Desert Race, Darwin Golf Club, \$2.255m; movement in remote communities for infrastructure grants, \$2.15m; cost recovery because we have seconded staff to the NT Major Events company and Darwin Waterfront, \$2m.

There were also agency-specific savings targets impacting on that of \$7m; parameters and efficiency dividend, \$1m for movement in that; a decrease in the movement in the Turbocharging Tourism stimulus package of \$1.5m. That has been offset by an increase of \$1.9m in how we account for leases—a change in accounting treatment there.

**Mr PAECH:** Are there any more questions on Output 1.1?

**Mr HIGGINS:** Yes, I have pages. When we talk about the Turbo2 campaign I note there is \$62.8m, of which \$50m is new. If you look at your efficiency dividends over the next two years, it will equate to that carry-over money. That is one way of saying, 'that is gone, but we have the \$50m'. I just have trouble coming to grips with the fact that we want to save money and we are trying to save it everywhere, then we toss in an additional \$50m for Turbo2.

I am not saying that we should not be having this campaign but my worry is, where do we get that money from and how are these priorities being set? It is probably not just within your department, but how is Cabinet even setting these priorities? Are we measuring these? What sort of indicators are we using to say how effective this has been?

**Ms MOSS:** That is a very large question, Leader of the Opposition. There is lots in that one. I think I have broken it down a little bit. Again, I understand what you are saying.

Obviously we have had the economic development summits early in our term where we worked with the local business community, the community sector and community members more broadly on what those really important pillar areas are for the Northern Territory, but also what those emerging areas. Creative industries, which I guess you would not say is an emerging area, but it is an area with great potential for growth. There are a number of things that were highlighted through that process as priorities over the next 10 years for government. That was a process that we worked through with a range of community stakeholders.

Tourism, as you know, Opposition Leader, is one of our largest economic drivers across pretty much every region of the Northern Territory. It would be in the top three. Again, it is a really important area that we can scale up and that we need to scale up, particularly after the change in the INPEX phases here in the Top End. We have seen more empty seats on planes, more empty hotel rooms, et cetera. We need to make sure



that we are redefining ourselves again as a holiday destination—that is, front-of-mind for a range of visitors.

That is a real challenge, as you know. We are not only competing with the Melbournes, Sydneys and different Margaret River regions of Australia, we are competing with international destinations as well. We need to invest to make sure we are noticed and that we are monitoring a mention when it comes to that worldwide coverage of destinations.

We have continued to believe that tourism is a really important economic sector for us to invest in. It employs thousands of people across the Territory and puts a lot of money back into our economy. We are making sure we are measuring components of that. It is obviously not all marketing; it is a component of that—if you look at Turbocharging Tourism 1—which from memory is about \$27m in marketing. That includes the cooperative marketing with airlines, which includes a range of—the NT Now campaign and *The Bachelorette* campaign that we ran and all of those sorts of things.

It also contained about \$56m in tourism infrastructure. It then included funding for events and festivals as well. I might just ask Andrew to talk a bit more about the evaluation. Obviously we know that we had 60 000 additional holiday bookings as a result of that investment. The period of time for that investment is not yet over. We had a target of 53 000 additional holiday bookings; we far surpassed that. I think it is fair to say that the way we evaluate the different components of Turbo changes depending on what type of activity it is. I will hand over to Andrew. If you have specific questions within that, please feel free to ask.

**Mr HIGGINS:** I want to hear from Andrew; that is good. I think you people—I would like to see more publishing of those sorts of figures, like how are we measuring things. It is good to come out and say, 'We are investing this'. For us to have to ask these questions here today I think is something that we should not have to do. It should be, 'Here it is. This is how will measure this investment going forward and we will report these figures to you.' It is just a comment on that.

**Ms MOSS:** I will take that comment, Leader of the Opposition, and I think we have. I certainly have regularly been giving updates on the holiday bookings and answering questions on how we measure certain campaigns, but I will take your comment and if you have ...

**Mr HIGGINS:** I think we need the good with the bad. If we publish something that says, 'here is a snapshot' rather than 'here are the good bits out of it'—I am not saying that is what we do.

**Ms MOSS:** I will take your comment on board. It is worth mentioning at this point. Probably not the last time we went out with the figures—not with the 60 000—but when we surpassed the 53 000, the department did a fulsome briefing with media to walk through some of the methodologies and statistics and how the department has arrived at some of these figures. It is not just the snapshot.

It is a briefing that we are willing to provide to Members of Parliament, but these guys are constantly meeting with industry and reporting back to them on how things are tracking and answering those questions. I acknowledge it is a really big package. Being able to burrow down in to the detail today is really important.

**Mr HOPPER:** If I may touch on the results and how we package those up, we produce off the back of the Tourism Research Australia data. As you would recall, that comes out quarterly and we produce snapshots which we post online and circulate with the relevant media releases at that time, both for international and domestic. We circulate those and they are available at all times. That is the good, the bad and the ugly.

We talk about how things are moving in terms of total visitors, average night stay and expenditure. Internationally we look at what the different markets are doing. We have seen significant growth from Japan and China and we report on those equally. Areas such as visiting friends and relatives and business travel are going down as expected, as a result predominantly by the changes with INPEX as it transitions.

The data is certainly all there. It is also there by region. In terms of the detailed data campaign-by-campaign, some of the elements depending on the campaign are related to commercial-in-confidence areas. This is a very competitive space, but equally we have significant amounts of data that we receive through Tourism Research Australia and we are always sharing that.

Accommodation data is another area that we look at closely and equally we are looking at how we can generate better data and share that with industry because it is really important that industry also understands how things are changing for them in their business or in other regions and how that might be relevant. There is significant data and we look at what return on investment, all those different elements consistently.

From an infrastructure perspective what has been really good out of Turbo1 was the Visitor Experience Enhancement Program. Being able to generate \$11.5m of private sector investment off a \$3m base is really positive. We would like to see that ratio grow always, but that was a really great example of the private sector seeing opportunity and having confidence to reinvest in their own businesses. All of that is tracked and we monitor how that carries forward.

Does that go some way to ...

**Mr HIGGINS** Yes, it does. The concern that needs to be taken on board is—from my past involvement with people in tourism I get a lot of them come and talk to me. Some of them say that what is being reported is not what they are feeling. There are areas—and I use the word ‘cherry picking’. I am not being critical in that. I have seen some of the documents you had in the past and they will highlight some of the good, but they do not necessarily highlight some of the bad.

One of the criticisms is that if you do not recognise you have a problem, you cannot fix it. I say, we need to recognise those problems. It is not a failure of the campaign as such. It means that we constantly need to review that campaign and then see how we are going to go forward with it.

People in industry are saying that the failure is not being recognised. It may be, but they are not seeing that it is. It is just a comment that I pass. It is not a criticism of the scheme. Investment in tourism is lacking. There is your plug to get some more money. The thing is, we need to be reasonably honest with some of the figures around it and publish them all.

**Mr HOPPER:** We are not looking to hide any numbers at all. In fact, some of the steps that we are taking around data now is that we can sit with individual operators and tell them exactly how their business is looking from a review perspective. The challenge always is, generally anywhere but also in the Territory, it can be quite lumpy. There can be some operators doing very well and some operators doing not so well.

We are constantly reflecting on our own activities from a marketing campaign perspective. For the campaigns that we are seeing are not working, we are either looking at what we can do to make them better or stopping them and putting more funds into other campaigns that are working well. That is an iterative process. We certainly do not give a big list to industry and say ‘this one was good’ and ‘this one was bad’ but we do share with them why we are making changes in our campaigns. Where the opportunity presents, we allow them to be a part of those campaigns, of course, to try and generate greater outcomes.

**Mr HIGGINS:** There are other factors that affect it. If people look at the Daly at the moment, we had a lousy Wet Season. They are dependent upon fishermen and people coming. Word gets out very quickly that you do not have good fishing. Your figures will be way down and all of those facilities will be struggling.

Tourism needs to keep a closer eye on some of that and ask how we can help people overcome that problem. What other attractions are there? I think it is an area that has lacked in the past when we talk about infrastructure and stuff. There is a lot of potential outside of fishing there. I went there for 16 years and wanted to go fishing, and I think I went fishing about 16 times. There were lots of other things to do.

**Ms MOSS:** We might just table the snapshot we have in front of us. They are available online but they break down region-by-region. We put it all out there. In some cases, some regions quarter-on-quarter might perform better than others and we certainly put that out there. I acknowledge as well that in some cases you are also talking about individual operators.

It is really important that we acknowledge that not everyone is having a good season out there. There are some people who are struggling. An example of that is probably operators in the backpacker market. We all have memories of town being overrun by backpackers back in the day, but that market is changing. The behaviour of backpackers is changing. It is a national challenge that we are grappling with. In that case, some of the operators in the youth market, for example, might be having a more challenging time than some of our other operators. We definitely acknowledge that.

We are working really closely with operators and the industry on the 2030 vision, so we are all working together. That strategy will be out over the next couple of months. We have worked on that together with industry. I take your point. There are green shoots of growth out there for the tourism industry as a whole, but definitely it does need to be nuanced. Not everybody will have a great season every season, and some people will struggle more than others because there are changes in certain markets from year to year.

Madam Chair, we table that snapshot.

**Mr HIGGINS:** Is there any consultancy out for the development of a plan for Aboriginal tourism? If there is not, what existing ones do we have?

**Ms MOSS:** Yes, there is a consultancy under way for an Aboriginal tourism development strategy. Again that is one that I expect that we will get over the next couple of months. They are all kind of coming together at the same time. We have the tourism 2030 strategy, we have the Aboriginal tourism development strategy and we also have the business events strategy. They have all been out under development and will all be released shortly.

We obviously still have in place the Aboriginal tourism advisory committee, which I acknowledge was established under the former government and continues on under Chair Helen Martin, who also has a formal role on our Tourism NT Board of Commissioners as well. We have put the \$1m into the Arts Trail campaign. I think it is fair to say a significant proportion of our arts and cultural offering in the Northern Territory is predominantly First Nations art and culture. It highlights a significant proportion of our Aboriginal cultural tourism product across the Northern Territory. We acknowledge that there needs to be more of a focus on this area of tourism in the Territory.

Our investment in the regional and remote arts centres and galleries plays a really important role in that. We want to improve the visitor experience and help them to improve their infrastructure for that. We have in part taken a tourism lens over some of those grants, or over that grants program. But yes, that strategy will be out and we will be looking as much as possible to support the growth of Aboriginal tourism operations across the Territory and seeing more Aboriginal-run tourism product.

**Mr HIGGINS:** Is that being outsourced? Is there someone doing that? Who is doing and is there some sort of time frame and costs for it?

**Ms MOSS:** Ambrose Indigenous business is doing that consultancy, Leader of the Opposition. They are doing the Aboriginal tourism plan. All of those are currently under way through—I might just give you all three of them if that is easier, because I am expecting that question.

**Mr HIGGINS:** Yes, just do that.

**Ms MOSS:** Deloitte Access Economics are doing the tourism industry strategic plan, the 2030 plan. KPMG have been doing the business events strategy and Ambrose for the Aboriginal tourism strategy.

**Mr HIGGINS:** What is the time frame for the Aboriginal one and what is the cost, if that can be broken down roughly? I do not want the cost of the other ones, just that one.

**Ms MOSS:** For that one it is just under \$178 000 and the time frame will be—we are expecting that one in July.

**Mr HIGGINS:** So that is in another six weeks?

**Ms MOSS:** Yes.

**Mr HIGGINS:** When they are doing that plan, and we talk about Indigenous or Aboriginal tourism, there are a couple of sides—not just a couple, there are a whole stack of different sides—to it. There are actually people that want to come to know about the culture itself, there are people who want to come and know about the arts, then there are people that actually want to run their own tourism business from the Indigenous perspective. That as well is also sort of split into two. There are issues with those on their own land as opposed to doing other ones.

In that consultancy, is it going to break it down into that? I know that one of the stumbling blocks that Indigenous people have in setting these up of course is tied with—when we get onto Indigenous land, if you want to take people on a tour and you want to set up a business on that Indigenous land, you have to get a section 19 lease. How are we addressing that in coming up with that strategy? Are we splitting down into lower categories like that?

**Ms MOSS:** Thank you Leader of the Opposition. It is a challenge, as you say. I might hand over to Andrew just to talk a little bit more about that particular strategy and plan. I know they have been going across the Territory talking to different operators and talking about those challenges. I will hand over to Andrew to talk in more detail about it.

**Mr HOPPER:** Leader of the Opposition, I think the strategic plan is not finalised yet, but it is very close. I think what we have looked at more so is from a region perspective. Obviously there is, as you have quite rightly pointed out, a lot of those different types of experiences or attractions that are available.

There are challenges in land use, and we see that in a number of places. Our work is to identify how we can help with those conversations from within the department. Obviously, industry development work has a longer lead time. We need to make sure we have our structures right to support those strategies and form does follow function. We are looking at that as well as we finalise.

Ultimately, what we have an appreciation for, as a result of the arts trail initiative and marketing campaign, is we understand now from a tourism perspective how many businesses we have in the Territory which are ready to receive tourists right now. That is a critical component, because the advocacy piece is important. We need people to receive what it is they expect in what we are marketing.

What we have also been able to identify, across whether it is a cultural centre or an on-country experience, where are some gaps and where do these businesses need support. A big part of the Aboriginal tourism strategy will be having identified those different businesses understanding what programs are available to support them. Not all those programs will reside in this department, nor will they reside just in the Northern Territory government.

There has been quite an amount of work undertaken to identify what those gaps look like and what the supporting programs will be. That is a significant step for the department to support that strategy. I think, as we finalise that strategy, what we will be able to see then is what we need in the regions broadly and importantly then, what we need by individual businesses to support them.

**Mr HIGGINS:** When we talk about the gaps, are we looking at what potential there is in some of the regions where we do not have any tourism at the moment and identifying those?

**Mr HOPPER:** Absolutely, that is all part of it. We need a holistic plan, every region has different strengths, albeit there are some commonalities for certain. We need to understand what exists, what those gaps might or might not be and then work towards making sure we are offering fulsome opportunities which support dispersal in the region itself and also through the Territory. This is critical; once we get people here we want to hold them for as long as we can and see them move around.

**Mr HIGGINS:** The reason I have an interest in this, is that when I was involved in tourism—I still am—an Indigenous person was trying to set up a tourism business. If I went to tourism six or seven years ago, maybe even longer, and did not get much help—prior to being elected. That person has only just been able to get some certainty around their section 19 lease. It seems that everyone wants to push it off somewhere else. That is what I would like to see coming out of that strategy.

**Ms MOSS:** As you say it is a big challenge and I completely understand what you are saying with that example, I think there would probably be a lot of examples where that has happened.

Further to Andrew's point and your question about how we are looking at what is needed regionally, we have regional plans which have just been released in the East Macs and the Barkly region, which have been done in collaboration with local councils, also the Ntaria region as well, which has guided a lot of that investment in the Hermannsburg Historic Precinct.

We have the local decision-making agreements as well, where often local communities are identifying tourism as an area they want work more strongly with government and we are doing our part, under the local decision-making agreements. A significant proportion of our parks, as you know, are jointly managed and that is a good example of how we can investment on our parks. Things like the Nitmiluk investment—they are coming up to their big birthday and they have seen a huge amount of investment there. That is testament to Jawoyn working closely with other stakeholders and government partners.

There is a lot of work which still needs to be done, but I think we are on the right track to do that in a much better way. I also wanted to mention, we have investment attraction within the department, tourism investment attraction more broadly. That position will be joining the Investment Attraction unit, which has been centralised across government.

Again, this is not just a tourism issue; it is an issue for businesses right across the Territory. Hopefully, that will also provide an environment for more sharing around those issues and being able to work through it.

**Mr HIGGINS:** Member for Nelson, I have headings here. I have done Turbocharging Tourism, and I have now finished with Aboriginal tourism and will go to air links. Do you have anything on Aboriginal tourism?

**Mr WOOD:** On the iconic arts trail, it has always seemed to be a bit of a cloudy idea, not because it is not a good idea, but I am presuming you are also trying to encourage people to go to communities. Arnhem Land would be a difficult area, and somewhere like Wadeye would be a difficult area. Has there been any push to make sure that people can get to those communities or is it relying only on people having to hop on a plane? At this time of year when you have the people coming up in caravans, will there be ways and means that those people can get out to those communities and if the roads are not suitable, is there a push from the other side of government to open up some of these avenues?

You are going to have to have permission from Traditional Owners and a question I will raise with the minister later is that those roads need to be permit-free otherwise they are not public roads. Have you had a look at the infrastructure that will help promote the idea of an arts trail? Will there be major issues in relation to the ups and downs of tourism because of the Wet and Dry Seasons in relation to how these various facilities will operate?

I have just come back from Nauiyu and looked at the Merrepen Art Gallery and come back with less money in my pocket but the thing is, come the Wet Season you will not get many tourists down to the Daly River even if the road is open all year. It is just that people do not come.

**Ms MOSS:** Seasonality is obviously an issue for all of our operators in the Territory. Making sure that we are getting people to the Territory in the shoulder season is a challenge but one that collectively, with industry, we are taking on with gusto. We keep trying to redefine that Wet Season. I keep getting outlawed from saying 'Wet Season'; 'tropical summer' is what we are using now.

**Mr WOOD:** No, it is like 'Kakadu plum'; it is 'billygoat plum'. It is 'Wet Season'. It saves us from being too smooth.

**Ms MOSS:** The Wet Season is glorious. We need to encourage more people to come to the Territory during that time. We obviously have a range of initiatives such as Bruce Munro: Tropical Light to try and bring people here during that period. Then we want to get people to disperse through the Territory.

To your other point, we cannot just rely on air links. A significant proportion of our tourists in the Territory are self-drive. Yes, we work with DIPL to make sure those tourism priority roads are taken into account. We have seen that through things like the Kakadu deal. Roads is a huge component of that. We were just recently in Gapuwiyak so we were having conversations with people in the arts centres out there about that as well.

To the question of permits, that is a more complex issue. I am aware that the NLC is continuing to develop and work through their permit system. We will continue to raise the concerns, particularly that arts centres and other tourism operators across remote and regional areas share about that. That is about people inviting visitors onto their land.

**Mr WOOD:** I do not have a problem with that. My concern was that you want to have infrastructure and it is a question I have raised and I will raise today. If you want to get an improvement on roads, then the roads presently, if they require a permit presently, are private roads. They are not public roads.

If the government wants to spend money on those roads, the question I will have for the minister later is can they spend money on private roads? If there is no legal basis for spending money on what is a private road, that is a road that you need a permit to travel on, then I think we have an issue there that needs to be sorted out so that we can have public roads that can get upgraded and encourage people to go to those communities.

**Ms MOSS:** I am sure you will raise that question this afternoon.

**Mr WOOD:** I will raise it, yes.

**Ms MOSS:** But in how that relates specifically to the Arts Trail, there are also a number of art galleries where you can access the art gallery without a permit as long as you are not going elsewhere within a community. As you know, we have some spectacular art galleries—Buku-Larrnggay in Yirrkala is one that we are working with for a feasibility study at the moment. Every time I go there, there are busloads of tourists who love that experience.

The opportunity is right across the Territory. It is not a cloudy one; it is a very real one. People genuinely want a cultural experience. A lot of people—I speak more broadly than the Territory here—a lot of international visitors come to Australia looking for a cultural experience and leave not having had one. We have the real opportunity to provide that.

**Mr WOOD:** Could I give a little plug?

**Ms MOSS:** Please do.

**Mr WOOD:** Wadeye Men's Shed was at Merrepen. That is not a big art gallery, it is just men getting together and producing beautiful didgeridoos—not lacquered ones, just like they used to make them—and tapping sticks. They are selling to Japan. I think they have some contracts. The great thing is that they are doing that, but to get to Wadeye is a long way and that is the bit that I said is cloudy, because it is difficult for people unless they are willing to pay for an air fare to get out to those communities. I just love the idea that there is a men's shed at Wadeye producing really top quality artwork.

**Ms MOSS:** Yes. It is a challenge, but it is one that we are willing to work through our regional plans to tackle. The other great way we can get that work out, essentially to the world, is through things like our investment in the Darwin Aboriginal Art Fair, where you bring all of those art centres in. Art centres have been seeing increases in sales year-on-year. Desert Mob in Central Australia is the same principle.

We also have an awful lot of artists from remote parts of the Territory overseas at the moment, showcasing their work in New York and Paris. There are a lot of people getting out to communities because of the reputation the Northern Territory is building for itself. The easier we can make it—Member for Nelson, I 100% agree with that point—the better it is for those communities who want visitors through their art centres.

**Mr HIGGINS:** Another example of that is Regina Wilson out at Peppimenarti. She is going to Italy very shortly. She has done a lot of trips overseas. That is halfway to Wadeye and the section that is all dirt. There is a bit of bitumen after that. Again, they have an art centre out there and you just cannot get to it. That is something that needs to be addressed.

The next section is on air links, if I could move to that. It is pretty general, but I have tried to group them. When we look at Donghai Airlines, how many tourists are actually coming from China? It is not just people going from Australia over and back again. How many tourists do we have coming from China through Donghai?

**Ms MOSS:** Opposition Leader, obviously aviation links have been a huge part of Turbocharging Tourism 1 and will continue to be. We have a range of new routes as a result of that, one of which being the direct air service to China and Shenzhen. It is currently a twice-weekly service and it will go up to three in the Dry Season, which is good. The slots have been filed for next year as well.

We recently released the stats about that. Donghai specifically carried just over 7000 visitors. About 3715 of them were inbound visitors. However, that does not tell the whole story of Chinese visitation. We saw an increase in the Tourism Research Australia stats of about 55% growth for the greater China market. Getting visitors who come into Australia on the east coast here to the Territory is important for us as well.

I will pass over to Andrew Hopper to talk about the China visitation market more broadly.

**Mr HIGGINS:** I am more interested in Donghai. It is a question about how much money we are spending on cooperative marketing with them and whether it is getting return to Donghai? How are we measuring that with that one particular airline? It is not a question about Chinese tourism. I have a question on that later. It is more our investment in that cooperative marketing.

In the past you have said we are subsidising or whatever—all those things can be confidential.

**Ms MOSS:** We do not subsidise.

**Mr HIGGINS:** It is more a question of how much are we spending on the cooperative marketing? Is it giving us a return? It is specifically aimed at tourism, so how many are we getting on those flights—the two and then going to three?

**Mr HOPPER:** There are a couple of questions there, let me work through them. The Bureau of Infrastructure,

Transport and Regional Economics are inbound passenger load—that is a publicly available figure. Between Shenzhen and Darwin for January 2019 we were at 74%, and for February it was 65%. As the minister mentioned, we will see an increase in services coming out through July–August. At the moment that would all suggest that it is heading in the right direction. We have started the relationship now. It has been just over 12 months. In the expenditure with Donghai there are no subsidies, but it is commercial-in-confidence.

We are trying to attract multiple airlines from multiple destinations, domestically and internationally. We do not share those figures publicly. What we do, as with other campaign activities, is monitor the return on investment. We continue to work with Donghai as well as Tourism Australia in-market to understand what works well for Donghai for that region. Those conversations continue and we continue to tweak our activities to generate the best possible outcome.

**Mr HIGGINS:** The question is more on the tourist numbers. When we see numbers of people—passengers on planes—it also covers business, and government is trying to increase business relations with China as well. Business would love to claim all of those seats as theirs and tourism would like to claim all of them as theirs. I am trying to find the truth. I am actually after the tourism numbers.

We may not have that, but my question then would be whether we can get it at some point to find out how many tourists we are getting on those flights from China?

**Mr HOPPER:** We can get you the specifics as best we can. Typically international visitors are predominantly holiday visitors. Business is always a small portion, and you would recall that from your previous time with Tourism. That is not to take away from our good friends at DTBI. They are driving business outcomes.

**Mr HIGGINS:** I was going to say, gees, you have started the argument. I just threw it out there as a bit of a joke.

**Mr HOPPER:** You would know from your past experience that that is the reality and we see that at different times when there is business activity. Typically, international routes are driven by holiday visitation. Albeit there is also freight which forms a component it is much about as what is above the deck is what is below. Certainly, there has been some increases in freight. They are moving somewhere in the vicinity—I would have to get the exact figure, which I do not have with me here but might be able to get—at the moment they are moving about half a tonne a flight,

**Ms SHEPHERD:** I think they have an allowance of up to about a tonne for freight.

**Mr HOPPER:** At the moment they are moving about half a tonne per flight, which is fantastic. It is predominantly natural produce, and we would like to see that grow. We have an opportunity to see that grow. All those elements matter to make that leg sustainable.

**Ms MOSS:** If I can, Leader of the Opposition, our estimation of the visitor expenditure from the inbound is around \$8.3m, which is quite a good return on expenditure so far. It is also important to note at this juncture that through the cooperative marketing we have the opportunity to promote this destination to a much bigger audience.

Shenzhen, at last count, has about 13 million people, but that region has 35-plus million people. We are promoting the Northern Territory as a destination. Central Australia is already quite well known amongst travel agents over there, for example, but the Top End not so much. There is still some work to be done, but the initial indicators have been positive in what we are starting to see.

**Mr HIGGINS:** Can I put that question on notice? I will leave it pretty loose to see how many of those people coming in are tourists, with a qualifier that says how you come up with that figure. If I could do that on that one, if that is all right?

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#### Question on Notice No 8.1

**Madam CHAIR:** Opposition Leader, could I get you to restate the question in full then, please.

**Mr HIGGINS:** Could I get a figure on the number of tourists who are passengers on Donghai Airlines from China and an indication as to how that figure is determined?

**Madam CHAIR:** Do you want to put a time frame around that, Opposition Leader?

**Mr HOPPER:** I have to see how far we can go on that detail.

**Mr HIGGINS:** I will leave that up to the minister to decide.

**Madam CHAIR:** Yes, but do you want to put a time? I do not think you put a time frame on that request, Opposition Leader.

**Mr HIGGINS:** That is the answer I am giving. They can come up with the time frame. If they want to do it over the last 12 months—if you cannot do that and it is six months or nine months, that would do me at this point.

**Madam CHAIR:** Minister, do you accept that question in that loose form?

**Ms MOSS:** I do.

**Madam CHAIR:** There is a lot of latitude in the question.

**Ms MOSS:** I acknowledge there are some complexities to it, but we will ...

**Mr HIGGINS:** That is why I have given the latitude there.

**Ms MOSS:** Thank you, Opposition Leader.

**Madam CHAIR:** That will be noted when the question comes back. Minister, having accepted that question by the Opposition Leader, it has been allocated the number 8.1.

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**Madam CHAIR:** Are there any other questions on Output 1.1?

**Mr HIGGINS:** Yes. Still on the air links—without breaching any confidentiality, what sort of new air links is government working on? I am not necessarily after the airlines, but which links we might be looking at, if that can be disclosed?

**Mr HOPPER:** Opposition Leader, no, we cannot. But I can say we are always looking to generate increased links domestically. A significant proportion of our visitors, as you know, are domestic. We are working with all our airline partners to look at opportunities domestically. There are, obviously, natural flex from airlines operating as commercial entities. But we continue to look at that.

Internationally, we are obviously very happy with our links to Singapore. Obviously, we have the new service to China. We still have a Bali service with Virgin Australia starting its seasonal service to Bali from Darwin. That is fantastic and gives us an opportunity to potentially link through to Europe.

As you would appreciate, a whole lot of links come as a result of change. Locally, we have the route from Darwin to Uluru and then from Uluru to Adelaide. Again, that provides some real opportunity with our international connections coming in to Darwin. So, as much as we can, we will continue to look for opportunity and work with our partners to do so.

**Ms MOSS:** Opposition Leader, I will run through what new routes we have achieved since 2018. SilkAir has increased its services to six times weekly all year round, Singapore to Darwin. Obviously there is Shenzhen to Darwin that we just spoke about. Virgin Australia is doing the twice-weekly service Alice Springs to Brisbane. Jetstar is doing three services a week, Brisbane to Uluru. Jetstar Asia has an additional weekly seasonal service from Singapore to Darwin, which means it has daily services over our peak season. We have had the first charter flights from Japan in a decade.

We also have the twice-weekly Qantas service from Adelaide to Uluru and to Darwin that Andrew was talking about. Airnorth is doing twice-weekly seasonal service Gold Coast to Darwin via Townsville. Virgin Australia is doing the three-time weekly seasonal service Darwin to Denpasar. SilkAir is introducing one additional frequency from this July, which will bring its weekly services to seven, which I mentioned before. Qantas has just announced its new route Darwin to Broome from October. There has been a significant number of additional routes or frequencies over the last 18 months.



**Mr HIGGINS:** When we are talking about the number of people on Donghai there has been a lot of criticism. I am not saying whether it is correct or not—you know, empty planes. When I got the staff to do a calculation on the total numbers of our flights—this is not tourists—they came back saying you average about 70 on a flight. If that is roughly right, how many are on each flight and has that been growing? Have we kept that figure at any point in time?

**Ms MOSS:** In terms of the load factor, I do not think it is quite as simple as saying it must be about 70 people on every flight, as you know.

**Mr HIGGINS:** No. I am just saying these are the number of seats that have been occupied on these flights.

**Ms MOSS:** The loads have been increasing, yes. There has been a lot of work, particularly on the distribution system and trying to make it easier to book and those sorts of things. It is increasing.

**Mr HIGGINS:** Are we finding that some of the flights are way under and some are way over, if you know what I mean? People always like to pick on the one-offs and people take pictures of empty planes. I am trying to get a feel for that and clarity on that. My question was, is that a rare occurrence? Have you got an average of 70? Are we finding any pattern in any of that in the flights that are coming in?

**Mr HOPPER:** I can answer it broadly. There are some peaks and troughs but a lot of that is to do with the Chinese market and when they typically holiday. Chinese New Year is a very popular time of year. As we have seen, with the increase in services through that July–August period now two years running. That is another popular travel time when there is increased demand.

Overall that averages out, as you say, but there will be some lumpiness. A lot of that has to do with—ultimately we want this service to be inbound. It is a great opportunity for Territorians to visit a new part of China, but that will happen until the service has been in existence for longer.

**Mr HIGGINS:** When we talk about this cooperative advertising we do with them, how much say do we get in that? Are we trying to target some of those peaks and troughs? To me, the thing is, if we want people to go to China from here we would not do it when the Chinese are wanting to have their Chinese New Year obviously if they are travelling around a lot. Is it purely up to Donghai to work on that?

**Mr HOPPER:** With all our partners, we look at timing of campaigns and activities. There is obviously benefit in promoting when there could be an increased demand because people are able to travel, but at the same time we take into consideration seasonality for the Territory and when we have capacity and affordability, which we have seen. That is really changing over the last little while. We will always work where we believe there is opportunity to generate greater demand, and we do that in collaboration with all our partners whether that be Donghai or Qantas.

**Mr HIGGINS:** Minister, a minute ago you gave us a figure on how much it has added to the economy and I did not write that down. Can you tell me what that one was again?

**Ms MOSS:** It was \$8.33m on the inbound figure that I gave you, which was about 3715 visitors.

**Mr HIGGINS:** This is where we get a bit of confusion with different departments. The Chief Minister announced on social media that the route added \$7.1m in the 12 months to operation, which is under your \$8.33m. You obviously must be correct.

**Ms MOSS:** It will be over a different time period.

**Mr HIGGINS:** How is that figure calculated then?

**Ms MOSS:** That is visitor expenditure.

**Mr HIGGINS:** So here is a total. Yours is visitor expenditure. This is where I am getting a bit confused. I think we just say the Chief Minister got it wrong.

**Ms MOSS:** I think we can say that the figure was over a different time period and today I am talking about the most recent data we have. It is \$8.33m in new visitor expenditure. From memory, I think the Chief Minister would have been using the same measure around visitor expenditure. That is a pretty common measure for us to use around these sorts of campaigns and partnerships.

**Mr HIGGINS:** What are the dates of your time period?

**Ms MOSS:** February 2019.

**Mr HIGGINS:** Up until the end of February 2019? Okay.

Do we have any caveat on the payments for that cooperative marketing? Do we get a say in it? Do we have any things where we say, 'no, you cannot use it in this particular area', or is it purely at their discretion with us getting some say?

**Mr HOPPER:** We try and work collaboratively on all these things. Ultimately, what we need to understand is, they are also in market, and with 27 000 visitors coming from mainland China, we are not new to China, but every region in China consumes things differently. That is certainly a factor and Tourism Australia made that point very clear when we were in market with Donghai Airlines.

We work with the trends of what we are seeing nationally and what is working, what works in that region and what we have seen work in promoting our market. We then find, in effect, the sweet point between all of that where we know things will generate the best outcome. There is always conversation on those things and, like any good conversation, there can be opinions which differ, but we have to work towards finding the best possible way forward.

**Mr HIGGINS:** It is all cooperative, no blanket caveats?

**Mr HOPPER:** Yes.

**Ms MOSS:** I think another example is that we have just finalised the MOU, which was announced last week with Qantas. Those things are subject to ongoing negotiation between the Northern Territory and an airline like Qantas. That particular agreement will see much more support from Qantas on things like Parrtjima and some of our other events in the Northern Territory. We negotiate with partners on these campaigns to make sure we are getting the best we can for Territory.

**Mr HIGGINS:** That is all I have for air links. We will go to the Arafura Games and a bit on air travel. My question is very specific. Is it true that Tourism NT had airline seats available to use at its discretion, secured through the NT government's joint marketing initiatives with the airlines, such as Jetstar? This is in regard to the Arafura Games.

**Ms MOSS:** I will ask Simonne to speak to that one. More broadly, questions around the Arafura Games had a specific output under Minister Fyles.

**Mr HIGGINS:** These are seats that Tourism NT specifically had, I will keep them to those.

**Ms SHEPHERD:** Under our cooperative agreements with airlines, part of the negotiation is around seat availability and I believe—I will refer to Andrew to confirm this—it was around our Jetstar Asia cooperative marketing agreement that those seats were available.

**Mr HIGGINS:** How many of those seats were there? I have been told there were around 200.

**Ms SHEPHERD:** I do not have the number with me. We would have to take that one on notice. Minister, are you happy to take that on notice?

**Ms MOSS:** I am happy to take that on notice. We can get that information for you.

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#### Question on Notice No 8.2

**Madam CHAIR:** Opposition Leader, please restate the question for the record.

**Mr HIGGINS:** I will put it in a longer sense that I have here. I have been told more than 200 seats were available to Tourism NT and were used for the Arafura Games athletes and officials. Could I have that confirmed and the number? What was the value of that seat allocation to the Arafura Games purposes? When you talk about numbers, if you could put a value on that?

**Ms MOSS:** Do you mean in terms of a sort of retailing value for those seats, because I guess you could say, 'What is the value to the Territory of having all of those athletes and officials here in the Territory?' Which, obviously we all agree was immense.

**Mr HIGGINS:** The retail value.

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

**Ms MOSS:** Yes.

**Madam CHAIR:** Thank you. The question asked by the Opposite Leader of the minister has been allocated the number 8.2.

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**Mr HIGGINS:** I have also been told that the Landbridge sponsorship of the Arafura Games was worth about \$50 000. How much of that was used to pay for Arafura Games athletes' airfares to Darwin?

**Ms MOSS:** Leader of the Opposition, there was a specific output for the Arafura Games within proceedings. I will ask Madam Chair to make a decision about where the question should go.

**Madam CHAIR:** Definitely there was an output for that, however you could put that question on notice back to the Attorney-General, because we even got to those outputs and that was a question for then.

**Mr HIGGINS:** We got to that output and I think it got referred here.

**Madam CHAIR:** I do not believe that was the case.

**Mr HIGGINS:** It does not matter. I will put the question on notice then to the Attorney-General.

**Madam CHAIR:** I will just seek some advice as whether we put that in as part of this transcript, or I just allow you to ask that question outside of the process.

I do not want to muddle *Hansard*. I do not want it muddled in with this particular output for those transcribing.

**Ms MOSS:** It would be one I have to take on notice anyway, as I do not have the detail in front of me. I am not the responsible minister.

**Madam CHAIR:** It is well outside the output, so I ask the Leader of the Opposition to put in a written question on notice to the Attorney-General at the end of the day and not as part of this.

Are there any further questions on Output 1.1?

**Mr HIGGINS:** That is all I have on the Arafura Games.

**Madam CHAIR:** I know the Member for Nelson intended to ask more questions. If he re-joins us we will ask him at that point. Keep going with your questions please, Leader of the Opposition.

**Mr HIGGINS:** Motorsports—the simple question is, have the planned upgrades all been completed now?

**Ms MOSS:** Opposition Leader, as you know we had a significant investment in motorsports. I think that is money well invested and something that is well loved across the Territory. Not all are completed, but many are complete and well under way. I will just give you an update on that now.

We have \$13.25m committed to infrastructure projects across the Territory. The \$1m lighting project at Top End Motocross Palmerston was completed in June last year. There was \$1.5m for the Hidden Valley drag racing. That was also a lighting upgrade of the main track and was completed in November last year. There is the \$1m for Katherine Speedway water mains and toilet upgrades. We are at practical completion; things are very close to being finalised there. There was \$1.65m for Tennant Creek Speedway for a safety fence and lighting upgrades. A tender closed in March, so that is currently under assessment and we expect that tender to be awarded towards the end of this month.

There was \$1.6m committed to the Central Australian Drag Racing Association for a clubhouse and facilities

upgrade. There are a number of different conditions that we have to take into account, and DIPL have provided a revised time frame for that, which will be March 2020. There is \$500 000 for the Tatts Finke Desert Race masterplan and infrastructure upgrades. We will see works completed towards the end of this year. We had \$6m going towards Hidden Valley Motor Sports Complex to replace Motor Sports House. I know you were at the track over the weekend.

**Mr HIGGINS:** I only got there on Friday, but I did see the new Motor Sports House. It is looking much better than a refurbished hospital.

**Ms MOSS:** I think that is almost 75% complete, it would be fair to say. Completion is due around the end of August or the beginning of September. As you would have seen, it is absolutely fantastic. As you know, they have been in a demountable from the Myilly Point hospital for a really long time. I think it is a facility that they deserve and will be well used. That has gone to a local company, C and R Constructions. It is a great project and it is fantastic to see how that is coming along over the weekend. It will be great for future Supercars and everything else that happens there.

Madam Chair, can I put a response to Question on Notice 8.1?

**Madam CHAIR:** Yes, you may.

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#### **Answer to Question on Notice No 8.1**

**Ms MOSS:** That was the question in relation to the number of tourist passengers through Donghai from China. It is difficult to provide the break-down on purpose of visit, but data from the International Visitor Survey indicates that 88% in visitors from China to the Territory are on holiday. That can be applied to the numbers we provided.

Opposition Leader, if you require any further information let us know.

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**Madam CHAIR:** Thank you, minister. We will head back to Output 1.1, Tourism, Sport and Culture.

**Mr HIGGINS:** We had a proposal put in by Nightcliff and Brothers about utilising Richardson Park as their home ground. How much consideration was given to that, or was government already in the process of some other plans for Richardson Park?

**Ms MOSS:** As much as I love this topic as well ...

**Mr HIGGINS:** I only have a couple of questions.

**Ms MOSS:** I am not worried at all, I love talking about the new home for rugby league. Richardson Park specifically is being managed by the Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Logistics.

**Mr HIGGINS:** It has gone across to them?

**Ms MOSS:** Yes. I would encourage you to ask that question of the minister this afternoon.

**Mr HIGGINS:** That is the end of the questions on Richardson Park and motor sports.

**Ms MOSS:** To make it clear, Madam Chair, Richardson Park is with DIPL but am very happy to take any questions about the fantastic new Territory rugby league stadium.

**Madam CHAIR:** Member for Nelson, we touched on Arafura Games for a moment. Do you have any questions in that area?

**Mr WOOD:** Yes, and may be you can tell me if it has been repeated. When you are doing the budget for the cost of the Arafura Games, how do you work out what staff who have been seconded from different departments within the government? How do you count that when it comes to estimating the cost of running the Arafura Games? Is that included?

**Madam CHAIR:** Member for Nelson, the Arafura Games did not end up sitting with this minister but she could

only comment on the cost of staff from her agency, I am presuming, not for the whole of the Arafura Games.

The Leader of the Opposition has agreed to put a written question at the end of the day back to the Attorney-General.

**Mr WOOD:** I will leave it at that if it has been covered.

**Madam CHAIR:** Will you do the same thing?

**Mr WOOD:** Yes.

**Ms MOSS:** I am sure NT Major Events is here and will come up under commercial organisations. I am sure that question can be answered, but it is not technically my output.

**Madam CHAIR:** Commercial Organisations is 1.2 and we are still at 1.1.

Are there any further questions on Output 1.1?

**Mr HIGGINS:** If I can go to the film and TV industry—about a year ago the government removed its director of Screen Territory after just one year in office. Why did this happen? Was that just a straight resignation or was there some settlement out of that?

**Ms MOSS:** I am not sure it is appropriate for me to answer that question about an operational staffing matter.

**Mr HIGGINS:** I am asking whether the director actually resigned. There is a simple way of putting it. Did the director resign after one year?

**Ms MOSS:** We are happy to take the question on notice, Opposition Leader. Yes, I would be a bit cautious about talking about specific employment matters within the department within this forum.

**Mr HIGGINS:** Yes. I would have thought it would be a simple answer. If there was a settlement it impacts on the budget. That would have been my question, but I will put that question on notice.

**Ms MOSS:** I can take that on notice.

**Madam CHAIR:** Please restate the question. We just cannot name ...

**Mr HIGGINS:** I did not name the person.

**Madam CHAIR:** No, I accept that. I am just saying that in the question ...

**Mr HIGGINS:** Yes, I will not name the person. It is still the same. I do have the person's name here, but specifically did not use it.

About a year ago, the NT government removed its Director of Screen Territory. Why did this happen and what were the terms of the settlement, or was it a straight resignation?

**Madam CHAIR:** Are you willing to take that question on notice, minister?

**Ms MOSS:** I am. I note that it is also prior to this financial year, Madam Chair.

**Madam CHAIR:** It is not in the current—it is not within this budget?

**Ms MOSS:** No.

**Madam CHAIR:** It would be under a previous budget, I am assuming?

**Mr HIGGINS:** So that is a no, you will not take that question on notice? I would need to do that as a written question?

**Ms MOSS:** If you want to do it as a written question, Opposition Leader, I will take that.

**Mr HIGGINS:** Okay, I will do it as a written question.

What measures have been put in place since then to protect whistleblowers who expose any misconduct in the department?

**Ms MOSS:** Opposition Leader, where we receive complaints about any area of the department, as happens in any agency of government. We take those complaints very seriously. We have had a complaint provided to the department in relation to some specific issues occurring in Screen Territory. They were treated very seriously and there was an independent investigation of that complaint.

**Mr HIGGINS:** How much money have we then given out to that director since she left office 12 months ago in her capacity—through grants et cetera to work?

**Ms MOSS:** Opposition Leader, again without identifying people, I am very happy to take that question on notice. I obviously do not have that level of detail in front of me. I will make the point that we have a probity adviser who oversees all of our grants assessment within Screen Territory. All of those peer panel members sign off on the outcomes of every grants round.

**Madam CHAIR:** That needs to be in writing as well, leading from the standing orders are reflecting here. That is something that would need to be, again, in writing as a question. It is not in the current budget.

**Mr HIGGINS:** Well, there is stuff in this budget. My question is, how much money does that former employee of Screen Territory receive directly or indirectly from your agency since they previously worked for them?

**Ms MOSS:** Opposition Leader, I also note that the grants that are given out by the department are in the annual reports that the department also puts out. That information is all ...

**Mr HIGGINS:** Which will come out in some time.

**Ms MOSS:** It will, but it is all publicly available within that reporting period as well.

**Mr HIGGINS:** Yes. So we will avoid all the questions about that one?

**Madam CHAIR:** No, I am just indicating that you probably should put that in ...

**Ms MOSS:** Opposition Leader, we have taken them on notice. We do not have ...

**Madam CHAIR:** I am a bit cautious that it might bring into question critical character or conduct of persons and that those things must be asked in writing, Opposition Leader. The minister has agreed that she is prepared to take that in writing but it is not in this current budget. It might be elsewhere in the annual report.

Are there any further questions on Output 1.1?

**Mr HIGGINS:** I remind the Chair that we are dealing here with the payment of public funds ...

**Madam CHAIR:** Agreed.

**Mr HIGGINS:** ... and that this committee should look at the payment of those funds. I was leading to the last question. How much money have we paid to that employee since they left the department? I will now ask those questions in writing.

**Madam CHAIR:** Thank you, Opposition Leader. I am just cautious about that part of standing orders regarding questions critical of character or conduct of other persons who are not here.

**Mr HIGGINS:** The person has not been named.

**Ms MOSS:** Again, all the grants given out through the department are on the public record.

**Mr HIGGINS:** Yes. There is a lot more water to go under the bridge on this one.

Museums—how many visitors has the Arts Trail resulted in? Have we been measuring that?

**Ms MOSS:** You are asking for an evaluation of the tourism campaign for the arts trail?

**Mr HIGGINS:** Yes. Are we measuring how many people are partaking in that?

**Mr HOPPER:** The Arts Trail campaign is predominantly an awareness campaign because it is starting out. The conversion activity may occur through ATDW, the database that supports the Tourism NT website. At this point I do not have those figures with me.

**Mr HIGGINS:** Is that something we will try to collect into the future as an indicative thing? I would imagine it would be.

**Mr HOPPER:** Absolutely. As soon as we do specific conversion activity related to the Arts Trail, we will automatically pick up that data. Where we need to start in any marketing, of course, is we have to create awareness about that. The arts trail campaign in and of itself is relatively new with that sort of focus, so we are starting at an awareness level. Equally, the department is engaging with those operators to understand if they are seeing any flow-on benefits. That will be judged over a period of time.

**Mr HIGGINS:** The department awarded a consultancy via a tier three quote process in July 2017 and it was valued at \$115 000. It was given to Hames Sharley Pty Ltd and the purpose of that was to prepare a 10-year museum master plan for Darwin and Palmerston. Has that contract been completed and if so, when will that report be released to the public?

**Ms MOSS:** Again, another commitment we made was around that museum master plan. That consultancy is complete. We expect to release the report or the strategy in the next month.

**Mr WOOD:** On libraries, could you explain what the agreement was regarding Litchfield Council, your department and Taminmin College that allowed Litchfield Council to take over the community library?

**Ms MOSS:** I might ask Phil Leslie to join us at the table for these questions. I will start by saying that it is relatively standard practice across the Northern Territory for our libraries to be run by councils. I think that is the case in every other library that we run. That it is through agreement with council.

**Mr WOOD:** There is nothing written which says that. Obviously the government would love to hand over one of its libraries that it funds to someone else. That is simply what has happened. There is no rule that says a library cannot be a community library at a school and shared, a bit like football ovals.

**Ms MOSS:** Absolutely, with all of our agreements we work with the relevant stakeholders and in this case, council and the community on the running of that library.

**Mr WOOD:** I have not gone into the disagreement I have with Litchfield Council over the way it did things. If you look carefully, I think it was poorly done. I have had difficulty finding out exactly what the arrangements were for taking over the library and what the future arrangements would be.

**Ms MOSS:** We have a range of multi-year agreements for the running of libraries, obviously with a number of councils. In this case, the council wanted to run the library and it went through a consultation process. I am sure you are well aware of that process. There is a five-year funding agreement that is in place for the running of that library.

**Mr WOOD:** Right. Can you give us a rundown of what the five-year funding would be for that library? I presume you are saying that the government will now ...

**Ms MOSS:** In amount?

**Mr WOOD:** Yes—give Litchfield a certain amount of money and after that, it is more or less on its own except for standard library grants which you give all libraries. Is that correct?

**Ms MOSS:** It would be in the standard way we deal with all library agreements. I will hand over to Phil for some detail about the amounts within that agreement.

**Mr LESLIE:** Member for Nelson, there were two libraries that were still with government, but were handed over. One was in Nhulunbuy, which you would be aware of.

**Mr WOOD:** Yes.

**Mr LESLIE:** That transferred on 1 October 2018. Then Taminmin library went to Litchfield Council, which

transferred over on 1 January. The staff with us were at the end of contract, but those casual staff have also been transferred over for those who wanted to continue. Then both of those libraries at Taminmin and Nhulunbuy have gone on to the standard agreement as per the libraries over the rest of the Territory, where they receive funding through a five-year funding agreement. That continues.

**Mr WOOD:** Was there any special agreement with the council—special funding for the purpose of taking it over?

**Mr LESLIE:** There was no special funding as such, but funding aligned with the size of the library in accordance with the rest of the councils.

**Mr WOOD:** So, normal funding for a library would be a council puts in the larger amount and the government puts in a flat amount. I imagine it is an amount based on the size of the library, I presume?

**Ms MOSS:** Yes.

**Mr WOOD:** So, what amount would be given to Litchfield?

**Mr LESLIE:** The total funding is in the order of \$422 000.

**Mr WOOD:** That will be standard for five years?

**Mr LESLIE:** Five years, yes.

**Mr WOOD:** How has the matter of taking over a library—what was the agreement? The library is on Education land, not on council land. Is there an agreement between the government, the school and the council about who owns the physical library? Is it a lease? If someone is hurt in that library, what happens? Who is responsible if someone trips over?

**Ms MOSS:** Member for Nelson, I might take that on notice. If I can, we will get that detail. You are asking about public liability and who owns the premises?

**Mr WOOD:** What I am getting at is that you have made an agreement with Litchfield to take over a library which is in an Education facility; there had to be some arrangement.

**Ms MOSS:** Yes.

**Mr WOOD:** Madam Chair, can I put that on notice?

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### Question on Notice No 8.3

**Madam CHAIR:** You certainly can, Member for Nelson. Please restate your question for the record.

**Mr WOOD:** Minister, would you be able to give us details on the arrangement between Taminmin College, Litchfield Council and your department as to what are the workplace arrangements, including liability and leasing, in relation to Litchfield library/community library. I hope that makes sense.

**Madam CHAIR:** Minister, are you happy to take that question on notice?

**Ms MOSS:** I am happy to take that on notice, Madam Chair.

**Madam CHAIR:** Thank you, minister. The question asked by the Member for Nelson of the minister has been allocated the number 8.3.

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

**Mr WOOD:** Why has the funding for libraries not increased since 2017–18? In the budget it is a straight line from one year to the next. Is there a freeze?

**Ms MOSS:** Member for Nelson, it has been part of the negotiated five-year agreements with libraries that went through a process with local councils and others, where we released a vision for public libraries across



the Territory. They all have five-year funding agreements now.

**Mr WOOD:** So, that is part of the—is it \$32m? It is the same amount.

**Ms MOSS:** That has only just commenced. Before that it was flat and the five-year agreements have just commenced are subject to parameters.

**Mr WOOD:** Okay.

**Madam CHAIR:** Are there further questions on Output 1.1?

**Mrs LAMBLEY:** Minister, I would just like to ask about what you said earlier, that the government would not build the National Indigenous Cultural Centre. Although you may have spoken about it publicly before, I have just rung around a few people in Alice Springs and no one seems to be aware of those explicit comments you made earlier this morning.

I seek some clarification on what that means. I notice on your website it says:

*National Indigenous Cultural Centre Limited, an Aboriginal organisation in Alice Springs, is undertaking preliminary consultation for the development of the Cultural Centre. They have established a dedicated Steering Group to oversee consultation with stakeholders and partner engagement.*

You said earlier that the government is not going to build the cultural centre. This group, which is otherwise known as Nganampa. Is that group the same as the National Indigenous Cultural Centre Limited? They are one and the same?

**Ms MOSS:** They are. There has been a name change. It is the same. They are the proponents for this project. What I said earlier is that government is not the lead for this project, but we are at present the sole funders for the development of that project.

**Mrs LAMBLEY:** When you say that you are not the lead, you have commissioned them. The government—Territory taxpayers—are paying this organisation to do this business planning?

**Ms MOSS:** The government has provided a commitment of \$20m towards the National Indigenous Cultural Centre. Within that \$20m we are supporting the development of the business case.

**Mrs LAMBLEY:** People need to know very clearly and publicly how you are spending that \$20m. How much have you given to the National Indigenous Cultural Centre Limited to do this planning?

**Ms MOSS:** As I stated on the public record earlier, and I believe I have done previously on the public record, there has been around \$560 000 worth of expenditure on the business case and we have seconded a resource for the development of the National Indigenous Cultural Centre.

**Mrs LAMBLEY:** Was that work put out to public tender? How was that procured?

**Ms MOSS:** The proponents are the National Indigenous Cultural Centre Limited, which was previously Nganampa, and we are supporting that project.

**Mrs LAMBLEY:** What was the procurement process undertaken?

**Ms MOSS:** It did not go out to open tender, Member for Araluen.

**Mrs LAMBLEY:** So you just gave them the money to do it?

**Ms MOSS:** They are the proponents of that project in Alice Springs and we are supporting that project. They have been working on that project for many years before that.

**Mrs LAMBLEY:** But can you describe the procurement process? You cannot just give money to who you feel like. There has to be a procurement process.

**Ms MOSS:** We have been supporting this via a grant. To date that has been provided through grant funding.

**Mrs LAMBLEY:** Were there other people or organisations competing for that money?

**Ms MOSS:** For the National Indigenous Cultural Centre—no. But it is the provision of a grant to support the development of that project.

**Mrs LAMBLEY:** The National Indigenous Cultural Centre Limited will be providing a business plan. That is the planning side of the cultural centre?

**Ms MOSS:** It will be a business case.

**Mrs LAMBLEY:** That will be a business case. The other parts of the project—build, operate, maintain, design—will the government be undertaking that work?

**Ms MOSS:** We have a commitment of \$20m towards that project, but as I said, we are not the lead on that project.

**Mrs LAMBLEY:** Who will lead the other parts of the project?

**Ms MOSS:** The National Indigenous Cultural Centre is the proponent.

**Mrs LAMBLEY:** Are they contracted to do that?

**Ms MOSS:** At this stage it is a private project and we have supported it with some grant funding for the development thus far.

**Mrs LAMBLEY:** You came out publicly several years ago, as a government, and said that you would be building the national Indigenous art gallery and cultural centre. Now you are saying something very different when it comes to the cultural centre. You have \$20m; will you give all that money to the National Indigenous Cultural Centre Limited for the whole project? Is that what you are saying?

**Ms MOSS:** Member for Araluen, I think we have said the same thing all the way through this project ...

**Mrs LAMBLEY:** Not clearly, Minister, you never spelled it out clearly.

**Madam CHAIR:** Let the minister finish.

**Ms MOSS:** We have actually been very consistent on the National Indigenous Cultural Centre. It is on the *Parliamentary Record* many times that government is not the lead for that project. It was the Nganampa Anwernekenhe group prior to that. It has since changed its name, but it is the same group. That has been on the *Parliamentary Record* many times, Member for Araluen.

**Mrs LAMBLEY:** It is a departure from the original announcement you made several years ago, saying that you would be doing both.

**Ms MOSS:** I do not believe that it is. We are committed to building the National Aboriginal Art Gallery in Alice Springs and the National Indigenous Cultural Centre. We have made a commitment to that project, but we are not the lead on that project and I believe we have been clear about that since the beginning. That is on the public record in response to questions you have asked previously

**Mrs LAMBLEY:** It was not as clear as you have been today, I have to say.

**Ms MOSS:** I disagree, but ...

**Madam CHAIR:** Member for Araluen, do you have any further questions on the same topic? I would like to take a brief break.

**Mrs LAMBLEY:** I have one more question. It is to clarify again, particularly for the people of Alice Springs who are watching this space very closely. These are two of the biggest public projects which our town will see in decades. It is important that you be patient with everyone in terms of the information you provide us.

To be clear, the government will not be building the National Indigenous Cultural Centre?

**Ms MOSS:** I refer to all my previous comments on public record, including today.

**Mrs LAMBLEY:** The answer is no; you will not be building it. Is that right?

**Ms MOSS:** Government is not the lead on that project. I have been clear about that on the public record at every instance.

**Mrs LAMBLEY:** Well, you have not, but thank you for being clear today.

**Mr HIGGINS:** Could I ask one more question on the grants?

**Madam CHAIR:** On the same output?

**Mr HIGGINS:** Yes, on the grants. You passed a comment that it was money given as a grant. Was that grant the result of an application from the department advertising grants, and therefore went through the normal process of having a committee oversee those with a recommendation to the minister?

**Mrs LAMBLEY:** Of course it was not.

**Ms MOSS:** This was a commitment we made to support this project and it was a direct grant.

**Mr HIGGINS:** A direct grant that did not go through a committee; it went straight to the minister or Chief Minister? I will not ask which one.

**Ms MOSS:** It was a direct grant, yes.

**Madam CHAIR:** We will have a quick five minute break, so people can stretch their legs. Thank you.

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The committee suspended

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**Madam CHAIR:** Are there any further questions on Output 1.1?

**Mr WOOD:** Does the government intend to charge an entry fee for parks? That is distinct from camping fees, which I do not mind paying.

**Ms MOSS:** Are you asking if they are distinct from one another?

**Mr WOOD:** I imagine you could have an entry fee and just go in and out of the park but there is also a camping fee, is there not?

**Ms MOSS:** Yes. Through the root and branch review, we looked at other things within the department that we can be doing. Yes, you could separate those two things out, technically. Yes, we are looking at increasing camping fees, which have not been increased in almost 20 years. We will be looking at the parks pass structure as well. That work is to be under way and we will look at how other jurisdictions are doing it. Pretty much in most jurisdictions they have something of that sort in one way or another. I will get Mark Ashley from Parks to join us as well.

**Mr WOOD:** In relation to park entry fees, would you be looking at an entry fee for a vehicle or an entry fee for adults and children? Whatever entry fee you were looking at, would you make it so that it is user-friendly, not like what happened in Kakadu where people turn around and go away? I would love to encourage people to go to our parks, but I also realise they cost money to maintain.

**Ms MOSS:** They do cost money to maintain and that point is important. Camping fees, for instance, have not increased in almost 20 years. They require two rangers at a camp site collecting those fees and they are amazing assets for us in the Territory and we need to value them properly and we need to ensure we are putting money back in to them where possible and the Leader of the Opposition was talking about that earlier.

I will hand over to Mark for more information about the work towards those models, but the intention would be for it to be as user-friendly as possible. We have had long-standing discussions about online bookings and those sorts of things and how we can make access to our parks and our camping spots easier and more accessible, but there is a lot more work to be done.

Obviously we would want it to be user-friendly. We certainly would not want to create a system that discourages people from going.

**Mr ASHLEY:** In terms of parks we are looking at a whole host of different options around making it as user-friendly as possible. We are assessing and working other jurisdictions looking at what they are using in terms of the online booking systems.

We are looking at different practical ways of capturing and doing things in field appropriately. It is one thing to have an online booking system, but if you order a camp site in Karlu Karlu, Devils Marbles, for example, you would want to know whether that camp site fits your RV, your tent or your situation. There is a lot of detail that needs to be worked through.

We are currently preparing a paper for government's consideration across a whole host of things, including potentially a parks pass, camp fees and also other things like looking at valuing our experiences—some of those high value experiences, such as the iconic walks across the Territory.

Other iconic walks, for example, charge at different rates in other jurisdictions. There is certainly a propensity to pay. Some of the tourist operators that do commercial operations on some of our iconic walks have said to us, 'You should be realising better value for Traditional Owners in this space.'

There is a whole host of options that we are pulling together. We are trying to look at best practice across the whole of the country and indeed internationally. I have had discussions with New Zealand, for example. We will be preparing a paper for government's consideration to that end.

**Mr WOOD:** Would you consider some parks not have a charge at all? For instance, Leaning Tree Lagoon is probably not much bigger than the footprint of Parliament House. Djukbinj, for instance—I will come to a question on Djukbinj later. There are parks that do not have any sort of formal management arrangement from the public perspective. Would there be some variation in those fees according to the size of the park?

**Mr ASHLEY:** At this stage there will be whole range of options. We would not expect to anticipate that it would be a universal one-size-fits-all process, for example, there are many urban base parks. Casuarina Coastal Reserve is one of the most visited parks in the Territory. People use that on a daily basis to walk their dogs and exercise and it is unreasonable to assume people should have some sort of park arrangement for that place—similarly in Alice Springs Telegraph Station. Local parks in different reserves have different functions and are used in different ways by different members of the community. That needs to be reflected.

**Mr WOOD:** Howard Springs is one of those parks where people go for a walk.

**Ms MOSS:** As part of implementing these changes there will be some need to change bylaws and things like that. I am sure there will be plenty more opportunities for ongoing discussion about this.

**Mr WOOD:** One of the reasons for charging is not just to help bring in more improvements, but you have lease payments to Aboriginal Traditional Owners. Do we have a total cost of lease payments for all our parks?

**Ms MOSS:** In terms of payments and joint management arrangements?

**Mr WOOD:** That is right.

**Ms MOSS:** Again, I might hand over to Mark. Otherwise, we can take that on notice.

**Mr ASHLEY:** The short answer is yes, we do pay lease fees as a part of the joint management arrangement. Some of our most iconic parks are owned by Aboriginal people. It is Aboriginal land as part of the 2004 joint management arrangements that were put in place in the handing back of parks across the Territory. Those fees were negotiated as part of that process.

Currently the lease fees are running at about \$1.89m a year, but I would just like to confirm that exact figure. They are indexed to CPI, so it is a real cost.

**Mr WOOD:** That is a ballpark figure. I am not asking you down to the bottom dollar.

**Mr ASHLEY:** We can certainly provide it on a park-by-park basis.

**Mr WOOD:** To some extent, by having some payments, you actually are helping offset some of the other payments you have.

Just a bit of a practical issue at the present time—as much as I would love to spend more time in the parks. At Flora River park you just put your \$3.85—I do not know. It is all done on GST, is it not? You do not have this sort of rounded figure amount. You put that in a little box. I presume you cannot do that online? Or you would be able to do that online with the hope that a ranger would come along and see if you have sticker on the front of your car and if you paid. Is that how it works?

**Mr ASHLEY:** That is how it would probably work. Again, we are looking at some options. What we want to try to get away from is rangers having to do that. It takes a lot of time and leads to a lot of inefficiencies. It is harder for the purchaser. You have to plan ahead. If you have the capacity to plan your holiday, you can go to a Tourism-based website and you can get information on a region, for example, and then you can go and realise a booking in a park. It is a more efficient way of capturing the market.

In terms of processing, that is what we are aiming toward and moving toward. It is just not about the actual managing of the money. It is also about managing the interaction that people have in the campgrounds. Strategically, what we have rolled out in the last two years is a campground host program, where we have volunteers at certain campsites to assist in that process. So if there are some disputes on access to a site at a local level, there is someone there that a tourist camper can go and have a conversation with. We piloted that program in Litchfield this year.

**Mr WOOD:** I was going to ask how that has worked.

**Mr ASHLEY:** We did an evaluation on it. It worked really well. Again, I do not have the exact number of hours it saved our rangers, but it was in the order of many hundreds. The feedback from rangers was that it enabled them to spend much more time on fire management. As you would know, tourist season is right on fire season so it is a key or critical operational factor for us. It worked really well.

The feedback from the campground hosts themselves is that they really enjoyed it. We put in additional infrastructure at their sites to make their stay and volunteering time more pleasant, giving them access to a slightly improved campground and enabling them to have camping in other areas of the parks. It is a model that has been used. There is a network of people who travel around Australia and do that. It is working really well.

**Mr WOOD:** Just a final question on that, if people just pop up to a park, will they still be able to go in? Some places are a long way from any internet. The back end from Gregory or Judbarra and Keep River are a fair way from any sort of internet connection.

**Mr ASHLEY:** There are two parts to that question. The first is that we are, in association with the campgrounds' hosts, rolling out improved telecommunications. We have recently signed off on a series of agreements for improved telecom towers and Optus towers across several of our parks.

The second part is that we would anticipate that at every campground, a small number of campsites will be held available for people who come in ad hoc. That is why it is really important to have those campground hosts there so you can manage that interaction.

**Mr WOOD:** Minister, I have not heard of any new parks for a long time. Are there any new parks planned for the Northern Territory?

**Ms MOSS:** At this stage we are obviously working with local people everywhere around the Territory. There are some changes to the park around the telegraph station in Alice Springs, where they have taken on an extra parcel of land which Mark will be able to talk a bit more about. In terms of new gazetted parks, at this stage, no.

**Madam CHAIR:** Sorry, minister. Would this still be under Tourism or are we straying, Member for Nelson?

**Mr WOOD:** Well, we are under parks.

**Madam CHAIR:** No, we are not. We are still under Tourism, Sport and Culture.

**Mr WOOD:** Yes, but this is not Parks. That is official parks; this is parks in general.

**Madam CHAIR:** It is the right output.

**Mr WOOD:** Do you have the visitation numbers over the last, say, three years—I have asked this some years before—for all of our parks, please? I would like to see visitors to which parks are increasing in numbers and to which are decreasing in numbers.

**Ms MOSS:** We have a number of those number published in our annual report. You probably have them on hand.

**Mr WOOD:** No, you can get it ...

**Ms MOSS:** On the website.

**Mr WOOD:** Is that website as good as the Department Primary Industry, and Resources' one, where you cannot find a thing?

**Ms MOSS:** They are on the website.

**Mr WOOD:** Can you table that document? Does that have all the parks, because I have had—even little ones like Leaning Tree?

**Ms MOSS:** Yes, it is all of them. I am happy to table that info for you. It is probably easier than going through the whole table.

**Madam CHAIR:** Sure. You are just tabling the paper? That is fine.

**Mr HIGGINS:** Could I ask a question on those numbers, if that is all right?

**Madam CHAIR:** If we are talking about numbers on parks, then I am happy to entertain the question over here, but it will need to come back to the Member for Nelson.

**Ms MOSS:** Madam Chair, can I clarify on the document I was going to table—it actually is only major parks. I know the Member for Nelson was is asking for all parks, so can we take that on notice and get a more fulsome list?

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#### Question on Notice No 8.4

**Madam CHAIR:** Member for Nelson, can I get you to please restate the full question for the record please.

**Mr WOOD:** Minister, could you provide visitation numbers for all Northern Territory parks over the last three years?

**Madam CHAIR:** Minister, do you accept the question.

**Ms MOSS:** I accept the question, Madam Chair.

**Madam CHAIR:** Thank you, minister. The question asked by the Member for Nelson of the minister has been allocated the number 8.4.

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**Madam CHAIR:** Opposition Leader, do you have a question in that area?

**Mr HIGGINS:** Yes. How do we calculate those visitor numbers? There are pretty even, they do not go up and down. I am interested to see how we do it, or do we do some estimation or something else?

**Mr ASHLEY:** In how we do it, we have a series of different methods. Predominantly, they are based on individual counters on roadways. So, all the major routes in and out of parks have vehicle counters. We count vehicles accurately, then do an estimation on the number of people in those vehicles.

We calibrate and test that by doing random samples. For example, the average figure is 1.69 people per vehicle. The numbers are accurate and are quite astounding. For example, in Casuarina Coastal Reserve,

we get in excess of one million people. That is just the people coming in on the roadways. It does not include people riding their bikes or walking their dogs in there. You equate that to vehicle movements. It is the main bitumen road down past the surf club and it receives in excess of 18 000 vehicle movements a month. Visitation is a strong point of Territory parks and it certainly underpins their value to the community.

**Mr HIGGINS:** When we look at the number of vehicles, like the 1.69, do we just multiply them by 2 or by the 1.69 or whatever it was?

**Mr ASHLEY:** By 1.69. We calibrate and check that. I will take that on notice to get you the latest.

**Mr HIGGINS:** No, that is all right. I just want to know how we calculate it.

**Mr WOOD:** Minister, with the increase in visitors to Gunn Point because Gunn Point Road is sealed, what measures if any have you put in place to protect Tree Point reserve, and have you had any discussion with the NT Land Development Corporation to protect the whole beachfront? I have raised this before but I think it is important.

**Ms MOSS:** I might get Mark to speak more specifically about work there, but obviously where we do see increased visitation, that gets taken into account through all the operational decisions that are made through parks—where we need to deploy more resources and what work is required.

**Mr ASHLEY:** You are correct, we are seeing increased visitation to the site. We have been working with NT Land Development Corporation over the last 12 months. We have recently put in a new series of signs on the area of the beach including one which is attached to a buoy, to accommodate the tidal movement at the site.

More broadly, we are also looking forward in terms of managing the potential sites and it will have implications for hunting access in certain areas. We are working with the Sporting Shooters Association on managing the impacts of the new roads in the area.

Yes, we have been working out there and we are pleased to have some new additional pieces of infrastructure in place to help manage that situation.

**Mr WOOD:** Have there been any discussions with land corp about the whole beach? You have one part of the beach which is protected, theoretically—although it is not always protected—but it is in the park area and the rest, the same beach, it is Rafferty's rules? I know one belongs to land corp and one to Parks, but somewhere along the line, some people have to get together and say, 'Where is the future management of this area before it gets wrecked?' There are no plans? All right, I will try to take it up with land corp.

What management plans do you have for the future of Shoal Bay Coastal Reserve and Djukbinj National Park, including the Escape Cliffs? They are both parks but there is not a lot of anything on them, they are basically just pieces of land. Are there any plans to develop them more?

**Ms MOSS:** I will hand over to Mark.

**Mr ASHLEY:** Firstly, in regard to Djukbinj, at this stage we are working with the Traditional Owners around some options for that area. My understanding is that they are happy with the level of development that is currently in that park. In terms of Shoal Bay, it is a reserve. It serves a purpose and there are no immediate plans at this stage to further develop that site.

**Mr WOOD:** As you might have realised, or heard sometimes, about the options of having ATV, or off-road vehicle parks. Member for Namatjira, I hope I have not taken your question. I have been working with the Member for Stuart on this issue.

Would there be any consideration given to allowing the Shoal Bay Coastal Reserve to be used as an off-road recreation reserve? That is not diminishing its object to preserve the environment, but there is no reason why it also could not be used as a recreation facility. Have there been any thoughts given to the possibility of that happening?

**Ms MOSS:** I will ask Mark to talk more broadly about that. I am aware we have had these discussions before about various reserves and use for ATV. It is important we look at the values of each reserve, when those proposals come up. Also from a Sport perspective, I can say we are looking at what peaks are asking for.

There has not been any formal proposal, to my knowledge, on the use of our parks for that purpose or support from the peak sporting bodies for that. There are plenty of examples of where we are working with sporting bodies in particular.

**Mr WOOD:** The reason why you probably do not get a request is again because it is Rafferty's Rules. People can go and use the crown land out that way any way they want. There are no controls. From my point of view, it is poor management of the environment, whether it is a park or crown land, people just do what they like. The concept is not so much about whether you have been knocked on the door and asked, 'can we have one', because people are happy as it is.

I am talking from a bigger point of view. You would be concerned about conservation of the environment and—if we can have a way that people can enjoy off-road vehicles and the rest of the environment can be maintained in a reasonable manner, I would have thought that was a positive thing that government could look at.

I am asking if there is a possibility of a park being used for that purpose. I will leave one question for the Member for Namatjira, he might have a similar question.

**Mr ASHLEY:** From a park management perspective, there is no valid reason why it could not occur provided that, as the minister quite rightly pointed out, the environmental values of the site are identified, understood and protected. There are other cases internationally where four-wheel drive vehicles and off-road vehicles can do that but it needs to be controlled and it would require considerable resources to put that infrastructure in place to do that.

Currently across NT parks, we work progressively with a whole host of different four-wheel drive clubs. We provide four-wheel drive clubs access to fire road areas and areas where the public cannot currently access. We do that in a managed agreement process where they go and camp and access areas of the park. It provides benefit to us, they provide information on where feral animals and weeds are and if there are any particular problems. It can work but in that particular instance, the high degree of visitation would require some significant infrastructure and investment to manage that.

**Mr WOOD:** I would be hoping that there would be a commercial side to help pay for that.

**Mr ASHLEY:** Potentially, yes. Going forward that would be one option.

**Mr PAECH:** Would that require a legislative change to the *Territory Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act*, given that the act itself is about the biosecurity and conservation management?

**Mr ASHLEY:** No, that could be done under commercial concession permit. The permits would be similar to any other commercial arrangement on park where people provide a business service or a service and there are a series of conditions for them to operate in that arrangement.

**Ms MOSS:** There are currently a whole range of plans for different parks around visitor experience and more broadly that would provide stakeholders and you with some guidance about what could and could not be permitted in certain parks. The future development of any kind of additional recreational activities—what that might look like. Casuarina is obviously the closest example to me and something I was quite involved in.

You understand from reading those plans what potential other opportunities fit in with the environmental, cultural and recreational values of the park. There will be some parks where certain activities like ATV just would not fit.

**Mr WOOD:** You have allocated large amounts of money for cycle paths in Central Australia. When can we expect the same in the Top End? For instance, I could talk about the railway line down to Adelaide River but I will work backwards because in the 10-year infrastructure plan the proposed rail trail between Adelaide River and Batchelor is noted as—what is happening with that rail trail between Adelaide River and Batchelor?

**Ms MOSS:** I might ask Mark to talk more about the mountain bike trails. To go more broadly to many of the points you made in the question, the Red Centre Ride is almost \$12m in Central Australia. It is a really important tourism product. From our perspective, obviously driving visitation to the centre is really important and we recognise that there are a lot of hills and things that we do not necessarily have in the Top End. That is an important point to make regarding mountain biking.

**Mr WOOD:** Not on a railway line hopefully.



**Ms MOSS:** That has proven really popular as a tourism product in Central Australia. There are people travelling for things like Easter in the Alice. We just had Pinkbike there and they have a huge following so we are really focused on that mountain biking tourism when it comes to the Central Australian investment, but there is also investment in the Top End. There are trails in Charles Darwin National Park, Lee Point and through Casuarina Coastal Reserve and probably some others that I am not thinking about off the top of my head. I am looking at Mark and I am sure he has ridden them. I might hand over to Mark to talk a bit more broadly about the Top End mountain bike trails.

**Mr ASHLEY:** In terms of developing cycling infrastructure, it is important that there is an overall approach to it because essentially what we are trying to do is stimulate business activity, provide entertainment for locals and a recreational activity, so there needs to be some strategy.

You would be aware that several years ago there was that NT mountain bike masterplan put in place. That describes very broadly Alice Springs as the pinnacle. Alice Springs, for a whole host of reasons, is ideally suited to mountain biking. The climate during the winter attracts people from the East Coast. The terrain is magical. The country is very special. It has bitumen access and there is an international airport. I am really pleased to say that the final work completed on the west side is a completely new product.

Now you can actually ride from your hotel east, west, north and south, and ride well past quality trails. That recently has been picked by Pinkbike magazine, an international mountain bike journal. We are starting to get international recognition. That was the ultimate aim of that strategy, to create an international product comparable with other destinations to attract people to come to Alice Springs to ride their bikes.

The second part of that strategy is about creating a different experience, an experience of a longer mountain bike ride. It is fantastic that government committed to the process of investing in the Central Australian mountain bike trail. That is the second product. We are looking at having those sort of rides across different parts of the Territory.

There is a new market emerging very strongly in mountain biking. It is probably people like me, who are coming past middle age and not as fit as they should be. They just want to go out and ride for days. That is what that market is catering to.

**Mrs LAMBLEY:** I am not sure about the 'days' part.

**Mr WOOD:** Well ours is not technically not a mountain, it is a flat trail ride, and it has a heritage benefit. If you like pub crawls, you have Coolalinga, Virginia, Humpty Doo Tavern, Humpty Pub, Noonamah Pub, and you can have a feed on the whole way. You can get to Adelaide River and Batchelor as well.

Has there been any—do I have keep working with DIPL or do I need to promote that? I think that path, if it went through, would promote tourism and local businesses, because people would come from the city and from Palmerston to go down to Noonamah, Humpty Doo, Coolalinga, as it is going to hopefully be finished this year. That took five years to get about 10 kilometres done. There is time to get to Adelaide River, which is about another 100 kilometres—that is about 500 years nearly. Not quite, but it is a long time.

All I am asking is that there has been an emphasis on the trails in Central Australia. Is there an emphasis on doing some of that work in the Top End?

**Ms MOSS:** Absolutely, yes there is. As we said there are new trails being created and trails being re-done—that is not the word I am looking for—up in the Top End across a number of our different parks. I understand that you are very passionate about a specific trail, Member for Nelson.

**Mr WOOD:** It is heritage.

**Ms MOSS:** I completely get that and I would encourage you to keep working with both departments. We will prioritise the potential projects based on what benefit we think is in them for Territorians and the Territory.

**Mr WOOD:** If we called it the Mark Ashley rail trail, would that help?

**Mr ASHLEY:** No.

**Ms MOSS:** The Gerry Wood rail trail.

**Mr WOOD:** No, you will only put a buffer at the end for me.

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

**Mr HIGGINS:** Has anyone put in an application to heritage list Parliament House, or is that being considered?

**Ms MOSS:** Before I answer that question, do you have a number of questions on heritage? Should I bring ...

**Mr HIGGINS:** I only have two. There is one on Parliament House. I thought Mark would have the answers.

**Mr PAECH:** Could we just ask questions of Mr Ashley while he is here?

**Mr HIGGINS:** I will ask the two questions and we may be able to get the answers. The questions I have are: is anyone considering putting heritage listing on Parliament House; and is anyone considering an application for Anzac Oval in Alice Springs?

**Ms MOSS:** I can answer both of those questions. Regarding the first question on Parliament House, yes. I am aware that there has been a nomination to heritage list of Parliament House. Yes, there was a nomination and an assessment in relation to Anzac Oval.

With the first, obviously that will be received and assessed by the Heritage Council. That is an independent process and it will make an assessment as to whether or not that continues through the process, at which point it will make a recommendation to me. Obviously, interested persons will be involved in that and there will be a public comment process, should the heritage council choose to accept that for heritage assessment.

On the Anzac Oval question, I have just received a recommendation from the Heritage Council. I will make a decision on that shortly. Yes, it has been nominated.

**Mr HIGGINS:** Were both those nominations private, or did any of them come from government? I do not even know whether government can do that.

**Ms MOSS:** I do not know who nominated Parliament House. It is not information I have. I understand that the Anzac Oval nomination was public. It was made by a Heritage Council member, so external to government but a council member. The Heritage Council accepted that nomination.

**Mr HIGGINS:** So, on Parliament House, we do not know whether it is external to government or government? We do not know that answer?

**Ms MOSS:** I do not have that. I cannot speak to that detail, Opposition Leader.

**Mr HIGGINS:** Does the person down the back have the answer? All he has to do is just say yes or no.

**Mr WELLS:** I am Michael Wells, the Director of the Heritage Branch. The first part of the answer to that question is that normally information on who makes a nomination is not available. Sometimes people do not mind it being in the public domain. For example in the case of Anzac Oval, Heritage Council member Alex Nelson was happy to tell everyone that he made the nomination.

**Mr WOOD:** We knew about that without him even telling us.

**Mr HIGGINS:** That is why I asked if it is public or government. I did not asked for names.

**Mr WELLS:** That is on the public record, yes. But in respect to that, it does not really work in that sense of government or non-government. The way it works is that anyone can make a nomination at any time. That is normally just a member of the public.

There are only two other ways in which an assessment can be instigated. That is if the Heritage Council, of its own volition, comes to a consensus that a place should be considered for assessment. Or the minister can ask the Heritage Council to commence an assessment. They are the only ways in which something is nominated effectively.

**Mr HIGGINS:** Yes. So, the listing of Parliament House has not been initiated by government as such. It may be a government employee who is treated as public, but not from government itself?

**Mr WELLS:** It is correct to say it is not from government.

**Mr HIGGINS:** Okay. That is all I wanted to know.

**Mr WOOD:** If we are doing heritage, how much of the old railway line is heritage listed, or is only just pieces of it? That is the North Australia Railway.

**Mr WELLS:** Member for Nelson, the answer is very small sections. For example, just as you drive out of town on the Stuart Highway on the right hand side just before you get to the RAAF Base, there is a small section. It is probably only about one kilometre long. There are other sections, for example, in Katherine. There is a length of railway line that is listed that might be a couple of kilometres long, I think. I am not quite sure.

The short answer is, very small segments of the overall route which, after all, goes all the way from Darwin to Birdum potentially.

**Mr WOOD:** Is the Larrimah to Birdum section heritage listed? That is pretty well the only remaining reasonable section of the line left.

**Mr WELLS:** I do not believe so. That is easy for me to check quickly, but I do not think so.

**Mr WOOD:** Better write something. It is a good little trip actually, through there. That is all.

**Mr PAECH:** While we have Heritage on, the old buildings which remain in the Aputula/Finke community are becoming quite derelict. Are they heritage listed and is there an appropriation to do some remedial works to those buildings?

**Mr WELLS:** I would have to check quickly just to be absolutely sure, but I do not think there are any heritage listed buildings there. There were some nominations under the previous Heritage Conservation Act, which lapsed. I believe that is the situation, but I have to check to feel completely confident about that answer.

**Ms MOSS:** Can we take that on notice, Member for Namatjira? I imagine it would not take too long for us to check.

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#### Question on Notice No 8.5

**Madam CHAIR:** Member for Namatjira, can you please restate the question for the record?

**Mr PAECH:** Are there any buildings in the Finke community, known as Aputula, which are heritage listed? If so, is there any funding allocated to maintain their structural integrity?

**Madam CHAIR:** Minister, are you happy to take that question on notice?

**Ms MOSS:** I am happy to take that question on notice.

**Madam CHAIR:** The question asked by the Member for Namatjira has been allocated the number 8.5.

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**Madam CHAIR:** Are there any other questions on Output 1.1?

**Mr PAECH:** Yes. If I can go back to Parks and Wildlife. I will frame this in tourism manner.

Minister, is the department undertaking any works to manage invasive species of grasses in our national parks, particularly buffel and gamba?

**Ms MOSS:** Absolutely. The question of invasive grasses is one that the Parks and Wildlife team grapple with each and every day, obviously with places like Litchfield National Park, and gamba and buffel grass in your region, Member for Namatjira.

Our rangers spend a significant amount of time working with other partners to try and make sure that we have effective control over weeds. Importantly, buffel is actually not a declared weed in the Northern Territory.

It has been used, as you are aware, Member for Namatjira, on cattle properties in Central Australia. It remains a priority for us that we manage buffel, particularly around national parks but more broadly where it poses a threat to public safety or biosecurity values of a park or its tourism assets.

We are happy to take any specific questions you have about the management.

**Mr PAECH:** What strategies are being used by the department to protect national parks from invasive grasses—not weeds—due to the changing climate? I am well aware you attended the West MacDonnell National Park after the extreme bush fire. What strategies are being introduced by the department to mitigate the loss of some historical trees and places of significance within those national parks?

**Ms MOSS:** If I can talk specifically about that example you have given, that is probably a good indicator of how the department manages across national parks.

The department has a fire management plan that we work on annually with our joint management partners—with traditional owners and other stakeholders. That involves mitigation. Obviously mitigation is a massive part of fire management. If you can prevent it from getting close to sacred trees or other really important assets in the first place—that is desired by everybody. We saw the damage when we were in the region. They were big fires and involved about 81 first responders and people supporting them to control the fires across the West MacDonnell ranges.

I will get Mark Ashely to talk a bit more broadly across the response to that bushfire, but we have an integrated conversation plan. All stakeholders come together on that and review the plan so we can ensure we are all working in the same direction around control and things like invasive grasses.

**Mr ASHLEY:** The first thing to say is that every major park has an integrated conservation plan. That is a specific document that sits under the park management plan and that is all about trying to understand how to best manage particular values in parks. For example, in terms of how you manage a fire, invasive species, and your ferals.

Subsequent to that, parks have a series of weed and fire management plans, which is the operational aspect. If you use the example at Tjoritja, West MacDonnell National Park, there is a high-level plan of management that talks about Traditional Owners' aspirations and the values of the park. There is an integrated conservation plan that then details all of the specific biodiversity values and hotspots within the park, for example, the southern facing range areas—as you pointed out—the river areas, the riparian zones, the wet areas and the soaks. They are the areas where our biodiversity is concentrated and we need to manage and protect. It identifies those values and some of the things we need to do.

Then you have the next level down which is an actual management plan. The fire management plan and the weed management plan describe the hands-on, on-ground things you need to do to protect those sites. In terms of fire management, we have recently done a whole host of activities where we have reviewed the fire management plan that was in place for the park following the fire.

It is important to note that we are starting to see some extreme conditions. The weather experienced during that 15-day period averaged over 43 degrees. It was very hot, there were north-westerly winds. It was really challenging for people to manage that fire.

I would like to put on the record and acknowledge the efforts of the parks staff and also Traditional Owners and the Central Land Council staff and many other volunteers who came together to fight that fire. It was a challenging time for everyone involved.

In terms of responding to that fire, there is a whole series of things we are now reviewing. We are looking to place additional fire breaks and doing some additional innovative ways to break up fuel patterns within the park. Obviously we do not want to get a D9 bulldozer and charge through the middle of the park. We are looking at how we do something innovative. Is there an option, for example, to put in a walking trail? A walking trail is enough to provide a back burn-off in the cool seasons. You can actually take something that could be a tourist product and turn it into a management outcome. We are looking at a whole series of things like that.

We are also looking at all the normal stuff we do like spraying buffel grass around some of those red gum areas that are well known and sensitive. The reality though is that across the parks estate, we cannot manage all the invasive weeds. We need to prioritise. That is the operational part. It is important that we do that in a systematic way and a way that is based on science. That is why it is important to have that overlying strategies that identify those values.

**Mr PAECH:** Do the same management practices apply to the Todd River in Alice Springs, regarding mitigation of those trees?

**Ms MOSS:** The Todd River has a working group as you are aware through the Department of Environment and Natural Resources. Yes, it would be similar and certainly the Parks and Wildlife team work really closely with the Department of Environment and Natural Resources around that. Custodians have raised concerns previously about damage to sacred trees in the Todd River and that working group was pretty quickly established. You may want to ask more questions on that to the Minister for Environment and Natural Resources. From memory, it operates off very similar principles.

**Mr PAECH:** I acknowledge the enormous amount of work that has been done in regarding the West MacDonnell Ranges tourism masterplan, but I want to ask if there are any scheduled works in relation to the East MacDonnell Ranges, particularly around Arltunga Historical Reserve. Is there work scheduled there to grow tourism and ongoing conservation work to preserve that historical township?

**Ms MOSS:** We have a regional tourism plan that has just been released for the East MacDonnell Ranges with the local council. Of course, the historic reserves are a really important part of that. I would definitely see that those regional plans are an important indicator for us as a department about where we should be putting future investment.

Madam Chair, I have an answer to a previous Question on Notice.

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**Answer to Question on Notice No 8.2**

**Ms MOSS:** In relation to retail value of seats, which was the question asked by the Leader of the Opposition, I understand the estimated value is around \$75 000.

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

**Mr PAECH:** I have one more. The Megafauna Central in Alice Springs is very well attended and has great visitation. What work was being done by the agency of the department on extending that back out to Alcoota, which is a community in my electorate? Are there any opportunities for tourism growth?

**Ms MOSS:** Megafauna Central has been a great success. I think a lot of that has been down to the work that the department and the Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory—which undertook that work and run that facility—did with the local community as well at Engawala.

As you are aware, there were many members of that community who were there for the opening of Megafauna Central. An important element of the retail out of Megafauna Central has been selling some local art and some of those stories being told out of Engawala. Without a doubt, the art that comes out of Engawala and surrounding region is incredible and tells many of those fascinating stories about the fossil fields.

There was previously, under the previous government, an idea that there had been some preliminary discussions with the community. I do not think there was any in-depth work done towards that particular plan.

I see Megafauna Central as the first step to be able to develop that offering further across the region. The Member for Namatjira and I talked to the community. It is important we continue to work with them and other Traditional Owners and stakeholders across the region on developing the tourism offering across the region to make sure, if we have visitors travelling to the fossil fields, the community sees maximum benefit for that and visitors are able to have some things you would want to be provided if you were travelling quite a way out of Alice Springs.

We need to continue to work with the community, particularly around the development of the arts centre. There is potential there for accommodation and food offerings, but there is a lot more work in it and that regional plan will be vital for that.

Megafauna Central is a first step, as far as I am concerned. It is definitely not job-complete. It has been fantastic to see the development of the augmented reality project take place. You can look at the megafauna around Alice Springs, and the interpretation within Megafauna Central has been co-developed and is in

language. We need to make sure we continue to leverage that opportunity.

**Mr WOOD:** I have two questions on wildlife.

**Madam CHAIR:** That is not this output.

**Mr HIGGINS:** If I could ask the minister a question on this output?

**Madam CHAIR:** It is not this output.

**Mr WOOD:** No, wildlife—policies on wildlife. This and crocodiles.

**Mr HIGGINS:** When we were talking before, Mark, about the weeds et cetera, I presume that is controlled through spraying. No matter who we use to do that spraying, whether it is rangers, contracted out or whether it is Indigenous rangers, do we have a requirement that they need something like a chemical certificate-type certificate? So we do require that they have a chemical certificate? The reason I ask is that I will be doing some follow-up questions with the Environment minister, who I think has carriage of bushfires.

There is a lot of criticism coming back about that program. I am giving context so you can answer the question. A lot of criticism coming back in regard, not so much to the program, but who we just hand those chemicals to and what qualifications they have and how they are appropriately used. Can you sort of say to us why you feel your people are—just in your context. I know you have a lot of bushfire experience and it is something that goes to the minister later.

**Mr ASHLEY:** Thanks for the question Leader of the Opposition. Certainly we have a WHS policy within the division across the parks and anyone who is involved with the application of herbicides needs to have a qualification—that Certificate I in Chemical Handling. In that we include people who may volunteer with us and the like. We have a whole system in place to do that. It is just a part of normal OHS requirements.

**Mr HIGGINS:** So that applies to rangers that we employ as well as contractors that we might tender?

**Mr ASHLEY:** Absolutely. If we have contractors doing work on parks, they have a requirement under the condition of their contract to meet all those normal work health and safety conditions.

**Mr HIGGINS:** I actually praise that, because some of these chemicals can have an adverse impact on the environment if inappropriately used.

**Mr WOOD:** I thought I had better ask a crocodile question because it is always worth asking. Grahame Webb from Crocodylus Park, as you know, has long advocated conserving Australia's crocodiles through commercial incentives. Will the government look at allowing Aboriginal people, if they wish, to sustainably harvest crocodiles to improve their economic opportunities, similarly to how the Inuit people in Northern Canada are allowed to harvest polar bears? If not, why not?

**Ms MOSS:** Thank you Member for Nelson. The issue of safari hunting is ...

**Mr WOOD:** That is a possibility. I am talking about a sustainable harvest by Aboriginal people.

**Ms MOSS:** Harvest is a question probably better directed to Department of Environment and Natural Resources.

**Mr WOOD:** Who gives the licence for that?

**Ms MOSS:** For harvesting?

**Mr WOOD:** Yes.

**Mr ASHLEY:** The Department of Tourism, Sport and Culture manages the permits, but in terms of all approvals, processes, populations assessment, is administered through the Department of Environment of Natural Resources, who have responsibility for the crocodile management plan.

The Territory crocodile management plan provides the framework, sustainable harvest levels and all of the conditions and requirements. Any expansion of that program should be placed toward them

**Mr WOOD:** Do you then give the permit?

**Mr ASHLEY:** We give the permit. So there is a degree of separation between the science and the people doing the enforcement through the permits, for example, Parks and DENR.

**Mr WOOD:** Madam Chair, do I ask the minister about the geese? Is that through you?

**Ms MOSS:** Again there is some crossover, I suppose. But in terms of the management plan, the geese are the Minister for Environment and Natural Resources', which I was previously, which is why ...

**Mr WOOD:** That is why I remember all my arguments were with you.

**Ms MOSS:** I remember them well too, Member for Nelson. That management plan is undertaken by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources.

**Mr WOOD:** Permits are given the same way, because they are the other people who come out and write the permits on the opening days?

**Ms MOSS:** Yes, that is managed by Parks and Wildlife. We have a really important role for some of the enforcement and things like that, but the management plan itself sits with DENR.

Madam Chair, I have another answer to a question on notice.

**Madam CHAIR:** Could you please state clearly the question number.

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#### **Answer to Question on Notice No 8.5**

**Ms MOSS:** In relation to whether any buildings in Finke Community/Aputula are heritage listed. The answer to that question is no. They are not heritage listed.

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**Mr PAECH:** What would be the process if they wanted to heritage list them?

**Ms MOSS:** Then somebody could put in a nomination to the Heritage Council with the reasons why they believe those should be heritage listed. The Heritage Council would then make an assessment about whether that is a nomination that they accept or not. If they do, that progresses through to a recommendation to me. During that period, if they are accepted, there is a provisional heritage protection.

**Mr PAECH:** Okay. Anyone can do it?

**Ms MOSS:** Yes.

**Mr HIGGINS:** It is a good job for a local member.

**Madam CHAIR:** That is what he was thinking.

**Mr PAECH:** That is what I am thinking.

**Madam CHAIR:** Are there any further questions on Output 1.1? That concludes consideration of Output 1.1.

#### **Output 1.2 – Commercial Organisations**

**Madam CHAIR:** The committee will now move to consider Output 1.2 Commercial Organisations. Are there any questions? There being no questions on Output 1.2, that concludes consideration of Output 1.2 and Output Group 1.0. Thank you to those who have attended for that section.

#### **OUTPUT GROUP 2.0 – CORPORATE AND GOVERNANCE** **Output 2.1 – Corporate and Governance**

**Madam CHAIR:** I will now call for questions on Output Group 2.0, Corporate and Governance, Output 2.1 of the same name. Are there any questions?

**Mr HIGGINS:** In response to some of the global questions in regard to the Mitchell Street Mile and the scrapping of that as a standalone activity, the answer came back from your department. It was listed as an efficiency in your department's response. Is this efficiency the sole justification as a standalone event, or did we look at some of the other impacts of cancelling the event et cetera. I am trying to get a bit of logic behind it.

**Ms MOSS:** Opposition Leader, we have spoken, obviously, to Athletics NT in relation to this event. There have been some changes to the event over time. It should be noted that it was not to be running at the same time this year because of some of the changes and complexities of that. It was looking like it was not to be run this year.

We believe—and we looked deeply at this one—that the Mitchell Street Mile will benefit from being part of the Arafura Games. It will in a way add some prestige to that event and encourage more athletes to come and take part in that event.

We will work with Athletics NT. They still have a desire to continue to run athletics and mile events for our local athletes, but they have been accepting. The new CEO of Athletics NT has seen the benefit of being part of the Arafura Games and the broader offering that provides.

**Mr HIGGINS:** When we look at moving it to the Arafura Games, will that preclude the prize money that was there. I am not saying you would necessarily get the same prize money, but that was one of the attractions. It was one of the biggest prizes being offered in Australia. What is happening with that?

**Ms MOSS:** I understand it is public knowledge that the prize money was no longer being offered by the previous providers of that prize money. I am sure if sponsors still wanted to come on board for that event, that would be something we would look at.

**Mr HIGGINS:** Yes, that is my question. Will we still try and aim ...

**Ms MOSS:** It was a great selling point for the Mitchell Street Mile that it was the richest mile. It can get people and athletes here on the end of their campaigns coming to run in the Territory and that is great. As we do with the Arafura Games, yes, I will be positive that where there are sponsors wanting to support those sort of things. There will be scope to continue to do that.

**Mr HIGGINS:** Yes, will we continue to chase to see if we can get a sponsor for that, or will we just let them come forward? I do not think you really meant that in your answer.

**Ms MOSS:** We will continue to work with all sports on their events. It is fair to say it is not my output in specifics of the Arafura Games. It is probably fair to say that the Arafura Games team aggressively goes after sponsors for the games more broadly, and other ways in which they can support specific events. I do not think the Major Events team or sports sit around waiting for sponsors to come to them. They are pretty aggressively trying to get sponsors on board for different events.

**Mr HIGGINS:** You are actually saying the Minister for the Arafura Games stole the Mitchell Street Mile from Sport.

**Ms MOSS:** No. I am saying it is a fantastic opportunity for them to be part of the Arafura Games. Obviously there is more analysis being done of that particular event but anecdotally, to date, it was an overwhelming success. It was great to hear from local accommodation providers and from sports in particular about how good the Arafura Games was for them. The opportunity to grow the Arafura Games is huge and for athletics to play a bigger role in that is a brilliant opportunity for them that I do not think has escaped the board of Athletics NT.

**Mr HIGGINS:** That answer was a lot better than 'efficiency'.

This is not a question about the cost, but one of your departmental officers was listed as travelling to Shenzhen, two other places I cannot pronounce, and then Beijing in China in July and August this year. The cost was a fraction under \$4000 and it was for route development meetings. What does it mean by that and what are the outcomes or benefits from these meetings?

**Ms MOSS:** Can I seek some clarification about whether you are talking about attendance at the World Routes conference?



**Mr HIGGINS:** It could have been, it was in July and August 2018. The exact cost was \$3891. It would have been in response to our global questions, that is all.

**Ms MOSS:** I think I have the one you are referring to. Aviation route development meetings in Shenzhen, Guangzhou, Zhengzhou, Beijing ...

**Mr HIGGINS:** Yes, they are the ones. I am glad you can get your tongue around it.

**Ms MOSS:** I am not sure I got my tongue around the third one but I gave it a good go. In terms of an aviation route development meetings—and Andrew can talk to this in more detail as he would have undertaken many similar meetings himself—members of our Department of Tourism, Sport and Culture team regularly go out into the region where we already have existing relationships with airlines or where we might be wanting to develop relationships and potential routes with airlines. That, of course, requires having meetings with those airlines. There is a lot of work that goes on in between from here.

In countries such as China, for example, it is important to build those face-to-face relationships and our team certainly go out and do that. They do get out to the World Routes conference. We often work quite heavily with NT Airports around some of these meetings and trips as well. I will hand over to Andrew Hopper to provide a little bit more context around what aviation route development meetings might contain.

**Mr HIGGINS:** I know that people need to travel and I am a full supporter of that and I am not questioning that, I just need to know what it is. People are reading this stuff and they go well, 'What in the hell? Is that just another junket or something?' It is trying to get an understanding of that and what outcomes we hope to get out of that sort of stuff.

**Mr HOPPER:** Certainly route development, as the minister alluded to, is meeting with airlines and discussing the ability for those airlines to consider routes related to the Northern Territory. As you would appreciate, we are talking to multiple airlines concurrently. We are always looking for opportunities. Those meetings are usually one-on-one and they will be with the international representative from those airlines who look at international route development as well.

It is relationship development, ongoing conversations, often discussing business cases and how that route could be sustainable, understanding the levels of cooperative marketing, support that might be required and can be provided. There are a whole range of conversations that happen but the ultimate purpose is—can we generate a new route into the Northern Territory or potentially see a bigger aircraft on a route. There is a whole range of different permutations that we talk about but that is the purpose behind route development.

**Mr HIGGINS:** Was it just straight meetings or was there a conference on at the same time and a lot of these airlines might have been there?

**Mr HOPPER:** There was a routes conference multiple airlines all come together in one spot. Equally, similar representatives from other tourism organisations and/or transport departments will attend all seeking the same outcome, new airline routes.

**Mr HIGGINS:** It is a good place to get some potential contacts et cetera. There was a similar one in Cebu in the Philippines in March this year. What were we aiming with that one? I do not have the exact reason for that trip?

**Mr HOPPER:** It is very similar. That was the Routes Asia. There are different versions of Routes conference. Multiple conferences all need to be attended because they all ultimately lead to the gathering of multiple airlines in one spot. They are very much back-to-back meetings, scheduled meetings and the opportunity then to network with other international destinations and domestic destinations. That, again, is another annual summit with those key airlines.

**Mr HIGGINS:** How many conferences like this would we be aiming to get representation at from people in the department?

**Mr HOPPER:** They are fundamentally the two major ones. There are other opportunities.

**Mr HIGGINS:** We go to one in Europe somewhere.

**Mr HOPPER:** Yes, ITB. There is also the Australian Tourism Exchange, ATE, in Australia. All of those conferences provide the opportunity for airlines to be in the one spot with other tourism operators.

**Mr HIGGINS:** How many in total would we actually aim to get to every year, roughly? I am not after an exact list. If I wanted that I would do a written question. Roughly, how many conferences do you think we aim at each year to get someone to?

**Mr HOPPER:** Probably between four and six, generally. In terms of specific aviation there are the two we discussed.

**Ms MOSS:** The others are much broader than that—ITB, ATE ...

**Mr HIGGINS:** ITB, I have been to many years ago.

**Ms MOSS:** That is the one in Berlin.

**Mr HIGGINS:** Yes.

**Ms MOSS:** They are much broader and are the ones that we often have tourism operators head over with the Tourism NT to showcase product and meet the buyers, essentially. They are still incredibly important for us and for operators. There are some main ones that we try to get to but there are lots of them. There are big caravan and camping ones where we may try to get people there if it aligns with our strategies and what we are trying to achieve.

**Mr HIGGINS:** The caravan and camping shows—in the past tourism used to pay for the site of those and then operators would attend at their own cost. The cost of the stand et cetera, which was like a Northern Territory stand—is that still the case?

**Mr HOPPER:** I will have to clarify specifically. I do not think we have changed the model too much. If you would like to propose that as a formal question we can certainly follow it up.

**Mr HIGGINS:** Yes. Can I get that one on notice—and the arrangements around that?

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#### Question on Notice No 8.6

**Mr HIGGINS:** I will rephrase that one for us.

**Madam CHAIR:** Yes, please, Leader of the Opposition.

**Mr HIGGINS:** Can you tell me if Tourism still pays the costs of running the stands at the major caravan and camping shows around Australia and then invites operators to be on that stand at their own cost? Is that still the structure? If it has changed, how has it changed?

**Madam CHAIR:** Minister, do you accept that question?

**Ms MOSS:** I do.

**Madam CHAIR:** The question asked by the Leader of the Opposition of the minister and has been allocated the number 8.6.

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

**Mr HIGGINS:** Yes. On the attendance at those conferences—do we just normally send one person or do we always try and send two to them?

**Mr HOPPER:** It depends on the conference.

**Ms MOSS:** For something like ATE, for example, a small team goes from the Department of Tourism, Sport and Culture. We go to support operators but people also have a range of their own meetings from the department—Tourism Australia, a lot of airlines go as well as international representatives in the market. It is a decision that is made strategically within the department.

**Mr HIGGINS:** Would we have sent two to China because it is an international world one as opposed to one in the Philippines where it is an Asia one?

**Ms MOSS:** If we look at the World Routes conference, for example, I would imagine in that case that NT Airports probably also went. It was just the one from our department in that case, but not necessarily only one from the Territory.

**Mr HOPPER:** Often we travel with NT Airports or they travel with us—certainly regarding airline route development.

**Mr HIGGINS:** I am just trying to get a feel for it. I was imagining some poor person having to travel on their own.

**Mr HOPPER:** No, but we are conscious of costs of course, so it is a fine balance. No, typically we do aviation route development in conjunction with organisations like NT Airports.

**Ms MOSS:** there are places such as in Guangzhou, for example, where we might have a representative already there. We might have one of our Territory-based DTSC employees travelling there, but they also have the support from a rep. We often have support of Austrade and Tourism Australia for a lot of the things we do.

We have these conferences we attend, but there are also trade missions we initiate as well. Adventure NT, for example, was a trade mission we undertook. We took a range of tourism operators and Austrade assisted with that. There were a lot of Austrade and Tourism Australia representatives there as well.

The department does incredibly well working with the other really important players to support trade investment across Australia, and does a great job with the resources.

**Mr HIGGINS:** A lot of people focus on overseas travel for some reason, putting a microscope over a department and do not concentrate on some of the other areas. Do you break it down so that someone could see this is our investment in overseas trips to promote international stuff? Do we have a breakdown on how much travel we do within Australia in promoting the Northern Territory across Australia? Is it possible to get a breakdown of that? Overseas travel, of course, will cost a lot more.

**Ms MOSS:** In terms of this travel, what proportion is international and what proportion is domestic travel undertaken to promote? I have numbers for the whole agency, but if you are talking Tourism specifically, I am sure we can get that. We can break it down in that way.

**Mr HIGGINS:** Yes, I prefer to get it broken down into Tourism if I could.

**Ms MOSS:** We can do that, yes. We can take that on notice.

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#### Question on Notice No 8.7

**Madam CHAIR:** Could you restate the full question please, Opposition Leader.

**Mr HIGGINS:** Could I get a breakdown of the expenditure in regard to travel by Tourism internationally and domestically?

**Madam CHAIR:** Minister, are you happy to take that question?

**Ms MOSS:** I am, yes.

**Madam CHAIR:** Is there a time frame?

**Mr HIGGINS:** Up until March this year for the last nine months, yes.

**Ms MOSS:** For the financial year?

**Mr HIGGINS:** Yes.

**Madam CHAIR:** The question has been asked by the Opposition Leader of the minister and has been allocated the number 8.7.

**Madam CHAIR:** Do we have any further questions on Output 2.1 Corporate and Governance?

**Mr HIGGINS:** Yes. How many ECO staff does the department have that will be affected by the signing of the contracts that has been requested? How many ECOs do you currently have?

**Ms MOSS:** That would be 23 if you include Darwin Waterfront Corporation and NT Major Events Company.

**Mr HIGGINS:** How many are in the Darwin Waterfront Corporation and Major Events?

**Ms MOSS:** That is two at NTMEC, one at the Darwin Waterfront Corporation.

**Mr HIGGINS:** So you have 20 in the department?

**Ms MOSS:** In Tourism, Sport and Culture, yes.

**Mr HIGGINS:** Is there any plan to cut any of those ECOs in the department under some of these efficiencies?

**Ms MOSS:** We have already reduced by one, Opposition Leader.

**Mr HIGGINS:** What level was that ECO?

**Ms MOSS:** That was an ECO1 position.

**Mr HIGGINS:** Okay. Have you had any feedback on whether everyone will accept those changes—the 20 of them?

**Ms MOSS:** I will hand that question over to the CEO, Simonne Shepherd.

**Ms SHEPHERD:** Everyone has been written to; they have received their letter. It is up to each individual to respond.

**Mr HIGGINS:** We have not heard any feedback from them?

**Ms SHEPHERD:** No, but I would say it is a private matter for each individual.

**Mr HIGGINS:** Do you have any ongoing funding agreements? We have grants going out, and I think you have said that the grants will be subject to that efficiency. There is some dividend Treasury gives back. I am trying to get a formula of that from them. Have you got any ongoing funding agreements with anyone in the future which will be impacted by those efficiencies?

**Ms MOSS:** Yes we do have a number of cases where we have multi-year agreements. I would not be able to list them all right now, but yes we have a number of multi-year agreements which might be across Sport, Tourism and arts. All those bodies have been spoken to in relation to the efficiency dividend that applies across all grants provided by government.

**Mr HIGGINS:** Those efficiency dividends will be applied evenly across all those grants—I will decide then whether I will want to put the other question on notice—or will you move some of them? You might decide you will give less of a cut to netball and give a bigger cut to hockey, say. I am not picking on those two sports, by the way.

**Ms MOSS:** Understood. The 3% will be applied across everyone who gets a grant.

**Mr HIGGINS:** Could I put on notice a question on that?

**Madam CHAIR:** It depends. Has the minister already indicated that she cannot answer it here?

**Mr HIGGINS:** Yes.

**Ms MOSS:** I do not have the full list of whom we have multi-year agreements for.

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**Question on Notice No 8.8**

**Madam CHAIR:** Leader of the Opposition, could you restate the question for the record.

**Mr HIGGINS:** Could I get a list of all the organisations which have multi-year funding agreements and what the amount of those efficiency dividends will mean to each of those organisations?

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

**Ms MOSS:** Yes. I would like to make a quick comment. In terms of something like sports organisations, there will be cases probably around peak sport body funding for example, where each year there is an assessment of the tier. That comes into play as well.

**Madam CHAIR:** The question asked by the Leader of the Opposition has been allocated the number 8.8.

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**Madam CHAIR:** Minister, you wish to make a comment on a previous question?

**Ms MOSS:** I do, a previous answer. I think I said there were two ECOs at NTMEC. There are actually three and one at Darwin Waterfront Corporation.

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

**Mr WOOD:** I have a question following on from grants. There is \$77 000 in last year's budget for wildlife grants and there is \$125 000 for Land for Wildlife. Which ones have been cut?

**Ms MOSS:** Land for Wildlife. That has been communicated to Land for Wildlife, but we recognise that it is a service where we can continue to provide support to owners on Landcare, weed fire and wildlife management through a number of mechanisms currently through both the Department of Environment and Natural Resources and NT Parks and Wildlife. That has been communicated to them.

**Mr WOOD:** I am very disappointed it has been cut completely. I have a note which says that this very worthwhile project, which has 250 members with properties from Darwin to Katherine—I see them in my area—and over 11 000 hectares under private land conservation. There are considerable savings from the NT Government's coffers in regard to resources spent on weed and fire management. All the land for wildlife properties are managing their weeds and fire and working towards improved habitat for the wildlife.

Would you reconsider the decision? I think they were looking for a much smaller figure, which would at least keep the project going, of \$25 000? Everyone is getting a 3% cut; they have a 100% cut. They do great work. Is it reasonable to ask you if the department would reconsider that cut, at least from the point of view that I think they could live with about \$25 000?

**Ms MOSS:** There are many other ways in which these services are now delivered and it is my understanding that there was not an ongoing agreement with Land for Wildlife with the department. We have been discussing with them—obviously there are other avenues through government that they may wish to consider. I will hand over to Mark because I know he has been having ongoing discussions with Land for Wildlife and we have encouraged them to continue working with government about other ways in which we can provide support.

**Mr ASHLEY:** In terms of the broader context, the original agreements were in place for four years and the intent of the agreement was to engage landowners in the process and raise awareness around some of the importance of doing weed control and fire management on blocks surrounding the urban areas in particular.

It was made very clear at the outset that this was not an ongoing program; it was a grant. I have been working with those two particular groups for 12 months trying to identify different mechanisms on how the provision of those services can continue.

There are other parts of government that provide weed management advice and the like. We have offered to be continually engaged with those programs in terms of giving them access to our networks, internet

resources and our social media sites to support the community movement around it. The reality is that weed control is the responsibility of the landowner and this program was not intended to be an ongoing grant arrangement.

**Mr WOOD:** I am presuming—I may be wrong—but Land for Wildlife is more than just Northern Territory. Are there Land for Wildlife schemes across Australia?

**Ms MOSS:** There are a number of similar programs across Australia. There is a similar program, I understand, being run by City of Darwin as well. I cannot recall the name but it is something very similar.

**Mr WOOD:** Land for Wildlife had some regulations around how a block of land was registered as Land for Wildlife. It had a brown sign for some land that was being prepared for finally being declared as a land for wildlife block. I always thought was a really positive thing. It was showing other people, who might just come out from the town—and I am not saying that all people who come out from town are going to clear their block—but it might have shown people that you can get some great positive outcomes from retaining the vegetation and biodiversity on your block of land.

Will there be any program now that allows someone in the rural area—it goes from Darwin to Katherine, I gather—to be able to say, 'I would like my block examined to see whether it potentially can have a Land for Wildlife sign on it', or will that basically be the end of the program?

**Ms MOSS:** As I stated earlier, there are other avenues that Land for Wildlife may wish to consider. There are Environment and Community Benefit Fund grants where it can be assessed amongst other applications that come through. There are a whole range of different measures that are now undertaken through the Department of Environment and Natural Resources and Parks and Wildlife around giving advice to landowners about weed, fire and pest management.

**Mr WOOD:** I suppose when I see this many grants at the back of the budget paper and I see one that I think promotes something good, encourages people to volunteer and has a very positive outcome, and it is being cut completely—it might have been on a four-year term but obviously they would have asked for renewal. I presume the answer when they wanted a renewal was that there was no renewal. It is just sad. If you took 1% off every grant in that document you would have enough money to keep them going.

**Ms MOSS:** Well, we are taking 3% across all of our grants programs.

**Mr WOOD:** They would not mind a 3%.

**Ms MOSS:** But it is a reality that will have an impact across our grants buckets. There are numerous grants buckets across government that would be applicable for Land for Wildlife, but not only within the Northern Territory Government as well.

**Mr WOOD:** They have had a double hit because Greening Australia has finished, closed down. If it has not, it is just on its last legs. Now this one, which was working with Greening Australia, has gone too. It is not good.

Minister, I asked you about the tropical lights tender. I was approached by some people about this matter. How does the government excuse itself—do not take me the wrong way—from not putting out a tender for a project that is worth \$3.5m?

**Ms MOSS:** Member for Nelson, I will note from the outset that it is an NT Major Events-organised event. I understand that NT Major Events is not here; we went past our corporate entity's output. What I can say in relation to this is that the \$3.5m is for the entire project over the life of the project. That will be set up in about October. It will launch in November and it will go through until April.

The \$3.5m is for the entire project. That includes the EOI that has recently gone out for local artists, which contains grants for local artists to be part of that trail around the CBD; it involves the work that is currently under way with the tourism, retail and hospital sectors on how they can leverage off this particular initiative; it involves the security and the operations over the life of that particular project as well.

I want to make it absolutely clear that the \$3.5m is for the entirety of the project. In relation to why Bruce Munro, I probably have answered this question a number of times. He is an internationally renowned light artist who has a significant following. We intend for this to be a visitation driver. That is why we are investing in it through the Turbocharging Tourism investment.

We know he has a following and a proven record, because he has done installations at Uluru, America, Albany, and the UK. That is the reason we have engaged him. There will be local suppliers and artists already producing work inspired by some of the images, and they have already had discussions with Bruce and the team. The overwhelming feedback I am getting from local retailers, and the hospitality and tourism industries is that people are really excited about the opportunity to link in with it. We are looking for the visitation potential of this, and he brings that.

**Mr WOOD:** I am not saying anything against the gentlemen, but I am looking at the process. You say you need \$3.5m to do this project. Normally you would go for tender. But in this case you say, 'We have a special person who has a renowned record of doing this particular type of project'. How do you get around—or what is the basis of getting around—what normally would go out to tender?

**Ms MOSS:** Member for Nelson, I will put it in another frame. For example, if we took an event like Bass in the Grass we look for local artists to be part of that, but we do not put the major acts out for open tender for example. The NT Major Events team looks for the acts that will appeal to Territorians and potential festival-goers. We will be able to promote a fantastic line-up on the festival calendar across the country. I do not see this as necessarily being different to that, though it is a different context, if you understand what I mean.

There are significant elements of this that involve the community, the local business community and local suppliers. We have directly engaged someone who has the following to bring people to Darwin and has the expertise. I do not think that is any different to a range of other major events we run.

**Mr HIGGINS:** Can you tell me how much the ICT expenditure for the department was as at 31 March this year?

**Ms MOSS:** I might ask Susan to speak to that.

**Ms KIRKMAN:** IT expenditure to the end of May this year?

**Mr HIGGINS:** That is all right.

**Ms KIRKMAN:** It is \$4.219m.

**Mr HIGGINS:** Okay. In that expenditure, were any contractors engaged to provide that service that might be fly-in fly-out and work directly for your agency as opposed to coming through someone else?

**Ms MOSS:** We do not have fly-in fly-out consultants in our ICT expenditure. We have a team within the department which works quite heavily on web content and web creation. Obviously, from a tourism perspective in particular, that is important—website design, digital campaigns and all those sorts of things. They are based here.

**Mr HIGGINS:** Okay. When you say they are based here, is that the individuals or the company? If it is a company, does it bring anyone in from interstate as fly-in fly-out?

**Ms MOSS:** Many of those ICT-related jobs within the department—web creation and those sorts of things—are internal staff members of the department. They would be part of Andrew's team.

**Mr HIGGINS:** Are they permanent people? Do we have to pay them much? Are they good?

**Madam CHAIR:** That is a bit subjective.

**Mr HOPPER:** Very good, Opposition Leader.

**Madam CHAIR:** Good answer, Mr Hopper.

**Ms MOSS:** I understand ICT for the whole department sits within Susan's team.

**Ms KIRKMAN:** It is provided through DCIS.

**Ms MOSS:** Yes, primarily through Department of Corporate and Information Services. Obviously, there is a body of work happening at the moment. If you have a look at the Langoulant report on centralising some of those operations, the technical side going over to the Department of Corporate and Information Services.

**Mr HIGGINS:** Okay. How many FOIs were lodged up to the end of March, or until you have the figures for this financial year?

**Ms MOSS:** Five.

**Mr HIGGINS:** Were they all fully provided an answer? How many were partially provided and how many were rejected?

**Ms MOSS:** My understanding is four did, Opposition Leader and for one there was not enough information provided to proceed with that.

**Mr HIGGINS:** Okay. The four where we sent a response back—were they full documentation back or partially.

**Ms MOSS:** I will ask Simonne to respond to that.

**Ms SHEPHERD:** We might have to take that on notice. I have the total figures. What documentation was around we do not have on-hand. Do you want to take that on notice?

**Mr HIGGINS:** I just want to know how many. You accepted four of them; we have given the stuff. How do I accept the fifth one? I want to know, of the four that we gave the information back, did we give it all back or was it a partial response?

**Ms MOSS:** Or were there components that we could not?

**Mr HIGGINS:** Yes.

**Ms MOSS:** We would have to take that on notice, Opposition Leader.

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#### Question on Notice No 8.9

**Madam CHAIR:** Opposition Leader, could you please restate that question for the record.

**Mr HIGGINS:** Of the four FOIs that were responded to, how many were there where the full documentation was provided and how many were there where the information was partially exempted.

**Madam CHAIR:** Minister, do you accept that question?

**Ms MOSS:** Yes, I do.

**Madam CHAIR:** The question asked by the Opposition Leader of the minister and has been allocated the number 8.9.

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

**Mr HIGGINS:** How many fees were paid for those applications? Were they just small applications?

**Ms MOSS:** The fees paid were \$592.

**Mr HIGGINS:** Okay, just small ones.

**Madam CHAIR:** Are there any further questions on Output 2.1? I am conscious that the time is 11.55 am and it has come to a natural break. We would usually go to 12, but we may as well not start on the next one. We will break for 30 minutes.

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The committee suspended.

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**Madam CHAIR:** Were there any further questions on Output 2.1?

That concludes consideration of Output 2.1.

### **Output 2.2 – Shared Services Received**

**Madam CHAIR:** I will now call for questions on Output 2.2 Shared Services Received. Are there any questions?

That concludes consideration of Output 2.2 and Output Group 2.0.

Are there any non-output specific budget-related questions? There being no questions, that concludes consideration of outputs relating to the Department of Tourism, Sport and Culture. On behalf of the committee, I thank the officials who provided assistance to the minister today.

### **OUTPUT GROUP 3.0 – TERRITORY WILDLIFE PARKS**

**Madam CHAIR:** The committee will now move to consider the Territory Wildlife Parks business line. Do you wish to make an opening statement regarding Territory Wildlife Parks?

**Ms MOSS:** Madam Chair, I will not in this instance. I think we have probably covered broader agency outgoings and achievements in my previous opening statement.

**Madam CHAIR:** Are there any questions on the Territory Wildlife Parks?

**Mr HIGGINS:** Who is responsible for maintaining the infrastructure at the wildlife park at Berry Springs? The reason I ask is because over the years, a lot of that has aged and we do not seem to be spending too much money updating that. I am trying to find out who is responsible for it. What are our plans in the future with it in terms of upgrading it? I know that the people do a fantastic job, Mark. They are exceptional and very helpful if I ever have any questions about it. They are always very good.

**Ms MOSS:** You are right; they do an amazing job. If we talk about both—particularly Territory Wildlife Park has been around for quite some time now and some of that infrastructure is indeed ageing. In terms of who is responsible for the repairs and maintenance, it is the Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Logistics.

Our repairs and maintenance program for both parks in 2018–19 was a total of \$766 000, which included a one-off additional \$169 000 to complete some works from the previous year. I can break that down into the parks if you are interested in that.

**Mr HIGGINS:** No, that is all right.

**Ms MOSS:** That is how it is managed. It is managed through the broader department, but with DIPL.

**Mr HIGGINS:** My comment on it is that the wildlife park—and I presume it is the same in the Alice Springs Desert Park—attracts a lot of people as a tourism thing to do in Darwin and it is an add-on and people who work in Tourism know that you might have your product to offer but if you have add-ons it increases the visitor stay and their spend in the Territory.

Looking at the income of those parks and the expenditure to keep them, there is not a big difference between them. I do not see that as a big investment by government, so why can we not increase the expenditure? There have been problems with the aquarium at the wildlife park and some other facilities there have shut down. Why do we not have those? There is a strong connection that has been built between the wildlife park and the schools, especially Berry Springs school. When we talk about caring for the environment there is a massive potential in linking with further schools and that sort of education.

Does government agree with that? Will we put some funding in to it or are we just going to let it drag along the way it is? To me, it is actually deteriorating and we need to invest a hell of a lot more money into it.

**Ms MOSS:** You are quite right on a number of statements you made during that question. It is really important educationally, and a number of our schools attend the Territory Wildlife Park on a regular basis. It is an important tourism asset, but it is important regarding research and caring for animals, particularly the education and community aspect of that.

Funding has been put in to rectify the issue of the aquarium and that issue was well publicised. It was devastating for the team, as you can imagine. The amazing team there cares deeply about what it does and that issue has been rectified.

We have been undergoing a masterplanning process. Initially, that was about acknowledging exactly what you say, the importance of the Territory Wildlife Park, and a kind of where-to-from-here because it is an ageing attraction. We all agree on that. As you would be aware, even under the former government there were investigations into other models for running the Territory Wildlife Park and how that might become more sustainable over time.

That is still a question that we are working on and we have that masterplanning process under way whereby a number of different options are being looked at, particularly attention paid to the operating model around Territory Wildlife Park. Mark, do you want to add anything to that?

**Mr HOPPER:** Yes. Thank you, minister. The masterplanning process has been ongoing. It has been very thorough in its approach. There were a series of different options put to Cabinet to refine, and they came back with a series of three options going forward and they are now doing further work around those.

At this stage we will receive that report toward the end of this month with a view of having it finalised back to the minister and Cabinet consideration by July.

**Mr HIGGINS:** I hope the outcome of that is not that we just sell it off to someone private and let them run it. The wildlife park to me is the equivalent of a zoo that is in every capital city. When you have a look at them, if you go to Perth or Sydney you get the ferry across to them. In the past we have had the ferries go to the back of the wildlife park.

I note that we have a plan going forward in regard to eventual ferry infrastructure—and I know it is over a lot of years—around Darwin Harbour. It makes a lot of sense for that would be there and it would be a shame if we fob that off to some private enterprise.

You can come up with a model where it becomes some sort of government business centre or whatever, but I would hate to see it go out of government hands. This is why I ask that question. I would be very keen to see the outcome of that. I say this not on the basis that it is in my electorate, I treat it as something that is there for the Territory and everyone in Darwin. I think people would be very annoyed if that was fobbed off to private enterprise.

**Mr WOOD:** I would agree with you. That is exactly right.

**Madam CHAIR:** That sounds quite hypothetical to me, and we are not here to talk about hypotheticals.

**Ms MOSS:** I am happy to make a comment, Leader of the Opposition.

**Mr PAECH:** A bit like TIO, as well.

**Ms MOSS:** The previous government looked for a private partnership. That did not eventuate. We will undertake that work. I completely accept and agree with you about the value of the Territory Wildlife Park to the community. It is much-loved and for very good reason. The transport issue has been really important for the wildlife park for some time as well. We have put extra focus on trying to solve it.

One of the issues obviously is that unless a visitor has a car or is already on a tour that stops by the Territory Wildlife Park—that can be a distinct issue for visitors. We have been looking at that question through this process as well. It has just been time to have a proper in-depth look at how that is operating and one that the former government did as well.

**Mr HIGGINS:** I think transport is the reason. I raised the issue. We had a ferry or a hydrofoil, aquaplane thing, or something used to go out there. Then they used to bus them back. Transport is an issue that should be linked coming in from that Berry Springs town centre. It is not just getting transport out to the wildlife park; it is the connection of the people in rural area.

When we start to develop those areas, we have to remember what access people have into Darwin. How do they get here? You have a single bridge going across Elizabeth River at the back of Palmerston, otherwise you have to come right out and around. All of these things need to be taken into account when we look at the wildlife park.

**Ms MOSS:** One hundred per cent. The transport question regarding Berry Springs more broadly is obviously a question for the Transport minister, but we will all make sure we look at that in its entirety.

Access to our tourism attractions is really important in that transport planning and trying to make things accessible from a commercial point of view for people who may or may not have chosen to run that route as a commercial enterprise in the past. It is quite possible that no longer stacks up for those commercial entities. That leaves us obviously with a distinct issue with access to what is a really phenomenal asset.

**Mr WOOD:** Leader of the Opposition, can I ask one on transport?

**Mr HIGGINS:** That is all right.

**Mr WOOD:** I have probably asked about this for many years. Has there been an effort to try and look at allowing the public bus service to come down to the wildlife park? There is a bus that goes to Noonamah and even further, down to Redcliffe Road. There would be people who do not have a lot of money and cannot afford to get a taxi. There used to be backpackers; I am not sure how many we have these days. Has the government looked at the option of running a bus service to see the park, which could pick up local people for other reasons?

**Ms MOSS:** I can talk specifically about park transport. The broader question about local townships is a question for the next minister. I will ask Mark to talk a bit more about the investigation of transport options specifically for the Territory Wildlife Park.

**Mr ASHLEY:** Member for Nelson, we have had as part of the masterplan process we have had discussions with the Department of Transport looking at extensions of the public transport system. The challenge and those discussions are ongoing. It will be finalised as part of the masterplanning process. We have also had conversations with commercial providers, such as the ferry, as well.

Some of the challenges are to get people to the wildlife park, you are going against the flow of the bus service demand. I am not a transport engineer, clearly, but the way it was described to me is that it is quite a considerable effort because the buses need to come from the city in the morning and then obviously the reversed route, as opposed to getting rural residents primarily into Darwin during their work periods.

We also looked at having a smaller bus service as part of that link in from the Stuart Highway to do that extra few kilometres to the Berry Springs commercial area and the park and looked at options for providers of that. We also looked at some options and had some off-the-record conversations with some commercial providers for some sort of tour. There has been a whole host of different options in the transport space and that is fundamental to the ongoing viability of the park.

**Mr WOOD:** There is no park and ride in the Berry Springs area.

**Mr HIGGINS:** Some of the transport stuff, people in private vehicles that want to go to Litchfield do not actually go down Cox Peninsula Road because of the dirt road. There will be an impact once that loop road is fixed as well, so we will get a change there.

Have we ever looked at the contribution the wildlife park makes in a sense of tourism to the Territory economy?

**Ms MOSS:** I do not have an ROI figure in front of me but I know it is visited by approximately 65 000 people a year. Obviously there is ticket revenue and those sorts of things but there is a broader value to the Territory around some of those other aspects you mentioned previously. Again, that is something we would take into consideration through this process, the broader value to the Territory.

It is not just about people buying tickets and that sort of dollar-figure return. It is the education, the broader community involvement—you would know this very well. Members of your community, Opposition Leader, are there regularly for different—it might be a mums and bubs group or it could be volunteering. There are arts groups that do wildlife- and parks-related art. The value to the community is much bigger than just the ticket sales and how much we get back through that revenue stream.

**Mr HIGGINS:** When we do the Darwin Festival, has anyone ever considered—I remember a few years ago, or each year, we had a dinner associated with the Darwin Festival. There was one done out at Crazy Acres a few years ago. In coming up with the Darwin Festival, has anyone looked at doing a progressive dinner

around the wildlife park? That was done by bussing people out and you get so many to start. You go to the aquarium section and you get your fish, and then go to the wallaby section and then get your humanely killed wallabies et cetera—but I mean along those lines. Has anyone ever considered that? I have, I can tell you that much.

**Ms MOSS:** Clearly somebody has considered that—you. Over the years, I would dare say that lots of different events have been considered to be part of the Darwin Festival but I know that the Territory Wildlife Park and the Desert Park have been used for—I will not talk about a specific festival as such—business events for example.

Through tourism more broadly, we have a focus on business events. While Partjima was on recently there was a (inaudible) in Alice Springs and they had a dinner at the nocturnal house at the Desert Park during Partjima. Those sorts of things are possible and do happen. The Convention Bureau is very good at looking at what those different experiences might be, how they cater to different groups that come here and what they are looking for.

I am sure it could happen. You might want to talk to Ian Kew and Emily at Darwin Festival. They do the festival programming. It has been an important community asset for a long time. It is fair to say it is mostly locals who go through the park, so those opportunities to link it in with business events are always at the forefront of our mind.

**Mr HIGGINS:** The US Marines are actually a regular group that goes through there as well. They have a lot of flow-on effects with the local Berry Springs Tavern, a beautiful place.

**Mr WOOD:** The Territory Wildlife Park used to, some years ago, hold other species beside native species. I believe there was a change of policy and they were going to bring some of those species back. What has happened to the antilopine kangaroo, buffalos and bantengs? Will they not be exhibited in the park? They used to be, but they were taken out and I thought they would be exhibited.

**Ms MOSS:** They used to be. There has been a handover. Mark will have all the history on this, I have no doubt. There have been changes over recent times as well. There have been a couple of additional exhibitions that have been on. Buffalo and the telling of some pastoral history has been added as well. Mark, can you speak more about that?

**Mr WOOD:** I was using your website for the park for the information. I did not see buffaloes on that.

**Mr ASHLEY:** We have invested in the buffalo display. Animals are there. It talks about the interaction of buffalo with the environment and how they are unique to the Territory, but how they also have significant impacts on the flood plain environments. It tries to tell that story. It also talks about their interaction with the industry. There is a static helicopter and a bull catcher and other such things. In terms of the antilopine, I will have to take that on notice. I am not sure about that.

**Mr WOOD:** It is nearly a local, that kangaroo. I do not know why it is not ...

**Mr ASHLEY:** I would assume that it is because they are widespread in terms of the species. We are trying to exhibit species that people do not often get to see. The aquariums and nocturnal houses, some of the bird species—doing it in a way that people can actually see them

**Mr WOOD:** They are the third biggest kangaroo in Australia. Most people see them when they have hit them, unfortunately. The other one was the banteng. Do you keep any banteng in the park?

**Mr ASHLEY:** Not to my knowledge.

**Mr WOOD:** There used to be some, I think, some years ago.

**Mr ASHLEY:** It is an extensive collection. There are over 3900 animals.

**Mr WOOD:** I do not have enough time to go to the parks, but last time I was there you had the peregrine falcon, which was a mascot for the army. It was released back to the battalion. That was a fantastic day.

**Mr ASHLEY:** Yes, it really was.

**Mr WOOD:** One other question is related to—the Member for Araluen has sent this to me. She got this from

a constituent. It was related to a question regarding the canteens at the parks. There is a canteen at the wildlife park and one at the Desert Park. This was sent from someone in Alice Springs. The person said that, 'there have been many complaints over the past 12 months about the Alice Springs Desert Park kiosk, café and entry station. The company that won the contract does not appear to be fulfilling the terms or requirements. What is being done to address this? Why was the company chosen over local businesses? Why does Findus not opening the café or running the entry station?'

My question in relation to that for both parks is, are there a set of standards or conditions that the owners or the people operating those canteens must comply with? I must admit, I was down for the Masters Games and I had similar concerns about the canteen at Alice Springs Desert Park. I do not know whether—I might have just come when it was closing time. I had to be careful what I had to say.

**Ms MOSS:** Where I probably will start with is that my understanding is that it is a Territory business that is running the café at Desert Park as the concessionaire. That went through an open process. I am well aware of that. I am not aware of any complaints received. I will hand over to Mark to talk more broadly about that.

**Mr ASHLEY:** The company that—without breaking commercial-in-confidence. It was a competitive process. They were assessed. They are in the processes of establishing the business now. Part of that processes is initially manning a temporary arrangement in the visitor entry station and over the coming months transitioning to full operation in the cafeteria area to the right as you walk into the park.

Subsequent to that, reactivating what I think is one of the best commercial venues in the Northern Territory—the Madigan's Function Centre space, which overlooks the range. Madigan's has not been operating for many years and their commercial operators have a strong history in establishing high-quality commercial hospitality operations. It will be fantastic to see that go again. The short answer is they are transitioning to provide the full suite of services across the Desert Park and it is absolutely vital.

**Mr WOOD:** When they get the contract, someone keeps an eye to make sure what they said they would do is actually happening in those areas?

**Mr ASHLEY:** We have a full commercial team which specialises and manages all our commercial agreements across parks. It is headed up by a very talented commercial lawyer who sets up some tight agreements in terms of the process, and manages accountabilities to those agreements. We have agreements right down to how they operate, the quality, the service, the food, the types of functions and the times of functions. It is a strong process and it is a strong accountability framework.

**Mr WOOD:** Does the park have, pardon the pun, a feedback process either when people are still in the park, or when they go home they can put something online?

**Mr ASHLEY:** Yes. We have both; you can do that online or on-site in the park. We have also put some quite overt arrangements in place to explain to people that this is a temporary arrangement whilst other areas of the business are established.

The reality is that Madigan's needs some work. It is not a walk-in walk-out operation because it has been some time since it has operated. It needs to be painted. Similarly, there was a significant amount of work that needed to be done in the commercial kitchen in the café. Government committed some significant resources to do that so they can run an innovative operation, not just there but for things like functions for hundreds of people in the park. It is about setting it up for the future.

**Mr WOOD:** The Member for Araluen can send that back to the person who wrote that note. They may have misunderstood that things were happening; I do not know.

**Mr ASHLEY:** I am more than happy to meet with anyone.

**Mr WOOD:** I said I would raise it.

**Ms MOSS:** Member for Nelson, I appreciate that.

**Madam CHAIR:** Are there any further questions on output 3.0? That concludes consideration of the Territory Wildlife Parks business line. On behalf of the committee, I thank the officials who assisted the minister with this aspect of her work today.

## DEPARTMENT OF CORPORATE AND INFORMATION SERVICES

**Madam CHAIR:** The committee will now consider to output groups relating to the Department of corporate and Information Services.

Minister, can I ask you to introduce the officials accompanying you and to make any opening statement you would like to regarding the Department of Corporate and Information Services.

**Ms MOSS:** Madam Chair, with me at the table today is Kathleen Robinson, the Chief Executive for the Department of Corporate and Information Services and Chris Hosking, the Deputy Chief Executive for the Department of Corporate and Information Services.

Thank you for the opportunity to make an opening statement because over the past several years the department has undergone significant evolution from a central support agency to one that is driving a significant amount of economic and social reform agenda for the benefit of all Territorians.

The department is currently developing and delivering, in partnership with relevant agencies, a number of major transformation projects to support the delivery of more efficient and effective services to Territorians. There is \$259m on the core clinical systems renewal project which is about delivering a contemporary integrated clinical system for Health that will really transform our patient care across the Territory. There are about 400 NT Health clinicians actively participating in the development of a functional design for that. The project is on track for delivery within a five-year time frame and currently under budget.

The \$45m SerPro project replaces the ageing PROMIS system, with digitised police records available to frontline officers in real time. Again, the project is on time and on budget.

There is a \$64m client management system for Territory Families, which is about ensuring better information sharing, better protection of our most vulnerable children in the Northern Territory and better youth justice case management. That was a major element of the Northern Territory government's response into the Royal Commission into the Detention and Protection of Children in the Northern Territory.

The Office of Digital Government is now well-established. It is delivering on government's key ICT commitments, which include the delivery of the first Digital Territory Strategy, which is a major milestone that was achieved this financial year. The first strategy includes 60 actions across five digital directions, most of which are in progress and 11 of which are completed.

One completed action is the delivery of the first Inspiring Women into Technology Summit, which was a couple of weeks ago and was incredibly well-received. It is part of our broader efforts to encourage more women and girls to take up careers in the technology and digital workforce. I hope to see that event happen again.

Government is also working hard to grow cyber security knowledge across sectors through our Department of Corporate and Information Services active awareness programs. Cyber security is a critical area of focus for our department. The Office of Digital Government is also delivering on the open data portal, which we launched a few weeks ago, which gives business, industry and community better access to government data. That is live and there are just over 250 datasets published and more to come.

The data sharing and analytics framework is under development, taking into account a range of complexities and sensitivities, including legislative requirements, professional protocols, technical requirements and more. Digital transformation was also a key feature of the plan for budget repair, which is aimed at creating efficiencies and enabling the delivery of improved and cost-effective government services across the Territory. The report identified seven new digital initiatives and these will be rolled out alongside our digital strategy. The plan for budget repair will see corporate services further centralised within our agency. That planning work is already well under way, with implementation to start on 1 July.

The past year has also seen engagement with the local ICT industry ramped up. We are working hard to ensure we are maximising jobs and benefits to the local industry out of government IT work. Initiatives include over \$140 000 annually spent on ICT services and professionals—more than 90% locally, with hundreds of local jobs supported; a joint working group between the ICT Industry Association and the Northern Territory Government developing an industry engagement plan; and an independent industry liaison appointed, who has had over 120 meetings with industry and government representatives. We have also launched a \$1m digital partnership grant program with the first projects to roll out later this year. We have regular industry briefings, an ICT services panel contract being reviewed, which has had comprehensive industry input; and

a range of ICT packages rolling out. That means jobs and business for local industry as well as capability building.

Everybody deserves access to reliable communications, which is something we talk about a lot. We continue to invest through the \$28m co-investment program we have with Telstra. It has so far seen 15 communities receive mobile and broadband services with two currently in progress. The second tranche of the program announced in 2018–19 will roll out over four years, targeting remote communities, transport corridors and tourist hot spots.

We are investing \$8.5m into the under-sea fibre optic cable to the Tiwi Islands, which replaces unreliable radio links to the mainland, scheduled to be completed this year. Telstra are then required to undertake upgrades to their on-land telecommunications infrastructure, and planning for that is under way.

Given that telecommunications is a federal government responsibility, we continue to advocate strongly on behalf of Territorians for better and more cost-effective services, and because it is critical to daily life.

I thank the department, under the stewardship of CE Kathleen Robinson and Deputy CE Chris Hosking. They work incredibly hard and have a large remit. We look forward to your questions.

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

**Mr HIGGINS:** What is the amount of efficiency dividend that the agency has to give up in financial years 2019–20 and 2020–21?

**Ms MOSS:** The whole-of-government savings for this upcoming financial year is \$626 000. In the 2020–21 year it is just over \$1.7m.

**Mr HIGGINS:** How will we achieve that? Will it be gradually done or have we identified anything specific in that saving?

**Ms MOSS:** We went through a root-and-branch review like every other agency, and we identified some specific savings and efficiencies within the department. Some of our agency-specific savings include changing the arrangements regarding management services, and receiver of Territory monies services. There is some consolidation around agency support functions within our corporate and governance area and through asset accounting.

There are a range of agency-specific savings, but we also put out some information in April regarding retention periods for NT Fleet Services and those sorts of measures.

We have some specific measures which the department has been working hard on. Kathleen and Chris have been out with every other agency, talking to staff who might be impacted by the move to our agency, where services are being centralised.

**Mr HIGGINS:** From memory, you said 90% of the technical staff are local people employed locally, which would imply that that we bring 10% from interstate. When I came here in the mid-1980s I had started on computers in 1973, with punch cards, and now I carry my whole office around in my telephone. Things have changed.

One thing that struck me back when I arrived here was the skills of the people here. One thing that annoyed me at the time was the fact we went interstate quite often to become skilled. I was one of them. There were about 20 or 30 who started with me, and I was the only one left after about three years. The issue I raise is training. At that time I wondered, rather than bringing these people from interstate, do we spend enough on training the people we have? They were very good. You get a new lot of software that runs and sure, we may not know it here, you have to be trained in it.

How much do we invest in that training of our technical people? Have we got a figure on how much we spend each year? Do we have a plan for it? What do we do with that?

**Ms MOSS:** Leader of the Opposition, I might just provide some answer but in terms of the actual dollar figure, if we could take that on notice that would be good.

**Mr HIGGINS:** Yes.

**Ms MOSS:** I just wanted to talk more broadly about the issue that you are talking to, because it is really prevalent for us. To be honest, every jurisdiction struggles with some of the workforce skills required across ICT. There are new challenges and specific skills sets that can be required for some of the more complex projects that the department undertakes and that occur across the Northern Territory.

We have worked with Charles Darwin University on a specific education qualification on cyber security. That is relatively new—about 18 months or one year old. That has been a really good development where we can start to grow our own cyber security specialists in the Territory. More generally as well, the department has been doing a lot of work across other government agencies, with Defence and others on how we upskill existing local businesses in understanding the requirements to be able to undertake Defence work.

For example, there are very specific security measures and things that you need to be able to commit to if you are going to undertake some of that more sensitive work. They do cyber security awareness for the local business community more broadly, because unfortunately we do see a lot of cybercrime impacting local business, and the loss of businesses as a result of that. I guess it is a broader question on training, but I understand that you are asking specifically about specialist ICT skills.

**Mr HIGGINS:** I am not saying that we change that percentage—the 90% and 10%. It is not aiming to reduce that 10%. We will always probably have that 10%, but I am looking more to how we are keeping our 90% at a level where they have the skills they need and are not attracted down south where they will want to get experience. They are all keen these young fellas. As you get older you get more relaxed about it. It is more how much are we spending or what amount of time are we investing in those 90% of the staff we have here.

**Ms MOSS:** We can take that question on notice about the specifics. You take some of the larger digital transformation projects where you have local businesses partnering with some very large, sometimes multinational, companies which are very experienced at these things—that is also really good for building our local capability to be able to take on more of that work as it becomes available.

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#### Question on Notice No 8.10

**Madam CHAIR:** Leader of the Opposition, can I get you to restate the question for the record please.

**Mr HIGGINS:** How much are we investing in upskilling the current permanent IT professionals that we have employed in government?

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

**Ms MOSS:** I do, yes.

**Madam CHAIR:** The question asked by the Leader of the Opposition of the Minister has been allocated the number 8.10.

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**Madam CHAIR:** Are there any further questions related to the statement?

**Mr HIGGINS:** You made the comment about women in IT and stuff. From memory, when I started here, there was close on a 50:50 ratio. I am not saying it was 50:50. What is the current ratio today of permanent people in IT?

**Ms MOSS:** In the Territory?

**Mr HIGGINS:** Just within this department as opposed to some that might be out ...

**Ms MOSS:** We might just take the gender breakdown of the department on notice, but we should be able to provide it to you relatively quickly. In terms of the ICT industry more broadly across Australia, about 28% of the entire ICT workforce is women. Most of them would be in the leadership positions. We would like to see more women in ...

**Mr HIGGINS:** Do you think we are above that 28%? I would have thought we were previously.

**Ms MOSS:** We would have thought that yes we probably are above that in the Territory. It is something we



can definitely confirm for you. There is quite a bit of data through both the Digital Pulse report that Australian Computer Society puts out, but also our government agency data as well regarding our own employees.

We would think it would be somewhere between that. It is probably higher than the national 28% in ICT, but I do not think we would find it was anywhere near the 50:50 proportion, which would be great to see. That is why events like Inspiring Women into Technology is so important. A lot of women in tech here have raised the point that women might have left the workforce due to, say, the birth of a child, and are looking to re-enter the workforce. Retraining in something like IT might create a great opportunity for them. There are lots of opportunities to link women more strongly into our ICT workforce.

**Madam CHAIR:** Sorry, do you want to put that on notice?

**Mr HIGGINS:** No. I will ask the minister separately later on if she can come up with some rough figures.

regarding the training, do we exchange any people? When we need to bring skills up, do we make any exchanges with other IT-type providers, either government or otherwise, and do a swap?

**Ms MOSS:** I will ask Kathleen to talk about that.

**Ms ROBINSON:** We do not have anything formal in that regard. We would be more than open to those types of suggestions. We have a lot of interactions with people from other jurisdictions and whether they are private sector.

One of the tasks in the Digital Territory Strategy is to do a job pathways program and have an arrangement where we have a traineeship that would see people spending part of their time in the private sector locally and in government. You end up with people who have exposure across both sectors in the IT area. That is something that a fair bit of work has been put into creating and hopefully in the next 12 months or so we will have to be able to talk more positively about.

**Madam CHAIR:** Are there any further questions on the opening statement?

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

**Madam CHAIR:** The committee will now proceed to consider the estimates and proposed expenditure contained in the Appropriation Bill 2019–20 that relates to the Department of Corporate and Information Services. Are there any agency-related whole-of-government questions on budget and fiscal strategy?

**Mr HIGGINS:** Yes. Rather than asking this of each one, there is an overall variation of the budget of an additional \$15.8m. Can you explain how we came up with that or what that is made up of? We have mentioned some stuff with IT projects et cetera. I do not know whether they are actually given to the department or who was contracted to do it?

**Ms MOSS:** It is quite a number of different elements. There is not one specific answer to that.

Just to give some examples, there is a variation of a one-off funding for GrantsNT, some carry-over of things like the Tiwi Islands optic fibre connection project, some changes relating to project timings and requirements where there might be some carry-over on some of those major digital transformation projects. I am happy to give some more examples, otherwise we can provide more detail.

**Mr HIGGINS:** There is really no new project or initiative included in that? Most of that would be carry-overs. I notice property leasing; I think that would be the accounting process around it all. I am getting nods, so I have that one right. That is half of it gone. That was the reason for the question.

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

#### **OUTPUT GROUP 4.0 – SHARED SERVICES** **Output 4.1 Finance Services**

**Madam CHAIR:** The committee will now proceed to Output Group 4, Shared Services, Output 4.1, Finance Services. Are there any questions?

There being no questions that concludes consideration of Output 4.1.

#### **Output 4.2 Human Resource Services**

**Madam CHAIR:** The committee will now proceed to Output 4.2, Human Resource Services. Are there any questions?

That concludes consideration of Output 4.2.

#### **Output 4.3 Contract Services**

**Madam CHAIR:** The committee will now proceed to Output 4.3, Contract Services. Are there any questions?

That concludes consideration of Output 4.3.

#### **Output 4.4 Information and Communications Technology Services**

**Madam CHAIR:** The committee will now proceed to Output 4.4, Information and Communications Technology Services. Are there any questions?

That concludes consideration of Output 4.4.

#### **Output 4.5 Property Leasing Services**

**Madam CHAIR:** The committee will now proceed to Output 4.5, Property Leasing Services. Are there any questions?

**Mr WOOD:** Minister, I am not sure if I am in the right area, but I will ask anyway. Is your department responsible for land leases on Aboriginal land? This is the section under property leasing services. Do you deal with that or do you only deal with buildings?

**Ms MOSS:** We only deal with the buildings on property leases.

**Mr WOOD:** So you do deal with government property on Aboriginal leases, for instance?

**Ms MOSS:** We are just seeking some clarification on that. Are you talking specifically to where there is a government-owned asset on leased land?

**Mr WOOD:** I do not know who has the overarching responsibility for that.

**Ms MOSS:** I understand the answer is yes, except for Housing and Education.

**Mr WOOD:** So police stations and Health?

**Ms ROBINSON:** Yes.

**Mr WOOD:** Are you able to give us the total cost of leasing for those areas that you cover on Aboriginal land?

**Ms MOSS:** I do not have that in front of me, but if we can take that on notice we would be happy to get that to you?

**Mr WOOD:** Would you be able to get some idea of where those leases are held?

**Madam CHAIR:** Could you just add that into your question?

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#### **Question on Notice No 8.11**

**Madam CHAIR:** Member for Nelson, can I please get you to restate the question for the record.

**Mr WOOD:** Minister, could you supply the information in relation to properties under your responsibility that are leased on Aboriginal land and where those leases occur?

**Madam CHAIR:** Minister, are you happy to take that question.

**Ms MOSS:** I am happy to take that question.

**Madam CHAIR:** The question asked by the Member for Nelson of the minister has been allocated the number 8.11.

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**Madam CHAIR:** We are still on Output 4.5. Are there any further questions?

There being no further question that concludes consideration of Output 4.5 and Output Group 4.

### **OUTPUT GROUP 5.0 – DIGITAL GOVERNMENT** **Output 5.1 Digital Government**

**Madam CHAIR:** The committee will now proceed to Output Group 5, Digital Government and Output 5.1 of the same name. Are there any questions?

That concludes consideration of Output 5.1.

### **Output 5.2 Enterprise Projects**

**Madam CHAIR:** The committee will now proceed to Output 5.2, Enterprise Projects. Are there any questions?

That concludes consideration of Output 5.2 and Output Group 5.

### **OUTPUT GROUP 6.0 – CORPORATE AND GOVERNANCE** **Output 6.1 – Corporate and Governance**

**Madam CHAIR:** The committee will now proceed to Output Group 6, Corporate and Governance, Output 6.1, Corporate and Governance. Are there any questions?

**Mr HIGGINS:** I only have one question. How are we going with the Chan data centre relocation? Just an update on that one.

**Ms MOSS:** Thank you Leader of the Opposition. I will ask Chris to talk about that project in more detail. It is on track. It has been a complex project, as I am sure you can appreciate. It has been going well with very careful and consideration and management from the Department of Corporate and Information Services.

**Mr HOSKING:** The transition of the government's computing out of the Chan is progressing to schedule, as the minister said. The majority of our computing workloads have transitioned across to our new government data centre in a leased facility in Millner—the old archives building. That transition will be complete around November this year. The transition of our residual or backup computing footprint to provide a level of resilience and disaster recovery capability will transition to an alternate private sector data centre by about April next year. By April 2020 we aim to have completely vacated the Chan premises.

**Mr HIGGINS:** Okay. That is all I have in that area.

**Madam CHAIR:** Any other questions on Output 6.1? That concludes consideration of that output.

### **Output 6.2 – Shared Services Provided**

**Madam CHAIR:** The committee will now move to Output 6.2, Shared Services Provided. Are there any questions?

There being no questions, that concludes consideration of Output 6.2 and Output Group 6.0.

Are there any non-output specific budget-related questions?

There being none, this concludes consideration of outputs relating to the Department of Corporate and Information Services. On behalf of the committee, I thank the officers who have assisted the ministers today.

## NT FLEET

**Madam CHAIR:** The committee will now move on to consider NT Fleet business line. Minister, do you need to change any staff over? No, that is great. Do you have any opening statement for NT Fleet?

**Ms MOSS:** I do not, no. My opening statement for my agency still stands.

**Madam CHAIR:** Are there any questions to the minister on NT Fleet. It is very broad.

**Mr HIGGINS:** In reference to page 188 of Budget Paper No 3, how will the vehicle policy framework be changing this year, 2019–20?

**Ms MOSS:** The note referred to is about the extension of the retention period for vehicles, Opposition Leader. That is a 12-month extension on the retention of vehicles.

**Mr HIGGINS:** So, all vehicles will be held for a further 12 months?

**Ms MOSS:** For an additional 12 months, yes.

**Mr HIGGINS:** Is there a kilometres issues on those as well? Is it 12 months or so many kilometres or ...

**Ms MOSS:** It is, yes. I will ask Chris to talk a bit more about that. Obviously, this was one of the measures through our Root and Branch review we found was a very reasonable one that would create some savings across government, and we could do so safely. I will ask Chris to add some more detail.

**Mr HOSKING:** The policy changes that will take effect on 1 July will change the retention period for passenger vehicles from three years to four years and from 60 000 kilometres to 80 000 kilometres before they are disposed of. For light commercial vehicles such as four-wheel drives or utilities, it will go from four years to five and an extension from 100 000 kilometres to 125 000, which brings the Northern Territory into line with other states and territories.

**Mr WOOD:** Can I ask a follow-up question? If you increase the age or the number of kilometres a vehicle has done, does that mean your resale price goes down? If it does, is it a win-loss situation? If you had stayed the same would it not have made any difference?

**Ms MOSS:** It does, Member for Nelson, but the department has factored that into its modelling on this measure through the root-and-branch review.

**Mr HIGGINS:** When 'exploring ecofriendly fleet opportunities for electric vehicles' does NT Fleet take into account the carbon emitted during the production of the electric vehicle as well as during its use?

I say that because it would seem true that certain electric vehicles have a higher carbon emission intensity in production than many fossil fuel-powered vehicles. Is that taken into account? It is a pretty easy 'yes' or 'no'.

**Ms MOSS:** I think that is a no, Opposition Leader. I take your point, but it is a no.

**Mr WOOD:** How many hybrid vehicles have you in the fleet presently?

**Ms MOSS:** NT Fleet has four hybrid electric vehicles, but more broadly we are seeking the number.

**Mr WOOD:** I am not talking about straight electric vehicles; I am talking about hybrid electric. Do you have straight electric vehicles that can fill up at CDU?

**Ms MOSS:** We have 40 within the fleet.

**Mr WOOD:** 40 hybrids?

**Ms MOSS:** Yes

**Mr WOOD:** Any pure electric vehicles?

**Ms MOSS:** No.

**Mr WOOD:** Thank you.

**Madam CHAIR:** Are there any further questions on NT Fleet? That concludes consideration of the NT Fleet business line. Thank you to those who have helped out today, and those behind the scenes preparing information.

### DATA CENTRE SERVICES

**Madam CHAIR:** The committee will now consider the Data Centre Services business line. Minister, do you wish to make an opening statement?

**Ms MOSS:** No.

**Madam CHAIR:** That being the case, we might have general questions regarding Data Centre Services. Are there any questions?

**Mr HIGGINS:** When we talk about the income—there is \$24.5m. Is that just money recouped from the departments for the provision of services?

**Ms MOSS:** Yes, it is.

**Mr HIGGINS:** When we have our outputs at 22 we actually make a profit, do we? Big smiles—that is a yes. Hansard, that was a smile!

**Madam CHAIR:** Are there any further questions on Data Centre Services?

That concludes consideration of the Data Centre Services business line. On behalf of the committee, I thank the minister for attending today and all the officials who provided you advice. The committee will take a short recess and come back to outputs relating to the Department of Environment and Natural Resources.

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The committee suspended

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### MINISTER LAWLER'S PORTFOLIOS

#### DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCES

**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 Environment and Natural Resources.

**Ms LAWLER:** Thank you, Madam Chair. It is an absolute pleasure to be here. I introduce the officials from the Department of Environment and Natural Resources who are here today: Joanne Townsend, Chief Executive Officer; Cynthia Loganathan, Chief Financial Officer; Dr Alaric Fisher, Executive Director Flora and Fauna; Luis Da Rocha, Executive Director Rangelands; Christine Long, Executive Director Water Resources; Collene Bremner, Executive Director Bushfires NT; Paul Purdon, Executive Director Environment Protection; Karen Avery, Executive Director Environment Policy and Support; Chris Shaw, Executive Director Onshore Gas Reform; Vicki Highland, Executive Director Corporate Services; and Janet Hanigan, Executive Director Social, Economic and Environment Policy.

I would like to make an opening statement about my portfolio responsibilities for the Environment and Natural Resources, and Climate Change.

This government has consistently taken the view that a healthy, natural environment is the foundation for a strong economy, and that these are complementary objectives, not competing ones. Our focus on job creation must not be at the expense of our environment or to the detriment of the wider social, cultural or economic values our environment and natural resources provide.

I have held this portfolio for the past 12 months, balancing its responsibilities of environment protection and the management and regulation of the Northern Territory's natural resources, alongside my other portfolio

responsibilities of Infrastructure, Planning and Logistics.

Over the relatively short period I have supported change in responsibilities and accountability of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources to meet critical goals for the government. From February this year the responsibility for regulating the environmental impacts of onshore petroleum exploration and development transferred to this agency, and to me as the accountable minister. This change was a direct result of the government's decision to lift the moratorium on hydraulic fracturing and its acceptance of the recommendations of the independent Scientific Inquiry into Hydraulic Fracturing in the Northern Territory.

It is also founded on a very reasonable view that the agency regulating an industry such as petroleum should not also be responsible for its promotion and development. To meet this new responsibility, changes were made to the *Northern Territory Environment Protection Authority Act* to appoint two new additional members with expertise in petroleum regulation, and to authorise the NT EPA to advise me on petroleum matters.

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources has a key obligation to administer natural resources and environmental legislation on behalf of Territorians and is responsible for the administration of 17 acts and 11 subordinate pieces of legislation.

A key focus area of the department over the last two years has been contemporising some of the legislation it administers to ensure it is fit for purpose and meets community expectations.

Over the last eight months, amendments to the *Water Act*, the *Nuclear Waste Transport, Storage and Disposal (Prohibition) Act*, the *Northern Territory Environment Protection Authority Act*, and the *Pastoral Land Act* have been introduced, examined in detail through the parliamentary scrutiny committee process and debated and passed by the Northern Territory parliament.

Of note, is the recent introduction of the Environment Protection Bill which will transform the environmental impact assessment process for projects with potentially significant environmental risks and introduce a new environmental approval by the Minister for the Environment and Natural Resources.

These changes and reforms are significant activities of the department that will ensure effective environmental and natural resource legislation and management is in step with the priorities of government and the expectations of Territorians.

The department also delivers critical natural resource assessment and monitoring services to ensure the conservation and sustainable use of those resources across the Northern Territory. The department provides services and programs to mitigate threats posed by wildfire, pests and weeds and it advises on environmental policy as well as environmental impact assessment, approvals and compliance activities under the direction of the NT EPA.

This work includes delivering an important assessment role for proposed developments and advising of risk mitigation actions where appropriate, that support a healthy and sustainable environment, while enabling economic growth.

A comprehensive environmental regulatory reform program which has included the development of a robust, clear and transparent set of rules and guidelines for how the environment must be protected has been developed, which led to the introduction of the Environment Protection Bill in the May sittings.

There has been significant activity in the management of weeds throughout the year. While the impacts of gamba are well known and being addressed through the amended weed management plan for gamba and the seasonal Gamba Action Program (GAP), the department has been active across a range of other weeds. This has resulted in management plans for mimosa and bellyache bush also being amended and consultation on the review of plans for chinese apple, mesquite, prickly acacia and neem. In addition, the Weed Management Branch responded to two weed incursions in the past year for parthenium and rubber vine, requiring the assembly of incident management teams.

Both of these weeds are Weeds of National Significance and declared for eradication. Given the rapid response by the department, eradication of both weeds is considered highly feasible. It is also worth noting that the department was able to report cabomba had been successfully eradicated in the upstream section of the Darwin River and the lifting of the quarantine area in that section of the river.

Water resource management is always topical and during the year significant progress was made in a number of areas. This included increased water allocation planning activity, which saw the declaration of the

Western Davenport Water Allocation Plan 2018–21 and the release of the draft plans for Ti Tree; Ooloo and Katherine for consultation.

Increased processing of licence applications also occurred with 268 new, renewed or revised water extraction licences issued for the year-to-date, 383% on the previous year. This reflects both increased resourcing and improved processing procedures and policies, many identified through the water licence review. These processing improvements have enabled the department to finalise almost 95% of the 295 Darwin rural area licensing applications received as a result of lifting the 15-litre-per-second exemption in 2016, which is a significant achievement.

The release of the Bushfire Emergency Management System (BEMS) launched in March this year is also a notable achievement by the department. The system provides the community with real-time information, complements the other improvements made in public information and emergency warning systems and procedures implemented throughout the year.

I am pleased to highlight that \$6.8m was allocated for the new Bushfires NT headquarters. The first stage of construction is expected to commence within the month and be completed by mid-2020. The construction of a new purpose-built facility in the Darwin rural area will allow for the amalgamation of the administrative volunteer support and Top End Bushfires operational resources that are currently split between Winnellie and Batchelor to a new regional Bushfires NT headquarters in Livingstone.

Our Aboriginal ranger groups are a crucial frontline service in conservation and land management across the Territory. Government has awarded \$4.1m for one-off capital grants over two years and \$8m over four years for land management and conservation to better support the work of Aboriginal ranger groups. Both commitments are being delivered through a grants program developed in consultation with key stakeholders.

The first round in 2017–18 of the grants program delivered \$1.9m for capital grants to 27 ranger groups and \$1.9m of land management grants to 17 ranger groups. The second round of grants for 2018–19 have been assessed and reviewed by the Aboriginal Land Management Advisory Group, with capital grants worth \$1.9m allocated to 19 ranger groups, and a further \$510 000 awarded to eight land management projects in their first year approved for funding.

Delivering on government's goals would not be possible without the hard-working and dedicated staff of the department. This is an agency that is delivering significant reforms with staff located in Darwin, Batchelor, Katherine, Tennant Creek and Alice Springs. I thank them immensely for the work they do on behalf of Territorians.

In addition, I became responsible for delivering government's climate response strategy earlier this year. I thank staff within the Department of the Chief Minister for the significant work done to date in consultation with the community. I look forward to releasing that draft strategy soon.

I welcome the opportunity now for questions from the committee. Thank you.

**Madam CHAIR:** Thank you, minister. Are there any questions relating to the opening statement from the minister?

**Mr HIGGINS:** All of the portfolios answered a similar question to this. What is the specific amount of the efficiency dividend for this agency in 2019–20 and 2020–21? Is it actually the amount and how we plan on addressing that?

**Ms LAWLER:** The root-and-branch review—the information is available on the treasury.nt.gov.au website. The efficiency dividend for the Department of Environment and Natural Resources—the whole-of-government savings for the 2019–20 year is \$654 000. The agency-specific savings are \$1.380m, and the agency efficiencies are \$544 000.

**Mr HIGGINS:** How does the Environment department plan on finding its savings? Has it identified any specific programs or cuts, or will just do it as someone leaves? Will we save that position or reshuffle people around? How will we achieve it?

**Ms LAWLER:** There is that efficiency dividend that all departments have been allocated—3% in 2019–20 and 2020–21. I will pass to the Chief Executive Officer of the department who can then go through specific programs that the department has identified in these savings measures.

**Ms TOWNSEND:** As stated by the minister, the root-and-branch efficiencies for our agency are \$1.38m. Of that, \$300 000 is ceasing the Aboriginal carbon unit, \$533 000 is ceasing the Mary River Barrage maintenance program which addresses salt water intrusion. There is also \$3000 cut for the Weeds Advisory Committee.

Internally, we also have an efficiency of \$544 000, as the minister mentioned. The sorts of approaches we will take are to look at amalgamating some functions within the department. We have a couple of work units which are very small and we can amalgamate them. We can obviously look at attrition and having to make difficult decisions about replacing staff. We will also be looking at programmed outputs. Where we might have a four-year program, it may be that it is feasible to do that over a five-year program or a six-year program—a six-year schedule, so to speak.

We have also implemented a number of redundancies this year. We have actually had six redundancies this year, and that will help us make some of those structural changes that we need to meet these efficiencies as well into the coming year.

**Mr WOOD:** The three sections you said you were scrapping, the Aboriginal carbon unit, the NT Weeds Advisory Committee and the Mary River Saltwater Intrusion program, is there anything that is going to replace those? What effect will that have on the environment, especially the Mary River Saltwater Intrusion program? Is it simply just a cut, because you have to find some efficiencies? What will be the effect of scrapping those three programs?

**Ms TOWNSEND:** I will start with the easy one. The NT Weeds Advisory Committee has not met for over 12 months. We think that would be an efficiency we can make ...

**Mr WOOD:** I would have told them to get their act together, but anyway ...

**Ms TOWNSEND:** We have plenty of other committees we can talk to about weeds. The Aboriginal carbon unit within BushfiresNT has developed the Aboriginal Industry Carbon Strategy, which has been published. BushfiresNT will continue to have its operational role to support landowners and those projects with fire planning, but it is anticipated that some of the industry development functions will move to the department of Business and its new office of investment attraction, which is probably a more appropriate place for that function.

The Mary River Saltwater Intrusion program—there was a study done in 2011 and subsequent to that it found that that project was ineffective in—it was slowing the rate of saltwater intrusion, but it was not going to prevent saltwater intrusion. It was actually having some other environmental impacts. We will continue to monitor intrusion into that system, but we are no longer going to spend \$533 000 on a maintenance program that is not going to be effective in the long term.

**Mr WOOD:** Subject to what happens in oncoming years, will that be monitored?

**Ms TOWNSEND:** Yes, we have continued with our monitoring program. If the technology improves or changes, we will be in a position to make a better case to government about what they might do there.

**Mr WOOD:** There is a sign on the Arnhem Highway that tells you that the water levels are slowly rising.

**Mr HIGGINS:** The money in that cut is more or less the work that they were doing, as opposed to the monitoring?

**Ms TOWNSEND:** Yes.

**Mr HIGGINS:** You mentioned weeds and we spoke of gamba. I know we have a program to give out free chemicals to landowners to get rid of gamba, et cetera. I asked the Parks people whether, when they actually do any of this spraying, whether they all have to have chemical certificates or that sort of qualification. The answer was yes—even their contractors.

There has been some criticism come back in regard to the way in which some people use glyphosate and that they do not have that training and that could be causing us some problems. My question is, do we see any evidence of that? Do we think we should have some sort of training for these people? When they give you the chemical there are all the instructions on the container, and I think they actually give you some sheets as well. It is more an opportunity I suppose to defend that, or a question as to whether you are doing something right or wrong.



**Ms LAWLER:** When a rural person, generally, goes to get their glyphosate there is a herbicide usage agreement. It spells out very carefully that the pesticide is labelled and there something on treating weeds—all the conditions on the use. That herbicide usage agreement is given out to people in the rural area. There could be examples of people who are not necessarily using that herbicide in the correct way, but we hope they make sure they have protective clothing, a mask, and do all the right things. There has been enough publicity about the use lately, particularly the use of glyphosate that we would hope people are sensible in using it.

**Mr HIGGINS:** One of the concerns that gets raised—and it does not come out on any of the labels or in the information—is about the pH of the water. If the pH of the water is wrong, the issues is that it does not work properly, so people tend to double the quantity. They think, 'I'll fix it, hey!'—which is worse. It means we are spraying twice as much as we should. Is there any way we can improve that and give more information to people.

I know there are the agreement, labels and chemical certificate course. One of the classic faults is that people increase the volume thinking it will work more quickly—the pH around the water. The pH of most of the bores in the rural areas is actually quite high. It is a simple thing to fix.

**Ms LAWLER:** It might be useful to call up Luis, the weed expert. I have said many times that gamba is everybody's business. The amount of information and the knowledge of gamba has increased in the last few years. The department, through Facebook, is doing a great job putting information out and educating people on pH levels and bore water. I will pass to Luis to provide some more information.

**Mr Da ROCHA:** You have raised the issue of pH with me before, Opposition Leader. I have asked our staff to look into that. There are procedures in place that we are reviewing. I do not know where we are up to with that, but I can provide you with a briefing on where we are up to before the next season commences.

**Mr HIGGINS:** I want to see something released that is specific to that. It is a specific issue that has been raised with me by a number of people, even people who do not have an understanding. They say you can increase the efficiency of glyphosate by throwing citric acid into the water. Of course that will lower the pH; it is an acid. It has nothing to do with the fact it is citric acid.

There is a lack of understanding that needs to be addressed by the department. I do not say that with criticism. There has been a lot of publicity around glyphosate in recent months.

**Mr WOOD:** Has it been raised with the company, Monsanto?

**Mr HIGGINS:** I have not.

**Mr WOOD:** The department could ask that the label eventually be changed to include that information.

**Mr HIGGINS:** It applies to all weeds, not just gamba—any weed we use that chemical on.

**Ms LAWLER:** You have probably been to bushfire events more than I have at different times. I have heard people who are experts on weeds—as in, rural landowners who have been in the rural area for a long time—talk about putting dishwashing detergent into the mix as well so that it sticks to the blades of gamba grass.

As a department we have had conversations about new landowners. There is an information package available for people who buy rural. It goes to real estate agents and rural landowners and is about what is required with fire breaks and weed management. They get a heap of information when they buy a rural block. If you are new to the Territory or a young person buying in the rural—it is a way to give them a heap of information that they may not have or understand on maintaining a rural block.

**Mr HIGGINS:** The use of detergent, as you say, it is actually sticking and it gets the stuff to go on. It is used commonly with a lot of the sprays. Weeds branch does a terrific job in promoting the issues around gamba, so do not take any of that as a criticism.

**Mr WOOD:** The government has a gamba action program in place to assist landowners to get on top of gamba on their block. How much money is available for this program, how many staff have been allocated to deliver this program and have you the number of enforcement and compliance works done this calendar year?

**Ms LAWLER:** I will start and then we can work backwards on some of the questions. As you said, gamba is of great concern to us, I keep saying that. It is truly everyone's business. You had the minister responsible for Parks and Wildlife. I am also talking to DIPL. It is everyone's business.

As at 31 March over 1000 compliance inspections had been undertaken in areas of high bushfire risk leading to more than 200 landholders being issued with compliance orders to take action. Two penalty infringement notices for non-compliance had been issued as at 31 March 2019. The 2019–20 budget is \$300 000. What was the other question?

**Mr WOOD:** How many staff have been allocated to deliver this program and how much money is available for the program this year?

**Ms LAWLER:** I said \$300 000. I will pass to the Executive Director Rangelands to talk about the staffing numbers.

**Mr Da ROCHA:** I think I might have spoken to this last year. Within the weeds branch all weeds officers have a Certificate IV in Government (Investigation), they are all trained to do compliance. This year, we went as far as bringing our staff up from Alice Springs to assist in our compliance work in Katherine, because we have the 'start of the GAP' program in Katherine as well, to give them exposure. That is all staff within the weeds branch. We have two dedicated compliance areas and there are two dedicated officers; the manager and compliance officer.

**Mr WOOD:** I know they have a big job, but I live opposite three blocks of land. One has no gamba because they have three cows to eat it down to the ground. Next door has dry gamba, and the other side has gamba—not too much, but it is there. I do not know whether anyone has stuck a note on the front gate that said, 'excuse me, you need to get rid of gamba'.

They have a big job. You go through Herbert—that is where I deliver my newsletter—there is an enormous amount of gamba on those five-acre blocks.

**Ms LAWLER:** As I said, as at 31 March there have been over 1000 compliance inspections. The rural area probably has ten times that number of rural blocks but, as I said earlier, I think people are getting better about it. It is everyone's business.

It is DENR's job to inspect and follow-up, but it is also the individual's responsibility. Once they have information, if you are a new landowner, recognising that you have gamba on your property and then having a plan to address that gamba—whether you are going to use a herbicide or whether you are going to pull it out yourself, slash, whatever you are going to do—you have a plan.

DENR is continuing to use Facebook. I know you are not on Facebook, Member for Nelson, but they are using mechanisms like that to get out information as far as they can. Bushfires NT, as well, has been delegated to do that work. Government has a responsibility for road verges, Parks and Wildlife has a responsibility for Litchfield, the federal government has a responsibility for Kakadu.

To me, we all need to do our bit. You can, I guess, dob in your neighbours if you want to. These guys will knock on their door. It truly is a big job and one where we will continue to work hard. In the last few years, there is so much more awareness of gamba and people are starting to address that issue.

**Mr WOOD:** Thank you, minister. I use a tricky way of using Facebook. I just Google it and that tells me what people are doing. I then switch off again.

**Ms LAWLER:** All right.

**Mr WOOD:** Gamba on Crown land is the complaint I get from people who back onto Crown land. They say, 'You want me to clean up my gamba. My next door neighbour is the Crown.' What is the policy for Crown land control of gamba?

**Ms LAWLER:** We could probably talk more about that in my next session when I am representing DIPL. They have contractors whose responsibility it is. There are tenders that go out about spraying, maintaining and clearing gamba on Crown land as well. Whether it is the Land Development Corporation, Land Corporation or DIPL about Crown land, they need to ensure that they are cleaning up their act as well.

**Mr WOOD:** Is there any inspection of pastoral properties? My understanding is you are allowed to grow

gamba—well, if you have it you can keep it, but it is not allowed to spread. Is that correct?

**Ms LAWLER:** Yes. I can start on this and Luis can answer. There are three pastoral properties in the Northern Territory that have a permit to grow gamba.

**Mr WOOD:** Three?

**Ms LAWLER:** Yes, three. That was one of our revenue measures. If we talk about revenue, I think it is \$33 000 that we will be charging for permits to have gamba. There is \$33 000 in revenue in the department—a new revenue stream for those permits. Three properties have a licence to grow gamba.

**Mr WOOD:** Does that include the Douglas-Daly research station, because that is where I was recently, and they grow gamba.

**Ms LAWLER:** I will pass to the Executive Director.

**Mr Da ROCHA:** Member for Nelson, there are certain permit holders where we issue permits for, but they are for research purposes. I cannot guarantee that is one of those, but I suspect it is. I am happy to report back at a later stage to you. Those trials are to ensure that the herbicide or the way we try to eradicate gamba is the best way. We need those research-type ...

**Mr WOOD:** They were working out how better to use it for getting fat cattle.

**Ms LAWLER:** Luis could probably also talk about the firebreaks and the distances.

**Mr Da ROCHA:** I can. Collene is better placed in Bushfires. However, in those areas such as the Coomalie Shire, you will have firebreaks that are larger than the four metres because we recognise that they are hot spots, literally, when it comes to gamba fires.

**Mr WOOD:** Could I put it on notice, minister?

**Madam CHAIR:** Member for Nelson, would you please state the question for the record?

**Mr WOOD:** Minister, would you be able to provide us with information about which pastoral properties have a licence to grow gamba?

**Mr Da ROCHA:** I can answer that now.

**Madam CHAIR:** You can answer that now?

**Mr Da ROCHA:** Yes. That is the Munji-Munji, Cave Creek and Mainoru Stations.

**Mr WOOD:** Any every other station that has it should, theoretically, have to control it?

**Mr Da ROCHA:** That is correct.

**Mr WOOD:** That is interesting. I was at Jindare Station some years ago and they were growing it as pasture.

**Mr Da ROCHA:** I will note that down.

**Mr WOOD:** That is some years ago. They might have controlled it since. That is all the questions. I have others ...

**Madam CHAIR:** We are still on the opening statement, I remind members.

**Ms LAWLER:** I do not know whether we are wrapping up gamba, but it truly is at the forefront for the agency. Obviously when you have Bushfires NT as part of your department, minimising the risk associated with gamba is at the forefront of DENR's work. We are very much concerned about that. There have been information sessions. We will continue to try to educate the public as much as possible so they can all do their bit. We will do our bit and make sure DIPL does its bit and other agencies like Tourism, Culture and Parks will do their bit. As far as I am concerned, if we all do as much as we can, only then will we achieve with gamba.

**Mr WOOD:** You will let us know if the Douglas-Daly research station has a licence?

**Mr Da ROCHA:** Yes.

**Mr HIGGINS:** With regard to cabomba, you said it has been gotten rid of in the area of Darwin River. Is it anywhere else in the Territory that we are aware of?

**Ms LAWLER:** I will let Luis answer that. It was a great achievement to see cabomba—within the first couple of months of taking on the role. We remember when cabomba was first made apparent in the area of Darwin River about 10 years ago.

**Mr Da ROCHA:** That is not the only sighting of cabomba. There was a previous eradication in Marlow Lagoon.

**Mr HIGGINS:** Was that where we used the drones to look for it, or were they just used at Darwin River?

**Mr Da ROCHA:** Darwin River. Just to clarify, we have not eradicated all of it; there is still a portion there. It has been two years since the last time we detected it. We are using the best science that tells us we have to wait for a period of 10 years of non-detection before we can declare it eradicated. 2027 will be ...

**Mr HIGGINS:** Did you say there were two spots where it is?

**Mr Da ROCHA:** One—Lok Landji Billabong. It is in a 1.2 kilometre stretch.

**Mr HIGGINS:** There is another one, salvinia. It is on the surface but cabomba is underneath. How are we going with that one?

**Mr Da ROCHA:** We are working towards eradication. We are still working through that. As the minister alluded to, we have an incident management team for two other weeds, but salvinia is one we continue to work on.

**Madam CHAIR:** Are there any further questions on the opening statement?

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

**Madam CHAIR:** The committee will now proceed to consider the estimates of proposed expenditure contained in the Appropriation Bill 2019–20 as they relate to the Department of Environment and Natural Resources. Are there any agency-related whole-of-government questions on budget and fiscal strategy?

**Mr WOOD:** The budget overspend in 2017–18 of \$1.8m was primarily due to revenue for a number of externally funded projects not being received. Has the \$1.8m revenue for a number of externally funded projects now been received? If not, not, will or when will it be received?

**Ms LAWLER:** I will pass to Cynthia Loganathan to respond to that question.

**Ms LOGANATHAN:** The majority of that funding was from the Commonwealth Government for the National Water Infrastructure Development Fund for Ord Stage 3. That project is ongoing. We are anticipating to get that this month or early next financial year.

**Mr WOOD:** Will that cover the \$1.8m?

**Ms LOGANATHAN:** It will cover \$1.7m of that. The others are smaller external funds we have received throughout this year.

**Madam CHAIR:** Are there any further questions? That concludes consideration of agency-related, whole-of-government questions on budget and fiscal strategy.

#### **OUTPUT GROUP 1.0 – NATURAL RESOURCES Output 1.1 – Flora and Fauna**

**Madam CHAIR:** The committee will now proceed to Output Group 1.0, Natural Resources, Output 1.1, Flora and Fauna. Are there any questions?

**Mr HIGGINS:** The first one is on the budget. There is a variation down of \$2.6m. Can someone explain what

those variations are? I know there are carryovers and programs finish. Can we get an idea of what that \$2.6m means?

**Madam CHAIR:** Before we proceed with that. Minister, could I get you to introduce those who have joined you.

**Ms LAWLER:** Dr Alaric Fisher, Executive Director Flora and Flora. On that question I will refer to the Chief Financial Officer, Cynthia Loganathan.

**Ms LOGANATHAN:** Thank you Leader of the Opposition. The majority of that is the Aboriginal Ranger Grants capital grants of \$2.1m. The capital grants were only a two-year project program. It finishes at the end of this year.

**Mr HIGGINS:** Magpie geese bag limits—do we see them being increased this year in line with the population numbers?

**Ms LAWLER:** Thank you very much Leader of the Opposition for bringing up the question of magpie geese. It is one of my favourite questions in this portfolio that I have get asked when I am out and about. As we know our natural environment truly is one of our greatest assets. That is why I as minister, and I know the department, take steps to ensure the conservation and sustainability of our waterfowl population.

I have always said that any decision should be based on the science, rather than on political pressure. I am not one to bow to political pressure, I am one to use the science when I make decisions. We want to see a long-term sustainable population of magpie geese. One of the key bits of work being done is to make sure we have the management program in place, because I believe if there is a waterfowl management plan, then we can increase certainty for hunters of magpie geese as well as reducing the controversy over what the bag limit will be.

It is about increasing certainty for the hunters and the knock on effect for retail and places like that, which are also impacted by those numbers, and reduce controversy. I will pass to Dr Alaric Fisher because they have already done some of the flyovers this year and have been working very hard to get those numbers sorted early.

**Dr FISHER:** Leader of the Opposition, as you know we make a recommendation about the hunting season conditions each year based on an estimate of the population of magpie geese across the Territory for the year. That population estimate is derived from a systematic aerial survey that gives us a very robust count for the magpie goose population. It also tells us about the amount of nesting in the year.

As you also know, the bag limits and the season length have been relatively small or short for the last two years because of exceptionally low populations revealed by those counts. We have undertaken the aerial survey for this year. It finished about three weeks ago. I can give you an indication of the results, just noting that they are still being finalised or checked, really.

The indicative population estimate for this year is 1.48m birds. That is a significant increase from last year's estimate, which was slightly under a million birds. That would certainly indicate that it would be safe to increase the bag limit and/or the season length to some extent. We will be making a recommendation up through the minister very shortly about that.

The only note of caution in that is that, as we all know, the Wet Season was actually exceptionally poor and the quality of the Wet Season has very significant effect on magpie geese populations, because it affects their nesting success for that there is a lag. The big increase this year reflected very good nesting last year. Unfortunately the poor Wet Season this year has resulted in there being very little nesting this year. We estimated the number of nests at 10 000–10 500, whereas last year it was 77 000. While we see an upward trajectory in the population, we have to be quite careful about managing that still because we expect that to at least stabilise or have a blip in it next year because of the poor nestings.

**Mr HIGGINS:** The question was not political, it was based purely on science because of the increase in geese population numbers. I take the fact of the caution and the lag. It is something very similar to barramundi. You do not look after the barra, but the fact that we had a poor season this year does not mean we will have a bad fishing season necessarily. The bad fishing season will be in another 12 months or two years. People need to bear that in mind.

**Mr WOOD:** Minister, could you please provide a detailed breakdown of what exactly will be spent on with

the \$2.82m in 2019–20 to support Aboriginal rangers?

**Ms LAWLER:** I could probably table those ranger grants. That is probably the easiest, I am thinking. Otherwise they are considerable.

It is a pleasure to provide you with that information because I know from my travels and meetings with Aboriginal rangers across the Territory how valued that program is. It has truly been one of the great programs where DENR has been able to support rangers. I was out at Gapuwiyak about two weeks and I was talking with the Yirralka rangers there. I will table those because there are five pages of information there.

**Mr WOOD:** Thank you.

**Dr FISHER:** For completeness, the \$2.82m next financial year will actually have two aspects to it. Partly, it is ongoing funding for programs that have already been funded under the land management component of the ranger grants. There will be another round of applications opened next year for new applications. We cannot tell you what they will be in advance, other than that amount of money will be available for people to apply for.

**Mr WOOD:** Thank you. Is there a program for upskilling Aboriginal rangers? We have rangers who work in wildlife in our parks, and we have Aboriginal rangers in our parks. A lot of those people have university qualifications. With Aboriginal Rangers, a lot of it has to do with traditional ownership of the land and people caring for country, but do we have a program that can help those people upskill their qualifications?

**Ms LAWLER:** Member for Nelson, I will start with the response, but then I can hand to Dr Alaric Fisher.

First of all, often in the school in remote communities, there is training on conservation and land management through Certificate II or Certificate I. You are seeing that from school leavers having those skills. Also, some of the recipients of the grants—and you will see that when you get that full list—are for training.

I was out at Glen Helen recently, talking to the CLC rangers there. They have some funding. One is for learning how to track and improving their tracking skills. Northern Land Council also has ranger strategic training programs. They have some money for that as well. Besides school leavers and those of age, some of the land councils are providing on-the-job training as well, and using some of the rangers for that.

**Dr FISHER:** It is obviously a very important area, to increase the skill of Aboriginal ranger groups. Many of the ranger groups are coordinated through the Land Councils, particularly in the central region I think all of them are and in the northern region, the majority still are. A lot of them are moving towards a more independent operation.

Both those major land councils have their own programs of training and up-skilling for the rangers. That is usually through various levels of certificate courses in Conservation and Land Management, or chemical, Weed Control, fire management et cetera.

One of the things we have tried to do through the ranger grants program, is to be very broad in the scope of the program and actually invite innovative applications that look at, not just activities to specific conservation or land management activities but also to look at what the broader barriers are to conservation and also social outcomes through Aboriginal land management. We have encouraged the applications for things like strategic training.

**Mr WOOD:** I was looking at whether upskilling in the science of what people do. They come obviously from a background of tradition and culture, but there is also science to what they are doing and it would be good to see if that was also part of improving ...

**Dr FISHER:** I can answer that to some extent. My group has a strong engagement with a lot of Aboriginal ranger groups and a lot of research and scientific biodiversity monitoring work we do is on Aboriginal land and it is done in conjunction with Aboriginal ranger groups. Certainly, that involves providing on-the-spot training in things like survey methods, like using camera traps, to sample the mammal fauna.

That has seen some extremely good results, for example, Warddeken Land Management Association in West Arnhem Land actually recognises the value of that to the extent that they have employed a full time ecologist to offer support for the operation of the rangers. In fact, they have one of the best biodiversity monitoring programs in the Territory, if not Australia, as the result of that.

**Mr WOOD:** That is good, thank you. Minister, the last review of species conservation status within the NT was done in 2012. The review of the conservation status of plant and animal species listed as threatened will continue through to 2022. As reported in DENR's annual report for last year, was public consultation on the first round for proposed changes to the threatened species list completed in the second half of 2018? How is the department tracking towards its 2022 time line?

**Ms LAWLER:** I will pass that specific question to the Executive Director, Dr Alaric Fisher.

**Dr FISHER:** No, we did not complete that in the latter part of 2018. It is a complex process—assembling, analysing and packaging up the data. We are close to finishing that work and are preparing the material to go out publicly through a public consultation process in the next couple of months. That is part of the formal process of the review of the conservation status of species.

We will put out a list of species that we believe the status has changed for and the rationale for that. We will invite public input as to people's opinions but also if they feel like other species should be included.

**Mr WOOD:** We heard today from the previous minister that Wildcare has been scrapped. They look after flora and fauna species. Is there any role that you can play in keeping that program going as part of looking at the status of plant and animal species in the Top End?

**Dr FISHER:** Our key role is to provide expert advice and support to community organisations that are interested in taking on those sorts of roles. They do a fantastic job, particularly in the rural area of Darwin there is the estate, if you want to call it that, as Land for Wildlife. It is very important for the conservation of a whole lot of species, such as the black-footed tree rat, for example.

**Mr WOOD:** I know, but they have no money.

**Dr FISHER:** Unfortunately we do not have any money either. We do engage with them in terms of trying to make sure that whatever is done is in the most effective and targeted way possible, and also that we can monitor the outcomes from them

**Mr WOOD:** These two next questions are about cats. Are you still running a feral cat baiting program in the West MacDonnell Ranges? How much is it costing, and is it effective?

**Ms LAWLER:** I will pass to Dr Alaric Fisher to respond to that one specifically.

**Dr FISHER:** Yes, we still are running that. That has been run for, I think, four years now with the benefit of Commonwealth Government funding. We managed to secure some additional funding to keep it going this year with money that came from the Commonwealth through Territory natural resource management. I cannot tell you the exact value of that program, but we can certainly get it.

**Mr WOOD:** I suppose the key is, is it working?

**Dr FISHER:** It appears to be working. The importance of getting the extra funding was to do another year's worth of baiting and monitoring to judge the results. The baiting is just about the final year's baiting, which we have funding for and is just about to be done. Then there will be monitoring over the next few months.

The results to date are very promising. They show that there has been a decrease in cat abundance in the areas that have been baited. They also released preliminary results showing an increase in the detection rates of the central rock rat, which was the key endangered species that we were trying to protect.

**Mr WOOD:** The next question follows on from that—does the NT Government contribute anything to the upkeep and management of the cat-proof fence in Kakadu? You were also involved in a similar fence in Watarrka National Park. Is there any consideration to do something in our parks? Will these fences keep the cane toads out, besides the cats?

**Ms LAWLER:** We will just go back to the funding one because we do have details. There was \$94 000 in internal funding and \$34 000 external funding for cat baiting in the 2018–19 financial year. I will let Dr Alaric Fisher talk about cane toads.

**Mr WOOD:** And fencing.

**Ms LAWLER:** And fencing.

**Dr FISHER:** Member for Nelson, the cat-proof fence in Kakadu National Park was a research project at a small scale. It was funded by the National Environmental Science Program. The goal of it was try to get more clarity about the effects of feral cats on wildlife, and particularly the relative importance of impacts from feral cats versus impacts from other factors like fire. That experiment was very useful, but it is finished. That fence will not be maintained by us. We have handed it back to Kakadu and they have had a number of different ideas about what they will do with it.

The fenced area at Watarrka was an area that was put up to protect a population of mala. It was running into problems in terms of the maintenance of that area. In fact we have actually handed those mala over to Australian Wildlife Conservancy, which is a conservation NGO. They are building a very large cat-proof enclosure at Newhaven Sanctuary, north west of Alice Springs with the idea that once they have removed the threat of cats and other feral animals, they will reintroduce a whole lot of mammals back to there which, in some cases, are extinct in the NT. We have given the mala as the source population for mala in that area.

**Mr WOOD:** All right. I might follow up with them one day.

**Madam CHAIR:** Member for Nelson, will you change subject because I will give the Member for Nhulunbuy an opportunity to ask a question under Output 1.1.

**Mr WOOD:** That is all right.

**Mr GUYULA:** Minister, what is being done to protect native bee populations from the spread of European honey bee and the detection of Asian honey bees?

**Ms LAWLER:** Thank you very much, Member for Nhulunbuy. I will pass to Dr Alaric Fisher to talk about bees in the Territory.

**Dr FISHER:** Thanks for the question, Member for Nhulunbuy. I guess the simple answer is that nothing is being done to protect native bees. That is similar to cane toads. That is a very difficult, probably intractable problem in the sense that because it is a commercially important resource, the European honey bee is the only real viable option. To control them once they are established in the wild would be through a biological control and that would, essentially, not be permitted because of the almost certain impacts on the industry.

In terms of other introduced bees, that is mostly a biosecurity problem. Both the Commonwealth and the NT governments have biosecurity programs to detect and if they are seen to be a problem, to act on incursions of new feral species. I cannot answer your question more specifically, but I am happy to get what information I can and provide it back to you.

**Mr GUYULA:** That is a question that came from somewhere in the Barkly. They said they are having problems with it, so maybe someone needs to go and have a look.

**Madam CHAIR:** Mr Guyula, do you want to put that as a question on notice for further information, or are you happy to seek a briefing after we follow up from estimates?

**Mr GUYULA:** I am happy to seek a ...

**Madam CHAIR:** A briefing later?

**Mr GUYULA:** Yes.

**Madam CHAIR:** Sounds good.

**Mr HIGGINS:** Can I ask something on bees? The European bees—you talk about the imminence of feral and whatever and pushing out native bees. Do they just take up their habitat or do they actually have other impacts on native bees? Do they kick them out from where they are or do they wait until they are already gone and then take over that space? Do you see what I am saying?

**Dr FISHER:** Yes, I do, Opposition Leader. You are asking me questions well outside my area of expertise.

**Mr HIGGINS:** Oh, okay. I thought you were the fauna guy.

**Dr FISHER:** I have some limits.



**Mr HIGGINS:** I have a hive at home. If I get you a couple of photos ...

**Madam CHAIR:** Oh, it is personally motivated questioning.

**Mr HIGGINS:** Whether they actually invade hives or just take up their habitat ...

**Dr FISHER:** My understanding is it is more about competition for resources in the habitat. For example, if the European bees are in high density, then they are getting to the flowers first. In many cases, they have a more destructive way of accessing the nectar or the pollen, so they are disadvantaging the native bees. It is more about that than just displacing them.

**Madam CHAIR:** All right. We might get back to the budget. Thank you for indulging the Opposition Leader.

**Mr WOOD:** Minister, have the flora and fauna assessments been completed for Gunn Point and Wadeye?

**Ms LAWLER:** I will pass on to Alaric for those for Wadeye and Gunn Point.

**Dr FISHER:** Thanks, Member for Nelson. Those assessments are part of a department-wide program called Mapping the Future, which is looking at all of the resource values of selected areas that have development potential—at both the opportunities but also the environmental risks involved. We have completed the field work for both of those two areas. We are currently analysing and writing that up. We expect the reporting for both of those to be completed by the end of this calendar year.

**Mr WOOD:** I am interested because since the road to Gunn Point was sealed, I have never known so many things to happen up there, all of a sudden. There have been some surveys and people are telling me things are moving on. I do not really know much about what is being prepared for there, but the information you have—will that be able to be transferred back to Planning, to start to identify areas that have to be protected?

**Ms LAWLER:** We can talk more about that in the next areas of my portfolio, but a land use plan is being developed for the Gunn Point region. All of that would form part of the Planning Commission's work.

**Mr WOOD:** I might ask a question when we get to water resources on that issue.

**Madam CHAIR:** Do you want to park it and ask it later?

**Mr WOOD:** It looks like Jo can answer it.

**Ms LAWLER:** Jo can answer it.

**Ms TOWNSEND:** Further to what the minister said, the Mapping the Future program, which was funded by the Northern Territory Government is very much about doing that analysis of where those areas of interest and competition are going to be and doing that biodiversity, water assessment and land use planning, either alongside or ahead of that. That explains why Gunn Point and the Wildman area would have been absolute priorities in that program.

**Mr WOOD:** I suppose what concerns me now that we have opened up that area—because there is a bitumen road and that means more off-road vehicles can get into that part of the world. There are some very special jungle and rainforest areas in that. It does not belong to the government, which makes it harder. Is there any ability to protect some of those areas before they get damaged?

**Ms TOWNSEND:** We do not have much say over off-road vehicles, but the information we are collating and collecting would go to inform what developments could and could not happen, or what restrictions on development there might be to protect sensitive areas. Off road four-wheel driving is a bit hard.

**Mr WOOD:** ATVs are probably a bigger problem.

**Ms TOWNSEND:** Unsanctioned is not quite the same—but certainly it would allow us to be clear as part of those development proposals about what they need to protect and what could be developed there.

**Mr GUYULA:** I would just like to put the question about bees on notice.

### Question on Notice No 9.1

**Madam CHAIR:** Member for Nhulunbuy, could I please get you to restate the question for the record.

**Mr GUYULA:** Minister, what is being done to protect native bee populations from the spread of the European honey bee and the detection of the Asian honey bee?

**Madam CHAIR:** Minister, are you happy to take that question?

**Ms LAWLER:** Yes I do.

**Madam CHAIR:** The question asked by the Member for Nhulunbuy of the Minister has been allocated the number 9.1.

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**Mr WOOD:** There was a question I was going to ask the previous minister, but she said it was your responsibility. Crocodiles—has the government reviewed its policy about the sustainable harvesting of crocodiles in relation to the potential for Aboriginal people, if it is their wish, to be able to use that resource, similarly to what happens in northern Canada where Inuit people are able to harvest polar bears? Of course, that is done on a sustainable basis.

**Ms LAWLER:** Thank you Member for Nelson for your question about crocodiles. The Northern Territory crocodile industry is based on an annual sustainable harvest of up to 90 000 eggs and 1200 adult animals from the wild. I will pass to Dr Alaric Fisher to talk specifically about Indigenous management or use.

**Dr FISHER:** Member for Nelson, the area of safari hunting and other uses is a vexed one.

**Mr WOOD:** Yes, that is why I stayed away from it. I am talking generally about people having the ability to use the resource.

**Dr FISHER:** At the moment the management plan does allow for the harvest of wild crocodiles in addition to eggs with an upper limit of, at the moment, 1200 animals. There is actually plenty of scope for Indigenous groups or landowners to apply to harvest crocodiles within that harvest limit. There are significant economic barriers to that happening, really because there is not actually very much market for large animals that are harvested in the wild. Their skins are not suitable for the very high-quality skins that are required for crocodile products.

The major economic opportunity has been painted to be safari hunting and allowing Aboriginal people to basically host safari hunting on their country. While the argument has been advanced, there is very little data to support whether there is an economic benefit to be gained.

**Mr WOOD:** Under that 1200 they are allowed to harvest, do not take this the wrong way, but what is wrong with them harvesting them as 'safari harvesting', if you might call it that?

**Dr FISHER:** Safari hunting is specifically outlawed in the Commonwealth Government's approval of our crocodile management program as a wildlife trade program, as required under the international CITES convention.

**Mr WOOD:** It does not make any difference; the crocodile will not know who shot it.

**Dr FISHER:** I understand, but the problem is that allowing safari hunting, by default, would potentially endanger Commonwealth Government approvals which allow the whole of the crocodile industry to function. Virtually all crocodile products are exported.

**Mr WOOD:** Thank you.

**Madam CHAIR:** Any further questions on Output 1.1 Flora and Fauna? There being no more questions that concludes consideration of Output 1.1. I will now call for questions on Output 1.2 Rangelands.

### Output 1.2 – Rangelands

**Madam CHAIR:** Are there any questions?

**Mr HIGGINS:** Yes, I want clarification on the Indigenous carbon unit and getting rid of that. You said it was going to be moved to somewhere else—or the role. I am not saying the money was moved, but the role. Where was it to be moved to again?

**Ms LAWLER:** We talked about it having two components. The actual industry development side will go to the Office of Investment Attraction, so the business side. The support for carbon and Aboriginal people around the carbon unit will continue through Bushfires NT.

**Mr HIGGINS:** That is all I needed to know.

**Mr WOOD:** This is a broad question in relation to decreasing resources for weeds management due to finalisation of the Commonwealth Pest and Weed Management Agreement. Could you outline for Territorians what weed management initiatives have ceased and what initiatives will be happening in 2019–20?

**Ms LAWLER:** Thank you, Member for Nelson. I will pass to Luis Da Rocha.

**Mr Da ROCHA:** Member for Nelson, that was due to a delay in payment from the Commonwealth Government.

**Mr WOOD:** What you were saying before?

**Mr Da ROCHA:** Yes.

**Mr WOOD:** Is that finishing?

**Mr DA ROCHA:** It finishes at the end of this financial year. That is when the agreement ends.

**Mr WOOD:** Will that leave gaps in your weed management program?

**Mr Da ROCHA:** We are hoping we will be able to negotiate a new one. It looks positive, because some of the work we have done has come up really well and been well received by the other jurisdictions. It is not only with the Commonwealth Government, but other jurisdictions working collaboratively on that project. We only went to Canberra two months ago to present on it, and some of our results are leading the way.

**Ms LAWLER:** And just to do the high level, political level. Obviously I go to environment ministers' meetings. We have a new environment minister, Sussan Ley. As soon as I have the opportunity, I will meet with her to talk about the issues we have in the Territory, and put on the table the things we would like to work collaboratively on with the federal government.

**Mr WOOD:** One weed we have not heard a lot about but is still well and truly in the Territory is mimosa. A lot of work has been done over many years on biological control. Is biological control making any difference, or are we back to square one?

**Ms LAWLER:** I will pass to Luis Da Rocha.

**Mr Da ROCHA:** Just on biological control, more generally in the weed space, we have seen great success. The minister issued a media release only a couple of weeks ago where we exported some of our weevils to South Africa, to deal with the weeds.

**Mr WOOD:** I thought you were going to say 'weeds' then.

**Mr Da ROCHA:** To deal with the weeds. We exported the larvae to South Africa as part of an agreement to assist the Australian Government. We have seen successes in that and continue to do that work.

**Mr WOOD:** How is mimosa going?

**Mr Da ROCHA:** We are continuing to work on that. Mimosa is still on our list.

**Mr WOOD:** I am probably pre-empting a question. I was going to ask in General Business—but I was at the Douglas Daly and Katherine research station field days, and they are introducing some new grass species for hay. I asked what sorting of testing is done, because I have all this knowledge of species that have been introduced and turned into weeds. Is there a control method before a new species of grass is introduced from

Queensland, which they do not have any control over, to the Northern Territory before it becomes a pest?

**Mr Da ROCHA:** We work to the national Australian standard for biosecurity when it comes to weeds. There would be a plot—we work with DPIR at the Douglas research centre. A permit is not required for Douglas Daly research farm because it is in the B zone, not the eradication zone. There would be trialled plots in a controlled environment.

**Mr WOOD:** What worries me is that it was being promoted as a new grass that you could buy the seed for. I checked some of the details of that grass and it basically said it had a reasonable chance of being a weed problem. I thought, 'Where do we go now?' We have introduced a new species to the Northern Territory that is ideal for hay. Do we have humidicola? You do not class it as a weed, but if you go to the rural area it is a weed. It is everywhere.

Is there a process where a plant cannot be introduced into the Territory—I remember neems—without some fairly stringent requirements to show it will not ...

**Mr Da ROCHA:** There is a group made up of representatives from not only across government, but also the community. We review the potential species to be introduced.

**Mr WOOD:** I hope that is not your weed advisory council, because they got the sack.

**Mr Da ROCHA:** We have committees in regional areas specific to those. The one Jo referred to earlier was the Northern Territory Weed Advisory Committee, which has since ceased to serve its purpose.

**Mr WOOD:** There is considerable decrease in expenditure in the repairs and maintenance line between 2017 and 2018—one was \$1.435m, and it went down to \$655 000. How did that happen? Did you look after your vehicles so well that they did not need repairs and maintenance?

**Ms LAWLER:** I will pass to the Chief Financial Officer to address that reduction in repairs and maintenance.

**Ms LOGANATHAN:** That decrease in the repairs and maintenance is related to the Mary River briar ridges. Going forward that is about efficiency—root-and-branch review items.

**Mr WOOD:** Had you made your mind up to get rid of it before the efficiency measures? In 2018 it was decided it would be lower. Does it show up if it is going to be an efficiency cut, which is to cut that program? I imagine it would not show up in a budget.

**Ms LOGANATHAN:** No.

**Mr WOOD:** Not yet, but next year it will.

**Ms LOGANATHAN:** There was also a whole-of-government stimulus program the previous year.

**Mr WOOD:** I need that, after a long time in estimates.

**Ms LAWLER:** The Chief Financial Officer is saying the previous year was a larger amount of repairs and maintenance because it was a stimulus program. Whether those programs related to—it could have been croc traps or different things that were built. The previous year it would have been a higher amount, so it has possibly gone back to what it was.

**Mr WOOD:** It seems to be a big drop.

**Ms LAWLER:** Four hundred thousand.

**Mr WOOD:** Well no. It was \$800 000. That is a lot.

**Ms LOGANATHAN:** We had \$500 000 as an economic stimulus.

**Ms LAWLER:** Let us take that one on notice so that Ms Loganathan can get some clear detail around the changes in the repairs and maintenance.

### Question on Notice No 9.2

**Madam CHAIR:** Member for Nelson, can you please restate the question for the record?

**Mr WOOD:** Minister there is a considerable decrease in expenditure for the repairs and maintenance line between 2017, which was \$1.4m, and 2018, which was \$600 000. How did this happen?

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

**Ms LAWLER:** Yes.

**Madam CHAIR:** The question asked by the Member for Nelson of the minister has been allocated the number 9.2.

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

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The committee suspended.

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### Output 1.3 – Water Resources

**Madam CHAIR:** We have a quorum so we will get back to it—moving to Output 1.3 Water Resources. Are there any questions?

**Mr HIGGINS:** We have a lot. There is a lot of water to go under the bridge here. I will ask some simple ones upfront and then we will get into some other ones.

The charging of water for gas extraction—is there any plan to look at charging for other commercial users there? It is not a dig at gas; it is asking if there is any plan to look at that. It is a great lever in controlling the amount of water being used. I am not suggesting private at all here; I am just talking about commercial. Is it something we are looking at or should look at into the future?

**Ms LAWLER:** Thank you, Leader of the Opposition. No, there is no plan to do that. I am more than happy to—and I should probably introduce Christine Long, Executive Director Water Resources. She is probably one of the most in-demand and knowledgeable people in the Top End. That is for sure. I have no plans for that, but I will pass to Christine to reiterate that.

**Ms LONG:** No, there are no plans to introduce charging for commercial users.

**Mr HIGGINS:** My thing would be more—are we going to consider, in the future in, say, mining as opposed to just all? Will we gradually try to cover some of those other industries like mining? The reason I ask is when you link it back to, say, Strategic Indigenous Reserves when that first came up—if I said 10–15 years ago that one of the intentions was that it potentially could have raised revenue for Indigenous people if they had those reserves by forcing mining companies to actually pay for that water from them, so like trading. That is why I asked that question.

**Ms LAWLER:** As I said we do not have any plans. Water is a highly complex and contentious issue, not just in the Territory. I remind people that we are a land of sweeping plans, and Australia is a very dry continent. Sometimes we forget that in the tropics. As a minister with responsibility for large areas of water, regarding water we do a lot of research and reading on what is happening elsewhere in the world. It is an area I obviously have a strong personal interest in.

We will continue to keep a very close eye on the issue of water in the Northern Territory, but also Australia-wide. It will continue to be at the cutting edge of some of government's decisions and policy decisions into the future for Australians. I think we saw a bit of that at the last election. We can talk about it in the area of climate change. It is an area for governments to be agile and very careful about.

**Mr HIGGINS:** We had an independent into review into water licensing. Have all the recommendations of that

been implemented? I think it was handed down over 12 months ago. I may be wrong in those dates.

**Ms LAWLER:** I will pass to the department to go through that. That was a comprehensive review that has set us on a good path—a very positive path for what we need to for water management in the Territory. It has been about building trust of Territorians with water allocation and what we do and how we manage water in the Territory. Those 21 recommendations have been worked through. I will pass to Christine Long to provide a more detailed uptake. As I said, there has been some big work that has been done by the department in that area.

**Ms LONG:** Of the 21 recommendations, 18 are complete and three remain to be completed. The department does a six-monthly report on progress against those recommendations and that is published on the department's webpage.

**Mr HIGGINS:** What are the three recommendations that are still left outstanding?

**Ms LONG:** The three that remain to be completed are P1–3—to paraphrase, develop and implement formal processes for assessments of licence applications. That is a multifaceted recommendation. Some work remains to be completed to capture improved administrative processes. That is quite a broad recommendation.

P1–8, which is to review the practice of licences with annual announced allocation conditions in areas with a limited water trading opportunity, is also still under development. Again we have some procedural work to finalise in relation to that particular recommendation.

The remaining one is P1–14, which, to paraphrase again, is to undertake a comprehensive hydrochemistry and environmental isotope assessment of the Mereenie Aquifer System. That is nearing completion and as soon as that work has been completed and the final report is published, we will consider that complete.

**Mr HIGGINS:** Is that to tell the age of the water?

**Ms LONG:** That is part of that study, correct.

**Mr HIGGINS:** In regard to water allocations there is a lot of discussion around the 80:20 rule. When that was first introduced it was taken as a guide to start with. Has that been reviewed? At the time there was not a lot of science around it. A lot of time has passed since then so we must have a lot of science around that. Is that in the process of being reviewed? I am not after an answer as to whether it will increase or decrease, I am just after the review. I do not want to start an argument about the 80:20 rule.

**Ms LAWLER:** The 80:20—just for people listening—is in the tropical area of the Northern Territory; it does not apply if you live in the southern part of the Territory. I will pass to Joanne Townsend, the Chief Executive Officer to make further comment.

**Ms TOWNSEND:** You are correct, there is always a lot of conversation around the 80:20 rule. It is actually the Northern Territory Water Allocation Planning Framework. That framework has a set of contingent allocation processes that apply in the Top End, which are colloquially called 80:20, and a different set of contingent allocations that apply in the arid zone.

The rule around the NT planning allocation framework is that where there is no science, the contingent allocation applies and that is the case in the Daly. In the Ooloo system we have the science and we use minimum flow requirements. That is a model we would like to move to for other regions because it gives you more certainty. We are looking to improve the research, particularly in Tindal in the Katherine area, so we can rely on minimum flow requirements rather than those contingent allocations.

We still use 80:20; the exception is Katherine, which has never applied 80:20. The bulk of their licences were issued in the mid–late 2000s, before that rule was embraced. We have embarked on a review of a range of water policies and legislation. One of the things we need to look at is the Northern Territory Water Allocation Planning Framework—not to look at the 80:20 per se, but to look at a greater level of detail in some of its terms so we can apply it more specifically, particularly in the arid zone. We are inviting comments on that from the public right now.

**Mr HIGGINS:** From the answer, I presume the 80:20 will stay—for want of another word, it is default, which is fine. We are looking at other areas like the Ooloo one and flowrates in the Daly itself. How many water allocation plans do we have? How many areas are covered and how many of those with 80:20 have we come

up with another allocation method for?

**Ms LAWLER:** There are currently four declared water allocation plans operating in the Territory: Alice Springs 2016–2026, Berry Springs 2016–2026, Katherine Tindall Limestone Aquifer 2016–2019, and Western Davenport 2018–2021. There are five plans at various stages of being declared: The Howard Katherine Tindall Limestone Aquifer, which is a renewal; Mataranka Tindall Limestone Aquifer; Ooloo Dolostone Aquifer; and the Ti Tree one, for which public comment closed on 20 May.

We reinstated water advisory committees, which have been a great process and opportunity for a range of people to be able to come together. It is community members and industry stakeholders, and they value and understand water in their area. They are able to have a say and provide advice to government as well as the water controller. I will pass to Ms Townsend, if there is anything you would like to add to that.

**Ms TOWNSEND:** If I go through the list, I would be happy to give you a much more detailed briefing. This is the summarised version. The Alice Springs plan is based on storage depletion over a 400 year framework, which is within the NT Water Allocation Planning framework.

Berry Springs, as you know, is based on protection of the spring flows and 80:20. Katherine Tindall Limestone Aquifer is the one that is currently out for public comment. That one is not based on 80:20 and its predecessor was also not based on 80:20. In that draft plan we are recommending that we maintain the consumptive pool but that we do not issue any more licences and undertake the science to be more definitive about what is an appropriate allocation.

I will quickly mention the ones that are out for public consultation. The Ooloo water allocation plan is based on the environmental flow requirements, which are minimum flow requirements rather than 80:20 and that is because the science is much more definitive about protecting those ecosystems based on that. The Ti Tree one is based on protection for ground water dependent ecosystems and recharge only, rather than ground water storage depletion.

**Mr HIGGINS:** Yes. Just on the flow rate—you probably do not know the answer for it. Something that has always concerned me with the Erskine one—from memory Erskine said we need to maintain a flow rate of about 12 cubic metres per second to enable the pig-nosed turtle to move from pond to pond for breeding.

My concern around that one—which was looked at by the fish and flows people working through CDU—was that the species of fish may require more than the 12 cubic metres. You probably cannot answer that question and say that you have taken a risk with that. I think the science is very difficult in that area. Is what I have said, correct?

**Ms TOWNSEND:** Of course. I will make two points. The flow requirements change and they do not sit at the 12 cubic metres, it changes depending on dry or wet years. More importantly, there is a significant amount of work being funded through NESP, looking at the Daly River. There are eight projects. That will help us to refine those flow rates to be more precise.

**Mr HIGGINS:** The person that gave me that concern was Wayne Erskine himself when I was out fishing with him.

When we talk about the Berry Springs aquifer, the freeze we have on there and the concerns around that—this year that is one with a lot of bores with potential problems. I have asked this question before, what are we doing in regard to addressing that problem? It is not a problem that we can address by shutting people's bores down. In that area we also have a town centre which is dependent upon water infrastructure. How are we progressing in the sense of trying to address that or come up with a plan? Do we have a plan over time? I am not saying tomorrow; next week would be fine to have that plan. How are we going in getting a plan to overcome that problem in the future?

**Ms LAWLER:** It is convenient when two portfolios have overlap and have a strong interest in the rural area, subdivisions and where we go with all of this. One of the first things I did when I came in as minister, which was 12 months ago, was ask the two departments to work closely together to come up with some solutions about what we can do. As we know, every time you provide for a subdivision, you then give the opportunity for more people to have bores. Across the rural area, I think the figures are there are about 5000 bores, but there are probably another 5000 people who could have bores in the rural area that do not.

When you have a dry Wet Season as we have had, it becomes very apparent. I thank the department for the wonderful work it is doing. It was at Berry Springs last weekend. The weekend before I was at Humpty Doo

when it was doing its Know your Bore workshop. It was been very well received. The rural people who were coming were very interested in knowing their bore, where we are going and what we are doing with that.

The big picture is there is work under way. We are looking at some clear announcements about that in the coming future on some of what we think is a way forward for that. There have been some conversations saying, 'This is rural water and it is everybody's business', which again is true. When we look at the issue of water in the rural area, it truly is not just the rural people's responsibility to curtail their use of water; it is everybody's.

Most of you would have seen the announcement by Power and Water because that has been an issue. Often there are conversations about Power and Water taking water out of the McMinns bore fields at Girraween. There was an announcement yesterday about Power and Water reducing the take from those rural bores.

As a government, being able to work with Power and Water to see that step, which is unprecedented—that is the first time we have seen that sort of move, which is great. We are hearing Power and Water is concerned as well about water this year—or at least into the future—in the bores in the rural area. There is lots of work in that area.

It is a bit of a long answer, but education works for all Territorians looking at their water use. Territorians have some of the highest water usage in Australia, if not the highest. All of us have to look at our water use—minimising leaks, use of water in our gardens, then flowing down from that—no pun intended—how do we then manage subdivisions into the longer-term future in the rural area?

I will pass to Christine or Jo. It is great having two water experts here. As I said, water is very much an issue for Territorians.

**Ms TOWNSEND:** Opposition Leader, specifically on Berry Springs—Berry Springs is an aquifer system where we have had pretty good, long-term monitoring data in place. The missing piece of that puzzle has been good, long-term data on use. Obviously, the decision to lift the exemption a few years ago so that people who were using water for commercial purposes were being licensed gave us a lot more information about the amount of water that is being used.

That is also an area where we are very concerned to protect Berry Springs. It is an iconic system that people feel very passionate about. One is to get a handle on the actual quantity of the resource, but also the use of that resource for extraction purposes. That is well under way. All those licences have been issued.

The second thing—and the minister spoke about this—is to get a handle on subdivision. As you know, people feel very strongly about their block size. We have been doing some work with the Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Logistics to try to allow for subdivision but to limit the section 14 right, if that is what the landowner chooses to do. If you want to subdivide, but you will therefore, forego your right for the multiplication for your section 14 right.

Third—and Christine and her team have been very busy working on this—is educating water users in all of Darwin rural area, but particularly in Berry Springs, because they have had no recharge this year about their risks to water use, but also longer-term messaging about effective water use.

**Mr HIGGINS:** I think the logo being used—I have actually had a look at dry grass or dry bore, I may have them the wrong way around. It is your choice. It is pretty stark message. How was the reaction at Berry Springs last weekend? Were there many people there? What information could you give me on it?

**Ms LAWLER:** I will pass to Christine Long, who was there.

**Ms LONG:** approximately 30 people visited us at Berry Springs Shopping Village on Saturday. As you will be aware the focus of our attendance was to educate people about their individual bores and what risks they may be facing this Dry Season.

Everybody was very thankful that we were there and they were very positive of the information that was provided. It was not a busy day and it was not our busiest day yet, but it was steady progress. Things moved along very well. Most people were very thankful for the information. There were some people who did not deliberately come to see us, but just happened to be travelling in and out of the IGA who dropped by and got the information while the two hydrogeologists were able to provide that to them.

**Mr WOOD:** How is it being advertised? I heard Des on Country Hour, but is there any other means that it is



being advertised? I think they are coming to Howard Springs as well.

**Ms LONG:** We have an eight-week program of—I will call them shopping centre visits, but they are shopping centres and markets, that type of thing.

We are advertising every four weeks in the *NT News*. Most of the advertising is being done through social media. The people I have spoken to at the various—we call them pop ups, they are a pop up stand. The people I have spoken to have obtained that information through social media in the majority. Some people have seen us there and rung up their friends and said to come down and talk to us. There has been a bit of bush telegraph in operation as well. I am also aware that there have been some notifications put through newsletters and the like as well.

**Mr WOOD:** I do not know whether the Opposition Leader has, but we have those electronic signs that face out for the people going past.

**Mr HIGGINS:** That is you, me and the Member for Goyder.

**Mr WOOD:** Okay. I was wondering whether it is worth putting something on that as well, because people do stop and look at that when they go to the post office.

**Ms LAWLER:** We are happy to do that as well. I went to the one in Humpty Doo on the first weekend. It was very well received. To have two hydrogeologists right there with their laptops—I know rural people are interested in their bore. The data that they had there I found fascinating, but all the people there were all learning something new about their bore, whether it was the year it was put in—I was standing next to somebody whose bore was from the 1950s or something.

It was fascinating information generally. It is an opportunity to know where the levels of your water are and the extractions, all of those things. We would encourage people—I think next weekend it is Howard Springs and then the following weekend it is at Coolalinga Central. We will try to get that information further, rather than just social media. We are more than happy to commit to getting it out on your big screen TVs in your electorate office and other ways, or even in your newsletters.

**Mr HIGGINS:** I think part of that also needs to be advertised. I thank the department for going out. I know my electorate officer had a session on that. She is very proficient at it already. It would be good that if on that electronic thing and then through social media that you can point them to those electorate offices. I am not sure which ones have had the training, or whether we are doing all of them. I think it is an opportunity to get some of that information out there.

I went through some of the stuff that she was shown and I found it very useful. She pulled up a couple of different ones to get the comparison. The only comment I had was that there was a good video there, but it has sound. The TVs in our offices, Gerry—there is no sound. It would be good if we could put some speakers in somewhere.

**Mr WOOD:** I will hear that repeated all day. I will think I am back working in Mitre 10.

**Ms LAWLER:** I think the valuable thing is that people really are interested. All the people I spoke to when I was just standing around, in ways, were all committed to doing something and wanting to know how they could reduce their water usage and have those conversations. Water Smart were there as well. It is simple things like changing your timers and dropping the length of time you are watering.

I felt there was a strong, positive interest in what we can do. We are all in this together. What can we do to reduce our water usage? Christine, you might like to comment. There was no anger or antagonism; it was about working together on this.

**Ms LONG:** I should have added—and thank you for your prompt, Opposition Leader—that we will be visiting your office, Member for Nelson, and the office of the Member for Goyder. We have not got there yet. As part of that visit we will deliver information packages, which are the same information packages we have been giving rural residents at the pop up stands.

As part of that kit, we will include information about the Know Your Bore tool, which is the tool the Opposition Leader is referring to. We also have some stickers.

**Mr HIGGINS:** Which you are allowed to put on government cars, I think.

**Ms LONG:** Yes, there are a few already on government cars, I can assure you.

**Mr WOOD:** They might think the driver is the bore.

**Ms LONG:** The purpose of providing information to electoral offices, of course, is so that if people have questions, they have a point where they can gain some initial information and be pointed to more information in future.

I would encourage people, when we are operating our pop up stands, to come along. We work through the Know Your Bore tool with individuals. We print their bore report, and then the hydrogeologist will go through the bore report with the resident and explain to them what their options might be.

This is not just about rural water use. This is about all urban and rural water users working together to reduce the impact on the aquifers in the Darwin rural area, given that we have had such a poor Wet Season.

We are not duplicating Power and Water Corporation's Living Water Smart. They already have an active Living Water Smart program. We are working with them to fill in the gaps. That is why our focus has been on the rural area, and the pop up stands, because that is where we feel we can add value and information to those residents.

It is not about blaming rural residents for using all of the water, as some people have claimed on social media. It is about informing the people who have bores, so they are empowered and have the information they need. Obviously, doing a pop up stand at Casuarina Shopping Village about rural bores would be a complete waste of time. That is the purpose; it is targeted and is intended to deliver the right information that people need.

**Mr WOOD:** What day are you out at Howard Springs?

**Ms LONG:** We are at Howard Springs from 10am to 2pm on Saturday. Hope to see you there.

**Mr WOOD:** I get off a plane from Alice Springs at 1pm so hang on, I am coming. I think it is great that Power and Water has taken some proactive moves in this direction, because I get worn out from the people who complain that Power and Water takes all their water. At least it is taking some of the sting out of the criticism. Whether it is accurate or not is irrelevant, but it is a good public relations move.

At the same time, rural people also have to do their part. It is no good for them to say, 'Well that is great; we can pump more water.' There are people I know in the rural area who still do not care, so it would be great to see if that message could come out.

**Ms LAWLER:** Yes, you just have to drive around the rural area and you will see people who have their bores running 24/7 watering their patch of grass. Thank you to Power and Water for making a move on that one. That has been really positive.

We can promote the website as well so people can get that information. If you do not know your bore number you can still come along. You know your address, obviously. You can put that information in and we will still be able to identify your bore that way.

**Mr WOOD:** I am struggling to find it on the website. It is a bit like the Primary Industry website. I have 'Environment and Natural Resources—water' but I do not have anything to tell me this will happen. It is not the easiest of websites.

**Ms LAWLER:** I could be political and say it was the previous government, because I was working then as a public servant and I know how tough it was to get us all to change our websites from being particular to very generic. We all resisted it ...

**Mr WOOD:** And I criticised them too.

**Ms LAWLER:** ... but the gurus tell us that is what people like.

**Mr WOOD:** It is a shocker.

**Ms LAWLER:** I guess it might be more to do with our age, Member for Nelson.

**Mr WOOD:** Well, I can press each button and none of them will come up and say 'Know Your Bore'.

**Ms LAWLER:** Yes. I know that issue.

**Mr WOOD:** That is all right.

**Madam CHAIR:** We are still on Output 1.3. I remind the committee to get moving. Get back on track a bit.

**Mr HIGGINS:** On bores and people coming in—is there any confidentiality in someone accessing someone else's bore information? I would not think there is.

**Ms LONG:** The Know Your Bore tool has been derived from the NR Maps tool. All of the information that is available on Know your Bore is already publicly available information.

**Mr HIGGINS:** The reason I asked that is that the comment I have is that when people access this it is very interesting to access bores that are very close to you to see the differences in your bore compared to the one near you. I know that is a message that you having been trying to get across to people as well—that every bore is unique and there are some very big differences in flow rates. I noticed in flow rates and water levels, when you talk about depths of bores and where the water is down those ...

**Ms LAWLER:** That is a really good point, Opposition Leader. There is still that view by some people—and often it is from people who have not lived in the rural area for a long time—that there is one big aquifer under the rural area, rather than lots of different aquifers. It can be very different from Wells Creek Road to Henning Road. There are quite substantial differences.

Good point. It is one of those ones where the more information people have, the better decisions they make about their own use and the purchase of property and things.

**Mr HIGGINS:** We have promoted water very well here today. That is good.

We spoke before about the licensing of bores in the Berry Springs aquifer. We have all of those licensed at the moment. How long before we get a bit more information—of have we any at the moment—that says our predictions on usage is reasonably accurate. Are we over or under? How long will that take?

For a mango farmer you can say, 'This is how many trees you have, this is how much water you should use.' Boom—that is how much they should use. How is that comparing to actuals? I know we have had a dry year as well and it will go up and down—or do we not have any of that sort of information yet?

**Ms LAWLER:** I will pass to the Chief Executive Officer, Joanne Townsend.

**Ms TOWNSEND:** That is a good question. It is too early, is the short answer. Of the 299 applications we received in the Darwin rural area, 225 licences have been granted. But we also gave people a window of time to put their meters in. Then they have to start reporting use. We have done over 100 visits to licence holders to confirm that their meters are in place, and 62 of the people we have met with so far have their meters in place and have started to report.

That data is coming in, but we do not have enough of it or enough of time to speculate on what that means yet. I would say, maybe this time next year.

**Mr HIGGINS:** My next question was to be when might we start to see some ...

**Ms TOWNSEND:** We will have some preliminary information for this time next year, I would say.

**Mr WOOD:** Could I ask about the meters? Are they not Wi-Fi connected or do you have to manually read them and send the data?

**Mr HIGGINS:** It depends on how much money you have.

**Ms LAWLER:** I will pass to Ms Long but hearing that, they are manual.

**Mr WOOD:** I thought it might be easier.

**Mr HIGGINS:** In relation to bore construction permits on page 203 of the budget, 185 requests were

processed this year. Next year we only anticipate 145. Why the drop? That is in construction permits as opposed to licence applications. We may have had a spike last year, I am not sure.

**Ms LAWLER:** I will pass to the Chief Executive regarding those KPIs.

**Ms TOWNSEND:** There are two things. We had quite a backlog of bore construction permits and we have caught up. We are being much more efficient. Thank you, Ms Long. We have also changed our practice where we used to require multiple permits for multiple types of bores. Now a single permit can be granted for multiple bores on a single portion.

**Mr HIGGINS:** Are we seeing a drop in the number of those construction permits over five to seven years? If you looked at the graphs on how many bores existed in the 80s and 90s with the dots on the screen, like there was a massive proliferation of bores. Is that starting to decline? That is more the question I am asking.

**Ms TOWNSEND:** Potentially. If you have a look at the bore construction data over time and the population of bores, which is on your television screens, you will see spikes in the late 80s and 90s. Stock and domestic type bores started to slow down in certain areas like the Darwin rural area, particularly with some of the limitations we have now.

You will always need a bore construction permit for a rework or a replacement and we have new industries coming in. You are going to see more bore constructions permits for mining and petroleum where previously they were not regulated by us. What you will see is a change in the type of bore construction permits that we are issuing for different industries, rather than an overall decrease.

**Mr HIGGINS:** When we talk about 185 or 145, do we keep a breakdown of whether they are new or replacements? If someone's bore collapses they will get a construction permit but it is really a replacement one. Do we separate them so that we can identify which ones are new? Can we get those figures?

**Ms LAWLER:** Yes we can. I am thinking about Know Your Bore, which has all the history of when it has been rebored and all of those things. That is all available there. We can get that data.

**Mr HIGGINS:** Can I get a breakdown of the 185 into those two categories? If you do not have that now I will put it on notice.

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### Question on Notice No 9.3

**Madam CHAIR:** Opposition Leader, please restate the question for the record.

**Mr HIGGINS:** Could I get a breakdown of the 185 bore construction permits into new bores as opposed to reconstruction?

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

**Ms LAWLER:** Yes.

**Madam CHAIR:** The question asked by the Opposition Leader of the minister has been allocated the number 9.3.

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**Madam CHAIR:** We will continue Output 1.3.

**Mr HIGGINS:** On page 200 of the budget paper three it mentions identifying opportunities for agricultural expansion through strategic assessments and identification of land with suitable soils and sufficient water. Can you detail for us any already identified opportunities or potential areas for expansion?

**Ms LAWLER:** That is mapping the future. I will pass to the Chief Executive to speak about that. We will try and keep it short, we are running out of time here. It is part of the Mapping the Future work. I think you spoke to the Minister for Primary Industry and Resources about this the other day. It was around the Wadeye area and the work that has been done there.

It is one of those projects that is interesting and exciting work. When I was at Gapuwiyak the other day, we were looking at some of the work that had been done in that Arnhem area as well. I will pass to the Chief Executive Officer to talk more about Mapping the Future.

**Ms TOWNSEND:** Thank you. Mapping the Future is a five-year program, funded through the Northern Territory Government. It is looking at land capability, water availability and environmental conservation zones, so biodiversity, which is the addition to the former land and water suitability program.

It is looking at strategic locations. We have identified ten strategic locations. As you can appreciate, some of those locations already have some data, and we will be prioritising the biodiversity work versus the water work. Wildman River is a good example where we already have good water information, but what we do not have is the biodiversity data.

There are at least 10 priority zones across the Northern Territory. None of those zones are complete in the full sense of the word. The one likely to be finished first is, potentially, Wildman, followed by Wadeye where we are doing some additional work on some former land and water suitability work. We would be happy to give you a more thorough breakdown of the staging of those projects over four years, and over the 10 sites.

**Mr HIGGINS:** I might ask for a brief on that, as a follow up. Can you just rattle off those 10? You have mentioned Wildman and Wadeye.

**Ms TOWNSEND:** I can do better; I can give you a map.

**Mr HIGGINS:** Yes, that would be even better. I like pictures.

**Ms LAWLER:** It is exciting. It is good work, so I am very happy for you to get a thorough briefing on it.

**Ms TOWNSEND:** In summary, the areas we are looking at are Gunn Point, Wadeye, Katherine, Roper Valley, Larrimah, Sturt Plateau, the Gulf Fall, Western Davenport, some work in the arid zone of Alice Springs, and Nhulunbuy. As we progress, some of those areas might drop off because the interest wanes. I caution the handing over of my picture with that comment.

**Mr HIGGINS:** Yes. Can we get that tabled? Member for Nelson, you can have a go.

**Mr WOOD:** I think you have covered most of my questions. Just a broad question first, there is less budgeted in 2019–20 for water resources. It is \$2.6m less than the 2018–19 estimate. Is there a reason for that? It is on page 199.

**Ms LAWLER:** Member for Nelson, I will pass to the Chief Financial Officer to respond.

**Ms LOGANATHAN:** The decrease in the budget for water resources is due to some Commonwealth funding we are planning to receive this year. It is very close to the end of that funding.

**Mr WOOD:** I probably should not have asked you, but I saw the one and two up there on the budget notes. It referred to the whole of natural resources rather than those particular—I usually look for the notes but there were not any.

Minister, you mentioned you had the water review, which I understand looked at allocations. How many people have either lost their license or had their license reduced under the ‘use it or lose it’ scheme, or from the review you spoke about earlier?

**Ms LAWLER:** The water allocation and the use it or lose it scheme—it is a bit of a cliché—has been some very heavy lifting for the department. It has done some really outstanding work in that area. I will pass to Christine, because she has the details on the questions you asked.

**Ms LONG:** In relation to the management of unused water, which is related to licence conditions, people are required to use their licensed water entitlements. When they do not, we ask them why they have not. I believe that is the process you are referring to.

The controller of water resources wrote to 48 licensees about unused water entitlements. Those letters were sent in 2018, 13 were sent to the Ooloo, 34 were sent to the Katherine Tindall Limestone area, and one to Western Davenport. As a result of that, the volumes that were returned at 31 March for the Ooloo was 5.259 gigalitres, for Katherine Tindal Limestone Aquifer to-date there was 1.628 with 11 decisions pending by the

controller of water resources. The Western Davenport submission has not been assessed and considered by the controller at this point in time.

**Mr WOOD:** That was 5.29 gigalitres for Ooloo, 1.62 for Katherine Tindall, and not been decided on Davenport, is that correct?

**Ms LONG:** I will just repeat the figures: 5.259 for Ooloo and 1.628 for Katherine Tindall Limestone Aquifer.

**Mr WOOD:** Has any court action been taken by any of those licence-holders against their loss of water licence?

**Ms LONG:** No court action has been commenced by any of those licence-holders.

**Mr WOOD:** When you say commenced, does that mean that some are pending?

**Ms LONG:** They have a right to seek a review through the Supreme Court. I believe there is a 30-day time period in which they can seek that right. Four of the licence-holders sought a ministerial review of the decision by the controller to reduce the licensed water entitlements.

To respond to your earlier question, no licence-holders lost their licences as a result of the management of unused water process. It is not about people losing their licences, it is about fine-tuning their actual water needs against their licensed water entitlements.

**Mr WOOD:** During the big debate over water licences there was the issue where people had been given a lot more water than they needed. Was that covered by this review? Are some of those people who had been given more water than they needed, part of these figures that you put before me? Or was there another process?

**Ms LAWLER:** There are a substantial number of licences across the Territory where licensees are using less than 10% of their water entitlement. The issue is, there are many other people looking for water. If you want to farm in the Katherine or Daly region and the water is fully allocated, it causes a blockage there. It has been some heavy-lifting. It is tough work but it needs to be done if we are looking into the future around developing the pastoral industry or the agricultural industry in the Northern Territory.

**Mr WOOD:** Is trading your water another way of saying you have used it instead of losing it? So if people are smart enough and they have extra water they can trade it.

**Ms LAWLER:** This is the first time that this has been done. We have taken that step. It is around a change of culture, an understanding that we have put these reforms in place, this is what and why we are doing it. We believe it is a fair model and is based on that data. People will start to look at what they are doing, and their usage and things like that.

**Mr WOOD:** My concern is that people got water for nothing and were then able to trade it for something. You might say the government or the community did not get anything back for that. I am interested to see—I am not sure where we are going to go, but I always worry that some people have done very well out of a free water licence in the first place.

**Ms LAWLER:** The Chief Executive is saying that we have not had substantial amounts of trade. As I said earlier on water, we have seen what is happening on the national stage with water when you look at the Murray–Darling issues. These are things that we do not want to have, those over-allocations. We definitely do not want to see the Daly not flowing or any of those issues.

The work that has been done by DENR in the last couple of years has been substantial. The work on the *Water Act*—I think WA took six years to reform their *Water Act*. We are doing a huge amount of work on the *Water Act*. We are stepping through that work. We think hopefully that, in the next few years, we will have much stronger legislation and better, targeted usage of a precious resource. I commend the department for its work.

**Mr WOOD:** I support what you said. I just live with memories of Mataranka. That is all.

**Ms LAWLER:** Yes. The water controller, the agency and I are very much aware of that. We want to do what is best for Territorians into the future.

**Mr WOOD:** My other question is in relation to water licensing in the Berry Springs area and, I suppose, some of the other commercial areas in the rural area. Have any commercial growers refused to request a licence? If commercial people continue to pump water without a licence, what are the consequences?

**Ms LAWLER:** I will pass to the Chief Executive Officer, who is also the water controller.

**Ms TOWNSEND:** We obviously relied on people who were commercially dependent to seek their water licence. We do not have a list of who does not have a water licence. Our approach has been—it is an offence to extract water without a licence and those penalties increased with the changes to the *Water Act* that came into effect late last year.

We are not necessarily going out and chasing people particularly. Our priority is to get those people who have asked for water licences licensed and reporting their water usage. What I have reminded people is that if you are a commercial entity and you want to sell your business and do not have a water licence, and you are required by law to have one, you will find that is a bigger impediment to your business than what I and my team can do. I think that is a message that certainly resonated with a lot of the growers when we met with them when we were promoting water extraction licences.

**Ms LAWLER:** Their day of reckoning will come.

**Mr HIGGINS:** When we talk about getting the licences, there has been a lot of discussion about residential people getting their licence. It is about the amount of land that they water. When they apply for a licence, is that deemed to be a commercial licence? What do they do? Do they say, 'We are watering 10 acres of lawn', or can you explain that a bit? It is a question that is asked of me. How do we do it? Do they have to comply as if it is a commercial licence and put all the meters on, et cetera?

**Ms LAWLER:** I will pass to Christine Long.

**Ms LONG:** The short answer to your question is yes. They are required to have a water extraction licence, which under their licence conditions they are also required to install a compliant meter and report their water usage from their meter monthly to the department.

**Mr HIGGINS:** When they calculate how much water they should use, how are they doing that? I had trouble figuring out how much I needed for a mango farm. How do we do it in a residential type thing? Is it based on that you will have a garden of so many hectares? Is there some sort of guide the department is using?

**Ms LONG:** Yes, the department has a guide that it uses—a procedure—to calculate an estimate of what the licensed entitlements would be for a property of that type.

**Mr HIGGINS:** Is that available publicly of them to use, or you just use that yourselves? I know when someone fills out a water application for a licence they estimate the water usage. Can they get access to that to calculate some of that themselves in making that submission? That is all.

**Ms LONG:** If they contact us, we will be happy to provide them with a copy of that procedure.

**Mr HIGGINS:** A lot of people in that position say to me, 'I really do not want to go to them. I just do not know. They might be tricking me.' It is what answer I give to them; I say, 'they are terrific people. They will not arrest you or anything. They are there to help you.'

**Ms LAWLER:** No. I am thinking it might be useful to have a one-page fact sheet or something that the department can provide. It goes back to that sale of blocks and people trying to change the type of garden they have. I grew up in the rural area and I had a large amount of lawn, because it was old-school where you put a large amount of lawn around your place in case there was a fire coming through. That would always be your fire break around your residence.

But more and more people are looking at bush gardens and less water. We can take that on board about a fact sheet that goes out—whether to real estate agents and local members—about calculating water usage. We will do that.

**Mr HIGGINS:** Can we get an answer which says categorically—and this will clarify, it is not a trick question—there will not be any charging for residential water. It is not on the government's radar.

**Ms LAWLER:** There will not be any charging for residential water—full stop.

**Ms TOWNSEND:** We will get a T-shirt.

**Ms LAWLER:** Yes, we will get a T-shirt.

**Mr HIGGINS:** I just wanted to get that out there.

**Ms LAWLER:** There will not be under a Labor government. Gary Higgins, I will let you sort that out.

**Mr WOOD:** What a relief! We all just pumped a little water out.

**Madam CHAIR:** Are there any further questions on Output 1.3? There being no further questions that concludes consideration of Output 1.3.

#### **Output 1.4 – Bushfires**

**Madam CHAIR:** The committee will now move on to Output 1.4 Bushfires. Are there any questions?

**Mr HIGGINS:** How much water does Bushfires use each year out of our aquifers? No, no, that is a trick question. I just wanted to see the look on someone's face when I did that.

There is a reduction in the budget going forward of nearly \$2m. Can you explain what that is? I reiterate that we finish some programs and funding only goes for so long, so it is not saying that your budget has been cut. Where has that \$2m coming from?

**Ms LAWLER:** I will pass to the Chief Financial Officer.

**Ms LOGANATHAN:** Opposition Leader, as mentioned, part of that reduction is a result of external funding from National Aerial Firefighting Centre, as we are still negotiating an agreement with them. Also, there is a new program with the Volunteer Bushfire Brigade fleet management program where we have transferred some of the appropriation money to capital appropriation for funding of that. That will reduce our operational funding.

**Mr HIGGINS:** When you talk about that national scheme—I have forgotten what you said about it ...

**Ms LAWLER:** The aerial firefighters.

**Mr HIGGINS:** Yes, the aerial firefighting. Is that ongoing funding, or is that funding we draw on after the event? How does that work?

**Ms BREMNER:** Yes, Opposition Leader, that is ongoing funding. We have an agreement with the National Aerial Firefighting Centre. That is all the jurisdiction are included in those arrangements, funded by the Australian government.

**Mr HIGGINS:** Did you actually say that was stopped or that is finished?

**Ms LOGANATHAN:** It is just a timing of the agreements and how much we will be getting.

**Mr HIGGINS:** So in actual fact we may get some more of that, it may come back to us.

**Ms LOGANATHAN:** Yes, we will.

**Mr HIGGINS:** In the past a lot of money went to bushfires, like if they are doing aerial bombing. That was not really funded other than afterwards. We were always guaranteed that government would give us the money afterwards. Is that in your budget or not? Is it still the same arrangement? If you have to get in aerial bombers or whatever for large bushfires, where does that money come from? Is it in your existing budget or do you draw on it after the event?

**Ms LOGANATHAN:** We fund a portion of it from our operating monies. Anything that goes over a million dollars we seek a Treasurer's advance for but at the outset it is out of our operational funding.

**Mr HIGGINS:** We tried to put pressure on the Treasury because they said they are trying to restrict the use or put tighter controls around Treasurer's advances. We tried to tell them that they should give us the money



that we have always drawn on in the past. I am trying to help you out here.

**Ms LAWLER:** I will let the Chief Executive Officer answer, she is the one that tries to manage Treasury.

**Ms TOWNSEND:** The issue is that we never quite know from year to year, depending on the fire season, what that advance will be. My case to the Treasury would be that that is the true purpose of a Treasurer's advance. We have some base funding that allows us to call in aerial bombers but I do not want Ms Bremner or myself making a decision on budget grounds about whether to use aerial firefighters.

**Mr HIGGINS:** That is alright. We also said that there was \$6.8m allocated for the new bushfire facility—presumably that is not in this budget here, it is floating around in capital somewhere. Can you tell me over what time frame that is? I know you mentioned it at one stage but I did not pick it up.

**Ms LAWLER:** That is in the DIPL budget and I think it is by the first quarter next year—I cannot remember. By 2020 we should see that facility completed. That is the coming financial year so by the middle of next year we hope to see that completed on the corner of Townend Road.

**Mr HIGGINS:** When you say 'completed'—I think it will be moving there but there are other stages to it. It is getting the two places you have mentioned, Bachelor and Winnellie, to enable them to go there. There are other stages in the future which I presume are over and above that \$6.8m.

**Ms LAWLER:** Yes. I will hand over to the executive director, who is very excited about having all of her people in one place and being quite centrally located to the heartland of where the voluntary bushfire brigades are.

**Mr HIGGINS:** I tried to get that centre there on a couple of occasions. I pushed for it there after we lost government as well.

**Ms LAWLER:** It is a bit like the Palmerston fire station. I have had to push very hard for that one, but that is another good news story. I am a firm believer that capital infrastructure will take us into the next 20, 30, 40 years.

**Mr BREMNER:** I am happy to talk about the new headquarters. You are correct, it has been designed in stages. We are at the first stage, which is the stage that has been released for tender. It incorporates an instant control centre with a radios operations room—we have volunteer brigades from Dundee and Marrakai to Douglas Daly, incorporating Humpty Doo.

It is essential that we can manage that from the facility. It is currently run from the Batchelor facility, which is quite inadequate for the needs of the rural area. It will also include a volunteer training room and will be able to be separated into three different meeting rooms and potentially open up onto the back veranda.

It will have a large workshop—I would like it to be larger, but we have to do what we do in this fiscal environment. It also has a truck wash bay, which obviously we need to have with trying to reduce the spread the weeds in our firefighting capacity.

We will have the Batchelor crew, and the Winnellie team will move in as well, which will make it much easier for us to support the incident management arrangements. Currently it is a hundred kilometre drive when you have an unfolding event and it is very difficult to manage currently.

**Mr HIGGINS:** Presumably you are going to have a kitchen and a barbecue facility?

**Ms BREMNER:** Yes, we are taking the barbecue with us as part of our fiscal arrangements.

**Mr HIGGINS:** Notice I said barbecue, not fire pit. Are there any plans as part of that to do any upgrades not necessarily to the airstrip itself, but some of the stuff around Hughes Airstrip, because I know that is used ...

**Ms BREMNER:** The Hughes Airstrip is obviously a heritage airstrip. It does need some work on it, but it is not incorporated into the headquarters arrangements.

**Mr HIGGINS:** Sometime in the last 12 months, was there a new water point put in closer to where the aircraft are?

**Ms BREMNER:** We did investigate doing that and we can proceed. Everything is about the budget, because

we were also looking at the Batchelor Airstrip as well. Obviously we currently use water carting. At times, if you have fires very close to where the planes are based, they can use water faster than we could potentially fill the tanks. It is when we get the budget.

**Mr HIGGINS:** You often see the water trucks sitting up near the water pipe on Townend Road with the driver having his cigarette. I presume he puts it out on the ground rather than throwing it into the bush. I have no more questions on this point.

**Mr PAECH:** Minister, how will the department support the work of ranger groups throughout the NT in providing essential services when it comes to fire management?

**Ms LAWLER:** We pulled out our paper on rangers and gave that out. I do know that through our ranger grants, there are a large number of those that are very specific for fire management. As I said, recently I was in Alice Springs and met with the Central Land Council. One of the grants to the CLC was on the Allua land, putting in a large break all through that Allua land to restrict fire.

We handed up this list of land management grants. A large number of these are for managing fires. The Warddeken rangers—I know some of their grants are for fire management. As I said, the CLC—theirs were about fire management as well. Through our capital grants as well as the conservation land management grants, there are lots that have things to do with firefighting.

The Northern Land Council—there was \$8000 for a firefighting unit. There is a quick spray units, four-wheel drives as well and ATVs under those capital grants which are being used, as I said, for firefighting. I am happy to give you this list, but there have been purpose built fire trailers and pumps. A large number of these capital grants, as well as the land management grants, are for firefighting for our rangers. As I said, it is a great program. I can pass to Collene Bremner to elaborate further, if you like.

**Ms BREMNER:** Bushfires NT provides firefighter training to ranger groups and has done so for years, as well as for other landholders. That has continued. I have a list of 52 stakeholders over the last nine months between July, in relation to the remote area firefighting, which is more pertinent to Aboriginal ranger groups.

**Mr PAECH:** When you say remote—that is bushfire crews going out to various ranger groups?

**Ms BREMNER:** Yes. We did a course—not just for ranger groups but also for councils, like at Ali Curung, Oenpelli rangers, and Jabiru. In particular, for Central Australia, we did the BWA for the Ingkerreke outstation. We also work closely with the Central Land Council in relation to training when required.

**Ms LAWLER:** Yes, Yulara, Parks Australia. It is through those grants but also through training.

**Mr PAECH:** Yulara, being a federal jurisdiction, would they consult with you around the fire load within that or would they do that through their own mechanisms?

**Ms BREMNER:** At Yulara there is a local fire service but there was a fire in the last 12 months near the Olgas, along that highway, where some of our volunteers and Bushfires NT staff worked closely with the park. We do fuel loadings across the Northern Territory and share that information within the Bureau of Meteorology to give us an overview of what the fire danger period might be.

**Mr PAECH:** In terms of a remote perspective, do you go out and assess, on communities, the surrounding fire load?

**Ms BREMNER:** For some we do. In Central Australia, my Bushfires NT staff have worked with local communities in relation to what risks they have, what equipment they already have in the communities, what sort of training they do and how they do their fire management plan. We have an upcoming project next financial year funded through the Natural Disaster Resilience Program. That will be looking at fire risk across the Territory, in particular, remote places where there is not a fire service.

**Mr PAECH:** Given that we have large events in Central Australia like the Finke Desert Race, what kind of involvement does Bushfires NT have around that event, considering that there is so many people in a particular area?

**Ms BREMNER:** Our Alice Springs Bushfire Brigade attend that, Aileron races and a variety of other things. They do it in relation to some of their community engagement. Bushfires NT staff are involved in some of the event planning to ensure that we are not mistaken with doing structure fires or being paramedics. We are

useful for things like campfires getting out of control or any of those types of things. The brigades are involved in that.

**Madam CHAIR:** Any further questions on Output 1.4, Bushfires?

**Mr WOOD:** In regard to my electorate, there is a small portion of residential blocks that are in the bushfire control. I always thought that was a silly idea because it is disconnected from the rest of the bushfires area and is closer to the NT Fire Service. Am I right to say that if—I think it is Lambells Lagoon would probably have it in its area—if that was taken away from them they lose funding because they have less residential blocks to maintain, is that correct?

**Ms BREMNER:** That is not correct. We provide operational funding for the running of the vehicles and various other stuff and their area is gazetted. They are not funded. Bushfires NT do not fund on the number of assets in the area at all.

**Mr WOOD:** Has anyone considered whether it makes more sense that at least the residential area comes under the control of NT Fire Service, because everything below it and to the west of it is all NT Fire Service?

**Ms BREMNER:** Bushfires NT has done a number of reviews. When we think about where we have brigade areas, under the *Bushfires Management Act*, they are in fire protection zones. Where you have properties within the fire and rescue purview, that is what they call the ERA or emergency response area.

Bushfires NT have undertaken some planning with their regional bushfire committee, and NTFRS—fire and rescue—in Alice Springs, Tennant Creek and Katherine, and we are changing the boundary of the ERA and the fire protection zone, because the fire protection zone currently is just a 50 kilometre circle. We are looking at using roads and other natural boundaries.

Once we have that—the Darwin rural area is a lot more difficult, obviously. I have flagged with the Executive Director of NT Fire and Rescue Service that it is a discussion we need to have in the future. They are waiting to get their new fire station, I dare say.

**Mr WOOD:** When they get the new fire station, they can invite the NT Fire Service volunteers for the opening, but do they actually get together? Sometimes I see two different policies when it comes to burning. One is the NT Fire Service and one is the bushfires. Do we have a uniform approach to how we deal with the environment; when we burn, when we do not burn, or they just have different policies and do it that way?

**Ms LAWLER:** Jo and I are conflicted because we associate with the Northern Territory Fire and Rescue Service, so we will pass to bushfires.

**Ms BREMNER:** There are some different arrangements, obviously. Fire rescue areas have a high risk. They have, generally, smaller blocks and more assets, so they will have a permit system for landholders who want to light fires, generally burn piles. They will do that up to a period and then will have a cut-off period and landholders can no longer access permits.

In Bushfires NT—if you live in the fire protection zone, you will always require a permit, but when that permit can be used will be assessed by a fire warden. We do agree, in relation to when there are more severe fire danger periods, that permits will cease and no burning will be allowed. We do joint fire bans.

**Mr WOOD:** Maybe one day we will also bring back the firies games? Then we can see who the best is.

**Ms BREMNER:** The issue from a Bushfires NT perspective is that the volunteers are fairly well flat out responding to trying to reduce the fire threat. They do not have a lot of time for games.

**Mr WOOD:** Are you telling me they are getting older and cannot beat the NT Fire Service boys?

**Ms BREMNER:** Our volunteers are too busy to play games.

**Mr WOOD:** We had some good times at the Berry Springs Reserve in those days.

**Madam CHAIR:** Any further questions on Output 1.4 Bushfires? That concludes consideration of Output 1.4 and Output Group 1.0.

**Ms LAWLER:** We have a response to the Member for Nhulunbuy about bees. Do you want me to deal with

that now?

**Madam CHAIR:** Minister, please clarify the number of the question you wish to answer first.

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**Answer to Question on Notice No 9.1**

**Ms LAWLER:** Number 9.1, in relation to protecting native bee populations from the spread of the European honeybee and the Asian honeybee. The Department of Primary Industry and Resources, which is the agency responsible for agriculture, biosecurity and animal welfare, has previously undertaken pollination studies for native bees.

In Australia, native bee populations have interacted with European honeybees for over two hundred years. Natives and European honeybees coexist without severe impact. The Northern Territory environment is quite harsh for the European honeybee, and native bees are better adapted to the environment.

The Asian honeybee is considered an exotic pest in the Northern Territory, and is treated as a biosecurity threat, with all means taken to eradicate any exotic incursions. While there has been previous detection of Asian honey bee in the Territory which have been successfully eradicated in each case, the Asian honey bee is not known to be established in the Northern Territory and is therefore not a competitor for resources.

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**OUTPUT GROUP 2.0 – ENVIRONMENT**  
**Output 2.1 – Environment Management and Policy**

**Madam CHAIR:** The committee will now consider Output Group 2.0, Environment, Output 2.1, Environment Management and Policy.

**Mr HIGGINS:** With the proposed bond levies for extracting industries, will they be bond or levies, and in that sense, when an operator has returned the site to fully rehabilitated will they receive all the bond back or will there be a levy on that? I am wondering if it is a bond they completely get back or if part of it is taken as a levy.

**Ms LAWLER:** Are you asking in regard to extractives?

**Madam CHAIR:** Minister, can I get you to introduce the person who has joined you at the table.

**Ms LAWLER:** Yes. Paul Purdon is the Executive Director Environment Protection and Karen Avery is the Executive Director Environment Policy and Support. I will pass to Karen Avery.

**Ms AVERY:** In relation to the proposed legislation, bonds and levies are quite different things. A bond may be sought from a proponent who has been issued with an environmental approval by the minister. Once they have rehabilitated their site in accordance with the conditions of the environmental approval they would receive their bond back. A levy is something different; it is not proposed that all proponents would pay a levy, but they would be specific to certain industries where they are perhaps dealing with legacy sites or past damage that has occurred as a result of that industry.

Not all industries will have a levy applicable to them.

**Mr HIGGINS:** What possible industries will have that levy attached to them?

**Ms AVERY:** The mining industry does. We do not necessarily have a clear view on who else may. It may be landfill, but beyond that there has not been any firm decision made.

**Mr HIGGINS:** Would it be that the levies will be put onto industries that have legacy mines or issues hanging over? Typically, you would grab that levy to do that rehabilitation, whereas the bond you would be getting to ensure they do the rehabilitation, and if they do not you take it out of that.

**Ms AVERY:** That is a very accurate description of the delineation between the two.

**Mr HIGGINS:** Where would that bond money be held in the sense that if it is a large amount of money, which it could be—I can see a lot of companies saying, 'Hang on, we want some interest on this', or something. It

is a bit like when you purchase a house; quite often there is a bond that is paid for whatever reason and usually there is some agreement on where that money is held and who would collect interest on it. This would be over a long time, potentially.

Where will that bond money be held and what would happen with it? Maybe you want to say it is an agreement between the parties, without giving secrets away, but where would it be held?

**Ms AVERY:** In fact, very few organisations would hand over actual cash. It is most likely a bank guarantee, in which case it is an instrument that is held, as opposed to financial cash.

**Mr HIGGINS:** Effectively, the company would be hanging onto the money itself but giving you the right to access it if they default under the terms and conditions.

**Ms AVERY:** That is right. What is proposed in the legislation is quite open, so bank guarantees or other instruments may be approved by the minister.

**Mr HIGGINS:** That is all I have at this point. Oh, sorry, there is still one question I have here.

**Madam CHAIR:** Still on 2.1?

**Mr HIGGINS:** Yes. The pastoral subleasing question was passed on yesterday. When might that legislation be coming back through?

**Ms LAWLER:** Opposition Leader, that was about three outputs ago—non-pastoral usage. We are looking at getting that back into parliament in August.

**Mr HIGGINS:** It is just the date. It was just that Primary Industry yesterday said you have carriage of it.

**Mr PAECH:** Minister, I want to ask about the climate change framework. I understand there is a forthcoming climate change framework intended ...

**Ms LAWLER:** This is not the right output group for climate change either.

**Mr PAECH:** I am asking because it was in policy. I am assuming because it is not implied yet, it is ...

**Ms LAWLER:** All right.

**Madam CHAIR:** Just to clarify, minister, if you are happy to accept the question, even if it is slightly out of output ...

**Ms LAWLER:** I am happy. It means the climate change person will be happy because it means she might be able to go home earlier.

**Madam CHAIR:** As long as it is not too far out because when people read the record later they expect the output responses to be within those outputs. It is only fair for anybody looking at this in 20 years' time.

**Ms LAWLER:** Let us just leave it. Off you go.

**Mr HIGGINS:** Who would be doing that in 20 years?

**Ms LAWLER:** Some doctoral research scholar, probably.

**Madam CHAIR:** We will proceed and if you feel it is completely out, please let me know.

**Ms LAWLER:** It is completely out, but that is fine. We will go ahead.

**Mr PAECH:** I am asking because it is in policy. I am happy to be redirected. I am curious how the forthcoming climate change framework is intended to protect vulnerable communities across the Northern Territory—particularly remote communities from my constituency—from climate change, acknowledging clearly—I am curious as to how that will work and a time frame.

**Ms LAWLER:** I will start at the top and then I will hand to Janet Hanigan, Executive Director for Social Policy, Environment.

The work on climate change in the Northern Territory is important work we firmly believe in, as a government. There has been consultation. The discussion paper was out at the end of last year going into this year. It is fair to say that we had thought there might have been a different government federally, one that believed in climate change, which may have looked at our position and where we were going on that.

There has been some more work done on our climate change strategy. About vulnerable people in the Territory—our strategy will be for all Territorians. Whether you are in a remote community, living in a surge zone in the Top End or in Central Australia, we know the impact of climate change will be considerable when we look at temperature increases and how that impacts vulnerable Territorians.

The bottom line is we are hoping to have that strategy available and out for further consultation in the next quarter. I will hand to Janet now to provide a little more detail.

**Ms HANIGAN:** I think the minister has answered the question quite sufficiently. Was there anything specific that was not covered by the minister's response? In essence, the climate response strategy looks to address the needs and a response for all Territorians. That includes vulnerable Territorians. When we looked at the stakeholder groups which provided quite extensive feedback through the consultation process, health and vulnerable people was clear out of nine key stakeholder categories that we identified.

**Mr PAECH:** As part of the consultation, did the agency actively go out and request people to put in a submission?

**Ms HANIGAN:** We had 1600 on the Have Your Say site, 743 downloaded the discussion paper, 176 responses to the survey, 38 written submissions, 33 targeted stakeholder meetings and 59 stakeholder organisations that we met with across the spectrum.

**Mr PAECH:** I am just picking up—the discussion paper has been in and it will come back out. Minister, did you say that?

**Ms LAWLER:** We had the discussion paper, and that provided broad information on increases in temperature and more severe cyclonic events. That discussion paper is still available. It is now the next step to look at the Climate Response Strategy and building on what Ms Hanigan said, it is everybody's business. It is not going to be DENR's or DCM's responsibility. When you look across all of the government agencies and that is what our strategy will look at. I am not pre-empting anything.

Whether you have a school group and are educating kids on climate strategy, an agency that is looking at your vehicle use or looking at the amount of energy used by the building industry—it is such a broad area when you look at how we can all contribute to the issue of climate change. It is government departments across the board looking at what they do, local government and individuals—we have seen lovely responses from council looking at single-use plastics. They are already taking that step at the markets. Territorians have taken steps in regard to their own behaviours and our Climate Response Strategy will have multiple levels and layers regarding how we respond as Territorians to climate change.

Ms Hanigan can add to that.

**Ms HANIGAN:** That is right. It is about setting the tone for everyone to do their bit.

**Mr PAECH:** It is good to set the tone, but do you imagine it will be the department which enforces the other agencies to comply? Am I pre-empting?

**Ms LAWLER:** I do not know if it is about enforcement. It will be about whether there are targets or people will be working towards commitments to what they need to.

**Mr PAECH:** Okay. Thank you.

**Mr WOOD:** Do you want to reduce plastics, minister? No problem.

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

**Ms LAWLER:** I am just thinking about climate change; are we continuing with that?

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

**Mr HIGGINS:** There was a promise to introduce an online public portal for environmental decision-making. How is that going?

**Ms LAWLER:** I will pass that to Mr Purdon.

**Mr PURDON:** The online portal commitment has a number of elements. The aim of that is to provide environmental information including licence approvals in the public domain. We already have the Northern Territory EPA's website. All licences and approvals under certain legislation are available.

The Department of the Environment and Natural Resources has their water portal up and running. There is already a fair bit of information in the public domain on a number of different websites.

The intention with that portal is to pursue a portal once we have the regulatory reforms in place, so the work that Karen Avery is doing in terms of setting up the new environment protection act—we want to align a new environmental portal when that legislation comes in place.

**Mr HIGGINS:** Is that answer saying that all of the information that would have been in the online public portal is currently available? Do you just have to look for it?

**Mr PURDON:** Yes. It is a very simple way of putting it. If not all, then most of it is already in the public domain. It just might be a bit harder to find at the moment.

**Mr HIGGINS:** Mr Wood might have trouble with some of that. When the environmental changes are coming in, I presume these ones are related to the onshore gas industry? Is that what you are referring to—the environmental changes?

**Mr PURDON:** No. I am referring specifically to the environment protection act, which is separate from the petroleum changes and the petroleum commitments. The petroleum commitments around getting information in the public domain we are progressing separately, but there is a fair discussion to be had about whether that links in through the same environmental portal or not.

**Mr HIGGINS:** That is all.

**Madam CHAIR:** Is there anything further on 2.1?

**Mr MILLS:** Yes. I have a question on behalf of the Member for Nhulunbuy.

Minister, can you describe for the Member for Nhulunbuy the decision-making process that led to the abandonment of a critical recommendation from the NT fracking inquiry to store fracking waste water in enclosed tanks not allowing for polluted water to be stored in open evaporation ponds? What risks have been considered with this current approach in the codes of practice?

**Ms LAWLER:** First, I would like to make it very clear that there has not been a change at all. We are thoroughly and comprehensively implementing every one of the 135 recommendations of the hydraulic fracturing Pepper report. In relation to this concept around open tanks I will pass to Chris Shaw the Executive Director, Onshore Gas Reform, who can work through that process very clearly.

To be very clear, we are making sure every one of those 135 recommendations are implemented thoroughly and comprehensively. Chris responded to this question from the media recently, so I will pass to him.

**Mr SHAW:** The question relates to recommendation 7.12, which is being delivered through the Code of Practice: Onshore Petroleum Activities in the NT, which is now on the web. It is finalised.

Basically I can talk to the development process. We got the CSIRO involved to help us come up with best-practice science around the storage of waste water in particular, as this question relates to. From there we went out to peer review, both national and international peer review, to get advice on how they felt our proposed approach dealt with the recommendation of the inquiry report as well as the best available science, and they supported what we came up with.

Then we went out to the public for consultation, and this was the biggest issue that came back from the public consultation—the use of these enclosed waste water tanks. We basically went back to really thoroughly review the approach taken and strengthen the code. As the minister says, we have complied with that

recommendation to store waste water in enclosed tanks. The code is now much more specific saying that water must be stored in enclosed tanks.

However, on the flip side, particularly at these early exploration scale of the industry there are not a lot of waste water management solutions available locally, which means we want as little volume as possible of this waste water and to do that we have allowed for evaporation to be used so water that comes back from the wells it must be stored in the enclosed tanks but we are also saying that we are allowing evaporation to be used primarily as a mechanism to reduce the volume, reduce the greenhouse gas emissions from waste transport, reduce the road safety issues from waste water transport and reduce the local social impacts from waste water transport.

Water comes out, goes into the enclosed tanks and then can be evaporated but while it is being evaporated, we have a range of other controls in relation to potential rainfall events and in particular flora and fauna and the biggest concern has been about avian fauna, about birds. We have gone back to the companies who are doing their detailed wastewater management plans now to talk with them about what the particular birds might be in that area and how they are proposing to reduce any risks to those birds to as low as reasonably practical.

**Mr MILLS:** Did I hear that it goes into an enclosed tank and then into an evaporation pond?

**Mr SHAW:** Yes and to clarify, the water has to be stored in an enclosed tank; however, if it is being evaporated for the purpose of reducing the volume of that wastewater, it is allowed not to be in the enclosed tank, only for the time that it is actually being evaporated. You would not only have an evaporation pond, you would have the enclosed tank and you would be able to move it from the enclosed tank to the evaporation facility, and then back into the tank.

**Mr MILLS:** That makes sense.

**Mr WOOD:** I take on board what you said about the recommendations, minister, but I find it—mining now has two standards. We have plenty of wastewater in a lot of our other mines which are well and truly open for birds and other animals to frequent. I am not saying we should be using that as the standard but you seem to have picked on one industry and not picked on an industry which has got a lot more damage to the environment than the fracking group would.

**Ms LAWLER:** Yes, the public scrutiny and social licence that the onshore oil and gas industry has means that we have to be comprehensive and careful when making sure those recommendations are fully implemented. Yes, as Chris says, the water can be evaporated off but then needs to go back into enclosed tanks to make sure the recommendation is fully implemented.

**Mr WOOD:** I am glad Mr Shaw has given us that explanation because I think I asked you that was based on someone who sent me the question and sent me a picture from one of the reports at the Amungee site which was dams. That would probably be the best description. From that, I thought there was basically going to be a line dam and animals could walk in there and birds could fly on top of there. That is not going to be the case, I understand it, except that there will be water, I presume, pumped by misters in an area which will allow that water to evaporate.

**Ms LAWLER:** Yes. As Chris said, it is about reducing the amount of wastewater through evaporation. Reducing that then saves the number of trucks that are on the road taking the wastewater to be treated, so it is about the bigger picture. I will go back to Chris to add.

**Mr SHAW:** Yes, that is correct. One other thing to add is, once we move to a production scale of industry, the industry will actually be looking to keep as much of that wastewater as they can to reuse in future hydraulic fracturing operations. At that point, there will be less call for evaporation.

**Mr WOOD:** I know it is not fracking, but the system for extracting a gas from around Roma and the Maranoa area is coal seam gas and they recycle that water by going through a treatment plan and then pastoralists are allowed to use that water for pastures and fatten cattle and sell those. Is there any chance—maybe not in the short term because there may not be enough production but—in the long term that water could be recycled for pastoral production?

**Mr SHAW:** It is a different water production curve to coal seam gas that you would have seen in Queensland. That water comes from each well over a period of years versus the shale gas typically only flows back for a period of a few months following the hydraulic fracturing. You do not get the de-watering effect. It is a much



smaller volume but that said, we will be encouraging proponents to look at all the reuse and beneficial use opportunities that they can.

**Mr MILLS:** Has the department conducted any modelling on costs associated with offsetting the emissions generated by NT shale fracking, as per the recommendations of the fracking inquiry? How will you ensure that fracking companies, not Territorians, pay for the emissions offsets?

**Ms LAWLER:** There is work being done on the offsets policy. That is being done by the Department of the Chief Minister. I think their offsets policy will be out before the end of this year. I will pass to Chris if he can add to that—later this year the offsets policy will be available.

**Mr SHAW:** Further to that we are working with the Commonwealth Government specifically about the shale gas emissions question and their particular recommendation. I think it is recommendation 9.8, which talks to no net increase in greenhouse gas emissions from gas used in Australia.

**Mr MILLS:** Will we need to wait until September—no sneak previews?

**Mr SHAW:** Yes, correct.

**Ms LAWLER:** As I said, it is the Department of the Chief Minister which is overseeing it, not our department.

**Madam CHAIR:** Any further questions on Output 2.1? That concludes consideration of Output Group 2.0.

### **OUTPUT GROUP 3.0 – STATUTORY BODIES** **Output 3.1 – NT Environment Protection Authority**

**Madam CHAIR:** We will now move to consider Output Group 3.0, Statutory Bodies, Output 3.1, NT Environment Protection Authority. Do you need to change out any staff, minister?

**Ms LAWLER:** Paul is here. I am not going to read out an introductory statement or anything like that for the EPA. You can go ahead with questions.

**Madam CHAIR:** Are there any questions on Output 3.1?

**Mr WOOD:** What was the result of the review of Environment *Protection (Beverage Containers and Plastic Bags) Act 2011*?

**Ms LAWLER:** I might pass to the CEO. We actually had that in 2.3 in your notes. That is the Container Deposit Scheme you are talking about?

**Mr WOOD:** And plastic bags.

**Ms LAWLER:** And plastic bags—I am wondering who is going to talk on it. It is one we are proud as a government that we have done considerable amounts of work on it. I will pass to Paul Purdon.

**Mr PURDON:** The recent review was a review of the Container Deposit Scheme, as opposed to the plastic bags ban, which concluded in the second half of last year. That review was tabled by the minister at the time in October last year in the Assembly. I think that review report is available on the NT EPA website. Since then, the department has been advising the minister on what it thinks the government's response should be to that review. The minister has put that proposed response through government more broadly. We are a few weeks away from making public government's position in response to that review.

**Mr WOOD:** Will we be able to comment on that response?

**Mr PURDON:** I do not think the response will be out for consultation, but you can certainly comment.

**Mr WOOD:** I probably will.

**Ms LAWLER:** As we have said previously, 111 million containers were returned to coordinators by collection depots during 2017–18 and 75% of all approved containers sold in the Northern Territory during 2017–18 were reused, recycled or appropriately disposed of. To me there are great news stories about that. It is about taking the next steps to do more.

**Mr WOOD:** You are talking to the well and truly converted here. I should probably fix up the history a bit. You were the ones who got us ready for container deposit legislation. My understanding is that the CLP brought it in. I might be wrong there, but I think they did.

**Ms LAWLER:** We are the ones that had the big fight with Coca-Cola.

**Mr WOOD:** That has the EPA thing ...

**Ms LAWLER:** It was Labor that brought it in, I have just been told.

**Mr WOOD:** Something happened in between where the CLP had to pay for that court case.

**Mr HIGGINS:** That was the Coca-Cola one, but Labor did bring it in initially.

**Ms LAWLER:** Anyway, it is good news and I think from all of our points of view, it is how we get more information to get more people to do the right thing ...

**Mr WOOD:** I have some questions in relation to that. You mentioned the recycling rates. The thing that concerns me is whether the EPA tracks where the product goes. Does glass end up being used for glass, or does it end up as a big crushed pile at Envirobank? Does the plastic get reused? What guarantees do we have? It looks good from this end, but the result is not so good when it gets to home base.

**Mr PURDON:** We do not track that data. We can obtain it from coordinators if we need it. You will recall the Act has two objectives, and I am paraphrasing; one is to reduce litter and the other is to promote reuse or recycling.

The fact that one of the objectives is to reduce litter means that if the containers are being collected and still going to landfill, we are still achieving the objectives of the act. We do not track that data as a formal part of our administration of the act.

**Mr WOOD:** Is there an 'and' between the two objectives, or an 'or'?

**Mr PURDON:** I do not recall exactly what the act has, but they are dual objectives.

**Mr WOOD:** It makes a difference whether it is an 'and' or an 'or'. If it is an 'and' then both have to come into play.

**Mr PURDON:** That is right, but our position in drafting and implementing the act is, if you are not recovering for reuse, at least you are recovering to get them off the streets.

**Mr WOOD:** I admit I had forgotten there were only two, because I always thought the third was to reduce landfill.

**Mr PURDON:** I do not believe that is an objective of the act. If you are trying to get litter off the streets, potentially you are increasing what is going to landfill. It is still achieving an objective.

**Mr WOOD:** I would put 'and' three times, just to make a point.

**Mr PURDON:** I can add to that. That is the act and its objectives, but there is a broader ambition of the Territory government, and other jurisdictions, that has been led by environment ministers nationally. It is commitments to the National Waste Policy, which has set some targets nationally for waste recycling, including increasing the recyclability of different plastic containers et cetera.

The Northern Territory is committed to implementing the National Waste Policy. In that sense, we are looking at how the CDS can contribute to national targets. We are also looking at working with other jurisdictions on what other single use plastics or unnecessary plastics we can either recover more effectively for reuse or remove from the market. Plastic straws, for example, Styrofoam cups, boutique plastic bags over and above the single use plastic bags—they are all different types of plastics at the moment that are in the frame for various policy mechanisms being looked at nationally.

**Mr WOOD:** When we talk about national programs—Western Australia is about to introduce its scheme and I have to laugh because Coca-Cola and Lions are the people who are going to run it. I think they are mad, because they are the people who tried to stop us from having it so I do not know whether Western Australia

were on another planet when that happened, but they have chosen them.

When you are talking to other ministers, is there talk about expanding it and also making it far more uniform? I have said time and again, when you have to pick up a bottle of wine, the non-alcoholic wine can have a deposit and the alcoholic one cannot. The fruit juice can, and the 100% fruit juice cannot. The 750 millilitre iced coffee may, and the one litre iced coffee does not. It goes on and on.

Is there any discussion on how we can make this a lot easier for the consumer, and not have to separate things based on the size of the product rather than the product itself?

**Ms LAWLER:** I agree, but the ACT commenced the container deposit scheme in December 2017, Queensland in June 2018. They are only really just getting there. We have probably got to catch up, as you said, with WA. As the minister, that would be one we can lobby to try. As the smaller jurisdiction though, it is probably a tough call.

**Mr WOOD:** I just thought we would lead the way.

**Ms LAWLER:** We can lead the way but when you have big places like New South Wales only just recently coming on the scene and WA, as you said, not until 2020, there is a lot of work to be done.

**Mr WOOD:** I wrote to both ministers in New South Wales and Queensland. I might as well have spoken to the man on the moon. The Queensland minister said it was just for litter. I thought, hang on it is for more than just litter. That is the old South Australian process.

Is it uniform enough that if I purchase a bottle of Coke in the Northern Territory, I can get my money back in the ACT?

**Mr PURDON:** Yes, it is, and that has been brought about through shared labelling requirements, for example. One of the recommendations of the review is to look at that uniformity of containers and also the scope of containers covered by the Northern Territory Government's CDS. We will be looking at that and we will be working with other jurisdictions on the scope that they have covered and whether we can work together on broadening the scope.

The other thing of interest is Tasmania has just announced, in the last couple of days, a commitment to a container deposit scheme to be introduced by 2022. That leaves Victoria as the only jurisdiction who has not made a commitment to container deposits.

**Mr WOOD:** Too many vested interests in Victoria. I have been in local government long enough to know the people that work against that scheme. That is great news. I think then, eventually the Commonwealth Government should step in and say we will manufacture a national scheme and the money—which I think should go back into environmental schemes—from containers not returned should not be going back to companies. It should be going back to the Commonwealth and then spread out to the states and territories according to sales. At the moment I think it is one of the biggest rip-offs that we have in the system. That is another issue.

One of the areas in your annual report shows crushed cans in one of the communities. Of course, presently companies will not take crushed cans unless you just get the weight and they will pay you for the aluminium price rather than the container price. That does not really encourage people to crush cans and reduce freight. Has the EPA done any work on seeing whether they can get around that? Getting rubbish in from remote communities is surely one of the big issues we have in the Territory to try and make this bigger than 60% or 70% but making it closer to 90%.

**Ms LAWLER:** In 2018–19, \$114 000 was issued to communities and small businesses under the Environment Grants Program to install container deposit infrastructure in regional and remote areas. We saw that in Peppimenarti, Nganmariyanga, Yulara, Katherine and out at Cooina. There is some support from government to do that.

**Mr PURDON:** I just had a bit of a déjà vu moment with that question. I do not know if I can recall the answer as well as I did last time I answered it. We are aware of that issue. We have worked with communities and when there are depots and coordinators to try to come to some arrangements between themselves so that crushed cans can be accepted and be included as part of the scheme as a case-by-case basis.

I do not have the details in front of me of who we have worked with and whether that arrangement is still

continuing. I can find more information on that if you would like.

**Madam CHAIR:** Are there any further questions on Output 3.1?

**Mr WOOD:** I will just clarify one thing. You are not only looking at reducing the—what is the opposite of uniformity? Non-conformity? You are reducing non-conforming products in regard to beverages. But are you also looking at containers which are not necessarily beverage containers, like glass jars and liquid detergents in plastic containers?

We have the scheme for large containers of insecticides—what are they called—drumMUSTER. I think that would be better in this process, too. Is something happening in the background to try to increase the types of containers that can be returned?

**Mr PURDON:** Coming out of the CDS review completed last year, the focus is on beverage containers, not on jam jars or other types of containers. We are not looking at other types in that sense, other than single-use plastics that might be taking over the market or their recycling can be increased from a national sense. The Northern Territory is not looking at broadening the CDS beyond beverage containers.

**Mr WOOD:** If there was a third objective of the act which says 'to reduce landfill', which is what we should be trying to do—we need to change the legislation and that would give more of a window to look at reducing other containers ending up in landfill. That is something a member of parliament should do.

Has the environmental assessment of the McArthur River overburden management project been completed, and what were the results?

**Ms LAWLER:** I will pass to Paul Purdon for that.

**Mr PURDON:** The Northern Territory EPA completed its assessment of that project in July last year and provided its assessment report to the Environment minister on 31 July 2018. The EPA's report is available on the EPA website.

The EPA made about 30 recommendations in regard to how that proposal should proceed. Those recommendations were provided to the Environment minister, who forwarded them on to the Minister for Primary Industry and Resources for his consideration in issuing any approvals for the project.

To give you a summary of those recommendations, they were about the overarching objective of the EPA. What it wanted to achieve was protecting the health of the McArthur River. There are a range of recommendations by the EPA on how that should be achieved. The EPA was conscious of the need for transparency in regard to what MRM is doing at the mine and what the regulator is doing. A number of recommendations were about improving transparency and accountability in regard to management of the mine and improving community input.

The EPA made some recommendations about adaptive management of the mine site—improving the science that could be collected through various monitoring programs that allow MRM to learn as it goes, in a systematic way, to achieve certain environmental outcomes. The EPA was concerned and made recommendations about the governance of expert reviews and getting the best expertise to inform the regulator and operator on environmental management decisions.

**Mr WOOD:** How do the EPA's recommendations fit in with—is there not an independent body or company that looks at the overall operations of the mine that came from a time when the river was being re-routed?

**Mr PURDON:** Yes.

**Mr WOOD:** How do the two come together?

**Mr PURDON:** That is the independent monitor. The EPA looked at the role of the independent monitor as it stands now and thought that it could be revised. At the moment the independent monitor does an annual review and report on the operation and regulation of the mine.

From memory the EPA recommended that happens less frequently and that other expert bodies, whether there is one panel looking at waste rock management or tailings storing management, or separate bodies looking at those, could review those particular aspects, report to the regulator, and the independent monitor would have an oversight role of other expert bodies, if that makes sense. It was changing the governance in

way that would, I think, take a bit of pressure off the independent monitor from having to do a fairly detailed and onerous annual review, and allow other expert bodies to provide their technical input to certain subsets of the operations.

**Mr WOOD:** Your role with McArthur River was to do a report, which I would have presumed was something to do with the waste rock, and I think there was burning. You stepped in and did a report. You are not the people that are looking at the overall management from an environmental point of view—that is the independent monitor?

**Mr PURDON:** The EPA does not have any overarching regulatory role in relation to the McArthur River mine. It did environmental impact assessment on the overburden proposal, but when we had the smoking waste rock dumps, it was an air quality issue that was a concern off the mine site, so the EPA, because it has jurisdiction for air quality issues off a mine site, stepped in and did a report into that. That report was basically was on what the impact of air quality emissions from the mine site on the neighbouring communities. That was the EPA's role.

The regulator of the mine site itself is the Department of Primary Industry and Resources.

**Mr WOOD:** Will that role of independent regulator move your department when the environmental sign of mining cross out of mining and into the Department of Environment and Natural Resources—is that correct?

**Mr PURDON:** The government's commitment to moving the environmental regulation of mining to the Environment department, which still needs to be put into place—yes. Environmental regulation of McArthur River mine and other mines would then sit with the Environment department.

**Mr WOOD:** I will be interested to see the changeover too. I have a couple more questions. These are more specific. The EPA now provides the advice on all environmental management plans submitted under the Petroleum (Environment) Regulations that relate to hydraulic fracturing activities and announced its intention to appoint two additional members to assist in undertaking its function. I think that was announced before.

The 2019–20 budget allocation for the EPA is slightly under \$6000 less than last year. Will there be any cost for the NTEPA on implementing the reforms outlined in the Environment Protection Bill 2019?

**Ms LAWLER:** Two members—Dr Vaughan Beck and Dr Rod Lukatelich, who started on 1 January 2019. Last financial year there was new funding of \$220 000 for two additional members to the EPA, which also increased an increase to remuneration for all members excluding the Chairperson from 1 January 2019.

**Mr WOOD:** Are you hoping those costs will be recovered at some other stage?

**Ms LAWLER:** Probably a simple answer would be yes. We do hope that all of the costs associated with onshore oil and gas will be recovered. But, again, these are two highly qualified people who are important for all Territorians to be confident that the Northern Territory EPA has that depth and breadth of knowledge on it to make sound decisions. I think that cost is a small amount for that reassurance and the assurance for myself on that.

**Mr WOOD:** Under the section of purchases of goods and services in your annual report, page 102—in the department's financials, expenses for legal services includes legal fees, claim and settlement costs. This was \$118 000 in 2018, up from \$80 000 in 2017. Does this figure include the EPA's legal services? Do you foresee that the NT EPA will require additional legal services after the commencement of the Environment Protection Bill 2019?

**Ms LAWLER:** I will go to the Chief Financial Officer to respond.

**Mr WOOD:** Mr Purdon might have an opinion.

**Ms TOWNSEND:** Yes, it does include the NT EPA's legal costs. It will vary from year to year depending on what matters we raise.

**Mr WOOD:** It has to be variable, I presume.

**Ms TOWNSEND:** Are we expecting it to increase? Hopefully not. It will depend.

**Mr WOOD:** Okay. Could you provide a list of the NT EPA members, the number of meetings that each

member has attended in person or via teleconference, and the total number of meetings they should have attended in the last 12 months? What is the cost to the Territory in having NT EPA members who live outside the Territory in terms of travel?

**Ms LAWLER:** I presume that information would be in the annual report.

**Mr WOOD:** That is fine. I can follow that up if it is easy.

**Ms LAWLER:** I think it is in the annual report. I would presume all of those sorts of things are in the annual report. I do not have them in my folder in front of me. I can get you that information.

**Mr PURDON:** I will had to that. The annual report will say how many meetings have been held each year but it will not tell you exactly which members were present or absent. If you want that level of detail ...

**Mr WOOD:** I will give you the question and you can give it back.

**Madam CHAIR:** Do you want to put it on notice?

**Mr WOOD:** Yes.

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#### Question on Notice No 9.4

**Madam CHAIR:** Member for Nelson, could you please restate the question for the record.

**Mr WOOD:** Minister, could you provide a list of NT EPA members, the number of meetings that each member has attended in person or via teleconference, and the total number of meetings they should have attended in the last 12 months? What is the cost to the Territory in having NT EPA members who live outside the Territory in terms of travel?

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

**Ms LAWLER:** The question asked by the Member for Nelson of the minister has been allocated the number 9.4.

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**Madam CHAIR:** Are there any further questions on Output 3.1?

**Mr WOOD:** I have one last question. This was a matter raised last year with the EPA. I am a little general in what I say here. I visited a site in Katherine last year that the EPA was looking at in regard to illegal dumping. I have forgotten the name of the road, it is the road out to the gorge.

**Ms LAWLER:** Gorge Road.

**Mr WOOD:** Yes, Gorge Road. What has happened in the last 12 months regarding that property which had been asked to remove the waste that had been dumped on the property?

**Ms LAWLER:** I can report that the Northern Territory EPA has been investigating a property at Gorge Road. Evidence indicates that there has been significant amounts of waste materials that have been deposited at the property over 10 years and covers approximately 7000 square metres.

I will pass to Paul to provide an update on that complaint.

**Mr PURDON:** In May last year the EPA issued a pollution abatement notice over that property requiring the landowners to take measures to minimise environmental risks and to assess any groundwater impacts in relation to the waste on the property.

Very little has happened since then. The pollution abatement notice was reviewed at the request of the land owners independently. That review found that the pollution abatement notice was valid, it still stands and that it is appropriate. The EPA has recently been in discussions with the department about what its next steps might be given that not much action has been taken in relation to that pollution abatement notice. I do not want to flag what action that will be in this forum, but we are not far from informing the landowners what the next steps will be.

**Mr WOOD:** Am I correct in saying that also the Katherine tip is closed for asbestos? That was my understanding. They had a limitation on how long they would accept asbestos.

**Mr PURDON:** I cannot confirm that.

**Mr WOOD:** That is all right. It was one of the issues that was raised.

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**Answer to Question on Notice No 9.3**

**Ms LAWLER:** Madam Chair, I have a response to question 9.3.

**Madam CHAIR:** Thank you, minister. Go ahead.

**Ms LAWLER:** It is in relation to bore construction permits, new versus reworked bores. For the period 1 July 2018–31 December 2018 there were 19 bore work permits for new bores and 29 bore work permits for reworked or decommissioned bores. Efficiencies were introduced from 1 January 2019, which saw approvals for more than one bore per bore work permit. This means that differentiated data is not available for the period from 1 January 2019 to present day.

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**Madam CHAIR:** Are there any further questions on Output 3.1? That concludes consideration of Output Group 3.0.

**OUTPUT GROUP 4.0 – CORPORATE AND GOVERNANCE**  
**Output 4.1 – Corporate and Governance**

**Madam CHAIR:** The committee will now proceed to Output Group 4.0, Corporate and Governance, Output 4.1, Corporate and Governance. Are there any questions?

That concludes consideration of Output 4.1.

**Output 4.2 – Shared Services Received**

**Madam CHAIR:** The committee will now proceed to Output 4.2, Shared Services Received. Are there any questions? That concludes consideration of Output 4.2 and Output Group 4.0.

Are there any non-output specific budget-related questions? This concludes consideration of output groups relating to the Department of Environment and Natural Resources. On behalf of the committee I thank the offices that provided assistance to the minister today, at the bench and behind.

**ABORIGINAL AREAS PROTECTION AUTHORITY**

**Madam CHAIR:** Minister, I welcome you to introduce the officials accompanying you.

**Ms LAWLER:** I have Dr Ben Scambary, Chief Executive Officer of the Aboriginal Areas Protection Authority and Alan Buckingham, Director Corporate Services.

**Madam CHAIR:** In a moment I will 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 minister to ask their questions first, followed by committee members and finally other participating members may also ask questions.

The committee has agreed that other members may join in a line of questioning pursued by a shadow minister, rather than waiting for the end of a shadow minister's questioning on the output. Minister, do you wish to make an opening statement regarding the Aboriginal Areas Protection Authority?

**Ms LAWLER:** Yes. It would be my pleasure. I thank the committee for the opportunity to make an opening statement and I welcome your questions. As I said, I have Dr Ben Scambary and Mr Alan Buckingham with me today.

The Aboriginal Areas Protection Authority is a statutory body established under the *Northern Territory Aboriginal Sacred Sites Act 1989* and provides an important regulatory function to protect sacred sites while maintaining a balance with the economic and social aspirations for all Territorians.

The primary way in which the authority manages the protection of Aboriginal sacred sites is through the issuing of an authority certificate. In the Northern Territory. Anyone proposing to use or work on land in the Territory may apply to the authority for a certificate. Certificates are voluntary and provide developers and land users with clear instructions on what can and cannot be done in and around sacred sites.

Since 1989, the authority has delivered certainty for thousands of projects across the Territory while protecting sacred sites. The authority recognises the economic priorities of the Northern Territory and in 2018–19 it issued 80 authority certificates for a range of development projects including tourism, Defence, mining and infrastructure.

In 2018–19, the authority supported the government's infrastructure and investment priorities by issuing authority certificates for major projects including a certificate for upgrades and maintenance on the Plenty Highway in Central Australia. This project, once complete, will help amongst other things such as improve road safety and access to remote communities. There is also a certificate for the development of an undersea fibre optic cable to the Tiwi Islands. The project, once completed, will provide Tiwi Islanders with access to reliable, future-proofed and weather-resistant telecommunications infrastructure. The project is part of the government's commitment to invest in the bush. There is a certificate for the construction of a launch facility in Arnhem Land. Once complete, the facility will become the home of Australia's first commercial sub-orbital rocket and will support the growth of Australia's emerging space industry.

To attract and sustain recreational-based tourism in line with the government's Turbocharging Tourism package, the authority-issued authority certificates for projects including upgrades and development of infrastructure and facilities in the east Reynolds area of Litchfield National Park, construction and maintenance of a new Glen Helen path and viewing platform, repairs and maintenance work at the Big Horse Creek Campground and boat ramp at Gregory National Park, and installation of park facilities along the Larapinta trail.

Tourism is a cornerstone of the NT economy, and these projects will help attract more visitors and create more job opportunities for locals. To support regional growth in the Northern Territory, the authority facilitated regional infrastructure planning and logistics projects by issuing authority certificates for the Katherine proposed logistics and agricultural hub and the Katherine East neighbourhood centre and associated work. These projects will transform areas of Katherine into a more accessible tourist hub, attracted more jobs and enhancing liveability of the town.

The contributions of the defence to the Territory's economy is substantial and an important economic driver. The authority facilitated development in the Defence sector, issuing authority certificates for the refurbishment, new infrastructure and expansion of airfield at the Tindal RAAF Base and the Lee Point master plan, urban development for Defence Housing Australia.

Another area of important work that occurs in the Territory, is the provision of facilities and essential services by the government, and the private sector, to our remote communities. To facilitate these important activities, the authority issued certificates for township development at Daly Waters, upgrades to the Balunu Healing Camp at Talc Head and telecommunications infrastructure at Kintore, Litchfield, Wurrumiyanga, and Atitjere.

Authority certificates also continue to provide certainty for the mining sector, which is a key driver of economic growth in the Territory. In 2018–19, the authority issued a number of certificates which facilitated mining and exploration projects throughout the Territory. As part of the authority's administration of the Sacred Sites Act, the authority is responsible for enforcing offence provisions. In 2018–19, the authority prosecuted one proponent, and a business operating on the Blyth River, for breach of the Sacred Sites Act. The defendants pleaded guilty, and a conviction was recorded for both defendants.

Today, through this opening statement, I am pleased to relate the achievements of AAPA. I take this opportunity to thank the board, the chief executive officer, and staff of the authority for their work in protecting sacred sites and supporting the economic aspirations of the Territory.

**Madam CHAIR:** Are there any questions relating to the statement?

**Mr GUYULA:** On Output 5.1.



**Madam CHAIR:** If the minister has mentioned the topic in her statement, then you are free to question the statement.

**Mr GUYULA:** I have concerns about the protection of sacred sites in Arnhem Land. I attended the Chief Minister's dinner in Nhulunbuy and there is a great desire to open up our country to tourism through fishing and visits to country. With an increase in visitors there is also a need to protect country and sacred sites. Is there an increase in funding to balance this need?

**Ms LAWLER:** Thank you for the question, Member for Nhulunbuy. It is very broad so it is a bit hard to narrow down. When you talk about increased visitation, are you referring to, for example, the bituminising or the opening up of the Central Arnhem Road? Or are you talking about specific tourism ventures?

I am not quite sure what you mean, but that is a responsibility of visitors to East Arnhem Land to ensure that they are careful about the environment and sacred sites and things like that. I will pass to Ben, the chief executive officer.

**Dr SCAMBARY:** The authority responds to requests for authority certificates for all manner of development. In relation to any proposals in Arnhem Land, we would hope that those proponents would come to us to seek clearance for sacred sites in the areas that they are interested in.

In terms of the second part of your question which related to funding, we cost recover those activities. If someone wants to undertake a tourism development in Arnhem Land they would come to us and seek an authority certificate and we would consult with the custodians of sacred sites there and we would charge the applicant for the cost of that.

**Mr GUYULA:** Yes. It is a question that concerns protection of sacred sites whether it is in areas where tourism is going to be conducted or where businesses are going to be conducted. Also, the bituminise, or whatever happens, it is protection of sacred sites where there can be a support from the government to protect areas of sacred sites and their significance.

**Dr SCAMBARY:** We would certainly hope that where that kind of development is proposed, our processes would be used and that we would have the opportunity to mark out where sacred sites are and make sure that we impose conditions that avoid them and protect them.

**Madam CHAIR:** Are there any further questions relating to the statement? There being no further questions the committee will now proceed to consider the estimates of proposed expenditure contained in the Appropriation Bill 2019–20 as they relate to the Aboriginal Areas Protection Authority.

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

There being no questions that concludes consideration of agency-related whole-of-government questions on budget and fiscal strategy.

## **OUTPUT GROUP 5.0 – PROTECTION OF SACRED SITES**

### **Output 5.1 – Protection of Sacred Sites**

**Madam CHAIR:** The committee will now proceed to Output Group 5.0, Protection of Sacred Sites, Output 5.1, Protection of Sacred Sites. Are there any questions?

**Mr WOOD:** When you are working on sacred sites do you have a different process when you are not working on Aboriginal land as when you are working on Aboriginal land? Is there a different strategy or different approach that you use? One has obviously got the traditional owners living there and the other there may be traditional owners around but it is not Aboriginal land any more. Is there a different process dealing with those issues?

**Dr SCAMBARY:** There is no real difference in the methodology that we use when we are consulting with custodians of sacred sites, either on or off Aboriginal land. The Sacred Sites Act applies to all tenure types in the Northern Territory except for Pine Gap.

Our method is, broadly speaking, based on a pre-field work exercise where we identify from our records who the relevant custodians might be, and that is based on who we have consulted in the past and a range of anthropological materials. Then we will go to where those people live, whether it is on Aboriginal land or not, and do further consultation to make sure we have the right people to talk to. Then we will talk to those people

who are responsible for those sites. Tenure does not really make a difference to the way we do it.

**Mr WOOD:** There are a number of legacy land claims happening at the moment. I think some may have been sorted, but I know some have not been. Are you asked to be part of those land claims, either from proponents or from the commissioner? Are you part of that process?

**Dr SCAMBARY:** Not as such. We do not really get involved in the land claim process. The detriment issues that are dealt with and coordinated by the Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Logistics, I believe. They ask for our comment on any detriment issues.

From time to time, sacred site issues might arise as a point of conflict. We might be asked for advice in those circumstances, but it is fairly rare. Typically, when pursuing a land claim land councils will seek to ensure their record of sacred sites is consistent with ours, or they will avail themselves of the record we have.

**Mr WOOD:** What I was getting at in the original question was, the land council, when dealing on Aboriginal land, I would imagine would be talking to the traditional owners themselves about those sites. You are saying there would be a need to make sure your records and their records were the same?

**Dr SCAMBARY:** Yes. That is correct.

**Mr WOOD:** There are a number of land claims still being looked at in the Territory. Thank you. I do not have any more questions, Madam Chair.

**Madam CHAIR:** Any further questions on Output 5.1 Protection of Sacred Sites? There being no more questions that concludes consideration of Output 5.1 and Output Group 5.0.

## **OUTPUT GROUP 6.0 – CORPORATE AND GOVERNANCE**

### **Output 6.1 – Corporate and Governance**

**Madam CHAIR:** The committee will now consider Output Group 6.0, Corporate and Governance, Output 6.1, Corporate and Governance. Are there any questions? There being no questions that concludes consideration of Output 6.1.

### **Output 6.2 – Shared Services Received**

**Madam CHAIR:** The committee will now consider Output 6.2, Shared Services Received. Are there any questions?

There being no questions that concludes consideration of outputs relating to the Aboriginal Areas Protection Authority and all outputs relating to the Minister for Environment and Natural Resources. On behalf of the committee I thank the officers for attending today.

The committee will now move on to consider outputs relating to the Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Logistics. We will take a two-minute break.

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The committee suspended.

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## **DEPARTMENT OF INFRASTRUCTURE, PLANNING AND LOGISTICS**

**Madam CHAIR:** The committee will now consider output groups relating to the Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Logistics.

Minister, I invite you to introduce the officials accompanying you and make an opening statement.

**Ms LAWLER:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I would like to introduce the officials from the Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Logistics who are here today: Andrew Kirkman, Chief Executive Officer; Fotis Papadakis, Chief Financial Officer; Leah Clifford, Deputy Chief Executive who is responsible for Lands and Planning; Louse McCormick, General Manager, Transport and Civil Services; John Harrison, General Manager Infrastructure, Investment and Contracts; Simon Saunders, Executive Director, Transport Safety and Services; Doug Lesh, Senior Director Planning; and Mark Meldrum, Director Building Control.

The Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Logistics provides key services and functions to communities across the Territory through land use and planning, infrastructure investment, building regulations and maintaining the Territory's logistic supply chains.

The department has delivered and is continuing to deliver many of government's key functions including: the infrastructure program, with a number of fast tracked projects; emergency response and recovery; planning reform; development of area plans across the Territory; transport safety and services; building regulation; and legislation and reform.

We have been working hard to deliver a stronger and more diversified economy. We are unlocking the potential of the Territory by delivering major projects that create and support job creation, economic development and growth.

Despite challenging times, our priority remains to create jobs for Territorians. Our infrastructure program continues to provide significant economic support to the civil and building construction sectors. We are investing in roads as well as community infrastructure for sport, housing and education, including cooling and revitalising projects across the Territory.

Many essential infrastructure projects have been delivered since the committee convened in 2018, more have been fast-tracked and are now under way or due to start. The infrastructure program is supporting our tourism industry with the Turbocharging Tourism stimulus packages one and two, which are enhancing existing visitor experiences whilst creating new tourism experiences for visitors to the Top End.

The value for the Territory initiative has been a key focus for the department with 95% of all contracts awarded, and 98% of construction contracts being awarded to Territory businesses. This means more jobs for locals. The department is anticipated to spend in the order of \$900m this financial year providing a consistent works program that supports a wide range of local businesses that make up our construction industry in the Territory.

The department is delivering, in collaboration with the Department of Local Government, Housing and Community Development—over \$300m in remote housing across 39 remote communities—with multiple Aboriginal Business Enterprises delivering some of these works.

This government understands how important it is to provide our local industries with ongoing strong economic investment. In February this year we made a decision to fast-track a number of projects totalling over \$125m that will create around 500 jobs over the next three years.

As part of the government's commitment to social and economic development, the department has also processed over 455 development applications and is continuing to deliver government's vision for planning across the Territory with the planning system reform progressing with next steps to include draft changes to the *Planning Act* and the NT Planning Scheme.

We also have a clear plan for infrastructure investment in the Northern Territory with our 10-year Infrastructure Plan that includes important government projects as well as private investment projects. The Territory Labor government's number one priority is to continue to create jobs, to keep driving our economy, and to attract more people to live and work here to keep us growing and thriving.

The department is also responsible for approximately 55 000 square kilometres of vacant crown land across the Territory. This includes management of, stormwater drains and public assets across the Territory for public safety and to meet the needs of the community, including such areas as the Frances Bay Mooring Basin.

Building regulation is also managed by this department where audits and investigations are carried out under the *Building Act 1993*. The department has completed over 140 complaint investigations, consisting of 136 building complaints and eight practitioner complaints.

Transport logistics is a significant economic enabler for the Territory with the department managing over 22 000 kilometres of national highways, arterial and local roads, whilst also supporting other transport infrastructure such as remote aerodromes.

There are many more roads projects forecast for delivery across the Territory with a total roads program of \$632.9m. This roads program will provide more jobs for Territorians. I would also like to acknowledge the

staff at the Motor Vehicle Registry for all their hard work to deliver ongoing customer satisfaction reforms to the community with 157 221 licences issued and 194 380 vehicles registered. Over 50% of renewal transactions are now taking place online.

The Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Logistics is a diverse agency that plays a very important role in the community, including emergency preparedness, response and recovery. This was very evident in March this year when Cyclone Trevor crossed the coast east of Borroloola. The department provided logistical support, set up evacuation centres in four locations across the Territory and ensured government and public buildings were made safe.

Delivering on government's priority to create local jobs as well as delivering important services right across the Territory, would not be possible without the hard-working and dedicated staff of the department, and I would like to thank them for the work they do every single day on behalf of Territorians. I now look forward to talking about the great work of this department.

**Madam CHAIR:** Are there any questions relating to the statement?

**Mr HIGGINS:** The department has a very hard job in delivering a lot of these projects. It is a department that cops a lot of criticism when things go wrong, but they do not get given the praise when things go right. That is something the department should be proud of. They get a lot of things right in the amount of money.

If I can go through a couple of quick things. You spoke there about building regulation and this is just a straight question. When we talk about on rural blocks, you have the 80 square metres and you do not have to go through the full planning process. There are three things that you have to meet: one is a single power connection; the other is a single water connection, or a single bore; the third is a single sewerage connection or septic.

There is no exception to any of those except the last one, which is that if your septic is not big enough to handle that second dwelling, your plumber can give you a letter that says it is not big enough and you can put a second septic tank in. Why then, if that is the exception, do those people that get that from their plumber, still have to go through the full planning process?

I know there are regulations on distance of septic et cetera from bores, but complying with all of that—and in the regulations it actually says the plumber can give you a certificate. Why is there a requirement to go through the full planning process when the whole intention was to avoid the planning process?

**Ms LAWLER:** I am not sure why. You have paraphrased my thoughts—the concerns in the rural area about water. There is the myth that at the end of the Wet you flush dye down your toilet and see it come up in your bore. That often gets talked about in the rural area.

We do not call those urban myths, but these are rural myths. That often is the one that does the rounds in the rural area.

My presumption would have been it was a public health matter making sure people did not just get a mate who is a plumber to write a letter and get around it and then run into issues around that. I will take that one on notice, because it is not one I have a clear answer on, but I would presume it would be just maintaining people's wellbeing and making sure we do not have 10 different septic tanks on a block or things like that, and where the water is then being contaminated. We will chase that one.

**Mr WOOD:** That is why I asked in the last sittings whether septic tanks are checked, because that is my concern. People do things, it is supposed to be self-regulatory, but who regulates that process?

**Mr HIGGINS:** This one, I do not think, was about health. I checked all of that. You have a licensed plumber who says the septic is not big enough, therefore you require a second one. Like any house that puts a septic in, I presume they come and inspect it.

The question is, if you have to go through the full planning process, it is not addressing the issue. To then go and stick the pink signs up and go through that six-week advertising and put it in the paper—these are the things that 80 square metres was meant to miss. It might be a question to take on notice.

**Ms LAWLER:** Yes, I am happy to. Whether it is just an opportunity to inform your neighbours, and if you are a neighbour you might want to know that your neighbours were putting in a second septic tank. It is a great place to start talking about septic tanks, but I will take that on notice and I am sure somebody listening will

have a chance to reply.

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**Question on Notice No 9.5**

**Madam CHAIR:** Opposition Leader, please restate the question for the record.

**Mr HIGGINS:** When you are building a granny flat, 80 square metres and under, the requirements are single power, single water and single septic. The exception is if your licensed plumber gives you a certificate that the septic will not handle it, and if you then want to put in a second septic, you need to go through, as well as the normal health stuff, the full planning process. Why?

**Madam CHAIR:** Minister, do you accept that question?

**Ms LAWLER:** I do, and I am very interested in the answer.

**Madam CHAIR:** The question asked by the Opposition Leader of the minister has been allocated the number 9.5.

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**Madam CHAIR:** Are there any further questions relating to the statement?

**Mr HIGGINS:** The figures in there are 95% to local and 98%. I do not know the exact split, but we have heard in some of the commentary today, or yesterday. If you looked at the artificial reefs—there was a whole stack of steel coming from China. We have heard people say a local firm might get it and they are passing work interstate. Do we have any plan to have a look at some of that? We know what the intent is, Buy Local and all that stuff, but if people are finding ways around that, are we going to look at how we might be able to tighten that up?

**Ms LAWLER:** It is obviously very important to the Territory to make sure that people buy local and use local. We have Denys Stedman as the Buy Local Advocate, who I make time to meet with.

The issue around all of that is that it can be quite complex and quite vexed, and when the economy is tough it gets looked at and scrutinised very closely. You understand the steel issue as well—we remember that issue very well. It is one that we continue to try to drive and strive to improve.

**Mr KIRKMAN:** As the minister was saying, we absolutely strive to get as much local content in to our contracts, particularly our construction contracts as we can. As you pointed out we have about 99% local content now with our construction contracts, which is great.

We do not lose site of the fact that we then need to be really clear about the content within those contracts and we drill down on those. With that particular contract, the fishing infrastructure ...

**Mr HIGGINS:** I was using that as an example.

**Mr KIRKMAN:** That was a good example. There was an element in there that the successful tenderer had put in which we uncovered when we sat down and worked it through with the contractor how they are actually going to deliver that we identified that there was an intention to look at not going local, if you like, for an element.

It was a relatively small element of the bigger contract, but through that process we have been able to identify a better way to do it and get it delivered locally, which is effectively a concrete solution with a much lesser component of steel. We are even expecting that local content on the steel to be delivered locally now. That is the outcome of that one.

We look at each project and the components under it. Occasionally when we go through the detail, yes, we find there are elements that perhaps we would like to be delivered differently, and that was a good example of that.

It is something that we are very cognisant of and we continue to work with our teams to make sure they are very cognisant of those matters when we are assessing tenders.

**Mr HIGGINS:** When the Buy Local Advocate did his last annual report, he raised some concerns as to how you deem a company to be local, how you actually measure it. There is all those problems. As well as materials there is also the issue of people and local companies getting contracts and then subcontracting out to someone interstate.

Is that still a concern or do we have some mechanisms in place to ensure that that is not occurring? It is a criticism that comes from a lot of people out there

As was said before, times are tough at the moment and lot of these people have time on their hands to sit down and look at the intricate detail in what their competitors are doing. We are probably getting a bit of fine scrutiny of some of this but it is highlighting those problems. What can we say to those people?

**Ms LAWLER:** I will start at the top. Absolutely, we want to maximise the dollars that are going to Territory businesses. We know the knock-on effect of people staying in the Territory—jobs for Territorians. It is one where we will continue to refine and work hard. I will pass to Andrew about any nitty gritty things that we can talk about.

**Mr KIRKMAN:** There is a lot of scrutiny on buy local and ‘best for Territory’ component. With the new procurement directions that we have we are looking at a 30% effectively local content component in just about every assessment that we have. It is a very high waiting for local.

We have a method to go through and make sure we are looking at individual components, numbers of locally employed people, subcontractors, we are going down to the detail of where the service supply is coming in. It is a very detailed review. We are working closely with the Buy Local Advocate and industry about how we can refine that more, take some of the subjectivity out of it and make it a bit more objective if we can. We also have to keep in mind we do not want to be causing more red tape for local industry at the same time.

There is a balancing act in this. I might just pass to John Harrison to see if he can add anything more, because he is the man who is delivering this for her.

**Mr HARRISON:** Our contracts have a requirement in the response schedules for contractors to tell us where they are going to source materials or subcontractors from interstate and to give us an option to purchase locally. That is something that we consider.

Once people make promises in those response schedules and we accept them as an awarded contract to them, we then have a contracted compliance unit that audit all contracts valued—or contractors who have contracts over \$500 000. We will audit a contract that they have with us once a year. Any contract over \$5m will definitely get an audit. We look at those components of the contracts.

**Mrs LAMBLEY:** If a contractor uses an interstate supplier or a quote from an interstate supplier to form part of his tender and he goes on to win that contract, how does that work out? If you are not checking the supplier before you award the contract, that could potentially blow out the ...

**Mr HARRISON:** Our response schedules require that suppliers and subcontractors are listed within so we have an understanding of what the composition of that contract will be prior.

**Mrs LAMBLEY:** Within the tender?

**Mr HARRISON:** Yes, within the tender. Then we hold them to account after we have awarded.

**Mrs LAMBLEY:** Okay. If a tenderer has numerous suppliers from interstate, you would check that out to find out ...

**Mr HARRISON:** Yes. If they have listed people from interstate and those components are valued at over \$100 000, we would want for them to tell us what the local supply cost would be, and then we could make a decision on whether we wanted to pay a premium for local content.

**Mrs LAMBLEY:** Can you instruct a contractor to buy locally, even if the price is cheaper interstate?

**Mr HARRISON:** We could choose not to award a contract to them

**Mr HIGGINS:** Is that a new thing in the tender? How long has that been in the tender process?

**Mr HARRISON:** I do not have an exact time frame, but it has been some time. It would be 12 months or more.

**Mr HIGGINS:** There was mention that 500 jobs are going to be created over either three or five years. I think it was infrastructure brought forward—I may not get that quote right. Can you tell me out of that, are they permanent jobs or jobs during that construction phase?

**Ms LAWLER:** No, they are job during that construction phase. There was \$125m of projects that have been brought forward. Some of those are one that you like—the Mandorah Jetty, Zuccoli stage two, Kilgariff stage two, the Litchfield Road, and I cannot remember what the fifth one is. It is a broad range of infrastructure, roads as well as infrastructure.

As you said, the focus then is on Territorians getting those. Whether it is Ostijic that have the road in Litchfield, but then it is the subcontractors—the sand that they get, the soil that they get, the rocks and all of those things are jobs for Territorians. That is what Buy Local is about. It is about keeping that person in town who can then purchase a house and a car, go to the restaurants and be part of the Territory community.

**Mr HIGGINS:** You mentioned MVR and how fabulous they are. I have a regular fellow, I think he must spot when my car is parked at Berry Springs—I think he has gotten to know any car. If I got a hire care he would probably know it is me—he seems to come in every time I am there. He says he has issues with MVR. One of the latest things he has complained about is that none of the MVRs—and a lot of the government departments—are no longer listed in the phonebook. There is just a one liner in the phonebook.

I do not know why looks after that, but is there any comment on that?

**Ms LAWLER:** No, because I do not use a phone book.

**Mr HIGGINS:** I think I said that to him as well but it was not going down well.

**Ms LAWLER:** I cannot actually comment. I use a mobile phone. I am looking at Louise McCormick, who is responsible for MVR.

**Mr HIGGINS:** Probably because all the phone books were in front of my office because of the post office boxes.

**Ms LAWLER:** You can always dial 8999 5511, the government switch, and get put through to ...

**Mr HIGGINS:** That is what I said and I said. They are fantastic people.

**Ms LAWLER:** You are a good local member. I will pass to Louise McCormick, General Manager of Transport and Civil Services, who is the Motor Vehicle Registry guru.

**Ms McCORMICK:** I know that recently the whole-of-government page that includes our MVR numbers was updated recently with the new phone books, but other than that all our phone numbers are listed online, including the regional offices. He can contact any of those. We have a suite of online things, but he is obviously not an online person.

We have our contact call centre and there are a lot of ladies there who are quite experienced in MVR processing, so they should be able to help him if he calls through to the general contact centre.

**Mr HIGGINS:** They are the answers I gave him. I thought I would ask the question, so next time he comes in I will say I have asked the question.

**Ms LAWLER:** Worst comes to worst, send him to the Member for Drysdale's office. We are right next to the Motor Vehicle Registry at Palmerston, so we have a lot of visitors.

**Madam CHAIR:** The time being just after 6 pm, we need to have a half-hour dinner break. We will be back here a couple minutes past 6.30 pm.

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The committee suspended.

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**Madam CHAIR:** Are there any other questions relating to the statement?

**Mr WOOD:** I need to find out—the issue about the legality of public money being spent on roads that are not gazetted or leased. How can the government spend money on those roads until they have been subject to a lease agreement or have been purchased from Aboriginal people?

**Ms LAWLER:** We obviously need to build roads for Indigenous Territorians. We need roads to be built across the Territory. I will pass to Louise McCormick, the General Manager, who can give you more detail. I have responded to that one during Question Time. It is one that we are able to do and it is important that we build roads across the Territory.

**Ms McCORMICK:** To build something on someone's land you actually need their permission. When we do that on Aboriginal land we go through land councils or the Office of Township Leasing and do that by agreement. We also have Aboriginal Areas Protection Authority certificates. That applies not just to Aboriginal land but to all land. We do that as well. The permission is predominantly through land councils.

**Mr WOOD:** If you went and asked the owner of the pastoral property the same thing and he said, 'Yes, I am happy for you to spend money on my road'. Would you do the same thing?

**Ms McCORMICK:** Yes. Legally, you can.

**Mr WOOD:** Legally based on what?

**Ms McCORMICK:** That you have the land owner's permission.

**Mr WOOD:** In the case of Aboriginal land, what restrictions are there on the use of that road from the point of view of—does the *Control of Roads Act* or *Traffic Act* apply to that road?

**Ms McCORMICK:** In terms of whether the *Traffic Act* and *Control of Roads Act* apply, we have been working with the Solicitor for the Northern Territory for many years on that. The advice is that they do apply because it is being used as a public access road.

**Mr WOOD:** For argument's sake, I live on Aboriginal Land Trust land. Do I have to have my vehicle registered on that road?

**Ms McCORMICK:** Yes, you do.

**Mr WOOD:** Do they say why?

**Ms McCORMICK:** If you want to be covered by MACC insurance you need to be registered.

**Mr WOOD:** And if you do not want to be covered by MACC insurance?

**Ms McCORMICK:** Then you are doing an illegal act.

**Mr WOOD:** But it is my road. It is your fault for spending money on it.

**Ms McCORMICK:** It may be your land, but it may not be your asset or road.

**Mr WOOD:** The minister wrote a letter to me regarding the road into Bulgul. Bulgul is on Aboriginal Land Trust land and the minister said that road is not the responsibility of the government; it is the responsibility of the land trust. I seem to be getting two versions of ...

**Mr HIGGINS:** A copy went to Gerry because it is actually his family's land.

**Mr WOOD:** I know the land well and I do not expect the government to actually do that road, to be honest with you. I would have thought it was Yilli Rreung or someone else. I do not expect it to be a road. It is the front entrance to a private block of land. That is what I would have thought was exactly the same—when you enter Aboriginal Land Trust—that is the front gate and you are on private land.

So the question is, why? Unless you have a section 19 lease over that, can you spend money on someone's private land? I am arguing that from a perspective of quality. You do not do work on pastoral properties



anymore. Some years ago that was stopped. Why would you not play by the same rules with Aboriginal land? I am not saying you should not have roads on Aboriginal land, by the way. I am just making sure the process is correct because otherwise it looks like people are getting money spent on a private road.

Is there legal advice that I can see that backs up what you have said—that the government has a right to spend money on those roads and that those roads are covered under the *Control of Roads Act* and *Traffic Act*? Is there some documentation to back that up?

**Ms McCORMICK:** Yes. For projects on roads in particular, there is usually a legal deed agreement with land councils and the particular land trust that the project is on. That is the documentation for each of those projects. In terms of the *Traffic Act*, it is in the act itself.

**Mr WOOD:** I mean where is the documentation that says it is legal for the government to spend money—not giving it to someone, by the way. If you give it to someone like Yilli Rreung and they can spend it how they like, that is slightly different. In this case you are building the road and spending public money on it. What I am after is what legal advice enables you to do that legally?

**Ms McCORMICK:** In regard to the land councils, they have to get consent from traditional owners through the Aboriginal Land Rights Act. We ask them for a particular project that we need consent to build. We do that legally by agreement through the deed. The deed acts out consent that was given by the traditional owners.

**Ms LAWLER:** If you are going to all that trouble with the land council and traditional owners, why do you not simply ask for a section 19 lease?

**Ms McCORMICK:** Because most government land is leased on unimproved capital value. For that to be for a road network, that is a significant amount of land and we would not be able to afford to upgrade the road if we paid that lease.

**Mr WOOD:** That is one of the silly things about leases on Aboriginal land; they should have been peppercorn where it is being used for the community. The price of the lease you would say to be too considerable?

**Ms McCORMICK:** Transport also has a different flavour in regard to infrastructure because it is about access. It becomes a sensitive topic when you are accessing Aboriginal land. Providing that access via a public road, you may not ever get a lease because of the way the land is thought of by the traditional owners. We have done social mapping studies with them on the key arterial routes—the Central Arnhem Road and the Arnhem Link Road. Those gave us the understanding of what the aspirations of traditional owners are for that network.

We focus primarily on those arterial links, not someone's front gate access. It is a continual conversation with them about what happens on Aboriginal land. Barge landings and aerodromes are exactly the same. They are a discrete piece of land; a road connects back to a public network.

**Mr WOOD:** Where you have township leasing you are including the roads, so there is a lease over those roads.

**Mr KIRKMAN:** It might be good to add a bit more context to Louise's discussion. As she has mentioned, this is a matter that we have discussed for many a year. Land in townships has been resolved to a large degree. The example of remote public housing—we are paying peppercorn leasing on most of those assets.

**Mr WOOD:** Including the roads?

**Mr KIRKMAN:** No, unimproved capital value on a range of other assets. As Louise pointed out, it is not affordable to pay unimproved capital value on large land assets. That is why we are working through roads, aerodromes and barge landings—what that land tenure will look like. Moreover, I do not think anyone disagrees that those community assets are required. Roads are required for access, as are barge landings and aerodromes. No one disputes that the asset should be maintained.

Where we undertake a specific project or any new projects, we get approval through a project deed. Where there is ongoing use of an asset—a number of those assets actually predate the Aboriginal Land Rights Act as well, so there is a long-standing existing use of that by the broader community.

In going forward, we will continue to work on this matter of the land under roads, and whether it is a long-term lease or another arrangement, we would like to land that. In the interim, I do not think anyone disagrees

that those assets need to exist and be maintained for the benefit of the broader community. There is nothing illegal about it.

**Madam CHAIR:** Member for Nelson, just with some caution. One of the rules is that questions cannot be debated. You have asked questions and have been given answers. I do not want to get into a debate. If you could ask a question around the budget.

**Mr WOOD:** The question is, how can you put money into a road that is not open to the public? For some of the public it is and for some it is not. I would have to get a permit, but other people can use that road without a permit. That road is a restricted road on private property.

When I look at a pastoral property you do not spend money on those roads. You have two systems that are operating here in relation to maintaining roads in the Northern Territory.

**Mr KIRKMAN:** In response to that, on one hand we have roads that are accessed by the broader community. Pastoral roads are used by one owner and that is the pastoralist. Sometimes there is access by others which is agreed between the parties.

Where we are building roads on Aboriginal lands, it is for use of the broader community. Not a private citizen.

**Mr WOOD:** But it is a private parcel of land and a private ...

**Madam CHAIR:** That is bordering on debate. If you have a specific question you could get a briefing on this particular matter outside or you could put a question on notice.

**Mr WOOD:** Thank you for the answers but I am not happy with them—not because I disagree with the advice I have been given from that point of view. It also affects councils and the issue needs to be looked at more closely than it is being at the moment. The issue about rental for the land is something that—if people want roads to be built then the other side of it is reducing the leasing on the land to peppercorn rental. That is what should have happened in the first place.

**Madam CHAIR:** We are getting into discussion ...

**Ms LAWLER:** I can assure you that it is an issue that is looked at very carefully by the department. It is also one of the complexities—the Leader of the Opposition said that in one of his opening comments—of working in and building infrastructure in the Territory.

It is very different to the rest of Australia. My praise goes to the department for working its way through these complex issues.

I am happy for Mr Kirkman, Ms McCormick and you to sit in a room and debate it.

**Mr WOOD:** I want good roads on Aboriginal land. I just want to get this ...

**Madam CHAIR:** We understand where you are coming from, Member for Nelson.

**Ms LAWLER:** If we had an easy answer we would give it to you.

**Madam CHAIR:** Are there any further questions on the statement?

The committee will now consider the estimates of proposed expenditure contained in the Appropriation Bill 2019–20 as they relate to the Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Logistics. Are there any agency-related, whole-of-government questions on budget and fiscal strategy?

There being none, that concludes questions on agency-related, whole-of-government questions on budget and fiscal strategy.

## **OUTPUT GROUP 7.0 – INFRASTRUCTURE INVESTMENT PROGRAM, SUPPORT AND DELIVERY** **Output 7.1 – Infrastructure Investment Delivery**

**Madam CHAIR:** We will now proceed to Output Group 7.0, Infrastructure Investment Program, Support and Delivery, Output 7.1, Infrastructure Investment Delivery. Are there any questions?

**Mr HIGGINS:** Yes. I will pre-empt and say I will give a heading for each one, as I have in the past, to get through some of these. Then people can swap around.

Richardson Park in the budget papers has listed demolition of structures, upgrade playing fields and landscaping. What is the government's plan with Richardson Park at this point in time?

**Ms LAWLER:** It is my pleasure to talk about Richardson Park. There are a couple of things. We went to the election around the commitment for Warren Park and we have delivered on that. I have continued to have meetings with some of the parties that are very interested in having Richardson Park as a home ground. They are the Nightcliff and Brothers rugby league clubs. At Richardson Park we are going to demolish the grandstand, upgrade the playing surface which at the moment is not fit for rugby league or for the community to use, and insert a road to provide access for Ludmilla Primary School.

One of the issues with Ludmilla Primary School is that they have to come and go through Bagot Road which is a very busy road. The bottom line is that Richardson Park, the grandstand, will be demolished. There was a report that was done which showed it would cost between \$3m and \$6m to upgrade that facility, but it would also cost \$455 000 or \$460 000 a year to run that facility. I believe that the club and those clubs would not have the funds to do that.

St Mary's Football Club, which is probably one of the most successful football or sporting clubs in the Northern Territory, is struggling financially at the moment. The Northern Territory Government has put dollars into Warren Park and the running of rugby league there as its headquarters. The bottom line is, we will clean up Richardson Park. It will become a community facility. Both Brothers and Nightcliff—and I have said this to the clubs—can use that facility as a sporting ground and a training ground.

It does not have funding for lights at this stage. Brothers and Nightcliff or Richardson Park can join the queue for lights on an urban oval. We are rolling out a lighting program: Bagot Road is getting lights, Nightcliff Oval is getting lights, and I want lights at Gray Oval. I am hoping that the federal government's commitment to getting lights at Gray Oval will happen. We all want lights on our community ovals—maybe Albrecht is a different story. The community wants light on their oval.

A bit of a long-winded answer, but this one has gone on a long time. We have seen netball move from its home of netball at Parap to Marrara. We have seen hockey move from Alawa Oval—for years it was at Alawa—and move to Marrara. We have seen NTFL and all those sports now at Marrara. Rugby league is a sport that has now moved to Marrara. I know and I can understand that there are families and people who are upset by that but that is the reality. Sporting grounds move over time. Yes, it is now the home of rugby league and it is a beautiful facility. If anybody has not been to Warren Park, I would encourage you to go there. It truly is a magnificent facility.

We will then fix up Richardson Park. We will be very careful—I know there are some really important sites there that commemorate some really old Territorians. We will make sure that they are well looked after. We will update that oval so it is a lovely oval. We will update the ablution facilities there. There will be a road in to Ludmilla School so it can increase its student numbers, which it needs to do.

That is the picture of what Richardson Park is going to be. I know that has been really hard for a vocal group of people in the Territory and some of those people are people I have known for a long time. I can understand their connection to Richardson Park, but they will be able to have that as a training facility for their clubs longer term. If they want to get lights on those ovals, they will be able to do that. They just need to join the queue with a number of people.

Some of those dollars—\$2.1m has been allocated to extend Richardson Drive to Ludmilla School. That is separate from anything else. That is Education. A total of \$2.91m has been provided to demolish the existing buildings, upgrade the playing fields and landscaping. It is demolishing but it is also making sure that Richardson Park Oval is a lovely playing facility as well. Then there is \$1.5m to construct the ablution facilities there.

That is the sum total of the money that is going in to Richardson Park.

**Mr HIGGINS:** I was not going to enter any debate about it. It was a straightforward, simple question about a statement you made.

**Ms LAWLER:** I did say to the Member for Nelson that I am not going to continue to talk about Richardson Park. It is one that I have spent a lot of time talking about.

**Mr WOOD:** The Member for Araluen and I know a lot about Richardson Park.

**Ms LAWLER:** Yes, we all do.

**Mr WOOD:** I am quite happy that it has moved. Can I just ask who will be responsible for the facility?

**Ms LAWLER:** We are having conversations with a number of government departments about that. I would hate to do in Education because I have not had any final conversations with them on that. I have had conversations with the Principal of Ludmilla, who would like to have that facility for their classrooms and for the school to be able to use during the day.

At this stage there will be ongoing discussions about that. Whether it is DIPL or another government department, it will remain a Northern Territory Government facility.

**Mr WOOD:** Sharing facilities sounds to be a good idea.

**Ms LAWLER:** Yes. We want it to be used. I should probably add that there has been consultation with the community—those discussions with the Wells Street community there as well. If you want to be able to walk your dog or take your kids down and kick a ball around—we want to see those things happen as well.

**Mr HIGGINS:** Dundee boat ramp—the issue about having to cart all the sand away on regular basis is not going to be sustainable in the longer term. I know you have committed to a study to see what solutions there are for that. Can you give us an update on where that is at—that study—and what plans may come out of that in the future? What do we see coming out of that?

**Ms LAWLER:** I will pass to somebody who enjoys fishing probably more than me to be able to provide a response.

**Mr KIRKMAN:** There is still some work we are doing on how we are going to maintain a level of access to Dundee boat ramp. It is a fantastic asset. I certainly use it myself. Compared to what was there before, it is great to be able to launch yourself.

It does require and has required significant movement of sand to keep it open to tides less than three metres. I think there will be a rationalisation of what it will be open for. Clearly it is not a 24/7 boat ramp because of where it is. It is open to the sea. It has a lot of tidal movement across that ramp. We are keen to see that open to as much of the tide as possible so people can get in and out of what is one of the most popular boat ramps in the Northern Territory.

I will get Louise McCormick, whose team is doing the work on the actual study we are doing, to fill in a little bit more in that respect.

**Ms McCORMICK:** We are about half way through doing the sand monitoring. We have until March next year until that monitoring happens. We need a good 12 months of data so we can get the seasonal influences as well. So far it looks like the rock groyne itself is actually very porous. A lot of that sand movement is coming through from that rock groyne. We may need to look at how we fix that going forward. We only have about six months' worth of data so far, but we will keep monitoring until March next year.

**Mr HIGGINS:** I suppose from those answers that it is a bit like—potentially there is something that we could do, but we will not get to the ultimate solution of 24/7 access any time. Am I fair in saying that?

**Mr KIRKMAN:** That is correct.

**Mr HIGGINS:** But wait for the study to come out?

**Mr KIRKMAN:** The study will give us the best maintenance program to keep that open to as many tides as possible without breaking the bank.

**Mr HIGGINS:** I know that ultimately it will be dollars in the end that end up with the final decision.

Moving to shade structures—how much does government spend on shade structures in Darwin and Alice Springs CBDs?

**Ms LAWLER:** Are you referring to the Cavenagh shade structure?

**Mr HIGGINS:** Yes, we have some in Cavenagh Street and then we have some little bits around. I think the Chief Minister said we are trialling different things. It is a matter of how much.

**Ms LAWLER:** As part of our goal to cool the CBD and have a vibrant CBD and bring more people into the CBD, there are a couple of projects. The Cavenagh Street shade structure was \$2.7m, and that went to PTM Group, a local company. That was completed in October. We are encouraging those plants to grow every day.

We have also put 29 shade trees into Cavenagh Street, and that was \$1.37m. For the Smith and Bennett Street walkways that is GT Builders and was \$1m. For the actual shade structures, it is \$2.7m for Cavenagh Street and \$1m for Smith and Bennett Street.

**Mr HIGGINS:** That is roughly \$5m in Darwin?

**Ms LAWLER:** No, \$2.7m, \$1m and \$1.37 for the trees.

**Mr HIGGINS:** Yes, I added the trees. What about in Alice Springs?

**Ms LAWLER:** All up there is about \$15m for the Alice Springs revitalisation project and there are a number of projects in that. The government is investing \$20m to reinvigorate, but through this investment, \$15m has been allocated for the CBD revitalisation project. So, \$15m and also \$5m for breaking the cycle of youth crime.

The \$15m includes \$5m to design and construct a water play area in the CBD, and DIPL are working with DCM and the Alice Springs Town Council on that one; \$5m to implement initiatives identified through the heat mitigation study, and that is focusing on the hottest areas in the Alice Springs CBD; and another \$5m for the CPTED, crime prevention through environmental design, to look at how to revitalise the town. It is \$15m for the Alice Springs CBD revitalisation.

**Mr HIGGINS:** Alice Springs revitalisation does not really include any of the shading and cooling we talked about?

**Ms LAWLER:** There is some, and heating in the winter. There is shade in the \$5m heat mitigation study.

**Mr HARRISON:** We are just assessing a tender at the moment for the design of the heat mitigation and lighting studies for the Alice Springs work, so we could not put a number on the component for shade structure right now, but I know there are a number of shade structures going into various street locations.

**Mr HIGGINS:** When the Chief Minister refers to these as trials, how are we going to measure it in the end? Before we spent this money, we must have had a plan on how we were going to measure it?

**Mr HARRISON:** I can tell you the heat modelling does show a couple of degrees drop in temperature within the Cavenagh Street shade structure. Some temperature sensors have been installed, and that will be monitored over a 12 to 18 month period.

**Mr HIGGINS:** Anyone else got anything on shade structures?

**Mr WOOD:** Trees. More trees, save money.

**Mr HIGGINS:** Rapid Creek flood mitigation was supposed to be finished about six months ago, but there is still a lot of work going on down there. Has that just been delayed or are there additional costs we have come up with there?

**Ms LAWLER:** I think it is amazing work and the science around the 100-year flooding and how it actually will work is fascinating. That project has encountered some asbestos, as is often the case in the Territory or the Top End. I will pass to John. I think it is very close to getting finished.

**Mr HARRISON:** The plan is to have that project finished in July. I do not have the exact figure on me of the cost of the asbestos remediation work that was done to contain the asbestos that was found on the site. That has been predominantly the delay experienced on that project.

**Mr HIGGINS:** Other than the additional cost of the asbestos, there is no sort of plan for cost overrun within your normal margins?

**Mr HARRISON:** No. There is no substantial cost overrun.

**Mr HIGGINS:** Okay. If I look at the Parliament House car park, we asked I forgot which minister regarding the development of an operational plan for that. They doxed you lot in. who is developing that operational plan? What will be in it? Will we charge? I know we have cars coming out of various car parks around. Presumably, individuals will not pay but are the departments responsible for those car parks going to pay? Can you give us some idea of what will be in that operational plan?

**Ms LAWLER:** Yes. I have been able to monitor the State Square underground car park very closely because it is right outside my window. It is a \$19.4m project that Tomazos has been completing. There are 450 car parks with six electric vehicle charging stations, but it will also be a cyclone shelter. It will replace those four hot car parks that we currently have—the Parliament House one out the front where staff park, the juror's car park, the one over near the esplanade and the one that is beside the juror's car park. It is about cooling that end of the CBD. I will pass to Andrew Kirkman, the CEO, to talk about the operational aspects of it.

**Mr KIRKMAN:** We are working with the officers from City of Darwin on a maintenance regime for the underground car park. There is still some discussion to be had. At this stage, what we are looking at is having an operating lease potentially for 12 or 24 months with City of Darwin, and with NT Government retaining the asset. That will give us time to look at the revenues that flow from the facility. We know there are 150 paying car parks—there are 300 at this stage which are not paying. They are just a replacement of those car parks which currently exist.

We would expect 150 paying car parks to cover the costs of operating the car park, but I guess we just need to have a look over the first 12 months to see how that goes in terms of the revenue flows and costs and then we can have a longer-term arrangement following that.

**Mr HIGGINS:** Okay. So basically we want to get the Darwin City Council to run the facility if we can. They already run the other one over there I suppose. Then the 300-odd existing ones will come out and continue not to be charged to the people who park there. The 150 left over will then be charged out. I do not suppose you can answer whether that will be opened to the general public or whether we will try and issue those for a longer period rather than on a daily-type basis, or has that not come up for discussion?

**Mr KIRKMAN:** They will be open to the general public. As in West Lane and other car parks around the city, some people might chose to go into a longer-term arrangement with the management body, whether it is a yearly lease or otherwise. Effectively, they will still be open to the public.

**Mr HIGGINS:** Okay. The reason I ask that is if it is a ticket-type system and someone takes a ticket, say to go in to your 150 car parks. I am sure they are going to park in some of the 300.

**Madam CHAIR:** Make them park at the top. It is free at the top.

**Mr KIRKMAN:** There are fairly sophisticated systems that operate for underground car parks, as you know.

**Mr HIGGINS:** And above-ground car parks too.

**Mr KIRKMAN:** Yes, above-ground too. You do not necessarily need a ticket so it may be that anyone parks anywhere. We are working that through.

**Mr HIGGINS:** Can we get an update on the ferry infrastructure strategy? I know there was a thing that came out, the 50-year plan.

**Ms LAWLER:** Yes. That is another interesting one.

**Mr HIGGINS:** I will add to that the Mandorah one.

**Ms LAWLER:** It is an interesting project. I will pass to Louise that one. It is one that is a lot further out on the horizon than immediate.

**Ms McCORMICK:** We have just released the full study, and the main findings out of it were in the shorter term. The ones that really need to be looked at in terms of land that we need for terminals—Cullen Bay will

still be a ferry terminal going forward, and obviously Mandorah. We are also looking at Fort Hill Wharf and Palmerston. As demand grows, those are potential sites where we think the market will be in the future.

**Mr HIGGINS:** We talk about the one up near Palmerston—look at all the people in the rural area who have the one bridge to cross, unless you go all the way out. Previously there was a study done, or a questionnaire put out which quizzed people at Palmerston and they said that they would not catch a ferry. I said, you have asked the wrong people the question. It is the people on the other side of the harbour. What sort of time frame are we projecting for that up there to be considered?

**Ms McCORMICK:** The study is to cover 50 years in total but it is very much market driven. If the market demands that we start to look at those options we would then invest in that area. At the moment the market is just not there to make it feasible at this point in time.

**Mr HIGGINS:** When we looked at Weddell and building Weddell—I am going back and may you do not know the answer—Noonamah Ridge has become a big topic and one of the things is maybe that Noonamah Ridge should be built where Weddell was planned, but what was the plan to get people in to town from Weddell at the time. Was any of that looked at, at that time?

**Ms McCORMICK:** Yes. There is a mix on ways with different people want different options for transport. Palmerston was looked at as a potential site for that population, but there are also corridors set aside for the Weddell freeway, if you like—an arterial network that goes from the heart of Weddell all the way through to Tiger Brennan Drive.

**Mr HIGGINS:** That would cross where the Elizabeth River Bridge is? That would have been expanding that bridge, am I right?

**Ms McCORMICK:** No. It is further downstream that we would build a new bridge.

**Mr HIGGINS:** In towards the harbour more? Or the other way?

**Ms McCORMICK:** No. The other way. Towards the Stuart Highway, east.

**Mr HIGGINS:** If you shoot across there you are still going to end up in Palmerston so how would you join on to Tiger Brennan Drive?

**Ms McCORMICK:** The corridor actually sits along where the rail and Elrondie Avenue are. There is a corridor along there for the future link.

**Mr PAECH:** Has the land tenure already been secured?

**Ms McCORMICK:** Yes.

**Ms LAWLER:** That is one of the best bits of advice I got when I started as minister, was about making sure you never block those logistic corridors.

**Mr WOOD:** Are we getting the light rail in to Darwin then if it has not been blocked?

**Ms LAWLER:** All of these things are in to the future. At the moment our population is very stable, as we say, it needs to be driven.

**Mr WOOD:** There was a sign sitting on Tiger Brennan Drive that said 'light rail' and it has gone now.

**Ms McCORMICK:** The corridor is still there though.

**Mr WOOD:** I am looking for that corridor. It is getting thin.

**Ms LAWLER:** No, we are making sure it does not get thin.

**Madam CHAIR:** Are there any other questions on Output 7.1?

**Mrs LAMBLEY:** Thank you, Madam Chair. My question is around select tendering. I have had a few complaints from people within the Alice Springs construction industry about what seems to be a significant number of tenders going out selectively since March of this year. They gave the example of five local Central

Australian tenders going to one construction company Ingkerreke worth \$10.5m.

Why have these gone out to select tender? Could you explain the process of why they have gone to select tender, the decision around that and a rationale.

**Ms LAWLER:** I can first of all say that tenders and procurement are something that, as minister—again it was very sound advice I was given in the first day in this job—I keep well away from. I have nothing to do with procurement or the tender process.

**Mr KIRKMAN:** Our procurement policies allow us to go directly to Aboriginal business enterprises that have specific links into communities that they work in. That is definitely the case for Ingkerreke. I know they have been given some contracts directly. The reason for that is effectively the local Indigenous content they can offer and also the ability to partner with an Aboriginal business enterprise that is looking at growing capacity in remote communities.

I am quite proud of the fact that we have been able to contract directly with about \$40m of Aboriginal business enterprises so far this year. That is not the exact figure but it is certainly around that figure. That is something that we have planned for the future, particularly in our remote housing contracts. If we cannot get Aboriginal business enterprises working in community, working with local Indigenous people, developing their capacity and giving them ongoing jobs, then we have not met our targets through that program in particular.

We are also looking at expanding that beyond housing to other contracts we have such as roads and the like.

**Mrs LAMBLEY:** What are the targets?

**Mr KIRKMAN:** For remote housing, the target is 40% Aboriginal content.

**Mrs LAMBLEY:** How many IBEs would there be in Central Australia? The select tender would have gone out to how many businesses or enterprises?

**Mr KIRKMAN:** I will get John Harrison to answer that specific question.

**Mr HARRISON:** In that instance, those tenders went to two select ABEs. It was Ingkerreke and Tangentyere. However, I would not have figures on me about all of the ABEs within the Central Australian region. We seek advice from the Department of Local Government, Housing and Community Development on the capacity of ABEs.

**Mrs LAMBLEY:** The concern raised with me is that as work gets tighter, this advantage that Indigenous IBEs get is at the cost of other businesses surviving, perhaps. Is that part of the government policy to even it out at some point at the risk of some construction companies going bust?

**Mr KIRKMAN:** There is an extensive amount of work available, particularly under the remote housing contract obviously with \$1.1bn over 10 years from NT Government funding and \$500m-plus from the Australian Government over the next five years. There are a lot of ins there for everyone who really is capable of getting into this work. Everyone from the Aboriginal business enterprises, those local industries in community, but also those businesses that are willing to work in remote and build local Indigenous capacity in community. There is a lot of work going for those businesses as well.

**Mrs LAMBLEY:** And this is an NTG policy?

**Mr KIRKMAN:** That is right. It is very specifically for Aboriginal business enterprises working in community to get the benefit of not only growing Aboriginal business enterprises in terms of their governance and delivery capacity but also the connections they have in community to grow those local jobs and keep them going through the different work that comes through the community.

**Mrs LAMBLEY:** There does not seem to be a huge amount of understanding about this within the industry. Is that a fair assumption?

**Mr KIRKMAN:** I believe everyone that we deal with, say through Master Builders Association and others, would be aware that this is what we are doing. We are very open about it. We are very clear about it. We also suggest that for some of those businesses that are working in Darwin, Katherine, Tennant Creek, Alice Springs or Gove that they really should be looking to partner with some of these IBEs, particularly those



businesses working in community.

**Mr WOOD:** In relation to contract compliance unit, it was strengthened because of the Auditor-General's report in relation to the Aboriginal employment scheme. The Auditor-General brought out a report last year where she spoke about a range of things that the government needed to do. She also mentioned that some of her recommendations were no longer relevant. Does that compliance unit still exist, and have the recommendations of the Auditor-General been followed through?

**Ms LAWLER:** Are you talking in relation to the Indigenous Employment Provisional Sum?

**Mr WOOD:** Yes.

**Mr KIRKMAN:** That work is still being done. It is now being done in the corporate services area, which is distinct from the compliance unit which is dealing with contracts more broadly. That goes to some of the recommendations that the Auditor-General has set for us. We are focused on those recommendations and we have implemented those. That work will be ongoing for some time, as we have a few dedicated resources on that work. We have an interagency task force that is still set up which I Chair. Police are at the table there as treasury and finance and the Department of the Attorney-General and Justice. We look at the work that the audit team does in auditing all those contracts, and make decisions as to whether companies get referred for further investigation or not.

**Mr WOOD:** The Auditor-General said the unit had not met enough. Has that criticism been overcome now?

**Mr KIRKMAN:** That was one area in which I did not align with the Auditor-General but the point was made. We have clarified that with the Auditor-General and through our terms of reference on the task force. The task force comes together when the work of the investigation team is brought to us and has references for us to take forward and consider. There was a period of time when there was some very large contracts, and contractors being audited by the team that took a number of months. There was no point for the task force to meet during that time until the investigation work had been done and could be brought to us.

**Mr WOOD:** Are there more investigations ongoing in relation to this program?

**Mr KIRKMAN:** There is.

**Mr WOOD:** Is it likely that there may be more prosecutions or is that something you cannot say at the present time?

**Mr KIRKMAN:** I cannot say. That would be a matter for the police prosecutions, but there may well be.

**Mr WOOD:** That is the past. What is the future in relation to this program? Has it now begun under a new title and turned over a new leaf?

**Mr KIRKMAN:** No, it was suspended in August 2017 and has not continued in any form. There are a number of contracts which still have that provisional sum element in them. Some of those contracts run over a number of years, so we are running those out.

**Mr WOOD:** So, normal contracts sometimes have a percentage of Aboriginal people that should be employed?

**Mr KIRKMAN:** For large contracts we have an Indigenous development plan that we require. On many contracts, for example, a remote housing contract, we stipulate the targets around Indigenous content. We audit what companies say they will deliver under those plans, and that is the critically important part. You do not need to actually pay companies to pick up Indigenous people. If they say they will in their contracts, you need to audit it and reward them if they say they are doing, or not give them further work or assess them at a lower scale if they have not met their commitments. It is about future work and controlling the outcomes.

**Mr WOOD:** In regard to Aboriginal housing projects, how much is your department involved in that scheme in regard to design and administering the works overall?

**Mr KIRKMAN:** I will get John Harrison to answer more on the design element. In regard to delivery, DIPL handles all the remote housing component other than Room to Breathe, which is largely being done by the Department of Local Government, Housing and Community Development. They also have the ongoing work on housing maintenance, given they have that relationship with the tenancy and property management team,

which is a good team relationship.

Other than property management and Room to Breathe, we deliver all the new housing, subdivisions and everything else.

**Mr HARRISON:** The Department of Local Government, Housing and Community Development does the local consultation through the local decision-making framework. At that level it will make decisions about which floorplan and design the community would like. Then information is passed to us for us to tender, award to a construction contractor and manage through that process.

**Mr WOOD:** One of the concerns, which is a concern I had when the SIHIP program was around, was that the cost of housing was astronomical in the sense you would not get many houses built for \$495 000 a house. They were looking at getting cheaper models when we had SIHIP. Have you been able to do what they are asking to reduce the price of housing?

**Mr HARRISON:** Through that program we are working through a number of different contract models to achieve that. In some instances we were able to roll out quite robust modular construction and in other instances we are allowing industry to tell us how they could design a facility.

**Mr WOOD:** I have had many people knock on my door saying, 'I have a design'. I say, 'Go and see the department'.

Do take a percentage of the work you do from the housing program, as payment?

**Mr HARRISON:** We do not charge a fee for the work we do; however, part of the program would be spent on design and, in some cases, delivery costs.

**Mr WOOD:** I know Weddell was mentioned, but in this case I want to ask—you have a land servicing and engineering unit. Have they done any preliminary work on the cost of developing Weddell? I am not saying, 'Give me the whole cost', but can it be costed in stages? Has any work been done on that?

**Ms LAWLER:** I will pass to Andrew Kirkman while Leah Clifford comes to the table. We are jumping between output areas. It is fine as we are down to our last half hour.

**Mr WOOD:** I was following the annual report. That was mentioned in there. It is my only guide.

**Mr KIRKMAN:** With Weddell, we are going through looking at the past work that has been done. There is a gap analysis piece of work we are doing, which is basically working out what technical assessments have been done in the past and which ones need to be done going forward. Leah's team is undertaking that work, so I will get her to talk more about that.

**Ms CLIFFORD:** As Andrew mentioned, we have been working through a gap analysis and status report.

**Mr WOOD:** What does 'gap analysis' mean?

**Ms CLIFFORD:** Part of the work involved with that is undertaking an audit, if you like, of all the reports that had been done previously on Weddell to understand whether they are still current and can inform future subregional planning. We have gone through, looked at all that work and listed that all out.

Part of the budget this year included \$1.5m towards future planning for Weddell/Cox Peninsula, and we are working through now a project plan which will start to look at the cost of infrastructure to inform that subregional planning work that will need to be undertaken.

**Mr WOOD:** Will you eventually produce some sort of plan that the public can look at, that will become part of the subregional plan?

**Ms CLIFFORD:** Yes, we will work through a whole lot of reports that need to be done. We will need to engage with the planning commission in relation to that subregional planning work, Power and Water and others, to inform that important piece of work. As with all the planning commission projects, they go through public consultation, so we see that would be evolving as part of that process.

**Mr WOOD:** I had a great hope that Weddell that would be tropical, sustainable and something that was well planned. I have on my desk Walter Burley Griffin and his wife's book about how they developed Canberra,

which has not been developed quite as he wanted it because the politicians got on the road.

Is there any idea how the city would look? Is there any sort of saying that this would be the main centre into the city—the CBD will be here, the suburbs will be there—so we can design some of the architecture and the things that could make this a real special city?

**Ms CLIFFORD:** In terms of the theoretical constructs of how we do strategic planning, we obviously start at the highest level and work through the subregional planning. As we start to get more information and more detail, we move down into the area plans which start to look at road connections and things like that. There is a planning process that we will need to work through.

We have not lost sight of the fact that there was a lot of work done previously with design charrettes and things like that. They form part of the package of work that we are looking at and will certainly inform part of the project plan that we are putting together to move forward with the project.

**Mr WOOD:** Please, minister, do not take this the wrong way, but that is part of the reason I have always said that a development like Noonamah Ridge could fit in if there was an overall plan that would allow development in stages. This could fit here and that could fit there. You might not have to build a CBD now like Palmerston, which was not very big when it started. That is why I am really asking the question, how far have we gone down that path?

**Madam CHAIR:** Member for Nelson, I am really aware of the time so I am going back to the Leader of the Opposition.

**Mr HIGGINS:** In the past there has been consideration given to a government business centre at Wadeye. Is that still in the planning stage or is it not on the radar?

**Mr KIRKMAN:** I do not have a lot of detail on it. As far as I am aware it is still on the plan, but I think most of that work is being considered through either DCIS or the Department of Business, Trade and Innovation. We do not have a direct line of sight into that.

**Mr HIGGINS:** Feasibility study for the Tennant Creek–Mount Isa railway connection—when will that be completed? Will it be released—just a timing on that?

**Mr KIRKMAN:** There has been a considerable amount of work done on the Mount Isa–Tennant Creek railway proposal. That work had been done, as you are probably aware, in conjunction with Queensland and the Commonwealth Government. There was some funding provided by the Commonwealth Government to assist with that and further funding provided by both jurisdictions. The Commonwealth funding came through the Developing the North funding—they had about \$5m for railway related research projects.

There was considerable work done in terms of where potential alignments could go. Obviously that also looked at potential resource sites, which they might make good use out of for the railway—where black soil plains need to be avoided and the like. There has been considerable technical work. There was also some feasibility work being done. I understand some of these reports are on the Australian Government's website for this project.

The feasibility did look at where the current state of play was in the resources sector. It suggested that it would require some of those resource projects to kick off to really get this viable right now. Certainly from the Territory's perspective, we are very keen to continue this identification work to make sure the right studies are being done so that when projects get off the ground and require a railway, we have as much of that groundwork done as possible to make it a more streamlined project to get off the ground.

**Mr HIGGINS:** Ridesharing and the \$1 taxi tax, for want of a better word, how much has that tax raised and can that be split into Darwin, Alice Springs and other centres, knowing that Alice Springs does not have any Uber yet?

**Ms LAWLER:** Alice Springs has one: hi oscar. We are calling up Simon Saunders, who is the guru on all things ridesharing. I must say that ridesharing truly has taken off in huge leaps and bounds. There are 611 ridesharing drivers approved in Darwin, eight in Alice Springs, one in Gove, one in Katherine and one in Tennant Creek. So far there are 374 ridesharing vehicles approved across the Northern Territory.

Also, there have been 205 619 ridesharing journeys completed to date since commencement in February 2018. That is a lot of people getting in ridesharing. I will pass to Simon to answer your questions around the

dollar levy.

**Mr SAUNDERS:** We do not have the breakdown between regions, but we certainly can get that. The total revenue raised by the levy to date is \$1.71m. That is 91c received from each dollar levy charged for each point to point transport journey. So that is in a rideshare vehicle, taxi, private hire car or minibus. Any point-to-point travel.

**Mr HIGGINS:** Is that in line with our expectations?

**Mr SAUNDERS:** It is fairly close. It is slightly below the expectations because, as you are aware, the license fees were substantially reduced, for taxis in particular. The idea of the levy was to recoup that cost.

Those funds are used for the taxi subsidy scheme for disabled transport and also the regulatory cost associated with administering the commercial passenger vehicle industry.

**Mr HIGGINS:** Thank you. The Territory-wide Logistics Master Plan—I think submissions for that closed in 2018 with a final document expected in late 2018. Where is that at and when do we expect to see it?

**Ms LAWLER:** This is a good news story. I was at the Australian Logistics Council, and Andrew was there with me. We did a presentation and I chaired a presentation from north Australia, which was very well received.

We have done a lot of work on our Territory-wide Logistics Master Plan, but we are waiting for the federal government to put out the National Logistics Master Plan to make sure ours lines up. There have been conversations at the bureaucratic level and a lot of conversations at the conference I attended as well. With the election, there has been a bit of a slowing around that.

We want to see the federal plan just to make sure ours lines up with the direction federally.

**Ms MCCORMICK:** A lot of what we are doing, as the minister said, is trying to align with the national plan. It does not make sense to have two different logistics plans. They all have to connect. We have done a fair bit of consultation with industry about what needs they may have in terms of logistics in the future. It also looks at an integrated system where we have sea, air and land transport within the plan. That is basically it.

**Mr HIGGINS:** How many health clinics have we built since July 2018?

**Ms LAWLER:** I am trying to think off the top of my head. Most of those that we had were opened. I know Ngukurr was opened, Angurugu—I could not give you the details. I do not think there has been a new health clinic opened. We would probably have to ask the Minister for Health about that. In 2017, I think there were three opened but I do not know of any in 2018.

**Mr HIGGINS:** Okay. I will just point out to the Member for Namatjira, the output is infrastructure investment delivery. I am asking about delivery on some of these so he might want to keep his comments to himself if he does not know what he is talking about.

Repairs and maintenance for the Department of Environment and Natural Resources is set to fall from \$913 000 to \$380 000. Why the big drop? It goes from \$913 000 in 2018–19 to \$380 000 in 2019–20. There must be something in there.

**Ms LAWLER:** We are flicking through our folders but I cannot think specifically about that.

**Mr KIRKMAN:** If you would like the answer to that, we can certainly take that on notice. There were a large number of stimulus programs across the agencies and obviously a lot of those are finishing up this year. That may account for some of the detail but if you would like the actual response.

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#### Question on Notice No 9.6

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

**Mr HIGGINS:** Can I find out the repairs and maintenance spend for the Department of Environment and Natural Resources, set to fall from \$913 000 in 2018–19 to 380 000 in 2019–20? Can you tell us why there

is that large drop?

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

**Ms LAWLER:** Yes, we accept those questions. Whether it was one of the things like the croc traps or one of those stimulus packages, we would hate to see DENR missing out.

**Madam CHAIR:** The question that has been asked by the Leader of the Opposition of the minister has been allocated the number 9.6.

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**Madam CHAIR:** Are there any further questions on Output 7.1?

**Mr HIGGINS:** In Budget Paper No 4, on page 28, this remedial repair of spalling concrete on the main ward block and it has \$1.2m. I assume that is water coming in from somewhere causing that.

**Mr HARRISON:** That particularly item relates to spalling concrete on the sunshades. Quite a bit of work has been done on the sunshades over a number of years, as well as trials to either encapsulate or remove the sunshades.

**Mr WOOD:** Has there been some movement on the site for the new youth detention facility? Do you have a number of sites and if so, can you tell us what sites you are looking at?

**Ms LAWLER:** There are a number of sites and I can tell you that within coming days, if not coming weeks, there will be some announcements around those. It is the work of Territory Families. Tomorrow Dale Wakefield will be here, so that will be an opportunity to ask her those questions. We heard loudly and clearly about the last process with Pinelands that we need to make sure that we are consulting, that we are listening and I think as I said tomorrow is a chance to talk to Minister Wakefield. I do not like the handball things, but there will be announcements made very soon.

That, I must say, is a \$60m infrastructure build. I know there are Territory companies that are very keen to see \$60m worth of infrastructure built. I have had a number of developers and building companies talking to me about and wanting and needing work and having that continuous supply of work. I know they will be very keen to see some of those tenders coming out very quickly around that.

**Mr WOOD:** How did you come to the figure of \$60m? There were \$70m all together and I am pretty sure that at one stage it was split 50/50. Then Alice Springs were told that we were only upgrading Alice Springs to \$10m and all of a sudden we have \$60m there and the design seems to be befitting the dollar rather than what will the actual design cost. Then we will have some change.

**Ms LAWLER:** Member for Nelson, I do not think it ever was 50/50. It was always going to be a much larger number for the Top End. As I said, that is probably a clearer question to talk to Territory Families about. It was always my understanding that it was going to be a much larger facility in Darwin.

**Mr WOOD:** Thank you.

**Mr HIGGINS:** I will let it shoot through. I know the Member for Nelson wants to get to Lands and Planning so I am willing to pass up a few in between now and then.

**Madam CHAIR:** If there are no other questions that concludes consideration of Output 7.1.

### **Output 7.2 – Program Support**

**Madam CHAIR:** Are there any questions.

**Mr HIGGINS:** No.

**Madam CHAIR:** There being no questions, that concludes consideration of Output 7.2.

### **Output 7.3 – Asset Management**

**Madam CHAIR:** We will now consider Output 7.3. Are there any questions? There being no questions that concludes consideration of Output 7.3 and in fact Output Group 7.0.

**OUTPUT GROUP 8.0 – LANDS AND PLANNING**  
**Output 8.1 – Land Development**

**Madam CHAIR:** We will now move on to consider Output Group 8.0, Lands and Planning, Output 8.1, Land Development. Are there any questions?

**Mr WOOD:** I do not have too many. I want to ask you, minister—obviously Noonamah Ridge. You have just put on public exhibition the Planning Scheme amendment to allow for the development of Noonamah Ridge. Could you say what community consultation you would have had with the local community and have you had any meetings with the land owner or the developers in relation to this project?

**Ms LAWLER:** First of all I have had a meeting. I have also had a good look at the site. I have lived in the rural area at many times in my life, so I actually know the site. I have looked at the site more recently and have met with the developer. What was the other question?

**Mr WOOD:** Have you had any community consultation or are you expecting that to go through the planning process?

**Ms LAWLER:** This is a private development. It is not up to me to be the person who promotes or sells that or whatever it is. I am going to be the person who is a decision-maker. Intrapac is the company that would like to develop that estate out there. It is up to them to make sure they are out there listening to and talking to the community and providing information about that site.

**Ms CLIFFORD:** In terms of the proposal by the proponent, it is on exhibition at the moment until 12 July. As part of that process, consistent with all our other statutory processes for rezoning applications, people have the opportunity to respond to that particular development.

Following the exhibition period and closing of it, the general course is that we would hold a reporting on a hearing—traditionally, the Planning Commission—after which time, as the minister mentioned, as the decision-maker, a report would come through to her.

**Mr WOOD:** Just a question about process, Intrapac is doing it on behalf of the owner of the land, which I believe is Mr Laurence Ah Toy. Because he owns the land, the rezoning relates to his land and they are doing it on behalf of him, correct? Is that how it works?

**Ms CLIFFORD:** Intrapac has lodged the application, yes.

**Mr WOOD:** That is right. What I am saying is that they also—because they do not own the land—would have to have approval from the owner to lodge that application. Is that correct?

**Mr LESH:** The *Planning Act* does not require landowner authorisation for lodgement of rezoning applications. However, I understand that that is all lined up, so it is not a problem in this instance.

**Mr WOOD:** Just so we know where we are. One other question not related to that—it relates to a question I asked before, but I am not putting your Environment and Natural Resources hat on. What discussions have been held with the NT Land Corporation and the department about the future of Gunn Point from a planning perspective?

**Ms LAWLER:** There have been lots of discussions with the Land Corporation about that site, but also—there is the Land Development Corporation as well as the Land Corporation.

**Mr WOOD:** They own the land.

**Ms LAWLER:** I have had a number of discussions with the Land Development Corporation about making sure there is a land use plan for out there, because again, I think it is beautiful land. It is close to—probably 40 minutes to get to Palmerston.

I would like to see that land developed well, not just as the planning minister but also as a Territorian. One of the criticisms I have of Dundee is that you cannot promenade. I would love to be able to walk along the shore in my own age with my frame or something. Jokes aside, it would be lovely I think to be able to have a promenade or an esplanade area along the shore there, along the front at Gunn Point.

As I said it is beautiful land. There are no mangroves on that particular point there. It is a beach, as you know. There are opportunities for agriculture there and a range of things besides residential—tourism, all of those things. I think a lot of the grey nomads would love to see a caravan park there. I remember going out there with my father in the old ute to swim at the beach at Gunn Point.

Like a lot of old Territorians, we all have ideas about that site. I have had those conversations with the Land Development Corporation about making sure that it is planned well, not in a higgledy piggledy way or for the first people who put up their hand to get in there, or the larger developers and things like that. I think it would be useful for Territorians, and everybody who is interested, to have a say of what that looks like.

With the DENR hat on as well, we do need to know about the water out there. I know with the road development, there were three contractors doing that road. I think Ostojic's had trouble with getting any water at all—he was hitting sand when he was trying to get water for water carts, whereas Aldebaran had no trouble with water out there.

That was a bit of a long-winded answer, but there is a lot of work to be done into the future to make sure Gunn Point is some land for Territorians for the future for a range of purposes. Whether that is tourism; whether it is residential and what size it is, and whether it is agriculture, depends on what the water levels are there, all of those sorts of things. The planning commission is working on their land use plan at this stage, but it is one that needs to be planned properly.

**Mr WOOD:** I think that is great minister. I support everything you have said. There are two plans ...

**Ms LAWLER:** But ...

**Mr WOOD:** No buts. There is a Murrumujuk plan and there was Gunn Point plan. Obviously they are in the archives a bit, but there was a fair bit of work done in that relation.

You talked about having the esplanade. It was the esplanade that Litchfield Council fought hard for to stop the government at that time building within five metres of the cliffs. That was the reason that Mr Hatton deliberately took that whole area of the Litchfield planning area. There was a bit fight at that time.

It is refreshing to hear that someone believes that the front areas along there should be open to the public and not open to private people. They should be set back. I would give you 100% support if you can develop it like that. It would be great.

**Ms LAWLER:** I had better hurry up as I probably have another year as minister, maybe. But hopefully other people are listening and agree with us as well.

**Mr WOOD:** Refreshing.

**Ms LAWLER:** I think it is beautiful land.

**Madam CHAIR:** Are there any further questions on Output 8.1? That concludes consideration of Output 8.1.

### **Output 8.2 – Development Assessment Services**

**Madam CHAIR:** The committee will now consider questions relating to Output 8.2, Development Assessment Services. Are there any questions?

That concludes consideration of Output 8.2.

### **Output 8.3 – Crown Land Estate**

**Madam CHAIR:** The committee will now consider questions relating to Output 8.3, Crown Land Estate. Are there any questions?

**Mr HIGGINS:** I was going to ask about gamba grass control on Crown land. In your opening statement you said you had 55 000 acres or square kilometres or vacant Crown land. Can you tell us what you do to control gamba on that estate? Remember, a lot of it comes up criticism of Crown land—people say, 'I am spraying the gamba on my block and government is not doing its bit next door'. What do we say to them?

**Ms LAWLER:** We get asked similar questions often. DIPL invests over \$560 000 each year in operational funding to control weeds, including gamba on vacant Crown land parcels in the greater Darwin area. I will pass to Leah Clifford, who can provide a more comprehensive answer.

**Ms CLIFFORD:** Part of our Crown land estate is responsible for ensuring we have gamba plans in place, which we do, and that they align to the Department of Environment and Natural Resources' plans in regard to the control of gamba grass. It is a large area of land that we manage. As the minister said, \$560 000 in our operational funding goes toward the management of gamba.

We have to prioritise, and we work closely with DENR on that. Part of our strategy and gamba grass plan is consistent with the DENR plan on the eradication and prevention of the spread of gamba.

We identified a number of lots where we need to control it. We do that in consultation with other agencies. It largely focuses on areas that pose a threat to human life, property or the biodiversity and significance of sites. This year there is an additional \$2m in Crown land estate for repairs and maintenance. We are going through the process of allocating that now. Part of that funding will go toward gamba grass to make sure we meet our legislative responsibilities around the control and spread of that weed.

**Mr HIGGINS:** In that \$0.5m or so that you talked about, is that purely for the Crown land estate, or does it include money in the gamba program that we give the glyphosate people?

**Ms LAWLER:** That is a different budget.

**Mr HIGGINS:** If people complain about gamba coming from Crown land, who should they go to in order to raise that? You said you consult with the department et cetera. This is a common problem. What would you say to those people?

**Ms CLIFFORD:** Occasionally we hear that people identify land that gamba may be on. The first thing we do is check that it is Crown land. We are open to taking questions from the public, or if anyone has a concern regarding a particular block that should be looked at. We are happy to have that information brought to us. Crown land estate would be the appropriate area to do that. We have numbers and access through our website.

This is the right time to think about which blocks we might add to our program, particularly ahead of the Wet Season, which is when you want to be treating some of these grassy weeds. We are happy to take inquiries in that regard.

**Mr HIGGINS:** I do not know if the Member for Nelson would recall, but we had some beautiful gamba weeds are growing between the overpass at Palmerston on Tiger Brennan Drive going into town. I always thought that the people mowing the lawns would do something about them but they have flowered beautifully.

**Ms LAWLER:** I have been passed another note that the Land Development Corporation has a further \$120 000 for weed control. I am going to pull together all these bits and make sure that everybody is clear about it. It is everybody's business, gamba grass, and every agency—the two agencies I have—and LDC are working very hard to control gamba because we understand the dangers of it.

**Mr WOOD:** Minister, can you say how much land you have sold in the last year or up to now? Where was the land situated and how much was received for the land?

**Ms LAWLER:** This financial year?

**Mr WOOD:** Yes. Well, whatever figures you have available.

**Ms LAWLER:** Let me just find 8.3.9. There were two offers for the direct sale of Crown land for commercial purposes made in 2018–19. There were no offers of Crown land leases for community infrastructure.

**Ms CLIFFORD:** As the minister mentioned, there were two offers of Crown leases for commercial purposes. They are what we could say are our direct sales for this financial year. The first one was in relation to Morandini Earthworks in Winnellie which was a small portion of land that was associated with them closing out on a subdivision and consolidation of their Sadgroves ...

**Mr WOOD:** It is an old subdivision.



**Ms CLIFFORD:** It is a very old subdivision. Part of addressing their requirements of the permit was dealing with stormwater. This was a small section of land to do that. The drain will remain protected by an easement anyway for that property. The purchase price for that was \$20 000.

**Mr WOOD:** Mangroves were nice there once.

**Ms CLIFFORD:** The other one is to the Paspaley Pearling Beagle Gulf. This was a Crown lease term for a period of 10 years, which is over the sea floor for a pearl nursery and seeding area. There is no right for conversion to freehold for this one; it is purely a lease. This is the second Crown lease they have had in that particular area for this purpose, for its pearling enterprises. For this one there is no purchase price, we have not sold this one—it is just a leasing arrangement. The rental for that was determined at \$8700 per annum. I should say that with all our purchase price, rental, commercial agreements. They are all based on market valuations. The purchase price, or in this case, the rent, is determined accordingly.

**Mr WOOD:** A couple of pearls. Thank you.

**Madam CHAIR:** Any other questions on Output 8.3? That concludes consideration of Output 8.3.

#### **Output 8.4 – Aboriginal Land**

**Madam CHAIR:** We will now consider Output 8.4, Aboriginal Land. Are there any questions?

That concludes consideration of Output 8.4.

#### **Output 8.5 – Lands Planning**

**Madam CHAIR:** We will now consider Output 8.5, Lands Planning. Are there any questions?

That concludes consideration of Output 8.5 and Output Group 8.0.

### **OUTPUT – TRANSPORT PLANNING AND DELIVERY**

#### **Output 9.4 – Roads**

**Madam CHAIR:** We have a few minutes left, rather than me going through each one procedurally, does anyone have a question on Output 9.4, Roads, that we discussed earlier?

**Mr WOOD:** In relation to Litchfield Loop Road could you explain why it has taken so long, because I have seen this on two budgets before—that the bridge and the final sealing would be done. To add a little complication to that, I am told that the railway bridge on the Finnis River was replaced by a small concrete bridge and that there was re-sheeting of the road.

How long has it taken to get to this stage and if the government knew that it was going to put a new bridge in and seal the road, why did it spend money on replacing the little rail bridge and re-sheeting of the road?

**Ms McCORMICK:** The reason it has taken so long is that that particular part of the road has been subject to a land swap agreement with two different land trusts. It has taken many years to get that over the line. They do not get along, these two families.

We have done a lot of work with traditional owners. We have two project leadership teams that I have been working through the last couple of years to get agreement from traditional owners. The deed was signed in early 2018. We then had a lot of conditions under those deeds to work through with them. It took some time to get to that but we finally got there.

In terms of the bridge that we have just replaced, we did our routine inspections of bridges. It was found that the steel members on that bridge were corroded to the point where it needed replacement and that road actually has to be a detour for another two years while the bridge is being built. In interest of public safety we had to do that.

**Mr WOOD:** Is the new road gazetted?

**Ms McCORMICK:** Yes.

**Mr WOOD:** Very interesting. Did it cross Aboriginal Land Trust land?

**Ms McCORMICK:** It is a land swap. We swapped our land for Aboriginal land so it becomes government land.

**Madam CHAIR:** That then concludes our time with the Minister for Infrastructure, Planning and Logistics. On behalf of the committee, I thank the minister for attending today and all the officials who have provided advice both here and back in your departments.

That concludes estimates hearings for today. Hearings will recommence tomorrow morning at 8 am with questions for the Minister for Territory Families.

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The committee suspended.

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