

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

In committee in continuation:

MINISTER LAWRIE'S PORTFOLIOS

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: Good morning. As the Chairman mentioned in his opening remarks on Tuesday, the committee has agreed to a variation in the schedule of appearances, which now sees the Darwin Port Corporation appearing as the first area which the Estimates Committee will review. I remind witnesses that they should be aware that evidence given to the committee is protected by parliamentary privilege; however, I remind witnesses that giving of false or misleading evidence to the committee may constitute contempt of the Legislative Assembly pursuant to the powers and privileges legislation.

Officers should also be aware that when they are requested by their minister to provide answers to questions, they are not required to comment on matters of policy. For the purposes of efficient recording of the *Hansard*, I request that ministers introduce those officials who are accompanying them at these hearings and, where a minister may refer a question to an officer, officers clearly identify themselves at the time for the *Hansard* record.

I welcome the Minister for Planning and Lands and invite her to introduce the officials accompanying her and, if she wishes to make an opening statement on behalf of the business line Darwin Port Corporation, to do so.

DARWIN PORT CORPORATION

Ms LAWRIE: Good morning, Estimates Committee. I am appearing first of all for the minister for the Port of Darwin. Attending with me is the new Chief Executive Officer of the Darwin Port Corporation, Mr Robert Ritchie, who was appointed on 14 May of this year. Also appearing, if required, will be the Business Manager, Mr Kerry Whiting and the Trade Development and Cargo Operations Manager, Mr Garry Scanlan.

Darwin Port Corporation has seen the completion of major infrastructure development at East Arm. This represents a very substantial investment by the government in the Port of Darwin and, indeed, the future of the Territory. This investment is starting to see the generation of considerable interest in the Territory in access to that infrastructure, which is assisting in the development of projects which would not otherwise have been possible.

The corporation will continue to work with project proponents to promote more trade into and through the Territory. Darwin Port Corporation is working closely with its stakeholders and customers for the ongoing development of the Port of Darwin. The total trade for 2006-07 is projected to reach 1.5 million tonnes, which is an increase from previous years as new trade starts to come on line and, in particular, the export of bulk minerals.

With the establishment of manganese exports of 650 000 tonnes per annum and the commencement of Territory resource exports of 1.5 million tonnes per annum, total cargo is projected to grow past 2.5 million tonnes per annum in 2007-08. Commensurate with the increases in cargo volumes, commercial shipping is expected to increase by some 40 calls, to in excess of 770 calls, due to the larger vessels calling for the bulk mineral exports.

Darwin Port Corporation is well positioned for 2007-08 and will commission the new \$24m bulk loading system, oversee the expected commencement of Territory resources exports in September of this year, and oversee OM Manganese to move to full production and export capabilities.

Madam Deputy Chair, in conclusion, I look forward to any questions the committee may have in regards to the appropriation for this year.

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: Are there any questions?

Mrs MILLER: Thank you Madam Deputy Chair. Regarding other areas, minister, we have some generic questions. Are you happy to take those general questions from the start?

Ms LAWRIE: I would have to hear the question, absolutely.

Mrs MILLER: How much of the total of appropriation for this output of Transport and Infrastructure goes towards corporate and executive services?

Ms LAWRIE: I have to point out, shadow minister, that we are dealing with the port, not Transport and Infrastructure, so my answers will be specific to the port.

Mrs MILLER: All right, well, I will rephrase that. How much of the total of appropriation for this particular output of the Darwin Port goes towards corporate and executive services?

Ms LAWRIE: We can fast-track this a bit if you want. I have some information to table. I have the Darwin Port Corporation consultant expenses, the Darwin Port Corporation advertising expenses, and the Darwin Port Corporation marketing and promotion expenses that I can table. I can ask my chief executive officer, Robert Ritchie, to talk to the other corporate overheads.

Mrs MILLER: Okay, thank you.

Dr RITCHIE: Robert Ritchie. In answer to your question, \$4.9m is the total appropriation for this output. It goes towards Corporate Executive Services.

Mrs MILLER: Thank you. And you have answered the advertising?

Ms LAWRIE: Total for advertising.

Mrs MILLER: Okay, and media liaison monitoring?

Ms LAWRIE: Tabled the Marketing and Promotion.

Mrs MILLER: Reviews. How much of the total appropriation for this output group goes towards the cost of reviews undertaken this financial year?

Ms LAWRIE: I have tabled a list of consultants that the port has hired, and if there is any further information I will pass to my CEO, Mr Ritchie.

Mrs MILLER: Okay, so the consultants, yes I was going to come to that. Reviews, have you undertaken any reviews?

Dr RITCHIE: During that period, we have undertaken two reviews, payroll and invoicing, at \$16 000, and environmental management system development at \$4700.

Mrs MILLER: Thank you. Are you able to table, with the reviews, that comprehensive list of reviews? Are they both completed?

Dr RITCHIE: Yes, they are both completed.

Mrs MILLER: When were they started?

Dr RITCHIE: I would need to refer to ...

Mrs MILLER: And when were they completed?

Ms LAWRIE: Just for clarification, the payroll actually started earlier this year and it is actually in its final stages of being completed.

Mrs MILLER: Will that be made public?

Ms LAWRIE: They are internal reviews into the operations of the port, as you can tell by the titles. Payroll and invoice review is actually a very corporate services-style review. Reviews of that nature are not made public. The port, as you can understand, is a business and operates as a business division, so we would not be providing that information publicly.

Mrs MILLER: Staffing: how much of that total appropriation for that output group goes towards the cost of staffing? That includes the number of full-time staff and the number of employees at each level?

Ms LAWRIE: While I ask my CEO, Mr Ritchie, to get staffing details. I point out that staffing, by the nature of the port business, does fluctuate. Whilst we can give you, if you like, some indicative full-time equivalent staffing numbers, by the nature of the business of the port, staffing does fluctuate.

Dr RITCHIE: The full-time equivalent staff is 73, and that will increase. It is currently 69 for the period 2006-07. It will go to 73 for the period 2007-08 with the recruitment of four deckhands for our pilot boat. The staffing cost is \$2.1m.

Mrs MILLER: For the Darwin Port, how much of your total appropriation for this output goes towards the cost of airfares which includes the cost of airfares between Darwin and Alice Springs, and training, as a separate item?

Ms LAWRIE: We do not have that information here with us. We are happy to take those two questions on notice in terms of airfares and training.

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: For the purposes of *Hansard*, would you please restate your questions?

Mrs MILLER: Certainly.

Ms LAWRIE: We do have the total expenses which includes the airfares, we do not have the training component. I am happy to advise that there is a nil cost against intra-Territory fares. There was \$34 186 expended in interstate fares; and \$2390 in overseas fares. That was a trade delegation to Vietnam where we talked up our port.

Mrs MILLER: Are you prepared to take the question on notice regarding training?

Ms LAWRIE: In terms of training, yes.

Question on Notice 7.1

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: Member for Katherine, for the purposes of *Hansard*, would you please restate your question?

Mrs MILLER: Yes, certainly, Madam Deputy Chair. Minister, could you please provide the training as a separate item for the Darwin Port Authority?

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: Minister, are you prepared to take that question on notice?

Ms LAWRIE: Yes.

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: For the purposes of *Hansard* I allocate the Question No 7.1.

Mrs MILLER: Minister, how much of the total appropriation for this output goes toward greenhouse reduction strategies?

Ms LAWRIE: We do not have an identified line item for greenhouse gas reduction strategies at the Darwin Port. I will pass to my CEO, Robert Ritchie, to explain the nature of how we approach environmental issues at the port.

Dr RITCHIE: We have employed an environmental officer who is presently developing an environmental management plan for the corporation, and we have committed to the 1.5% reduction.

Mrs MILLER: Thank you.

Ms LAWRIE: There are some initiatives that the port is committed to doing and I ask my CEO, Robert Ritchie, to just provide some of those details.

Dr RITCHIE: We have re-lamped the administration building; installed after-hours timers on the airconditioning system so they are not running; reduced the operating hours of the airconditioning systems, and we have replaced incandescent lamps with compact fluorescent lights throughout the port areas.

Mrs MILLER: Thank you. With the view to reducing consumption of your electricity, would your department consider, for example, a regular e-mail requesting all staff to turn off their computers each evening?

Ms LAWRIE: We are happy to consider any energy saving measure, member for Katherine.

Mrs MILLER: Thank you. The Martin government, minister, committed itself to the humble target of 5% reduction of per kilometre emissions from the NT government's passenger fleet by the end of the month. What specific measures has your department done to reach this target?

Ms LAWRIE: As you can appreciate, member for Katherine, the Darwin Port Corporation is actually a relatively small organisation regarding number of employees, but it has quite significant operational requirements, so it is not able to reduce its fleet. It runs a pretty small fleet as it is, and all of the cars in the fleet are required for operational purposes.

Mrs MILLER: Are there any hybrid or LPG cars in that fleet?

Ms LAWRIE: I do not believe so.

Mrs MILLER: No. A final one, in the generic questions. The government has set a 10% carbon emissions reduction target. Can you set out what specific measures the Port Darwin authority has undertaken to meet or beat this target in all areas of operation?

Ms LAWRIE: I will hand over to my CEO, Robert Ritchie.

Dr RITCHIE: Once again, we have employed the environmental officer who is presently developing an environmental management plan for the corporation as a whole for us to work to move forward on those.

Mrs MILLER: Thank you. That is all I have for the generic questions. Thank you very much, Madam Deputy Chair.

Answer to Question 7.1

Ms LAWRIE: I can answer that question on notice in regards to training. We have been provided with a figure of \$113 200 expended on training by the Darwin Port Corporation.

Mr WOOD: Thank you, Madam Deputy Chair. I only have one minor generic question, minister. Could the 2006-07 report be spiral bound? Some of these seem to be suffering from saltwater intrusion or not enough glue. Perhaps the next one could be in a spiral bound form.

Ms LAWRIE: Might be able to save some energy on that, Gerry.

Mr WOOD: Yes, that is right; less glue. That is all.

Business Line

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: The committee will now proceed to consider questions regarding the business line. It should be noted that the schedule of appearances detail individual areas to assist members in considering items of expenditure. However, as the Darwin Port Corporation is a business line I do not intend to work through this list as such. Questioning from members can focus on issues of policy or be of a general nature. Are there any questions?

Mrs MILLER: Yes, there are. I was going to ask if we could just have general questions because I did not want to go through it line by line.

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: Yes, go ahead, member for Katherine.

Mrs MILLER: The organisation has changed from a profit-seeking to a not-for-profit organisation. In February 2007, the Auditor-General pointed out that the asset value of the corporation jumped by a \$120m because of this revaluation. That is in the Auditor-General's February 2007 report on page 56.

The budget estimate for the corporation, which is Budget Paper No 3 2006-7, page 182, placed a value of the assets of the corporation at \$179m. The final estimate for the current financial year - which is Budget Paper 3 2007-08, page 209 - revised the assets to \$210m. In the space of two years, minister, the assets of the corporation have increased by \$139m or a 123%. There are actually no new buildings on the site. Is it not the case that the new accounting standards applied by the change from profit to not-for-profit have the effect of bumping up the nett worth of the Territory's assets as a whole, and when expressed on the general government set balance sheet? Is it not a little colourful accounting?

Ms LAWRIE: No, and I reject that slur on the accounts of the port wholeheartedly. The change in the Australian Accounting Standards on 1 July 2005 and the required methodology resulted in an increase of more than \$100m in the carrying amount of the corporation's property, plant and equipment assets. As at 30 June 2005, the balance of the corporation's property, plant and equipment assets was \$41.83m. The corporation's balance of property, plant and equipment assets as of 30 June 2006 was, as you said, \$156.147m with the introduction of these revised accounting standards. These are Australian Accounting Standards.

Prior to 1 July 2005, the corporation was required to revalue its property, plant and equipment assets at amounts not exceeding the recoverable amount. This was deemed to be the cash amount expected to be recovered through the continued use of these assets. This valuation was undertaken utilising the present value of future cash flow for the corporation. With the introduction of the Australian Accounting Standards that conform with the International Financial Reporting Standards effective from 1 July 2005, the corporation was deemed to be not-for-profit from this date.

This not-for-profit basis requires the corporation to value its property, plant and equipment assets at written down current replacement cost.

Mrs MILLER: Thanks, minister.

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: Any further questions?

Mrs MILLER: Yes, I refer to the 2005-06 annual report and found it a little disturbing, considering that wonderful figure of our assets there, that there is a significant decrease in trade and in shipping, and a decrease in the total vessels calls, and non-trading vessel calls. It did not look really very good. So the increase of assets ...

Ms LAWRIE: Is that a question?

Mrs MILLER: ... is a 123%, while there is a decrease in activity. Can you explain how?

Ms LAWRIE: No, when you look at the number of ships calling you have to take into account that we are now getting larger ships calling in our port. With the onset of LNG we get large tankers. With the increase in size of shipping you are actually getting a decrease in the number of ships calling at port. That is the case for LNG. That is the case when you move into bulk minerals export as we are as a port. You actually have to take into account the nature of your shipping, rather than just the figure of vessels calling at port. We are moving increased tonnage across the port, so that is an increase in business if you like, but fewer ships are calling because we are not getting the experience of past which was smaller ships because we did not have those large industries that the port was doing business with. We now have the larger industries of LNG and bulk minerals, so we are getting larger ships calling at the port and increased tonnage through the port; therefore, increased business from the port, if you like, but not the smaller ships, so therefore, fewer ships calling.

Mrs MILLER: You just answered my next question with that one. What is the increased tonnage?

Ms LAWRIE: As is said in my opening statement - and I will refer back to it ...

Mrs MILLER: This is the anticipated increase?

Ms LAWRIE: I refer back to the opening statement. The total trade for 2006 was projected to reach 1.5 million tonnes, an increase from previous years as new trades start to come on line, particularly the export of bulk minerals. With the establishment of manganese exports at 650 000 tonnes per annum and the commencement of Territory resource exports of 1.5 million tonne per annum, total cargo is projected to grow past 2.5 million tonnes per annum.

Mrs MILLER: Thank you, minister. What new cargo will be coming into the port?

Ms LAWRIE: You would be aware of the recent announcement of MOCEAN Shipping, which has announced that they will be opening a trade route from Surabaya through to Darwin which will be freight cargo. We have also, of course, announced the bulk minerals of manganese as well as Territory Iron. We have growth both in cargo as well as bulk minerals.

Mrs MILLER: Thank you, minister.

Mr WOOD: Minister, why is there a substantial decrease in container trade?

Ms LAWRIE: I will defer to the CEO, Robert Ritchie, who has vast experience in the shipping trade. However, the nature of the port has been one of very much a focus on the bulk minerals export trade. We had a great deal of container activity at the port as a result of the construction of the LNG plant at Wickham Point so, if you like, there was a spike in activity bringing in the materials required to construct Wickham Point. Obviously, with completion of that project, we have had a reduction in freight coming in across the port. I will turn to the CEO, Robert Ritchie, to see whether he wants to add to that.

Dr RITCHIE: In adding to that, with the bulk commodities moving through, it is opening up the ability to have inbound trade which is going back on the rail line back down to those areas. Therefore, we see a growth in that area in containers into here and then going down on the rail to those mine sites. I ask for further clarification from Trade Development Manager, Garry Scanlan.

Mr SCANLAN: Gray Scanlan. To support the minister's comment, we had a spike when the LNG plant was being constructed, which was a fairly welcome spike, which realised a peak in our cargo throughputs. We have had a change in service provision by a major service line provider Swire Shipping. They have gone from smaller ships calling on a fortnightly basis to larger ships calling on a monthly basis, so that has realised a reduction in the total number of container vessel calls, and some moderation in container numbers as well.

Mr WOOD: Minister, I suppose what I am getting at is that the AustralAsian Railway and the port development were designed specifically, when all the fanfare was on, to be the gateway to Asia. You would see all those lovely pictures on walls that showed that we were going to have a trade to various places throughout Asia on these fast moving vessels. I am not sure what has ever happened to those fast moving vessels, but that was to do with container trade for primary industry products from the south. Has there been any move in that direction, or is that something that has not been achieved?

Ms LAWRIE: As I said, member for Nelson, the really exciting recent news is of MOCEAN which is opening up the shipping trade from Surabaya to Darwin. That is a new announcement and it is just about to start. We also have the Hai Win service through China and we have Swire, so the focus of the port is growing that shipping trade and that business. We acknowledge we are in a competitive environment for that, but recent announcements show that we are growing that business, not reducing it.

Mr WOOD: I realise that, minister, but if you took out the live cattle trade, which is nearly all Northern Territory-based, the manganese and the normal road freight that is now being put on rail, has there been any move in the export trade of primary production? That was one of the key reasons for building the railway, so we had this gateway to Asia. Has that focus died? Is it still something that the Northern Territory government is promoting, or are southern markets not using the rail for that purpose?

Ms LAWRIE: Before I refer specifically to the Trade Development Operations Manager, Garry Scanlan, I will say the focus has not died on primary production at the port. Okay? That is a core business element of what the port will do and achieve, as well as separately our freight containers, in our role as the gateway to Asia.

What we are doing is moving very smartly with the times. Asia wants Australia's raw materials; they want our mining products. As a port, we have capitalised on that focus from Asia, hence, we built the bulk loader at the port. We will see an increase in volume across the port in the bulk minerals export area. Okay, you have your core operations, your primary industries as well, but you also have to move with the times and understand what business opportunities are there to grow the port, and it is absolutely in the area of bulk minerals. I refer to my Trade Development Officer, Garry Scanlan, who went to Vietnam and talked about the opportunities for links between our port and Asia.

Mr SCANLAN: The trade is, essentially, a focus on two-way trade for exports as well for Australian origin products, and imports for Australian consumable products, normally from areas of Asia as well. The focus on the imports has been growing, with mining consumables coming out of China and also Indonesia. Malaysian Shipping Service want to increase those mining consumables coming back. We are actually taking advantage of the railway going southbound into southern markets, and a good example of that is the increase in mining consumables into the Carpentaria minerals province in Queensland, through the Mt Isa and Cloncurry region as well.

Exports have been a bit of a tougher task to manage, but we are moving forward with that. There are, obviously, some manufactured items coming out of South Australia moving forward and being exported through the Territory - mainly to near East Indonesia and, as our near neighbours, again, mainly into the mining sectors, with those large mines we have.

Mr WOOD: Is there any refrigerated primary produce being exported from south through our port via the rail?

Mr SCANLAN: No, regrettably, it is only small volumes in the refrigerated area. We are really talking about mining consumables and machinery, and elaborately modified items, manufactured items, going north. A couple of things that affect that at the moment is the drought in Australia, which is affecting a lot of those exports and productions as well. What is going out is going out is going through their traditional supply lines. We do not have a large capacity northbound for here for frozen items in the shipping sector - I am not talking about the land transport.

Mr WOOD: My original conception was that it was not going to be frozen primary produce, it was going to be fresh produce brought up from south in parts of New South Wales and Victoria and were going to be exported by these fast boats that people said were going to be built, to export fresh produce from Australia to Asia. That really has not happened?

Ms LAWRIE: Garry Scanlan.

Mr SCANLAN: I should qualify it. I should not have said frozen, member for Nelson. It is temperature controlled, which takes in everything from half frozen to fresh produce, be it citrus fruits or something like that.

The fast ship question is something that is always under development. It is a question of technology catching up with the capability. The fast ship is always something that is on the horizon, but the technology for fast shipping is developing at a fantastic rate. It needs to be pay load versus cost of delivering the service. In other words, the ships need a lot more fuel than is economically viable for the payload they are carrying to provide that fast service. At the moment, we have traditional shipping services that are providing direct line routes, which is the fastest alternative to these fast cats or fast ferries.

Mr WOOD: Minister, would I be able to get a breakdown of the number of containers that go across the wharf, and a breakdown of where they come from, what are they made up of - general cargo versus primary produce versus mining equipment?

Ms LAWRIE: Member for Nelson, why don't I organise a briefing session so that they can take you through that? Some of that information is really in the realms of our business, in a sense of information that other ports would be quite interested in seeing. However, I would be happy, on a confidential briefing basis, to have the port take you through the nature of the cargo going across the port.

Mrs MILLER: Was that offered to every ...

Ms LAWRIE: Of course, to the member for Katherine and the shadow as well.

Mr WOOD: Would that be possible down at the wharf so we could have a look at the latest ...

Ms LAWRIE: You could go down to the Port Corporation headquarters there, have the briefing and then get a tour of the wharf.

Mr WOOD: Yes, I will accept that.

Ms LAWRIE: That offer is open to any members of parliament.

Mr WOOD: I will take my fishing line.

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: Any further questions?

Mr WOOD: I have more questions. Minister, are you still handling uranium being exported from South Australia across the port?

Ms LAWRIE: Yes, I will refer that to Garry Scanlan.

Mr SCANLAN: The South Australian exports of U3 uranium are still in a trial basis. Essentially, what the exporters out of South Australia are doing is keeping their options open. There is some going out of South Australia still. There are enough small amounts coming out through the Northern Territory to keep the transport option available out of the Northern Territory for them as well.

Mr WOOD: Minister, does the port make a proactive approach to people like the uranium miners or other groups to try to get them to use our port as an alternative to other ports throughout Australia?

Ms LAWRIE: Member for Nelson, yes.

Mr WOOD: How is that done? Do you actually go and visit these companies?

Ms LAWRIE: The port has a variety of means it employs to do that. We have a very active chairman of the port who is always engaging in discussions with mining companies, as well as the new CEO coming on board, Robert Ritchie. Garry Scanlan has been actively engaged in promoting the business of bulk minerals across our port.

Mr WOOD: Thank you. Minister, has the bulk handling system been completed or are you still using the skip method of loading bulk products?

Ms LAWRIE: We had a successful work commissioning of the bulk minerals loader just within the last fortnight.

Mr WOOD: Well, that has made that question redundant. Minister, when will the cruise ship terminal be completed?

Ms LAWRIE: I will take that question as minister for DPI as it is in the waterfront area.

Mr WOOD: Can I ask will the cruise ship terminal become part of the Darwin Port Corporation responsibility?

Ms LAWRIE: Again, I will take that question as minister for DPI.

Mr WOOD: All right. Don't let me forget. There were some problems with the container crane being able to be moved up and down because of light poles in the road. Does that problem still exist? What is the time frame for a second crane, or has that been deferred until container trade picks up?

Ms LAWRIE: There are no problems with the movement of the crane. Government is always discussing with stakeholders the timing of a second crane. We have a strategic process under way at the moment regarding the future infrastructure needs of the port, including issues such as land reclamation around the port to increase opportunities for businesses to locate at the port. That is a new body of strategic work that is being undertaken by the new CEO, Robert Ritchie. It is something that, as minister, I wanted to see occur, but I did want to wait for my new CEO to start - that would have been appropriate.

Mr WOOD: Thank you. Minister, there was a problem originally with the movement of the crane because of light poles?

Ms LAWRIE: There is no longer a problem.

Mr WOOD: That is good. Could you give us an update on the progress of the construction of the palm oil biodiesel pipeline?

Ms LAWRIE: Yes. I refer to Garry Scanlan.

Mr SCANLAN: The Natural Fuels Australia pipeline has been completed. It is a stainless steel pipeline. It runs on the existing Darwin Port Corporation pipeline corridor. They have received two feedstock shipments and are yet to send the next port shipment out at the moment. I understand Natural Fuels still has some production issues. They are yet to move to full production at this stage.

Mr WOOD: Has the interim quarantine waste disposal facility gone through its public environmental report and been constructed yet?

Ms LAWRIE: Yes.

Mr WOOD: There was a contract for berthing facilities at Stokes Hill Wharf for the Australian Customs vessels. Has that being completed?

Ms LAWRIE: Garry Scanlan.

Mr SCANLAN: It is all but completed. There are just some minor fit-out issues to go. Customs should have a new home there for the boat.

Ms LAWRIE: You have been saving these questions up for years, Gerry.

Mr WOOD: I have. I believe the port is a very important part of our economy, and I am glad it has been brought forward.

Ms LAWRIE: Yes, it is.

Mr WOOD: I have had people saying that there has been a shortage of land for smaller shipping, from the local trade. There has been talk about developing Hudson Creek. There needs to be more land - I will not call it reclaimed - filled in, in that area. What stage are those facilities at, at the moment? This is for your barge-type operations.

Ms LAWRIE: We have an expression of interest out at the moment regarding land at port which has frontage to the harbour. Companies have been looking at that as potential for establishing there. That would not preclude barge at all, with that current expression of interest. I emphasise the port is certainly consulting with stakeholders. In future land development down there, it is not the purview of this port and I would not be taking that particular question on board as Port minister.

Mr WOOD: The barge area does not come under the Darwin Port Corporation?

Ms LAWRIE: If a barge area was constructed, then yes.

Mr WOOD: There are barge areas where Perkins Shipping is and the Tiwi Barge people use to ...

Ms LAWRIE: You are talking about future developments, though, Gerry.

Mr WOOD: The existing area where those barges tie up comes under the Darwin Port Corporation?

Ms LAWRIE: Yes, it does, but you are talking about the development of additional.

Mr WOOD: I will ask you under DPI. There were problems with some retaining steel rods that broke away, I think about two years ago. Any idea the cost of all those repairs were to the port? Are there still problems associated with that structure?

Ms LAWRIE: Madam Deputy Chair, this is an interesting issue because, whilst they are tie rods at the wharf, therefore, Port of Darwin, the issue of the tie rods is actually a responsibility of DPI. With your indulgence, I will break with convention of Estimates Committee and call for the CEO of the Department of Planning and Infrastructure to answer these specific questions in regards to the tie rods, so that we do not have to remember to go back to DPI. This is an issue specific to the port, but managed by DPI.

I introduce to the committee the CEO of the Department of Planning and Infrastructure, Sarah Butterworth, who can provide advice to the member for Nelson in regard to the tie rods at East Arm Wharf.

Ms BUTTERWORTH: Sarah Butterworth. There has actually been more tie rods go since the ones that failed a couple of years ago. There is a total of six rods have failed and a further two were actually discovered as well as the existing four. In the cost to repair those, all of those costs have been borne by the original contractor. We estimate it is probably in the order of \$3m or so. Because of the way those had to be repaired they had to put cabling down, and work in confined space and weld from those confined spaces. We have been spending a lot of money on the other side of it, which is doing a lot of testing and the experts involved in watering and a whole range of things that we have been doing at the wharf. We have done some weight testing on the [inaudible], We have been doing ultrasonic testing, which [inaudible]. We are still in discussions with the joint venturers to look at the results of those various tests. At the moment we are waiting, because the last time they failed in May this year, and we are, apparently, waiting for that to results to be analysed. Finally, for some data to come from some load cells that have been put on the tie rods there, there is some continuous [inaudible] on each tie rod. We are waiting for more of that data and then we hope that the report will be finalised and we [inaudible].

Mr WOOD: Through you, minister, could you say whether the breaking of these rods has reduced the use of the port? Has there been any damage to other infrastructure? In other words, has there been any subsidence of the port at all?

Ms BUTTERWORTH: In terms of damage to the port, initially, yes. When the first tie rods were discovered, we were cautious about what might happen. There have been instances overseas where walls have unbit, as they call it, if you have all the rods down and it collapses. We did an extensive investigations to ensure that the wharf was still safe. When we were sure, we asked them what areas we could. All that happened was that we closed off the area around the tie rods so it would all right. These last ones which will be [inaudible] discrete from the [inaudible] areas of the port. It did not affect the [inaudible] of the ship [inaudible].

Mr WOOD: Has it caused any damage to actual infrastructure?

Ms BUTTERWORTH: No. Part of the monitoring is ensuring that the wharf itself is not subsiding. Also, the monitoring is checking the capping and [inaudible]. At this stage, there is not any suggestion that there will be more problems, but we are concerned about the reason for the tie rods failure and whether it is an ongoing problem.

Mr WOOD: Has it caused any problems with the size of vessels tying up at the port? In other words, only a certain weight vessel can tie up?

Ms BUTTERWORTH: No. The only issue there has been in regard to vessels tying up is that we have a very strict protocol in place; that if a failed rod is discovered, then a vessel cannot tie at the bollards within 15 m of that. No extra [inaudible].

Mr WOOD: There will be ongoing checking of these rods, I presume, for a long time.

Ms BUTTERWORTH: I suspect so. The problem that we had with the ultrasonic testing, which would [inaudible] the most was that we were not able to validate the results, without going down and checking to see what [inaudible] on the ultrasonic test. It was very difficult to work out exactly what we [inaudible]. Every time it failed, we got more information.

Mr WOOD: I know you have recovered the cost of the damage from the company that put them in, but who will pay for the cost of these ongoing observations of what is happening at the wharf?

Ms BUTTERWORTH: That is a matter to be resolved as part of whatever settlement we come to with the joint venturers. At the moment, DPI is carrying those costs.

Mr WOOD: They are not passed on to the port authority?

Ms BUTTERWORTH: No.

Mr WOOD: Thank you. Minister, just a couple of questions. One is in relation to the small craft services. Will the Darwin Port Corporation have any control over any part of the waterfront development?

Ms LAWRIE: Any control over of any part of the waterfront?

Mr WOOD: You are going to have a ponded area, and I am assuming that there will be some boating within that area. Will that come under Darwin Port Corporation?

Ms LAWRIE: Normal conditions will apply in the authority of the port. I am happy to defer to my CEO, but there are ongoing discussions between the Port Corporation, DPI and the waterfront authority regarding who manages what aspects of that development, once completed. On the water, activity *per se*, I would expect the final negotiations to end with that being with the Port Corporation. Is there anything you want to add to that, Robert?

Dr RITCHIE: One of the key areas for us is the security under our requirement of the DOTARS Security Plan for the port, so anything that impacts onto the waterfront will be part of that. It is outside our area of control, but we are working with the interdepartmental working group - we are a part of that - and we will forward the views on security and the harbour master's statutory functions as well.

Mr WOOD: I hear you will not be in charge of the wave pool movements. There has been a lot of discussion regarding the cruise and defence facilities, particularly since the waterfront development occurred, about fuelling facilities for Defence. Has that issue been finally settled?

Ms LAWRIE: There is an agreement in place with the Department of Defence for refuelling. That agreement will continue for quite some years. I am happy to refer to Garry Scanlan for the details of that.

Mr SCANLAN: There are two issues to Defence refuelling, one of which is receiving the fuel into the Naval fuel installation. Alternative facilities have been developed for the receipt of Naval fuel into the Naval fuel installation so visiting international Naval vessels and domestic vessels can continue to receive fuel through that facility.

Mr WOOD: Will the fuel eventually be offloaded at East Arm Port instead of where it is offloaded now?

Ms LAWRIE: We are still waiting for some advice from the Department of Defence as to its future plans. When we get that advice we will be able to proceed with the longer-term plans. However, we certainly have an agreement in place for some significant years.

Mr WOOD: My last question relates to tourism and real estate development. I presume the shops at the wharf come under your control?

Ms LAWRIE: Yes.

Mr WOOD: Is there any intention to expand those because of their popularity, or has it, basically, reached its limit, because you can fit so many cars on the wharf.

Ms LAWRIE: I will refer that question to Garry Scanlan. However, it is pretty busy down there now, mate.

Mr SCANLAN: Yes, it remains one of Darwin's most popular dining areas. Regrettably, it is a finite area; it is a wharf structure. We do some pretty creative things down there to get the most amount of people in there. However, given also it is a finite structure, delivering services to that area is limited to a certain extent - being power, waste disposal and water. Generally, we try and squeeze as much out of it as we can, but I think we are getting close to our limit now.

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

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: That concludes consideration of this Business Line. On behalf of the committee, I would like to thank the officers who provided advice to the minister today.

PLANNING AND INFRASTRUCTURE

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: The committee will now proceed to consider the estimates of proposed expenditure contained in the Appropriation Bill 2007-08 as they relate to the Department of Planning and Infrastructure.

Minister, I invite you to introduce the officials accompanying you and, if you wish, to make to an opening statement on behalf of Department of Planning and Infrastructure.

Ms LAWRIE: Madam Deputy Chair, with me is my Chief Executive Officer of the Department of Planning and Infrastructure, Sarah Butterworth, and the Chief Financial Officer, Ken Tinkham. I also have available the Lands, Planning and Development Management, Executive Director, Rod Applegate; Darwin City Waterfront Redevelopment Acting Project Administrator, Terry O'Neill; and for services output, Acting Executive Director, Marg Morrisey; Infrastructure Services Output Executive Director, Neville Jones; Construction Division, Government Business Division General Manager, Paul Jones; and Darwin Bus Service Government Business Division General Manager, Bill Heath. It is a large agency. I will be joined at the table by other departmental officers as appropriate as we move through the appropriation for the department.

This department plays a major role in the economic and social development of the Territory, providing wide-ranging essential services, implementing major infrastructure projects, land planning and development, managing the national and major arterial road network, and keeping transport moving and safe.

The department also has responsibility for regulating land use, and building and transport sectors. I should point out the department has, during the past financial year, reviewed its output framework and performance measures. This review was initiated by the department because of the view that a better alignment was needed between the departmental structure and the outputs, and because the department considered that the existing performance measures needed updating so that they more clearly reflected the department's performance and effectiveness.

The previously separate of Territory Roads has been combined with the Transport Services output, and the Indigenous Infrastructure output is no longer an output group, having largely been absorbed into other areas of DPI, with the exception of the Indigenous Housing group which was transferred to the Department of Local Government, Housing and Sport. Madam Deputy Chair, I look forward to any questions that the committee may have with regards of the appropriation for this year.

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: Thank you minister. Are there any questions?

Ms CARNEY: Thank you, Madam Deputy Chair. Good morning, everybody. Minister, can we rip through the standard questions that ministers have received, and see if we can get through it quickly so we can move onto other things? There are some time constraints. I know the member for Nelson, commonly referred to as Gerry, always 'fires up' in this portfolio. We tend to get to the other part of your portfolio for reasons which ...

Ms LAWRIE: Which one would that be?

Ms CARNEY: Oh, that would be Family and Children's Services.

Ms LAWRIE: I am shocked.

Ms CARNEY: My apologies in advance to departmental staff. We have competing priorities which will make our questions probably shorter than they would have ordinarily been.

Having said that, minister, how much of the total appropriate for this output group went towards Corporate and Executive Services in 2006-07.

Ms LAWRIE: In 2006-07, the cost of the Corporate and Executive Services was \$8.978m and there were 71 full-time equivalents, which includes additional training positions.

Ms CARNEY: I will come to employee positions ...

Ms LAWRIE: Just trying to speed it up.

Ms CARNEY: You have jumped the gun. \$8.978m. Wait for the question. I take it you will refer me to DCIS for information on cleaning and maintenance of offices and all that sort of stuff, as most ministers have done?

Ms LAWRIE: We actually have compiled some information for you. We can table it.

Ms BUTTERWORTH: We have two versions on it. We have one version that includes the DCIS costs, because they do the lease cost accommodation, and we have another one which is just our own costs because we have a number of our own facilities.

Ms CARNEY: I guess for the purposes of *Hansard*, I should ask the question. Can you provide details of costs in relation to office cleaning expenses, office leases, etcetera.

Ms LAWRIE: I am happy to table the estimated annual cleaning charges for the Department of Planning and Infrastructure, leased and owned buildings.

Ms CARNEY: Thank you. Minister, what is the size of your CEO's office in square metres?

Ms LAWRIE: Not as large as yours but – I will pass that over to the CEO.

Ms BUTTERWORTH: I am assured it is 28.5 m².

Ms CARNEY: 28.5 m². I know that public servants have the measuring tapes out already. Thank you.

In relation to advertising, how much of the total appropriation has gone towards advertising and what are the design and production costs of radio, television, newspaper and magazine and other medium? If you have that in table form, I would be grateful if you tabled it.

Ms LAWRIE: Yes, I am able to table for the Leader of the Opposition, Department of Planning and Infrastructure advertising expenses as at 31 May 2007. I am able to further table the Department of Planning and Infrastructure marketing and promotion expenses as at 31 May 2007.

Ms CARNEY: Thanks you. Would you also able to table, minister, details of the costs of advertising media which included your image?

Ms LAWRIE: Nil.

Ms CARNEY: Nil?

Ms LAWRIE: Nil.

Ms CARNEY: You do not have your pearly whites on anything, minister?

Ms LAWRIE: No.

Ms CARNEY: Okay, what is the cost of postage associated with mass communication with Territorians, and can you include any letterbox drops?

Ms LAWRIE: From myself, nil.

Ms CARNEY: When you say from yourself ...

Ms LAWRIE: As minister.

Ms CARNEY: For the department. Thank you. What is the cost of policy research or message development research, if any?

Ms LAWRIE: Nil. I will say that, obviously, there was a lot of work in and around the Road Safety Task Force. It was done in-house. There was a lot of work. Obviously, that was a period where the task force, which had several government agency reps, went out and consulted pretty largely and widely. There is no line item of costs, but that was part of their respective jobs: being seconded to that task force. The strict answer is nil, but I am flagging that there was a lot of consultation done by the task force leading up to the preparation of the task force recommendations to government on road safety reforms.

Ms CARNEY: You would have provided ...

Ms LAWRIE: So there was activity, but nil cost.

Ms CARNEY: You would have provided that answer for this question that my colleague, the shadow minister for transport, asked when she was asking the generic questions?

Ms LAWRIE: No, generic questions previously were for the Darwin Port Corporation.

Ms CARNEY: Darwin Port, okay, thank you. How much of the total appropriation for this output group went on media liaison and monitoring 2006-07?

Ms LAWRIE: We added that in the response to the promotions and marketing.

Ms CARNEY: Okay, thank you. Does that include costs, if any, of transcription services of interviews?

Ms LAWRIE: It would include a very small amount.

Ms CARNEY: When you say very small, what is your definition of 'very small'?

Ms LAWRIE: I will refer to my Chief Financial Officer.

Ms CARNEY: Mr Kiely has a very interesting definition of very small. So does his electorate officer.

Mr TINKHAM: Ken Tinkham, Chief Financial Officer. Just a quick glance through, I would say it would be in the order of \$2000 or \$3000.

Ms CARNEY: They are outsourced, I suppose? Does it follow from that it is outsourced?

Ms LAWRIE: Yes.

Ms CARNEY: Thank you. How much of the total appropriation went towards the costs of reviews undertaken in 2006-07?

Ms LAWRIE: There was only one review undertaken in 2006-07. That was the review done by the Road Safety Task Force. As I indicated earlier in my answer, a lot of the costs were in-house. I can advise that there is an approximation of time spent on the task force process. There was an AO8 full-time for six months, an ECO1 full-time for three months, and task force members were full-time for one month. Costs in relation to the production of the task force report were \$12 476. This included copy of fatality and serious injury maps, \$600; consultancy of peak communication strategy, \$5000; media and monitoring, \$2924; photocopy paper, \$262; postage/freight, \$263; and printing report, \$3427.

Ms CARNEY: For purposes of getting this right – they are internal costs that you have calculated. Correct?

Ms LAWRIE: Yes. DPI costs, internal.

Ms CARNEY: Okay. I move to consultants. How much of the total appropriation went towards engaging consultants? Can you provide details of how the consultants were appointed, how many were there, what did they do, who were they, and what did they cost? If you have that in table form, I would be grateful if you would table it.

Ms LAWRIE: I will table it. DPI, by the nature of the agency, does use a lot of consultants. We use engineers, and we have a whole range of consultancies in strategic asset planning, roads, urban enhancement, etcetera. Right across the agency, by the nature of the agency, there are a lot of consultants. I am happy to table the Department of Planning and Infrastructure consultant fees as at 31 May 2007, as well as details of the date of consultancy, the vendor, the description and the specific amounts. It is a very detailed list you will be receiving.

Ms CARNEY: Thank you. Does it answer how they were appointed, namely via C of E, tender?

Ms LAWRIE: No. It gives a date but it does not mark out the differentiation between tender and C of E.

Ms CARNEY: Okay. Happy to take that one on notice, if you can answer now that would be fine.

Ms LAWRIE: We will take it on notice.

Ms CARNEY: Okay. Thank you.

Question on Notice 7.2

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: Leader of the Opposition, for the purposes of *Hansard*, would you please restate your question?

Ms CARNEY: In relation to the consultants appointed in 2006-07, can you provide details of their appointment; namely, was the work provided subject to normal government tendering or certificate of exemptions, or provide other details?

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: Minister, are you prepared to take that question on notice?

Ms LAWRIE: Yes, I am.

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: For the purposes of *Hansard* I allocate that Question No 7.2.

Ms CARNEY: Minister, the question you half answered before: how much of the total appropriation went towards the costs of staffing? Could you include the number of FTEs and the number of employees at each level? If you have that in table form, would you be good enough to table it?

Ms LAWRIE: The appropriation for the Department of Planning and Infrastructure staffing for 2006-07 was \$36.213m. I am able to table the full-time equivalent by program at pay 26 for Land Development and Management, Transport Services, Infrastructure Services, Strategic Business Services, Construction Division and Darwin Bus. It also indicates the movement of Indigenous Infrastructure Unit to Local Government, Housing and Sport. Did you ask for their levels as well?

Ms CARNEY: Yes.

Ms LAWRIE: Done.

Ms CARNEY: Thanks. Moving to airfares, how much of the total appropriation was spent on the cost of airfares - a global figure. Can you also provide the cost of airfares between Darwin and Alice Springs? If you have it in table form, can you please table it?

Ms LAWRIE: I can give you the global figure of official duty travel expenses of the Department of Planning and Infrastructure, which was \$625 955. We are unable to break down Darwin to Alice Springs because we have a category called intra-Territory airfares. I am happy to table the document that breaks down the intra-Territory, interstate and overseas.

Ms CARNEY: Sorry. Does that document give me the answers to intra-Territory?

Ms LAWRIE: Yes, intra-Territory. Obviously, that includes Darwin to Tennant, Darwin to Lajamanu.

Ms CARNEY: Everywhere else, yes, got it. That is fine, thank you.

Mrs MILLER: It would not include Darwin to Katherine; we do not have a passenger service.

Ms LAWRIE: We like to drive there because we check our roads on the way.

Ms CARNEY: Drive along at 130 km/h every step of the way.

Ms LAWRIE: Guarding safety.

Ms CARNEY: The next is an environmental one. How much of the total appropriation goes towards greenhouse gas reduction strategies?

Ms LAWRIE: The halving of the MVR Goyder road lighting energy use through replacement of light fittings cost \$50 000. The halving of Energy House lighting energy use - DPI in partnership with the building owner co-funded the replacement of all lights on DPI floors - cost \$86 000. At Darwin Bus and NT Fleet

depot, there is a 30% saving in energy use through the installation of skylights and prevention of use of central plant for after-hours airconditioning. That cost \$45 000.

There are various energy audit recommendations that have been implemented at Casuarina, Darwin and Palmerston bus interchanges for \$12 000. Changes to the DPI complex in Tennant Creek cost \$20 000, and changes to the Alice Springs Motor Vehicle Registry cost \$10 000.

In the 2007-08 Budget, DPI plans to further implement energy efficiency improvements in the Greatorex Building and Chan Building for \$60 000, Highway House, Cavenagh House and Motor Vehicle Registry at Goyder Road for \$50 000.

Ms CARNEY: Thank You. The government committed itself to a target of 1.5% reduction in emissions from NT government commercial buildings by the end of this month. What adjustments, if any, to buildings and specific measures has your department undertaken to reach this target and, in light of your previous answer, if it is the same rather than repeat it - I can tell it is the same.

Ms LAWRIE: It is the same.

Ms CARNEY: Thank you. Next one: the government committed itself to a target of 5% reduction in per kilometre emissions from NT government passenger fleet vehicles by the end of the month. What specific measures has your department put in place to reach that target and can you provide details of how many hybrid and LPG cars are in the fleet?

Ms LAWRIE: One hybrid car, and two LPG.

Ms CARNEY: That is the answer?

Ms LAWRIE: Yes.

Ms CARNEY: The final question: the government has set its self a 10% carbon emission reduction target. Is there anything you would like to add in relation to providing advice regarding whether you have met or beaten that target?

Ms LAWRIE: As I said, we have used a range of energy saving efficiencies in the agency and in 2007-08, DPI has further plans for energy efficiency improvements at the Greatorex Building, the Chan Building, Highway House, Cavenagh House and Motor Vehicle Registry at Goyder Road.

Ms CARNEY: Thank you. Thank you, Madam Deputy Chair.

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: Any further questions?

OUTPUT GROUP 1.0 – LAND PLANNING, DEVELOPMENT AND MANAGEMENT

Output 1.1 – Land Information

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: I will now call for questions on Output Group 1.0 - Land Planning, Development and Management, Output 1.1 - Land Information.

Ms CARNEY: Just a couple. Minister, the old Land Use Planning and Regulation sub-output group in last year's budget papers provided for a cash amount against the 'capacity to provide policy advice'. That was in 2006-07 Budget Paper, page 157. The amount was \$1.9m. I note that the measure has been dropped from this year's budget and I would just like to know why that is the case?

Ms LAWRIE: I am happy to defer that question to the Executive Director, Lands and Planning, Rod Applegate.

Mr APPLGATE: Rod Applegate. This year, across of the department, we took the opportunity to review the KPI in line with the restructure that the minister referred to earlier. Obviously, in this area we do a lot of policy development in reviewing the performance measures for this next year. We felt the ones now in the budget papers are more meaningful and can allow more meaningful reporting in the long term.

Ms CARNEY: Thank you. A new performance measure of accuracy of data sets a requirement of 60% accuracy. I am wondering if you could give me a bit more information about that one. I get the impression you are not surprised I am asking that question.

Ms LAWRIE: Happy to refer that to Rod Applegate.

Mr APPEGATE: Well, would I be able to refer that to my Senior Director of Land Information, Vic Stephens, who has that hat?

Ms LAWRIE: Welcome to the table, Vic.

Mr STEPHENS: Vic Stephens. The new performance measures actually take into account specifications for the data sets that we maintain and catch on a regular basis. A few years ago, we had a target to align with national technical specifications. Unfortunately, those national technical specifications have not been developed. This year, we went back to that measure and determined that, during the 2007-08 year, we will define technical specifications against which we can assess the accuracy and the currency of the data sets that we maintain from the Territory in line with the national technical specifications. So, 60% is the national figure that we can apply as a starting point. During the year, we will be following those technical specifications. At the end of the year, I expect the figure to be a much higher percentage figure, than at the starting point.

Ms CARNEY: Next year we will be asking this question, no doubt. Obviously, we would all like to see it increase. Thank you for your answer. I do have some more questions; however, in the interests of time I will move on.

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: Are there any other questions?

Mr WOOD: Minister, why has the NT Maps moved from the corner of Bennett and Cavenagh Streets?

Ms LAWRIE: I am happy to provide you with the answer for this, because I hear that you are not happy about it going down to Cullen Bay, Gerry.

Mr WOOD: No, in simple language.

Ms LAWRIE: Due to increasing pressure on space at the Darwin Magistrates Court, it was agreed in 2005 that the Department of Land Information operations should relocate from Nicholls Place. This provided an opportunity to bring together elements of land information, which was spread across two buildings in the Darwin CBD, and thus improve the efficiency and cost-effectiveness for this group. Following examination of all options available, it was decided in 2006 to move Land Information to the new Chinatown office development, now called NAB House. Some changes to services are also being implemented following the relocation. Land Information includes the Darwin Land Information Centre, commonly referred to as the Map Shop.

An independent review in 2006 found that services such as storage and sale of all Geoscience Australia and Air Services Australia printed maps comprising about 800 different map sheets across the Territory, and commercially available tourist maps also available from private bookshops and tourist outlets, were not directly associated with core business. They lost money and diverted resources from other more relevant services that need to be developed for government and the industry. Accordingly, the role of the Land Information Centre as the main Northern Territory outlet for these maps has ceased following the relocation.

Following discussions with private sector vendors, expressions of interest were invited to take over the function and, as a result, a local company is now selling these maps in Darwin. The successful tenderer has an outlet at Cullen Bay, and will be the local retailer for these maps in Darwin. An external service provider is also being sought in Alice Springs. Similar changes to services have already taken place in most other jurisdictions' government Land Information Centres.

Mr WOOD: Basically, have you not taken away the one-stop shop? People who go for some maps from you, may now have to wander down to Cullen Bay, which is not in the CBD, to get the other maps. Before it was a very convenient mapping facility - a place where you could get all the advice you needed, whether it was commercial maps or NT government maps. Do you not think, to some extent, this has downgraded what was a great facility for people in Darwin?

Ms LAWRIE: I do not agree it is downgraded a great facility. It is an opportunity for people to see our beautiful Cullen Bay.

Mr WOOD: I go down to get a map, not to look at Cullen Bay. How much has the move cost?

Ms LAWRIE: The entire relocation?

Mr WOOD: Yes.

Ms LAWRIE: It cost \$4.5m for the fit-out and relocation of both the agencies. This was allocated through the Department of Corporate and Information Services in the 2006-07 Budget. That includes police, because police moved to Chinatown too.

Mr WOOD: So that \$4.5m is not just for the mapping shop moving?

Ms LAWRIE: No, it is everything.

Mr WOOD: You still own or lease the ex-mapping site in the Magistrates building?

Ms LAWRIE: No. The whole idea was to get out of Nichols Place because they have some pressure there in terms of the growth in the court system, member for Nelson.

Mr WOOD: We were told by the Attorney-General that was not the case; it was a Planning and Lands decision to move out of there, not the other way around.

Ms LAWRIE: There was a very good reason to bring our staff together - absolutely. I did say in my previous answer that there was some real operational requirements to come together.

Mr WOOD: Just one more point. Is Planning staying where it is at the present time, at the old AMP Building, or is it moving over here as well?

Ms LAWRIE: Staying.

Mr WOOD: Would it not have made more sense to have Land Information with Planning and Lands?

Ms LAWRIE: There was not room.

Mr WOOD: You should have bought some space in that building that is going up next door to the AMP Building - plenty of room there.

Ms LAWRIE: You should go and work for NT Properties, Gerry!

Mr WOOD: In the rural area! That is all the questions I have on this section, Madam Deputy Chair.

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

Output 1.2 – Land Use Planning and Development Assessment

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: The committee will now proceed to Output 1.2 - Land Use Planning and Development Assessment. Are there any questions?

Ms CARNEY: I believe you have probably answered this publicly, minister, if memory serves me correctly. When can we expect the first release in Bellamack?

Ms LAWRIE: August. No sorry, not first release, the expression of interest is going out in August to see which developers are interested.

Ms CARNEY: Okay. After that?

Ms LAWRIE: We are aiming for first block release in mid-2008.

Ms CARNEY: At which stage is Weddell?

Ms LAWRIE: Sorry, can you repeat that question?

Ms CARNEY: Tell us at what stage Weddell is in its general progress?

Ms LAWRIE: Okay. Weddell is part of the Chief Minister's Creating Darwin's Future debate and discussions about the 15-year plan of future development requirements of the greater Darwin area. Weddell was out for public comment and discussion in the context of whether the greater Darwin community preferred to see, in the 15 years time when Weddell would be required to come online - this is the time frame we are talking here, Leader of the Opposition – development south of Darwin continue down the track to Weddell, or would they prefer to see development over at Cox Peninsula, akin to other harbour cities where you develop around your harbour asset. My understanding is that the Chief Minister will come out with a public range of discussions around Creating Darwin's Future shortly.

Weddell is still on the books, if you like, but there is no need to activate Weddell. We know the costs and infrastructure requirements for Weddell. We have all the information handy for government for future consideration.

Ms CARNEY: So as a result of Creating Darwin's Future, there would be consultations, discussion papers etcetera and, ultimately, if I understand you correctly, government will make a decision as between Cox Peninsula and Weddell. Is that correct? Is that what you are saying?

Ms LAWRIE: There are a whole lot of steps to be taken yet. Obviously, Cox Peninsula, for example, is subject to negotiations with traditional owners. It is not just as simple as getting the information back in and then government making a decision. There are a whole lot of steps to ...

Ms CARNEY: But, of course, government would ...

Ms LAWRIE: Ultimately, governments do determine where future developments occur.

Ms CARNEY: Yes, and then there will be other negotiations as a result.

Ms LAWRIE: Based on a range of advice.

Ms CARNEY: Okay, I would perhaps like to spend some more time on this - maybe the member for Nelson will, but I need to move on. Can you tell us, minister, at what point are negotiations over the Kenbi land hand back. I believe it has been about six years since government announced the settlement of the Kenbi land claim. What is the hold-up in the land development?

Ms LAWRIE: Yes, I do have some information on Kenbi, Leader of the Opposition. When you are in the midst of negotiations, you are limited to how much you can say. Whilst we want to be as forthcoming as we can be, we are actually actively in negotiations. The Northern Territory government is actively working with the commissioner and the relevant land councils to settle all valid land claims. The Aboriginal Land Commissioner handed down his recommendations on the grant of land subject to the Kenbi land claim in December 2000.

The Commonwealth has given the traditional owners and the Northern Territory time to reach agreement on any detrimental issues, and if all the recommended land should be scheduled. The Northern Land Council, representing the traditional owners and the Northern Territory, are currently in discussions on these issues. Notwithstanding the recommendations of the Land Commissioner, the Northern Territory still believes that Cox Peninsula is vital to the future growth and development of Darwin. As such, scheduling all the recommended land would impact on the Northern Territory and the ability to use that land for development under normal conditions. Some Larrakia recognise the value of their land for future development and wish to discuss how this might be achieved.

The Northern Territory is negotiating with the Northern Land Council on behalf of the traditional owners as to whether agreement can be reached and recommended to the Commonwealth that some land not be scheduled under the *Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act*, and which portions of land on Cox Peninsula should be excluded from scheduling.

Ms CARNEY: What sort of time frame are you looking at in terms of the completion of the things that you have outlined for negotiation?

Ms LAWRIE: We are in active discussions this year.

Ms CARNEY: I will repeat the question. What sort of time frame are you looking at in terms of negotiations and completion thereof.

Ms LAWRIE: I will repeat my rider at the outset; that when you are in active negotiations you do not do anything to prejudice those negotiations. I will say as much as could be said to not prejudice those negotiations. We are in active discussions this year.

Ms CARNEY: Clearly, you are in discussions this year, minister. It is June, it is 2007; you are in negotiations. Are you saying to the Estimates Committee that you are unable to provide any time frame as to when those negotiations will be concluded?

Ms LAWRIE: No, I am saying ...

Ms CARNEY: Even though ...

Ms LAWRIE: ... I am unwilling to provide it.

Ms CARNEY: You are unwilling to provide ...

Ms LAWRIE: I will not prejudice negotiations with the land council.

Ms CARNEY: Okay, so it has been years and it could, potentially, be years. We will infer from your answer ...

Ms LAWRIE: In your words, Leader of the Opposition.

Ms CARNEY: Clearly, in the absence of ...

Ms LAWRIE: You can infer what you like in your own words, but I will repeat I am unwilling.

Ms CARNEY: Okay, so you are unwilling. That is because, as I understand your answer, you do not want to prejudice any negotiations. Correct?

Ms LAWRIE: Correct.

Ms CARNEY: For no other reason?

Ms LAWRIE: Correct.

Ms CARNEY: All right.

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: Leader of the Opposition, do you have any further questions?

Ms CARNEY: Yes, Madam Deputy Chair, as a matter of fact I do. I have so many more questions in relation to that, but I am obliged to move on. Minister, the Chief Minister has indicated that Middle Arm is where future development will go. Glyde Point was assessed by the Environment Centre as being sensitive to development. As you know, the problem is that Middle Arm is in Darwin Harbour and Glyde Point is not. The zoning for Middle Arm is for industry, but not heavy industry, as you presumably know. My question is: when heavy industry comes to Darwin, where is it going to be put?

Ms LAWRIE: My question is what is your view of heavy industry? Are you talking smelter?

Ms CARNEY: Absolutely

Ms LAWRIE: There is ..

Ms CARNEY: Petrochemical, other forms of heavy industry.

Ms LAWRIE: Petrochemicals are a bit of a broad description. Really, the answer would be based on the specific type of industry that would be proposed. As is normal for government, we would look at areas of industrial land marked for development that would be appropriate to the nature of the specific industry being proposed. There is nothing proposed at the moment in terms of smelters.

Ms CARNEY: No plans on the books for manufacturing or heavy industry?

Ms LAWRIE: Well, downstream gas manufacturing, of course, has been the subject of very recent public discussions. There is some interest being shown by companies involved in the downstream manufacturing processes. They are not necessarily heavy industry, certainly not in the realms of a smelter. The government has started a public discussion in *Creating Darwin's Future* about where people want to see downstream gas manufacturing - whether they want to see it at Middle Arm or at Glyde Point. The feedback the government has received is they believe that downstream gas manufacturing appropriately sits within the industrial zoned areas of Middle Arm. That is the feedback we have received.

Ms CARNEY: I understand that a company has approached government in relation to processing products such as yellowcake, uranium. Can you confirm that is the case and whether processing of products such as that is likely to be at Middle Arm?

Ms LAWRIE: That is not something that has been put to my agency as a proposal. At various stages there are discussions with potential manufacturers and major projects in the Department of Chief Minister.

Ms CARNEY: Thanks for your answer; that is, that nothing has gone to your agency. Have you received representations as minister from this firm in relation to yellowcake uranium?

Ms LAWRIE: No.

Ms CARNEY: We are on Output 1.2, land use planning. I had proposed to ask some questions to the land at Dalgety Road in Alice Springs. It seems to me that it could fall within either Output 1.2 or 1.3. I need formal indication.

Ms LAWRIE: Output 1.2.

Ms CARNEY: Thank you. I will come to that shortly. I have another couple of questions. In fact, for the purposes of *Hansard*, I have many, but time is against me. How many departments are involved in clearances so that developments can proceed?

Ms LAWRIE: That depends on the nature of the development. If it is rural area development, different agencies are involved. You have to be more specific for us to give you a more accurate answer.

Ms CARNEY: What is the minimum number of departments involved in, let us say, a standard clearance? I will put it like this: when developers put in an application, they have to jump through a number of hoops, as developers would say. We would like to know how many hoops exactly they have to jump through in getting the relevant clearance, let us say, for a standard development? How many divisions in each of those departments does the developer have to deal with?

Ms LAWRIE: Well, if a developer comes forward with a proposal that is in line with the existing zoning of the land, then it is a very straightforward process. I guess the clarification required is: are you talking about a development outside of the existing zoning?

Ms CARNEY: Okay, let us say outside.

Ms LAWRIE: Outside of the existing zoning. Are you talking about rural or industrial? It depends on the nature of the development and the nature of the zoning as to what processes need to be followed. As much as I am trying to work with you, we actually cannot take hypotheticals because they are so general.

Ms CARNEY: Okay. In the interests of time, what I might do is write to you separately.

Ms LAWRIE: Absolutely, yes.

Ms CARNEY: We do not need that on notice, because we have been asked very specifically to ask questions along these lines and I appreciate that you know why.

Ms LAWRIE: Any specific issues you want to bring forward at any time, I am happy to deal with.

Ms CARNEY: Okay, I will do this by letter. A couple of questions in relation to Dalgety Road, Alice Springs. Your department sent an application to the Aboriginal Areas Protection Authority on 8 August 2006. In the application, it sought an authority certificate. By covering letter to the application, also dated 8 August 2006, the letter from your department said: 'It would be appreciated if you could

provide details of the requirements of the custodians of the area, if any, for such development on the sites and if there are any objections to the proposal'.

On 13 March or thereabouts, you, as minister, announced your approval for the Dalgety Road site. What did you, as minister, do from 8 August to 13 March, or thereabouts, in chasing up the authority certificate?

Ms LAWRIE: On 14 December 2006, the department received a response from the authority stating that there was no record of sacred sites within the area. There were sacred sites in the vicinity which could impact on works. The letter noted that an application for an authority certificate had been lodged and that a process of consultation with custodians was under way.

The department received further advice from the authority on 5 January 2007, that preliminary research indicated that there were sacred sites located in the vicinity of what we know as Lot 7717. The authority recommended that any ground disturbing activity or changes could only proceed in accordance with the conditions of an authority certificate, and that any planning approvals were also given only in accordance with the conditions of an authority certificate.

Development permits are generally issued subject to compliance with the requirements of statutory authorities, including the authority, prior to works commencing. Often the authority processes can take longer than the development approval process, as occurred in this instance. The development permit issued by me on 13 March 2007 was issued subject to the developer complying with the rigorous set of conditions, including obtaining an authority certificate and complying with its terms. On 16 May 2007, the authority advised that it was unable to issue an authority certificate over the site. Consultations with custodians indicated that there were sacred sites located on and in the vicinity of Lot 7717, thus works carried out within the area would pose a substantial risk of damage to these sites.

Ms CARNEY: Could you go back to the letter of 14 December 2006? Who was that to and who was it from?

Ms LAWRIE: The letter was from the Aboriginal Areas Protection Authority to the Development Consent Authority.

Ms CARNEY: Are you prepared to table a copy of that letter?

Ms LAWRIE: Yes, absolutely.

Ms CARNEY: Were you, as minister, aware that the authority certificate had not been issued in December of 2006?

Ms LAWRIE: Absolutely, and that is one of the reasons why I, obviously, made it a condition. I made the requirement for an authority certificate condition on the lease. I was very aware that there was no authority certificate issued.

Ms CARNEY: Sorry, when did you make it conditional on the authority?

Ms LAWRIE: When I issued the development permit on 30 March 2007, the authority certificate was a condition. As I said, it is not unusual for development assessment processes to proceed more swiftly than authority processes. Where you have one process completed before the other process is not, it is quite usual to make it a condition, which we did in this case.

Ms CARNEY: You made a number of public comments on 13 March, and days thereafter, particularly in Alice Springs. At no time, to my knowledge, having reviewed all the material, did you make any reference to the fact that you were waiting for an authority certificate. Why was that?

Ms LAWRIE: No, I did actually. In public comments, I was very clear in saying that the requirement for an authority certificate was a condition.

Ms CARNEY: I am pretty certain we have all the information, or all of the material. Did you ...

Ms LAWRIE: Well, I know what I said. I know what I said to the media.

Ms CARNEY: Sure. Which media organisation did you say that to?

Ms LAWRIE: I said it to the ABC.

Ms CARNEY: Did you say that to the ABC on 13 March 2007?

Ms LAWRIE: I could not tell you the exact day; I do not have all the transcripts and dates before me. However, I can say categorically that I have a very clear recollection of the discussion around the development permit, including the requirement for an authority certificate.

Ms CARNEY: I will not pursue this further, but I would just need to get this very clear. Do you say that you did say publicly that you were waiting on an authority certificate?

Ms LAWRIE: I have said very publicly that I had made a condition of the requirement to have an authority certificate on the development permit.

Ms CARNEY: It is a little frustrating because time is against us, but your answer has been interesting. Thank you, I will leave it there. I am sure the member for Nelson has some questions.

Mr WOOD: Minister, some of my questions will relate to what the Leader of the Opposition stated. You talk about a 15-year strategic plan for Darwin. Where does that leave the Darwin Regional Land Use Structure Plan, which is the current planning document for the area?

Ms LAWRIE: I am happy to refer that specifically to Jim O'Neill.

Mr O'NEILL: Jim O'Neill, Senior Director of Planning and Development Assessment Services. One of the issues that we have before us in planning terms at the moment is the necessity to come to grips with the development plan that is going to apply to Darwin, and the growth of Darwin for the short- to medium-term; that is, 15 years. This suggests to us in Planning that we need to examine those previous planning documents. This Darwin Regional Structure Plan is going back to 1984, you may recall. There has been a series of updates of that in various forms over the years. It is one of those cycles that we are in, in planning; that we re-examine the directions and the logic to further urban and industrial development in these regions.

Ms LAWRIE: We update, and we are going through that process at the moment.

Mr WOOD: The Darwin Regional Land Use Structure Plan is a very detailed document. I would expect more than just a public consultation 'what do you think'-type process; to be a little more in-depth than that. The Darwin Regional Land Use Structure Plan has a whole range of issues from transport to infrastructure to provision of the central services - a whole range of issues that I would expect there would be some more serious discussions with people in the Litchfield Shire; there would be some public meetings occurring that would really look at that in-depth before we went down the path of, for instance, looking at Cox Peninsula. It concerns me we are looking at Cox Peninsula because Weddell has existing infrastructure in the form of a major water line and it is close to Darwin River Dam. It is close to the power at Channel Island, and you are going to put a new power station on Channel Island Road. There needs to be some debate as to whether Weddell should come on earlier, not later, because of land use pressures.

Ms LAWRIE: The agency does have a consultation strategy. Informing the considerations, there is a current review of transport options for the Darwin region. There is completion of a study of a residential, commercial, industrial lands that apply in the Darwin region. We are developing a ring tail hierarchy for the region, and we are investigating opportunities for urban in-fill in Darwin. Our consultation strategy includes an interdepartmental working group being established in August of this year; requirements from government agencies to be completed later this year; requirements from the Transport Division and the Infrastructure Division of our own agency to be completed by January of next year; targeting stakeholder consultations to be completed in the first quarter, if possible, of next year; and further public consultation mid next year.

You are quite right; something of this magnitude does require a very clear process to follow regarding government having an understanding of the variety of requirements for future development, and going out to that necessary stage of public consultation.

Mr WOOD: You may have heard me many times ask about the future of Weddell. Weddell is one of these moving pictures that change when the idea of a dam over Elizabeth River was removed from its original planning design. Now, we get these sorts of maps that the government has put out, and they still do not give you any idea of the boundaries of Weddell, nor do they allow the public or other groups to get

involved in the design. For many years I have said: 'Here we have a new town that I would hate to see as a repeat of Palmerston'. That is not putting down Palmerston as a city, but from design work for the CBD, I do not think you will find anyone who thinks the CBD of Palmerston is a great piece of design work.

Yet, here is an opportunity for us to put out competition for an international, national, even local architects. You say it is 15 years away, there is no reason why we could not look at something now - something special for Weddell. However, all I ever see is the department's one dimensional - in this case it is not coloured – and it already seems to be settled. There has never been a movement by government to say: 'Let us put this out for some public input. Let us see innovative design work for this town'. I believe there is an opportunity we are missing. I ask the minister whether she would look at that approach for the development of Weddell.

Ms LAWRIE: As I have said, we are at very early days of 15-years strategic land use plan for Darwin being revisited. I clearly identified that the interdepartmental working group is just about to be established; that there is a whole process to be followed between now and the middle of next year. I am not going to put the cart before the horse and announce some public design competition for Weddell when all of those processes regarding whether there will be an emphasis on development of Weddell or on development elsewhere, are yet to be ultimately determined.

Mr WOOD: I would not say it was the cart before the horse; it is definitely the horse before the cart because, once you have the design, you can keep it. You do not have to act upon it.

The other thing you will notice with Weddell is that you have not included private land. As you know, there is substantial land in the Noonamah area which, in some maps, has been shown as part of Weddell. This map tends not to be given any sort of identification. You and I know that there are developers who are itching to see whether they can develop land there.

It is not just about whether the government thinks this area should be opened up. There are private landowners in this area who would like to know the future direction of the government because they recognise there is a shortage of land at the moment. In the rural area at the moment, anyone knows the price is \$270 000 for a one hectare block. There is definitely a demand for land, yet we do not seem to be moving along with this concept.

Ms LAWRIE: There is a really healthy demand for land in the rural area. It is one of the reasons why, as Minister for Planning and Infrastructure, I am having a steady stream of subdivision applications coming across my desk for subdivisions in the rural area, most of which are approved if they meet the appropriate zoning. As minister, I put things out to public exhibition where they do not meet the appropriate zoning. To say that no residential rural development is occurring because we are not proceeding with detailed plans around Weddell ...

Mr WOOD: I do not think I said that.

Ms LAWRIE: ... is something that I reject.

Mr WOOD: You can reject it because I did not say it. I was referring to Weddell. In the Darwin Regional Land Use Structure Plan, the Noonamah area was identified as being part of Weddell. All I am saying is there are some private landowners in that area - and I am not particularly supporting or rejecting what they are saying. However, what you are doing is concentrating on Crown land and there is quite a substantial amount of private land which really cannot be developed, I think, until the government decides the boundaries of Weddell and the plans for that area.

Ms LAWRIE: There is nothing preventing private landowners coming forward with subdivision proposals, as they do on a regular basis.

Mr WOOD: All right. We will leave that section. Minister, is the Glyde Point environmental impact statement going to be completed?

Ms LAWRIE: It is nearly complete.

Mr WOOD: When do you think we should see it up for exhibition?

Ms LAWRIE: I will defer in a moment to Neville Jones, but I can say that it is not an environmental impact statement, in a sense of it is more a research project that looks at the broader strategic appropriate

uses for Glyde Point. Therefore, it is not an environmental impact statement in the sense that you have an active development proposal under way, and the company with that development proposal pursues the normal EIS process. You need to understand that it is actually a level above that, which is a strategic overview. However, I defer to Neville to explain that process to you.

Mr JONES: Neville Jones, Executive Director, Construction Services. The Northern Territory *Environmental Assessment Act* does not currently include the concept known as strategic assessment as is in the Commonwealth environment legislation. The work that has been carried out at Glyde Point is, in fact, termed environmental impact statement.

As you know, member for Nelson, we have done a series of engineering and environmental baseline studies over several years. The statement is being prepared at the moment draws all of those documents together, and there have been some additional field studies done. We have currently received a draft of the final document for review. I expect that the review of that draft will identify some further studies to be done before it is complete. It is not intended for public exhibition because, in the absence of any commitment to the development proposals out there, the document would be in draft form for the time being, and it would either be used if there was a definite proposal or, if there is too much lapse of time, it would have to be refreshed and reviewed.

Mr WOOD: That concerns me to some extent, because your Chief Minister has said that there has been some feeling from the public that we should not develop Glyde Point. John Bailey from the Darwin Harbour Advisory Committee said on radio that, basically, they were not necessarily opposed to the Stage 4, but there should be some more information and research done into the possibility of using that land. The Environment Centre and PPlan have certainly being opposed to it. I have said I have some concerns about it. How can anyone make an informed decision about the suitability of Glyde Point if the government does not put this study on public exhibition?

Ms LAWRIE: Member for Nelson, as I say, there is no current proposal for development at Glyde Point. This is a researched strategic assessment being undertaken by government that is required for us to consider the long-term view of future industrial development. There is nothing proposed at the moment. It is the nature of the strategic assessments of this nature to sit within government.

Mr WOOD: I understand that, but you realise the Chief Minister has spoken about Dow Chemicals. She has also spoken about how she believes that the Darwin public do not have any great concerns about using the centre of the harbour as an industrial zone.

Ms LAWRIE: The Chief Minister does not think that it should go in the centre of the harbour. She has said to you on many occasions, member for Nelson, that the industrial land at Middle Arm is not in the centre of the harbour - not the sandbar.

Mr WOOD: Middle Arm Peninsula is in the centre of the harbour. Maybe if you are in Darwin centric it is not, but if you are a Litchfield centric, it definitively is. That purple area is in the centre of the harbour. Glyde Point is right opposite East Arm Port. It is meant to be developed as industrial.

This issue is not just about whether this is a sensitive part of our area to be developed, it is also whether we want an eyesore in the centre of our harbour. You know that there are lots of complaints about the size of the Wickham Point tank, which I presumed was a lot smaller than that from the photographs. The port itself is not exactly a beauty spot when you look at it from the fish and chip shop on the wharf; you have a whole row of oil tanks there. Do we really want to turn our harbour into a Botany Bay, or do we want to do something special and look for alternative sites? I believe we are not taking into account that it is not only whether the Darwin Harbour is the ideal place for industry; it is whether we want our harbour to look industrial. If you look at this, all that purple area to the north of Channel Island Road, and to the west of the Channel Island Bridge, except for the mangroves and one little island the government took out - which probably would have been doubtful whether it would have been suitable for development - is all for industrial.

Surely, that petition that was received in 2001 with 6500 signatures, expressing our great concerns about the industrial development of the harbour, is not saying to the government that people think it is okay. Surely, government should be listening to that as well. Why do you want to go down this path of developing the middle of the harbour? Just because someone decided that was a good idea or you, as minister, think this is a good place to put industry?

Ms LAWRIE: Member for Nelson, you would be aware that significant sections of Middle Arm are already identified for industrial development.

Mr WOOD: You are the minister, you can change that.

Ms LAWRIE: They are zoned for development.

Mr WOOD: Yes, I know that is the planner's idea, but the planners love me when I go on about Middle Arm. You are the minister, you could say tomorrow: 'Sorry, we are going to preserve the harbour from industrial development'.

Ms LAWRIE: Member for Nelson, I am the minister for the port. The port exists in a very central area inside the Darwin Harbour. Wickham Point exists in Middle Arm, on the end of the Middle Arm. I am not going to wave a magic wand and then waive the fact that we have a working harbour; it is just ridiculous.

Mr WOOD: Minister, these industries do not have to use the water of Darwin Harbour. Why could they not actually be placed at Howard Peninsula, which is closer to the port by road. It is closer to the port, it is closer to Palmerston and it is on the strategic corridor to Glyde Point, which includes railway and utilities? Why take an area that does not need to be used when you have other areas that could be suitable? Considering the Howard Peninsula was the site for the regional waste facility and your Darwin Defence Hub, which I will come to later.

Ms LAWRIE: Member for Nelson, I have already asked the department to examine whether there is sufficient land available to accommodate some industrial development after the land required for regional waste facility has been quarantined in the Howard Peninsula. Your request has gone forward.

Mr WOOD: While I am talking about that question, minister, you just recently rezoned land for the Darwin Defence Hub. Do you realise that some of that land is wet? I know this is not a very good picture, but I am willing to table it. That was taken last week of two magnetic anthills in an area which you had zoned industrial, and is now going forward to the development application. The department has said this land is suitable. Why are you allowing - and I am not against a Defence Hub - some of that land that is not suitable to be rezoned for industrial, when it goes against the environmental principles which, I hope, your government supports?

Ms LAWRIE: Member for Nelson, the land zoned for the Defence Hub is suitable for the purposes of the Defence associated industries that will attract a significant amount of economic opportunities for Territorians. There is land adjacent and near the Defence Hub's own land which is a lovely environmental habitat, and that is not being zoned.

Mr WOOD: Well, minister, unless this Defence Hub zoning is going to include the Navy, this is land that goes under water. That is the land.

Ms LAWRIE: Member for Nelson, you showed me a picture that, I dare say, looks out on to the wetlands to the back of the land that has been zoned, not the actual land that has been zoned.

Mr WOOD: All right, minister, I will take you out there one day. I will give you a briefing - an on-site briefing. Minister ...

Ms LAWRIE: I have been out there a few times.

Mr WOOD: I will show you the map.

Ms LAWRIE: Been out there a few times.

Mr WOOD: Take Plaxy Purich with you. I am sure she will tell you also.

Minister, in relation to the regional waste facility, now with the proposed changes to the council structure, will the government rethink the regional waste facility program in the light of a new Litchfield Shire which expands down as far as Douglas Daly, out to Dundee and Marrakai, because the regional waste facility will be nowhere near the centre of this new shire?

Ms LAWRIE: Member for Nelson, the Department of Planning and Infrastructure provides technical advice to the Department of Local Government regarding the regional waste facilities. Therefore, your

question regarding the regional waste facility is more appropriately directed to the Minister for Local Government.

Mr WOOD: That is true. However, from a land use planning view, which is one of your areas because on this map here - land use concepts - you have a red diamond which your department has shown as a possible site for the regional waste facility. I am asking whether your department will reconsider that in the light of the changes to the shires that the government has put in force?

Ms LAWRIE: The identified location of the regional waste facility is based on technical advice from the Department of Planning and Infrastructure, based on centrality to the bulk of the population. When you are looking at where you place your regional waste management facility, having a view to where the bulk of your population is, is a significant factor in the technical advice you provide to the Department of Local Government.

Mr WOOD: Thank you, minister. I need to tell you that Dundee's waste is transported approximately 100 km to Shoal Bay at the present time. It does not make sense from a planning aspect. That is all the line of questioning I have on that section.

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: That concludes consideration of Output 1.2.

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: I now call for questions on Output 1.3, Building Advisory Services. Are there any questions?

Ms CARNEY: Madam Deputy Chair, I do have a few but I will reduce it to one. I am fairly certain it fits into this area. It is in relation to the increase in fees effective 1 July for new applications - Planning Scheme Amendment and related fees from 1 July under the *Planning Act* - information which is publicly available.

Ms LAWRIE: For clarification that is under Output 1.2, not 1.3.

Ms CARNEY: Are you prepared to take it now? It is a quick one. Given that you went out of another output area earlier for the member for Nelson, minister, I would be grateful if we could ...

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: We have finished Output 1.2. Will the minister take the question?

Ms CARNEY: Are you prepared to take it now? It is a quick one. Given that you went out into another output area earlier for the member of Nelson, minister, I would be grateful if we could ...

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: We have finished Output 1.2 with the minister.

Ms LAWRIE: I am happy to take it.

Ms CARNEY: Thank you, it is a quick one. You may need to take it on notice, but if you have the answer now that would be great. In relation to the increase of fees, (a) why where the fees increased; and (b) how much do you expect to recover as a result of the increase in fees in 2007-08?

Ms LAWRIE: As in every other jurisdiction, the Territory charges a fee for development applications lodged under the *Planning Act*. The last general increase of fees was 1993, more than a decade ago ...

Ms CARNEY: It is a CPI-based increase. Is that what you are saying?

Ms LAWRIE: ... since which time the real value of the fees certainly has been seriously eroded. With the increase in construction costs generally over the periods since 1993 and the major developments now occurring, the fee structure as it existed had perverse outcomes. For example, a duplex unit development in Palmerston attracted the same fee as the Pandanus Apartment development in central Darwin.

In setting the fee structure of values, government examined fees charged in other jurisdictions. The new fees placed the Northern Territory about midway in the range of charges that exist around Australia. Fees that would impact on small business activities such as a home occupation or for a single dwelling, which usually does not require planning approval anyway, have been kept deliberately low, increasing by just \$10.

The most significant increases are associated with developments valued in excess of \$1m and increase on a sliding scale to a maximum \$15 000 for developments in excess of \$50m. Government has not

adopted a full user pay model for the provision of development assessment services and expects that, collectively, the fees will equate to under half the cost of the actual assessment process.

The proposed increase in fees has been advertised and each person coming forward is advised regarding the development applications. There has been no significant negative reaction expressed by the development industry. I know a developer interviewed by the media when we announced the fees said that it would have no impact. They tend to pass any cost they incur on through developments. I have to say if you are going to build a development in excess of \$50m, a fee of \$15 000 is neither here nor there.

Ms CARNEY: A second part of the question: how much does this government expect to recover as a result of the increase of fees in 2007-08?

Ms LAWRIE: We are looking at for 2006-07 an additional \$261 000, and we are predicting approximately \$800 000 for 2007-08.

Ms CARNEY: No further questions in the interest in time for this output.

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: Output 1.3 – are there any further questions.

Mr WOOD: Output 3 - that is the Building Advisory Service?

Ms LAWRIE: No, no, I went back to 1.2.

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: That concludes consideration of Output 1.2.

Mr WOOD: Oh, no, that is 1.2.

Ms CARNEY: We were in output 1.3. We jumped back to 1.2. We are back in 1.3.

Mr WOOD: Can I go back to 1.2 – you have lost me there. Through you, Madam Deputy Chair.

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: I will now re-open Output 1.2 – last questions on 1.2.

Mr WOOD: Is it 1.3? Which is Building Advisory Services – 1.3?

Ms LAWRIE: 1.3

Mr WOOD: All right 1.3, Madam Chair – I have it. Output 1.3. Minister ...

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: Concluding Output 1.2 which will not be re-opened.

Output 1.3 – Building Advisory Services

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: I will now call for questions on Output 1.3 – Building Advisory Services.

Mr WOOD: Sorry, Madam Deputy Chair.

Ms LAWRIE: Is the Leader of the Opposition going to have any questions on this one?

Ms CARNEY: Yes I did, but in the interests of time, no. I need to get to other areas

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: Member for Nelson.

Mr WOOD: Minister, has your government done a survey or report on whether your new building regulations have increased the costs of building a house? In other words, have you done a cost comparison between what a house cost to build without these new building regulations and what it costs today?

Ms LAWRIE: Member for Nelson, no we have not. I have to say are you suggesting that we should not have reformed the building industry?

Mr WOOD: No, I am concerned that some of the building regulations have added extra costs to the house that may need looking regarding whether they need simplifying. This may not be the perfect

example but I know from a personal point of view – you want to replace the windows in your house – no changes to the frame, you require an engineer's certificate. Surely, a qualified glazier who knows the Australian standard required for the window could fit that window in your house - say you went from sliding to louvres - and your building certifier could give it the tick. At the present time, you are required to get an engineer - for what reason, I am not sure - which certainly adds to the cost of a house.

Ms LAWRIE: I am advised, member for Nelson, that you have always required that permit.

Mr WOOD: I may, but what it highlights ...

Ms LAWRIE: So it is not as a result of the reforms.

Mr WOOD: No. I said that it may not be the perfect example, but what it does highlight is whether you have reviewed the implications of your regulations on the cost of housing. The cost of housing is sky rocketing.

Ms LAWRIE: You used an example that always existed.

Mr WOOD: All right. Take that example. Do you think it makes sense?

Ms LAWRIE: I am not a builder and I rely on the expertise of the building industry and the Building Advisory Services section. It has existed for a long time, so they have all come to the view that it makes sense.

Mr WOOD: I know the man in charge of it has been there for a long time. I know him.

Ms LAWRIE: Fabio is a good bloke. We have an agency of good blokes.

Mr WOOD: I am not saying he is not. I am not commenting.

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: And girls.

Ms LAWRIE: And terrific women.

Mr WOOD: I am not commenting on that, either. However, you have introduced a whole series of regulations and some of those regulations, I believe, have incurred costs. I am getting this back from builders. I believe it would be sensible of the government to review the cost implications of their regulations, and to see whether there are ways that retain what you are trying to do but, perhaps, reduce costs.

Ms LAWRIE: Member for Nelson, what the government introduced is a requirement to have a builder registered. The increased cost of that is a fee of \$800 over two years. Quite frankly, you are looking at, by your argument, an increase to the cost of \$400 per annum. Tell me where and how that is going to have a significant cost flow-on effect to the building industry.

Mr WOOD: It is not only about the licensing of the builder; it also about the way in which a house is now constructed.

Ms LAWRIE: The Building Code we did not change with the reforms. We changed the requirement for registration.

Mr WOOD: There has been. I am getting this from people who build houses that there is an increase in costs because there are certain building permits that are required up-front, at the beginning of the mandatory inspection stage. One of the issues that I do not think has ever been resolved is the reason we require engineers to sign off is because building certifiers are not willing to sign off some of these things on their own.

Ms LAWRIE: I can see, member for Nelson, that my agency officials are champing at the bit to get involved in this discussion.

Mr WOOD: That is all right. That is the reason I asked why you have not looked at it.

Ms LAWRIE: There is a lot of the shaking of the head no. I want to give them the opportunity to express that. I defer in the first instance to Rod Applegate and then we will introduce Fabio Finocchiaro.

Mr APLEGATE: Thank you, minister. In relation to the issue you are talking about regarding building certifications, this government clearly examined the need to bring greater certainty to the end user, which is the house owner in the whole building reform.

Therefore, in Darwin, yes, there has been a mandated inspection. That is what people want. That provides greater certainty to the end user of a house, that their house has been built in accordance with the code and will stay up and be a house that they first commit to buying and are having built. Yes, there is an increased requirement on the certifiers also to do the job that they were supposed to be doing since 1993. The regulations and changes have enshrined that so they are fully aware of their responsibilities now as private certifiers under the *Building Act*. Fabio may wish to say more.

Mr FINOCCHIARO: Fabio Finocchiaro, Senior Director Building Advisory Section. I make the point that certifiers are qualified and deemed professionals in the specific area of the Building Code and engineers are equally qualified in a different area. We do get a mixture of engineers who are certifiers and vice versa but, generally speaking, they are two separate disciplines. The system has always required structural certifications which engineers do. Building certifiers, as part of their certification process, rely on and take that certification. It is not that we have created a separate part or something different. There has always been two parts, and it has always been because it is two separate disciplines.

Mr WOOD: I will not labour it. The feedback I am getting is that there are costs that are going up considerably. I am not saying we should not try to protect the consumer; what I am saying is whether we can look at what is happening to see whether something can be streamlined. Also, are there layers in that bureaucracy that we need to address to reduce the cost of housing?

Ms LAWRIE: In terms of that, certainly there is a whole lot of work being done by government in working with the Construction Industry Reference Group, involving several government agencies looking at the views of the HIA, TCA and others. We are always looking at ways to ensure that we have a buoyant construction industry. Issues around the role of certifiers and how they interface with construction are active issues before government. We have the Construction Industry Reference Group to do exactly that.

Mr WOOD: All right. I do not have any more questions.

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: Are there any further questions? That concludes consideration of Output 1.3.

Output 1.4 – Land Administration

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: I will now call for questions on Output 1.4 - Land Administration.

Ms CARNEY: Madam Deputy Chair, I am very sorry to do this but, for the sake of *Hansard*, I am indicating that, yes, I do have questions in relation to 1.4 and, while I am at it, 1.5, and in relation to non-output specific areas. I will waive my right to ask those questions on the basis that the minister has another portfolio involving child protection, and we are very keen to get to that area. To members of the department, it is not as though the opposition is not keen on this area, we have four-and-a-half hours and there are competing priorities, so thank you. My colleague would also like to get to Transport, so thank you.

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: Leader of the Opposition, I will deal with each output group individually. Any further questions on Output 1.4?

Mr WOOD: You announced, in the budget, \$7m for land for first homebuyers. Could you explain a little more about that project?

Ms LAWRIE: Are you referring to the \$7m announced for headworks at Bellamack?

Mr WOOD: Yes, and I believe you included in there that there would be some land for first homeowners?

Ms LAWRIE: That is right.

Mr WOOD: What process is going to occur in the development of that land?

Ms LAWRIE: I am waiting for advice from the Minister for Local Government, Housing and Sport and Recreation. I have a range of options that I put to him as Planning minister regarding the affordable housing component of the Bellamack subdivision and any public housing component of the Bellamack subdivision. We are getting advice back from that minister and his agency of how they want us to proceed.

Mr WOOD: When I have raised the issue of the government actually quarantining some land from land that it is putting up for auction for development, you have generally given me the answer that we will affect the market if we put out blocks for land for first homeowners. The market is the key reason why some of my ideas have not gone past square one. However, surely if you have a limited number per year of land that has been set aside for first homeowners - that the government actually owns, not the developer; the government pays the infrastructure going past those blocks within that larger development - you will not affect the market, (1) because you are only releasing a limited number; and (2) those people cannot get into the market simply because the median price of houses has gone up so much even HomeNorth cannot necessarily supply enough money for those loans. Why can you not use a system like that?

Ms LAWRIE: We have identified, in both Darwin and Alice Springs, that we will be putting onto the market affordable blocks quarantined from a normal market price, if you like, for affordable housing. In Alice Springs, that is in the area called Larapinta, and in Darwin it will be in Bellamack. Whether or not the government chooses directly or go through a developer is still to be determined. There is nothing precluding either process from being effective.

Mr WOOD: Would you be looking at just the ability for a person to buy the land, not a house/land package? If the government can produce land at a moderate price it would enable a first homeowner to build a house of their choice. Would you consider that an option, or are you only looking at house/packages?

Ms LAWRIE: I have indicated that preference has been home/land packages, but final decisions have not been made. I take the suggestion on board.

Mr WOOD: That would be good, because, at moment - and I have been discussing with the minister for Lands - we have about 160 to 180 people in Darwin, Palmerston and Casuarina waiting for housing. We have a range of people who are out of the market, also in the rural area. May I ask - and I did ask this of a member of your department - why you cannot open up land for first homeowners in the rural area where you own a considerable amount of Crown land; I am not talking about suburban, I am talking about rural - which will allow people the choice. If you read Collier's report at the moment, land in the rural area has gone up to a median - just the land only - I think of \$270 000. It says here:

On average, the median price for rural land in Litchfield Shire has jumped around \$100 000 ...

That is in a year:

... to around \$270 000.

Surely, the government could also look at an alternative for rural subdivisions - I refer to the forestry land - for first homeowners with a limited number, restrictions on when that land can be sold and covenants on when the house has to be built. You own land and there is an opportunity for you, as a government, to give people an opportunity to not only have suburban land, but also some rural land.

Ms LAWRIE: You would appreciate, perhaps, more than most that if government opens up land in the rural area, we are absolutely beholden - particularly if it is us doing it and not a private developer - to provide the appropriate infrastructure and services that go with that. It is not just a question of saying: 'Here is some appropriate land; let us subdivide and sell it off for affordable housing'. We also have to look at the infrastructure costs associated with the opening up of that land. We also have to look at the transport cost associated with the opening up of that land. We also have to look at the impost on our school and education system with that land. It is not as simple as saying: 'Okay, we own some land down here. It is a nice patch of land. Let us open it up, flog it off and get some money for government and put some first homebuyers in there'. There are a whole lot of other costs associated which would require considerable government expenditure.

Mr WOOD: I understand that. However, if you do not look at some of these options, the school at Howard Springs will either be importing people from Palmerston or will close down, because the average

price of land in Howard Springs - if you can find a house/land package in the Howard Springs area for under \$450 000 to \$500 000, you are looking for a very cheap house.

Ms LAWRIE: A new school is being built at Howard Springs!

Mr WOOD: Yes, and it will mainly be getting people from Palmerston; it is a Lutheran school. However, the number of houses that are available for young families in the Howard Springs area is extremely limited. They cannot buy land for \$270 000 a block.

Ms LAWRIE: I know young families who recently moved out there.

Mr WOOD: You ought to do a study of the land prices out there and have a look at the consequences of that land becoming so expensive that there will be problems with the schools at Howard Springs - unless you bring children in from other parts by bus - to have sufficient children to keep those schools operating as they are at the present time.

Ms LAWRIE: That was a statement, not a question, Gerry! I am not going there.

Mr WOOD: All right. Okay. I will leave it at that.

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: Any further questions? That concludes consideration about Output 1.4.

Output 1.5 - Darwin Waterfront Redevelopment

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: I will now call for questions on 1.5 - Darwin Waterfront Redevelopment. Are there any questions?

Mrs MILLER: In the interests of time, definitely not.

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: Okay, member for Katherine. Member for Nelson?

Mr WOOD: I just have a question that was in the budget or the annual report. What has happened to the Defence pipe network?

Ms LAWRIE: I bring to the table, Terry O'Neill, the Acting Project Administrator of the Darwin City Waterfront Redevelopment Project. I refer that question to Terry.

Mr O'NEILL: Terry O'Neill. Honourable member, as Garry Scanlan outlined, the Defence pipe network involves fuel pipelines that bring fuel from tankers up to the Naval fuel installation for storage, and return that fuel through the same pipeline to ships. The infrastructure has been in place for a long time and its condition is such that upgrading has been warranted. We agreed to an arrangement with Department of Defence whereby the fuel bunking facilities on the Fort Hill Wharf would be upgraded on a cost sharing basis. Defence agreed that we could remove the fuel pipelines that run up to Stokes Hill Wharf which are now redundant - the three pipelines that ran along Stokes Hill Road that actually were in the way of the redevelopment works including the convention centre.

The only active main fuel lines now, or the only fuel line in fact, is the single line that runs from the Naval fuel installation along the northern side of Kitchener Drive to about a point near the World War II tunnels, and then heads across the development site to the Fort Hill Wharf. All the other lines are redundant. As part of the Stage 1 works, all the redundant fuel lines affected by Stage 1 are being moved.

Mr WOOD: Will the line that goes across to the wharf from Kitchener Drive have to be relocated?

Mr O'NEILL: Yes. It is a Territory commitment to the developers that that line be rerouted. We have just engaged consultants to carry out a preliminary design and costing on the rerouting. The terms of the project development deems that work needs to be carried out by 2010. Basically, it will involve rerouting the existing underground section that crosses near the old Shell bitumen plant, around the northern side of Kitchener Drive and around the outer side of the loop road towards Fort Hill Wharf.

Mr WOOD: Are there any implications of having a fuel line passing close by a residential development?

Mr O'NEILL: There are no implications for the new line which will be underground. We are having some discussions with Defence to encourage them to consider funding undergrounding of the remaining

section of the pipeline along the eastern end of Kitchener Drive, which is on the Stokes Hill Road end. We want to convince Defence to underground that section.

Mr WOOD: Would there have been a safety audit done in the development of the residential area versus a fuel line?

Mr O'NEILL: Yes, indeed. There are no code provisions that drive the necessity to underground the pipeline but, from an obvious practical point of view, there is always a risk of that pipeline being hit by a vehicle, although it has never happened in the past. There is, obviously, a great interest to us as to the aesthetic issue of having an aboveground pipeline in an upmarket residential and public area.

Mr WOOD: A bit like Middle Arm Peninsula. Sorry, I slipped there. Thank you. I have no more questions on that section, Madam Deputy Chair.

Ms LAWRIE: Madam Deputy Chair, we have finished that section.

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: That concludes consideration of Output 1.5. That concludes consideration of Output Group 1.0.

Non-Output Specific Budget-Related Questions

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: Are there any non-output specific budget-related questions?

Mrs MILLER: Not in the interests of time, Madam Deputy Chair.

OUTPUT GROUP 2.0 - TRANSPORT SERVICES Output 2.1 - Transport Policy and Planning

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: The committee will now proceed to Output Group 2.0 - Transport Services, Output 2.1 - Transport Policy and Planning. Are there any questions?

Mrs MILLER: I am actually going to apologise to all of these people who have spent so much time in preparing for today's estimates. I have a mass of questions that I want to ask you. I am going to write to the minister with these questions to hand on to the departments because in the interests of time - it is now 10.50 am - and, as the minister is aware, we have an extremely sensitive portfolio that needs a lot of questions asked, which is Health and Community Services.

I am going to defer my questions, to write to the minister, but I do thank you so much for all the time that you have put in to preparing for today. It will not be vain because I will certainly be writing with the questions. I thank the minister for the opportunity to the members of her department.

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: I invite the minister to introduce her advisors.

Ms LAWRIE: Certainly. Joining me at the table is the head of my transport division, Marj Morrissey. I am just wondering for an indication from the member for Nelson how far he wants to proceed with this, given the opposition's indication of wanting to progress straight through without asking questions.

Mr WOOD: Well, I know the area is important, but we have two hours and 10 minutes and that is a lot of time still.

Ms LAWRIE: I am happy to take questions.

Mr WOOD: I am not going to take up a lot of time, but I think there will be sufficient time for the opposition to ask questions. Can I go into 2.1? Minister, have you completed the NT Transport Plan?

Ms LAWRIE: In respect of the Northern Territory Transport Plan, there are a couple of elements to it. There is a 10-year infrastructure plan looking at transport corridors. There is a separate body of work we are doing in the actual public transport delivery model.

Mr WOOD: Will it be available to the public for comment when complete?

Ms LAWRIE: Certainly.

Mr WOOD: I hope that will include bicycle paths. I say that because I am asking for a commitment, which I think has been given, that a bicycle path will advance from Palmerston, that is at Thorngate Road, to Howard Springs Road next financial year, which I think will be the last financial year before an election.

Ms LAWRIE: Of course our plan will include bicycle paths. We are very keen on expanding our bicycle path network. That is why the government went to the election with a commitment for bicycle path expansion. We are very aware of our need to deliver greater accessibility for our cyclists.

Mr WOOD: So it will happen from Palmerston to Howard Springs Road?

Ms LAWRIE: Specifically, in the site identified as the old North Australian Railway corridor between Palmerston, Yarrowonga Road and Howard Springs Road, we will be using the road reserve of Howard Springs Road between the Stuart Highway and the Howard Springs Nature Park.

In our Arterial Cycle Network Strategic Review, this item was identified as a planning item requiring further investigation. It will provide a bicycle path that allows both locals and tourists the opportunity to cycle to the Howard Springs Nature Park and also a link for Howard Springs' residents and others to cycle to Palmerston or on to Darwin. The preliminary estimate is \$1.9m, which is broken down into the Yarrowonga Road to Whitewood Road \$1.4m, and Whitewood Road to Howard Springs \$500 000.

Heritage clearance of the rail embankment may require the restoration - decking only - of three rail bridges and it is on the department's forward works program.

Mr WOOD: Thank you, minister. Could I just inform you that the Friends of the North Australia Railway walked that entire line about three weekends ago, and a group of them will be happy to do some volunteer work along there. I know you have \$1.4m.

Ms LAWRIE: \$1.9m all up.

Mr WOOD: Yes, but it just seems an extraordinary cost. I hope that is not the super version of the bicycle path, because we would like to keep it like an historical path as well as a rural path, so there are lots of trees ...

Ms LAWRIE: You want a dirt path? Is that what you are asking for?

Mr WOOD: No. We were actually going to ask, minister, whether we could have started putting a dirt path down if you had not made that commitment, because it is in good nick except for the part near Palmerston and those bridges.

Ms LAWRIE: A four-wheel drive bicycle path?

Mr WOOD: Not a four-wheel drive.

Ms LAWRIE: A mountain bike path.

Mr WOOD: I thank the minister for her commitment, and I also hope eventually that that bicycle path goes down to at least as far as the Arnhem Highway, which is a much easier section than the railway line.

Ms LAWRIE: I am happy to commit to the member of Nelson, that if you want to forward to my office any details of anyone who wants to work as volunteers, or any community-based organisations that we need to look up, we would be happy to pursue that.

Mr WOOD: All right.

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: Any further questions?

Mr WOOD: That is all my questions on that section.

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: Okay, that concludes consideration of Output 2.1.

Output 2.2 – Transport Safety

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: I will now call questions on Output 2.2 - Transport Safety. Are there any questions?

Mrs MILLER: As I have said, again, in the interests of time I will be writing to the minister. I have plenty of questions.

Mr WOOD: I think before you were minister, minister, you were looking at the possibility of having seat belts on buses. What has happened to that concept?

Ms LAWRIE: The Transport Safety Division is doing a lot of work on the upgrade and changes to our service with a remodel for public transport. That component of that work is currently being undertaken. There is also discussion at a national level around mandating anchorage points in new bus fleets, as well as looking at the issue of a time frame to retrofit anchorage points as well in existing bus fleets. There is that national body of work as well as our own Territory level body of work being done.

I am delighted that schools, of their own initiative, have been implementing policies to give preference to hiring buses that have seat belts on them. We are fortunate, certainly in Darwin, to have some modern buses with seat belts as part of that modern bus fleet that schools are able to hire to transport children on.

Only a couple of jurisdictions have moved in the area of seat belts on school buses. Queensland, I note, has them in regional areas where they travel long distances, or on roads of significant speed limits. Those are, obviously, the very clear policy starting points for consideration by this government.

Mr WOOD: Thank you, minister. Do seat belts actually reduce the number of children who can sit because, as you know, little kids can sometimes fit three across a bench?

Ms LAWRIE: Yes, that is one of the arguments that people use against seat belts in buses, in that it actually reduces the bus's capacity. I have said that, having witnessed the consequences of a school bus up the back of a truck, as a parent, I would say at what price do you put safety?

Mr WOOD: I was not putting that argument. I was wondering whether you had got around that issue by allowing for three seat belts - that is where I was coming from - because that is what happens to kids in school buses. You get more on, seated.

Ms LAWRIE: Depending on their age – have you seen the size of those Grade 7s lately?

Mr WOOD: We are healthy out in the rural area. I will not mention my grandson.

Ms LAWRIE: They are taller than me.

Mr WOOD: That is correct. Minister, on the demerit points system. It is a general question. I know the reason you want to introduce demerit points is, basically, people collect a number of points and they are disqualified from driving. Is there not sufficient existing legislation to do exactly that, through people who are repeat drink-driving offenders, repeat speeding offenders, or having no registration repeat offenders? If that is not true, why could you not use the existing legislation and come up with the same result you are trying to do through demerit points?

Ms LAWRIE: The Road Safety Task Force identified a key recommendation to introduce the demerit points system into the Territory. The reason for that is that we have recidivist behaviour which is a component of making our roads unsafe to use. Demerit points schemes have shown elsewhere that only 30% of motorists attract demerit points. Of that 30%, less than 0.5% go on to lose their licence. You are looking at a scheme that target those hardcore recidivists.

Experts in the field advise that the attraction of demerit points does change driver behaviour; as they acquire demerits, they change behaviour. Certainly, if you look at that percentage of 30% who attract demerits, with only 0.5% going on to actually losing their licence, there is a significant change in driver behaviour reflected in that statistic.

Mr WOOD: I understand that, minister. However, what I am getting at is: why can you not use the existing legislation, which may have to be tightened or the penalties increased? Why can you not use existing legislation to take those people off the road?

Ms LAWRIE: Well, existing legislation does take people off the road. We have, of course, the legislation that you are very fond of debating – the anti-hooning legislation. There is a whole raft of ...

Mr WOOD: They are not off the road yet.

Ms LAWRIE: ... provisions that apply. I have to say that demerits are seen as another effective tool to make our roads safer. Where we have a Territorian being killed and nine being seriously injured on our roads every week, the very clear view of the Road Safety Task Force – which the government has accepted – is that we need to employ all of the tools available to change the dangerous patterns of road use in the Territory.

Mr WOOD: All right. I am sure we will get on this debate when the time comes. I am not saying that we should not be reducing fatalities and accidents, minister. The thrust of my question was why you cannot do the same thing under existing legislation instead of adding more legislation? That is the thrust of my argument.

Ms LAWRIE: And what I am saying is that, with three times the national rate of deaths, we had to use all of the tools in the toolkit to change driver behaviour. Demerits are a core component of that.

Mr WOOD: Thank you, minister.

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: Any further questions?

Mr WOOD: Rail safety, minister. Given the two major accidents we had on the rail line, what measures will be implemented to improve road/rail crossing use, and at what cost?

Ms LAWRIE: The government is near final completion of an audit into all of our level crossings. We have increased the level crossing awareness. We have been working with the Australian Trucking Association regarding its newsletters and getting information out to people. The agency has undertaken a level crossing safety awareness campaign with the road safety grab since the beginning of the rail operations. In 2006-07, expenditure in that area was approximately \$35 000, which is about 26% of our total spend on road safety media. We recognise, if you like, punching above our weight in rail safety awareness with regard to level crossings.

We have increased the sanctions in this area, given the seriousness of level crossing crashes. The government has recently increased infringements for failing to comply with level crossing signs from \$80 to \$500. That gets us to the highest infringement in Australia. We have added three demerit points to apply to any offences when people fail to stop at the level crossing. Recently, I was on the record saying that, whilst the audit of our level crossings show that they meet Australian standards, at the most dangerous crossings the government will put extra safety measures in place.

Mr WOOD: And we will not have pink trains? All right ...

Ms LAWRIE: GSR and FreightLink have not indicated at this stage that they are going to paint pink.

Mr WOOD: That is good. That is all my questions on Transport Safety.

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: That concludes consideration of Output 2.2.

Output 2.3 - Public Transport

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: I will now call for questions on Output 2.3 - Public Transport. Are there any questions?

Mrs MILLER: As I have indicated, Madam Deputy Chair in the former outputs.

Mr WOOD: Minister, as you know in the rural area there is one return bus service; that is, you can go both ways. When will you give consideration to a regular two-way bus service in the Darwin rural area?

Ms LAWRIE: Member for Nelson, as I have said in an answer to a previous question, the Department of Planning and Infrastructure is currently having a look at its bus service delivery model that includes having a look at the growth areas. For example, we have growth areas in the Darwin rural area; in Palmerston; in places in Alice Springs; and new subdivisions coming online - for example, Lyons and

Bellamack. We are factoring all the existing public transport needs as well as predicted public transport needs into our bus service delivery model, and that work is being undertaken now. I am hoping it will be complete by the end of this year.

Mr WOOD: That will include the possibility of the Wildlife Park being on regular public bus service?

Ms LAWRIE: As I said, work being undertaken looks at all components of the bus service delivery.

Mr WOOD: In relation to ticketing, is the government still considering a ticketing system, or have they gone for the ...

Ms LAWRIE: We have a ticketing system.

Mr WOOD: ... the one price cost all. Well, you had a ticketing system. I just want to know ...

Ms LAWRIE: I went on the bus the other day; I paid \$2, I got a ticket.

Mr WOOD: Was that because the other ticketing system was too complicated or too expensive? I believe there was supposed to be a replacement ticketing system installed, and there were some great issues about the ticketing system at that time. Is that basically off the cards now and the system we have in place is staying?

Ms LAWRIE: The system we have in place will stay. Obviously, if you are looking at a comprehensive assessment of your bus service delivery model, a component of that is your ticketing.

Mr WOOD: I am not necessarily against the system we have at the moment. I know that it was a problem and just wanted to see where you were heading with that. The cheaper the public transport, hopefully, more people will use it.

We have been getting some bus shelters. I will not say what I think about where they are all placed. Will there be an intention to have a continual upgrade of bus shelters beyond what are being installed at the present time in the rural area?

Ms LAWRIE: Part of the bus service delivery model is looking at the critical component of infrastructure. The experience around Australia is that if you have an infrastructure component to your public transport that is identified - the way people get on and off buses, and things such as the bus stops and stands at the bus stops - then that affects the frequency of the use of your public transport system. I can say though that we compare very favourably to Cairns regarding bus stops.

Mr WOOD: Minister, are you looking at a bus interchange? I am not talking about where the buses themselves interchange, I am talking about a place where the public can park their vehicle so to encourage people to use buses. I need to refer specifically to the new Lutheran school site. The principal came to see me saying that there was a requirement that he would have to put a bus interchange in. I believe that he has since been advised that is not his responsibility. However, there is talk of a bus interchange there. Could you explain what that is about and who will it service?

Ms LAWRIE: The question started to be a broad question asking about interchanges and then went specific to the Lutheran school.

Mr WOOD: Give us the broad answer, then the specific answer, please, minister.

Ms LAWRIE: As I indicated in my previous answer, the work we are doing to look at the entire bus service delivery model does critically include your infrastructure. A component of that is your interchanges - where they are, what infrastructure exists at the interchanges, including components such as safety and accessibility, cleanliness and the DVA standards, and everything that goes in there these days. Specific to the Lutheran school I will refer to George Timson.

Mr TIMSON: George Timson, Public Transport. The new Lutheran school will be serviced by buses at some point. Part of the early design work developed with the principal and their architects is to look at where buses might operate in that area.

We had some concerns regarding the initial design where buses would interact with the general car parking, which was not particularly the best long-term option. We worked with them to redesign the area

and to plan a more appropriate bus facility, which isolates the children from the general vehicle traffic in the area and includes some planting and paved area. We anticipate in the future we will be able to work in with the greater Howard Springs area, particularly our interchange, which we have on Stowe Road at the moment. We anticipate we will transfer to that area to make it a bit safer.

Mr WOOD: It sounds good, but we should expand on that later. That is all my questions in that section.

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: That concludes consideration of Output 2.3.

Output 2.4 - Transport Assets

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: We will now proceed to Output 2.4 - Transport Assets. Are there any questions?

Mrs MILLER: Again, Madam Chair, I will put mine in writing to the minister.

Mr WOOD: Could I just ask for clarification on landscaping on highways. Does that come under this section?

Ms LAWRIE: The next section, 2.5, Road Network Management. This is 2.4, Transport Assets.

Mr WOOD: Sorry. I have nothing on 2.4.

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: That concludes consideration of Output 2.4.

Output 2.5 - Road Network Management

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: I will now call for questions on Output 2.5 - Road Network Management. Are there any questions?

Mrs MILLER: Again, Madam Chair, I will be putting mine in writing to the minister.

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: Any further questions?

Mr WOOD: Yes. I would like to get some information on Tiger Brennan Drive. Could you say exactly what part of Tiger Brennan Drive is to be constructed this financial year? Are there plans for an overpass across Roystonea Avenue to connect Tiger Brennan to the Stuart Highway? Are there plans to put an overpass across Berrimah Road? Do you have sufficient funds to do all that construction work?

Ms LAWRIE: Yes and no. \$10m will be expended this financial year to duplicate from Wishart Road, Berrimah Road through to Tiger Brennan Drive, so you will get your dual turning lanes. I have the correct technical term there. It will ensure that, for cars in Wishart Road, there will be two turning lanes going through into Berrimah Road and two turning lanes going through to Tiger Brennan Drive. The works around that intersection are seen as the most critical and urgent work to deal with the traffic being banked up on Wishart Road at the moment. There is a design in terms of a flyover - what we call grade separation - at the Stuart Highway as a future stage component of the Tiger Brennan Drive extension itself. There is an agreement between us and the Commonwealth to put grade separation over the railway on Berrimah Road.

Mr WOOD: Will it be done this financial year?

Ms LAWRIE: We are still negotiating with the Commonwealth as to which parts come into this first stage, but I will defer to Mr Wanka regarding the Berrimah Road grade separation.

Mr WANKA: Ernie Wanka, Senior Director, Road Network. As the minister said, we are currently discussing with the Department of Transport and Regional Services the first stage of the duplication from Tiger Brennan Drive to Wishart Road. There is a possibility of constructing the overpass as part of the first stage of the \$27.4m funding that is available under AusLink 1. That is a \$13.7m, 50:50 share, for the Australian government and the Northern Territory government.

Mr WOOD: That is over Berrimah Road or over Roystonea to the highway?

Ms LAWRIE: Over Berrimah Road.

Mr WOOD: And we will definitely have an overpass at the Stuart Highway?

Ms LAWRIE: Depending on Commonwealth funding. The Territory government's increased our commitment in funding and we are still waiting to hear a like commitment from federal government. I was hoping for an announcement in the federal May budget. That was not forthcoming. We are still in negotiations with the Commonwealth. I am expecting an election announcement, really, at this stage.

Mr WOOD: No matter what happens, as long as it is not the set of traffic lights that are there at the present time.

Ms LAWRIE: I met with the Deputy Prime Minister, Mark Vaile, and expressed the reason for grade separation at that intersection and he understood that.

Mr WOOD: When can we see work start on the Litchfield roads?

Ms LAWRIE: I will ask Ernie to answer that.

Mr WANKA: The first stage of the Litchfield Park Road, north of the mine, is currently out for tender. We have \$4.5m on this year's program. Our first stage is estimated at \$4.8m. We have sections 38 to 44 designed. However, we are still resolving clearances on that section of road.

Mr WOOD: That is an interesting price when you compare it with the bicycle path you just closed, minister. It varies. I do not know whether you can table me the number of times in a year that the Stuart, Arnhem, Victoria and Barkly Highways have been slashed, and can you give me an approximate date for those slashing times?

Ms LAWRIE: I do not have that level of detail, member for Nelson.

Mr WOOD: Do you have a timetable for Girraween Road connection to the Henning Road intersection on the Stuart Highway? I have asked this question for at least two or three years. I have been told that government is having to purchase the land required for this road. I am sure it has not taken three years to ring up Mr Eddleston in Scotland and ask him if you can have a very small corridor of land through his property. Where are we with this important intersection?

Ms LAWRIE: It is on the forward works program.

Mr WOOD: How forward?

Ms LAWRIE: It is getting closer every day.

Mr WOOD: My other questions relate to the Coolalinga landscaping. The government put out tenders this year for the Coolalinga landscaping. On the day before the tenders closed, the government announced that the tender had been withdrawn. Can you say why that tender was withdrawn? Minister, do you not think that doing something like that causes a lot of grief amongst those contractors who have spent considerable time preparing plans, which are not cheap, and putting in their tender documents, only to find that the government had decided to withdraw the contract?

Ms LAWRIE: Member for Nelson, the advice I have received is that, yes, we had the public displays and information in regards to the Coolalinga Master Plan available at the local members' offices – you and the member for Goyder - and also at the Litchfield Shire Council. There were questionnaires available to the public. They were given a choice on where to commence the first stage of the landscaping works. Public tenders were called in April/May this year but no submissions were received. A selective tender process will close early this month, I am advised, early June, with work expected to commence in July in an unirrigated area as per the Landscape Master Plan. We did not receive any submissions.

Mr WOOD: Minister, I am interested in that reply because I had a response from one contractor who said he put a response in, and the day ...

Ms LAWRIE: Well, I have been advised, no submissions.

Mr WOOD: I will check my sources against what you have said and get back to you. I will not have any more questions on the rest. I have a few more, but I will ..

Ms LAWRIE: You will deal with each one ..

Mr WOOD: I will deal with those in writing. That is right through to Output 3.4.

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: That concludes consideration about Output 2.5.

Mr WOOD: I will not ask any more questions on that section. I understand the opposition ... I do have some questions on the Darwin Bus Service, I will ask those if possible.

Output 2.6 - Road Transport
Output 3.1 - Assets and Program Management
Output 3.2 - Infrastructure and Planning
Output 3.3 - Procurement
Output 3.4 - Indigenous Essential Services

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: I will join Output 2.6 - Road Transport; Output 3.1 - Assets and Program Management; Output 3.2 - Infrastructure and Planning; Output 3.3 - Procurement; and Output 3.4 - Indigenous Essential Services. If there are no questions, I conclude that those output groups are now finalised.

Non-Output Specific Budget-Related Questions

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: Are there any Non-output Specific Budget-related Questions?

Mrs MILLER: Yes, Madam Deputy Chair. I will to our generic questions that I did not ask at the beginning for Transport and Infrastructure. How much of the total appropriation for this output group goes towards Corporate and Executive Services?

Ms LAWRIE: Just to short circuit this, member for Katherine, all the information provided to the Leader of the Opposition included this area of the agency.

Dr LIM: You have?

Ms LAWRIE: Yes.

Mrs MILLER: Okay, thank you.

Mrs MILLER: And that includes all of those generic questions, minister?

Ms LAWRIE: No. The only item that we need to deal with is under the Construction Division consultants.

Mrs MILLER: Okay. And the rest of these generic questions have been answered under the ...

Ms LAWRIE: Yes.

Mrs MILLER: Thank you very much.

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: Any further questions?

Ms LAWRIE: I will table the Construction Division at this point in the interests of time.

Mrs MILLER: Thank you.

DARWIN BUS SERVICE

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: The committee will now move on to the Darwin Bus Service. On behalf of the committee, I thank all departmental officers who have provided advice to the minister during her session today. I invite the minister to introduce the officers accompanying her.

Ms LAWRIE: The officers at the table have not changed. Marj Morrissey heads up our Transport Division. We required to bring forward Bill Heath, who is the Manager of the Darwin Bus Service.

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: Are there any questions?

Mrs MILLER: Yes, I will ask a couple of very brief ones, and I will probably put the rest of these in writing too. In Budget Paper No 3, 2006-07, page 166, and Budget Paper No 3, 2007-08 on page 192, there has been a decrease in bus services over those two periods. Can you tell me, when we are considering the development of regional areas and our suburbs, why there has been a decrease in bus services?

Ms LAWRIE: There has been a change in the bus schedules. Is that what you are referring to?

Mrs MILLER: It just says in your performance indicators there has been a decrease in bus services.

Ms LAWRIE: Yes. The concern is that you are referring to an earlier section of the agency which is Public Transport, as opposed to the business division of Darwin Bus Services.

Mrs MILLER: There has not been a decrease in ...

Ms LAWRIE: There has not been a decrease in Darwin bus services.

Mrs MILLER: Right. Okay. You are saying that the scheduled services have increased, they have not decreased?

Ms LAWRIE: No, Darwin Bus Services have remained the same. What the confusion here is, member for Katherine, is that we have several bus operators, for example, in the Darwin rural routes where the bus schedules have changed. Darwin Bus Services is just one operator. There are other operators. Buslink is a major operator, for example. Your questions go beyond the output group we are in at the moment, which is Darwin Bus Services. They deal with the more broader public transport which has just closed off. I am happy to provide you with a briefing, if you like, on how the bus services operate and where the change has been.

Mrs MILLER: Yes, I will. I know they operate but I will certainly have a briefing.

Ms LAWRIE: There is where the changes in the schedules have been.

Mrs MILLER: Thanks you. How many buses in Darwin's Bus Service are using LPG and diesel? I am asking this because it was four years after the announcement that they would be using LPG and diesel.

Ms LAWRIE: I will refer that to Bill Heath. Welcome, Bill.

Mr HEATH: Bill Heath, Manager of Darwin Bus Service. There was an LPG project commenced in about 2001. The trial was to try to run LPG, which is liquified petroleum gas, with a dual fuel system with diesel on the buses. The initial concept was trialled on a stationery generator. The generator was run up to operating speed, then converted over to gas under a set load. The trial was very successful. The application in a bus which is a moving vehicle which has to stop at all bus stops, rejoin the traffic, accelerate, maintain speed, decrease, etcetera, was a very difficult application to try to replicate. With the LPG, they had a lot of problems trying to control the amount of gas going into the motors. The development of the engine management system was being carried out by a company in South Australia. Unfortunately, they were unable to produce an engine management system to manage the amount of gas going into the motor in an acceptable time frame.

It was a very ambitious project from the start. There are alternate gas programs such as compressed natural gas, CNG. You can buy those now from different manufacturers around the world. The LPG project, unfortunately, never got to fruition. At the present moment, there are no buses in Darwin Bus Services operating on LPG.

Mrs MILLER: Thank you. Minister, can you tell why me the bus stops are not numbered? Most cities you go to ...

Ms LAWRIE: Again, member for Katherine, the bus stop infrastructure comes under an earlier output group. This is Darwin Bus Service which does not have responsibility for the bus stops. It is a bus fleet, owned by the government.

Mrs MILLER: Okay. Well, can you still tell me why bus stops are not numbered? In most cities you can always get on bus stop 23 and get off at 38. It really is a bit frustrating when there are bus stops that are not numbered.

Ms LAWRIE: We are a pretty small city and you tend to say okay, get on at the bus stop outside the museum and get off at the Nightcliff Pool. Anyway, given that the bus stop infrastructure is part of the work that is being done partly by the department of Transport to look at Darwin Bus Service delivery model - and obviously, we would include in that Alice Springs - there are requirements under the *Disability Discrimination Act* to address bus stop infrastructure. The issue of whether to number or not number the bus stops, I am happy to put into the mix of that Darwin Bus Service delivery model.

Mrs MILLER: Good, because a lot of people who arrive in our city have no idea where Nightcliff Pool is.

Ms LAWRIE: Do you know what? Our bus drivers are fantastic and they are very helpful. If someone gets on a bus and says to one of our bus drivers, 'I really want to get to X', then our bus drivers are very courteous and they tend to stop and say: 'Right, we are here'.

Mrs MILLER: Absolutely right, they are.

Mr WOOD: You could put letters on the bus stops.

Mrs MILLER: It is so much easier to have numbers than letters. Thank you, Madam Deputy Chair, in the interest of time.

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: Any more questions?

Mr WOOD: I am a little confused, but I will ask the question and you can tell me if I am in the wrong area. Under Darwin Bus Service, there is a statement under Performance: 'the implementation in November 2006 revised schedule for the Darwin Bus Network resulted in a reduction of kilometres travelled affecting both income and expenses in 2007-08'. That is why I have the question. I was really wanting to know whether the issue of buses not meeting buses under the revised schedule has finally been fixed, especially for commuters who have to go out to the rural area and Palmerston? Has it been fixed?

Ms LAWRIE: Yes. The schedule that came in place that you are referring to regarding the bus connections, was the first significant schedule change for many years. In those years, new bus services had been put into the system. An extension of bus services in Palmerston, particularly the rural area had occurred, but they had been add-ons rather than a whole new look at the schedule. What occurred was a very bold whole revamp of the schedule. We did that with the knowledge that you do not get something of that magnitude right 100% when you introduce it. It certainly did improve bus services. It improved the ability for drivers and interchanges to understand when the buses were going to get there.

The service was unreliable prior to that change in schedule. It became highly reliable so the main desired effect of the new schedule certainly succeeded. However, there were customer complaints regarding the connection and waiting times as a result of the new schedule. Listening to those concerns, as minister I asked the agency to revisit the new schedule and see what could be done without detracting from the reliability aspects of the new schedule, but seeing whether we could enhance the new schedule.

That work has been done and we have been in discussions with the bus operators and drivers, as we are required to do in introducing additional changes to the schedule. Those discussions have gone well, I understand. The new changes are expected to come into effect at the start of the next semester of the school year. They will improve connection waiting times, particularly in the rural Palmerston to Darwin link. Connection times between buses at Palmerston in the peak times will be approximately 15 minutes. There will be an additional express bus route from Palmerston to Casuarina in the morning, and we are extending existing route 74 to include the suburb of Farrar. We are going to provide a new bus service to Yarrowonga and Robertson Barracks, and ...

Mr WOOD: Oh! I should have asked about that. It has taken a while to come.

Ms LAWRIE: Well, we are doing it. We will be including, in off-peak times, an additional bus route to loop in Crocodylus Park for tourists. Many of the changes involved in the schedule have also taken into account issues raised by nurses at Royal Darwin Hospital of being able to commute to and from work.

Mr WOOD: Hopefully, those people will be able to get to the 6 pm bus for Humpty Doo because, if they do not get there, as you know, they have to walk because that is the last bus.

Ms LAWRIE: The changes have been mindful of any concerns raised by commuters.

Mr WOOD: Thank you, minister.

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: Are there any further questions?

Mr KNIGHT: Madam Deputy Chair, we have been going for three hours. I wondered whether we could have a five minute break.

Mr WOOD: I only have one question left.

Ms LAWRIE: I am happy to take a break between portfolio changes to allow officers of DPI to vacate and officers of Family and Community Services to come in. We are probably only a couple of minutes off that.

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: As requested also by the member for Katherine, we will have a five minute break between changes in portfolios.

Business Line – Urban Public Bus Service

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: The Committee will now proceed to consider questions regarding the Business Line. Are there any questions?

Mr WOOD: No.

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: That concludes consideration of this Business Line. On behalf of the Committee, I thank all departmental officers who have provided advice for the minister during this session today.

CONSTRUCTION DIVISION

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: The committee will now move on to Construction Division. I invite the minister to introduce officers.

Ms LAWRIE: I introduce Paul Jones, the General Manager Construction Division, which is a government business division.

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: Are there any questions?

Mrs MILLER: In the interests of time constraints, I will be directing my questions to the minister by correspondence.

Mr WOOD: One small question, minister. When is the Victoria River Bridge expected to be completed?

Ms LAWRIE: On that question, I am happy to defer to Paul Jones. I am advised that tenders close next week.

Mr WOOD: This question is on behalf of the member for Daly. What is the expected completion date?

Ms LAWRIE: Ernie Wanka has joined us at the table.

Mr WANKA: For the first stage of the Victoria River Bridge, there was a briefing of tenderers yesterday. The tendering process will be subject to an addendum, so the period will be extended. That is a 104-week contract. That is two years, and that takes us through to mid to late 2009. That includes the Victoria River Bridge and three other bridges at Gove, Sandy, and Ross Creeks and some approach works, and raising some areas through that section at the 185 to about the 220 on the mark. It is part of an all-up \$50m project. There are two other stages involved in that, which are building the Little Horses and Big Horses new high level new bridges at those locations. The third stage is using up remaining funds in raising, strengthening and widening pavements. We plan to complete all that by December 2009.

Mr WOOD: Thank you, minister.

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: The committee will now proceed to consider further questions regarding the business side. Are there any questions? That concludes consideration of the business side. On behalf of the committee, I thank all officers who provided advice for the minister today. I would like to now call a five minute recess.

Ms LAWRIE: I thank all the officers of the Department of Planning and Infrastructure for their appearance at the Estimates Committee, as well as the incredible effort and work they go to in preparation for the Estimates Committee.

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: We will have a five minute recess to return at 11.40 am.

The committee suspended.

HEALTH AND COMMUNITY SERVICES

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: I welcome the minister and invite her to introduce the officials accompanying here and, if she wishes, to make an opening statement for the portfolio responsibility which she has carriage of which sits within the Department of Health and Community Services.

Ms LAWRIE: Thank you, Madam Deputy Chair. I introduce Dr David Ashbridge, my Chief Executive Officer, and Jenny Scott, the Assistant Secretary of Community Services. With me at the table is Adam Tomlinson, the Acting Director of FACS, and I anticipate at some stage bringing forward the Acting Deputy Director of FACS, Dave Richardson.

As the minister for Family and Community Services, I will be taking questions on all output groups that relate to Family and Community Services, Age and Disability Services and Mental Health Services. I will also be taking questions on Alcohol and Other Drugs Services output from Public Health Services output group.

My colleague, the Minister for Health, has already advised this committee of the expected end of year budget result for the Department of Health and Community Services as a whole, as well as giving an overview of the department's budget construction in 2006-07 and 2007-08. This applies equally to my portfolio.

In 2006-07, Community Services' output budget has increased from \$176.1m to \$181.5m, an increase of \$5.4m or 3.05%. This government has increased the department's Community Services output budget for 2007-08 from \$181.5m to \$193m. That is an increase of 6.36%. Some of the Australian government grants for Community Services finished in 2006-07 and have not been renewed or replaced with other grants. However, they are highly likely to continue but, as they have not yet been formalised, we are unable to include them in the budget. This has impacted in particular on the Alcohol and Other Drugs output group.

Before I highlight some of the key areas of the budget for 2007-08 in my portfolio, I would like to reflect on our achievements in 2006-07. Across government, a committee has been established to develop an action plan for suicide prevention across the Territory. Visiting mental health services to rural and remote communities has increased. Amendments to the *Mental Health and Related Services Act* have been passed. Capital funding has been allocated for a new eight-bed 24-hour support of mental health service in Darwin for people who are becoming unwell, or to provide more intensive support following discharge from our acute services. There is now additional community-based residential care service with 24-hour support for people with mental illness and their carers. A new Central Australian mental health crisis assessment service is now in place, providing the Alice Springs Hospital's Emergency Department with extended hours support, crisis assessment and intervention.

We have passed the *Carers Recognition Act* and the carers card has been introduced which is another significant commitment of this government. Additional treatment places for people who are subject to an alcohol intervention order or a prohibition from the alcohol court are in place. There is a \$4m grant for capital redevelopment of Banyan House. The specialist care program has been expanded and is now caring for 20 young people across the Northern Territory. This group of children in care are some of the most traumatised in the out of home care system.

The Strong Family Program supported eight indigenous family workers from remote communities to graduate from Charles Darwin University with a Certificate III in Remote Community Violence Prevention and Early Intervention. This course was developed and piloted by the Strong Family team.

I would now like to highlight some of the Family and Community Services budget initiatives for 2007-08 to enable the continuing implementation of Building Healthier Communities: a further \$1.42m funding for caring for our children reform in child protection to expand the range of responses for families whose children are at risk; additional funding of \$480 000 to expand the sexual assault referral centres in both Darwin and Alice Springs; additional funding of \$300 000 for the supportive accommodation assistance program to address the needs of individuals and families and to respond to family violence in our remote communities; additional funding of \$770 000 for specific innovation and investment projects in the supported accommodation program; additional funding of \$200 000 for prisoner support to provide increased mental health and disability service in Alice Springs and Darwin; and finally, \$2.3m to deliver enhanced disability services as recommended in the Northern Territory Disability Services Review.

I look forward to questions from the committee.

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: Thank you. I remind officers that they should be aware when they are requested by the minister to provide answers, they are not required to comment on matters of policy. For the purposes of the efficient recording of *Hansard*, I request that ministers introduce officials accompanying them and, where a minister refers a question to an officer, officers identify themselves for the record.

At the outset, in the interests of getting the most out of this estimates process, I ask that all questions and answers are put in a non- emotive or personal way. All questions are to be put through the Chair and directed to the minister. Are there any questions?

Dr LIM: Thank you, Madam Chair. I do not have any questions for 3.1. Is that what you are calling for?

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: No, I am calling for questions on the minister's opening statement.

Dr LIM: No questions.

Mrs BRAHAM: Minister, as you know we are very concerned about antisocial behaviour in Alice Springs. You used to have the Warden Scheme and the Return to Country program. Are you still funding those?

Ms LAWRIE: Yes. That does go to a specific output group. The question from the Chair was in respect of the opening statement. I am happy to take that in the appropriate output group.

Mrs BRAHAM: Quite often, we do not get to the output group.

Ms LAWRIE: We will follow the estimates process.

Dr LIM: Then let us leave that.

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: Would that be Output 6.3?

Mrs BRAHAM: Okay, so you do not want to answer it.

Ms LAWRIE: No, it is not that I do not want to answer it. In fairness to the opposition, I want to follow the process.

Mrs BRAHAM: Okay. Can I then also ask you about staffing levels in your FACS office in Alice Springs?

Ms LAWRIE: Yes, and again, I am happy to take that question in the appropriate output group, which is Output 3.3.

Mrs BRAHAM: You do not consider that to be a global question, at all?

Ms LAWRIE: The question was in regards to my opening statement.

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: Member for Braitling, do you have any questions on the minister's opening statement?

Mrs BRAHAM: Obviously, no matter what I ask, you will say it comes under another output.

Ms LAWRIE: We either follow the estimates process or we abandon it, member for Braitling.

Mrs BRAHAM: If you do not want to reply, that is okay. I understand.

Ms LAWRIE: I do want to reply, member for Braitling.

OUTPUT GROUP 3.1 – FAMILY AND COMMUNITY SERVICES
Output 3.1 – Child Care, Early Childhood Development and Parent Support Services

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: The committee will proceed to consider the estimates of proposed expenditure on Output Group 3.0 - Family and Community Services, Output 3.1 - Child Care, Early Childhood Development and Parent Support Services. Are there any questions?

Dr LIM: In the interests of time, no questions from me.

Mrs BRAHAM: Could you tell me what funding you are giving to childcare this year? How many places?

Ms LAWRIE: Absolutely. The member for Braitling will appreciate that childcare is the responsibility of the federal government. State and territory jurisdictions have a licensing and regulation role in regards to childcare

Mrs Braham interjecting.

Ms LAWRIE: If you let me finish, member for Braitling. The Northern Territory government is alone in that we provide a subsidy for childcare places in the Territory as a way of making some inroads into providing affordable childcare.

In terms of the 2007-08 Budget, we have allocated \$3.7m to subsidising childcare as part of the expenditure. To the end of April in 2006-07, we expended some \$3.1m.

Mrs BRAHAM: Is the subsidy to individual parents?

Ms LAWRIE: The subsidy does go per child in the childcare centre. The payment system for the subsidy is based on the data of the childcare centres. The subsidy is provided to the childcare centres based on substantiated data, so we do not pay the parents individually *per se*. They, obviously, have a reduction of the subsidy on their childcare placement that we pay through the centre-based process.

Mrs BRAHAM: A new childcare centre is anticipated for Alice Springs very shortly. What funding will that childcare centre receive?

Ms LAWRIE: The same as the other childcare centres in regard to the subsidy. The growth in this output area reflects childcare centres coming online.

Mrs BRAHAM: You cannot give me more details than that?

Ms LAWRIE: It depends on the number of children they have in the childcare centre.

Mrs BRAHAM: Have they made an application as yet, do you know?

Ms LAWRIE: The details of whether they have made an application I do not have before me, but the moment that childcare centres come online and apply for subsidies, we have funding available to pay them.

Mrs BRAHAM: Can you give me that information when it comes?

Ms LAWRIE: Sure, when the centre's operation makes an application we will be able to advise you that the payments occurred.

Mrs BRAHAM: What staffing levels do you have in the area of Parent Support Services, and what centres are you ...

Ms LAWRIE: The main activity in the Parent Support Services is the very positive initiative of Parent Line, which is a 24-hour call number, seven days a week. People can call that Parent Line and get advice on parenting. Regarding specific staff within that area, it is funding that we provide for non-government agencies, so they are not departmental staff as such.

Mrs BRAHAM: You do not know the numbers of calls that utilise that service over the last 12 months?

Ms LAWRIE: The number of calls made to Parent Line, obviously we have that information available. We do not have that information on hand, I will have to take it on notice.

Mrs BRAHAM: It would be interesting to know the level of use of that service, I am getting at.

Ms LAWRIE: Yes. The feedback we have received has been very positive.

Mrs BRAHAM: Can we get some figures on that?

Ms LAWRIE: Sure.

Question on Notice No 7.3

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: Member for Braiting, for the purposes of *Hansard*, would you please restate your question?

Mrs BRAHAM: Could I ask the minister to supply the usage figures, the number of calls that they have received through that line?

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: Minister, are you prepared to take that question on notice?

Ms LAWRIE: Yes.

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: For the purposes of *Hansard*, I allocate the question No 7.3.

Mrs BRAHAM: I will go on to the next output.

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: That concludes consideration of Output 3.1.

Output 3.2 - Support Services for Individuals and Families in Crisis

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: I now call for questions on Output Group 3.2 - Support Services for Individuals and Families in Crisis. Are there any questions?

Dr LIM: In the interests of time, I will forgo this output group.

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: Thank you, member for Greatorex. Are there any other questions?

Mrs BRAHAM: Does this area cover some of the children who have autism? That particular group, I believe, has a group within the Territory.

Ms LAWRIE: That particular group would fall under Age and Disability. The services to children with autism tend to be in the area of Allied Health Services, speech therapists, etcetera, so that falls under the area of Age and Disability. They are not prevented from using a range of support services. For example, if the parent of a child with autism attends a shelter then, obviously, they would ...

Mrs BRAHAM: Does this area cover those parents who find they are having difficulties with their teenagers or young children and are seeking assistance?

Ms LAWRIE: Yes. The area covers, for example, the areas of Youth at Risk Services, the SAAP-funded programs, which are primarily shelter-style programs. It covers some support services in intensive family support services.

Mrs BRAHAM: I guess I am thinking of the instances where people find they cannot handle their teenage children, and they see that the only obvious way to solve this is to go to FACS, who then tend to want to take the child away from them.

Ms LAWRIE: No, that is more in the area of Output 3.3. It is not necessarily a FACS response to remove the child. We have some intensive family support services within the FACS area that are innovative.

Mrs BRAHAM: Perhaps, as the member for Greatorex wants to get on to 3.3, we will go on.

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: With no further questions, that concludes consideration of Output 3.2.

Output Group 3.3 – CHILD PROTECTION SERVICES

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: I will now call for questions on Output Group 3.3 - Child Protection Services. Are there any questions?

Dr LIM: Minister, would you not agree with me that we are going through déjà vu; that 12 months ago, at this very same session at estimates, we talked about child abuse, and here we are doing the same thing again?

Ms LAWRIE: Given that the protection of children is Output 3.3 is within the description of Child Protection Services, then it is appropriate that we revisit all the issues.

Dr LIM: Would you not agree with me that the déjà vu is that we were, 12 months ago, under the national and international spotlight, and here again we are under the national and international spotlight for the Northern Territory's failure to deal with this matter adequately?

Ms LAWRIE: It is very useful for the national debate to be occurring at the moment regarding the protection of children in the Territory. In regard to being under the international spotlight, I can recall the United Nations comments, going back in excess of a decade, regarding the nation's shame of the degree of poverty that exists in indigenous communities right across the nation, not just the Northern Territory. In that regard, the nation's own Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission has drawn to the federal government's attention in numerous reports, on many occasions, the need to address poverty that exists in indigenous communities right across Australia, including the Northern Territory.

As minister responsible for the protection of children, I am absolutely delighted at the opportunities that exist now, now that the federal government is turning its attention to this critically important issue. The opportunities exist now to work in partnership with the federal government to deliver improved services into our indigenous communities.

I recall a debate, as you have raised, some 12 months ago where an eminent Australian, Professor Fiona Stanley, during the midst of debate around the protection of children, very clearly said you cannot protect children in remote indigenous communities while there is overcrowding in housing. Critical infrastructure needs such as housing must be addressed. It is very clear, with a \$1.4bn need there, that the Territory cannot go it alone in addressing the environmental circumstances that provide safe living opportunities for the children of the Territory, particularly in our remote indigenous communities. Therefore, any opportunity that exists to protect children in the instance of this current national debate, in my view, is a great opportunity.

Dr LIM: Thank you, minister. Correct me if I am wrong, but am I right in saying that you appreciate – as do I – at long last, a national consciousness about the issue which, up to this recent period of time, has been commented on by many media commentators and professionals, but there was no national consciousness as there has been today?

Ms LAWRIE: Member for Greatorex, I guess it depends on your view of national consciousness. I have had the privilege of working with organisations at a national level such as SNAIC, which is responsible for advocating for the rights of indigenous children in the child protection system. I have seen a very large consciousness from them regarding that. People such as Professor Fiona Stanley have articulated this

concern for years. I have attended several ministerial councils as Minister for Family and Community Services, where discussions have occurred at that national level between state and territory ministers and the federal government.

I guess what we are seeing now, as a result of the *Little Children are Sacred* Report, is quite dramatic response from the federal government. People may have a view around the degree and the components of that response but, as Minister for Family and Community Services, I am delighted at the opportunities that exist now as a result of the federal government's response to engage in the very critical discussions around how to extend our child protection system and, particularly, how we look at the need for Family Crisis Intervention Services within those remote communities.

I draw your attention to the National Research Centre for the Prevention of Child Abuse's, *The State of Child Protection* report. This is a 2005 report that I know the Leader of the Opposition has read. She has referred to it on many occasions. I draw your attention to the significance of one of the recommendations:

Child protection systems, underpinned by mandatory reporting, are necessary, but also insufficient to protect children ...

This is in the context that we have mandatory reporting system in the Territory. It also says:

Child protection systems are chronically under pressure, with some critics citing mandatory reporting as a causative factor. We are supporters of mandatory reporting. We regard it as both a professional and a civic duty to protect the most vulnerable members of the community. At the same time, we think it is abundantly clear that child protection systems, based on mandatory reporting but short of support services, are ineffective.

In contrast, the child protection systems in Scandinavian countries are comparatively small, but their family support systems are large. The connection between the two is hard to ignore. We suspect it would take a few decades to reproduce a similar situation in Australia if, indeed, it could be reproduced. Given the different policy traditions, we would hope for broadly similar outcomes in Australia, but expect them to be reached via somewhat different pathways.

I bring this to your attention, member for Greatorex, because it has been my view, as Minister for Family and Community Services, that whilst the Territory government has been putting significant resources into building up the core service component of our child protection system, which is the Child Protection Services core component, we have also introduced innovative new Family Crisis Intervention Services to the length and breadth of the Territory. However, they are too few. They are requiring significant additional resources. It is a subject that I have raised directly with the federal minister, Mal Brough, as an area that we need to engage on urgent discussion in how we can extend family crisis intervention into our indigenous communities. I think there is an opportunity for Territory to lead the nation in that.

Dr LIM: Thank you, minister. I hope you can keep your answers a lot briefer than this.

Ms LAWRIE: It is an important subject.

Dr LIM: All I asked was that you agree if there was any national consciousness on this issue, apart from the agencies, the professional bodies, the NGOs and the professionals who are working in this field.

Ms LAWRIE: I would hope so.

Dr LIM: What I am saying is that at long last all Australians, I would hazard a guess, if not a great majority of Australians, are now fully aware of the issues that surround sexual child abuse. Obviously, not only in the Northern Territory but around Australia.

Ms LAWRIE: I would hope so.

Dr LIM: Good. Minister, I bring you to the definition of a child. On page 42 of the *Little Children are Sacred* report, it defines the child as: 'For the purpose of this report, a child is defined as a person below the age of 18 years as specified in the Northern Territory *Community Welfare Act* and consistent with the Northern Territory Criminal Code.' Let us stick to that for the time being. I will come back to the 16-year-olds. Would you agree with that definition of a child?

Ms LAWRIE: I agree.

Dr LIM: Thank you. The report further adds: 'It is not against Northern Territory law for an adult to have consensual sex with a child aged 16 or 17 (unless the child is 16 and under the special care of the adult)'. Do you also agree with that?

Ms LAWRIE: You are talking to the *Criminal Code* now. I am not the minister for Justice. If you want to go into areas of the *Criminal Code* you should have a discussion with the minister for Justice.

Dr LIM: Well, you agree that that is what is in the quote on page 43 of *Little Children are Sacred*?

Ms LAWRIE: You are quoting from the *Little Children are Sacred*?

Dr LIM: I am. And you agree with that?

Ms LAWRIE: So you are quoting.

Dr LIM: Okay. So we at least agree with the definitions of child and about consensual sex with a child.

Ms LAWRIE: As I pointed out to you, the issue of age of consent is not an issue that exists within the legislation that I have portfolio responsibility for.

Dr LIM: Okay. Last year we talked about where the children are exposed to sex abuse particularly children – or child as defined here – who are suffering from STIs. Your department and your departmental officers described the process where children under 14, if assessed to have had consensual sex, will be counselled to seek medical attention, but any child under 13 or under 12 will be treated as having suffered sexual abuse. Am I correct in making that summary?

Ms LAWRIE: No, member for Greatorex, and I am happy to introduce Dr Tarun Weeramanthri to the Estimates Committee, to get him to take the committee through the clinical and professional decisions made by doctors in regard to the appearance of sexually transmitted infections within a child. Dr Weeramanthri.

Dr LIM: Minister, before you ask Dr Weeramanthri to go through the explanation again, it is all in *Hansard*. We can all read it. It is easy enough to pull it up on your computer; I have a printed copy of it here, in fact. I do not think we really need to go through that same process and go through exactly what it is. Now ...

Ms LAWRIE: Yes, but we do actually, because you misinterpreted in your comments before the committee just then what the process is. It is actually critically important that we all understand what the process is, because your interpretation was wrong.

Dr WEERAMANTHRI: Tarun Weeramanthri, Chief Medical Officer. I believe that the question relates to what was said in the estimates process last year. I actually have a transcript of what I said in estimates a year ago. I will not go through the whole set of arguments in relation to the particular comment that was made about what we said about children aged 13 years and under, I will quote from *Hansard*:

We have already pointed out that the children 13 years and under would make the assumption that there was a likelihood or possibility of abuse and, therefore, encourage all our clinicians to notify sexually transmitted diseases under the age of 13, that is 13 years or under.

That is completely consistent with our current guidelines.

Dr LIM: Thank you. Minister, I come to definition of child sex abuse as written on page 42 *Little Children are Sacred*, and I quote:

Defining 'child sexual abuse':

In section 3(e) of the Community Welfare Act 'sexual abuse' is defined very broadly as where:

he or she has been sexually abused or exploited, or where there is substantial risk of such abuse or exploitation occurring, and his or her parents, guardians or persons having the custody of him or her are unable or unwilling to protect him or her from such abuse or exploitation.

Do you agree with that?

Ms LAWRIE: If you are quoting from the act, I do not have the act in front of me, but it sounds like a fair representation of what is in the act.

Dr LIM: Minister, by definition, the law says that child is under the age of 18. We also say that consensual sex is legal if you are 16 years and older. In other words, our society, the Northern Territory, has decided that children under the age of 16 do not fully comprehend the seriousness of sexual intercourse and therefore, consensual or otherwise, these children are not making informed decisions, and are being abused. Would you agree?

Ms LAWRIE: Not necessarily.

Dr LIM: Not necessarily?

Ms LAWRIE: It depends on the circumstance, member of Greatorex, of whether or not the sex is consensual. There is a very big difference between consensual sex between a 15-year-old and a 16-year-old and consensual sex between a 15-year-old and a 28-year-old. There is a very big difference there. The issue of consent is critically of how, from a public health perspective and from a child protection perspective, you respond to it.

Dr LIM: So a 15-year-old could not exploit a 14-year-old and, therefore, commit a sexual act? The 14-year-old is not being coerced into it in a consensual way?

Ms LAWRIE: Again, member for Greatorex, you are going to specifics of individual circumstances. I am not going to engage into hypotheticals with you other than to point out that the clinicians are the best equipped to make an informed view of whether or not sex has been consensual. If it is not consensual - particularly in a group of teenagers we are talking about here, which are the 14-year-old to 16-year-olds specifically - there are very clear mandated recording processes.

If the sex is consensual then there is a range of factors that the clinicians take into account as to what process they follow. It does not exclude a notification Family and Community Services if the clinician views that is appropriate.

Dr LIM: Minister, did the report not comment about consensual sex and that, in fact, consent could be given by an under-age person without fully comprehending the consequences and, through not being informed, consent for something that they were not fully aware of?

Ms LAWRIE: The report did comment on the high sexual activity of particularly indigenous teenagers - absolutely. It talked about that through a raft of different sections within the report. Member for Greatorex, in the interests of the importance of this debate, do you want to get to your point? Are you calling for a change in policy by our professions in terms of STIs?

Dr LIM: Well, you see, I am confused about the policy. Again, on page 238 of the *Little Children are Sacred* report, it reads:

On the basis of the available data, NT sexual health practitioners have developed the view that sexual activity:

- *in a person under 12 years is highly likely to indicate abuse.*
- *in a person aged 12 to 13 years of age, it is a 'grey area' requiring close examination of the situation.*
- *in a person 14 years or older, it is often consensual in nature, but may still indicate abuse ...*

The explanation by Dr Weeramanthri just now does not talk about this grey area. What is the grey area? Could you explain that?

Ms LAWRIE: Member for Greatorex I am happy to get Dr Weeramanthri, who is an expert in this area, to respond. However, I point out that the *Little Children are Sacred* report has 97 recommendations. Not one of those recommendations is asking the Northern Territory government to change its existing policy in

regards to sexually-transmitted infections in children. I will go to Dr Tarun Weeramanthri to explain the grey area.

Dr WEERAMANTHRI: Thank you. Member for Greatorex, I do not have the report in front of me, but I think I can remember that page. You pulled out a piece of information there which talks about a categorisation of risk at various ages. Could I just ask you to repeat what you said about the 12- to 13-year-olds?

Dr LIM: I will read it again:

On the basis of the available data, NT sexual health practitioners have developed the view that sexual activity:

- *in a person under 12 years is highly likely to indicate abuse.*
- *in a person aged 12 to 13 years of age, it is a 'grey area' requiring close examination of the situation.*
- *in a person 14 years or older, it is often consensual in nature, but may still indicate abuse ...*

I am asking about the 12 to 13 - your definition does not include that?

Dr WEERAMANTHRI: Thank you, member for Greatorex. What you say there is correct regarding the risk assessment of the professional in saying that, in the group aged 12 to 13, it is a grey area in whether it may or may not be consensual and requires a close examination of the situation.

If you then go down the page, I believe it then tells you, in light of that risk assessment, what our guidelines are. In light of the fact that it is a grey area, our guidelines then state that all of those cases will be notified to the intake team. We have made an assessment that is a grey area, and our response is that we are asking that all of those cases then, because it is a grey area, are notified, so it is completely consistent with our advice that it is consistent with the current guidelines.

Just to put my mind at rest, it might be useful to go down the page and read the equivalent section there in that report for what is actually being recommended in the guidelines, and we have considered this situation.

Dr LIM: All right, I will come to that shortly. However, to lead up to my next question; my frequent argument with the minister has been that you have under-resourced FACS to investigate sexual abuse and child harm notification. The report, on page 241, has a very clear graph on Figure 4, Notifications and Completed Investigations, which shows, between the years 2001 to 2006, notifications have risen very rapidly, whilst investigations have plateaued at now less than half of the cases notified. Minister, is that not an indication that you are under-resourced in the department and, therefore, investigations are not conducted?

Ms LAWRIE: I welcome the question; it gives us an opportunity to explain the funding and resources available in Child Protection Services, as well as the notifications, assessment and investigations processes within the agency. I can say that the budget in this area when the CLP was in government was less than \$8m. The budget is now \$35m. Therefore, regarding the CLP running the line that Labor under-resources, I have to say it is an extraordinary claim.

We have received, in current notifications up to 31 May this year, 2766 notifications, with a projected figure of some 3016 through to the end of the financial year. This will exceed our estimate by 270. Notifications received since 1999-2000 equate to an increase of more than 100%. Since 2003-04, Family and Community Services has received approximately an extra 1000 reports.

Current investigations up to 31 May are 1291 child protection reports investigated. We project that figure will be 1408 by the end of this financial year. The number of investigations since 2000-01 has drastically increased from 476 investigations in to 14 000 this financial year. This equates to a greater than 15% increase in FACS child protection activities.

Dr LIM: Minister, it is not about you or the ALP; it is not about me or the CLP; it is about the children. What I am talking about is that you are receiving a lot of notifications, and it is going up very quickly.

Irrespective of whatever you put in as compared with previous governments, your resources are not allowing for the cases to be investigated ...

Ms LAWRIE: Not at all. I reject that.

Dr LIM: Look at the graph.

Ms LAWRIE: Not at all.

Dr LIM: Look at the graph on Figure 4.

Ms LAWRIE: No. I want to point out ...

Dr LIM: The jaws are widening.

Ms LAWRIE: I point out the absurdity of that because, under the way the CLP reported investigations, you reported broadly as 90% would be investigated within 28 days. That is how the CLP reported child protection investigations. That is compared to the way the reforms the Martin Labor government has put in place in Child Protection Services to report investigations. We have identified three categories of reporting investigations, and we investigate within time frames of one day, three days, and five days. If you want to take the politics out of this, member for Greator, stop with your absurd allegations.

I will hand over to Dave Richardson, who has the operational responsibility for the notifications into the system. He is the Deputy Director of Family and Community Services. Dave will take us through, step by step, exactly how the notifications and investigations processes work.

Mr RICHARDSON: Dave Richardson, Deputy Director, FACS. On receiving a notification, there is an initial danger assessment conducted in all case – 100% of cases. At that point in time, we would determine whether a child protection investigation is required, weighing up the threshold against the definitions of maltreatment in the act.

Regarding the difference between those figures of notification and investigations, there are a cohort of those that will be referred to Family Support Services, or dealt with through the means of what we call a protective assessment of the child and family situation.

The process that we are targeting this year, obviously, is in the order of 1400 investigations, and that is an increase, as the minister has pointed out.

Dr LIM: You talked about the process. I draw your attention to the graph, Figure 5, on page 221 of the report, which shows that, even with children in danger, you have failed to investigate all cases within 24 hours. In fact, the report commented on that. Currently, at best, you are achieving 70% investigation of the cases that your department assessed as in absolute danger. So, three out of 10 children are not investigated. That is children in danger, the ones you said have to be done straightaway. Can you explain that?

Ms LAWRIE: Yes, and I will repeat, member for Greator, before referring the specifics to Dave Richardson, that at least we say we are going to investigate within 24 hours. Under the CLP you had 28 days. I refer to Dave Richardson.

Mr RICHARDSON: Seventy percent is a figure that, obviously, we all hope to improve on. One hundred percent is an aspirational figure. There are logistics around receiving a notification and then taking action. The clock starts ticking from the point of the phone call being received by FACS and the investigation commences on face-to-face investigation. Prior to the face-to-face work, there will be numerous phone calls, numerous planning sessions, and we would endeavour to child in danger cases absolutely as soon as possible. But given that we work in the Northern Territory, there is also the issue of distance and, sometimes, chartering flights. In those situations, we endeavour to make arrangements with health clinics and Education to go and sight children.

Absolutely all efforts are made within FACS in child in danger cases to act on that information as soon as practically possible. In comparison to previous years, 192 children currently fall within that category.

Dr LIM: You have an aspiration of 100% but, too bad, the other 30% would miss out ...

Ms LAWRIE: No, they do not miss out, member for Greatorex. They do not miss out.

Dr LIM: Let me finish. Let me finish. Well, they do miss out in the first 24 hours ...

Ms LAWRIE: You very clearly heard from Dave Richardson that a lot of effort is made apart from the face-to-face. A lot of effort is made by both Family and Community Services and other professionals, where appropriate, to sight the child. However, the investigation time period is when face-to-face from our child protection workers occurs. Do not misconstrue the process.

Dr LIM: For the other two categories - children at risk and children of concern - we are down to 30% when your aspirational rates are 70% and 80% for this year and, previously, you had a 100% aspiration rate. Therefore, you are not meeting your own targets.

Ms LAWRIE: Member for Greatorex, I point out that, thank God for the reforms in child protection services. Thank God for the 71 extra child protection workers in the Territory under the Martin Labor government, because the CLP's aspiration was 28 days.

Dr LIM: Again, I say it is not about you or the ALP, or me and the CLP; it is about those children. Would you then agree with the report which says that:

However, it may also mean that the system has reached its capacity and that FACS' current staffing and funding resources is inadequate to enable it to cope with the increasing numbers of cases requiring investigation.

I further quote:

It would appear that, as demand has grown, FACS' ability to meet the commencement standards has fallen to the extent that investigations of a proportion of the most serious cases are not able to be commenced within the required 24-hour period after a report is received.'

Ms LAWRIE: I point out, member for Greatorex, that no child protection system anywhere - whether it be in Australia or elsewhere - can meet 100% of investigations. A critically important component of a child protection system is that you have your most senior child protection workers based in your intake, who then do that immediate initial assessment to determine the response required. I point out that what is critically important, particularly in the area of child abuse and child sexual abuse, is that the Martin Labor government has put in place a Child Abuse Task Force. That Child Abuse Task Force consists of experienced crime investigation police officers and our most experienced FACS child protection workers. They are based at the Peter McAulay Centre in Berrimah. That is where our FACS intake is now located. What we have out of that is a targeted response group ...

Dr LIM: Alice Springs is 1000 miles away.

Ms LAWRIE: ... with investigative capacity that did not exist in the system before. The benefit of that is that the police have operational database systems, and that *Little Children are Sacred* will go to this. It clearly recommends a closer working relationship between police and the child protection system in access to their data and systems. When I visited the Child Abuse Task Force at Peter McAulay, both the police officers and the child protection workers present indicated to me that one of the most beneficial aspects of creating that Child Abuse Task Force and co-locating them together is that they cross-reference each other systems immediately. There is no time delay; they cross-reference each other systems immediately. That empowers them with a vast array of knowledge to feed into the system what the appropriate response is.

In explaining further the professional processes made by child protection workers, I again refer you to Dave Richardson.

Mr RICHARDSON: As alluded to earlier, there is a very detail danger assessment conducted in all cases and there will be conversations with schools, clinics and other professional personnel to work out the next steps. That often includes a planning meeting and that planning meeting will happen in all categories. The risk assessment, though, will tell us the ones we need to get out to as soon as possible. In relation to the figure on child at risk cases, that has actually improved by 18% this year up to 55%.

The child concern reports can also receive a family support-type response rather than a statutory investigation response, or a mixture of those two. However, it is weighing up all the factors that are there available to us at the time, and that is carefully considered by the intake professionals.

Ms CARNEY: Madam Deputy Chair, with my colleague's consent, I would like to just ask a couple of clarifying questions in relation to that.

Mrs BRAHAM: A point of order; Madam Deputy Chair! I believe it is the member for Greatorex is asking questions for the opposition and when he has finished ...

Ms CARNEY: Yes, but it is with his consent, which he has given.

Dr LIM: We have conferred on the question.

Ms CARNEY: Minister, in relation to ...

Mrs BRAHAM: Madam Deputy Chair, are you giving a ruling on that?

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: We have done that in the past. I will get advice on this.

Dr LIM: Keep going. We are wasting time like this.

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: Well, you know that we ...

Dr LIM: Let me ask the minister while we are waiting for the ...

Mr KNIGHT: Point of order! There is a point of order before the Chair, member for Greatorex.

Dr LIM: That is fine, I will just ask while the point of order is being decided. Minister, Dr Weeramanthri talked about the grey area. What happens after a notification goes into a grey area ...

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: Please cease, member for Greatorex. My ruling is that the member for Greatorex should continue the questioning. Once he has finished, the Leader of the Opposition can continue on. Member for Greatorex, do you have any further questions?

Dr LIM: Just a quick one. What happens after the notification goes into the grey areas?

Ms LAWRIE: Sorry, which grey area?

Dr LIM: The 12 and 13 years.

Ms LAWRIE: In terms of the sexually transmitted infections? Are you asking what happens when a notification comes into the intake?

Dr LIM: We talked about the grey area before, remember?

Ms LAWRIE: I am just clarifying your question. Are you asking what happens once a notification comes into the intake? I refer the question on to operational – Dave Richardson.

Mr RICHARDSON: Since the STI guidelines have been in place, the grey area, the 12- to 13-year-olds, have been referred to our intake team and there will be discussions between FACS and police. They will do that in consultation with the Sexual Assault Referral Centre as well.

Ms CARNEY: The points of clarification, minister, are in relation to the questions Dr Lim asked. I am matching up the estimates you provided in the budget papers and the table contained in your report to which Dr Lim referred.

On the one hand, we have budget estimates for 2006-07 and 2007-08. For children in danger, 100% time compliance; that is, within 24 days the matter had been investigated and then, a sliding scale, if you like - 80% and 70% for the other categories. Do you stand by those figures in the budget papers, given the report - and, if it is of assistance, I can hand you a copy - actually shows a declining number of investigations commenced within the time frame, since your government - so we do not need to go back, these are just under your government. Investigations within the time frame have declined, and declined quite significantly. How do you then get from that significant decline all three categories, particularly children in danger, which you should investigate within 24 hours? How do you get from those figures in the report to what is a massive jump to 100% compliance with the aspirational time limitations in the budget?

Ms LAWRIE: The data in the report was provided some time in late 2006. They were from various Department of Health and Community Services sources. That is the explanation for the variations in the data. Data is always volatile in that it depends on time of provision as to what that data is showing at that time. As you would appreciate, when you are setting Budget Books, a lot of what you put in your Budget Books are estimates. Actuals you get as the year to date progresses, and you will get your final actuals some time in about September of each financial year when all the data is present. In investigations and how they are tracking within the aspirational time frames, it really depends on the point of time at which you take your data.

Mrs BRAHAM: A point of order, Madam Deputy Chair! Could I point out that the rules according to the Estimates Committee is that shadow ministers should ask their questions first, followed by members of the committee - the member for Araluen is not a member of the committee - then Independent members. So, if the member for Greatorex has finished his questions, it should be the Independent's turn next. Could I ask for a ruling on that, Madam Deputy Chair? What is the ruling?

Dr LIM: Madam Deputy Chair, speaking to the point of order, the leader and I decided that these are questions that I could have easily asked, or she could have asked as well. It does not make any difference whether I ask it, or she asks it, or whatever. I said to her ...

Mrs BRAHAM: You are the shadow.

Dr LIM: Sure, I can do that. It is a matter of taking the notes across from me, or to me. What is the difference? The leader is asking the questions on my behalf.

Mrs BRAHAM: Because that is procedure ...

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: Can I ...

Ms CARNEY: Madam Deputy Chair, can I suggest the following? Obviously, people have different views, and I understand that. May I suggest the following to make it easier? Perhaps we do a deal now. I am happy to pass my questions over to Dr Lim, and then we can go to the member for Braitling. I say that in a spirit of goodwill, because everyone wants to ask questions and we have 20 minutes left.

Mrs BRAHAM: Thank you, member for Araluen.

Ms CARNEY: I believe we have the member for Braitling's consent, Madam Deputy Chair.

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: My ruling is that the member for Greatorex may continue until he has asked all of his questions. Then, as part of the accepted method of oncoming questions, it would go to members of the committee, and then Independent members.

Dr LIM: This comes back to the time lines for investigation. Is it not the case that, in 2001-02, investigations commenced within time frames of 95% for children in danger; 80% of the time are for children at risk; and 60% for children of concern. That is indicated from the graph on page 241.

Ms LAWRIE: I am happy to refer that operational question to Dave Richardson, who can yet again explain the process.

Mr RICHARDSON: I can add two sure answers to the question: (1) the increase in number and growth in child protection investigations has approximately grown at 155 cases investigated per year. In comparison to 2000-01 to today, we are investigating an extra 932. That would go some way to explain the issue around compliance.

The other issue around compliance relates to general acknowledgement across our community and other jurisdictions of the growing complexity of child protection work. Sometimes, investigations take longer which, in turn, will result in delays, potentially, to other investigations.

Dr LIM: Thank you for that answer. That reinforces my point there are more cases being reported or notified ...

Ms LAWRIE: Which is a good thing.

Dr LIM: Of course it is. I hope there are more, so that we can investigate them. Not that I want to see more children suffer, but more notifications made, so we can get to investigate and see what is going on, and try to protect these children. However, I am also told now that you are struggling to meet the demand that is there and, hence ...

Ms LAWRIE: Your words.

Dr LIM: No. That is what was said. You cannot meet all the cases because there are so many more. Is that not right?

Ms LAWRIE: We are dealing with 1000 cases more than previously ...

Dr LIM: And I am reinforcing that.

Ms LAWRIE: ... in the context of 71 additional child protection workers in the system, and taking the Child Protection budget from less than \$8m to \$35m. Your hypothesis is based on a static scenario; that is, that there were no extra child protection workers in the system during that time frame; there were no additional options for the child protection system to refer to, such as the Family Crisis Intervention Services; that we had not put in place a Child Abuse Task Force; that we had not put in place an after-hours service for the first time in history.

When you are comparing 2001 figures to 2007 figures, you have to also understand that the budget has significantly increased from \$8m to \$35m. Within that increase is not only the additional child protection workers in the system, but also the critically important response tools such as the Child Abuse Tasks Force, and the Family Crisis Intervention Services.

Dr LIM: Minister, it is not that I am accusing you of not putting in money into the service. I know you are putting a lot of money into the service, and I congratulate you for putting the money in. I am saying that you are not keeping pace with the demand that is there - the demand that we all recognise is very crucial and critical and needs to be dealt with. In fact, in last year's annual report, your outcomes for the investigations were: for Category 1 which is child in danger, it was 71%; Category 2, children at risk, was 37% - 37%; and for Category 3, child of concern, 32%. That is in your annual report.

Therefore, we are not meeting the targets adequately. Hence, my argument you are not providing enough resources. Yes, you are putting a lot of money into it. I would not dispute that. But what is happening ...

Ms LAWRIE: And an extra 71 staff.

Dr LIM: What is happening - and 71 extra staff. What is happening ...

Ms LAWRIE: And we have just had a recruitment round. We received 51 applications.

Dr LIM: Do you mind if I finish my comments?

Ms LAWRIE: This is not a static scenario ...

Dr LIM: Can I finish what I have to say before you respond?

Ms LAWRIE: Well, it is a statement, not a question.

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: Member for Greatorex, do you have a question?

Dr LIM: Is it not the case that, while more money has been going into Child Protection Services, the number of investigations commenced within the time frames have been proportionally falling?

Ms LAWRIE: No. What you are talking about is the description of the word 'investigation'. What you do not acknowledge is the critical danger intake assessment that occurs. The way you are describing it I refute. Okay? Clearly, what you have heard previously from a specialist in this area, from our Deputy Director of FACS, that there is a whole, if you like, investigative process that occurs. From the moment the call is made, the clock starts ticking. The most experienced intake team workers check the information; contact with phone calls if we are talking of a remote situation; contact the local clinic and, if necessary, the school as well. There is a whole body of work done that is in that critical initial danger assessment period

that is actually investigative work. However, the clock does not start ticking on the time of investigation until the face-to-face occurs.

What you are talking about in the scenario that you present, is actually misconstruing the way the process works. You are ignoring the work that occurs through the most experienced child protection workers we have in our system, from the moment the call comes in, to when the face-to-face discussions occur.

Dr LIM: The investigations for children in danger do not commence for 30% of the cases that are assessed as in danger.

Ms LAWRIE: No, again ...

Dr LIM: Let me just draw you ...

Ms LAWRIE: No, again, I disagree with your interpretation of the work that occurs within the child protection system in the Territory. If you want, I will have - separate to this Estimates Committee process because I am aware that you want to ask us more questions - a detailed briefing whereby child protection professionals sit down with you and explain what occurs from the point of notification, which is the phone call into intake, to when the investigation clock kicks in as well.

There is a great body of work in investigation work that occurs then. It is particularly an exceptional body of work today than what it was years ago because we have that intake co-located at the Peter McAulay Centre with direct access to the police crime databases. That did not exist before. What I can say as a minister is that I am far more confident of the assessment process that is occurring today than assessment process that occurred years ago when the CLP was in government.

Dr LIM: I will come back to this point. You tell me, the reports tell, that there are more cases notified. You tell me, your officers tell me, that the cases that are notified are quickly assessed so that they can categorise them to 'danger', 'in danger', 'at risk' or 'of concern'. You then told me the clock starts ticking. The graph in Figure 5 caption or heading reads 'Investigations commenced within the time frame, from 2001 to 2002, to 2005 to 2006'. That graph clearly indicates that in the year 2000-01, 'children in danger', investigations were commenced within the time frame in nearly 94% of cases. Today, we are down to 71% according to your last annual report. Therefore, there is a degradation of commencement of investigations of the children that are assessed - as you used the word, assessed - as 'in danger'. And you have not started the investigations.

Ms LAWRIE: I repeat, what you are dismissing frequently, is the access to information that our most professional child protection workers in the intake team now have at hand which is, critically, immediate access to the police data as well. What you are dismissing in that is the work that is done in that assessment phase to ensure that the child's circumstances are absolutely understood by that intake assessment team.

What you are also dismissing in that is that the dramatic increase in children within that category 1 that we are dealing with these days: the increasing complexity of the cases. I refer you to Mr Richardson to explain, yet again, that child protection process.

Mr RICHARDSON: Regarding the member's concern about the 30%, I reiterate that there are referrals, notifications received in remote communities. It would take time to mobilise, to get out to those communities. The majority of these cases are dealt within between one and three days. Approximately 70% are being dealt with; that is in the order of 150 children.

There is a small cohort that we do not get within that time frame. Again, we make arrangements with clinics, schools and others within the communities to sight the child and to ensure the provision of safety of the child. There is no one in the FACS intake team sitting on their hands concerned that we are leaving a child out there in danger, because the robust assessment processes allowing classifying child in danger reports. But there is absolutely reality around distance.

Dr LIM: Minister, I am not accusing FACS staff of sitting on their hands. I am saying, and I have said over and over again, that I believe FACS tries desperately hard to do the best it can but, within the resources that it has. We all understand also that many of the children who are sexually abused are in the bush and there are difficulties with the remoteness of these children. Hence, our concern that the resources are not adequate. I come back again; it is not about numbers or the dollars, it is about the time

frames for the children who are identified, irrespective of the numbers, that must be assessed quickly, investigated and, until your investigations are complete - in a medical model, until you finish your investigations, you cannot treat. Unless you are telling me ...

Ms LAWRIE: That is not true, member for Greatorex.

Dr LIM: Unless you are telling me ...

Ms LAWRIE: That is not true.

Dr LIM: No. Unless you are telling me – and I ask you the question - that before the investigation is completed, you intervene. Is that what you are saying?

Ms LAWRIE: Very usually in the case, particularly of sex abuse, an intervention and immediate intervention is a direct referral to our Sexual Assault Referral Centre for exactly the issue that, if it is an issue of sexual abuse, then part of the assessment process is the intervention of SARC, quite appropriately, I have to say.

Dr LIM: Describe the incidences of the 30% that are not being investigated within the first 24 hours.

Ms LAWRIE: Member for Greatorex, I am not going to go into hypotheticals with you. Okay? I am not going to go ...

Dr LIM: I want to know, minister.

Ms LAWRIE: I am not going to go into hypotheticals with you. That is a ridiculous scenario.

Dr LIM: What I want to know, minister, is a description of the cohort that do not get investigated within the first 24 hours after the assessment team have already assessed as being in danger. Describe that cohort.

Ms LAWRIE: We will give you a generic description; we will not go to individual cases. I defer to Dave Richardson.

Mr RICHARDSON: It relates to non-urban cases.

Dr LIM: So it is distance. Am I right in saying that, minister?

Ms LAWRIE: I do not know whether you have cloth ears, but I recall sitting here listening to Dave Richardson answer the last few questions saying that one of the factors in the timeliness of response is whether the notification is from remote. Again, I have sat here and listened several times to the answer being provided which is that, where we have a timeliness issue of getting a child protection remote FACS team worker out to the community, we contact the health professionals in the community and the school. The intake team makes a professional judgment on who is best to contact in that particular remote community to ascertain that the child is not in danger.

Dr LIM: Nobody follows up within the first 24 hours?

Ms LAWRIE: They are your words. We follow up.

Dr LIM: So you are happy with that situation, obviously.

Ms LAWRIE: You know what I am not happy with, Member for Greatorex?

Dr LIM: You are not happy with it? Okay.

Ms LAWRIE: I am not happy with the fact that, since I have been the minister, I have put to the federal government on several occasions that we need to expand our child protection system into remote communities right across the Territory; we need child protection workers, welfare workers based in remote communities. I have put in writing the cost to deliver expanded services into our remote communities. I have said to the federal government that the Territory government is prepared to be a partnership in the delivery of the expansion of the service into our remote communities rather than relying on the structure of remote teams. The federal government has not responded to that request - not once.

Further, the Territory government has not waited idly for the federal government to get its act together on this critically important issue. We are directly funding welfare workers into remote communities now. We started that process because we could not wait any longer for the federal government to accept its responsibility for indigenous Australians living in the Territory who need better services right across those communities including critically important infrastructure services.

Dr LIM: Minister, I am glad to hear you say that you are not happy with the situation because it shows me that you will try to investigate 100% of the cases that are in danger. Why are you not putting in more resources so that FACS can cope?

Ms LAWRIE: We are. We have taken the FACS budget from \$7.8m in 2001 to \$35m now. Every year that the Martin Labor government has been in, particularly with our Caring for Children reform agenda, we are increasing the FACS budget by millions of dollars. Again, we increased it by a couple of million dollars this year, specifically in the area of child protection services.

Dr LIM: I applaud you for putting more money into it but, as the report - again on page 241 - says:

Under current resourcing, it may therefore be that 1100 to 1200 investigations are all that can be undertaken in a year. If this is the case, it is likely that workers have raised the threshold for investigation such that cases concerned must now be assessed as more severe to be allocated for investigation. Therefore, some cases that previously would have been seen as serious enough to require an investigation will not have received a child protection response.

That is a grave concern. That report is saying that you guys have too many cases reported and you do not have enough resources and, suddenly, the threshold for when a child gets into the danger mark is now higher, which means maybe some of the 'children at risk' group now should be in the danger group. That is what it is saying. Do you agree with that?

Ms LAWRIE: Look, I know what the report is saying. I will step through a couple of issues that you raised there, member for Grotorex, before I refer to Dave Richardson to again explain the process we follow.

First, and most importantly, is that, with the additional resources put into the child protection system, people in the communities now have a confidence that, when they notify, there will be a response. I have travelled the length and breadth of the Territory as minister for the last couple of years. Everywhere I have gone - be it an urban centre, a regional centre, or a remote community - a message was delivered loud and clear. People had no confidence in the child protection system before, because they said, 'We did not get follow-up when we notified'. The big difference is that today the feedback I get when I travel is that people say: 'We have confidence. We notify FACS, we know there will be a response'. That, to me, is a critically important change in our child protection system.

Why has that change come about? It has come about because we have quadrupled the child protection budget. Is there more to do yet? Absolutely, there is a lot more to do. I have already put on the table in these discussions at estimates that we critically need to expand our Family Crisis Intervention Services the length and breadth of the Territory. Services such as Peace at Home in the Katherine region are fantastic. It is talked about in the *Little Children are Sacred* report. They did not come about through chance; there was an absolute commitment from the Territory government to put services in there.

The Safer Family Service by Tangentyere in the town camps is making huge headway in caring for and protecting children. We have funded non-government organisations in the Territory to provide critically important family crisis intervention work that I have clearly put on the table. More is needed to be done in the services funded into the remote indigenous communities of the Territory. We are funding a service at Bawanunga; we are funding a service at Numbulwar; we are funding a service at Tiwi. These are the start of where absolutely more needs to be done.

One of the consequences of the existing national debate around child abuse in indigenous communities, and of the federal government's intervention, with teams going out into indigenous remote communities, is that we would expect - we would absolutely expect - to see an influx of more notifications into our child protection system. That is a consequence of the federal government's intervention. Very clearly, there needs to be a capacity to respond to that: how you take a system that is getting a certain increasing demand in notifications, and you are adding in your child protection resources into that system to keep pace

with that demand, and then, have what we expect will be a spike in notifications. When you create a spike through intervention, you need to have the resources to back up the capability to deal with that spike.

That is why I eyeballed Mal Brough as the federal minister with this responsibility and said: 'We need to urgently discuss the child protection response to the reforms that you have announced'. It is critically important. We cannot wait for a month's time where we are having our child protection system crashing because of a spike in notifications. There needs to be, as part of the federal government's response - aside from sending in the Army, the Australian Federal Police, and from saying they want to do health screening - a child protection component to that response. I have already put that on the table to the federal minister. The Chief Minister is articulating that to the Prime Minister.

Dr LIM: Minister, you call it a spike, I call it a significant rise over a three-year period, according to the graph on Figure 4. So it is not a spike, it is growing more and more ...

Ms LAWRIE: I am talking about the spike that will happen now – right now, today. We are at the start of a spike. If you think there is not going to be a spike in notifications coming into the system when the Prime Minister is sending the Army into remote indigenous communities, and teams of Commonwealth workers to move through the community in a roll and a wave because of child abuse, and that there is not going to be some calls coming in extra to create a spike, then you are kidding yourself.

Dr LIM: I agree with you there will definitely be a greater increase, or a spike as you describe it. Minister, I hear your and your officer's responses that there is an over-representation of notifications from indigenous children. Is it not, therefore, logical that more resources be put out there? Is it logical that that should happen? Is it not the reason why the Commonwealth government has taken over that function and decided to roll out this program?

Ms LAWRIE: Member for Greatorex, if we get more resources into our child protection system in remote communities of Australia as a result of the federal government's intervention – hallelujah! If we get funding for Family Crisis Intervention Services in our remote communities as a result of the federal government's intervention – hallelujah! I, for one, absolutely welcome that intervention. I have said to the federal minister, Mal Brough, that we need to have urgent discussions around the Family Crisis Intervention Services. It must occur as a response to the federal government's intervention. You cannot go out into the remote communities and say, 'We are here to protect children', without putting in the resources to deal with families in crisis.

Why is there a crisis? These are impoverished communities. Therefore, the response needs to be multidisciplinary. It needs to have components of everything from mental health to infrastructure changes. I have the agency that has done the proposal. We wrote it up and I took the funding request to Mal Brough at his indigenous summit over a year ago. What we are saying today here, member for Greatorex, is not new. The Territory government has articulated this need to the federal government previously.

If, as a result of the Prime Minister's intervention, we actually see the funding flow through - then I would say hallelujah!

Dr LIM: Minister, I will join you in the rejoicing, because we need that, and we need the commitment from both the Northern Territory government and the Commonwealth government to ensure that this flows for the next 15 to 25 years so that we can bring about some generational change.

Let us go away from this and come down to some tin tacks. Last year, your CEO gave some figures on the numbers of STIs by age groups. He gave the numbers for 2004 and 2005 for those under 12, 12 and 13, 14 and 15, and 16 and 17. Could you provide me with figures for the year 2006, and also to date 2007?

Ms LAWRIE: Yes, member for Greatorex, happy to provide those figures. I refer to Dr Tarun Weeramanthi who has the information. The information is under the public health area for Minister for Health, and I know it was tabled yesterday. However, we have the same information to table again today if you wish.

Dr LIM: If you could. Last year, the figures were provided for me by your CEO during our discussions.

Ms LAWRIE: Member for Greatorex, as I have said to you, and as you know, the Centre for Disease Control has the data for sexually transmitted infections. I am happy to provide you with the information that was provided yesterday by the Minister for Health in data on sexually transmitted infections. Dr Tarun Weeramanthi is here and has that information.

Dr LIM: If you have the information, I appreciate that. However, you also recall that a message came down from you to the Minister for Health saying that you would take all of these questions today, and you asked him not to proceed with any responses in this regard.

Ms LAWRIE: Again, you like to misconstrue, member for Greatorex.

Dr LIM: That is what was said.

Ms LAWRIE: Member for Greatorex, I watched estimates on closed circuit television in Parliament House yesterday, and I saw the minister and his officers responding to the issues of STIs. I particularly enjoyed the response from Dr Krause - thoroughly informative and factual. STIs were debated yesterday by the Minister for Health, quite appropriately.

Where I come in, in my responsibility, is the interface – the notifications into the FACS system. Those were the questions that the Minister for Health indicated I would be answering. One of the questions was from the member for Braintree, for example, regarding notification of young pregnant girls to FACS. Where the interface comes into the FACS system, that is where I answer the question. Happy to.

Dr LIM: You are going to provide me with those figures?

Ms LAWRIE: Yes, the figures you received yesterday, we will provide again today.

Dr LIM: Okay, then. If it is all right they can be tabled too?

Ms LAWRIE: Yes, tabled.

Dr LIM: What time do we finish, Madam Deputy Chair.

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: In 45 seconds, member for Greatorex.

Dr LIM: In the few seconds that we have left, I would like to thank you and your officers for the information that you provided. You, obviously, have difference of opinions as to how well this program will be rolled out. I am glad that the Commonwealth government has come in with a lot of support. I look forward to a change.

Ms LAWRIE: I look forward to its funding.

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: On behalf of the committee, I thank all the officers who provided advice to the minister today.

Answer to Question 7.3

Ms LAWRIE: I have a response to a question on notice regarding the number of calls made to Parent Line. I table that.

Ms LAWRIE: I thank the officers of the Department of Family Community Services for their appearance at the Estimates Committee today and the extensive effort they have gone to in preparing for the estimates process.

The committee suspended.

MINISTER SCRYMGOUR'S PORTFOLIOS

Mr CHAIRMAN: Minister, are you happy to kick off? It is slightly before 1.30, but everyone seems to be here. I will start by introducing the members of the Committee. We have Mr Wood, the member for Nelson, the member for Macdonnell, Ms Anderson, member for Arnhem, Ms McCarthy, myself as Chairman, member for Brennan, the member for Blain, Mr Mills, the member for Katherine, Mrs Miller, and Dr Lim, the member for Greatorex.

I should start by reminding witnesses that they are subject to parliamentary privilege in the evidence they provide, however the giving of misleading evidence can constitute a contempt of the Legislative Assembly and action can be taken pursuant to powers and privileges legislation. Officers should also be aware that they are not required to answer questions of policy if the minister refers a question to them. If people have a mobile phone, please check that it is either switched off or on silent.

With that out of the way, I welcome you, minister, and your officials and invite you to introduce the officials accompanying you this afternoon, and to make an opening statement on behalf of the Department of Natural Resources, Environment and the Arts.

Ms SCRYMGOUR: Thank you, Mr Chairman, and members. I am joined at the table this afternoon by Dr David Ritchie, Chief Executive of the Department of Natural Resources, Environment and the Arts and Mrs Clare Milikins, who is the Executive Director of Finance and Governance. As we move through the department's outputs, I will be joined by other departmental officers as appropriate. For Output Group 1.0, Parks and Reserves, this will be Mr Graham Phelps who is the Executive Director of Parks.

I would like to make some brief introductory comments relating to the department's budget as represented in Budget 2007-08. As you are all aware, this is the second budget for our exciting and innovative department, created by this government in recognition of the unique qualities of the Territory's natural and cultural heritage and their increasingly central role in both the economic development of the Northern Territory and in protecting the way of life we enjoy as Territorians.

As outlined in Budget Paper No. 3, the department's job is to better understand the Territory's biophysical environment, our diverse society, complex social history and artistic capabilities so that Territorians have an opportunity to use these natural and cultural resources as a source of inspiration, innovation and personal and economic growth.

The department's goals are directed to six key outcomes, which are: protecting natural and cultural assets owned by the Territory; protecting the community's interest in all natural and cultural assets; supporting the community and creating new understandings and expressions of Territory identity; predicting and assisting in mitigating threats from both natural processes and human activity; helping the community to care for and make best use of our natural and cultural assets; and creating commercial, educational and recreational opportunities based on our natural and cultural assets. These outcomes are provided by seven output groups and 15 outputs presented in Budget Paper No. 3.

I take this opportunity, Mr Chairman, to identify a transposition error in output table on page 214 of Budget Paper No 3. The titles of the second two outputs, Visitor Management Programs and Conservation Management Programs, have been transposed in this table. The output funding reported against Visitor Management Programs of \$21.3m for 2006-07 and 2007-08 actually relates to the Conservation Management Programs, and the \$8.4m for 2006-07 and 2007-08 reported against that output relates to Visitor Management Programs. I apologise for this clerical error. In all other respects, the information is reported correctly.

Whilst these outputs are consistent with Budget 2006-07, there are a number of key initiatives in Budget 2007-08. The three Parks and Reserves outputs have been refined and recast to better reflect Parks' primary role of conservation management. The Natural Resources output has also been refined to increase focus on and accountability for the considerable work the department is doing on water management issues, and recognising the importance of effective management of water to the lives of current and future Territorians. To achieve this function, the budget for 2006-07 Hydrographic and Drilling outputs have been combined with the Water Allocation Planning, Licensing and Regulation activities previously managed in the department's Policy and Planning Division to create the Water Resources output. The Budget 2006-07 Natural Resource

Regulation and Enforcement output has also been removed. Components such as Land and Vegetation Management functions are now being reported under Natural Resource Assessment and Sustainable Use of Wildlife, and Pest Animal Control functions are now being reported under the Natural Resource Management Activities output.

The 2006-07 estimates have been recast to enable comparisons for all these new and amended outputs. The significant increase in the 2006-07 estimates against last year's budget, and compared to the 2007-08 Budget, is evidence of the department's capacity to lever external funding. In total, \$2.9m in additional grant-funded expenditure has been added to the output budget since this time last year, along with a carry forward of \$3.9m for projects either not completed in 2005-06, or for which funding was received after publication of the 2006-07 Budget Papers. Grant funding cannot reliably be incorporated in forward estimates, and thus is not reflected in the Budget Estimates until announced by funding providers. Because grant funding continues to be received right up to the end of the financial year, the department will continue to have significant amounts to carry over.

Mr Chairman, I am happy to answer questions in regards to policy and operational matters that are within my portfolio, and I look forward to any questions the committee may have in regards to the appropriation for this year for the Department of Natural Resources, Environment and the Arts and the Territory Wildlife Park's Government Business Division.

Mr Chairman, I also have responsibility for the Community Engagement Division of the Department of the Chief Minister with my responsibilities as Minister for Women's Policy, Young Territorians and Senior Territorians, and I intend to make some introductory remarks about those areas when we get to the relevant output group at the completion of the NRETA outputs.

Mr CHAIRMAN: Thank you, minister. Are there any questions on the minister's opening statement? Member for Blain?

Mr MILLS: No.

OUTPUT GROUP 1 – PARKS AND RESERVES **Output 1.1 - Parks Joint Management Programs**

Mr CHAIRMAN: There being no questions, I call for questions for Output 1.1 - Park Joint Management Programs. Member for Blain.

Mr MILLS: Minister, thank you for your opening statement and sketching out your areas of responsibility. With your indulgence, as we have done with other ministers, we have some general questions to ask at the beginning which are not specifically captured in any one of the points. Do you object to us getting these out of the way first? They deal with corporate services, cleaning services and management of department itself.

Mr CHAIRMAN: Other ministers have been happy to take these questions.

Ms SCRYMGOUR: That is fine.

Mr MILLS: There is nothing surprising.

Mr CHAIRMAN: Square metreage for the CEO would be handy.

Mr MILLS: Minister, of the total appropriation for this department, what input goes to corporate and executive Services? Percentage terms will be fine.

Ms SCRYMGOUR: Member for Blain, I will go through in terms of corporate support, and what you are talking about, which covers some of the functions. Is that what you are after?

Mr MILLS: No. Out of your total allocation what amount goes to corporate and executive Services?

Ms SCRYMGOUR: All right. 17 707.

Mr MILLS: 17.707. Is that million?

Ms SCRYMGOUR: Yes.

Mr MILLS: You do not have that as a percentage?

Ms SCRYMGOUR: No.

Mr MILLS: We can work that out. Thank you. I expect cleaning arrangements within the department, as with most other agencies, is contracted out?

Ms SCRYMGOUR: Some are. Member for Blain, as you would be aware, some of the lease properties are financed and managed through DCIS. However, NRETA owns a number of properties. Do you want me to go through some of those, or do you just want to know what the percentage is?

Mr MILLS: I am happy for it to be tabled.

Ms SCRYMGOUR: I am not going to table anything. In terms of leased properties, there are leased properties which we do through DCIS, and then there are a number of properties which NRETA owns. Did you want a separate ...

Mr MILLS: I am particularly interested in the ones that NRETA owns. We have had the other information provided through DCIS.

Ms SCRYMGOUR: Okay, the property management costs for what NRETA owns is about \$3.26m.

Mr MILLS: Are you able to indicate how much that translates into cost of cleaning per square metre?

Ms SCRYMGOUR: The costs of cleaning contracts are generally based on hourly rates, dependant on contract deliverables. For example, emptying bins, cleaning bins, wiping surfaces, etcetera. I cannot give you an exact rate there.

Mr MILLS: These contracts are usually determined on a square metre basis.

Ms SCRYMGOUR: I will hand that question to the Chief Finance Officer.

Ms MILIKINS: The department has cleaning contracts on a number of different facilities; not just its buildings, but also on public use facilities such as Casuarina Coastal Reserve ablution facilities. All those are captured in the cleaning cost code and the property management cost code. It is not something that is readily separable between the buildings. We have remote ranger station which local community members are often contracted to clean. We have MAGNT, which actually employs cleaners, so we do not do that on a per-metre basis. Public use facilities in parks are generally let on an hourly basis. As a general principle, most of our cleaning contracts are on the hourly basis taken to clean the facilities, as opposed to a per metre cost because they are not office facilities.

Mr MILLS: Okay. I accept that explanation, thank you. How often are contracts renewed?

Ms SCRYMGOUR: Member for Blain, if you want a complete breakdown, we could answer it, but to be completely sure, we can take that on notice and then get back to you at the end of the output.

Mr MILLS: That is fine. I am happy to do that.

Question on Notice 8.1

Mr CHAIRMAN: Member for Blain could you please restate the question for *Hansard*?

Mr MILLS: Details of periods of contract, and when those cleaning contracts would be renewed?

Mr CHAIRMAN: Minister, can you confirm you are happy to have that on notice?

Ms SCRYMGOUR: Yes.

Mr CHAIRMAN: For the purposes of *Hansard*, I allocate that question number 8.1.

Mr MILLS: Thank you.

Mr CHAIRMAN: I am sorry, member for Blain. It is just easier if someone in your agency notes down the question number, just so that when it gets reported back, minister, we can tick it off as having been done.

Mr MILLS: Thank you, Mr Chairman. The allocation from the appropriation that goes to the maintenance of offices?

Ms SCRYMGOUR: About \$189 000, member for Blain.

Mr MILLS: That covers ranger stations?

Ms SCRYMGOUR: That was all property management maintenance costs.

Mr MILLS: Okay, thank you. Office rental costs. The contracts that are managed through DCIS are fine; we received that information through DCIS last night. How do you calculate the cost of office rental on properties that you own? Is that managed or accounted for in some way?

Ms SCRYMGOUR: If these are properties that are owned by the department, we do not pay any rent.

Mr MILLS: Okay. That is understandable. The total appropriation for the output group that goes towards advertising? That includes design and production costs for radio, television, newspaper, magazine, and any other media.

Ms SCRYMGOUR: All marketing and communication costs for 2006-07 as of May 2007, member for Blain, is \$209 710.

Mr MILLS: Is that up or down in real terms from the preceding year? Is that more or less than the same time last year?

Ms SCRYMGOUR: Less.

Mr MILLS: Less, is it? Okay. Significantly?

Ms SCRYMGOUR: I suppose half of what we spent the year before.

Mr MILLS: Would that result from a particular campaign or project related to parks?

Ms SCRYMGOUR: There would have been an increase in costs in some of the marketing when you look across the agency, but I suppose if you look at one area, it was probably the work that was done and the marketing with the EPA.

Mr MILLS: The EPA, of course. Okay. Thank you. This may sound like a curious question, but don't worry, there is a curiouser one coming. Advertising that carries or bears the image of the minister, can you provide any details?

Ms SCRYMGOUR: At the outset, that the department is not responsible for placing the minister's advertising. There are things that we do separately, which is upstairs.

Mr MILLS: Yes, I understand that.

Ms SCRYMGOUR: So that cost is separate from the department. Documents that included the minister's image were in the vicinity of about \$50 548.

Mr MILLS: Okay. And I am sure if you ever get an opportunity to be in opposition, or recall times in opposition, the purpose of this is just to ensure that government resources are not used for shameless self-promotion, but you have done well. I understand that your face needs to be out there. We do not want you to hide. We are just Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition.

Ms SCRYMGOUR: I do not think there is any danger of that, member for Blain.

Mr MILLS: The cost of postage associated with mass communication with Territorians; what is the cost of the letterbox drops?

Ms SCRYMGOUR: The agency postage is about \$39 150 as of 31 May.

Mr MILLS: Okay, same as the preceding figure.

Ms SCRYMGOUR: I make that cost is not in relation to any letter-box drops that might be in relation to government; it is purely if the department sends out something like we saw with the big campaign about the grapevine. So it would be associated with that rather than a cost that was attributed to government activity.

Mr MILLS: Thank you, minister. As we've gone through, we've been able to sift those out because it can be a bit confusing with information that sometimes comes from Chief Ministers and some comes from departments, and this helps us, too.

Ms SCRYMGOUR: We want to make sure that you're not confused by any of that, member for Blain, and that you get the right information. We're all working to get you that information.

Mr MILLS: That's right, progressing toward that common goal. It's fantastic.

Mr Wood: I'll get my hanky out soon.

Ms SCRYMGOUR: It is good to see that sense of humour still exists on a Thursday, Mr Chairman.

Mr MILLS: That's right. Okay, you do research of issues management, focus groups, finding out what people are thinking about certain matters before you make a decision. What money has gone toward that kind of research?

Ms SCRYMGOUR: No focus group surveying was undertaken, however the agency takes part in numerous community consultation activities where feedback from the public is sought. This includes, but is not inclusive of all the activities, for instance, the form and function of the EPA, beneficial uses declaration of water in Darwin Harbour catchment, review of the Howard Springs Plan of Management, which I am sure the member for Nelson would be interested in. There was also the review of the Coburg Marine Park Plan of Management and the review of the Threatened Species List of the Northern Territory.

Mr MILLS: Okay. So no focus groups have been funded to work on an analysis of market views on certain matters?

Ms SCRYMGOUR: No.

Mr MILLS: Okay. That's usually from Chief Mins. How much of the total of the appropriation for the output group goes toward the cost of media liaison and monitoring, so keeping an eye on what's going on in the media?

Ms SCRYMGOUR: 5107.

Mr MILLS: 5107.

Ms SCRYMGOUR: With that 5107, member for Blain, just to break it down, of that, 3667 was for media monitoring with local company Media Networks, and 1390 of this was for newspaper subscriptions.

Mr MILLS: Okay. Was the media monitoring related to a specific issue?

Ms SCRYMGOUR: As I understand it, it was for transcripts.

Mr MILLS: I appreciate it would be for transcripts, but was it transcripts of a specific issue or do you just grab a transcript every now and then to read?

Ms SCRYMGOUR: I will defer to the Chief Executive.

Dr RITCHIE: We have an arrangement for them to provide transcripts and summaries, and then we can then dig into that in detail and get full transcripts on a range of issues. So we say: 'We want everything on the environment', as key word and so that is how it works.

Mr MILLS: Okay, so it's just an open account that you access as required?

Dr RITCHIE: Yes.

Mr MILLS: I understand that. Thank you. Are there any costs for media monitoring? What costs were associated with transcribing services? I can probably guess the answer to this, but I will ask anyway.

Ms SCRYMGOUR: I thought I'd just answered it in the question before that.

Mr MILLS: Yes, that's what I thought. Thank you. What is the total number of reviews that are to be publicly reported? What is the status of these reviews? How long have they been going? When will they be reported? Are you able to provide a list of these reviews?

Ms SCRYMGOUR: The only review for the department in 2005-06 was the review of *Building Strong Arts Business*, the Northern Territory's indigenous arts strategy.

Mr MILLS: Has that been concluded?

Ms SCRYMGOUR: It has and the cost of that consultancy was \$20 000 to save you asking the next question.

Mr MILLS: Thank you. There was another one question before that question. So that is it, just the one review?

Ms SCRYMGOUR: One review.

Mr MILLS: All right, it must be very forward looking.

Ms SCRYMGOUR: We are a very efficient department, member for Blain.

Mr MILLS: Yes, well there are some others that seem to be looking backwards and internally but ...

Ms SCRYMGOUR: No, no, it is reflected right across government.

Mr MILLS: No, you have not followed estimates all the way through, but surely ...

Ms SCRYMGOUR: Bear in mind that this department is a fairly new one. We have been going for only two years.

Mr MILLS: Yes, that is right, so that number will increase as we go on. Consultants: I need details of consultants that have been contracted by this department.

Ms SCRYMGOUR: So that you get a good answer, member for Blain, I will refer that question to Clare Milikins.

Ms MILIKINS: We have spent, in terms of appropriated-funded consultancies up to 31 May \$693 000.

Mr MILLS: Okay, thank you for that. I was also seeking details of those contracts. What were the consultants employed to do and could we have a breakdown?

Ms MILIKINS: We have broken down the consultancies that were over \$10 000, otherwise it is quite a long list of small. We have three consultancies over \$10 000. One was with Advance Dynamics Australia, the Impact of Leaders on Culture Workshops, which was an organisational capacity building consultancy and capability building for the department. That was done in consultation with the Procurement Review Board, NTICN and through a Certificate of Exemption, \$179 000.

Mr MILLS: Just on that, why was a certificate of exemption sought?

Dr RITCHIE: Member for Blain, that was a decision because that particular company was able to offer a package of management training and organisational diagnostics that was not available in the Territory and therefore we had to go for a Certificate of Exemption.

Mr MILLS: Thank you.

Ms MILIKINS: The second one was with EWL Sciences Pty Ltd, hydrogeology and geomorphology relating to the McArthur River Mine proposal, and it was advice on the hydrogeological and geomorphological elements of the tailings storage facility at McArthur River Mine. It was initially quoted at under \$10 000. NTICN advice was sought, and quotes sought and written approval for the CE for the letting of the consultancy. Ultimately, it came in at \$14 000.

The other was the University of Newcastle McArthur River Review Report, the environmental assessment on the McArthur River Mine, and that was a select tender process for the C of E in relation specifically to the mine. That totalled \$206 000. All other consultancies are very minor and small.

Mr MILLS: So the total though, as I recall, was \$623 000?

Ms MILIKINS: All other consultancies are less than \$10 000. If you would like a ...

Mr MILLS: Gosh, there must be a very big list. I would not expect nor desire you to read them all. However, as other agencies have tabled those lists, I request the tabling of those consultant lists.

Ms SCRYMGOUR: We do not have that information here, member for Blain. In terms of all of the consultancies that are less than \$10 000, we do not have that information.

Mr MILLS: Can you get it for us?

Ms SCRYMGOUR: Certainly, I can.

Mr MILLS: It is just that the amounts that are above \$10 000 leaves us with about \$400 000 less than \$10 000 each. There must be a huge amount of them, so they need to be looked at.

Question on Notice 8.2

Mr CHAIRMAN: If I can get you, member for Blain, to repeat the question, please.

Mr MILLS: I request the complete list of all consultancies that have been contracted by this department.

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

Ms SCRYMGOUR: Yes.

Mr CHAIRMAN: For the purposes of *Hansard*, I allocate that question number 8.2.

Mr MILLS: Is that information likely to come, minister, during the session, or do you expect it to come later?

Ms SCRYMGOUR: As I said, all the questions on notice that we receive, we will endeavour to get the information by the end of our session today rather than this particular output.

Mr MILLS: No, that is fine. I am flexible there. Thank you. What is the total appropriation from the output group that goes towards the cost of staffing, the number of full-time equivalents, the number of employees and at each level?

Ms SCRYMGOUR: Okay. For full-time equivalents the total appropriation funded is 640. Yes, that would be staffing. That is what you have asked for. You have asked for staff.

Mr MILLS: How much of the appropriation goes directly to its staffing costs?

Ms SCRYMGOUR: Oh, the appropriation.

Mr MILLS: Yes. So what is your wages bill, basically.

Ms SCRYMGOUR: I thought you were asking for FTEs. Can I just ask for clarification, Mr Chairman? You are asking for how much of the appropriation was for staff?

Mr MILLS: Yes. What is your wages bill?

Ms SCRYMGOUR: What percent? Yes.

Mr MILLS: Yes.

Ms SCRYMGOUR: \$46.5m.

Mr MILLS: Thank you. And the number of full-time equivalents?

Ms SCRYMGOUR: The number of full-time equivalents is 675. Out of that, 35 are actually grant funded, so there are 35 FTEs with grant funding.

Mr MILLS: Is that like Commonwealth grants for rangers?

Ms SCRYMGOUR: It is all external funding, but I will refer ...

Mr MILLS: Yes. Any details on that, I would appreciate.

Dr RITCHIE: Member for Blain, a lot of them are positions created through Commonwealth funding through the National Estate Grants program and through the National Heritage Trust funding. Without putting a figure on it, probably three-quarters of that is through the Commonwealth. They are the big environmental funding arrangements set up by the Commonwealth.

Mr MILLS: Thank you, Dr Ritchie. Before I forget, I had missed a question back here. It was going back to the office rental question. The follow-on question is: what, minister, is the size of the CEO's office in square metres?

Ms SCRYMGOUR: If we could just get a correction, Mr Chairman, on staffing and FTEs. Dr Ritchie.

Dr RITCHIE: I think I may have been in the past. It is Natural Heritage Trust funding, not National Estate grants.

Mr MILLS: Thank you

Ms SCRYMGOUR: In relation to the member for Blain's next question, in terms of the office space, is it just the CEO that you would like?

Mr MILLS: If you want to go down to executive contract officers.

Ms SCRYMGOUR: No, I am just trying to clarify the question you asked. Was it just for the Chief Executive Officer?

Mr MILLS: Yes. It is a rudimentary question. How big is the office in square metres?

Ms SCRYMGOUR: The Chief Executive's office is 30 m².

Mr MILLS: Do you all know, by the way, what each person's office is?

Mr CHAIRMAN: They do now.

Mr MILLS: Airfares and cost of travel. This is within the Territory. What we are after is airfares between Alice Springs and Darwin. It may be hard to capture that directly. You may have the accounting system to do so. Most others have been able to indicate that the majority are but cannot specify otherwise.

Ms SCRYMGOUR: I will refer that question to the CEO.

Dr RITCHIE: That question was in two parts, member for Blain, I take it, a total for intra-travel or were you just focusing on Alice Springs?

Mr MILLS: To keep our information sound, it is all airfares within the Territory.

Dr RITCHIE: The first figure, which is all the airfares within the Territory is \$231 357; clearly identifiable Alice-Darwin, Darwin-Alice is \$119 592. Just to give more information rather than less, within the remainder there is clearly identified a proportion which is 'other', but because of the way these things are booked there is another \$70 000-odd that is not identified. It is possible that some of that could be Darwin-Alice as well. I think probably we have most of it in the \$119 592.

Mr MILLS: Thank you very much, Dr Ritchie. Now we are going to Environmental questions. This is the loyal opposition just checking that claims that have been made have been applied in practice. What strategies have been employed within the department to reduce greenhouse gas emissions?

Ms SCRYMGOUR: Given that we are the lead agency, member for Blain, I will refer that question to the CEO of the department.

Dr RITCHIE: I guess there are a couple of components to this: what we are doing as a department; and then what our role is within the government's framework. That goes beyond just the department. Without wishing to pre-empt you, should I deal with them all in this one question?

Mr MILLS: I am particularly interested in the department itself, not so much outstations.

Dr RITCHIE: In the department itself. It is a question really about meeting specific targets.

Mr MILLS: Yes.

Ms SCRYMGOUR: But the outstation stuff, that is pretty good too, you know.

Mr MILLS: I am sure it is, and I do not want them to be offended by what I just said.

Ms SCRYMGOUR: No offence taken I am sure, member for Blain.

Dr RITCHIE: I'll just go through these by divisional level. That's the column down there and they apply to specific buildings. These are actions to achieve the 1.5% energy reductions. The Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory has been recladding the museum to create much better insulation at a cost of \$150 000; the air levels in the building, work on the air conditioning, have been re-balanced so that the system works much more efficiently, the relationship between the inside and outside air is better, which has achieved a better result; they've installed a new lighting power control system in what's called the Wet Store, which is where you have lighting, for safety reasons, continuously on, and that has been changed; there are now photoelectric switches on all the halogen uplights in the Maritime Museum; and all outside lights are now connected to photoelectric switches.

We have more or less completed the process of taking out all the fluorescent tubes in the building and replacing them with energy efficient globes. Then there is a range of timer delayed switches on various pieces of machinery ranging from urns right through to printers, photocopiers, etcetera.

I will not repeat that for other buildings, but that gives you an idea. In the Alice Springs Plaza, we've moved to occupancy sensors for all lighting. There are timer delay switches in rooms for public safety, but the switches are off after hours. Again, we've gone through the process of getting rid of fluoro tubes and replacing them with energy efficient globes and, again, arranging for automatic switching off of a range of office machinery.

In Goyder in Palmerston, we have changed the way we use air-conditioning by having a different timing arrangement so we use it much less frequently and we have special dimming systems in the common areas such as passage ways, so that we are reducing the cost of illuminating those areas. Occupancy sensors, again, timer delays, replacing fluoros and then a range of other switches on the major items of office machinery.

At the Field Research Centre, which used to be the old CSIRO offices at Berrimah, again we've re-adjusted the amount of time we use the air-conditioner. We have replaced all the seven day time switches with 365 day time switches, and replaced all the override switches with timer delays. Again, we have replaced fluoro globes with energy efficient globes, replaced all the lighting arrangements in toilets and connected all the office machinery to timer switches.

At Nitmiluk, we have ...

Mr MILLS: Dr Ritchie, I think I've got the idea. Thank you very much for that.

Ms SCRYMGOUR: Mr Chairman, this is such an important area, and it is good news in terms of a lot of areas where the agency, which is the lead agency for this, is reducing Greenhouse emissions. With the member for Blain's indulgence, I'm not sure whether the CEO had finished, but there were at Nitmiluk ...

Mr MILLS: No, but I let him get further than anyone else.

Ms SCRYMGOUR: ... Darwin Plaza and a number of our areas ...

Mr MILLS: It is impressive. No, seriously.

Ms SCRYMGOUR: There have been a number of initiatives and commitment across the agency.

Mr MILLS: I can see that, and I am satisfied, but the question is: targets were set. Can you demonstrate that targets have been achieved in terms of the 1.5% reduction?

Dr RITCHIE: Member for Blain, this is all to do with 1.5% reduction for buildings, energy reductions. We believe that we are well within these initiatives. I guess the final audit of that is where we will have some external assessment, but we believe on the basis of the hours of illumination we have reduced, and the machinery and standby that we have reduced we should achieve that.

There are other targets which we can move to, which are the 5% reduction in the passenger fleet, for instance. On that, it is difficult for us because our fleet is primarily a field-based fleet and it is primarily vehicles that have to operate in remote areas and off road so it is essential for us to use diesel and pretty robust vehicles. We have been changing the six-cylinder, the Land Cruiser series, as the base to the four-cylinder vehicles wherever possible in the last year. We have got rid of eight six-cylinder vehicles from the previous year.

For those vehicles that are going to be used primarily on bitumen, we are looking at replacing sedans with hybrid vehicles. This year, we have added another two, so that will bring it up to four. We have been running a trial at Walker Creek at Litchfield using biodiesel in both the vehicles and our gensets. Apparently that has gone pretty well and we will be evaluating that and seeing if we can roll that out across other parts as well.

On the broader targets, the broader 10% car ownership target, we have been looking at altering behaviour of staff coming and going from work. Given that a lot of our staff are in the Goyder Building in Palmerston and we are connected to town with pretty good bike paths, we have been promoting walk and ride to work. That has involved some investment in showers and changing facilities. There is a trade-off there. Judging anecdotally from the number of bikes now chained up where I want to park my car, it is probably beginning to work. We have car pooling registers and making sure that all new staff know about the bus timetables.

We are making sure, again, we have good, secure electronic document management systems. This is still a potential rather than actual, but the Solar City bid in Alice Springs does include, as a major component, a trial of, because we are offering some of the land in the Araluen Centre for the solar array to go with that, the full proposal involves us running our entire airconditioning system at Araluen as part of that so we are hopeful that will eventuate, too.

Mr MILLS: You must be very pleased, minister. That is a good report. In terms of the bikes, this may seem a frivolous question, but with the encouragement to ride to work, do they still need to turn up at the right time and leave at the right time, or is it in work time?

Dr RITCHIE: At this stage, it is ride on your own time. However, we absolutely recognise that changing, showering and those facilities are something that if, we want this to happen, we are going to have to provide them.

Mr MILLS: Sure. I have ridden once from Palmerston to here and it takes a fair bit of planning. The bike stayed here for about four months. It was a good idea once.

Thank you for the response to those general questions. I turn now to the Parks Joint Management Programs. A little while ago, there was a lot of information coming out promoting the new framework and all the benefits that would flow from it. I do not know whether the member for Nelson is of the same view, but there seems to be a shortage of information at the moment as to how that is progressing. I just took out, for example, this publication from a while back which outlines the sorts of things that government would do. I will run through these as an audit to see how things are progressing on the objectives that were set at the beginning. First, it said that:

The NT government will write to the Australian government asking them to convert the parks listed in Schedule 1 to Aboriginal freehold land.

Can I have a report on that? Has that been achieved?

Ms SCRYMGOUR: Mr Chairman, before we progress, member for Blain, if that is okay, I will ask Mr Graham Phelps, who is the Director of Parks, to join us at the table so that when we are working through some of these issues, I can refer them to him.

In relation to the question you have just asked, I refer that, in turn, to the progress when we get to that, to the Chief Executive Officer who may then refer it to Graham.

Dr RITCHIE: The question, as I remember it, member for Blain, was what progress has been made on the scheduling under the *Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act* of parks in Schedule 1 of the Framework for the Future Act.

Mr MILLS: That is correct.

Dr RITCHIE: Member for Blain, the Northern Territory has written to the federal Minister for Aboriginal Affairs. We understand that the necessary amendments to the *Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act* have been through the drafting process by the Commonwealth, and they are sitting in a queue to go to the Commonwealth parliament at the moment.

Mr MILLS: When did the Territory government write to the Australian government on this matter?

Dr RITCHIE: I am not aware of the date. This matter is being handled by the Office of Indigenous Policy in the Chief Minister's Department. We understand that all matters relating to these parks were finalised by the end of 2006.

Mr MILLS: Because there has been no response from the Australian government, does that mean that the framework cannot be decided upon in the Territory parliament?

Ms SCRYMGOUR: Not at all. There has been progress in some areas with joint management. I defer to Mr Ritchie.

Dr RITCHIE: Member for Blain, one of the real initiatives and reforms of the amendments to the *Parks and Wildlife Act* that set the operating rules for joint management was that they would apply in a tenure-neutral way so that while there was an immediate purpose in offering parks for to be listed as Aboriginal land, that political purpose was to have the claimants of that land, who we understood - the Territory, as you will recall, had advice – were likely to be successful claimants if they pursued the claims that were lodged over that land under the *Land Rights Act*. As a result of the Framework for the Future Act, negotiations and the sign-up for that preceding the *Parks and Wildlife Act*, the lands councils had obtained instructions from all the traditional owners that they would withdraw the ALRA claims over those parks and settle native title through ILUAs over all parks. That is at one level and that objective has been achieved.

The second aspect to the whole arrangement was that we would set up a framework for jointly managing all the joint management parks in the Territory parks estate. That included quite a number of parks where there was no change over of title whatsoever. So from the Parks and Wildlife Service point of view, it is irrelevant really what the underlying tenure of the land is. We are land managers and the funding we have from government to run the joint management program is about management initiatives with the traditional owners to jointly develop plans of management, jointly work through all the issues associated with managing the parks. So, yes, all that has happened without any impediment as a result of these political delays.

Mr MILLS: Can you outline the progress that has been made with the formulation of joint management agreements?

Dr RITCHIE: As we reported I think last year, the first year of joint management focused on capacity building and by this time last year, I do not think we had completed any joint management agreement. This situation has changed. I am pleased to say that we now have several to the point where they can be submitted through the normal process to the parliament. They will be coming up very shortly. I can refer to the Director of Parks who can give you some more information on those if you wish.

Mr MILLS: I appreciate that. I would like some more information on those, thank you.

Mr PHELPS: We have three joint management plans which will be available for the public comment phase in the near future. Rainbow Valley and Devil's Marbles are very near to release for public comment, and Flora River Nature Park will not be far behind.

Mr MILLS: When you say 'not far', are we talking about one, two or three months?

Mr PHELPS: It is very difficult to put an exact time frame on this, but certainly around three months would be the order we would expect.

Mr MILLS: These are the very first three. We have not seen any yet. This will be very important for us to get a clearer idea of how this is going to be implemented and its impact. Thank you for that. After these three, is another tier of agreements, like the second tier that are ready to come through, once these ones have paved the way?

Mr PHELPS: Work on West MacDonnell National Park has commenced and we are hoping to finish that during this financial year. We have also put in place plans to attempt to finish the Adelaide River Parks joint management plans this coming financial year. We hope to have a Statement of Management Intent which is the initial part of developing a joint management plan for Gregory National Park in 2007-08 as well.

Mr MILLS: Minister, management intent, is that what you describe it as?

Mr PHELPS: A Statement of Management Intent.

Mr MILLS: A statement of management intent. I therefore assume that Rainbow, Devils and Flora River have already lodged Statements of Management Intent.

Mr PHELPS: Perhaps if I could clarify that, Statements of Management Intent are informal arrangements as opposed to Joint Management Plans, which are formal instruments, so lodging is not appropriate. Statements of Management Intent are not used in all cases, but Gregory is a complex park with a range of different clan groups involved, so one of the steps in the process of working towards a Joint Management Plan in building the capacity of people to engage in that process of joint management planning is to use a Statement of Management Intent. So they are not used in all cases, but they are used when necessary.

Mr MLLS: Were they used in the three that are close to completion?

Dr RITCHIE: There was a Statement of Management Intent certainly for Rainbow Valley. I am not sure about the Devil's Marbles, being a much smaller park. When I gave an answer on this last year, I explained that there was, of course, an expectation on the part of traditional owners that we would begin pretty well immediately changing the way we operated in parks. We all recognised that to undertake a full process - if you recall the amendments to the *Parks and Wildlife Act* actually list what has to happen to produce a Joint Management Plan - it is quite extensive.

So the Statements of Management Intent vary, as the Director just alluded to, from almost one-page statements on how we will conduct our business to more detailed statements of how visitors will be managed or not, as the case may be. With Rainbow Valley, yes, but I am not sure about the others.

Mr MILLS: Right. I gather that you view that the progress is slower than expected.

Dr RITCHIE: I do not think that it is slower than I expected. It is in line with the estimates we have given in our Budget Papers. As you can see, this year we estimated that we'd do four, and we have three-and-a-half, and in the next year, eight. While they are all very distinct documents, once you get started and you have a number to work from, experience shows that the rate picks up. The first one is always the hardest.

Mr MILLS: I can appreciate that. The amount of resourcing to bring it to this point after over a year, can you itemise, in a global sense, the cost of getting these agreements to this stage?

Dr RITCHIE: We can provide some detailed break-downs of the budget for joint management. Again, the initial allocation for joint management per annum ongoing is \$3m a year. That budget is, to a very large extent, prioritised by the parks service with the traditional owners and their representatives and so just dividing \$3m by three and getting a cost would not be an accurate reflection of the cost of Joint Management Plans.

In the first years of joint management, we have front-loaded the budget with capacity building and providing opportunities for direct employment of trainees just to build capacity to engage in a meaningful way about ongoing management. I will ask our Director to go through the big breakdown of the joint management budget if that would be useful.

Mr PHELPS: Of the \$3m allocated to the Joint Management Program, about 40% of that budget goes to indigenous employment programs, about 20% to joint management planning for the delivery of those plans, about 30% of that funding goes to support the land councils who work with us to help deliver those planning outcomes, and the remaining 10% goes to lease payments and other joint management activities.

Mr MILLS: Right. This time last year, I do not recall the conversation on this, you were expecting to have three done by this year?

Dr RITCHIE: I am just looking at the budget papers. May we have the question repeated, member for Blain?

Mr MILLS: Just rewinding back to this time last year, what was the expectation as to the number of completions in 12 months?

Dr RITCHIE: From my reading of the budget papers, it was four.

Mr MILLS: So for next year, from this budget to the next budget?

Dr RITCHIE: Eight.

Mr MILLS: Is that cumulative, or do you mean there will be 12?

Ms SCRYMGOUR: No, eight.

Mr MILLS: Four and four?

Ms SCRYMGOUR: Four and four.

Mr MILLS: Four per year. When you speak of cracking the code, basically, and getting the first couple up and running, and then we are off, was it expected with all that investment that you would be able to speed the process up in the second phase?

Ms SCRYMGOUR: Before I refer this question, member for Blain, and I want the department to go through this and provide you with an answer, bear in mind with the consultation that you are bringing together a number of different groups. With funerals and other things, if that process is long, it is because there are a number of factors involved in this, not for a want of the need to progress to get the joint management plans in place. So just bear in mind that you need to build in some of those other factors of the timeframe and the process that it has taken to get to where we are proceeding with nearly four draft plans for joint management.

Dr RITCHIE: The budget papers are a conservative estimate. In consultation, I think we can say with confidence that these are our objectives. In other words, this is what we are hoping to do in 2007. We might not get there and we might end up with a number still in the process when we are sitting here next year, but that is the order that we have put as our target for the coming financial year.

Mr MILLS: That is three and four. It is not ...

Dr RITCHIE: It is four plus seven.

Mr MILLS: Okay. Going back to your comments, minister, I appreciate all the sensitivities that surround these negotiations, but if you add will to it, and there seems to be a strong desire for this direction to be taken, I am required to ensure that there is adequate pressure so that we do not delay because public funds are flowing into this process. We must have results. There is no disrespect to sensitivities of all those involved, but I am hoping that we see progress.

Ms SCRYMGOUR: That is happening, member for Blain. All I was saying is bear in mind that there are a number of events that happen in that process which cause delay.

Mr MILLS: Of course.

Ms SCRYMGOUR: If you think back to Nitmiluk, which was the jewel in the crown of the CLP, and fantastic arrangements, I am not knocking Nitmiluk. That arrangement is what we are proposing and which we took from the CLP. That whole process of Nitmiluk and the joint management arrangement took two-and-a-half years to finalise. That is just for a single park to get to that point. That is all I was saying. I was not trying to be derisive or facetious about your comments. I was saying, as you would be aware and I am sure your former colleagues would have told you, these things take time. If you look at the Nitmiluk model, that took two-and-a-half years.

Mr MILLS: I am aware that they do take time but, in the absence of the other side of the position being put by opposition, these things can take forever, as we have seen with other indigenous matters which have just gone on without due haste. In education we have a similar matter where there has been an inordinate amount of time taken to get one piece of paper signed, and that is of a great concern. So that is all. If I was standing on your side saying: 'Yes that is fine, take as long as you like', we may end up with delays of two, three, or four more years. Is it \$3m per year to service this?

Ms SCRYMGOUR: Yes.

Mr MILLS: Good, thank you. In leaving this so I can go to my colleague, the member for Nelson, all of this negotiation, decision-making and agreement is all based upon a legal decision that was made. I understand that the Territory government sought legal advice on the decision that prompted this change of management structure to the parks. Are you able to provide us with that legal advice the Territory government sought when that decision was made?

Ms SCRYMGOUR: Mr Chairman, I was asked this question last year and my response in that question was no. It was legal advice that was provided directly to government in relation to those issues. It is the same response that I gave last year, and I think it was the member for Grotorex who was asking the question at the time, member for Blain. The advice was given to the executive arm of government. That advice was considered, and the Chief Minister went into detail, and has had a number of discussions in relation to this. In terms of me tabling that legal advice, my answer is no.

Mr MILLS: Minister, can you understand that from the point of view of the opposition and others who are looking at this, the absence or the denial of government in providing the legal advice and holding it to themselves creates a problem where we simply must trust government, and that trust becomes difficult when key information is withheld obviously, to protect the interest of government. It makes it difficult. You expect us to support, in goodwill, the endeavours of government and you withhold strategic information from opposition on behalf of the community. Can you see how that makes it difficult for opposition?

Mr CHAIRMAN: Member for Blain, before the minister answers, there can be a whole range of reasons why anyone who receives legal advice is unwilling to make that advice public, not simply because there is something to hide. There are very real concerns even by solicitors about their clients making their advice public. I do not know that is as clear cut an issue as you suggest in what you have just said. As someone who has practised, I can let you know that there are concerns. Just one minute, member for Blain. I am just having pointed out to me Standing Order 255 that all the minister really needs to say is 'no'. The minister has gone further than that and given an explanation, and I think that is really the end of the matter. The minister said no, so we can move on to a new question, please.

Mr WOOD: Thank you, Mr Chair, I had five questions and they have all been answered. It was a late night. Could I just say that I have a slightly different opinion from the opposition on the issue about whether these parks could be challenged. I had a very close look at those parks and if you look at them and you realise where in the Northern Territory they are positioned, I must admit that as a lay person I would have found it very hard to challenge that they did not have traditional owners. There may have been some dubious ones, but the majority I felt would have been very hard to challenge. I thought I would put my two bob's worth in there.

Mr CHAIRMAN: So no questions on that output?

Mr WOOD: No.

Mr CHAIRMAN: All right. That concludes consideration of Output 1.1.

Output 1.2 - Parks and Reserves Visitor Management Programs

Mr CHAIRMAN: The committee will now consider Output 1.2 - Parks and Reserves Visitor Management Programs.

Mr MILLS: Thank you, Mr Chairman. I am not exactly sure what this area is. I have questions. What does this output group pertain to specifically?

Ms SCRYMGOUR: In my opening statement, member for Blain, I pointed out that there had been a transposition error and this output was changed. It is to create commercial education on recreational opportunities based on the sustainable use of the natural and cultural assets of the parks estate.

Mr MILLS: Okay, thank you. Now things may have changed, minister. I have an interest in Gregory National Park. I have endeavoured to visit most years, but I have missed the last two

years. On my last visit there, I noted that many of the places that I once visited were inaccessible because repairs had been required as a result of flooding and the like. Can I have an explanation as to why, from my memories of the park today two years ago, it was quite different from the early days. I was wondering if there have been improvements to the parks and how they present, particularly on that side. I speak from the point of view of many Western Australians who come to visit me, who come up that way and have found places that they wanted to visit, they have not been able to. Maybe things have changed in the last two years, but I would like advice on that.

Ms SCRYMGOUR: Member for Blain, I was listening to your question, and it is an important question. The whole issue of infrastructure in our parks, particularly for tourists visiting those parks, is important. Can you be a bit more specific in terms of Gregory so that I can refer this question to the CEO or to the Director of Parks?

Mr MILLS: All right. I will be very specific: Limestone Gorge, Gregory National Park. In early times, we would visit that place. The last time I visited was two years ago, but I had noted the year before and the year before that, the road had been washed out and there was a sign saying you could not access it, there was some repairs. So I let it go one year. The following year I thought I would go and have a look and it is the same state of ill repair from the year before.

Now, this is going back a couple of years, and I was hoping that it being the front door for those who come in from Western Australia, they will have those parks presented in a way that is accessible. I have found the same at Keep River National Park. There were places that had been advertised and once you got there, you could not get into them. For some reason there had been repairs or maintenance. I cannot remember the specific area, but I do recall that the place I wanted to see, I could not. I have investigated with other visitors and found it is the same story that seems to have gone on for a while.

Dr RITCHIE: Over the last couple of seasons, this is in relation to Gregory and Keep, and I have been to both parks probably in the last year, so since you were there, when I was in Keep last Dry Season, there are areas that become uneconomic to fix. In other words, the tracks get washed out and they are replaced by other opportunities. My understanding is that the total amenity of parks is being maintained, but the choice of visiting certain areas from certain directions and certain tracks do get closed because it is just better management practice to use other areas, particularly after big Wets. Last year in Gregory, for instance, the 4WD track coming up around to the Broadarrow track was closed right until the end of the year because it had been a very late season and that just happens in cycles.

The broad answer is that it is a cyclic process. It is determined by the length of the Wet, the severity of wash outs, etcetera. There has been no intention to close down permanently amenities in either Gregory or Keep. I can get more detailed information if you want it.

Mr MILLS: Well, detailed information. If, say, after the Katherine Show I go out to Limestone Gorge, can I drive down to the Bain River?

Dr RITCHIE: I am not sure exactly where you mean, but I will find out.

Mr MILLS: Thank you. I have been for the last two visits ...

Ms SCRYMGOUR: The East or the West Bain?

Mr MILLS: I am not sure. It is one of those.

Mrs MILLER: It would be the East Bain.

Ms SCRYMGOUR: Well, you have the East and the West Bain ...

Mr MILLS: It is Limestone Gorge. Limestone Gorge is right on it; I am not sure whether it is east or west.

Mrs MILLER: I think it is the east.

Mr MILLS: Yes. If you say it is cyclical and the total amenity of the park is still preserved, on two or three occasions, coming to a place that was one of the features of the park, the only

information I receive is that it is under repair and there is no access. I do not get information to say go and check another spot because that is really nice, too.

Dr RITCHIE: I would be very surprised if you were sent down a dead-end road by one of our staff. For the remote parks, it is very important and we encourage visitors to check in on the Ranger Stations at either Timber Creek or at Bullita because that local knowledge can really assist in enjoyment of those remote parks.

Mr MILLS: Okay. I will check first. The other one is that I came up here with my family in 1989 and not long after that, there seemed to be a whole lot of new signage around the place that really interpreted some of the features of the Territory, the World War II stuff, some of the historic mining signage. For someone who loves history and has worked in education, they were very valuable for me as a dad and as a teacher. However, I have found that, as time has gone on, and I have been in the Territory for some time, those signs are still there and some of them are becoming very difficult to read. I have not seen new signs going up or replacement of burnt out or faded signs. Is there a plan to do so?

Ms SCRYMGOUR: You should go down to Mataranka and the Hot Springs. Yes, there are some signs that are a bit old and tired and do need to be replaced, but that does not mean to say that signs all over are tired and have not been replaced. I was recently at Mataranka at the Hot Springs. The rangers were doing a replacement of all the signs and updating the messages both there and near Elsey. On R&M within the department, I will refer that question to the Chief Executive Officer and he can go through just what is happening.

Dr RITCHIE: It is an ongoing maintenance task. We do commit well over \$100 000 a year for it, \$120 000 in any given year, goes on signage, and there again it is a cyclic and rotating thing. I might ask the Director of Parks to elaborate on this if you find it useful. There are a lot of other opportunities to get information to people now rather than the old enamel signs. Having travelled around the parks over the last couple of years, the number of visitors who got their information from the website before they even began their travel is now, you would have to say, the majority. Our efforts in this area, we are hoping to get a lot more information, and this comes back to your earlier question, so that people can find out detailed advice and interpretation information from other sources rather than having to rely solely on signage.

Mr MILLS: I would like to stick with this for a bit. Maybe it's nostalgia, perhaps not. When the signs were fresh and new, it is a bit like there is a certain sense of pride in the advertising of the product, but when the signs become faded and dull and hard to read, notwithstanding there may be other information flows, it sends a message. It is a bit like going into a shop that may have very good products, but the signage is daggy and old and difficult to read. It is that impression that I believe is a negative for those who are coming to see our most valuable asset. I would like to bring us back to that. I have not seen the new signs at Mataranka, and I am wondering whether \$120 000 is enough and whether there is a will to refresh and re-present these signs or take them down?

Dr RITCHIE: We are very mindful of exactly that impression and agree completely that it is better to have no sign than a sign that looks tatty or has lettering peeling off it. Our approach is to replace signs. The priority is of course signs relating to safety and then, as I indicated before, to look at the best way of getting information to enhance the visitor experience. Whether that is to then replace with more of the traditional signs or whether to look at other ways of delivering that message is being looked at. Again, we encourage our visitors to our parks through our feedback forms to comment on that and we do take down signs that are starting to look tatty.

Ms SCRYMGOUR: Can I just add before, Mr Chairman – are you going to be on to signs?

Mr MILLS: I was just going to say I will play my part when I go out, and I will let you know.

Ms SCRYMGOUR: I can add to that, Mr Chairman, for the member of Blain's benefit. On a recent trip, about a month, one of my staff members reported all new signs in Davenport around the Limmen Bight and Elsey. So all of those signposts around that Gulf area have certainly been replaced.

Mr MILLS: I will look for it. In the joint management plans, is signage and presentation of natural features an element?

Dr RITCHIE: One of the purposes of the joint management plan, one of the areas that we have to document in some detail, is the way we are able to interpret the natural and cultural landscape. The best way of doing that, and the agreed approach to that, is for it to form a part of joint management plans. Signs are a very popular way of doing that with traditional owners and having something that gives the mythological story for a particular location. It has been in the past and will remain one of their preferred ways of doing it.

Mr MILLS: Thank you, Dr Ritchie. That is all for me, Mr Chairman.

Mr WOOD: He did not ask all my questions. Just on the signs, I hope to debrief after estimates the Davenport Range in about a week-and-a-half so I will be checking out the signs. I did raise signage last time, minister, in relation to Butterfly Gorge where one path on a sign did not exist and a new path to the gorge itself is dotted in by someone with a Texta colour. Obviously, there is a need for continual monitoring of some of these signs to make sure they are up-to-date. Minister, can you give us a list of visitor numbers for all the parks over the last five years, please?

Ms SCRYMGOUR: I will refer that question to the Chief Executive Officer.

Dr RITCHIE: We can compile a list. As you know, Tourism NT compiles data for us. It is of interest to note that overall, visitor numbers are up for parks over the last year by not much. It is 2.7-odd million in total, this year and 2.66 last year. There have been some fluctuations. As a general observation, it does look as though in some of the more remote parks, visitor numbers are down and those closer to the highway are up. We will get a better analysis of that from Tourism NT. Do you wish to know any particular park?

Mr WOOD: The reason I asked the question is because I have asked it over the last three years. There certainly was one year when visitor numbers had gone down quite significantly in some parks, even our bigger parks. I was going to follow that up with the question: how much you do work in with Tourism NT to promote the parks? I still would like the visitor numbers if I could get that, please.

Ms SCRYMGOUR: Mr Chairman, we would be happy to provide a copy of that to the member for Nelson.

Mr CHAIRMAN: Do you want that on notice, member for Nelson?

Mr WOOD: I am sure they will drop it in. I will add one more visitor to the Davenport. I do not want too many people there because then it would not be remote and it would not be as much fun. I might report on Davenport when I come back too.

Ms SCRYMGOUR: I have been told, Mr Chairman, to pass on to the member for Nelson that Davenport is absolutely spectacular at the moment. You will ...

Mr WOOD: I will be taking my blanket and sleeping bag, many of them.

Ms SCRYMGOUR: The visitor numbers are up there.

Mr MILLS: You will need a beanie!

Mr WOOD: There are a couple of places to visit. Minister, you have probably heard this before, but I will ask it this year: why is Leanyer Recreation Lake management by Parks and Wildlife? How does it fit into your key functional responsibilities? To finish off the question, why isn't it the function of, say, Sports and Rec? I know Darwin City Council does not want anything to do with it. How does it fit into your key functional responsibilities?

Ms SCRYMGOUR: That is a good question, member for Nelson. It is an important recreational park facility in the northern suburbs. Parks have had a role with that since, I think, the previous government. Can you just hold on?

Mr WOOD: I am not going anywhere.

Ms SCRYMGOUR: It has always been managed by Parks and we have continued that since we came to government in 2001. It does raise issues and we certainly have seen incidences at the parks. I am not talking about people's lives in danger with drowning or anything like that, but some violent incidents have occurred against Parks staff and we have had concerns with that, but we have continued the management of that since we came into government and continue to manage it.

Mr WOOD: I suppose what I am getting at is that there is always a call, when I talk about parks in the greater Darwin region, for more staff. I am saying: shouldn't we be using our rangers in areas that Natural Resources, Environment and the Arts have as their key responsibility rather than in a purely recreational facility? Isn't that a waste of the resource that really should be in parks?

Ms SCRYMGOUR: I agree, but this has been managed by Parks and Wildlife for some time. We continue to manage it, but that does not mean that we are reducing the capacity of Parks and Wildlife rangers in any of the parks estate that we manage. We have people out there and we ensure that the resources are provided to those staff members.

Mr WOOD: If I just could perhaps go back to the previous question about how Tourism NT promotes parks. Do they have pamphlets of all your parks or do they produce their own information or do you produce the information and give that to Tourism NT?

Ms SCRYMGOUR: I will refer that question to the Chief Executive.

Dr RITCHIE: I will refer it to the Executive Director Parks.

Mr PHELPS: It is a combination. We have information on each of our parks available on our web site and Tourism NT also does promotion for our parks through their brochures and those sorts of things.

Mr WOOD: Just on using the web site to find information, I recently tried to look up information about Djukbinj National Park. Some people wanted to find out about the Escape Cliffs, which I think is in the northern part of Djukbinj. It was not on the web site, there was no map. When I rang Parks and Wildlife, they said they do not put a map out for the area because it does not have any facilities. It seems strange to me that you have a national park on the Arnhem Highway and it is well signed, but you do not seem to have any information on the web to help people use that park.

Dr RITCHIE: Member for Nelson, as you will be aware the area that you are talking about is the Cape Hotham area.

Mr WOOD: There are two parts of it.

Dr RITCHIE: Yes, I know, but you talked about Escape Cliffs, which is Cape Hotham. That is virtually an Island and only accessible by boat. As you are also aware, we manage parks across a broad spectrum of objectives, so we have some parks that are designed and established so that large numbers of visitors can use them, areas that are more remote where the facilities are fairly basic, and some areas that are both remote and with no facilities and they are being managed for their environmental values. In the case of Escape Cliffs, there are very sensitive heritage values, as, again, you are aware. That is the first civilian settlement site in the Northern Territory. It is very vulnerable to people looting artefacts still lying around on the ground, the brick floor from the first Government House in Australia is there. We rely on its remoteness to protect it. It is not something that we would put on our web site and encourage people to go to. The primary visitation for that is for recreation fishers using the foreshore area, which, of course, is something that we have no problem encouraging.

To use the actual site as an unaccompanied visitor experience is not something that we want to do. So the rest of Djukbinj, which includes the area immediately across the river from Windows on the Wetlands and with access from the Arnhem Highway, there is information on that at Windows on the Wetlands and there is information readily available on the roads up through there. That is a very different category.

Mr WOOD: Therefore if someone wanted to visit Escape Cliffs, and the person who came to see me was a distant relation and someone who had actually lived there, would the best advice be

to make an appointment with someone from Parks and Wildlife to arrange a sort of a personalised or guided tour?

Dr RITCHIE: Yes, most certainly. If you contact our Director, Northern Region, he can assist with that. We have assisted with tours to the area from time to time, but the Northern Territory Historical Society and other bodies that they have run tours across at various times, Heritage Week and so on, so there are opportunities to go there in an organised way.

Mr WOOD: Thank you. That is all the questions that I had on that section.

Mr CHAIRMAN: Member for Katherine.

Mrs MILLER: Thank you, Mr Chairman. I think I am in the right category to ask about Howard Springs. Am I in the right category to ask about Howard Springs? I am surprised you didn't ask, member for Nelson.

Mr WOOD: There is another section on management.

Mrs MILLER: Okay, I was about to ask about it. On December 9 2005, minister, you issued a media release stating that the government's commitment to Howard Springs had intensified. What is the state of Howard Springs today? Long term locals that they would not swim there any more, so can you tell me what the state of it is today?

Ms SCRYMGOUR: Yes, certainly. Member for Katherine, I will go through and give you an update on that. The current water quality monitoring program we have had in place since 2003. The member for Nelson would be well aware of issues with the water. We agreed to continue that testing on a weekly basis. As you would know, when the Wet Season comes, it forces the closure because of the *E. coli* and other bacteria levels. There have been some issues with the park. We have worked with the Friends of the Springs and the wider community. As I understand, the member for Nelson has been involved as well with the draft Plan of Management for Howard Springs. For the status of the draft Management Plan for Howard Springs, I will refer the question to the Director of Parks, Graham Phelps.

Mr WOOD: Mr Chairman, if we are going to deal with the Management Plan, really should we lock this into the next category, because ...

Mr CHAIRMAN: Which category, 5.3?

Mr WOOD: Conservation Management Programs as distinct from Visitor Management Programs.

Mr CHAIRMAN: A fair point, member for Nelson.

Mr WOOD: The member for Katherine may have other questions outside of that.

Mrs MILLER: No. I wanted to know how the Plan of Management was going as well, but I also need another question in the same category, Mr Chairman.

Ms SCRYMGOUR: Mr Chairman, the member for Katherine is actually in the right output for this.

Mrs MILLER: I am in the right output, because it is commercial.

Mr CHAIRMAN: Oh, well, we are wrong.

Mrs MILLER: I will ask it on your behalf, member for Nelson.

Mr WOOD: Thank you. I do not know what I am going to do with all the other speakers.

Mrs MILLER: Minister, could you tell us the status of the Howard Springs Plan of Management at this point in time?

Mr PHELPS: The draft Plan of Management has been out for public consultation. So it has been written and has been through the public consultation period. It is currently on hold because one of the recommendations in the Plan of Management of course, is to continue at Howard Springs. However, since that Plan of Management went out for public comment, there have been new national guidelines on water quality and safety for recreational swimming areas, and the data that we have collected over the last few years of weekly testing suggests that it is not possible for us to safely predict that we would be able to meet those guidelines in the future.

There is a slight problem in that the guidelines now recommend testing for *Enterococchi*, whereas before we were testing for *E. coli* and you cannot quite compare the two, so we have formed a working group with Territory Health Services, who are developing Territory guidelines for water quality, and the EPA to help us work through this. We will be running a testing program this year to compare the results so that we can make a determination then as to whether we will be able to safely open that area for swimming in the future. We feel that it is not valuable to progress the Plan of Management further until we get that data in place.

Mrs MILLER: So not in the foreseeable future that people will be able to use Howard Springs for swimming? Not in the foreseeable future.

Mr PHELPS: The testing, we believe, needs to go through a Wet and a Dry Season. At the end of those 12 months, we should be in a position to make appropriate recommendations based on those new national and Territory guidelines for recreational swimming.

Mrs MILLER: Thank you. Does that make you happy, member for Nelson?

Mr WOOD: Can I just have a follow up question on that, Mr Chairman?

Mr CHAIRMAN: Yes.

Mr WOOD: Will that apply to all other parks that have recreational swimming, like Mataranka?

Mrs MILLER: I was about to ask that one, too.

Mr PHELPS: Yes, it will. The set of circumstances around Howard Springs makes it particularly susceptible to high people contamination. The flow of water, all of those sorts of things contribute to it, but these guidelines will apply to all recreational swimming areas.

Mr WOOD: What you are saying is these new guidelines are setting a higher standard than previously.

Mr PHELPS: They are using different testing methodology. *Enterococchi*, which are the organisms that they are now counting, have a longer survival period in water whereas *E-coli* has a very short survival period and it is recognised as a better indicator of contamination of the water and so it may be that it will pick up contamination that was not previously picked up under the testing using *E-coli* because the organism survives so much longer.

Mr WOOD: All people want to do is have a swim in a natural water hole – well, a man made natural water hole. Okay.

Mrs MILLER: We are playing a little bit of football here because I am going to refer to Mataranka now. Minister, Mataranka Thermal Pools, and I can see Brett Williams is here and he has probably had an earful from me over the years about Mataranka Thermal Pools, is a park estate and I realise that the conservation of our little red fruit bat is very important, but Mataranka Thermal Pools have always been promoted as a really good tourist destination and 20, 19, 18 even 17 years ago even, 16 years ago it was the most beautiful location to visit. Over a period of time we have watched the little red fruit bat totally destroy that area to the point that to access the board walks to the pool, you almost have to put a peg over your nose when you got out of the car.

I understand that there has to be some conservation and preservation of this red fruit bat, but to what extent can that area around the Mataranka Thermal Pool be restored to some of its original glory. Is there any intent to do that? It is still, unfortunately, very costly for the tourism industry in Mataranka. People are choosing not to stop because it is far too smelly and it is not a pretty sight to visit any more. I know that you have tried a lot of different ways of moving the bats, but none of

them have been terribly successful. They seem to be very clever at coming back. Are there any plans to restore Mataranka Thermal Pools to anywhere near its original glory and what can be done about the little red fruit bat?

Ms SCRYMGOUR: Member for Katherine, as you would know, I gave a report I think it was last week during the sitting about the damage the little red flying foxes are causing and in that report, I described at some length what the department had been trying to do to relocate the bats but also deal with issues with the operator who was running the park and some of the complaints that we have had from tourists. I went down there myself, as I said to you, and had a look at it. I agree that the impact of the flying foxes on the palms was quite evident.

The department and parks staff down there will continue to look at solutions. Bear in mind these cute little creatures, which cause a lot of problems, are protected. As I said in my report, no matter what we do, we can just continue to work with this problem, but it is like trying to stop the tide from coming in and out.

I said in that report that down there is a classic case of people and nature, the conflict you often see. What I outlined in the report and work the department will continue to do with that is all that I can give a commitment to do. There are other springs, Bitter Springs near Elsey.

Mrs MILLER: It is a shame Bitter Springs does not have an attractive sound to it like Mataranka Thermal Pools. It has been a little bit harder to promote to the tourists because the Mataranka Thermal Pools have been there for so long.

Ms SCRYMGOUR: They are iconic. I agree, member for Katherine, but I think we can start promoting Bitter Springs. I am very mindful that Mataranka Pools has a commercial operator. So it is not in anyway trying to take business away from the commercial operator, but getting that balance and offering people an alternative. When the bats are at their worst, we have seen very little evidence of them being at Bitter Springs. So if people know there is another spring just up the road and it is okay, then they will go there.

Mrs MILLER: Can I just add one more question to you about the thermal pool? The commercial operator, who has the homestead at Mataranka, provides toilet facilities. Is there any plan for Parks to build toilet facilities in that area?

Mr PHELPS: It is worth noting, member for Katherine, that the toilet facilities which are adjacent to the Mataranka Thermal Pools were actually built by the Northern Territory government. So the facility is there to be used by visitors and by the people staying at the caravan park. It is a Parks-built toilet block.

Having said that, we recognise the pressure and we have been looking at alternative arrangements for toilet blocks within the park boundary. That will be considered as part of minor new works priorities for the Territory.

Mrs MILLER: In this present budget?

Mr PHELPS: It will be considered as part of the priorities.

Mr WOOD: I raised it the other day, but when I visited Mataranka, the private owner was building a set of toilets next to the road way there. His query was: why am I building a set of toilets when Parks and Wildlife 200 to 300 metres down the road are building another set? Is there any sort of communication between the private owner and Parks and Wildlife to make sure we do not duplicate infrastructure?

Mr PHELPS: There is considerable communication between the private operator and parks.

Mr WOOD: So are there two blocks of toilets going to be built, one on the private land and one on Parks and Wildlife land?

Mr PHELPS: It will be a matter of need and appropriateness. The toilet blocks that I believe the operator is building at the moment is to replace one that was washed away in the floods some years ago which were for the campers in the camp ground. There is the issue of supplying appropriate toilet amenities for people staying at the camp ground.

Mr WOOD: All right. Thank you.

Mrs MILLER: One more question: how many days per year is Butterfly Gorge open? Do you want to take that one on notice?

Question on Notice 8.3

Mr CHAIRMAN: If you can restate the question for the purposes of *Hansard*.

Mrs MILLER: Certainly. How many days per year is Butterfly Gorge open? That also has the same problems with water testing and water content. That is what I wanted to know how many days it is open.

Mr CHAIRMAN: Minister, are you prepared to take that on notice?

Ms SCRYMGOUR: Yes. I am just trying to think of the other name of it, that is all.

Mrs MILLER: I have only ever called it Butterfly Gorge.

Mr CHAIRMAN: I allocate my question number 8.3.

Mr CHAIRMAN: Are there any more questions on that output?

Mr WOOD: Yes, I am going to ask questions on that one. Butterfly Gorge is at the head of Douglas Hot Springs, and I presume that one could walk to Butterfly Gorge, even if they wanted to leave their car at the Hot Springs area. I am not sure whether you are asking whether it is closed to vehicles or closed to people actually trekking that area.

Mrs MILLER: Closed to people actually going there.

Mr WOOD: All right.

Ms SCRYMGOUR: That is part of what we are going to find out for the member for Katherine.

Mrs MILLER: We were talking about signage, minister. You are right, without accurate and attractive signage, it does take away from an area. Is there some different material that can be used in signs? We have the same problem right throughout Katherine with all our heritage signs. The signs on the heritage railway bridge are a disgrace. I do not know what sort of material could be looked at so that it makes it more difficult for graffiti. The information is important. People come into my office and ask me what the railway bridge is about and I have a lot of information in my office about it, but when they arrive there and see this graffiti sign, it really is a shame. It does not do the bridge any justice at all.

Ms SCRYMGOUR: Yes, member for Katherine. There is graffiti and people use a lot of signs for target practice with shooting and a number of things, but I will refer this question to Graham Phelps.

Mr PHELPS: It is an ongoing problem. The technology with the signage has advanced considerably. There are two major factors to consider. One is UV stability and that is your fading issue. Traditionally, that has been a major problem and very difficult to manage, particularly in the Territory. You will probably have noticed it is the reds that tend to go first. There has been developed more UV-stable paints and, more recently, more UV stable inks. We are now tending to use a product which is actually a sticker rather than paint on the sign. That has very good long-term UV stability, and it has the advantage that it is actually relatively cheap once you produce the first one on the computer to then replace it in future years because you can just take it straight off the computer and print another one. As long as the backing that it is mounted on is still there, you can put it back on fairly cheaply, so it is a more cost-effective way of managing it.

The other issue is graffiti and that is a far more intractable problem to deal with. Most of the signage technology attempt to have some graffiti protection to enable you to clean it more easily.

Frankly, none of them work all that well. Even the vinyl signage has the disadvantage that it can be torn. The advantage of the vinyl, which I think at the moment is probably one of the best technologies used in the field, is that once you produce the first one, subsequent production is pretty cheap.

Mrs MILLER: It is a pity they did not use all that energy to do something productive, isn't it? Thank you.

Mr CHAIRMAN: Anyone? No. There being no further questions, we will conclude consideration of Output 1.2.

Output 1.3 – Parks and Reserves Conservation Management Programs

Mr CHAIRMAN: The committee will now consider Output 1.3 - Parks and Reserves Conservation Management Programs. Member for Katherine.

Mrs MILLER: No.

Mr WOOD: Minister, has your government created any new parks in the last financial year? If not, has it any new parks in the pipeline?

Ms SCRYMGOUR: Mr Chairman, I will refer the question to the CEO.

Dr RITCHIE: That was any new parks in 2006-07?

Mr WOOD: Yes.

Dr RITCHIE: I believe that the Channel Point Conservation Reserve was formally established in that period.

Mr WOOD: Do you have any new parks in the planning stage at all?

Dr RITCHIE: The Parks and Conservation Master Plan has raised the possibility of parks in a number of areas, but the answer is there are no parks likely to go before government in the current financial year.

Mr WOOD: Can private people or land owners put a proposal to Parks and Wildlife to have some of their land managed as a park or does the proposal have to come from Parks themselves?

Dr RITCHIE: There is provision in the *Parks and Wildlife Act*, as you are probably aware, section 24, that enables us to enter into a management agreement with a land owner. Through that, we can acquire. The most recent example of that is the Australian Nature Conservancy purchased a pastoral lease on which they are running part of it for cattle operations and part of it, they want to run purely for conservation biodiversity and they have asked us to enter into an agreement with them because we share some common boundaries with them within the park, and we have done so.

Mr WOOD: Just on that question, does the government have to give special permission for a pastoral lease to be used for an alternative purpose from the one for which it was originally leased?

Dr RITCHIE: Land leased for pastoral purposes forms part of the pastoral estate and must be used for pastoral purposes. In the case of broadening the property, it is basically using the best cattle country for cattle, and using the country that has best conservation values for conservation. The decision maker in this is the Pastoral Lands Board.

Mr WOOD: I thought you might have had an answer there before we go off on a different tangent.

Dr RITCHIE: I would like to elaborate on that answer I was giving before on the non-pastoral uses of pastoral properties. Just to make it clear, the decision for non-pastoral use of a pastoral lease does rest with the Pastoral Lands Board, which is a board administered through our department, but it is an independent board.

The minister just brought to my attention an answer to question 8.3, which was how many days Butterfly Gorge is open to the public. The answer is that it opens in mid-May and closes in mid-November.

Ms SCRYMGOUR: That is 180 days average in terms of closure.

Mrs MILLER: It is not closed at any time between May and October?

Ms SCRYMGOUR: It says: 'open from mid-May and closes around mid-November'.

Mrs MILLER: I do know that there have been quite a few occasions when it has been closed because of the quality of the water.

Ms SCRYMGOUR: So that you get an answer to this, member for Katherine, I invite Dave West, Regional Manager of Parks North, to come up and go through that. He also looks after Howard Springs.

Mr WEST: I am sorry, could you repeat the question?

Mrs MILLER: Yes, I know that it is open from mid-May until mid-October, but there are days that Butterfly Gorge is closed. We have had a lot of people come back to Katherine and say: 'We could not go into Butterfly Gorge because it was closed because of the quality of the water'. Can you tell me how many days it is closed on average?

Mr WEST: My understanding is that the determinate for access to Butterfly is in relation to vehicle access. There is a fair bit of black soil plain in the country through there and obviously the black soil plain takes considerable time to dry out. We actually have five years of data in relation to access to Butterfly. On average, the track is opened around mid-May and it is usually, on average, about mid-November when it is closed. On the basis of that, it is about 180 or maybe 200 days. I am not aware of closures in relation to water quality. I would have to check that information with the District Operations Manager.

Mrs MILLER: Thank you, I would appreciate it if you could. Are you able to table that five years data, or provide that five years data for Butterfly Gorge, minister?

Ms SCRYMGOUR: I would like to have a look at it, too, Mr Chairman. Certainly, member for Katherine, I can provide that at some stage to you.

Mr CHAIRMAN: Do you want to do that informally or would you like for that as a question on notice?

Mrs MILLER: I will do it formally, yes.

Question on Notice 8.4

Mr CHAIRMAN: Okay, could you restate the question?

Mrs MILLER: Could the minister please provide me with the five years data that is collected for Butterfly Gorge?

Mr CHAIRMAN: In relation to its opening?

Mrs MILLER: In relation to the access.

Mr CHAIRMAN: Minister, are you prepared to take that on notice?

Ms SCRYMGOUR: Providing, Mr Chairman, we have that information over the five years and comparison of five years prior to that and the five years now. I will provide that information to the member for Katherine.

Mr CHAIRMAN: For the purposes of *Hansard*, I allocate that question number 8.4.

Mrs MILLER: Thank you.

Mr CHAIRMAN: Any further questions, member for Katherine? Anyone? Member for Nelson, thank you.

Mr WOOD: Thank you. Minister ...

Ms SCRYMGOUR: Sorry, member for Nelson. If I could just clarify, Mr Chairman, whether we are still on output 1.2?

Mr CHAIRMAN: Output 1.3.

Ms SCRYMGOUR: 1.3. All right.

Mr WOOD: In relation to Tree Point Conservation Park, last year the Parks and Wildlife removed a large number of Poinciana trees because they were taking over some of the natural forest in that area. Could the minister say whether that program will continue into the future?

Ms SCRYMGOUR: Member for Nelson, I have actually gone out to Tree Point and had a look because it is an on-going issue with the block owners at Tree Point. I will refer this question to Dave West.

Mr WEST: Yes, member for Nelson, there was a program with the removal of those trees. There are a number of ongoing programs in consultation with the various land owners and people who reside in that area. As I understand it, that is an ongoing program.

Mr WOOD: So there is an intention this year to continue removing those trees and, I would presume, where possible, replacing them with indigenous species?

Mr WEST: There is a program in place with the Darwin Parks operation [inaudible].

Mr WOOD: Thank you. Minister, as you know the Gunn Point coastal area is very well used by campers, both local and interstate, yet it has no Parks and Wildlife control. Is there any intention by your department to extend your control from the Tree Point Conservation Park along the coastal area of Gunn Point?

Ms SCRYMGOUR: Member for Nelson, not at this stage.

Mr WOOD: Were there not plans at one stage to have a coastal park on the Gunn Point peninsula?

Ms SCRYMGOUR: Are you linking this with Glyde Point?

Mr WOOD: No.

Ms SCRYMGOUR: I am just trying to ascertain where you are coming from.

Mr WOOD: I am saying that we have this area which a lot of people use and we know there are issues related to Tree Point. I know the department has put a fence along the very fragile dunes to stop people driving over them. We have a coastal area further up which also needs protection. I am sure Lands is out there every day looking after it, but I was of the belief that back in time, there was a proposal for a coastal marine park through that area. It may have been the previous government that put the proposal. I am asking if government has given that consideration bearing in mind this area of coastal reserve needs some protection and management.

Ms SCRYMGOUR: I will refer that question to the Chief Executive.

Dr RITCHIE: The land you are referring to is owned by the Northern Territory Land Corporation. It comprises areas that have been at various times proposed for a subdivision, the Murrumjuk subdivision, and also is still being looked at as part of a major industrial site and deep

water port leading to Glyde Point. As part of those proposals, I think that both of those, certainly the latter, acknowledge the high natural values of Gunn Point and linking it with Tree Point. We would anticipate that as those projects become more developed, then proposals for formally recognising and protecting natural values in that area will develop. I have no doubt that the Department of Natural Resources, Environment and the Arts will have a role in that.

As far as the marine park, you are probably aware we are also involved in fulfilling an election commitment for the second marine park in the Northern Territory, which is the Bynoe Harbour Marine Park. Working through all the issues involved with that will set the benchmark for looking at other areas. The area off Gunn Point, particularly the Vernon Islands, which is a conservation reserve and also land under claim, again all those proposals will be a matter of rolling them into a bigger, more comprehensive, unified marine and coastal reserve or park that will be considered.

At this stage, these are all considerations. The values are noted and the islands are already protected as conservation reserves. There are areas within that that have been identified as important habitats, but as we speak, there is no formal proposal to take it to the step of declaring it a park.

Mr WOOD: Again on Tree Point, the boundary of Tree Point goes out to sea, I believe, and is adjacent to the Aboriginal land nearby. People who are fishing are therefore entitled to land on the beach that is within the One Tree Point reserve, would that be correct?

Dr RITCHIE: Member for Nelson, Tree Point is, as I understand it, a living area granted under the *Pastoral Lands Act* so it would be a Special Purpose Lease. I am not aware how far out to sea those boundaries go, but I would have thought they would go, like all pastoral leases to the high water, not to the low water mark.

Mr WOOD: What I am getting at there is that your lease at One Tree Point actually is the boundary for the Aboriginal association or group that lives there. There has been some altercation between people who have come in from the sea and landed on that beach. Of course, being a beach, it is very hard to define your boundary and their boundary, but in theory, if people were to land on the beach within the land that is set aside for One Tree Point, then no one could order them off that section of the beach. Am I correct there? That is unless it was Parks and Wildlife and the people were doing damage.

Dr RITCHIE: I understand what you are saying: if somebody lands on our area that is part of our conservation reserve, then the owners of the living area can not order them off. That is correct.

Mr WOOD: There have been some difficulties in that area, so I thought I should clarify that. You mentioned the Bynoe Harbour Marine Park. Where is the government with its marine protected area strategy at present?

Dr RITCHIE: This can be covered in another output, but I can answer in general and come back to it if there are still details you require.

Mr WOOD: Which output would this fit in to?

Dr RITCHIE: This would come into the natural resources area.

Ms SCRYMGOUR: The next output, I think.

Mr WOOD: I was linking it with the proposed Bynoe Harbour Marine Park. We can come back to it then. My Howard Springs questions have been handled well by the member for Katherine. In relation to Cobourg Peninsula, I received a map from someone during the year in relation to management plan. That area had some fishing no-go zones within that Marine Management Plan. I think the person who sent it to me was a little concerned about those areas. Can you give us some background as to why those areas were set aside. Was it based on scientific analysis of the area?

Ms SCRYMGOUR: Mr Chair, that should have been dealt with in the first output with joint management.

Mr WOOD: This one says 'plans of management'; it does not say 'joint plans of management'.

Ms SCRYMGOUR: It should have been picked up in Output 1.1

Mr WOOD: I must admit I thought they were new joint management programs that the government was putting into place.

Mr CHAIRMAN: Is this the only question you have in relation to this, member for Nelson?

Mr WOOD: Yes, the only one.

Ms SCRYMGOUR: Yes, we can deal with it. I will refer that question to Regional Director of Parks North.

Dr RITCHIE: Just before handing that to Mr West, member for Nelson, could you restate the question?

Mr WOOD: In relation to the plan of management for Cobourg National Park, I believe there was a proposal circulated, and I do not have the map with me unfortunately, which showed certain areas were not to be fished. I do not have a problem with the principle of that, but I am asking: was the basis for those areas being removed from the fishing area based on science or some other reasons?

Mr WEST: Member for Nelson, the plan of management is the result of long and intensive negotiations with fisheries interests, including commercial, recreational and aquatic fisheries interests. The focus of those consultations and engagement over a number of years was a zoning scheme. It is a collaborative approach and has come up with a number of zoning schemes, including scientific reference zones. Obviously, there are conservation zones, port of significance zones and multiple use [inaudible]. It is quite complex in terms of the way it has, but I think the main point there is that it has been an exhaustive collaborative engagement in relation to agreed zoning.

Mr WOOD: Through the chair, minister, I understand that, but I suppose, if you are not local, you would normally just pick a site and say: 'Well, there is no fishing there'. You would imagine that there would be a scientific basis for making that decision, or even a cultural basis, if that is the case. I am trying to find out if there was that reasoning.

Ms SCRYMGOUR: I thought the Regional Director provided the basis for that in terms of the consultations that occurred between all of the stakeholders, including traditional owners. The whole draft plan of management has been a long process to work through the agreed zones, or establishing those various zones within that marine park area.

Mr WOOD: I have no problem with that. I am trying to find out that, yes, they did sit down and work out which would be the zones. My question is really: what was the reason for them selecting that particular site?

Ms SCRYMGOUR: I will refer the question to the Regional Director of Parks, but there has been both scientific and other research that has been done to come to those conclusions. In one part of Cobourg, there is a coral reef. It has been a process where science has determined areas and research following from when people have made proposals looked at different zonal areas. It has been qualified, member for Nelson. I will get the Regional Director of Parks North to provide further information.

Mr WEST: Member for Nelson, yes, there has been scientific input. There has been traditional owner and cultural input. There has also been fisheries industry input, commercial input into the result of a series of zonings within Cobourg Marine Park that reflects the views of all the stakeholders.

Mr WOOD: All right. Thank you.

Ms SCRYMGOUR: Member for Nelson, the establishment of that conservation zone in that southern area of the park came as a result of a compromise between all of the parties that will see no Aboriginal hunting of marine turtle or dugong or recreation and commercial fishing, but this area

is available for other activities, including boating. It was a long process. I would like to put on record that it has, over the last few years, been highly contentious and quite political with all the different interest groups involved. However, Parks has done a fantastic job with trying to balance it. I also acknowledge that AFANT, the Seafood Council and the traditional owners to work through and come up with a very good draft plan of management with these zones mapped out.

Mr WOOD: Thank you, minister. The reason I asked is that members of the public come to me and say: 'What is going on here?'. I am not necessarily against parts of the sea being closed either, but if one is to do it and you want to offset any public criticism, the best way is to put forward the reasoning behind why this zone has been removed from fishing, and this one set aside for something else. My question really was to extract some information in relation to that decision. I can then pass it on to that person.

Ms SCRYMGOUR: If you are being approached, member for Nelson, when we put the plan of management out, one area that did raise some contention or we got some feedback on were the exclusion zones, which all of the parties had agreed to. They were areas around the various outstations within that park area. I will refer to the Regional Director of Parks North.

Mr WEST: In relation to the zoning scheme, the scientific reference zone was established to protect significant value such as coral and mangrove association, sea bird and shore bird nesting habitat and provides for controlled access where uncontrolled access is likely to risk being a disturbance to those zones.

There has also been the establishment of a conservation zone in the southern area of the park, which is a compromise between the parties where we will see no Aboriginal hunting of marine turtles, dugong or recreational or commercial fishing. This area is available for boating activities. Establishing this zone also recognises the significance of this area to marine species such as dugong and marine turtles.

The multiple use A and B zones provide for all forms of commercial and recreational fishing, including prawn trawling. Also, within the zoning scheme there are privacy zones which provide opportunities for continued traditional Aboriginal use of resources close to where Aboriginal people live. That is consistent with the acknowledged rights and obligations to allow for traditional owners under the legislation. That is reflected in the whole plan.

Mr WOOD: Minister, would I be able to get a copy of the management plan with some of the explanations? What has been proposed is excellent.

Ms SCRYMGOUR: We can provide a copy.

Mr WOOD: I am interested in the privacy section, because ...

Ms SCRYMGOUR: Privacy zone.

Mr WOOD: Privacy zone. That is very relevant in relation to a lot of today's debate about where people can fish, etcetera. My follow-on question relates to the issue of people having to get a permit to be on waters that are now regarded as Aboriginal land. What applies when a national park which is on Aboriginal land has a boundary on that intertidal zone? Is there a requirement for a permit to have a boat in that water when it is a park or does the ruling require a person to have a permit for that water?

Ms SCRYMGOUR: I refer the question to the Chief Executive.

Dr RITCHIE: I just want to preface this answer by saying that this is before the High Court and so it all depends on the outcome of that case. What I can say as a matter of fact is that, as you know, the underlying title of parks land is owned by the traditional owners. It is held in title under the *Aboriginal Land Rights Act*. The management arrangements we enter into on that land, is an arrangement where we lease the land and all associated rights to manage and operate a park back from the traditional owners. Under that principle, that would apply to inter-tidal areas adjacent to our terrestrial parks in which case, the traditional owners, in the leasing to us, then allow us to impose the subject of cost in the joint management arrangements whatever arrangements for entry are making the best use for recreation and visitor enjoyment and conservation.

Mr WOOD: It was a point of clarification. I did not want to get into a debate about it. I wanted to see how it fitted in with the present situation. Thank you. I have no further questions on that section.

Mr CHAIRMAN: All right. That concludes consideration of output 1.3. That seems a convenient place to have a five minute recess. Minister, we will add the five minutes on at the end of the session.

The committee suspended.

Mr CHAIRMAN: Minister, we will start back into things as quickly as we can, and allow 10 minutes at the end instead of five. We have been proceeding from one break right through to the end. However, if anyone does need another break, just ask for it and we will accommodate that. We have concluded consideration of Output Group 1.0.

OUTPUT GROUP 2.0 – BIOLOGICAL PARKS

Output 2.1 – Visitor and Educational Facilities

Mr CHAIRMAN: We are moving to Output Group 2.0 - Biological Parks, Output 2.1 - Visitor and Educational Facilities. Do you have any questions, member for Katherine and member for Nelson?

Mrs MILLER: No, I do not, Mr Chairman.

Mr CHAIRMAN: There being no questions, that concludes consideration of that output.

Output 2.2 - Botanic Gardens

Mr CHAIRMAN: Are there any questions on Output 2.2 - Botanic Gardens?

Mrs MILLER: No, thank you Mr Chairman.

Mr WOOD: I am wondering what the status of the Olive Pink Botanic Garden is. Does it belong to the government, or do we assist the trust which looks after it to maintain it as a botanic garden?

Ms SCRYMGOUR: Mr Chairman, I will refer this question to Jim Grant who is the Executive Director of Biological Parks.

Mr GRANT: It is run by a ministerially-appointed board. What the actual tenure of the land is, I do not know, but I could find out for you. Our department contributes \$126 000 per year to help them with the operations of the park.

Mr WOOD: Minister, do we have any people employed in running that park or is it purely a subsidy for what was originally, I presume, a private landholding that was turned into a botanic garden?

Ms SCRYMGOUR: Mr Grant.

Mr GRANT: I have the answer here. It is Northern Territory government land. We do not directly employ anyone. There was a consultant's report done in 2005, and that consultant went through the Alice Springs community and asked for various options for running the gardens. The Alice Springs community was strongly of the idea that it should best be run by the board as it has always been, as a community-based board.

Mr WOOD: I presume there are some horticulturists and gardeners involved in maintaining it. Who employs those people?

Mr GRANT: The Olive Pink Botanic Gardens Board.

Mr WOOD: Where do they get their money to pay those people?

Mr GRANT: They get \$126 000 a year from us. I am actually on the board. Last year, we got \$40 000 from the Tourist Commission. Sorry, this financial year we got \$40 000 from the Tourist Commission and another \$22 040 in bequests and donations.

Mr WOOD: Are there any plans to expand it, or is it basically a matter of maintaining what is there as an historical collection of plants in relation to Olive Pink, who planted them in the first place?

Mr GRANT: There are no plans to expand the site. There is a newly appointed board, and a newly appoint Executive Officer. There has been quite a lot of development of the volunteers and activities on the site, and we have new concessionaires in the restaurant. I do not know the visitor numbers, but they are increasing pretty dramatically at the moment. However, there are no plans to increase the site.

Mr WOOD: Are there any restrictions on how the park is developed? My history might not be too good, but I believe Olive Pink was a lady who told you what she wanted. I am wondering whether, when she passed away, did she set out any conditions as to the maintenance or the running of this park.

Mr GRANT: I have not seen any conditions that Olive Pink set out. As far as I know from the way the board acts, we have tried to always keep in with the spirit of what Olive wanted for the park. The other thing I should add is that the money was coming from the Sport and Recreation department. Now it is through us, and the Desert Park is now providing quite a lot of support in terms of machinery and expertise and the Olive Pink people are using our nursery as well.

Mr WOOD: Thank you. I must go and visit. I have gone past that corner where it says Olive Pink Reserve. You have convinced me to have a look now. Thank you.

Mr CHAIRMAN: Any further questions on Output 2.2? That concludes consideration of Output 2.2 and Output Group 2.0.

OUTPUT GROUP 3.0 – NATURAL RESOURCES

Output 3.1 – Natural Resource Assessments

Mr CHAIRMAN: The Committee will now proceed to Output Group 3.0, Output 3.1 - Natural Resource Assessments.

Mrs MILLER: Thank you, Mr Chairman. If I have this in the wrong output, you can tell me to put it in another one I am sure. I wanted to talk, minister, about the metering of bores. Do you want it under 3.1?

Ms SCRYMGOUR: We can leave that until 3.4.

Mrs MILLER: Okay. I will have to clarify this one, too. I want to talk about noxious weeds on government-owned land.

Ms SCRYMGOUR: This is the right output.

Mrs MILLER: This is it? I have the right one. I wanted to know ...

Ms SCRYMGOUR: No, hold on a minute. It is in management activities, so 3.2, not in the assessments.

Mrs MILLER: Okay. I hope I have not slipped up with any of these then because I have a few here. I will defer to the next output, thank you, Mr Chairman.

Mr CHAIRMAN: Given that the member for Katherine has not asked any questions in 3.1, if there is something that she is leaving to 3.2, are you happy to answer it if it really comes within 3.1?

Mrs MILLER: I think I have it all right now.

Ms SCRYMGOUR: To save going all over the place, we will leave it for the right output.

Mr WOOD: Just one question on natural resource assessments. Are you doing ongoing mapping of some of these areas which come within these assessment programs such as coastlines, native vegetation, biological diversity? I know some of these things were done for places like Litchfield where we had vegetation maps and things like that. Is that the sort of work you are doing throughout the Territory?

Dr RITCHIE: Yes, member for Nelson, a lot of the bread and butter work of this area is establishing baseline data.

Mr WOOD: When you do that sort of mapping, do you include feral things that you come across, for instance, weeds? Do you map that as well?

Dr RITCHIE: Member for Nelson, yes. If you look at maps accompanying the draft conservation master plan, you will see that there are statements about the present processes for weed and feral animals which are particularly problematic. Within this output, there is a specific weeds group that has pretty detailed mapping of the range and spread of some of the declared weeds like mimosa and others.

Mr WOOD: Do you have enough previous information for you to look at changes in coastlines, changes in native vegetation? I remember seeing some old photographs of cattle stations in the Victoria River region which showed land that, instead of going from being sparsely vegetated, since the cattle were there it became more densely vegetated. They were photographs over a couple of decades. Do you have information back far enough to make those comparisons?

Dr RITCHIE: Again, in that particular example, a lot of the information, the data sets that we have, we have to extrapolate from early aerial photograph coverage, black and white. Some pretty good work has been done with our biodiversity group in VRD on weeds thickening and a lot of that has been based on assembling photographs taken from particular places over time. I think you have probably seen the work done by Darryl Lewis who published a book on this. Certainly, if you haven't, it is well worth looking at.

The point I am trying to make is it does vary, so we don't have comprehensive cover of all these trends across the Territory, but in some areas we have.

Mr WOOD: Thank you.

Mr CHAIRMAN: That concludes consideration of Output 3.1.

Output 3.2 –Natural Resource Management Activities

Mr CHAIRMAN: The Committee will now consider Output 3.2. Member for Katherine.

Mrs MILLER: Minister, what programs are in place on government-owned and controlled land to eliminate identified noxious weeds such as Mission Grass and Gamba Grass? What is the cost to the department of these programs in this output? Do you also take road side verges into consideration under this output?

Ms SCRYMGOUR: I think the latter might be Department of Planning and Infrastructure, the road sides. I am joined at the table by Brent Williams, who is the Executive Director of the Natural Resource Management Branch.

Mr WILLIAMS: Member for Katherine, under the *Weeds Act*, the Department of Planning has responsibility for managing weeds on land it owns or land under its care and control, for example the national parks. Road side verges, as the minister mentioned, are in the care and control of the Department of Planning and Infrastructure. So the only on-ground programs that this department runs would be primarily on national park lands. Notwithstanding that, members of my division assist other landholders, including government-managed lands, through advice and accessing funding from a range of programs including Commonwealth money and with some strategic planning.

Mrs MILLER: What programs are running at the moment?

Mr WILLIAMS: I can give you some examples off the top of my head, but for a more comprehensive list, I would have to defer to my staff. The programs that we have running at the moment include aquatic weed, an extensive Mimosa management program including pond ground work with pastoral land holders, private land holders, government land holders, indigenous land holders [inaudible] and biological programs.

We have programs running for belly ache bush in the Katherine region, a range of declared weeds across the Northern Territory in specific locations, including chinee and pond apple. There are 60 or 70 declared weeds and I can't list them all off the top of my head, I'm sorry. We could provide it.

Mrs MILLER: Are any of these programs going to eliminate any of these noxious weeds, or just keep them under control in specific areas?

Mr WILLIAMS: That depends on the nature and extent of the specific weed in question. Some species are the subject of targeted elimination programs, for example, Cabomba. We have eliminated in the past other declared weeds of national significance in the Territory. Some species are able to be eliminated or eradicated from specific regions depending on the nature of the species. Some of the so-called prickly bushes, mesquite and prickly acacia are capable of being eliminated with extensive work.

Mrs MILLER: Through this department, what educational type programs do you run with land owners to advise them of how to eliminate and what support do they get to eliminate weeds, or is that purely up to the landowner?

Ms SCRYMGOUR: There are programs that are done in consultation with landowners, member for Katherine. Again, I will refer this question to Brent Williams.

Mr WILLIAMS: Specific technical training programs, for example chemical handling, are provided by either research institutions such as CDU or authorised training providers. Our department provides technical advice and support, and awareness programs and assistance with designing eradication programs for landholders, depending on the nature of the species and their level of interest and capability. That does include training, but not formalised training. The training that we provide includes control methodology, different approaches to control, where and when and mapping, for example. There is an extensive range of extension awareness programs which include on-ground assistance and training.

Mrs MILLER: Is there any comeback to landowners who deliberately ignore the advice that comes from your department, or does not show any responsibility on their property with noxious weeds?

Mr WILLIAMS: Yes, there is under the *Weeds Act* for certain declared species. However, our policy for forcing compliance with the act primarily emphasises awareness and education and other non-prosecutions means because we rely on landholders to be cooperative on a wide range of outcomes in weed management. Prosecution would only be seen as a very extreme measure.

Mrs MILLER: I am fairly certain that the majority of the landowners are very conscious of their responsibilities, too. Thank you very much.

Mr WOOD: Minister, could you give us an update on the Cabomba control program? Could you say whether you believe there is some light at the end of the tunnel? I gather you are putting quite a bit of money into control this year.

Ms SCRYMGOUR: Yes, we have. With the eradication program in the Northern Territory, we are on track with around a 95% reduction in the infestation levels, particularly around the Darwin River, since 2004. It is fairly good news, but there is ongoing preventative work that needs to continue, and I will refer this question to the Executive Director.

Mr WILLIAMS: As the minister said, the Cabomba eradication program is progressing extremely well. We have \$253 000 allocated to the program this coming year. The extent of the infestation in Darwin River has been dramatically reduced. As the minister said, it is only 5% of its

former extent. We are still maintaining a quarantine zone around the river to prevent its spread. We have succeeded in that by an extensive survey and public awareness program and reporting from public. Over the last two years, there has been no further infestation of Cabomba reported in the Territory. We are confident it can be contained within that small section of Darwin River below the dam. Now, it is contained to only one billabong on one landowner's property. We have eradicated it from other billabongs. We have succeeded in stopping the seeding for the last two years. The quantity of herbicide that we are having to apply at the moment is at an extremely low level.

We are continuing biological and water monitoring programs to ensure there are no ongoing adverse effects, and that effort has been proven to be extremely useful to identify and know what kind of effects and no contamination of water supplies for downstream users, including in the harbour, but also to assist us with extending registration of herbicide that we are using with the national registration body for pesticides and herbicides. They cancelled the registration of that herbicide last year but, because of the monitoring program at Darwin River, we have to extend our herbicide use to eradicate it.

Mr WOOD: Did you also use a shading method to attempt to control the weed?

Mr WILLIAMS: Yes, we did. We used the shading as a result of some information we obtained from interstate. We used it in the period of time prior to us being able to provide alternative water supplies to some landholders and, in some situations where we thought it likely to be successful in shallow water and it did prove to be successful. The shading helped us to eradicate one small patch of Cabomba in a billabong isolated from the main river without the use of herbicide.

Mr WOOD: Minister, considering the amount of money I gather the government had to spend in trying to eradicate Cabomba, would this be a good example of when it is eventually eradicated, promoting it to the public that one person's silly action in spreading this weed has cost the taxpayer a very large amount of money? Would you consider publicising this particular operation which has obviously had something to do with a person throwing out an aquarium plant somewhere along the line as an example of the cost to the community?

Ms SCRYMGOUR: Member for Nelson, the spread of weeds is something that is continuous. It certainly does need promotion and education, not just to land owners but people coming in from other states. I agree. The department strives toward promotion and trying to engage the wider community in the implications of the spread of Cabomba.

Mr WOOD: Minister, have you any idea of how much was spent so far since you had to start to eradicate it from the Darwin River area?

Ms SCRYMGOUR: I do not have any figures since 2003-04. I could take that quickly on notice and then, when we do a round-up, because I have to have answers to the other two, we could deal with that one.

Question on Notice 8.5

Mr CHAIRMAN: Could you restate the question, member for Nelson?

Mr WOOD: Minister, would you be able to provide figures that show the cost so far in attempting to control and eradicate Cabomba from the Darwin River?

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

Ms SCRYMGOUR: Yes.

Mr CHAIRMAN: I allocate that question number 8.5.

Mr WOOD: This question relates to dingo baiting. Have the regulations on dingo baiting changed in recent times? I recall a pastoralist talking about this on the *Country Hour*, saying he had some concerns about the time taken from when he wished to bait to when Parks and Wildlife

could actually carry out his request. Would it be possible to have some sort of an idea what is required if a person wanting dingo baiting to occur on their property?

Ms SCRYMGOUR: Mr Chairman, I will refer this question. I am joined at the table by Greg Leach, who is the Executive Director of Biodiversity Conservation Branch.

Dr LEACH: The incident to which the member for Nelson referred was an unfortunate one where there was a time delay because of corporate licence issue. The control and use of 1080 requires the Parks and Wildlife Service to have a corporate licence for that. There was a period where we were not in possession of that, so that was the delay in that particular instance. Our policy relating to the use of 1080 was adopted in June 2005 and so there have been no changes since then.

Mr WOOD: Just on that policy, can a land owner apply it or does it have to be applied by a member of department?

Dr LEACH: The requirement is that a member of our department prepares the baits and visits the property. The officer will visit the property, will look at the situation with the pastoral land holder and, at the moment, the regulations state that we then have to be the ones preparing the baits and then preparing a distribution plan of where those baits have to go. At the moment, the land owner can then distribute the baits to that particular plan.

Mr WOOD: Through you, minister, what are the restrictions on its use in relation to distance from townships or residences?

Dr LEACH: I do not have the figures off the top of my head, but there are restrictions on distances from communities, from highways and from living areas as to where those baits are prevented from being distributed. I can get the precise distances if you require them. They are quite clearly stated in the policy, which is publicly available.

Mr WOOD: Through you, minister, I suppose what I am getting at is that there are issues of wild dogs in areas close to habitation, especially Darwin rural and not so far from the city at the Buffalo Creek boat ramp. I have raised this before. If you cannot shoot the dogs and they are very difficult to trap, is there an alternative to 1080, the bait we use? Are there any other baits on the market that could be used in an area closer to habitation?

Dr LEACH: No, I am not aware of any other legally available bait. Strychnine was an alternative some time ago, but it has since been outlawed. I certainly appreciate the concerns of the member for Nelson with wild dogs and hybrid dingoes in peri-urban and rural areas, but the use of 1080 is certainly very strictly controlled. It is the only effective means we have for controlling some other feral animals, such as foxes and certainly any undesirable side effects of using it in peri-urban areas and unwittingly killing other species and other domestic animals could certainly restrict our use of that poison in the future. Other than shooting and trapping, no, there is really no other alternative for poisoning that I am aware of that could be used.

Mr WOOD: Of course, that is the dilemma. You cannot always shoot and trapping wild dogs successfully leaves a lot to be desired at the moment. I do not know whether this is an area that Parks and Wildlife do any research on, but there is a gentleman in the rural area who has traps. I think they call them Ray's Bitch Boxes. He actually built a specific trap and we have tried it. I think I called it the wrong name last time, but it was developed by a CRC for feral animals in America, but it is very hard to get dogs to go into those traps. This is not a problem that is going to go away and I wondered whether Parks themselves have looked at other means of controlling these animals. At Buffalo Creek, the problem is it is right on the edge of the Buffalo Creek Conservation Reserve and there is a dog issue there. There seems to be no way we can control them. So there has been no experimental work or other work done on trying to find an effective way of controlling these animals?

Ms SCRYMGOUR: Member for Nelson, I know that there has been a topic of discussion at the Parks and Wildlife Advisory Council and looking across various jurisdictions to see whether it has been used elsewhere. Do you have any further information to add to that, Greg, about the use in other jurisdictions and whether we could do it here?

Dr LEACH: Certainly, in our efforts with some other species such as foxes and cats, we have been doing research to try and target the bait delivery so that only a particular species can actually get at the bait and that could be an approach that could be looked at for wild dogs, but I am not aware that particular research has been done. Actually being able to present the baits so that only certain species can get at it is desirable.

Mr WOOD: And dogs come in a multitude of sizes, that is right. Just a broader question that has not been looked at much at the moment but it is: where are we going with camel and donkey control? They are big issues that seem to be so big that I get the feeling we are saying it is too hard. Are we doing something positive on the ground in relation to control of at least those two animals?

Ms SCRYMGOUR: Mr Chair, no, I do not think we are saying that it is too big and too hard. I will defer to my Chief Executive.

Dr RITCHIE: The issue of camels has come to national attention as a result of the drought in Central Australia and the large numbers of feral camels that come in and out of dry, remote areas onto pastoral properties and into communities. The facts of camel control are that the cost of removing a camel is about \$20 per animal and you would have to remove upwards of 150 000 camels to make a substantial dint in the population of those more remote areas, in that corner of South Australia, Northern Territory and Western Australia. Having said that, and understanding the magnitude of the problem, the solution has to be a jurisdictional one based on some pretty sound understanding of the consequences of shooting. Just going out and shooting camels is not the answer.

We are having a lead role in some externally-funded work through the Desert Knowledge CRC on an international camel management program and that is being conducted with South Australia and Western Australia so we are pretty optimistic that it will show us the way forward and we will then be able to efficiently and effectively target resources and demonstrate that if we can get additional resources, it actually will make a difference rather than just being a short term solution.

I might just say that while I have been talking about it, some of the figures on camels are worth noting. There are between 800 000 and one million camels in Australia of which a quarter of them are in the Northern Territory. Half of them are in Western Australia and the other quarter is in South Australia. Just so you get an idea, I am probably understating it if I say 150 000; it would probably be more like 250 000 that we'd have to shoot at \$20 a camel.

Mr WOOD: It is a pity can't attract money based on our population of camels rather than people. How about donkeys? What is the status of donkeys?

Dr LEACH: I do not have the figures for donkeys in front of me. However, as the member for Nelson is probably aware, we have been actively trying to control donkeys in the VRD, both horses and donkeys, with an aerial shooting program. Our modelling and aerial survey counts show that we have basically been barely holding our own with the subsequent reproduction rates down there. So we are holding the population in abeyance, but not making great inroads into reducing the numbers. It requires substantially more sustained effort to make significant reductions in numbers.

Mr WOOD: How do we get to make substantial reductions in the numbers of donkeys? That is notwithstanding that the member for Macdonnell wrote down: 'Please leave the donkeys alone'. We will leave her one or two, but how do we get to make a substantial reduction?

Ms SCRYMGOUR: They are the animal that carried Jesus, member for Nelson, as you would know.

Mr WOOD: Jesus only needed one!

Ms SCRYMGOUR: If any of us sees a donkey, we will see the cross on its back, so they are an important animal. Nevertheless, member for Nelson, in answer to your question, they are categorised as feral animals. As well as government, the work with landowners, whether that is pastoral landowners, Aboriginal landowners, and as my department has said, across jurisdictions, we have a certain level of capacity. We need to work with all of those landowners to try and work towards the reduction in those numbers.

Mr WOOD: Yes, I understand the concerns about the donkeys, but I do not want the Northern Territory to look like Palestine. I want some vegetation left. They are all my questions are on Output 3.2.

Mr CHAIRMAN: There being no further questions on Output 3.2, that will conclude consideration of that output.

Output 3.3 – Flood Forecasting

Mr CHAIRMAN: The committee will now consider Output 3.3 - Flood Forecasting. Are there any questions?

Mrs MILLER: As the minister can understand, this is pretty close to my heart. I can see in Budget Paper No 3 at page 214, there is an allocation of \$1 589 000 for flood forecasting. How many additional flood forecasting stations will you have, and what will be they like? Where will they be, at what locations? How will they operate?

Ms SCRYMGOUR: Member for Katherine, I will refer the question to the Chief Executive Officer in the first instance for one part of it, and then the second part of your question will be referred to the Acting Director, Land and Water, Daryl Chin.

Dr RITCHIE: Yes, with your indulgence, member for Katherine, I will come back to some of the components of that question. For a start, there is about \$440 000 new money been allocated to this program in 2007-08 of which there is proportion of actual flood forecasters to initially improve the 24-hour service over the web. Also there is a chunk which is for new gauging stations and new rainfall and river height gauges. I will ask Mr Chin to give an idea of where they might be. It is true to say that the details of that allocation are still to be considered by the Flood Advisory Committee. Those decisions still have to be made, but we have a broad idea. Perhaps on that point, and with that proviso, Daryl can elaborate.

Mr CHIN: Further to what David said, the additional funds and the funds that have been allocated for flood forecasting this year will see both improvements in some of the stations that we do have in the catchments that we do have flood forecasting requirements for, as well as some new stations.

The additional funding will actually enable us to employ three new staff. One will be a professional to analyse and develop better models for our catchments, and two hydrographers who will actually do the installation, operation and maintenance of the stations. We will have operational funds associated with doing that work as well as a capital works program to build new stations.

We also have applied to the Natural Disaster Mitigation Program to supplement those funds for capital works, which will enable us to put more new stations in.

David mentioned the Flood Warning Working Group. We will be having a planning session in August 2007. They will then consider the priorities of the different catchments, and the allocation of new monies to particular areas will be undertaken then. They have already considered in detail all the different catchments such as the Todd River in Alice Springs, the Katherine River at Katherine, the Daly River at Nauiyu, the Adelaide River Arnhem Highway bridge, the upper Roper including Mataranka and Beswick, the upper Victoria River at Coolabah including Pigeon Hole and Kalkarindji, and McArthur River at King Ash Bay. There have been extensive plans put in for a full scope of works. However, the funding that has come through will not enable all of that work to be done, so that group will prioritising the work in the particular catchments.

One particular issue we should highlight is that there will be additions to the network as well as improvements, but a fair bit of work will be undertaken to actually get some of the data from those stations to the Internet a lot quicker than we have in the past. That will improve the response both on the communities and our response to the floods.

Mrs MILLER: Thank you. Minister, during the threat of flood or the water rising in the river, and I will use Katherine as an example because that is where I come from, it still seems very unclear to the residents of Katherine just when they have to start evacuating. That is why I want to know how this flood forecasting equipment works. Last time there was a flood warning, I went

down and had a look at the river and thought 'What the hell is going on?' because I was having calls from the media when it was only at 13 m and 14 m, and yet there had been a warning. Katherine people tend to ring people who live along the river and say 'How is it going?' to assess whether they need to evacuate or not.

How is the technology improving with these monitoring systems that are going to be in place so that it is a little more accurate and not so much scaremongering when it is not necessary. I am very concerned that as time goes by, it is like crying wolf and people will hear the warning or be warned, and will not take it seriously. I am concerned that it could result in a disaster or a tragedy somewhere.

Ms SCRYMGOUR: I agree, member for Katherine. After the Katherine and Beswick flood, putting in place a better stations and gauges not just for Katherine but also Beswick and the outlying communities where the flooding actually occurs there first and then is the impact for Katherine. With the last lot of floods in the Katherine region and the review after, from our government there was a real commitment to upgrade. That whole assessment that was done certainly showed that a lot of our gauging stations and the infrastructure we had in place needed to be upgraded and made better. I will refer to Daryl Chin to answer the rest of it.

Mr CHIN: Some of the work will go into providing the models that we use to predict the time and the levels of the flood coming down the catchment. In particular in the Katherine area, there have been mitigation works undertaken and we need to assess how that affects the water flowing down through the flood plain. So we have undertaken some requirements of the model, running different scenarios through it. Different parts of the catchment respond differently to different events and how they are coming down the catchment. We give relevant information to the Police, Fire and Emergency Services so they can act in an appropriate way to get that message and the warnings out. Bear in mind, we only give the forecast so the actual response to that is handled by Police, Fire and Emergency Services.

Ms SCRYMGOUR: Member for Katherine, if I can just go on from Daryl, I mentioned Katherine, but also Alice Springs is an issue because you have the different soil and landscape than what you see in the Top End with Central Australia. There we see flash floods occurring. Getting those systems and gauges better in place in terms of the catchment up from the Todd River is an issue. There were certainly some moments of anxiety with the flash floods recently in Alice Springs.

Mrs MILLER: Minister, through the Chair, I feel the Todd is a different scenario to the Katherine River. The Katherine River changes. Each time we have had a flood warning or flood threat, it seems to me that the flow of water comes from different areas. The river can be at 13 and 14 metres and people down behind me are getting flooded. It is coming through a back water. It is really challenging to try to get right. I would be interested to see how this working group does assess it. It is a difficult one. Could I just ask, minister, who makes up the flood working group?

Mr CHIN: There are members from the Bureau of Meteorology, Police Fire and Emergency Services, Department of Planning and Infrastructure and NRETA on the working group.

Mrs MILLER: Thank you. That is all from me on this output.

Mr CHAIRMAN: There being no further questions, that concludes consideration of Output 3.3.

Output 3.4 - Water Resources

Mr CHAIRMAN: We will now consider Output 3.4 - Water Resources. Member for Katherine.

Mrs MILLER: Yes, thank you, Mr Chairman. Minister, government has asked for 300 volunteers to install bores on their rural properties to ascertain the flow of water. Is this going successfully?

Ms SCRYMGOUR: Yes. This is the 300 volunteers for meters on their properties?

Mrs MILLER: That is right.

Ms SCRYMGOUR: We have so far received around 150 people volunteering to have meters put in place.

Mrs MILLER: Minister, do you think that people feel threatened? Do they think that once there is a meter on their bore, government is acting as a watchdog? Do they understand what the meters are for?

Ms SCRYMGOUR: Not at all, member for Katherine. It is important to get the information out and we have done that in the promotion. The department has talked to many of the landowners. It is not about being a watchdog, but more about ensuring that we are not over-allocating. We only have to look at the debates down south about water conservation.

Talking to a number of landowners living in the rural area, it is not only the member for Nelson who talks to them, people do not feel threatened. Once they know what the purpose of the meter on the bore is, there is no fear, but when you do have misinformation or people being mischievous about the purpose of why it is important to have the meters, you will have the fear that government is being a watchdog or this is going to stay on permanently. I said clearly that it was a study, but I will refer this to Brent Williams.

Mr WILLIAMS: When the program initially started, there were concerns about the potential number of the bores, however, as the minister has outlined, as we have worked with landholders and with our consultation process with rural dwellers, a lot of those fears have been allayed. Most people we have contacted are positive about the need for a meter for bores and one positive outcome of the metering will be a better understanding of where the water is going in the aquifer and how that might be used to better inform a bore allocation planning process.

Mrs MILLER: Thank you. I do not have a problem, but it is the understanding in the community, realising that it is not there to eventually be a charge to them, and that is why we only have at this stage 150. I am sure more will be happy to be in this voluntary scheme. How much has it cost government so far to implement this bore water meter study, including the marketing and advertising process?

Ms SCRYMGOUR: In terms of the marketing, some of those costs would be as part of the corporate figures, which is included in some of the information we provided earlier.

Mrs MILLER: Yes, and the cost to the government so far to implement it.

Ms SCRYMGOUR: I will have this confirmed, member for Katherine, but part of the cost with these bores came from the National Water Initiative, however I will refer this question to Brent Williams.

Mr WILLIAMS: Thank you minister. The minister is quite correct; the majority of the costs are being funded out of the Australian Water Fund, and that is primarily the cost of the meters themselves, which is in the order of \$100 000. To date there has also been a consultancy for working out the best measuring process. The remaining costs have been absorbed by OUR department's personnel costs for water planners and professionals. As the minister mentioned, the marketing costs have been picked up earlier.

Mrs MILLER: Do you have to wait until you get the 300 meters in place before you set a time as a cut-off to be able to assess the volume of water that has been taken from the aquifer or are you assessing as you go along?

Ms SCRYMGOUR: As far as I can see, no. I think we could proceed, but I am not a person on the ground working with this. Maybe Brent or David could elaborate.

Mr WILLIAMS: The number of 300 meters was set as an ideal benchmark. The more meters, the better results we will get in terms of refining our model. If we only 150 or 200, the information is still valid and can still be used for forecasting.

Mrs MILLER: Minister, through the Chair, are you collecting data now? How do you collect it? What are you going to do when you have collated it?

Mr WILLIAMS: Yes, we are collecting data. We collect data in a range of ways to assess the flow in and out of the aquifers. It is a complex system around the Darwin rural area. The information comes from monitoring bores and metered bores from private landholders and those who are required under the *Water Act* to have meters above and beyond the ones we are talking about, and also from the Power and Water Corporation's bore fields. We also use information gathered from streams. This information is being used to build a model which will enable us to understand the flows in and out of the aquifers, and give us an understanding of the total body of water available. The measuring project is designed to fill a gap that we have. We knew that we had over 3000 stock and domestic bores in the Darwin rural area, and we did not have an idea of what quantum of water is extracted from the aquifers. Therefore, we could not really embark on the realistic water allocation process. Now that we have commenced installing the bores, that has commenced now, we will start the water allocation planning process by the creation of a Water Advisory Committee for the Darwin rural area. We anticipate that that will be established by the minister under the *Water Act* before the end of the year, as we have in Katherine, a process of consulting with stakeholders in anticipation of water allocation and having it [inaudible] before the end of next year.

Mrs MILLER: Thank you. That actually brings me to the next part about water allocations. I will give an example of what has happened to one landowner in Katherine. He has had a licence for 12 or 13 years, with a water allocation for X amount. At this particular point of time his property is not fully developed, so he is only using Y amount, he is not using the full amount of his licence. What happens to him, with his property, until it is fully developed, and he still has his licence for X number of years for the full quantity of water that he will need at the full development of his property? He is in great fear that he will use, and he has been told that he probably will lose it by his next door neighbour, who has just bought a property with no water allocation on it, and said: "I am going to have yours". That is the scenario that has been presented to him. What happens to this man who has a licence for a period of time so that it will be a water allocation that suits the full establishment of his property, but at the moment is threatened that he will lose some of that water allocation and not be able to develop his property to its full potential, even though he has a licence?

Ms SCRYMGOUR: As a commercial operator?

Mrs MILLER: Yes.

Ms SCRYMGOUR: Okay, I will refer that to David.

Dr RITCHIE: Member for Katherine, I will just contextualise this and then the specific details of that case study can be dealt with by the Executive Director of Natural Resource Management can follow on. The context of this is that under the water allocation arrangements that all states are signed up to under the National Water Initiative, the principles are that we do not over-allocate systems. We do not want to replicate what has happened in the Murray Darling. The first thing we have to know is what the resource is and then we have to have enough information so the community and the stakeholders and users can then make an informed decision about how much of that water is there that they want to then allocate for consumptive use. They have to take into account that if they take so much out of the aquifer for irrigated horticulture, that means there will be less available for domestic use in the town, and so much less for keeping the springs flowing longer through the Dry Season on the river. Those are the choices that a broadly based committee has to make.

Once a decision has been made about what is available, sustainably, we then move to a position where that is the finite amount, it is allocated and then a water trading scheme has to be put in place, the idea being that the market will then decide on what is the most productive use of waters allocated for consumptive usage.

That is the framework. At the moment for the Tindal aquifer in Katherine, there is a committee now considering the pretty sophisticated models that we have, very accurate models, of the way that aquifer behaves when you draw down water from certain points. Apart from the very broad observation that if you have a licence to take a certain amount, you have it. If you want to take that away from an operator, then they have to be compensated for it.

We can say that in the foreseeable future we will be looking to a situation where there is trading, and that particular individual may then have the option of trading and selling the bit that is not being used, or hanging onto it for later use. That is the broad theory.

Mrs MILLER: If the landowner now has a lot of pressure for him to trade some of that water for whatever reason, because he has not fully developed his block yet and in five years time he does continue to develop that block, how can he get that back? He is very concerned that if he does trade now, how can he get that allocation back? He feels that once that it is gone, it will be gone.

Mr WILLIAMS: At the moment, we do not have a water trading system in the Territory. It is part of the National Water Initiative program which the NT has signed up to. However, you can only have a water trading system in place where you have a water allocation plan, which sets limits around what you can trade and a mechanism for the trade. Currently, there is no threat to the land owner you are talking about. In the future, if he wants to trade some of his allocation with someone else and then wants it back, he would have to trade it back.

Mrs MILLER: So this particular person need not feel threatened with the allocation and the licence that he has now?

Mr WILLIAMS: Not for his current licence.

Mrs MILLER: Right, thank you. That is all.

Mr CHAIRMAN: Member for Nelson.

Mr WOOD: Minister, in relation to the monitoring of bores, the outcome of that will be that you hope you will know how much water is in the aquifer and you will hopefully come up with the water allocation plan for the area. The question that people are worried about is: without charging people, how are you going to limit the amount of water being taken out of that aquifer so that you don't exceed whatever the water allocation is for that aquifer?

Ms SCRYMGOUR: Member for Nelson, when we started this project we said that the monitoring, which included the installation of the meters on the bores, would be free and voluntary, and that would stay for a period of two years. Government has no intention to charge after that. Once we have up to the 300 and we have been able to get the monitoring and research, there is no intention to charge. The purpose of this exercise was to look at it over two years and then look at how we move forward with that as well as coming up with a Darwin rural area water allocation plan, but no charges for the two years.

Mr WOOD: I understand that, but what I am asking is: if you do not charge, how are you going to restrict the amount of water pumped from that aquifer that now has limitations on it because you have worked out a water allocation plan?

Ms SCRYMGOUR: It will be part of all the research and what we are pulling together in terms of how much is being drawn down on the aquifer, the use and demand. I will transfer this question to the Executive Director.

Mr WILLIAMS: In the case of the Darwin rural area, member for Nelson, there is a range of user types. There is the Power and Water Corporation water supply construction; there are rural irrigators and agricultural people; and there are the rural dwellers. The larger users, the Power and Water Corporation and the primary producers, will have future specific allocations. They will be monitored individually and be required to contain their extraction to an amount within those allocations on their licences. In addition, we will continue to monitor the rest of the aquifer for the rural residential blocks.

If it occurs over a period of time that the balance between the level of use of the various types of water users is changing, the water allocation planning process allows a process of revision. Under the current policy, there is no need to charge for water use *per se*, but the act allows us to enforce compliance with the licences.

Mr WOOD: Domestic bores are not licensed?

Mr WILLIAMS: That is correct.

Mr WOOD: That is the area that concerns me because we are doing this monitoring program to get a full picture of the aquifer. The domestic bores are the unknown quantity. They are the ones that really do not have any control over the amount of water that is being extracted. So if you find that we keep having subdivisions and we are starting to extract more water than the water allocation plan allows, you are either going to say there will be no more subdivisions, or you are going to limit the amount of water that domestic bores pump? If that is the case, how would you enforce that limitation?

Mr WILLIAMS: It is policy to see the [inaudible] decision for subdividing [inaudible] however part of the process of decision-making is seeking comment from bodies including ourselves in relation to water and we provide comment upon the likely availability of water for a subdivision and if we have knowledge that there is insufficient water available within an aquifer in a subdivision, we will advise [inaudible] of that and request that they consider alternate water supplies.

Mr WOOD: If you were to find out that the existing amount of water being drawn from the aquifer was an unsustainable amount, what would happen in the region? Power and Water is asking for 6% increase in water charges this year. Horticulture is a variable thing because it comes and goes, as you know from mangoes. Sometimes people are bulldozing them and sometimes people are planting them, but the domestic people are the unknown quantity and if it comes back that we are actually at a point where we are extracting more water than we should, what restrictions would the government impose? Would they put on domestic people or would they ask the other people to reduce?

Mr WILLIAMS: I guess until we have some specific answers, we cannot really forecast. We can look at similar situations elsewhere in the country and draw some potential answers from there. Where water availability is scarce, then there are a number of options available to government. One is to reduce allocations to licence holders.

Mr WOOD: I do not have a licence, of course, because I am domestic.

Mr WILLIAMS: Not if you are domestic, but there is a suite of options available to government and that is one. Another option is to increase water conservation awareness programs and ask people to reduce their water use, to improve their water efficiencies. So I guess it is very speculative at the moment but those are some of the things that are available.

Mr WOOD: Just leading on from that, minister, could I obtain the details of all the production bores licensed under Power and Water by you to add to the Darwin water supply, showing how much water was extracted from each bore? Could you also give details of the licence conditions for each bore? Is it possible to show the extraction of each of these bores over the last 10 years?

Ms SCRYMGOUR: I will need to talk to my CEO. You may have to refer it to Power and Water who are on tomorrow morning. Can you just bear with me, member for Nelson?

Mr WOOD: I am not leaving; I have nowhere else to go.

Ms SCRYMGOUR: Member for Nelson, can you just go back through that?

Mr WOOD: I can simplify it. The question is about production bores that are owned by Power and Water that have a licence from your department. I would like the information which shows how much each one of those bores was extracting, the details of the license for each of those bores and is it possible to show the extraction of each of those bores over the last 10 years?

Ms SCRYMGOUR: Member for Nelson, in terms of 10 years, we will need to ...

Mr WOOD: These bores have been there for 10 years.

Ms SCRYMGOUR: The extraction licences, we can maybe get some details in relation to them, but that may need to be referred to Power and Water. We are just trying to work out ...

Mr WOOD: You must have the figures otherwise you would not know whether they had exceeded their licence requirements.

Mr CHAIRMAN: Give the member for Goyder a call. He will know.

Ms SCRYMGOUR: We could take that question on notice. Then as we get towards the end, with the other two questions that were taken on notice, we can deal with them.

Question on Notice 8.6

Mr CHAIRMAN: Member for Nelson, if you could restate your question for *Hansard*, please?

Mr WOOD: Minister, could I be provided with the details of the production bores licensed under Power and Water that are used for the Darwin water supply, showing details in relation to how much water is extracted from each bore on an annual basis; showing how much has been extracted from each of those bores over the last 10 years; and could you please give me details of the licence conditions for each of those bores, or if it is not for each of those bores, for the total extraction from that particular area?

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

Ms SCRYMGOUR: I will take it on notice, but I would like to say to the member for Nelson, given the detail that he has asked for in this question, I will take it on notice, but he will not get the answer by the end of this session.

Mr WOOD: That is fine.

Mr CHAIRMAN: I allocate that question number 8.6.

Mr WOOD: I have no further questions, Mr Chairman.

Mr CHAIRMAN: There being no further questions, that concludes the committee's consideration of Output 3.4. Minister, did you want to take this opportunity to answer some of the questions on notice?

Ms SCRYMGOUR: Yes. In terms of question on notice 8.1, the list of and terms of cleaning contracts, we will table that. For question on notice 8.5, Cabomba, for 2004-05 to 2006-07, the total expenditure to date is \$891 000. It is \$253 000 in 2007-08 and another \$250 000 in 2008-09, bringing the total to \$1.397m.

Question 8.4 in relation to access to Butterfly Gorge, I will table this rather than going through it, on the opening and closure dates, going back five years from 2001 to 2007.

Mrs MILLER: Thank you, minister.

Mr CHAIRMAN: The committee has concluded consideration of Output Group 3.0.

OUTPUT GROUP 4.0 – ENVIRONMENT PROTECTION
Output 4.1 - Environment Protection Agency

Mr CHAIRMAN: The committee will now proceed to Output Group 4.0, Output 4.1 - Environment Protection Agency.

Mrs MILLER: Minister, how much has it cost government to commission the three board members of the EPA?

Ms SCRYMGOUR: Mr Chairman, prior to answering the question from the member for Katherine, I introduce Ms Lyn Allen, who is the Executive Director of Environment and Heritage. I will refer this question to the Executive Director.

Ms ALLEN: I have the figures for this financial year until the end of May. In that time, the board expenses, which include getting them to and from various meetings and a small stipend for a number of them, although a couple are doing it *pro bono*, is to date in the order of \$24 500.

Mrs MILLER: Thank you. Minister, what has government had to pay scientific river expert Wayne Erskine for his McArthur River assessment?

Ms SCRYMGOUR: Just bear with us for a minute.

Mrs MILLER: Yes, sure; I am not going anywhere either.

Ms SCRYMGOUR: It was \$14 137 this financial year.

Mrs MILLER: This financial year. Is that the total cost you had to pay Wayne Erskine, or is that just part of it?

Ms SCRYMGOUR: There was some work that he had done in the last financial year. Earlier this morning, when we were going through in the corporate services ...

Mrs MILLER: Beg my pardon, is it in there?

Ms SCRYMGOUR: I will just have that confirmed, member for Katherine.

Mrs MILLER: Okay, thank you.

Ms SCRYMGOUR: Yes, there were some costs associated with that which were provided earlier this afternoon.

Mrs MILLER: Thank you. Additional work was required by the government for the McArthur River environmental assessment study. What did that additional work cost? You had the original EIS and then you had additional work done. Is that listed in there as well, minister?

Ms SCRYMGOUR: The EIS?

Mrs MILLER: Yes.

Ms SCRYMGOUR: You do understand that the EIS is the proponent's document, not ours?

Mrs MILLER: Yes, but you do not know what the cost of it was?

Ms SCRYMGOUR: Well, the cost to government would have been the assessment of the EIS process and that was the \$14 000 I mentioned before. That was the assessment of that part of the river diversion which was done by Professor Wayne Erskine. EWL Sciences, which we talked about earlier on, was employed to advise on hydrogeological and then geomorphological elements of the tailings storage facility. That was at a cost of \$15 411.

Mrs MILLER: Thank you. Minister, part of the final arrangement with McArthur River was to get an independent monitor to monitor the river diversion and expansion program. Government has set a precedent by committing to pay the bill for that. When is the tender for the independent monitor going to be released and how long is the tender for?

Ms SCRYMGOUR: Mr Chairman, I would like to make it very clear to the member for Katherine that government is not paying for the independent monitor of the McArthur River. That was very clearly outlined in one of the conditions. What I have stipulated is that the mine, appropriately, should pay for the independent monitoring.

Mrs MILLER: Rightly so. When is the tender for that independent monitor going to be released and how long is that for?

Ms SCRYMGOUR: You will need to refer that question to the minister for Mines who, as I understand it, is on first thing in the morning.

Mrs MILLER: Okay. I know we are running very short of time, and I know member for Nelson is jumping out of his skin to ask questions on the EPA, and I am going to indulge him today. Member for Nelson.

Mr WOOD: Always leave the best to last. Minister, I have this document, which I think you told me was not the real document, and I have this document, which I gather is the real document. What is the difference?

Ms SCRYMGOUR: Member for Nelson, and I am sure that you will stand to correct me, one talks about an environment protection commission, and the other one talks about an environment protection authority.

Mr WOOD: True, but the basis of the document is basically the same. Is that correct? Except for the terminology.

Ms SCRYMGOUR: I think you are getting into semantics. I thought I had said very clearly that the document which had been leaked contained the model for an environment protection commission is not the preferred model of what government adopted. I do not know how much more clearer I can be. I cannot continue to go through this process if you continue to be confused. I have said the document that refers to an EPC is not the model adopted by this government, but EPA is the one.

Mr WOOD: Thank you, minister. Except for the name, I can understand there is a difference in name, basically the recommendations of either document for setting up an EPA and recommending what that EPA will do are basically are the same then, except for the name.

Ms McCARTHY: A point of order, Mr Chairman. I believe the minister has answered the question.

Mr CHAIRMAN: I will uphold the point of order. Member for Nelson, the minister has answered the question and restating of the question is only going to lead to restating the answer.

Mr WOOD: I have the ad out of the *NT News* on 27 June 2007. It said the recommendation including the EPA working with government, business and the community was to develop guidelines and standards for environmental practice and monitoring, evaluation and review with the [inaudible] Territory's environment protection, recommend legislative and policy framework, to acknowledge government agency operations and systems, provide high level of advice to government about protecting the environment. Minister, are not they exactly the same in both documents?

Ms SCRYMGOUR: Member for Nelson, there is a lot of difference between environment protection commission model. If you have a commission versus an authority, there are certainly some differences. If you would like some more clarity on this, I will indulge you so that you can understand the difference between the EPC and EPA. I will ask Lyn Allen, the Executive Director of Environment and Heritage, to go through the process with you.

Mr WOOD: Minister, I am happy to have that, but I am saying that when this document was so-called leaked, there was a lot of media speculation about the role the EPA was going to have. The Environment Centre criticised it and some other people criticised it, saying that they believed that this was weak. When this officially came out the other day, and you said it was leaked, so we are not discussing that, but you released this new document which has exactly the same in it. Surely people's criticism at that stage was legitimate because nothing had changed except the name in the document: That is, one was an authority and one was commission.

Mr CHAIRMAN: Member for Nelson, before asking the minister to respond, can I just ask for my benefit: what is the point you are trying to draw out?

Mr WOOD: I was criticised for raising this issue in parliament on the basis that I was using a leaked document. I was basically told this document that had been leaked and is not the real document. This one is realised the other day and, except for the words 'authority' and 'commission', it is nearly the same. I believe that I have to at least ask the minister: why I was criticised for a document on which I based my questions in parliament and which is more or less exactly the same as the official document?

Ms SCRYMGOUR: Mr Chair, can I just ask for your ruling on this? I didn't realise you were feeling so hurt about this, member for Nelson. If the member for Nelson has specific questions relating to the budget or has questions in relation to the EPA, he should ask those questions rather

using the fact that he was criticised in parliament when he used a document dealing with an EPC. I am not sure whether I said he was misleading or not telling ...

Mr WOOD: No, a Clayton's Greenie.

Ms SCRYMGOUR: Come on, member for Nelson!

Mr WOOD: That's all right. I can handle those compliments.

Mr CHAIRMAN: All right.

Mr WOOD: Can I ask a specific question, Mr Chair? I will get away from that.

Mr CHAIRMAN: I think that is the best way. If you base your questions on the document which is agreed as the current document rather than trying to refer back to any differences, then I think we will avoid any further problem with that, member for Nelson.

Mr WOOD: Okay. This is a direct question in relation to page nine of the EPA: Maybe this is a misprint, but in the second paragraph of page 9 it says:

The EPA can be directed by a minister to consider particular matters.

Minister, does that mean any minister can direct the EPA or should it say 'the minister', meaning you?

Ms SCRYMGOUR: As I understand it, I would be the minister who would have carriage, but I will ask Lyn Allen, the Executive Director of Environment and Heritage to expand further for you.

Ms ALLEN: I think the board in advising government about this was thinking that the model they are proposing is a whole-of-government model. They are trying to bring an integration process into this. While it would be the specific minister under the legislation that would give that direction, it could come from any minister to that minister. So in effect, it is government, but the legislation needs to be that a single minister makes the direction.

Mr WOOD: Just so I get it clear in my head, there will be a minister, which I imagine will be the Minister for Environment, who will be the minister to whom the EPA reports, but any minister can ask the EPA to consider particular matters referring to their portfolios?

Ms ALLEN: I believe that is the board's intent.

Ms SCRYMGOUR: You have that report, Mr Chairman. Now I have a copy of it, member for Nelson, if you look in that third paragraph, it says the EPA will be reporting annually to parliament via the responsible minister.

Mr WOOD: That is okay and I am not knocking it, but it seemed unusual because normally, the EPA documents would refer to the minister responsible for the EPA who dealt with matters. I am not saying this will not work; the way it was written gave the impression that anyone could direct the EPA any time they felt like it. I wasn't sure how that would stand up in the processes that an EPA would have to deal with.

Ms SCRYMGOUR: Member for Nelson, as the Executive Director pointed out, it will be whole-of-government, but it would still come through the responsible minister. It would not be an *ad hoc* thing where you have one minister making a referral to the EPA without the responsible minister for the EPA being aware of that referral.

Mr WOOD: That is okay. Minister, you cannot speak for the board, but you have accepted this report and the recommendations. Why does it not have a more regulatory function rather than monitoring, evaluation, scrutinising and recommending-type function?

Ms SCRYMGOUR: Member for Nelson, as per our election commitment, we never gave the commitment that it would be a regulatory body. What we said in the election commitment was that we would certainly boost its capability in terms of compliance, setting environmental standards, environmental monitoring, environmental planning and education. An important part of this, which

gets lost in the context, is overhauling our existing environment protection laws, which is an important component of this.

I will ask, again, the Executive Director of Environment and Heritage to go through it. The independent interim board embarked on quite a long, extensive consultation process to all resource centres in the Northern Territory. They were assisted by the Executive Director of Environment and Heritage, and I will ask her to elaborate further on that.

Ms ALLEN: I believe that the board conceptualised the role of the EPA as being spread from the high level of planning environment standards and guidelines, those sorts of things, right through to a more regulatory function, and they talked about positioning the new authority somewhere along that continuum.

Their view was that in the Territory there exists at that high level for bringing together frameworks and guidelines that the whole of government might work towards, and that the objective of scrutinising how government agencies go about their business and promoting good environmental practice amongst business in the community was a gap that could be usefully filled when there was already a regulatory system in place.

They were looking at it from the perspective of adding value to the existing system. I believe they also looked at the experience in other states and jurisdictions where EPAs have tended to be around for a lot longer, and they have a much more regulatory function, but in those places, the governments are finding that that space of integration and sustainability and promotion is still not filled by the EPA, and they have tended to put in things like sustainability commissioners or officers of sustainability or whatever, and so the board was able to look around and say what works for the Territory is to go with that trend now rather than go through the regulatory phase, which we already basically have.

Mr WOOD: Thank you. Minister, I was on the original Environment and Sustainable Development Committee that travelled around Australia. I was certainly under the impression that the Environment Protection Agencies had a regulatory role and were independent. If the Environment Protection Agency is only going to have a more advisory role, then is the Department of NRETA not going to use the label EPA because when it is assessing development proposals, it will not be seen to be independent because it will not be an EPA?

Ms SCRYMGOUR: No, the independence of the EPA will be guaranteed by legislation. It cannot be directed by government in relation to its findings or how it undertakes its work.

Mr WOOD: I think you misunderstood ...

Ms SCRYMGOUR: No, hold on. You asked me a question and ...

Mr WOOD: I think you misunderstood my question.

Ms SCRYMGOUR: I am getting to that, please. Your questions are long-winded as well, so you can wait ...

Mr WOOD: Thank you, minister. I was trying to help, not to hinder.

Ms SCRYMGOUR: You have been consistent in pursuing whether this EPA or the board is independent. Let me tell you categorically that the establishment of the board, which will be statutory in legislation, will give it its independence.

Mr WOOD: I understand and accept that. What I am saying is that in other places, it had a regulatory function. In this case, it will not because they recommend the existing NRETA process for commenting on development applications will be done by the department because it has the people to do it. What I am asking is: will the government remove the label EPA from its letterhead when it responds to development applications because it will not be the EPA?

Ms SCRYMGOUR: Within Environment and Heritage, we have an EPA program. There is nothing misleading about that. I am well aware that you were part of the sessional committee which went and looked around Australia at different EPAs. I thought the answer from the Executive Director of Environment and Heritage as to the consultations and the interim board's

recommendations to government indicated that it was after looking at the various models around and coming up with an EPA which was going to be suited to the Northern Territory, given our unique position.

Mr WOOD: As I said, minister, it will not have a regulatory role. Therefore, you should not be able to use the name on a department which is not the EPA. You are going to send out a message to people that when they receive a letter in relation to a development application, EPA program, which is an unusual phrase to use, people will get the impression that that is the EPA, and it will not be.

Ms McCARTHY: Point of order, Mr Chairman. The member for Nelson needs to better articulate the question. As far as I can understand, the minister has already answered the first question.

Ms SCRYMGOUR: What I will do ...

Mr WOOD: I do not get a ruling on the ...

Ms SCRYMGOUR: No, no ...

Mr CHAIRMAN: In light that the minister may have a resolution, I will hold off making any formal order until the minister has responded. There does not seem to be a lot of progress from the initial question on to further questions. However, I will give the minister an opportunity to respond.

Ms SCRYMGOUR: We did have a diagram, but I did not bring it down. If we had the diagram, member for Nelson, we could have held it up and gone through the difference. We did not give a commitment for a regulatory function. Within the department, there lies an Environment Protection Agency program. Within that program, the functions within the department are to do a number of things. That is completely separate from the EPA Board. Do you get it?

Mr WOOD: We are not setting up an EPA board. It has been going for two years to develop an authority.

Ms SCRYMGOUR: It is an EPA.

Mr WOOD: We are developing an EPA; that is what its job was.

Ms SCRYMGOUR: There are differences, member for Nelson. I will refer again to the Executive Director of Environment and Heritage, Lyn Allen, and ask her to separate the two; the EPA program and the EPA Board.

Ms ALLEN: My understanding of what the interim board is recommending and that government has accepted is that the Environmental Protection Authority, the new authority, will be a body that can scrutinise the regulatory functions of government. Government agencies across the board, including my Division of Environment and Heritage, will be subject to the scrutiny of the authority, the EPA, and the results of that will be able to be translated back to government. The authority will give advice to government about whether I and a number of other public servants are doing their jobs as well as they could be. We will continue to do the regulation and administer the acts that we currently administer, and the authority will assess how well we do that.

Mr WOOD: I will leave it at that, Mr Chairman.

Mr CHAIRMAN: Thank you, member for Nelson. There being no further questions, that concludes consideration of Output Group 4.

Output 5.1 - Heritage and Conservation Services

Mr CHAIRMAN: We will now proceed to consider Output 5.1 - Heritage and Conservation Services. Are there any questions of the Minister? Member for Katherine?

Mrs MILLER: No.

Mr WOOD: I have one. Minister, heritage grants for the whole of the Territory have been around \$200 000 for several years. Have you given any consideration to increasing that figure, maybe up to a more realistic figure of \$500 000?

Ms SCRYMGOUR: Sorry, are we in output 4 or 5?

Mr CHAIRMAN: Five. I just closed off on 4.

Ms SCRYMGOUR: Can you repeat that question, member for Nelson.

Mr WOOD: Minister, heritage grants for the whole of the Territory have been about \$200 000 for several years. Have you given any consideration to increasing that figure, maybe up to a more realistic figure of, say, \$500 000?

Ms SCRYMGOUR: Heritage grants, did you say?

Mr WOOD: Yes, heritage grants.

Ms SCRYMGOUR: In terms of more money, member for Nelson, no, the money that is allocated there is what is allocated for this year. It is something that we are looking at as more and more heritage places are added to the register. It is an issue that government needs to look at as more places are added.

Mr WOOD: Although you might say that, you are certainly not showing it in your estimates for 2007-08, which is exactly the same as this year.

Ms SCRYMGOUR: What was that question, sorry? Was it a question or were you just making a statement? An open-ended statement. I want to pick up on what you are saying. Sorry, I was distracted. I was looking at something else and did not quite hear what you were saying.

Mr WOOD: As long as I don't get blamed for making long-winded statements. This is the question, take three: heritage grants for the whole of the Territory have been about \$200 000 for several years. Have you ever given any consideration to increasing that figure to a more realistic figure of, say, \$500 000? Your estimates show that you will not increase it next year. It is a reasonable question on behalf of many supporters of heritage in the Territory.

Ms SCRYMGOUR: It is a reasonable question, member for Nelson, and in answer to your reasonable question, my reasonable answer is 'no'.

Mrs MILLER: That is unreasonable.

Mr WOOD: That is an unreasonable answer.

Mrs MILLER: I agree.

Ms SCRYMGOUR: No, no. Let me qualify that. There are heritage grants and the \$200 000 that is allocated, for the applications that we receive, does manage a fairly good spread across the Northern Territory in terms of the heritage grants program. Bear in mind there is also rate relief which is available to owners. There is free specialist advice. There are a number of things within the heritage area and services that are provided besides the heritage grants program.

Mr WOOD: Just quickly, minister, what is happening with the proposed Heritage Conservation Bill? Consultation ended in 2004-05.

Ms SCRYMGOUR: That, member for Nelson, is now with Parliamentary Counsel being drafted.

Mr WOOD: Thank you.

Mr CHAIRMAN: That is the completion of your questions, member for Nelson?

Mr WOOD: I was going to ask can I get extra time because there were three questions that were actually one there.

Mr CHAIRMAN: No.

Mr WOOD: I had one question left, one small question for the minister, who will be interested in this one. It is about the leprosarium plaque that they have put up for tender.

Ms SCRYMGOUR: I say to the member for Nelson that I will provide him with an answer with that and ensure that he is fully informed in terms of the leprosarium. I know that he has a lot of interest in it, and it is the same with me. There have been some hold ups with DPI with that, member for Nelson, but I will talk to you after this hearing.

Mr CHAIRMAN: Minister, thank you for your attendance here this evening.

Ms SCRYMGOUR: May I also, in relation to question on notice 8.2 about consultancies, table this document?

Mr CHAIRMAN: Yes, thank you, minister. Thank you to you and all officers who have presented evidence before the Committee today and to all those officers who have come with you in case their output groups were reached but were not reached.

Ms SCRYMGOUR: Thank you, Mr Chairman.

The committee suspended.

MINISTER VATSKALIS' PORTFOLIOS

Mr CHAIRMAN: We have a quorum here, so while we are wait for the other members to arrive we can make a start. For the purposes of *Hansard*, I note that on the Estimates Committee for this session we have the member for Braiiting; the member for Milner; the member for Sanderson; the Leader of the Opposition; the member for Katherine; and the member for Blain.

Minister, before I invite you to introduce your officers here with you, I welcome everyone and remind witnesses that evidence given to the committee is protected by parliamentary privilege. However, I remind you that the giving of false or misleading evidence to the committee may constitute a contempt of the Legislative Assembly, pursuant to the powers and privileges legislation.

Officers should also be aware that when they are requested by their minister to provide answers to questions, they are not required to comment on matters of policy. For the purposes of the efficient recording of *Hansard*, I request that ministers introduce those officials who are accompanying them and, where a minister refers a question to an officer, identify the officer, and I ask the officer to identify themselves before progressing with the answer.

Welcome, minister. I now invite you to introduce the officials you have with you and make an opening statement of behalf of the Department of Business, Economic and Regional Development.

BUSINESS, ECONOMIC AND REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Mr VATSKALIS: Mr Chairman, I wish to make an opening statement as the minister and to introduce my colleagues. First of all, I to introduce Mr Galton, Chief Executive Officer of the department to my left, and Ms Tracey Scott, Chief Financial Officer of the department and Tourism NT. Also with us, behind me, is Mr John Coleman, General Manager, Land Development Corporation, and Mr John Huigen, the CEO of Desert Knowledge Australia. Other officials are also with us and will be introduced if they are required to provide supplementary evidence. I will be covering policy, the rest of the team will be able to cover the operational aspects of the department.

As you know, Mr Chairman, the Territory's economy is bucking national trends. Business consumer confidence is very strong, bankruptcies are falling, employment is growing, retail trade is growing and construction activity has been at an all time high. Development of the Territory's regions will be crucial to sustaining our long-term economic future. Regional development is a key priority and a number one objective of the Economic Development Framework that was released last year. Improving the Territory's business operating environment, reducing regulation, and stimulating investment are also priorities for our government. The government and DBERD continue to engage with industry associations and business to understand key issues, enhance the business operating environment and attract investment.

The department plays a vital role in supporting the government's priority of maintaining a strong and growing Territory economy. DBERD is a compact agency with the important jobs of advocating Territory business and economic development across all levels of government; influencing decisions to improve the Territory business operating environment; and working with other government agencies to grow our economy. DBERD's key economic development responsibilities include: supporting the development of competitive business; encouraging the development of striving regional economies; and broadening the Territory's economic base.

The department's output structure has been refined. It is now structured around one output group, Economic Development. This group has three outputs of Regional Development, Business Development and Economic Development.

For the Regional Development Output, my department has primary responsibility for: regional economic development and a 4-year plan of activities, delivering programs and services locally through our regional offices, including an Indigenous Business Development Program; development and facilitation of key economic development projects, such as McArthur River Mine Community Benefit Package and the Red Centre Way; engagement with regional communities with economic development committees; and influencing them working with all levels of government to contribute and cooperate on programs and activities.

For the Business Development Output, my department works with business and industry developing a broader base and competitive Territory business sector. The business development programs provide: the Upskills Workshop; October Business Month; delivers services to the Territory Business Centres and the

regions; the procurement liaison function for most competitive Territory business outcomes through the government procurement processes; the Business and Skilled Migration Program assists employers with regional migration and promotes the Northern Territory overseas through (inaudible) strategies; and the Industry Development and Investment Program enhances sectors such as Defence, mining, petroleum supply and service, manufacturing and marine services. Engaging with Defence prime contractors is a key activity under my Defence Support ministerial portfolio to grow the Defence-related industry sector. Financial support is also provided to peak industry associations through this program.

In the Economic Development Output, my department provides strategic policy advice and analysis to assist business and government decision-making. The Economic Development Framework was developed under this program. The Innovation and Knowledge Economic Program defines opportunities for innovation and competitiveness through the NT Research Innovation Board and Fund and the Research and Innovation awards. The Land Development Corporation administers Northern Territory government-owned land identified for strategic industry development, and positions the Northern Territory and its industries in capitalising on major developments and industrial project. Desert Knowledge Australia, or DKA as it is known, is part of a group of organisations collaborating to achieve broadly agreed-to goals using desert knowledge to create desert opportunities.

DBERD has played an important role in striving to achieve the Territory's current strong economic growth. The department's program initiatives are targeted to maintain this momentum, develop new prospects, continue to attract new investments, and help to tackle the economic development challenges facing the Territory.

Mr Chairman, thank you for the opportunity to brief the committee on the portfolio structure and agency functions. I am certainly happy to address questions and comments on DBERD to assist the committee.

Mr CHAIRMAN: Thank you, minister. I will invite questions in relation to the statement, or the general questions that the opposition has been asking all ministers.

Ms CARNEY: Thanks, Mr Chairman. The general questions have been of much fascination to the rest of the world.

Good evening, minister and staff. Minister, like your colleagues, will you take general questions as follows? I know you are expecting them? Yes?

How much of the total appropriation went in 2006-07 to Corporate and Executive Services? If you have it in table form and you want to table it, go for it.

Mr GALTON: Richard Galton, Chief Executive. Just a point of clarification. That was a dollar value, was it?

Ms CARNEY: It can be dollar or percentage.

Mr GALTON: Okay. About 28% of DBERD's appropriation is spent on corporate services. However, that services not just DBERD, but also Tourist NT, Land Development Corporation and DKA.

Ms CARNEY: Do you have a breakdown just on DBERD?

Mr GALTON: No, I do not but, given the size of Tourism NT, it would be roughly half that amount, which is about \$3.5m.

Ms CARNEY: Thank you. The answer to the following might be 'Go to DCIS' and we may – I apologise in advance; you may have this answer. What is the cost per square metre for cleaning offices? Is it undertaken by an internal contractor or do you outsource it? Can you say what it cost?

Mr GALTON: The cost per square metre in Development House, which is the major building, is about \$9 per square metre. That is for servicing three floors of 1200 m². The cost of servicing our offices in Alice Springs, Katherine and Nhulunbuy is substantially higher - around \$25 a square metre, but much smaller areas.

Ms CARNEY: That is it? What is the cost of maintenance for the offices, or is will DCIS know the answer to that?

Mr GALTON: I am sorry. If I can just go back and answer that first question. Those costs are part of the head lease agreement with the private owner. We do not actually pay those fees ...

Ms CARNEY: So, they do not come from your budget?

Mr GALTON: No.

Ms CARNEY: Okay, thank you. I assume that is, therefore, the case in respect of the maintenance of the offices as well?

Mr GALTON: Exactly.

Ms CARNEY: Thank you. What is the square metre size of the CEO's office?

Mr GALTON: Currently, 30 m², but there is a co-location exercise under way at the moment where Tourism NT are vacating Tourism House and moving into Development House, so it will be substantially less at the start of next financial year.

Ms CARNEY: Thank you. How much of the total appropriation has gone in 2006-07 to the cost of advertising? What are the design and production costs of radio, television, newspaper, magazine and other medium?

Mr GALTON: The total cost in advertising, promotion and publication in 2005-06 was \$494 000. In 2006-07, it was \$724 000.

Ms CARNEY: Sorry, did you 2005-06 was \$495 000?

Mr GALTON: You did not want the 2005-06 figures?

Ms CARNEY: Not really, but ...

Mr GALTON: Okay. For 2006-07, it was \$724 000. Sorry.

Ms CARNEY: That is okay. Any estimate for 2007-08, or too early to call?

Mr GALTON: My expectation would be very similar.

Ms CARNEY: Thank you. What was the cost of all advertising medium which included the minister's image?

Mrs BRAHAM: He is the minister for Sport. He does not have to do any extra work.

Mr VATSKALIS: No, no. That is for DBERD.

Mrs BRAHAM: He hands out cheques. We know.

Mr GALTON: \$3200 this financial year.

Ms CARNEY: What was the cost of postage associated with mass communication with Territorians? Can you also include costs, if at all, of letterbox drops or inserts into magazines and newspapers?

Mr GALTON: The cost of postage in 2006-07 was \$13 689.

Ms CARNEY: Thank you, and letterbox drops, inserts?

Mr GALTON: No.

Ms CARNEY: There were none? Okay. What was the cost of policy research or message development research?

Mr GALTON: We have a policy group within DBERD itself, so they are all internal costs. We do not employ anybody to do that work.

Ms CARNEY: Okay. How much of the total appropriation in 2006-07 went towards the cost of media liaison and monitoring?

Mr GALTON: \$1547.

Ms CARNEY: Was there a separate cost in relation to transcription of interviews? If so, what was it?

Mr GALTON: No, that is part of that last cost I gave you.

Ms CARNEY: Okay. How much of the total appropriation in 2006-07 went towards the cost of reviews?

Mr GALTON: \$107 018.

Ms CARNEY: Would you provide - please if you have it in table form, if you could be good enough to table it I would be grateful - a list of all reviews including when the reviews started and finished? Also whether the names of the reviews and the costs are available to the public?

Mr GALTON: All the reviews were for internal functions. We can table the details of them.

Ms CARNEY: Thank you. Next question then, in relation to consultants. How much of the total appropriation went towards the cost of engaging of consultants? Can you include how the consultants were appointed, such as by tender or certificate of exemptions? How many consultants were appointed, who were they, what did they do and how much did they cost? If you have that in tabled form, would you be good enough to table it?

Mr GALTON: The total costs spent on consultants to the 31 May 2007 was \$657 000. I am able to table who the consultants were and what tasks they were undertaking.

Ms CARNEY: Through you, minister, does that have a breakdown of costs for each one, each consultant?

Mr GALTON: Yes.

Ms CARNEY: Thank you. In relation to staff, how much of the total appropriation went towards the cost of staffing? Can you include the number of full-time equivalents and the number of employees at each level? If you have that in table form, would you be good enough to table it please?

Mr GALTON: I will give you the employee expenses of \$13.1m of our total expenditure of \$25.5m. I do have details of the numbers of staff.

Mrs BRAHAM: Are they broken up into regions?

Mr GALTON: Yes, they are broken into regions.

Ms CARNEY: Is that two pages?

Mr VATSKALIS: Yes.

Ms CARNEY: How much of the total appropriation in 2006-07 was spent on airfares? Can you give me a global figure? Can you also provide costs of airfares between Darwin and Alice Springs?

Mr VATSKALIS: Sixty percent of total intrastate fares were for Alice Springs travel; that is \$90 000.

Ms CARNEY: So global airfares were \$90 000?

Mr VATSKALIS: No, you asked for Alice Springs. Sixty percent of total intrastate fares were for Alice Springs, a total of \$90 000. Total intrastate airfares expense was \$151 000.

Ms CARNEY: Intrastate?

Mr VATSKALIS: Yes.

Ms CARNEY: That is \$100 and?

Mr VATSKALIS: \$151 649.

Ms CARNEY: And the \$90 000 figure was Darwin/Alice?

Mr VATSKALIS: \$90 343 is for Alice Springs travel.

Ms CARNEY: Any overseas travel?

Mr GALTON: I do have them aggregated. What I have is the accommodation fees and travelling allowances.

Ms CARNEY: If you are happy to table that it would make life easier.

Mr GALTON: I have it broken down between domestic, other, and international.

Ms CARNEY: Thank you. How much of the total appropriation in 2006-07 went towards greenhouse gas reduction strategies?

Mr GALTON: I do not have a dollar value on that. I can add that the cost for energy management was shared with Tourism NT and, given the co-location exercises being undertaken at the moment, the department did not spend any money on trying to be more fuel efficient in their old building. That is part of the co-location. In the new head lease we are entering into with the owner, he will upgrade the building. So we do not have a breakdown of spending on dimmed lights and things.

Ms CARNEY: Thank you for that. The government committed itself to the target of a 1.5% reduction in emissions from NT government commercial buildings by the end of this month. What adjustments, if any, to fuelling and other measures were undertaken by your department? I am obliged to ask that question. I assume your question is the same to my preceding question.

Mr GALTON: Yes, but I can add a little more. The work in Development House itself saved 4.1% in that period but, combined with Tourism NT, the overall increased usage was 0.4%.

Ms CARNEY: Increased usage? The government has committed itself to a target of 5% reduction in per kilometre emissions from the NT Government's passenger fleet by the end of the month. What specific measures has your department done to reach this target, which also includes the number of hybrid and/or LPG vehicles in your fleet?

Mr GALTON: What has been undertaken since October is a rationalisation of the fleet itself. We have cut back on the numbers of fleet. We have cut back on the number of six-cylinder cars and replaced them with four-cylinder cars. We do not actually have any smarter vehicles. We do not have any Prius or such vehicles yet.

Ms CARNEY: Are you thinking about getting some?

Mr GALTON: Yes, we are. We replace cars either when they get to 40 000 km or two years, and we will consider it then.

Mr VATSKALIS: The only problem is that sometimes the output of a vehicle is deceptive. Sometimes the output of a vehicle can be deceptive because, if you take the whole of life of a vehicle including the construction, the result may be surprisingly different to what we believe. There was a recent newspaper report in *The Australian* saying that, despite the fact that the Prius is very efficient when it is constructed, because it includes such components of energy hungry when they are constructed, the overall output can be higher than what you expect.

The same thing happens with other equipment, even the wind turbines. They are very efficient when they operate, but to construct the wind turbines was a very energy hungry process.

Ms CARNEY: My final question. The government has set itself a 10% carbon emissions reduction target. Can you set out what, if any, specific measures your department is undertaking to meet or beat that target?

Mr VATSKALIS: As the CEO said, we have increased. This year, we increased by 0.4% energy used. However, the department plans to meet its long-term target to reduce energy use by 10% by 2010.

Ms CARNEY: Can I ask if there a specific strategy? Is there a strategy document? I am not necessarily asking you to show it to me, but is there, or is it just, 'Yes, we are going to'?

Mr VATSKALIS: It is difficult at this stage, considering the fact that the two departments are co-locating and there is a lot of disruption going on. You cannot develop a strategy until everything is bedded down.

Ms CARNEY: But, that is in the future 2006-07?

Mr VATSKALIS: No.

Ms CARNEY: Was there a strategy?

Mr VATSKALIS: Well, again, as I said to you before, year 2006-07 was the co-location with the NT Tourism, so there is not much point in doing it. From now on, the department will start putting in place strategies, together with Tourism NT, how we are going to reduce energy consumption and greenhouse gas emissions.

Ms CARNEY: So there was not?

Mr VATSKALIS: No. Well, we cannot have a policy if we do not have the stable environment.

Ms CARNEY: Was there one in 2005-06?

Mr VATSKALIS: Well, I was not a minister and the CEO was not the CEO, so I cannot answer that question for 2005-06.

Ms CARNEY: I do not think either of us are going to lose sleep over that one, minister. Thank you. That is the end of the general questions.

Mr CHAIRMAN: Do you have any general questions, member for Braitling?

Mrs BRAHAM: Mr Chairman, just to clarify a few areas so I do not get messed up as I normally do. Indigenous Development comes under Regional Development?

Mr VATSKALIS: Yes.

Mrs BRAHAM: Does the administration of the *Associations Act* come under your Consumer Affairs or something?

Mr VATSKALIS: Justice.

Mrs BRAHAM: Justice.

Mr VATSKALIS: You missed it.

Mrs BRAHAM: Missed it, okay. Payment of contracts comes under Business Development?

Mr VATSKALIS: DCIS does all the payment. You missed that as well.

Mrs BRAHAM: What does it come under?

Mr VATSKALIS: DCIS.

Mrs BRAHAM: Okay.

Mr CHAIRMAN: Sorted?

OUTPUT GROUP 1.0 – ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
Output 1.1 – Regional Development

Mr CHAIRMAN: All right, there being no further questions, I now call for questions relating to Output Group 1.0 - Economic Development, Output 1.1 - Regional Development. I invite the shadow minister, member for Katherine.

Mrs MILLER: Mr Chairman, I welcome all of the heads of all the different agencies here tonight and thank them, because I know they have done a lot of work over the last few weeks in preparation for tonight. My area is of Regional Development and, of course, it is pretty close to the heart. Minister, you may be aware that there are several businesses closing in Katherine, specifically. I will address others later. What is your government doing to try to promote business in and around these regional areas of Katherine, Tennant Creek and Borroloola? I do not want to know about Darwin, and I will ask about Alice Springs later on. What are you doing to try and encourage people to stay?

Mr VATSKALIS: Member for Katherine, I read the article about businesses closing in Katherine today, and I was amazed by the comments made by the proprietors. Both proprietors said business was good; the problem was actually the high rents. One comment was, actually, that the rent in Katherine was higher than in Darwin and, in some cases, higher than Sydney. It is actually on the second page of the *Katherine Times* today.

Mrs MILLER: They are not the businesses I am referring to, minister.

Mr VATSKALIS: I can do a lot to promote business to come to the Territory, and try to attract it, but there is nothing else I can do to dictate the level of rents in Katherine in Darwin or anywhere else in the Territory. It is not a managed economy, it is a free economy, so people can ask whatever they like. Of course, they have to consider if they are going to have a tenant or not.

Our government strongly promotes the Territory as a destination, not only for big business but for small business, and for Defence-related business. We are delivering programs and services in regional centres, we coordinate projects. We actually promote what has happened in the Territory's different regional centres, and also interstate. We are supporting businesses to develop. We help existing businesses to become more efficient. We show some businesses how to advertise their business, operate their business, and do basic things that businessmen should know - even accounting. We have had great success in the past by providing a number of incentives to business, with great results. Ask the proprietor himself who has admitted it.

With regard to Katherine, it is very difficult when you see the rents in Katherine, especially in the shopping centre complex; they are so expensive. On the other hand, businesses come to the Territory - and come and go. We have had two big stores in Alice Springs announcing their arrival recently. Harvey Norman is one and Target is the other. These businesses will not go to a regional centre if they are not certain that there is a bright economic future in the area.

Also, we are trying to work with other government departments, either Territory or federal. Recently, I met with minister Nelson, and I made it clear what impact it would have if the rumoured downgrading of the Tindal Base became a reality. He was very alarmed by the articles in the cutting from the *Katherine Times*, which I took down and gave to him. He assured me that, in his words, Tindal will not be downgraded; it will be maintained. That was further confirmed by the Under Secretary of Defence.

With regard to 2006-07, we had a number of things done that will promote business in the region. The package that we are negotiating with MRM is a typical example because there is going to be a significant amount of money in the region.

For 2007-08, we are actually planning activities like a \$300 000 grant for new and existing indigenous businesses, \$250 000 for regional economic development grants, and key projects for the department of \$250 000. The department not only advocates the Territory as a business destination, but actively promotes it and puts money into it.

I also met with the Chamber of Commerce in Katherine and, despite the allegations that nothing was done and no money was spent in Katherine, I went back and provided them with a table of how much money was spent in the Katherine region in the past three years. They were surprised because they did not realise that so much money was spent in the region. If you, let us say, had a small painting business, you do not know how much of that work is done in the region, or how much purchasing takes place in the region.

The government is promoting the Territory as a destination. We even agreed with the Chamber of Commerce to promote Katherine specifically, so the department now collects information about Katherine. The last time that was done was in 1990. I printed this information to produce a booklet, which will be distributed around Australia. People who see the booklet will know about Katherine, not only what the weather is like, but what the tourism attractions are, the types of soils, the humidity, the rainfall, the business opportunities, and the population statistics. People need to know these facts in order to come to Katherine or any other region in the Territory.

Mrs MILLER: Thank you, minister. It is interesting because, when we talk about the Katherine region, it covers 400 000 km². I was actually referring just to the town at that time. When I do look at what is happening in that 400 000 km², yes, there are projects happening out in the region.

You were referring in your reply, minister, to the *Katherine Times* of today, and saying that those businesses were closing because of high rent. Well, there are one, two, three here that have closed because of lack of contracts from government. There is one closing because nobody is interested in buying his business, even though it has been a very successful one for some 20 years now. Another one has had his on the market for a long time. Another plumber is leaving town because there is not enough business; he feels like a change. He is also a very good plumber. These are different people entirely to those you were referring to. That is what my concern is; that there is no development happening for these people to keep their businesses going.

As far as Tindal is concerned, yes, you are right. I have also had it confirmed that there will not be a downgrading of Tindal, which is really excellent - good news. In relation to what you were saying about promoting Katherine in a booklet – I will just refer to Katherine now; I will get to other areas - how are you doing that? Is that going through the Tourism NT? How are you promoting that?

Mr VATSKALIS: What my idea is that I do not want to reduce it to a tourist booklet. I want to produce a business focused booklet that will incorporate different elements of Katherine. I am referring to the Katherine region because, when I talk about region development we are not referring only to the city.

Let us not forget that the pastoralists who live 200 km from Katherine contribute significantly to the economy of Katherine. If we are going to attract people to Katherine we have to tell them what is in Katherine and the Katherine region. For example, there are people out there who believe Katherine is too far away, too difficult to do business in, and virtually have no idea about the potential of Katherine. If you do not provide people down south who are looking for, let us say, land information about the agricultural potential of Katherine, or the availability of water or the rainfall, they are not going to make an effort to find out about it. If we do not talk to the mining industry about the mineral potential of Katherine, they are not going to come up there for a research exploration.

We are trying to do a booklet that will cover all aspects of Katherine, just as a bait to entice people to ask more questions about Katherine, and then we can provide the specific information. We did that very well in my Mines portfolio. We promoted mining the Territory in a little booklet which actually made people take notice and come back to us: 'I saw in the booklet that you have potential ...', let us say, '... for iron ore. Can I have information?' Then the department would provide all the information.

Mrs MILLER: That booklet that you are referring to, minister, is that the one that has been collated by the Chamber of Commerce over a period of time?

Mr VATSKALIS: It was the 1990 booklet which is actually now defunct or overtaken by events.

Mrs MILLER: That is right. Is that going to be paid for by your department?

Mr VATSKALIS: Absolutely. The other thing we have to do is to promote Katherine because every business that sets up in Katherine will have a spin-off effect on employment, things bought and sold in Katherine and, eventually, there will be money coming to government. Again, specifically for Katherine, look at regional highlights, with \$8.95m for a Katherine secondary school. There is money flowing into Katherine. I do not have a chance to go now straight into specifics for Katherine but, if you go through that, you will find quite a bit of money allocated to Katherine.

Mrs MILLER: Minister, how many copies of that book are you going to print?

Mr VATSKALIS: I want first to collate it; find out what it is. That will depend on where we are going to target, who we are going to target, and how we are going to target. It is not a minister's booklet. It is going to be Katherine's booklet and we are going to work together with the people in Katherine.

Mrs MILLER: I was going to ask you whether you were going to have your picture in it, minister?

Mr VATSKALIS: Of course, it will have my picture in it, I am the minister!

Ms CARNEY: You were going to say numerous.

Mr VATSKALIS: We have to produce a lot of copies.

Mrs MILLER: Okay. Are you going to also do the same thing for Tennant Creek?

Mr VATSKALIS: Katherine is the first one and, because the regions are our focus, we want to produce the same for every region in the Territory. Some regions do not need help, like Nhulunbuy and Gove, because they have an active mining industry. Certainly, for places like Tennant Creek, Borroloola, and Alice Springs, that is my endeavour; to produce this booklet which people can pick up and realise the potential in those areas for business and enterprise.

My CEO also pointed out that all these business development questions come under Output 1.2

Mrs MILLER: I know they probably do, but I am sneaking, them in under Regional Development.

Mr VATSKALIS: I am happy to answer the questions.

Mrs MILLER: Thank you. Can I introduce a little Tourism Development into the Regional Development?

Mr VATSKALIS: Under what?

Mrs MILLER: Tourism.

Mr VATSKALIS: If I can respond to that, and you are very specific.

Mrs MILLER: Okay. What new developments in tourism are being explored for any of the regional areas outside of Darwin and Palmerston?

Mr VATSKALIS: Generically, this is a business. It does not matter whether it is a tourism business or any other business, we will promote it. We will assist anyone who come to us for assistance. Clearly, that falls under the Tourism portfolio, and they will have the lead on that. People come to business centres and ask for information, and we are happy to either refer them to the tourism agency or provide the information they want directly.

We have already provided \$70 000 to Territory Business Centres; there is \$50 000 to develop tourist plans for Mataranka, Larrimah, and Daly River; and \$0.5m approximately to deliver visitor Information services and intra-Territory marketing for local businesses. The department, despite the fact that it is not tourism department, has a partnership with tourism operations including the [inaudible].

Mrs MILLER: Okay. Also referring to regional areas, what indigenous development programs are there being offered to regional areas - indigenous-specific?

Mr VATSKALIS: My department has a very strong focus on indigenous areas. The reason for that is because the reality is there is nothing much happening out in the regions apart from the pastoral industry, and potential agriculture and mining. In the past, I have promoted all of those. You will recall the indigenous land use agreements we have signed with various pastoral properties. We have worked very closely with the mining industry to provide training and job opportunities. Groote Eylandt is a good example, Alcan is another, and McArthur River Mine will be a good example, you will be pleased to hear.

We also have an indigenous business-specific people to assist people who want to start a business or people who have a business and want to improve it and increase the activity and employment. Last week in parliament, I was asked a question and I advised that we have a \$300 000 grant which was started in

2005, and we have created a significant number of jobs by providing small- and medium-sized grants to people who want to establish businesses.

Dave Malone who is the Director of Regional Development can give more information more specifically on that.

Mr MALONE: Dave Malone. In addition to what the minister has mentioned regarding the Indigenous Development Business program, we are also in partnership with DEWR in placing economic development officers in Katherine, Darwin and Alice Springs. They work as well in mentoring and case management for indigenous organisations.

Our business development program provides the grants scheme but, in addition to that, provides advice as well. We have, through this year, the IBIS program, Indigenous Business Information Service, as well, which is linked to mining throughout the Territory. Again, it is the same sort of thing; it is about providing coaching, mentoring, and leading people towards pathways which allow them to establish businesses.

Mrs MILLER: At this particular point of time, how many indigenous development program businesses have approached you for attention in this next 12 months? Have you been able to identify any in regional areas?

Mr MALONE: Can I clarify that question? Is this in terms of people who are queuing up for support in one kind or another, or are forecast by us?

Mrs MILLER: Yes, people who are coming to you.

Mr MALONE: We, obviously, maintain a list of people who have expressed interest to us throughout this year, who will be looking to take advantage of the grants scheme. It is actually over-subscribed based on the numbers we have at this particular time. However, the issue is that that it is an expression of interest. There is a long distance between when people first start talking to us about a business opportunity that may convert into a grant at some stage in the future. There is a lot of work in between that. However, at this stage we have more than the current budget funding. That is not to say that is a negative. It is a fact of life that some people's timing will drift out to several years, for example.

Mrs MILLER: Thank you, that is good.

Mr VATSKALIS: Between 1 July 2006 and 25 June 2007, 119 existing or potential businesses sought advice from our department.

Mrs MILLER: They were right throughout the regional areas of the Northern Territory?

Mr VATSKALIS: Yes. To give you an example, the number of indigenous individuals or sole traders provided with business support and advice were 25 in Alice Springs; six in Darwin; five in Katherine; five in East Arnhem; and three in the Barkly; which is a total of 44. Then, of course, we have organisations and other people who the department are actively supporting as well, and we are very pleased. As I have said before, sometimes a small grant makes a hell of a difference, such as the one in Alice Springs with the free range eggs. An indigenous family was able to establish a free range chicken farm, providing a small amount of eggs now, but growing all the time.

Mrs MILLER: That leads me to my next question, as I was going to ask what types of businesses are the indigenous people asking for assistance with?

Mr VATSKALIS: Support to date includes housing repairs and maintenance contracts; a community general store; cultural awareness program; art and craft business; mobile music business; cultural tourism business; crocodile husbandry; civil road contractors; retail; hairdressers; native plant nursery; fast food outlet; fresh crab business; plumbing; indigenous painting contractors; and indigenous crowd controllers.

Mrs MILLER: Nice broad spectrum, isn't it?

Mr VATSKALIS: Absolutely.

Mrs MILLER: That is good. That is looking very hopeful. I know this area is probably outside too, but it is regional - research farms.

Mr VATSKALIS: Yes?

Mrs MILLER: Are you prepared to take some questions on that, minister?

Mr VATSKALIS: Well, it depends on what kind of questions. If they are very specific, they might have to wait until the Minister for Primary Industry and Fisheries comes on line.

Mrs MILLER: Okay, I just thought I might have a go at you first. I wanted to know what was being done in regional areas. Of course, I am talking about the Douglas Daly and the Katherine Research Farm. What is being done at those research farms to promote agriculture and horticulture, and citrus growing? What is being done at those places to promote those crops so that there is an industry in regional NT?

Mr VATSKALIS: If you had asked me in my previous capacity, I would have been able to answer it; now I cannot. You will have to ask tomorrow morning.

Mrs MILLER: Yes, I will ask him tomorrow morning. I could go on all night asking you about regional NT but I will defer for the moment.

Mr CHAIRMAN: Member for Braitling.

Mrs BRAHAM: Thank you. Minister, following on from the questions about the indigenous businesses, you said there were 152 ...

Mr VATSKALIS: 119.

Mrs BRAHAM: Are they inquirers or are they businesses?

Mr VATSKALIS: Well, that was existing or potential indigenous businesses that have sought assistance. Some of them will not start, some of them are already operating.

Mrs BRAHAM: How much in the budget do you allocate to that support?

Mr VATSKALIS: That was \$350 000.

Mrs BRAHAM: You have Building Stronger Regions?

Mr VATSKALIS: Yes.

Mrs BRAHAM: How will these businesses be affected, do you think, with the new local government reforms?

Mr VATSKALIS: With regards to our department, there will be no difference. They will still be able to apply to us for a grant to start up or continue business.

Mrs BRAHAM: Are many of these from individuals, or from community councils, or from business incorporations?

Mr VATSKALIS: Well, we are not talking about the community councils; we are talking about indigenous persons or indigenous organisations.

Mrs BRAHAM: Do any of those come under a community council?

Mr VATSKALIS: I do not think so. Most of them – well, community councils are different altogether. They do not trade.

Mrs BRAHAM: Well, I was thinking about Hermannsburg, but they, obviously, have a separate business, even though many of their council people are on it.

Mr VATSKALIS: Well, the one here that I have is Ntaria Council Hermannsburg Incorporated. They asked for assistance for a front-end loader, which was, I believe, provided. Yes.

Mrs BRAHAM: So you do not see that there would be any problems with the new local government reforms; that these businesses could lose their identity or ...

Mr VATSKALIS: Well, obviously, business is business.

Mrs BRAHAM: Yes.

Mr VATSKALIS: If people come and talk to us, we will consider them as any other business - if they are operating as an incorporated business.

Mrs BRAHAM: No, that is fine.

Mr VATSKALIS: Also, as an advisor, we work very closely with the Department of Local Government to make sure that things will go very well during the transitional period.

Mrs BRAHAM: Do you see an increase in promotion of successful indigenous business? Would you believe that is the trend?

Mr VATSKALIS: There is a will out there from indigenous people to start business and to make it very successful. I cannot see the reason why that will go backwards. From my own experience from my previous life, when I lived in Western Australia, the increased activity in the mining sector saw a very successful indigenous business that did not exist a few years ago, now to doing earthmoving work for the mines and support the mining industry, especially in the Pilbara.

Mrs BRAHAM: Does IBA still provide loans to indigenous businesses?

Mr VATSKALIS: Yes, we do.

Mrs BRAHAM: They do.

Mr GALTON: Yes, they do. In actual fact, we meet with IBA regularly. They are looking to spread their wings, so we have been currently talking about other communities in which they can take up business opportunities as well.

Mrs BRAHAM: I guess I am trying to get a feel that there is some movement within this area and that we can feel confident that we are making strides within that area of indigenous business.

Mr VATSKALIS: Well, if you allow me to show you very graphically what we have been doing ...

Members interjecting.

Mr VATSKALIS: The different stars show indigenous business development grants. Every star represents an aspect of indigenous business development grants. I do not think you want me to table that one.

Mrs BRAHAM: No.

Mr VATSKALIS: As you can see, from the north to the south and east to west. In answer before to the member of Katherine, these kind of business are the ones that become the steam engine for regional development. We have seen it in other places and we will see it here.

Mrs BRAHAM: That is good. Is that up in your office?

Mr VATSKALIS: Do you want a copy?

Mrs BRAHAM: Yes. It is worthwhile for telling people.

Mr VATSKALIS: We will reproduce that one in electronic format.

Mrs BRAHAM: Put in down in Central Australia because it worthwhile showing people that there are new things coming out. That is important for us to know.

Minister, you were pleased to be able to support the federal government to build that building at Desert Knowledge Precinct recently. I think we put in \$1m for it?

Mr VATSKALIS: Yes.

Mrs BRAHAM: Could you tell me what commitment you have in your budget to, perhaps, fund any future buildings out there? Or, if not buildings, any future work?

Mr VATSKALIS: That funding does not come from DBERD, it comes from a department like DEET. However, the government has a commitment and we already have a construction of a building worth \$6.5m, and we continue to provide more infrastructure there. I am enthusiastic about DKA. A lot of people have difficulty understanding what DKA is. As we said, it is desert solutions for desert problems. Considering the change in the environment and the climate, more and more land will become marginal and drier - a desert. We have to find a way to cope and to live in this dry climate.

Mrs BRAHAM: Out of there were, obviously, business opportunities for some of the traditional owners who are looking at the native foods and what have you. Is your department behind them helping them to further their aims?

Mr VATSKALIS: If people come to us with a proposal, we are prepared to sit down and help them through even the planning stage: how to set it up, how to operate, how to do the accounting. DKA will be doing a lot of research, and we are there to actually provide the real advice to these people. John Huigen is here from DKA. He can provide some of these answers if you want to go there now.

Mrs BRAHAM: Yes, because I really think it has a huge potential. There is a lot of interest in Alice Springs, and it would be good if we could have an understanding of the government's commitment and where they see government going, and what stage the people in Alice are likely to see on DKA.

Mr HUIGEN: John Huigen, CEO, Desert Knowledge Australia. In answering the bush tucker question, one of the key developments has been the co-location of the Desert Knowledge Cooperative Research Centre and Desert Knowledge Australia. They have gone into that first building. They have a really strong program of developing the bush tucker industry, and doing research to promote that. There is a plot of bush tomatoes presently under cultivation at the research farm at AZRI next door to the Desert Knowledge Precinct, which is looking at how to horticulturally and consistently grow that product. Desert Knowledge Australia's role is around building the demand for those products and drawing a whole network across the whole of Australia, in fact, to create a demand for bush products. There is a linked business network right across Australia to build that demand.

Mrs BRAHAM: Has there been much interest from the rest of Australia to be involved with that? You said there was a network.

Mr HUIGEN: Absolutely. The bush foods and local products networks across Australia are really very active. A number of innovative ways of trying to build that demand have happened. One of the things that we do is overcome distance through using virtual infrastructure with video conferencing and so on. We have a virtual bush foods promotional event which worked quite nicely.

Mrs BRAHAM: What on?

Mr HUIGEN: On bush foods and local products. In our network based at Broken Hill, there was a trade fair around this as well. Some of the growth in demand is demonstrated by the fact that the bush foods are now in the aisles in Coles ...

Mrs BRAHAM: And restaurants.

Mr HUIGEN: ... and so forth in Melbourne and so on. Getting demand through restaurants is often a first step to it being taken up as a mainstream product.

Mrs BRAHAM: Are the traditional owners in Alice Springs heavily involved in that project?

Mr HUIGEN: The bush foods research program actually taps into people on communities as well as people locally.

Mrs BRAHAM: What is your next step in the development of that precinct?

Mr HUIGEN: Oh, in the precinct. Sorry, minister, did you want ...

Mr VATSKALIS: No, no.

Mr HUIGEN: At the moment, there are a number of buildings being built for the Desert Peoples Centre which, as you are probably aware, is the coming together of the Centre for Appropriate Technology and Batchelor Institute for Indigenous Tertiary Education - co-locating, working together, to leverage off each other. The first suite of buildings are being built now. The pads are down and they will be pouring slabs pretty shortly. There is a staged roll-out. The first two buildings will be finished by December ready for the next academic year. The admin block and the first educational block will be there. Then, halfway through next year another cluster of education blocks will be online for the second semester of the year. Then, by the end of that year, another set of education blocks will be ready.

Mrs BRAHAM: This is totally federal government money?

Mr VATSKALIS: No, that is actually Territory and federal government money.

Mrs BRAHAM: So there is still that joint partnership, which is good.

Mr VATSKALIS: Yes.

Mrs BRAHAM: We look forward to seeing something on the skyline; not just the sign out the front on the highway.

Mr HUIGEN: No, no. I am looking forward to it as well.

Mrs BRAHAM: Thank you. Minister, does your department have much to do with Centrecorp, which is the indigenous business?

Mr VATSKALIS: No.

Mrs BRAHAM: Minister, can you tell me who bought the Commonwealth Bank building in Alice Springs?

Mr VATSKALIS: Well, it was not me.

Mrs BRAHAM: Well, it was not Centrecorp. I just thought someone might have known.

Mr KIELY: Could have been GE.

Mrs BRAHAM: Do not know who bought it? No. Okay, it was not the Territory government. It says in my paper that you have 20 regional economic development projects under Building Stronger Regions. Could you explain to me what the 20 are, and do you have a list of them that you could table?

Mr MALONE: The 20 is a performance measure, I think, in the budget papers. What you saw when the minister presented the map of the Northern Territory is that contains the suite of projects that our division is running. It includes grants, projects, investment projects and just general economic development projects. It is about 200 in total. That 20 is just a performance target, and we have passed that number.

Mrs BRAHAM: How do we get this information, minister?

Mr VATSKALIS: The information on the map, or information on the budget paper?

Mrs BRAHAM: Yes, I know, but how do we get the details of what we have been discussing about the projects that you have that are obviously there? You might know what is going on out there in your business side of the department, but we do not seem to get that information. Would that be right, member for Katherine?

Mr VATSKALIS: I am happy to provide that ...

Mrs BRAHAM: Do you do the promotion of it, do you publicise it, do you let people know the good things that are happening?

Mr VATSKALIS: We have not done it yet, if you put it that way. You cannot go and publicise different stages of development. We would like to promote successful enterprises. It is not fair to go out and

highlight every one at different stages of development. I am happy to provide a briefing and also happy to table the table of the program of where we provide assistance. That gives the location and if it is a new or existing business, and how much money we have provided.

Mrs BRAHAM: Right. That would be good if you could table that. What I am trying to say is that, quite often, there are so many good things going on. You mention Harvey Norman and Target starting. I believe it was Clarks Rubber also opened last week in Alice. The town is really quite vibrant at the moment. There are some very good things happening there. Quite often, we do not really get that information flow of what the department is doing. Some of the projects you have may be close to fruition and we can celebrate that. It is just to try and find out exactly what is going on and how we can support it and get behind the people.

Mr VATSKALIS: I can see your point, member for Braitling. The problem we have is that if the government puts out statistics, people will become cynical and say: 'Here they are blowing their trumpet; it might not be true'. We allow other people the information such as Sensis. In the latest Sensis report, the Territory had the highest economic growth rate in Australia - 7.2% - when Access estimated Australia at 4%. We had a population increase. We had the biggest confidence level in Australia of plus-8%, when New South Wales had minus-4%. So all these things are provided by Sensis.

It is good. We like it because it tells people out there a good story, and it is not coming from the government, but from a third party. That has more value than me going out there and saying how good Alice Springs is. People know whether it is good or bad. People know if it is good or bad but, when it comes from a third party, that has more value. I welcome your proposal. It is a very good idea and I will take it on board.

Members interjecting.

Mrs BRAHAM: Yes. I was thinking of some of the successful businesses like the Hermannsburg contracting business at the moment. We hear a little about them, but there must be other indigenous businesses out there that are successful. I do not know with the Harts Range ever got the petrol station off the ground. They were going to have a roadhouse on the way, and that has not been finalised yet, but it must be in the pipeline.

Lindsay Bookie wanted to put in some accommodation for tourists; Ipolera, at the crossroads, were going to put in a roadhouse. There must be things going on that we hear snippets of but we do not hear the end result. It would be good if you could feed even the local members so they can say: 'I am going to go and have a look at this'. Do you know what I mean? It is just lack of knowledge of exactly what is going and where to go to see it.

Mr VATSKALIS: It is a good idea.

Ms BRAHAM: Like Titjikala. That is a success story with what they have done. Perhaps you could feed us a bit more information like that. Mr Chairman, that is all for Regional Development for me.

Mr CHAIRMAN: I understand the member for Katherine has one further question on this output.

Mrs MILLER: I want to add to what the member for Braitling was saying about bush tucker and bush foods. The minister might be aware that a few years ago, Athol Wark tried to promote bush tucker. He did a real good job, but was not able to continue on with that. Do you think there is an opportunity there now with the Desert Knowledge Precinct developing bush tucker?

Mr VATSKALIS: Member for Katherine, I was the minister who appointed him as the Culinary Ambassador for the Northern Territory. He still has that title, together with Jimmy Shu. He has continued to promote the wild foods not only in Australia but around the world. Do not forget he is still lecturing at the American University of Tourism.

Recently, Athol approached me - I actually saw him at the opening of the DKA - and I suggested he write to me to see if we can find a grant for him to be supported in his continuing endeavour. My CEO will be talking to him very soon to provide him with necessary information for him to find ways to apply for these grants. Athol has done an exceptionally good job. I have seen many - not only from Australia but from overseas - some of the news cuts via e-mail from Hawaii where he was actually promoting bush food. This is an exceptional opportunity and we should not let it disappear. We must support him.

Mrs MILLER: I could not agree more. Obviously, the promotion went very well because my daughter living in Canada rang me to inquire what she could do to be an outlet in Vancouver. I said she was a bit a head of me. That goes to show the potential to develop that industry in the Centre of Australia even further in partnership with Desert Knowledge Australia.

Mr CHAIRMAN: You have a question, Leader of the Opposition?

Ms CARNEY: Minister, obviously, the budget papers this year in this area are very different from last year because of four outputs changing. On my calculations, with the removal of those four areas, there is \$11m to \$12m that has been moved, if you add up their budgetary appropriations from the 2006-07 Budget Paper No 3 at page 127. Can you tell me, because I was hard pressed to work it out, where that \$11m - I think it is almost \$12m - ended up?

Mr VATSKALIS: Certainly, if you give me a minute. The summary in the budget is the total budget expenditure for 2006-07 of \$22.949m. The revised budget 2006-07 is actually \$25.511m, and the budget for 2007-08 is \$25.42m. I do not know where the \$11m comes from. Are you saying you do not know where the \$11m has gone? I cannot see any \$11m difference.

Ms CARNEY: If you take out from the 2006-07 budget papers, there is \$824 000 from Business and Skilled Migration, \$6.936m from Industry Development and Investments, \$1.781m from Innovation and Knowledge Economy, and \$2.775m from Industry and Economic Policy. What happened to the \$11m to \$12m? I am not suggesting that it has literally gone missing, but I cannot work out where it has gone from those output groups to the new ones. I will not make the question any longer than it needs to be, but it might assist, if you look at the budget for Regional Development in 2007-08 it is \$5.890m.

Mr VATSKALIS: Right.

Ms CARNEY: But the budget for regional – hang on, sorry, I will withdraw that. In any event, where is the \$11.933m?

Mr VATSKALIS: Leader of the Opposition, I am looking at my budget from 2006-07 and 2007-08, the budget for 2006-07 is \$22.951m ...

Ms CARNEY: Sorry, you said \$22 ...

Mr VATSKALIS: \$22.951m.

Ms CARNEY: Can we just – sorry.

Mr VATSKALIS: That is regional.

Ms CARNEY: Okay, you are looking at the 2006-07 budget?

Mr VATSKALIS: For regional. The 2006-07 estimate was \$25.511m, and the budget for 2007-08 is \$25.424m. There is only ...

Ms CARNEY: Sorry, just to interrupt you there so that we are both looking at the same numbers. You are looking at page 161, Budget Paper No 3, 2007-08 for those figures. Yes?

Mr VATSKALIS: 161?

Ms CARNEY: Yes.

Mr VATSKALIS: Right. The 2006-07 estimate is \$25.511m?

Ms CARNEY: Yes.

Mr VATSKALIS: The 2007-08 budget is \$25.424m?

Ms CARNEY: Yes.

Mr VATSKALIS: The difference is \$87 000?

Ms CARNEY: Yes.

Mr VATSKALIS: Where is the \$11m you are referring to?

Ms CARNEY: If you look at the 2006-07 budget at page 127 and, if you take out, as has been taken out, the following output group areas on page 127 - this may well assist. Do you have 2006-07?

Mr VATSKALIS: No, I do not have that.

Ms CARNEY: It is probably going to assist us all.

Mr VATSKALIS: We do. Sorry, we do.

Ms CARNEY: You have it? Okay. Page 127, Budget Paper No 3 2006-07. Removed because of the restructure, the changes in the budget papers ...

Mr VATSKALIS: Yes.

Ms CARNEY: I have put lines through the areas that are no longer part of, or listed specifically, in these 2007-08 budget papers, because they have all been clumped into together. Yes?

Mr VATSKALIS: Yes.

Mr GALTON: Jodeen, can I answer your question?

Ms CARNEY: Yes.

Mr GALTON: Where I think you are coming from is that those programs you have put a line through because it says deleted, actually fold back up. They are all still part of the program. What has happened is that seven output levels collapsed into three, but none of the funding has changed. All it is, is a different way of simplifying what the department does. It has put three outputs in place instead of seven which were in place last year. There is no change in the funding, and there are no programs which have dropped off.

That is why I am having difficulty in understanding where this \$m11 ...

Ms CARNEY: Because what I did ...

Mrs BRAHAM: If you look at column C, this takes into account the ones they have.

Mr CHAIRMAN: Member for Braiting.

Mrs BRAHAM: I am just trying to assist with the maths.

Mr CHAIRMAN: I appreciate that, but ...

Ms CARNEY: What I did was physically put a line through those groups which have now been deleted.

Mr VATSKALIS: Now I understand what you are referring to.

Ms CARNEY: Then I added up what allocation they had, got to a figure of \$11.933m, and then tried to transpose them onto the 2007-08 budget papers and had a missing \$11m. I could not see where it was because, on the 2007-08 budget papers, compared to 2006-07, there is only an increase of \$2m.

Mr MALONE: What has happened is that those programs you see listed under output for 2006-07 - including Industry Development Investment; Business and Skilled Migration; Innovation Knowledge Economy; Industry and Economic Policy; and Indigenous Economic Development - still exist, but they exist under the headings of Regional Development, Business Development, and Economic Development 2006-07 or 2007-08. The programs have not been deleted. It is just the name is changed.

Ms CARNEY: If you were to transfer the allocations from the 2006-07 budget papers you would say the figures would slide directly back into the 2007-08?

Mr MALONE: Absolutely.

Ms CARNEY: And that they would work out and balance?

Mr VATSKALIS: That is right. The output of Business Development is the combination of the old Business and Skilled Migration, Industry Development and Investment, and Business Development.

Ms CARNEY: Sorry, Business Development comprises ...

Mr VATSKALIS: I will start it from the beginning.

Ms CARNEY: Yes. You said Business and Skilled Migration?

Mr VATSKALIS: Industry Development and Investment ...

Ms CARNEY: Yes.

Mr VATSKALIS: ... and Business Development. Those three are now combined in one called Business Development. The new Regional Development is a combination of the Regional Development and Indigenous Economic Development. The Economic Development now is a combination of the Innovation and Knowledge Economy, and Industry and Economic Policy. They have not disappeared; they have been amalgamated to form the new three outputs - consolidated.

Ms CARNEY: I see. So, by putting Industry Development and Investment, which is in the 2006-07 budget papers of \$6.498m, you would add that to \$6.182m, plus a couple of others, and that would get you to the figure of \$14.459m in budget papers 2007-08.

Mr VATSKALIS: The money has not disappeared but we have just put two together ...

Ms CARNEY: Changed.

Mr VATSKALIS: ... put one name and the money just flowed in, in one name.

Ms CARNEY: Okay. All right.

Mr VATSKALIS: Sorry, because they were similar numbers I could not understand where the \$11m you were referring to was, but now I can see what you were referring to.

Ms CARNEY: All right. Thank you for that. As I said, I was not saying ...

Mr VATSKALIS: I can table the table that shows the amalgamation of the different elements of the programs. I can table it.

Ms CARNEY: Okay. And the variation of \$870 000 referred to in budget paper 2007-08, page 161?

Mr VATSKALIS: \$87 000.

Ms CARNEY: I am sorry. \$87 000.

Mr VATSKALIS: Yes.

Ms CARNEY: Well, that makes sense. Thank you.

Mr VATSKALIS: Now, you wanted the answer for the \$87 000?

Ms CARNEY: Yes. I would not ordinarily but because there has been quite a significant change, I will ask for it.

Mr VATSKALIS: Mr Galton.

Mr GALTON: I can explain through a series of increases and decreases between the two years. The key components of the increases were an increase in Innovation Knowledge Economy grants of \$350 000; an increase of \$250 000 for settlement of native title issues in the town of Tennant Creek; \$233 000 of parameter adjustments; and other miscellaneous amounts of \$169 000. They are all increases. Less the

one-off funding for a \$300 000 NT exploration initiative which came out of our budget; \$235 000 came from a regulation reduction incentive fund - the diminishment by the Commonwealth government; \$431 000 of approval carryover from 2005-06. The aggregation of those figures gives you \$87 000.

Ms CARNEY: Will give me \$87 000. Thank you. All right. Back to some more questions.

In the 2007-08 Budget Paper No 3, page 162, it says that the description for regional development is:

... work with economic development committees to advance economic development with a particular focus on indigenous business and support the activities of other government agencies through the delivery of programs and services across the regions.

In the 2006-07 budget, the description for the then regional economic development referred to 'work with regional economic committees'. Obviously the name has changed. I am wondering why the name of the committee has changed when only about a year or so ago, your predecessor talked about the importance of the regional economic committees. Why the name change? Why was it necessary? Is there a difference?

Mr VATSKALIS: I think that it is only the change of the name. It is the name of the structure and the type of the committees and way they were actually working with the department to develop local solutions for local problems. The economic development committee now consists of people who have economic interests and have the interest of economic development in the region. Previously, the committees actually consisted of people with economic interests and other interests, or no interests at all. We are now focusing on economic development of the region. For example, in Alice Springs, the people there on the economic development committee are local businessmen - proven businessmen ...

Ms CARNEY: And women perhaps?

Mr VATSKALIS: And women. Businessmen and women, sorry. I am using it generically. And women. I was very proud to say that they are the first economic development committee in the Northern Territory to produce a plan on a page for the economic development in Alice Springs. It is not only a change of name, there might be some subtle change of the composition of the committee. However, we here now are focusing exclusively on the economic development of the region - not the economic development of the town; the economic development of the region.

Ms CARNEY: The difference between 2007 and 2008 in this area, notwithstanding the changes of names; I note that there was no reference to population growth as an issue. I read, minister, your budget speech you gave in parliament last week, which did not help me. That is why I am asking these questions. You did not give me many hints in your budget speech. Why do you not refer to population growth any more? Does that mean it is not a priority in the region?

Mr VATSKALIS: Of course, it is a priority. You are not going to get people moving to the regions unless you have economic activity. Nobody is going to move to Alice Springs unless there is a future and there are opportunities. We are focusing on economic activity and development of the region in order to attract everything else – the flow-on effects. We had, at one point, 8% population growth in the Territory according to Sensus, and that was before the Australian Bureau of Statistics found the extra 1000 people they could not find before. However, our focus is to develop opportunities and economic activity in the region, and the people will come.

Ms CARNEY: Whereas only a year ago, your strategies were to create a sustainable growth in population and infrastructure across the Northern Territory. How does 2007-08 differ from that, or are you just turning it around?

Mr VATSKALIS: It still is, and the reality is one is linked to the other; you cannot just separate them.

Ms CARNEY: But there is obviously difference in emphasis. What you said earlier was 'build and we will come'.

Mr VATSKALIS: I think we refined what we want to - or refocused what we want to do. Before, we had a very narrow focus on towns; now we have a broader focus.

Ms CARNEY: I move to indigenous businesses, if I might. It is within this area. On 25 May 2005, your government announced its indigenous development strategy, which set a target of creating 2000 jobs per

year for the next 10 years. How many nett jobs have been created for indigenous Territorians in the last two years?

Mr VATSKALIS: I cannot give you an exact for the whole government because it is not only in my department, it includes mining, primary industries and fisheries. In our area only, we have created an extra 120 jobs in the past two years.

Ms CARNEY: Indigenous jobs?

Mr VATSKALIS: Indigenous jobs. As I said before ...

Ms CARNEY: In the last two years?

Mr VATSKALIS: In the last two years. As I said before, in the last year, we created another 70 jobs since the beginning of the Indigenous Business Grant. David Malone can provide some more information.

Mr MALONE: Just very briefly, the IED strategy that was released in May 2005 was actually a partnership document reflecting both the Northern Territory and Commonwealth governments' aspirations along with the private sector and, of course, indigenous people as well. The 2000 number per year was an aspirational goal about what we needed to do to close the gap in parity. I believe Mr Bree spoke earlier in these hearings ...

Ms CARNEY: Indeed. I am looking at exactly what he said, and am very interested to hear what you are going to say, given what the minister has just said.

Mr MALONE: Thank you very much for that.

Ms CARNEY: Do not feel pressured.

Mr MALONE: No, I do not. He spoke about the difficulty in actually measuring some of these areas. Whilst, on occasion, that can sound like an easy out, in actual fact it is a very difficult area to work in. There is a partnership between the Territory and ABS and others in trying to find a methodology that helps us to measure that sort of information.

At the same time, there are some anecdotes coming through that provide some idea of whether we are making progress or not. I suppose that is the thrust of the question in particular. We have some anecdotes that I can provide. You would never want to be held to account for the individual numbers but, certainly, they give some indication of progress being made. For example ...

Ms CARNEY: If you do not mind, thank you. I was more interested in the figure, so I am really not after the anecdotal stuff. I do not want to be impolite. Thank you, but no.

Mr VATSKALIS: Well, as David Malone has advised me, the number of jobs is measured in 100s, not in single figures.

Ms CARNEY: You, minister, said 120 jobs.

Mr VATSKALIS: That is for my department, not the whole-of-government.

Ms CARNEY: Yes, sure. Thank you. On page 162, Budget Paper No 3, there is an estimate of 71 activities to support indigenous business industry participation. What do you describe as an activity? If you have a list of activities in table form, I would be grateful if you would table that.

Mr MALONE: We do not have a list that we can table at this stage, but I am sure that we could develop something for the Estimates Committee. The minister previously showed you that map that had been developed.

Ms CARNEY: The big map?

Mr MALONE: It is a big map. That contains a mixture of - for want of a better term - activities within the department. It includes the grants program that we run for indigenous development projects. It includes the work that the economic development officers do, which I mentioned earlier on. It includes economic development-type projects that we talked about earlier as well, such as the McArthur River Mine

Community Benefits Package. It also includes those projects that we are partnering across agencies, which is probably the hardest area of the lot for us, in working with other departments in the Northern Territory government, the Commonwealth government and indigenous people to develop projects at the grassroots level in communities. I do not have the exact number for that list on the map, but I believe there are something like over 200 in total for projects that have been run through our area in the last financial year.

Ms CARNEY: Thank you. How do you measure the outcomes of those activities? Obviously, it is a pretty broad list of activities. How do you measure the outcomes of each one?

Mr MALONE: There are some really simple measurements, obviously, at the end of the day; that is, the measurements that we use, I suppose, are at the fundamental level, which is about new investment and new jobs. Those are the measures that we look to. However, there is a pathway to get to that particular point, and it would be naive for us to think that by being involved in a project today that we will get an immediate outcome. Some of those activities are as much about introducing people to the principles of a doing business, and introducing people to the models for joint venturing and partnering through investments. Therefore, it is really something that you do on a case-by-case basis. The underpinnings that we have at the end of the day is, obviously, to try to increase the number of businesses operating and the number of jobs that we have across the Territory.

Ms CARNEY: Thank you. I think this question was answered before. How many indigenous enterprises are there in the Northern Territory? Was that a question I asked before?

Mrs BRAHAM: Tabled in estimates – very good.

Ms CARNEY: Was that the one that had 171?

Mr VATSKALIS: No, we said it was ...

Mrs MILLER: Development applications, that is what that was.

Ms CARNEY: Can I ask this question, in any event? How many indigenous businesses/enterprises are there in the Northern Territory now?

Mr MALONE: That is a question that we cannot actually answer today. We would like to. It could certainly help our cause in the work that we do. What we are doing is partnering with the NT Industry Capability Network, which is looking to develop an indigenous business database in parallel with the wider database they have for the business community. We also work with ABS in identifying a standard definition that we can use for indigenous business so that there is consistency across all the work that we do within government and also the private sector.

Mr VATSKALIS: Some of these enterprises are not exclusively indigenous, they might be in partnership with non-indigenous people or enterprises. The answer I gave before was, since July 2006, there have been 119 expressions of interest for the grants program that I mentioned.

Ms CARNEY: Yes. My question was heading towards that, but we will go straight there, especially in line of this tabled document. The tabled document 1004 is headed, Status of Indigenous Business Development Program Applications, and there were 38 applications.

Mr VATSKALIS: Yes.

Ms CARNEY: I would like to know how many indigenous businesses resulted from those 38 applications? I would have thought that the department would know as well - sorry, the minister.

Mr VATSKALIS: Well, the 38 applications here refer to existing or new enterprises. At the moment, this table cannot offer you this information. I believe, as time goes by, that some of those enterprises will continue to grow, some might not. So, we do not have the information yet.

Ms CARNEY: Would you take it on notice?

Mr VATSKALIS: Yes we can provide this information, certainly.

Question on Notice 6.1

Mr CHAIRMAN: Leader of the Opposition if you could restate the question for the purposes of *Hansard*.

Ms CARNEY: How many indigenous businesses/enterprises have there been as a result of the applications contained in tabled document 1004?

Mr CHAIRMAN: Minister, are you prepared to take that on notice?

Mr VATSKALIS: Yes, thank you.

Mr CHAIRMAN: I allocate that question No 6.1.

Ms CARNEY: I take it that the indigenous business grant program that existed in 2006-07 still exists?

Mr VATSKALIS: Yes.

Ms CARNEY: Reading from the estimates from last year, 10 applications were approved. I would like to know how many applications do you estimate for 2007-08? Also, while you are there, through you, minister, to Mr Malone, last year for the program \$300 000 was spent and 10 applications were approved. Can I have the number of applications and the financial estimate for 2007-08?

Mr VATSKALIS: We already have applications for 2007-08. There are 22 applications totalling \$535 930.

Ms CARNEY: Sorry, 22 applications totalling?

Mr VATSKALIS: \$535 930.

Mr MALONE: If I could just add to that. A point I would like to reinforce is these business opportunities are at various stages of development. People come to us and express an interest in participating in the program, so that is the global number that we have to date. Other applications will come in through 2007-08, and some of these applications will drop off as people do the equivalent of pre-feasibility type work and discover the business opportunity does not really stack up. This is our starting point, but it is not a forecast of the programs for the year.

Ms CARNEY: Okay. The indigenous business development program is going to continue, applications are up, money is up. Thank you, everybody.

Mr VATSKALIS: Over-subscribed.

Ms CARNEY: Over-subscribed. That concludes my questions, Mr Chairman, for this output group, thank you.

Mr CHAIRMAN: That concludes consideration of Output 1.1.

Output 1.2 – Business Development

Mr CHAIRMAN: The committee will now proceed to consideration of Output 1.2 - Business Development.

Ms CARNEY: Mr Chairman, we will see if we can get through this quickly as we can, because I know my colleague, the member for Blain, is very keen to ask some questions about sport.

Minister, Business Development in 2007-08 gets \$14.489m - Budget Paper No 3, page 161. In 2006-07, it received \$6.182. Actually, I will not ask that question because that was my question earlier about what happened to the \$11m. I will just put a line through that one. We will move on, and I am glad we will.

How many businesses are there in the Territory, minister? Something I could find was that, in 2004, the former minister said that there was 17 000 according to the Register of Public and Private Businesses. How many are there now?

Mr VATSKALIS: Yes, the Territory had 13 418 actively trading businesses operating in June 2006.

Ms CARNEY: Thirteen thousand ...

Mr VATSKALIS: 13 418.

Ms CARNEY: Is that different from the 17 000 that were listed on the Register of Public and Private Businesses that your predecessor referred to in 2004?

Mr VATSKALIS: Yes, the reason for the difference is because a lot of businesses have been refined and we have refined our database.

Mr GALTON: They were non-trading businesses included that had a business name. They were working from the register of business names rather than actively trading businesses, which we are now more confident about.

Ms CARNEY: Using that formula, if you like - which I agree is more accurate - are you able to provide a comparison for the preceding two years? It is not possible?

Mr VATSKALIS: No.

Ms CARNEY: I am not surprised. Minister, do you know how many businesses pay payroll tax in the Territory?

Mr VATSKALIS: That is Treasury question. We do not deal with that.

Ms CARNEY: The minister for Business does not know? I am sorry, but the minister for Business does not know how many businesses in the Territory pay payroll tax? You are serious? Okay. Do you know how many businesses do not pay payroll tax?

Mr VATSKALIS: These are Treasury questions. They are clearly coming out of the portfolio of the Treasurer.

Ms CARNEY: Sure, but you, as Business minister, would be talking to businesses all over the place.

Mr VATSKALIS: I am happy to bring this information to you.

Mr CHAIRMAN: Would you like to take that on notice?

Ms CARNEY: I can take that on notice.

Mr VATSKALIS: I can take it on notice. I am happy to do that.

Mr CHAIRMAN: Would you asking one or two question, Leader of the Opposition?

Ms CARNEY: Yes, I can bundle them up as one.

Question on Notice 6.2

Mr CHAIRMAN: Please ask the question, Leader of the Opposition.

Ms CARNEY: Minister, how many businesses in the Territory pay payroll tax and how many do not?

Mr CHAIRMAN: You are happy to take that on notice?

Mr VATSKALIS: Yes, Mr Chairman.

Mr CHAIRMAN: Thank you, minister. I allocate that question No. 6.2. I will just note, as I have with other agencies, if someone could make a note of the numbers being allocated to the questions so that when you come back with the answers we can correlate them easily. Thank you.

Ms CARNEY: Minister, how much payroll tax did the government receive in 2006-07?

Mr VATSKALIS: That is a Treasury question, Leader of the Opposition.

Ms CARNEY: Well, of course, you are the minister for Business.

Mr VATSKALIS: Yes, I know, but the payroll department is clearly tax which comes under Treasury. I cannot give you a figure of how much money would be taken by the Territory government. That is clearly a Treasury question and should be asked to the Treasurer.

Ms CARNEY: I accept halfway, that yes, it is a Treasury matter. However, at the same time, minister, as minister for Business, you sing the praises via media release and other communications of what your government apparently has done for businesses in the Territory in relation to payroll tax. I did not think it was too much of a tall order to ask you questions about payroll tax. I would hate to think that you actually do not know anything about payroll tax as Business minister, and that you try to give the impression to those in business that you do ...

Mr CHAIRMAN: Leader of the Opposition, I ask you to withdraw those comments.

Ms CARNEY: Can I speak to that, Mr Chairman? As I said, I hate to think that that would be the case. I certainly made no disparaging assertions that it was.

Mr CHAIRMAN: The imputation was there.

Ms CARNEY: Okay. Just to move on with matters I will put it like this. I ask the question, Mr Chairman. Minister, do you think that some business people in the Territory, when they find out that the Business minister does not know how many businesses pay payroll tax and how many businesses do not, and how much payroll tax went into government coffers, might think ...

Mr CHAIRMAN: Leader of the Opposition ...

Ms CARNEY: Mr Chairman! ... might be disappointed?

Mr CHAIRMAN: Leader of the opposition, you are asking for the minister to express an opinion on what you do not know businesses think or do not think, and what the minister does not know what businesses think or do not think. I believe that is an unreasonable question to be putting in this process.

Ms CARNEY: I will put it this way, Mr Chairman. Minister, do you accept that as minister for Business you should know something about payroll tax?

Mr VATSKALIS: Leader of the Opposition, I am not a tax collector. I am a business development minister. I am not there to tell people how much money to pay or what to pay. What I know is that our government has brought payroll tax down from 6.5% to 5.2%, and the Territory has the lowest tax for business in Australia because businesses with fewer than 100 staff pay the lowest taxes.

Most businesses in the Territory are small to medium businesses that do not have more than 100 people. Big businesses pay payroll tax, but I am not here to find out how much tax they pay. As a matter of fact, if they have a lot of staff and pay more tax, I am very happy because that means more employment, more economic activity.

I am not here as a tax collector. That is the job of Treasurer. I am here as business development minister and I do my utmost to develop business and to increase business activity here.

Ms CARNEY: Of course, and you will appreciate that the questions were asked because you, like me, would be talking to lots of business people and the relevant business people usually say to any politician and, indeed, anyone else who walks through the door, and will always complain about payroll tax.

Mr VATSKALIS: Well, surprise, surprise! A very small number of people complain about payroll tax because a very small number of businesses pay payroll tax.

Ms CARNEY: Ah, minister, but you said you do not know how many businesses pay payroll tax and now you say it must be a small number. Which one? How do you know?

Mr VATSKALIS: It is a small number because of the small number of businesses that are complaining to us. Most of the business people that I meet in my everyday life do not pay payroll tax. The newsagency

does not pay payroll tax. The coffee shop does not pay payroll tax. The small and medium enterprise does not pay payroll tax because they have a small number of people or they do not exceed the payroll tax-free threshold.

Ms CARNEY: Minister, you would be aware, I trust, that payroll tax has increased from 2003-04 from \$100.6m to 2006-07 \$137.3m. You produced the enormous map before. The size of my graph does not match, but the colours are much better. You have seen this sort of stuff before. Are you concerned that government's collection from payroll tax has increased?

Mr CHAIRMAN: Minister, I am going to ask you not to answer that on the basis that it is a payroll tax question which should be directed to the Treasurer rather than you.

Ms CARNEY: Mr Chairman, with respect, you are being somewhat interventionist tonight. The minister was answering some of my questions and I know well enough ...

Mr CHAIRMAN: On the basis ...

Ms CARNEY: Well, Mr Chairman ...

Mr CHAIRMAN: On the basis, Leader of the Opposition, that the minister has already on two or three occasions said that payroll tax questions should be directed to the Treasurer, not him ...

Ms CARNEY: But Mr Chairman, he referred to a small number of businesses who paid payroll tax, so he has himself halfway in.

Mr CHAIRMAN: He referred to discussions he had and, on the basis of his meetings with individual businesses, not in terms of a discussion on payroll tax figures. Can we move on from this, Leader of the Opposition, to what must be a long list of important questions you have for this minister?

Ms CARNEY: Mr Chairman, I wish to record my protest for the purposes of *Hansard*. Prior to your intervention tonight, I thought you had been an even-handed Chairman. For the record, you have now demonstrated a partisanship that I did not expect ...

Mr KIELY: She will tell on you.

Ms CARNEY: With those comments, I will move on. I note the mutterings from the member for Sanderson who really should keep his mouth closed.

Mr KIELY: Well, I have noticed your mutterings, Leader of the Opposition.

Mr CHAIRMAN: Order! Order, please!

Ms CARNEY: Minister, do you know how many businesses closed in 2006-07?

Mr VATSKALIS: As you are probably well aware, the Territory has a very transient population. Businesses open and close all the time in the Territory. You might have a business closing and the same owners move somewhere else and open another business. Closing businesses in the Territory is not a direct indication of the economy ...

Ms Carney interjecting.

Mr VATSKALIS: Closing businesses in the Territory ...

Ms CARNEY: My apologies, minister.

Mr VATSKALIS: What is a direct indication of the economy is the number of bankruptcies. In the Northern Territory, it has completely declined from 2006. In the March quarter, we had two business bankruptcies in the Territory compared to 1202 in Australia. That indicates that the bankruptcies in the Territory are extremely few and, of course, that is an indication that the economy is going gangbusters.

Ms CARNEY: Thank you. Do you know where the businesses closed? Do you have a regional breakdown for Darwin, Alice, Katherine, Tennant?

Mr VATSKALIS: No, I do not have a breakdown. As I said to you before, they register a business and, certainly, businesses do not re-register themselves in a period of time. We would not know how many of them are closing, when they closed, or why they closed.

Ms CARNEY: Do you know how many businesses opened?

Mr VATSKALIS: Well, because the businesses have to register with the department.

Ms CARNEY: And that is your only indicator?

Mr VATSKALIS: Yes.

Ms CARNEY: When I asked you how many businesses there were in the Territory, Mr Galton said earlier 13 418, and that was different from the original 17 000 described by your predecessor last year or the year before. He referred to a different formula that was used to calculate the number of businesses.

Mr VATSKALIS: That is more refined as a base.

Ms CARNEY: I would like some clarification, because you used the word 'register', which I did not think was the name of the particular formula to which Mr Galton referred in his answer. Do you make an assessment of how many businesses opened by this register, that I thought from your original answer you do not use any more. Where do you get that number? How do you calculate it?

Mr GALTON: There is some confusion here. What I was talking about are actively trading businesses versus non-actively trading businesses. The large number that we had previously included a lot of businesses that were not actively trading.

Ms CARNEY: They were on a register?

Mr GALTON: Their names were.

Ms CARNEY: Yes.

Mr GALTON: What has happened since is that we have trolled through the register and now have a more accurate register of businesses that are actively trading.

Ms CARNEY: Oh, I see, so it is the same register?

Mr GALTON: Yes.

Ms CARNEY: Thank you.

Mr VATSKALIS: Also, there were a number of businesses that were trading, they had a whole list of business names owned by the same people, for very obvious reasons in some cases. When we decided that now when you register you have to pay a registration fee, a lot of these people decided not to register their multiple names, or the multiple variances of a name. There were people who had 20 and 30 varying names. As an example, we had great difficulty trying to find something for Tourism NT, because people had different variances of this particular wordings. If they wanted it, they had to pay to use it, but now they have decided to pull it out.

Ms CARNEY: Yes, I remember that was the rationale of your predecessor when he introduced fees for the first time in the Territory's history which was, as you know, somewhat controversial.

Mr VATSKALIS: No, that is not for the first time in the Territory's history.

Ms CARNEY: Registration - that businesses had to register and it cost them?

Mr VATSKALIS: Yes, I know. I am familiar with that, because when I was working before I got into politics, I had to register my own small business, and I had to pay a fee.

Ms CARNEY: What, that was down south, was it?

Mr VATSKALIS: No, that was here in the Territory.

Ms CARNEY: Well, there you go. You will remember the controversy about that measure. However, I am not here to talk about that. I want to get on with this business.

Mr VATSKALIS: Leader of the Opposition, I know there was a controversy ...

Ms CARNEY: Absolutely! And they are still unhappy about it.

Mr VATSKALIS: ... but one of the things that my department is actively doing now is actually promoting what services it will provide to businesses. In that case, people must realise they might pay a \$60 or \$80 registration fee but, at the same time, they can get free seminars, free workshops, free advice from the department which, if you go out to buy in the market, would cost you hundreds, if not thousands, of dollars.

Ms CARNEY: Minister, what have been the three biggest initiatives of the department in the last 12 months?

Mr VATSKALIS: One of my biggest initiatives in the department is the negotiation with McArthur River Mine of the McArthur River Community Benefit Fund, the establishment of the Economic Development Committees, and the Indigenous Economic Development initiatives.

Ms CARNEY: Do you include in that the Indigenous Employment Strategy which we were talking about that was launched in 2005?

Mr VATSKALIS: I am talking about the indigenous grants and the successful provision of grants to indigenous business, small and big.

Ms CARNEY: Thank you. Procurement. There is always criticism from business about procurement practices. Can you say what you have done in the last 12 months to improve procurement practices for business? It might just be an advisory thing, but I am interested, and I know that businesses are interested as to what moves this department has made in relation to improving procurement practices.

Mr GALTON: This department does not have any role in setting procurement policy or direction.

Ms CARNEY: Yes, sure.

Mr GALTON: We have received constant feedback from industry that the achievements by the Northern Territory government in lifting the threshold from \$10 000 to \$50 000 between quotes and tenders for projects has made a huge difference with the ease of tendering and winning work with the government. As far as the department is concerned, the procurement liaison function internally within the department is resolving ...

Ms CARNEY: The long-standing issues.

Mr GALTON: ... 95% of outstanding issues. There were 66 activities, 66 different businesses that came to us in the last 12 months. They have solved 63 of those 66 inquiries.

Ms CARNEY: Through you, minister, is it your expectation that you would expect numbers of businesses to go to you to discuss procurement difficulties? Would you say on the basis of what you said that you would expect that number to reduce in 2007-08?

Mr GALTON: No I would not go that far. That would depend on the state of the economy and how much businesses want government work.

Mr VATSKALIS: We will see some change also in the procurement process. DCIS is introducing new forms. We had very positive comments the other day that before, for procurement up to a certain amount, a form of 50 or 60 pages now has been reduced to four, and that is a very positive comment by businesses. It has been simplified and they do not have to spend hours filling in a procurement form. It can be done in 10 or 15 minutes, and that is very important.

I would like to see that becoming simpler even for larger amount of monies. Businesses can be identified now. Certainly, with IT technology, we can actually have the identity of businesses in our computers. Click that and you already have an ID number instead of filling in, every time, information about the economic activity, economic capacity, and insurance. That should be updated at least once every

quarter or every six months. It is something we have been discussing about reducing the red tape. We cannot do everything at once but, certainly, we will be prepared to discuss it to see. If it can be done, it will be done.

Ms CARNEY: I assume that, because of the impact it has on business, it would have been a priority in 2006-07, and that it will continue to be right up there in the list of priorities because it is still a long way from being anywhere near perfect. It is better, but still not all the way there.

Mr VATSKALIS: We had a number of initiatives. I remember five years ago, you could not pay your driver's licence, let us say, via the Internet. Now you can do it. The IT technology has advanced so much you can do things now that you could not do before. We have to aspire to get these kind of transactions.

Ms CARNEY: Skilled migration comes under this output?

Mr VATSKALIS: Yes.

Ms CARNEY: The figures are difficult because of the change of structure of the agency. In the 2006-07 budget papers, it was estimated there would be 25 skilled migration activities. In this year's budget, the estimate was revised to 275, which includes education and skilled migration awareness activities. I suspect that is why the number has increased, because it is a lumping together of activities. Do you expect to see - I am sorry I cannot see it in front of me. Ah! You have lumped together business education and skilled migration awareness activities. How many of the estimate of 297 for 2007-08 is actually skilled migration? Are they two separate things - business education and skilled migration - or are you lumping them in together and called them something different?

Mr VATSKALIS: Can I take that on notice? I do not have activities, I have numbers. I can provide the answers with numbers, but I do not have the information for activities. I will take it on notice and we can provide this information.

**Question on Notice 6.3
(Did not proceed)**

Mr CHAIRMAN: Leader of the Opposition, if you could restate the question for the purposes of *Hansard*.

Ms CARNEY: It is always hard after a bit of time, Mr Chairman. In the performance measures in this Output Group called 'Business Education and Skilled Migration Awareness Activities Conducted', can you provide a breakdown for 2006-07 and 2007-08 of the business education activities conducted and the skilled migration awareness activities conducted?

Mr CHAIRMAN: Are you prepared to take that on notice, minister?

Mr VATSKALIS: I think Mr Galton might have the answer on that.

Mr GALTON: No, I do not have the answer. I do not believe we would have that figure. What we do have is a manager of the Business and Skilled Migration area, who travels up and down the track conducting business that would include both of those. I do not think it would be able to physically separate those two groups.

Mr CHAIRMAN: Do want to keep the question as it was, or amend it in some way?

Ms CARNEY: Okay. It is subject to just having a look at the last year's budget paper - where are we? DBERD. Sorry, just bear with me, minister. We might be able to either cut this short or change the question. How about we deal with it this way? You will be happy, Richard. In light of your answer, I will not press the question.

Mr CHAIRMAN: Minister, I call a five minute recess at this time so that we can get up and stretch our legs a bit. If you could be back at about 8.35 pm. That will add five minutes on the end of the session.

The committee suspended.

Mr CHAIRMAN: Thank you, minister. I invite the Leader of the Opposition to continue her questions in the output.

Ms CARNEY: Minister, I move to business improvement programs, which was on the list of performance measures, I am sure. In the 2006-07 Budget Papers, it was stated that '10 400 clients were assisted through business improvement programs. The estimate for 2007-08 is 12 860'. Can you provide a list - and if you have it in table form, can you table it - of the programs that were offered in 2006-07, and those to be offered at this stage in 2007-08, identifying if there are any new ones?

Mr VATSKALIS: Just a minute, Leader of the Opposition, we will find the information requested.

Mr GALTON: I have a copy of the programs that are offered. They were offered last financial year and will be offered next financial year.

Ms CARNEY: Happy to table that, minister?

Mr GALTON: Happy to table that. There will be no change between the two years.

Ms CARNEY: There are several references to clients in the performance measures for Business Development. Can I ask how data is collected in the counting of the number of clients? Specifically, is it any form of contact with your office - phone calls, e-mails, that sort of stuff?

Mr GALTON: That is correct. Every time a client comes in the Territory Business Centre in Darwin and the three regions, it is registered as an approach and then is categorised in what the approach is - whether it is for licence renewal, for new licence, registering of names, or for assistance. It is done both over the telephone, as well as direct approaches over the counter.

Ms CARNEY: How many of those approaches become people who obtain assistance? I am looking at, obviously, like any business, lots of people ring up. How many actually gain assistance from your department? How many approaches are more than just one-off approaches?

Mr GALTON: The vast majority of them receive direct assistance. I am going to be hazarding guesses, and I do not know whether that is what you are after. At least 80% of the people who approach us are after a direct service, or redirection to another department for a service.

Ms CARNEY: Getting back to Business and Skilled Migration. Budget Paper No 3, page 163, business and skilled migration applications certified is listed in 2006-07 as 500, and 2007-08 as 520. How many people are now working in the Territory as a direct result of their skilled migration applications having been certified?

Mr VATSKALIS: We cannot give you an accurate answer for that, because we are a regional certifying body here in the Territory. However, people can be certified in Brisbane or another place and come to the Territory and work for a company that has business branches in Brisbane or Sydney. We can actually give you some information about the people who have applied for a business skilled application here in the Territory and we, as a regional certifying authority, have said yes.

However, even those numbers are deceptive because you might be applying for a migration as a skilled person, but there are four people coming with you because, in some cases, not only the person who gets the approval comes, but brings the family. For example, in 2006-07 until 31 May, we had 86 applications, but the number of visas granted was 182, because not only the person arrived, but with him came the family as well.

Ms CARNEY: Okay, so it is not possible at all to ...

Mr VATSKALIS: To provide you an accurate figure of how many people work in the Territory under a 457 visa, because not all of them are certified from the Territory government's regional certifying body.

Ms CARNEY: Out of the 500 applications certified in 2006-07, there is no way of telling how many of those certified applications actually translate to workers in the Territory?

Mr VATSKALIS: The certified in the Territory is an accurate number, but how many people in the Territory come in with a 457 visa I cannot tell you. Some of them might have been certified in Brisbane or in Sydney and have come here as a direct transfer, let us say, to Alcan or another company that employs these people.

Ms CARNEY: I do not mean to be rude by asking, minister, and it is a serious question. Is that satisfactory? You put this in the budget paper for good reason ...

Mr VATSKALIS: Yes.

Ms CARNEY: I just think it would be useful for us to be able to go the next step and give an indication as to how successful it was. We have the number of applications in the budget papers, but that does not translate ...

Mr VATSKALIS: That is an estimated number of applications.

Ms CARNEY: Sure.

Mr VATSKALIS: The accurate number is actually 444 until 31 May 2007, so we are very close to the estimate.

Ms CARNEY: Yes.

Mr VATSKALIS: That is only what has been approved by us. I cannot give you a number of how many people are actually foreign workers working in the Territory.

Ms CARNEY: Thank you. That answer knocks out a couple of questions. In fact, it knocks out quite a few questions, minister, you will be pleased to hear. At estimates in 2004, your predecessor talked about the government strategy called Making it in the Territory, as well as the business and skilled migration strategy. He said that that helped to grow and develop business capabilities and capacities to build the Territory workforce. Are those strategies - and particularly, the Making it in the Territory one - still alive and well? Is it?

Mr VATSKALIS: The manufacturers' strategy, yes.

Ms CARNEY: Sorry. Say again?

Mr VATSKALIS: The manufacturers' strategy. Yes.

Ms CARNEY: Okay. Any idea how many jobs were created as a result of that strategy in 2006-07, and do you have an estimate for 2007-08?

Mr VATSKALIS: I cannot give you a direct number of jobs but I might be able to provide you at a later date - again, it is difficult to extract direct numbers.

Mr CHAIRMAN: Can I ask you to restate the question, please, Leader of the Opposition?

Ms CARNEY: How many direct results have been created in the Territory in 2006-07 as a result of the program, 'Making it in the Territory'?

Mr VATSKALIS: It was not a program; it was a strategy. There is a difference between strategy and program.

Ms CARNEY: Strategy, sorry. Strategy. Yes, I get it.

Mr VATSKALIS: With a strategy, you do not create jobs, you put in the foundations ...

Ms CARNEY: As a result of the Making it in the Territory strategy ...

Mr VATSKALIS: We cannot provide you the number of jobs because of the strategy. It is not a project with predefined or expected outcomes. With a strategy we put the planks of what we want to achieve and how will we achieve it. We did not say we were going to achieve so many jobs.

Ms CARNEY: Okay.

Mr CHAIRMAN: Do you still want to put the question on notice, Leader of the Opposition?

Ms CARNEY: Well, in line with the minister's answer, I am not sure that there is any point because you have said you are not able to tell us how many jobs were created as a result of the strategy. Have I understood you correctly?

Mr VATSKALIS: No. I said it was a strategy. A strategy is actually to put the foundation for assisting the industry to grow. You cannot say: 'I will create so many jobs'. With the manufacturers' strategy, we said that we had a four-part plan as a foundation, and the plan included growing manufacturing opportunities and markets ...

Ms CARNEY: Do you call it – sorry - manufacturing?

Mr VATSKALIS: Yes. That is the Northern Territory Manufacturing Strategy 2004-09.

Ms CARNEY: Okay. This might be an interesting run from ...

Mr VATSKALIS: And making a subtitle of that, yes.

Ms CARNEY: Okay. Take my word for it, minister, that in the *Hansard* of 23 June 2004 quoting minister Henderson, it actually says the Making it in the Territory strategy. So there is no such thing called Making it in the Territory. Correct?

Mr VATSKALIS: It is a subtitle of the Northern Territory Manufacturing Strategy.

Ms CARNEY: It is a manufacturing strategy.

Mr VATSKALIS: It is the same thing.

Ms CARNEY: It is the same thing? Okay. You are saying, minister, that a strategy develops business capabilities and capacities to build the Territory's workforce but you cannot provide the numbers.

Mr VATSKALIS: There was never an element or a strategy to produce a number of jobs. It was actually to assist the manufacturing industry by growing the opportunities in the market, by developing the manufacturing skills, creating strategic partnerships, and promoting and supporting manufacturing.

Ms CARNEY: Thank you. Another one of the performance measures in Budget Paper No 3 at page 163 is 'Territory Businesses and Organisations Provided with Financial Assistance'. This is a new inclusion. I do not think it was in the 2006-07 budget papers. You have estimated that in 2007-08 there will be 200 Territory businesses and organisations provided with financial assistance. You have estimated in 2006-07 it is 180 businesses provided with financial assistance. Can you tell me how much financial assistance was provided to those 180 in 2006-07, and how much you expect to be provided to the 200 in 2007-08?

Mr VATSKALIS: In 2005-06, we provided 148 businesses with financial assistance at a cost of \$2.5m.

Ms CARNEY: \$25m?

Mr VATSKALIS: \$2.5m - sorry. My apologies.

Ms CARNEY: I thought that was high.

Mr VATSKALIS: Yes. Our estimate for 2008 is that we expect to go to 150 companies assisted at a cost of \$2.8m – nearly \$2.9m.

Ms CARNEY: Did you provide me with the figure for 2005-06?

Mr VATSKALIS: 2005-06, yes - 148 was the number of businesses for \$2.5 m. For 2006-07, there were 132 businesses assisted at \$2.138m and, for 2007-08, we forecast 150. Sorry, my apologies. The projection in expenditure for 2007-08 is \$2.8m. However, we cannot, of course, foretell how many people will come for assistance to us, but we expect it will be the same number.

Ms CARNEY: Did you in 2004?

Mr VATSKALIS: No. 2005-06, 148 businesses, \$2.5m.

Ms CARNEY: Yes.

Mr VATSKALIS: 2006-07, 132 businesses, \$2.13m. For 2007-08 we cannot forecast the number of businesses, however, we believe it will be approximately the same number worth approximately \$2.9m.

Mr GALTON: To provide some clarity there on that figure for 2006-07, what the minister has given you is the actual expenditure to 31 May, but actually committed for the remainder of this financial year was another \$843 000.

Ms CARNEY: Would you be willing to table a list of those businesses that received financial assistance in 2006-07?

Mr GALTON: I believe that assistance is listed at the back of the annual report.

Ms CARNEY: Is the Trade Support Scheme still operational?

Mr VATSKALIS: The Trade Support Scheme has expended \$270 000 as of 31 May 2007, assisting 58 Territory businesses with an export marketing focus. There is a further commitment, but not drawn yet, of \$156 000.

Ms CARNEY: \$136?

Mr VATSKALIS: \$156 000.

Ms CARNEY: \$156 000. Another performance measure is 'Other major projects, trade fairs and missions supported through facilitation activities'. In 2006-07, it was estimated to be 34 and, in 2007-08, it was estimated to be 39. For 2006-07, what were those major trade projects, trade fairs, and missions, and if you have them in table form, can you table them, please?

Mr VATSKALIS: We will take that one on notice.

Question on Notice 6.4

Mr CHAIRMAN: Leader of the Opposition, could you repeat the question for *Hansard*.

Ms CARNEY: What were the major projects, trade fares and commissions supported through facilitation activities in 2006-07 as appears on page 163, Budget Paper No 3?

Mr CHAIRMAN: Minister, are you prepared to take that on notice?

Mr VATSKALIS: Yes.

Mr CHAIRMAN: I allocate that question No 6.4.

Ms CARNEY: The next one might be on notice too, minister. What were the costs of each of ...

Mr VATSKALIS: Well, we will provide you this information as well.

Ms CARNEY: Okay, question on notice?

Question on Notice No 6.5

Mr CHAIRMAN: If you could repeat it, Leader of the Opposition.

Ms CARNEY: What were the costs of the major projects, trade fares and commissions supported through facilitation activities as listed on page 163, Budget Paper No 3.

Mr CHAIRMAN: Will you take that on notice, minister?

Mr VATSKALIS: Yes.

Mr CHAIRMAN: I allocate that question No 6.5.

Ms CARNEY: How are the outcomes of major projects, trade fares and commissions supported through facilitation activities measured?

Mr VATSKALIS: We can perhaps combine all these questions and will supply them to you. However, the brief answer is that the outcomes in some of these activities is the number of contacts with industry made in the different areas, the number of contacts of industry that comes with us or with the department officers in these areas, and the number of possible contracts that can be arranged or signed between Territory businesses and interstate and overseas interests that were made during these contacts.

For example, in one of the recent trips in Singapore to promote Darwin as a hub for the oil and gas industry for service, one of the people who came with us actually had a significant agreement made in Singapore with one of the local participants, the local suppliers. He has a contractual agreement now to supply in Australia some of the products for a local manufacturer.

Ms CARNEY: You listed in there, before you went to the example, three measures. You also said, before you got to them, that you would provide further information.

Mr VATSKALIS: Yes, we can provide this information.

Ms CARNEY: For the purposes of *Hansard*, are outcomes measured in ways over and above those you have described?

Mr VATSKALIS: Yes, for some of those areas.

Ms CARNEY: Yes, I just wanted to get that clear. I do not have any more questions in relation to these, so I am happy to move on.

Mr CHAIRMAN: Member for Braitling, do you have questions?

Mrs BRAHAM: Thank you, Mr Chairman. Some of them have been covered by the Leader of the Opposition. How many Defence Community Liaison Officers do you have and where are they located?

Mr VATSKALIS: We have one Defence Community Liaison Officer, and he is located within the department. However, that does mean that he is only operating in Darwin, because there are Defence facilities in Katherine and Darwin. The role of Defence Liaison Officers is to actually find out what problems are faced by people who are posted to Darwin so they can actually facilitate the individuals with departments.

The other thing it also does is to promote Darwin as a place to come and work, because one of the problems we had in the past was that a lot of people thought Darwin was too far away, too hot, too uncivilised and did not want to come up here ...

Mrs BRAHAM: Oh, they are right!

Mr VATSKALIS: Now they have found out Darwin, according to the words Brendan Nelson used: 'It is easy for me to get them up to Darwin, it is difficult for me to get them out of Darwin again'. The liaison officer does a very vital role within the department for the whole of the Territory.

Mrs BRAHAM: Is it a Northern Territory departmental officer?

Mr VATSKALIS: Absolutely.

Mrs BRAHAM: Okay. It is not an Australian Defence officer. Is there any indication of how much the Defence budget is worth to Darwin? Also, looking at Pine Gap and Jingili in Alice Springs, how much would they be worth to the economy?

Mr VATSKALIS: One thing I want to correct is that he is a Northern Territory government officer, but the cost of wages and everything are shared between the Commonwealth and the department.

Mrs BRAHAM: Oh, okay.

Mr VATSKALIS: What was the question?

Mrs BRAHAM: Sorry, it was the estimation of the benefit to the economy of Darwin and Alice Springs from the Defence Force. For instance, in Alice we have the Pine Gap and Jingili 'Horizon' and Darwin, obviously, do not. Do you have figures on that?

Mr VATSKALIS: In 2005-06 Defence expenditure in the Territory represented 8.6% of our gross state product.

Mrs BRAHAM: True? Of the Territory budget?

Mr VATSKALIS: Yes. The Defence community, the personnel and the families, represent around 6% of the Territory population – not the Darwin population, the Territory population. In Darwin, it is actually much higher.

Mrs BRAHAM: Do you have the figures of how many are based in Darwin and in other parts of the Territory?

Mr VATSKALIS: No, I do not think the department has that information.

Mrs BRAHAM: Is Lyons subdivision mainly being built on Defence houses?

Mr VATSKALIS: No, it is 800 blocks for the Defence Housing Authority, 400-plus will be private development.

Mrs BRAHAM: The Defence is actually buying them and building those houses, and using them for the ...

Mr VATSKALIS: No, all the blocks are allocated and Defence has made a commitment to rent a number, and they make arrangements with the owners.

Mrs BRAHAM: There is concern in Alice Springs about fly-in/fly-out from the Tanami to Perth, and the number of businesses that were actually not using Alice Springs for supplies any more. Has that been changed?

Mr VATSKALIS: That is probably an appropriate question for the minister for Mines. I am very well aware that the government is trying to promote Alice Springs for supplies. However, big companies do centralise their procurement offices. Unfortunately, Newmont has decided to go to Perth. We would still prefer them to purchase their goods from Alice Springs. We need to work further with the Alice Springs community and suppliers because service and supplies make a lot of difference.

Mrs BRAHAM: That is right. At the moment, we are obviously losing a lot of business for that reason. Probably because of the road, minister. If we could actually put money into building more of that road and sealing it, it would be good.

Mr VATSKALIS: Well, the supplies from Perth have to come by road to the Tanami, and the road on that side of the border are no better than Tanami.

Mrs BRAHAM: What is wrong with us?

Mr VATSKALIS: It is probably the price and the service.

Mrs BRAHAM: How many businesses are at Brewer Estate at the moment?

Mr VATSKALIS: Where, sorry?

Mrs BRAHAM: Brewer Estate.

Mr VATSKALIS: The Brewer Estate was developed by the previous government as a noxious industry facility. The only thing that is out there is the power station, and the old refinery, but I cannot remember the other. The refinery has been pulled down.

Mrs BRAHAM: Part of that land been earmarked for the new power generation, which I know is not your portfolio.

Mr VATSKALIS: The new power generation will go to Brewer Estate.

Mrs BRAHAM: To Brewer Estate. So, the rest of the land that is vacant there?

Mr VATSKALIS: It is available for other companies to establish, especially if they are noxious industries.

Mrs BRAHAM: Okay. I do not really have any more questions, Mr Chairman. I am happy to go quickly on to Sport and Recreation.

Mr CHAIRMAN: Okay, member for Blain. Output 1.2.

Mr MILLS: Thank you, Mr Chairman. Firstly, before I ask the question, I am interested in the coordination between this department and Asian Relations and Trade. Can you describe to me how one connects with the other and the reporting structures one between the other?

Mr VATSKALIS: Asian Relations is in the Chief Minister's Department.

Mr GALTON: DBERD looks after the bucket of money, but gives a portion to trade assistance for Asia. We do not actually play any role in determining who goes where for what.

Mr MILLS: All right. If the determination of who goes where and does what is not driven from within this department, are there those within this department who go on missions under the direction of the coordination of Asian Relations and Trade?

Mr VATSKALIS: The department goes on trip relevant for our activities. For example, if there is an expo or a trade fair, or oil and gas opportunities to supply or services, my department will go. People in my department will go and they have gone not only overseas but also interstate. So our focus for the department is narrowing to what is actually relevant to our department. It is not to promote trade with Asia.

Mr MILLS: No, I understand that, minister. I am wanting to understand how these things are coordinated. We had some statements made here two nights ago which were in very general and woolly terms about Asian Relations and Trade. It must connect with your department. I am trying to understand how that connection is made, and how one talks to the other, and how directions set by Asian Relations and Trade are effected through your department.

Mr VATSKALIS: As I said before, we have a very narrow focus on what we are doing in our department. However, when we decide to go somewhere, we would receive briefing and advice from the Department of Asian Relations and Trade because they have been out there for a long period of time and they have intimate knowledge of the Asian region. Also, they have the contacts. Of we, let us say, go to Brunei for a trade fair for mining or primary industries, we will be receiving advice from the Department of Asian Relations and Trade. We would seek from them links so when we arrive there we will know who are the right people to meet in the right area. We work very closely, not in isolation.

Mr MILLS: Yes, no I understand that. I have heard all of that. I am wanting to understand how it works. If you are going to Brunei, for example, is that an initiative of the department, or is it under the instruction of Asian Relations and Trade?

Mr VATSKALIS: It would be an initiative of the department. For example, if I go to Brunei tomorrow as a minister for Sports to have a meeting, let say about the Arafura Games, that would an initiative of my department. Then, apart from the people we know, we might be asked for other people as well. To give an example, in my previous capacity as the minister for Primary Industries, I went to the Philippines. However,

the minister for Sport asked me if I could host a cocktail party for the officials of the Philippines Sports Commission to bring Arafura Games athletes here, and I was quite happy to do it. However, all the links information would be provided by different department.

Mr MILLS: You detect from what I am asking it, I want to know how this works. Is there a coordinating role, is there a committee, or a regular point of contact so that these things can be coordinated?

Mr VATSKALIS: We deal directly with the Department of the Chief Minister on this issue.

Mr MILLS: Is it a fluid arrangement? Is there a working group? Do they meet at set times or is it just as fancy takes it?

Mr GALTON: We just work at officer level, so we have a complete understanding. If they are going overseas and provide an opportunity for us to leverage off what we are trying to achieve within DBERD, we make arrangements with them.

Mr MILLS: But how is that activated? Is it just that you happen to run into each other or ...

Mr GALTON: We have close relationships with all government departments, not just with the Chief Minister's.

Mr MILLS: So is it coordinated from Asian Relations and Trade?

Mr GALTON: If Asian Relations and Trade are going overseas on business, they would be advising us, to see if we want to accompany them; and whether there are any objectives we wish to achieve going overseas. They are the sorts of questions they would be asking this department.

Mr MILLS: If this department has an interest in going to the Philippines, for example, is there a formal mechanism whereby Asian Relations and Trade are brought into that plan?

Mr VATSKALIS: Yes, you can say that because they will provide a full briefing to us about the Philippines, about previous contact with the Philippines, previous arrangements with the Philippines, people to meet in the Philippines, things to discuss, things to avoid, opportunities with the Philippines, and things already signed with Philippines not being fulfilled.

Mr MILLS: Well, help me get a bit closer then. If officers of this department or the minister go on a trip, how do they report to Asian Relations and Trade? How is that information fed into the coordinating functions of Asian Relations and Trade?

Mr GALTON: I would be liaising directly with someone in the Chief Minister's Department, advising them we are going overseas for such and such a reason.

Mr MILLS: Okay, good. There is at the end of a trip which has had understood objectives, there is a report on that trip that is ...

Mr GALTON: Absolutely, and that report is provided to the minister.

Mr MILLS: Okay, this minister or the Chief Minister?

Mr GALTON: My minister.

Mr MILLS: Right. Would that report then go to the Chief Minister with regards to her capacity as the Asian Relations and Trade Minister?

Mr VATSKALIS: If there are issues that affect areas outside my department specifically, then it would be forwarded to other people for consideration, not only the Chief Minister. For example, we went to Singapore for oil and gas. There was an issue raised about them wanting to acquire sand because Indonesia stopped the sale of sand to Singapore. That issue was brought back and forwarded to the Department of Primary Industry, Fisheries and Mines, and they had discussions with suppliers in Darwin.

Mr MILLS: Minister, how many trips have been conducted overseas by you in the last year?

Mr VATSKALIS: One.

Mr MILLS: One.

Mr VATSKALIS: One, but that question was asked by the Leader of the Opposition when she asked how many trips were overseas, what was the purpose, and what it cost.

Ms CARNEY: No, that was not of you.

Mr VATSKALIS: I am sorry. My apologies. In this portfolio with regard to business, it is one. There was another one as part of my Sports portfolio.

Mr MILLS: Right.

Mr CHAIRMAN: Excuse me, minister for Blain. I have just had a message passed to me from *Hansard* requesting that any mobile phones be turned off. There is some interference with their recording equipment.

Mr MILLS: Yes, I could hear that upstairs. Thank you, Mr Chairman. May I request a copy of reports that are made on any trips overseas? Are they secret documents or are they accessible to anyone who may request them - say a shadow minister?

Mr GALTON: Aren't reports done back to parliament? I thought the minister always reported back to parliament.

Mr MILLS: With respect, those reports, if you were on my side of the equation, are very short and fluffy little reports. We are looking at something a bit more substantial that matches with objectives set by the department, the expenditure of public money - not just a travelogues.

Mr VATSKALIS: We can provide some reports from these trips for you.

Mr MILLS: I would appreciate that. There is nothing sinister in this, minister. It is just that the estimates process helps us to understand the nature of these trips, the matching of objectives, and making sure that we are moving closer to our goals.

Mr VATSKALIS: I am happy to provide you with a briefing about it.

Mr MILLS: Yes. I am after the report. If I wanted further information as a result of reading that report, I would seek a briefing.

Mr GALTON: I have only been in the job for eight months, and there has only been one report in those eight months, and that was the minister's trip overseas.

Mr MILLS: Yes, that is all I am after.

Mr VATSKALIS: That was the only trip we did.

Mr MILLS: Just the one.

Mr VATSKALIS: Yes.

Mr MILLS: Thank you. So will we get them at the end of this?

Mr VATSKALIS: We will give you the report. There is no problem. We will give you the report.

Mr MILLS: No, I know, but does that mean that the report comes at the end of this session or sometime in ...

Mr VATSKALIS: We cannot give it to you at the end of the session, but we will provide the report as soon as possible.

Mr MILLS: Okay, thank you.

Mr CHAIRMAN: All right. That concludes consideration of Output 1.2.

Output 1.3 - Economic Development

Mr CHAIRMAN: The committee will now consider Output 1.3 - Economic Development.

Ms CARNEY: Mr Chairman, I have more questions but, in the interests of time, I have cut some back. Minister, the output for Economic Development on page 161 says that it 'provides strategic programs and activities to support sustainable economic and regional development with a focus on regional development and the development of competitive Territory businesses'. In light of that definition, when I turn to page 164 under Performance Measures, there is no material there to advise me of the numbers of programs or activities that are listed on page 161.

Mr GALTON: I refer you back to page 161, Leader of the Opposition. You will see that the output group listed as Economic Development encapsulates the three outputs being Regional, Business and Economic Development.

Ms CARNEY: Oh, I see. Okay.

Mr GALTON: So that you turn to ...

Ms CARNEY: Oh, that is the general one for all three outputs?

Mr GALTON: Yes.

Ms CARNEY: Oh, so that would explain. That is the answer to my question, thank you. I do, however, have another question in relation to this output. How are the outcomes measured for success in economic development that has a budget of \$5m? You have a list of performance measures there, but are there other ways you measure the success of this output group?

Mr GALTON: A significant proportion of the budget for Economic Development - in fact, I might invite Larry Bannister to talk about the Research and Innovation funding, and the awarding of ...

Mr BANNISTER: Larry Bannister, Innovation and Knowledge Economy Group. On Research and Innovation funding, we had \$1m allocated in that category between 2004-05 and 2006-07. In the current budget, 2007-08, the government has approved a further allocation of \$350 000 for that fund.

Ms CARNEY: Thank you. There is a footnote on page 164, and there is a reference to various one-off projects in 2006-07. Can you provide a list of those various one-off projects in 2006-07, and if you have them in table form, can you table them please?

Mr GALTON: Would you mind restating the question?

Ms CARNEY: On page 164, Budget Paper No 3, footnote 1 is 'various one-off projects in 2006-07'. What were those various one-off projects, and if you have them in table form, can you table them please?

Mr VATSKALIS: I will take that question on notice, Leader of the Opposition

Question on Notice No 6.6

Mr CHAIRMAN: Leader of the Opposition can you restate once again for *Hansard* please?

Ms CARNEY: Footnote 1 on page 164 of Budget Paper No 3 refers to 'various one-off projects in 2006-07'. Can you provide a list of those various one-off projects, and if you have them in table form, can you table them please?

Mr CHAIRMAN: Minister, are you prepared to take that as a question on notice?

Mr VATSKALIS: Yes.

Mr CHAIRMAN: I allocate that question No 6.6.

Ms CARNEY: Thank you, I will leave it there, minister. Thank you, everybody.

Mr CHAIRMAN: Any further questions on Output 1.3?

Mrs MILLER: In the area which covers Economic Development, Regional Development etcetera, how do you develop indigenous art industries in regional areas? Does that come under the minister for Environment and the Arts, or do you play a part in that as well?

Mr VATSKALIS: This output is about developing economic policy.

Mrs MILLER: Okay.

Mr VATSKALIS: Your question would probably come under Aboriginal development. We have provided grants under the Indigenous Business Grants program to people who actually want to do art in regions. Christine Christopherson was one of those artists who wanted a grant to establish a place where she can paint her paintings. That is indigenous art.

Mrs MILLER: Are you able to provide a list of indigenous artists who have applied for assistance to set up art industries in their communities? Are you able to provide that list?

Mr VATSKALIS: Only the ones who have applied to us for a grant under Indigenous Business. They are included in the list which I tabled.

Mrs MILLER: They are included?

Mr VATSKALIS: Yes.

Mrs MILLER: Thank you.

Mr VATSKALIS: Others who have applied specifically for art, probably come under NRETA. All the requests for art comes via NRETA and there is an interdepartmental working group that sits down and discusses the funding and who is going to fund it, how much and where.

Mrs MILLER: All right. So, your department does have some input into that final ...

Mr VATSKALIS: Yes, but we are focusing on businesses.

Mrs MILLER: All right. Okay. Thank you.

Mr CHAIRMAN: If there are no further question, that concludes consideration of this Output Group 1.0.

Non-output Specific Budget-related Questions

Mr CHAIRMAN: Are there any other non-output specific budget-related questions?

Mr VATSKALIS: Can I make a clarification, Mr Chairman, before we finish?

Mr CHAIRMAN: Yes, minister.

Answer to Question No 6.2

Mr VATSKALIS: The Leader of the Opposition asked for the number of businesses that currently pay payroll tax. We have been advised by the Treasurer that 1400 business currently pay payroll tax in the Northern Territory. Of course, we know we have about 13 500 businesses, so about 12 000 businesses do not pay payroll tax. Also, the number of businesses that are not paying payroll tax is not recorded as it is a self-assessment tax. We only deduct the number of people who pay against the number of businesses registered, and we find that 12 000 businesses do not pay payroll tax.

Mr CHAIRMAN: On behalf of the committee, I thank the officers who provided advice to the Minister for Business, Economic and Regional Development today. The committee will now move onto the Land Development Corporation.

For the purposes of *Hansard*, that answer was the answer to question 6.2.

LAND DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

Mr CHAIRMAN: Minister, I invite you to introduce any new officials with you and make an opening statement, if you wish, on behalf of the Land Development Corporation.

Mr VATSKALIS: Thank you, Mr Chairman. I made my statement before. Mr John Coleman is here from the Land Development Corporation.

Ms CARNEY: Hello, Mr Coleman.

Mr CHAIRMAN: Are there any questions?

Ms CARNEY: Yes. I am after some clarification of the Land Development Corporation's website. I had a look at the website today - and I will not quote everything that is here - and it refers to an area at Glyde Point on the Gunn Point Peninsula as being identified as a potential site for a major gas-based industrial estate and associated port activities, possible gas manufacturing projects, and the like. In light of comments made, I think, by the Chief Minister and, perhaps, a couple of other ministers in relatively recent weeks, I would like some clarification from you, minister, as to what you have in mind for Glyde Point? Do you see Glyde Point as a potential site for a major gas-based industrial estate?

Mr VATSKALIS: That question would be most appropriately put to the minister for Lands. It has nothing to do with the Land Development Corporation or Business and Regional Development.

Ms CARNEY: Do you know, then, why it might have been on the Land Development Corporation's website today?

Mr VATSKALIS: That was actually from the past; it was a remnant from the past. The web page has not been updated yet as we do not have any further information on this issue. As you understand, the Land Development Corporation was established for land for strategic development. That area was identified by the previous government as well as land possible for strategic development. That was incorporated by the Land Development Corporation of the time has not been changed because we do not have any change yet.

Ms CARNEY: So the information on the website today is no longer current?

Mr VATSKALIS: From what we know. We are waiting for clarification from the minister for Lands.

Ms CARNEY: I cannot recall word for word and it would be too cumbersome to go through the *Hansard*, but I am fairly certain that the minister for Lands today was not supportive, or indicated that she was not supportive of heavy manufacturing industry on Glyde Point. Indeed, the member for Nelson had, as you would expect, quite a bit to say about that. Can I ask, as the minister responsible for the Land Development Corporation, is it your intention to develop Glyde Point in a way which would accommodate a major gas-based industrial estate?

Mr VATSKALIS: The Land Development Corporation does not develop industrial estates. The Land Development Corporation is a holder of the land. The only reason it has been there, and is still there, is because we have not received any official notification or correspondence by any minister saying it is off the agenda. I am not going to move something without getting something from my fellow ministers. It does not matter what I think. The reality is if it is going to happen it has to go through a process, and if it is not going to happen it has to be a different process.

Ms CARNEY: Just to be clear, you have not ruled Glyde Point out?

Mr VATSKALIS: I am not ruling anything in or out. I am only there as the person responsible for the Land Development Corporation. That area was identified a long time ago and the only reason it is still on the web page is, until I receive official notification, I cannot modify the web page. If we receive the notification then it will be removed, or modified accordingly.

Ms CARNEY: So you have received no notification ...

Mr VATSKALIS: Not yet.

Ms CARNEY: ... from any of your ministerial colleagues?

Mr VATSKALIS: No yet. It has to be a certain process before we act ...

Ms CARNEY: Sure. Are you expecting any in relation to any industrial development?

Mr VATSKALIS: What can I say on that one?

Mr MILLS: If I can help, the Chief Minister has made some statements regarding the status of that land. I guess that would trigger in your mind an expectation that there is going to be a change in the classification, or the intent, of that portion of that. Would that be the case?

Mr VATSKALIS: Yes, but in my position, until we receive the official instrument to advise us of change of planned use or anything else, how am I going to change the government document because the web page is a government document?

Ms CARNEY: But the web page of the Land Development Corporation today says: 'An area at Glyde Point has been identified as a potential site for a major gas-based industrial estate and associated port facilities'.

Mr VATSKALIS: That statement is there because that plan was identified a long time ago, and it has remained until now as such. The government may decide that they will go through a process to rezone or stop any development. The Land Development Corporation is not a corporate entity; it is a statutory authority, and they have to be advised by the government what is going to happen there before they do any changes. It is bureaucratic and process, but this is what happens.

Ms CARNEY: Do I understand from your answer that the information that was on the website today has been there for years?

Mr VATSKALIS: It has been for a period of time.

Ms CARNEY: How long?

Mr COLEMAN: John Coleman, General Manager, Land Development Corporation. As far as I know, as soon as the website was created it was envisaged that estate would be a future estate and it was on the website.

Ms CARNEY: Can I ask when the website was created?

Mr VATSKALIS: When the Land Development Corporation was created.

Mr COLEMAN: Unfortunately, I do not know off the top of my head.

Ms CARNEY: It is not, I take it, updated regularly?

Mr COLEMAN: As soon as there are changes to estates, we make changes.

Mr VATSKALIS: The other thing, of course, is that this area has been identified and already gazetted under the *Planning Act* as a certain area. Until that zoning is changed, how can we change the web page? How can we change an official government document or an official statutory authority document if there is no change in designing as it appears in the current Planning Scheme?

Mr MILLS: Minister, are you aware of any process that would effect that change? Is there anything on foot at the moment through the systems that you describe that will, ultimately, result in a notification of change?

Mr VATSKALIS: I believe there is concern about Glyde Point and I share some of these concerns because of the proximity of environmentally sensitive areas, both onshore and offshore. In fact, nobody has come to us to propose, let us say, a smelter or some industry that needs a big area or certain development. There have been opinions expressed by the Chief Minister and other members of government but, to become a government policy, it has to be examined and assessed by the whole-of-government. It has not happened yet.

Mr MILLS: That is what I was going to say. It has not been formally assessed yet?

Mr VATSKALIS: No, it has not happened yet.

Mr MILLS: Opinion has been expressed, but nothing formally has been put into process?

Mr VATSKALIS: No, not yet. If you have any further questions on that, because of the planning aspect, it should have been asked of the minister for Lands.

Ms CARNEY: Minister, are you aware of Nolans Bore, the place in Central Australia where Arafura Resources has an application before the Mines minister to mine for uranium in Central Australia? Are you aware of that application?

Mr VATSKALIS: Leader of the Opposition, I am absolutely aware of this process. As a matter of fact, Nolans Bore is not a uranium mine. Nolans Bore started as superphosphates, but now they have discovered that it is very rich in rare earths. The target now for Arafura Resources is to process rare earths and the polyphosphate or the phoric-bearing ore they can utilise as fertiliser.

Ms CARNEY: Minister, you are aware of the plan from Arafura Resources that will - and you have seen this sheet, of course, and you have the picture of the open pit mine. Minister Natt will be interested in that because he is a bit funny on that. The big truck, the stockpile, the crusher, a pretty extensive flow chart, the train bringing the product up to Darwin and the uranium extraction and the uranium oxide? Right? Given the Chief Minister's stated preference for Middle Arm as opposed to Glyde Point, unless the Land Development Corporation ensures that this project happens at Glyde Point, then the only place that it can happen is at Middle Arm. Will you, as the minister responsible for the Land Development Corporation, ensure that Glyde Point is the preferred location for the processing of product that, amongst other things, produces uranium oxide?

Mr VATSKALIS: Leader of the Opposition, Nolans Bore and Arafura Resources have not even started mining yet. They do not even have an application before the minister for Mines. You are talking about a process that probably will start in 2010. In addition to that, depending on what kind of process it is, it has to undergo a number of assessments, and the outcome will probably determine where this product will go. The uranium to which they are referring, and that was reported in the media, is not a uranium extraction. It is clearing or removing any impurities from the phosphate in order to be sold as fertilizer. The uranium oxide, of course, is a by-product because the ore contains uranium. Nobody said it is going to go to Middle Arm. Nobody said it is going to go to Glyde Point. It cannot go to Glyde Point and they cannot actually establish anywhere else because of the process. Again, you will probably have an opportunity to ask the Mines minister tomorrow about it.

One thing I have to tell you is that the Land Development Corporation is there to make land available for strategic purposes. Arafura Resources can buy land. What they are going to put on that land will depend on the approvals that they get from a number of ministries, including the minister for the Environment and the minister for Mines.

Mr WOOD: And the EPA.

Ms CARNEY: Minister, are you aware of a media release issued today by Arafura Resources, in which they say in the first paragraph: 'Arafura Resources has been holding preliminary talks with the Northern Territory government about a rare earth processing plant in Darwin'. They also say that: 'as a consequence of this operation, the operation is likely to produce small volumes of uranium oxide, less than 200 tonnes per year'. They go on to say that the footprint of the processing plant is relatively small, about 25 ha, which compares with about 120 ha for the ConocoPhillips' LNG plant. Minister, given the media release issued today, are they having talks with you?

Mr VATSKALIS: No, not in my current capacity as minister for Business. I have been briefed by them in my previous capacity as a minister for Mines.

Ms CARNEY: So you know about this; you know about the plan?

Mr VATSKALIS: I know about the plan.

Ms CARNEY: You have probably seen the same sort of things that we have.

Mr VATSKALIS: I know about the process. There was no discussion with me about the possible location of the plant. As Arafura says in the first paragraph, 'preliminary discussions' – very early discussions because, as I said before, they propose to open the mine in 2009-10. Again, it is the Mines portfolio and you should probably be asking my colleague, the member for Drysdale, tomorrow.

Ms CARNEY: We will. I accept that but, given that something like this has to go in one of two places, and that you are the minister for the Land Development Corporation, we thought this was an opportunity to ask you about this.

Mr VATSKALIS: I do not think the Land Development Corporation have been approached by any mining companies to purchase land to establish a project.

Mr CHAIRMAN: I take this opportunity to announce that the member for Nelson has replaced the member for Braiting. Go, Gerry!

Mr KIELY: Did not notice she had gone!

Ms CARNEY: We can read each other's minds. Minister, can you just bear with me on the basis of this document I have just been handed.

Mr MILLS: Perhaps while you are perusing that, may I ask a question?

Mr CHAIRMAN: Yes.

Mr MILLS: I was interested to hear you inquire, minister, whether any approaches had been made of this nature on that piece of land. That indicates to me that approaches are made from time to time on proposed uses of land. Are they documented or record?

Mr VATSKALIS: If it is an approach like somebody who gives you a ring and talks to you about something, of course, you are not going to record it. However, if it is ...

Mr MILLS: A formal approach.

Mr VATSKALIS: ... a formal approach and a letter to the Chairman of the Land Development Corporation, of course, it would be recorded.

Mr MILLS: Okay. They are registered somewhere and available for scrutiny?

Mr VATSKALIS: Yes.

Mr MILLS: Where are they assessed?

Mr VATSKALIS: Mr Coleman can answer that.

Mr COLEMAN: We keep a record of all incoming correspondence within our system.

Mr MILLS: Okay.

Mr COLEMAN: As soon as we receive something like that, we will make sure the CEO of our organisation and the minister were aware.

Mr MILLS: Can I, therefore, request a copy of the register of interest in any of the holdings of the Land Development Corporation?

Mr COLEMAN: Current applications?

Mr MILLS: Yes.

Mr VATSKALIS: Some of them are commercial-in-confidence.

Mr MILLS: Right. There is no form in which it could be presented which screens that sensitivity from the register?

Mr COLEMAN: Yes, we could provide a list.

Mr MILLS: I would appreciate that. Thank you.

Ms CARNEY: Minister, a week ago, on 20 June 2007, in parliament when asked a question by the member for Nelson, the Chief Minister said that when she launched Creating Darwin's Future last year, one of the questions that was put to the community was and I quote:

... should we continue with that focus on Glyde Point for future industrial development, or should we focus it more on Middle Arm?

I will keep reading the quote because it will assist:

That was put out to the community, through the displays that we had at shopping centres and it was put to the forums. I had a number of different forums with key stakeholders and, essentially, there were no complaints aired when we said let us leave Glyde Point ...

Let us leave Glyde Point:

... and look at further developments on Middle Arm ...

Minister, in light of your earlier answers, are you and the Chief Minister at odds regarding future development and where it should go as between Glyde Point and Middle Arm?

Mr VATSKALIS: Absolutely not. As I answered before, if you have an area which currently has a certain zoning, that zoning has to change before you get a new zone. Glyde Point is currently zoned future development. Land identified there was vested to the Land Development Corporation. If the zoning tomorrow changes ... No, let me correct that. It did say it has been zoned as developed.

Ms CARNEY: Sorry, say again.

Mr VATSKALIS: That area has been zoned as Developed. It is now Developed. If this area changed tomorrow, say, to Conservation, they will change the zoning as Conservation. The land is not vested to the Land Development Corporation. When they change the zoning, then it will disappear because it will not be listed as future development. There is a certain process to be followed, and this process has to be finalised before anything changes in official documents. Even in the official government maps, it appears even now appears as DV. Until it changes, it will appear as DV, as development zone.

Ms CARNEY: Thanks, minister. I will leave it there and await with great interest to see what happens to this. I take the opportunity of thanking your department. I am done. I know other people have questions. I have a sneaking suspicion the member for Nelson probably has some questions as well. Thanks, everybody.

Mr CHAIRMAN: Before we do that, that might be a convenient time for a quick couple of minutes break. We will not have a formal five minutes, we if we just take a couple of minutes and come straight back.

The committee suspended.

Mr CHAIRMAN: Member for Nelson.

Mr WOOD: Thank you, Mr Chairman. Minister, if you were to use the so-called Wickham industrial estate, as it is called, what kind of industry would you expect to go there?

Mr VATSKALIS: Member for Nelson, we are on the Land Development Corporation. Your question has nothing to do with the Land Development Corporation. Land Development Corporation currently has land vested only at the harbour area and the Defence hub and nowhere else.

Mr WOOD: Minister, the budget highlights under Land Development Corporation says 'examining the potential for and establishment of other business park environments including the Defence Force hub, the

Brewer industrial estate in Alice Springs, Wickham industrial estate, Middle Arm and Glyde Point'. That is right in your area.

Mr VATSKALIS: We do not have any land vested in the Land Development Corporation at the Wickham estate or East Arnhem Point. They might be examining; it has not been directed to us. The land is vested to us, yes, the Brewer Estate, the Defence hub and East Arm port. I can show you the map.

Mr WOOD: I have the map. I know where Wickham is. I know. This is your portfolio.

Mr VATSKALIS: We do not have land vested to the Land Development Corporation at Wickham Point.

Mr WOOD: Minister, I will put it in the terms of the statement in the budget highlights. Have you examined the potential for the development of industry in Wickham industrial estate?

Mr VATSKALIS: We do not examine the development of industry; that is not our business. Our business is, if they vest land to us, to provide this land for strategic development. We have no plan. We cannot examine the development of any industry because that is not our core business.

Mr WOOD: Can I ask who wrote the budget papers?

Mr COLEMAN: If I might clarify? Of course, the Land Development Corporation is aware of what is happening in other government agencies, and that they are looking at industrial developments at Wickham and other areas. They will come to us and ask: 'What do you think if, in the future, we hand this estate over to you?' However, at this point, Wickham is not part of the Land Development Corporation's estate but, of course, they keep us informed.

Mr WOOD: That is okay, but the way it is written, it makes it out as if it is a role of yours. I know where you are coming from now, but it is not the way it is written in here - as though you are an active participant in what is going to happen there.

Minister, in relation to Defence Support, I know some people on Wallaby Holtze Road would be very annoyed if I did not raise the issue of the development which is going to occur there. Whilst I support the concept, and it going on an appropriate piece of land, do you realise some of that development is in the wetlands of that area? In fact, I showed a photograph of two magnetic anthills this afternoon which are on the southern end of that proposed development.

Mr COLEMAN: Mr Wood, we are aware there are some smaller areas that are subject to inundation - the southern side of the Defence hub. The intention is that the area will be engineered so that it will be re-profiled so those areas will drain into the right areas.

Mr WOOD: Looking at the map, of course, it is meant to be built on, so it is more than engineered. I gather it is to be filled and developed.

Mr COLEMAN: There are some small areas which will be, as a result of the land being re-profiled, yes, that area will be developed.

Mr WOOD: Re-profiled and engineered is another way for saying 'we are filling in the wetland'. Is that correct?

Mr COLEMAN: It is a small area of land that gets inundated, and it is not every year it gets inundated. We have had people out there having a look at the site, and we are well aware of which areas around there are subject to inundation.

Mr WOOD: Okay, I will probably have to face off at the next Development Consent Authority. Is the Land Development Corporation looking at other land in that area, or in the area of the Army? Are there any other proposals?

Mr VATSKALIS: That Defence hub is developed specifically to accommodate what we want to achieve, the through-life support for the Abrams tanks and anything else which related to the Army. That has been modelled on similar examples in the United States. There is a preference, both with the United States Army and our Army, to have the facilities to repair and maintain their vehicles and their equipment as close as possible to their barracks for safety reasons, especially the Abrams tank, which is a very high technology tank. The manufacturers, and the United States, are very concerned about safety to the extent that people

who have dual nationality are not allowed to handle some of the sensitive equipment for security reasons. Some of the equipment in the tank is not allowed to be serviced by people who have European nationality because of the possibility of industrial espionage.

We are trying to facilitate our Defence forces, and to ensure that, if we are going to succeed in getting the through-life support of the tanks, we can do it, and we can do it well and very close to the place where they are going to be stationed. The other thing of course is that the last thing you need is a 100 tonne tank being driven ...

Mr WOOD: Sixty-four.

Mr VATSKALIS: ... or a 64 tonne tank being driven through the city of Darwin in order to go to a service place. I would rather have it next to the barracks for a very short drive, or even direct entry or access to the barracks.

Mr WOOD: I do not have a problem with that minister; I just have some problems with the total development of the piece of land that has been set aside, and there is other land relatively close to the barracks that was an alternative but, as I said, it has been rezoned. The issue of how much of that land should be developed will be decided through the Development Consent Authority.

Minister, it says here that strategic issues facing your agency include 'continuing to develop long-term land use master plan and marketing strategies for the development and sale of government land, which has strategic industrial value'. Considering there are a number of areas, one of which is the Wickham Point industrial area and the other Glyde Point, have you in mind any other areas to which you are giving consideration for this long-term land use?

Mr VATSKALIS: Not at this stage.

Mr WOOD: So, you have more or less come to the end of what you need to do at the present time?

Mr VATSKALIS: We have enough land now at the East Arm area for us to accommodate strategic development, and we try to maximise the land coverage and use of those areas, rather than actually looking for new development. As I said before you entered the room, we do not even have land vested to us at Glyde Point.

Mr WOOD: Well, if Dow Corporation came along to you tomorrow and said: 'We want to build a chemical plant in Darwin', where would you advise them to look for a piece of land?

Mr VATSKALIS: We are not about to advise them anywhere. We would probably work with them to find out a suitable area that is going to provide them - not only them but also the people of Darwin - security about the possible impact it might have on the environment of Darwin. You do not put a chemical factory in the middle of Darwin, or in the middle of the harbour. Something like that would have to be considered in view of what they are going to produce and what the process is. It has to go through a certain process to get approvals. I cannot recommend straightaway where they are going to go, and probably they are going to be looking for areas to accommodate a facility with a minimum impact.

Mr WOOD: You made your point there, minister, you said it is not going to go in the middle of the harbour. It is not the impression I got from the Chief Minister the other day, but I totally agree with you. I believe it should go somewhere else. Have you been involved in the environmental impact statement work for Glyde Point? Have you been asked for any input into that?

Mr VATSKALIS: No.

Mr COLEMAN: I cannot speak for the history of the LDC. To my knowledge, I do not believe the LDC was directly involved as a corporate entity.

Mr WOOD: Minister, we did speak today, when we were talking about the Port Authority, about the opening up of the Hudson Creek area. Is that an area you would be concerned with, or is it just Planning and Lands?

Mr VATSKALIS: Planning and Lands.

Mr WOOD: You would not be involved in that as one of your areas?

Mr COLEMAN: If I might? Hudson Creek is an area over which we have made an arrangement with the Department of Planning and Infrastructure that all of East Arm that, for land that is not held privately, people will come to us so that there is a one-stop shop approach. If there is land adjoining those Hudson Creek properties which might be Crown land, then other agencies would point them to us now.

Mr WOOD: Has the area around Hudson Creek had planning approval, or will require planning approval before it is developed?

Mr COLEMAN: The area is zoned DV. As with any other area, any development will require subdivision and then, because it is a particular zoning, they will have to go through a development application.

Mr WOOD: Which, unfortunately, will go through the minister, not a Development Consent Authority. But that is another issue. Do you only deal with land, or do you actually deal with buildings as well?

Mr COLEMAN: We actually have some buildings, with in the order of 11 tenants, at East Arm in the old Trade Development Zone. So we do have buildings and we do deal with land.

Mr WOOD: I was given this media release about this company, Arafura Resources Limited, which is looking at having a processing plant for rare earths. I recall, maybe about 10 years ago, there was a British company, who put a factory - I am not sure of the site, I think it was in the Hudson Creek area or somewhere there - processing rare earths. They were given an exemption from planning by being made part of the TDZ. Do you know if that company still exists? Is it still doing that kind of work, and if that block of land still belongs to the Trade Development Zone? It was a British company.

Mr COLEMAN: I do not know of the company operating out there. The TDZ no longer exists. It is all under the Land Development Corporation, and I know of no exemption from planning available to them.

Mr WOOD: It just seemed a coincidence. I am fairly sure that company was processing some fairly, I suppose, noxious metals at that time that they had from waste products from mining, I believe. They were given a specific site away from the existing TDZ. I have not heard any more about them. I know they did operate for a while. I just did not know whether Arafura Resources was also going to set up something similar to it. Have you heard of Arafura Resources setting up in the East Arm Port area?

Mr COLEMAN: No, I am not aware of them setting up in the East Arm area. I do not have a history of 10 years ago.

Mr WOOD: The reason I remember is because it would have been subject to planning, but the government, at that stage, decided to call it part of the TDZ, which escaped planning scrutiny at that time.

Mr COLEMAN: I can assure the member that there is no exemption from the zoning requirements at East Arm.

Mr WOOD: Because the TDZ is now finished?

Mr COLEMAN: That is correct.

Mr WOOD: I have no more questions.

Mr KIELY: I have some questions. Minister, does the proposed nuclear waste repository at Muckaty Station come under any NT jurisdictional or planning guidelines?

Mr VATSKALIS: Member for Sanderson, that has nothing to do with DBERD or Land Development Corporation. My understanding is that the Commonwealth has moved to remove any part from the Territory to do anything in areas selected for a nuclear dump, to the extent that we cannot even apply native title or environmental legislation. The Territory has been removed from that process by special act of parliament.

Mr KIELY: So this government and the people of Northern Territory will not have the opportunity to ensure that the environmental safeguards are adhered to?

Mr VATSKALIS: I am afraid not.

Mr WOOD: With the Commonwealth process they will. It is not totally true.

Mr KIELY: I am asking the minister. When you get into government, Gerry ...

Mr CHAIRMAN: Order!

Mr KIELY: ... then you can answer me.

Mr CHAIRMAN: Order, member for Sanderson! Was that all your questions?

Mr KIELY: Oh yes, that is all I have about that.

Mr CHAIRMAN: That concludes consideration of Output Group 2.0.

Non-output Specific Budget-related Questions

Mr CHAIRMAN: Are there any non-output specific budget-related questions?

Being under-whelmed by any flagging with that, I will assume there are none. We will move on to Sport and Recreation.