

The Estimates Committee convened at 9 am.

Mr CHAIR: Good morning, everybody. It being 9 am we will recommence the Estimates Committee hearings. Today we are doing Renewables and Energy with Minister Lawler.

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

MINISTER LAWLER'S PORTFOLIOS

RENEWABLES AND ENERGY ESSENTIAL SERVICES

DEPARTMENT OF INDUSTRY, TOURISM AND TRADE

Mr CHAIR: Minister, welcome to today's hearing. Before I invite you to introduce the officials who are accompanying you and give an opening statement, I want to quickly reflect on a couple of standing orders which have come up in recent times. Thank you, Mr Keith, for your reminder.

There is an option available for the minister to request to go *in camera*, if required.

Under Standing Order 233 there is the 'exercise of freedom of speech' as well.

Standing Order 210 is 'Procedures to be followed by Assembly committees for the protection of witnesses'—reflecting adversely on a person.

I remind the committee and those watching of those two standing orders and the option to go in-camera.

Mr MALEY: I do not understand what the option to go *in camera* means.

Mr CHAIR: *In camera* means we can go without cameras. There would be no public viewing of the estimates hearing; it would be a private, closed session.

Minister, I invite you to make an opening statement. I will then call for questions relating to the statement. The committee can then consider any whole-of-government and budget fiscal strategy-related questions before moving on to output-specific questions and finally non-output specific, budget-related questions.

I will invite the shadow minister to ask their questions first, followed by committee members. Finally, other participating members may ask questions. The committee has agreed that other members—and that is anyone who joins us as well—may join in on a line of questioning pursued by a shadow minister rather than waiting to the end of the shadow minister's questioning on that output.

Minister, do you wish to make an opening statement?

Ms LAWLER: Good morning, Chair. I too acknowledge the Larrakia people on whose land we meet today. Good morning to opposition and Independent members.

Thank you for the opportunity today to talk about the wonderful work of this agency. With me today are Shaun Drabsch, who is the Chief Executive Officer of Industry, Tourism and Trade; the Deputy Chief Executive Officer, Anne Tan; Joanna Frankenfeld, who is the Chief Financial Officer; and other staff who may take the chair.

The Office of Sustainable Energy coordinates government's policy strategies and reforms to deliver clean, reliable, secure and least-cost energy to Territorians in line with the Northern Territory Government's 50% by 2030 renewable energy target.

In the Territory and across Australia we are seeing the rapid uptake of renewable energy. The Northern Territory Government's position is that ongoing investment in renewable energy technology will be a joint effort of government, industry, business and the community. The Office of Sustainable Energy coordinates this joint effort.

In comparison to the cost of new electricity generation, the cost of solar and battery storage is lower than the cost of electricity generation using gas. Our pathway towards 50% renewable energy by 2030 needs to be agile. It is guided by the principles of energy security and reliability at least cost.

The Darwin–Katherine power system plan is currently being developed and is expected to be finalised in the third quarter of 2021. The Alice Springs future grid project is also under way.

The Northern Territory Government's investments in renewable energy have enabled a greater uptake of renewable energy technology across the Territory. These include the Home and Business Battery Scheme, which has been incredibly popular across the Territory, with about \$2.8m in Northern Territory Government funding as at 31 March 2021. The latest figures are \$3.3m; I made a media announcement yesterday.

As well, 470 Territory businesses and homeowners have purchased and installed solar PV systems and eligible batteries and inverters. That figure, as of yesterday, was 550 Territory businesses and homeowners. Batteries enable householders and businesses to maximise use of electricity generated from rooftop solar PV systems while contributing to grid stability and reducing power system costs. The Territory government has committed an additional \$2.8m in Budget 2021–22.

In addition to the investments in the Home and Business Battery Scheme, the Northern Territory Government is also investing in the Darwin–Katherine battery energy storage system—the big battery or BESS. A two stage procurement process for a new \$30m, 35-megawatt battery energy storage system began in 2020; that work is continuing.

The BESS will deliver greater system reliability and security in the Darwin–Katherine power network and is projected to deliver cost savings of approximately \$6.4m and emissions reduction of approximately 50,000 tonnes per annum. The BESS is expected to be operational in the second half of 2022.

The Northern Territory Government's renewable energy target includes all Aboriginal communities supplied by Indigenous Essential Services and major regional centres. The government is investing a further \$2m over the next two financial years, in addition to the \$2.3m committed in the 2020–21 budget, into the development of a remote power services framework to facilitate the open and contestable delivery of clean and reliable electricity to the 72 Indigenous Essential Services communities.

A key part of this investment is developing an open and contestable delivery framework to facilitate approximately \$400m of private investment in remote power systems services to communities supplied by Indigenous Essential Services. Work is progressing in 2021 on the detailed analysis of each community to map the optimal renewables development pathway, considering existing energy assets, community aspirations and electricity demand profiles and forecast growth.

A competitive process will focus on maximising opportunities for local industries, creating jobs for Territorians and strengthening local skills and expertise. To kick-start the renewables rollout in Indigenous Essential Services, \$4.3m was approved in the 2020–21 budget for the installation of solar and energy storage in the Wurrumiyanga community. Planning for delivery of the Wurrumiyanga pilot project, which will achieve greater than 50% renewables for the community, is under way and a tender will be released in coming months.

Our investment in renewable energy delivers clean, secure, reliable and least-cost energy to Territorians. It is about maximising the Territory's potential. I thank the incredibly hard-working staff of the Office of Sustainable Energy who are here with me. We are happy to take questions.

Mr BURGOYNE: Buried in the footnotes of the Mining and Energy output, we are told that the variation for the Office of Sustainable Energy output in 2021 is due to the transfer of funding to 2021–22 to align with the timing of program delivery. Does this mean that the office is behind schedule with its program delivery?

Mr DRABSCH: The activities of the Office of Sustainable Energy have been focused on a range of studies and programs and engaging the national energy policy discussions. The timing of some of the work undertaken has altered over the course of the year. There are a number of factors coming into play in relation to COVID and so forth.

Anne Tan, who is the Deputy CEO of the Office of Mining and Energy, which the Office of Sustainable Energy sits in, may be able to add a further comment on the particular programs, where they are at and what funding is being moved from this year into next.

Mr MALEY: Before you start, can I ask a supplementary question? You said something needed to be altered. What has been altered?

Mr DRABSCH: The funding that was allocated in 2020–21 is moving into 2021–22 because the activity which those funds were supposed to pay for shifted into that time period.

Mr MALEY: Can you give me an example of the activity those funds are meant to pay for?

Ms TAN: In relation to the funding that has been transferred (inaudible – microphone off).

The Territory Economic Reconstruction Commission recommendation in relation to the development of a hydrogen master plan meant that we had to refocus resourcing on that particular matter. Some of the work programs we hoped to advance this year have been postponed to next year.

Those work programs primarily relate to the work we were hoping to do in terms of market reforms considering matters coming up in the national energy market space, and aligning the government's policy and strategy positions in relation to those.

Mr MALEY: In summary, does that mean you are delayed in rolling out your schedule? Between both of you? I do not think that either of you has answered the question.

Ms LAWLER: The CE and Deputy CE explained that the program has changed. We will learn more on this topic of renewables over the next few hours of conversations. This is a moving space, which I said in my opening statement.

The government needs to be agile. You could understand that hydrogen is an issue that is ramping up—from the federal government. As the Deputy Chief Executive said, there needs to be funding moved towards the hydrogen project. It was a one-off funding in 2020–21 in renewables in remote communities and the hydrogen trial.

The federal government has put a lot of money into hydrogen. We are one of the five identified hydrogen hubs across Australia; it is an area we are moving towards. The program is not behind, it has changed. In this space we need to be agile, keep our eyes open and move quickly on changes we see from the federal government.

Mr MALEY: You said the program is not behind, it has changed. What has it changed to?

Ms LAWLER: We just spoke about hydrogen. When you say 'the program'—this area of the Department of Industry, Tourism and Trade is small. The Office of Sustainable Energy has 8 staff. It is a small area but it has complex work. The dollars are tight and at times they have been refocused, including this financial year. That is where the change came in.

Ms TAN: To be clear, the work program is still the same. We have shifted resources based on a reprioritisation of the work program. The focus for the team has been on the remote power system strategy, the renewable hydrogen master planning work and the Darwin–Katherine system plan—which is critical in terms of the road map as to how the 50% target will be achieved.

There has been a lot of work that has been needed in relation to the battery energy storage system, in collaboration with Territory Generation. A large piece of work is under way in terms of the NEM gas pipeline changes or gas market transparency changes that are being introduced.

That is the current priority for the team.

Mr MALEY: I am confused. The minister said the program has changed and you said the program has not changed. Where does the truth lie?

Ms LAWLER: It is a change of focus. Sometimes the dollars need to be moved in a small division of the department. The focus of the dollars has changed.

Mr MALEY: The money has changed but the program has not?

Ms LAWLER: The overarching program is for us to get to 50% renewables by 2030. This is about terminology; we had these discussions with you at the last estimates regarding the words 'program' and

'project'. Our goal and vision—our government has a vision, unlike the federal government—is to get to 50% renewables by 2030. That is the overarching vision.

When I meet with the CE and deputy CE, it is about how we get to that position. Then there are changes because of things such as a bigger push for hydrogen. Twelve months ago we would not have had conversations about hydrogen. Things are changing quickly and that is what the department needs to do.

When you see the dollars—they are minimal amounts when you look at the overall budget of the whole agency. It is about making sure we have a focus and can be agile.

Mr MALEY: We are only talking about the program for this financial year. Has that changed?

Mr DRABSCH: As Anne explained, there are a series of projects within the overall Office of Sustainable Energy program. There are new priorities which emerge, such as out of TERC, and the projects themselves have timing issues, such as the undertaking of the renewable power supply—there is a pilot program happening in Wurrumiyanga and a tender process is about to get under way.

Those timings may shift across financial years from month to month—from the second quarter of this calendar year to the third quarter, for example. That has to be reflected in the cash flows we anticipate as we prepare the budget.

The program overall is broad, comprehensive and multi-faceted. The team has done tremendous work to keep up and advance it close to the time frames we anticipated.

Mr BURGOYNE: How much money will be invested in the hydrogen master plan you spoke about before?

Ms LAWLER: The work for the hydrogen master plan is rolling out now. There was a hydrogen strategy out; I am happy to table the Northern Territory renewable hydrogen strategy. Underneath the strategy is more work that has been done to make sure we can have a hydrogen industry in the Northern Territory.

There was one-off funding in 2021–22 for renewables in remote communities and a hydrogen trial. I am happy to talk about the trial; we have done media on this as well. It was about Aqua Aerem. That pilot trial is coming to a peak because we are looking for the information that comes from it.

In Tennant Creek, Aqua Aerem—a company that has quite new technology—is using something similar to solar panels to extract water from the atmosphere. Through extraction they use the water for hydrogen. The gen-backup power plants in Tennant Creek are able to be adapted—not just for diesel or gas generation; they can have hydrogen generation as well.

That trial is something we are excited about. It is very interesting. We need a good source of water for hydrogen. The pilot they have undertaken will provide that information. In a relatively dry climate like Tennant Creek, how do you extract and have enough water to have a hydrogen-run generator system there? The hydrogen trial, as well as the work we are doing—there was one-off funding of \$1m for remote communities and that trial.

Mr BURGOYNE: Is there a budget line associated with the hydrogen master plan or is it made up of those programs and projects?

Ms LAWLER: The hydrogen master plan is work being undertaken by the agency. It is part of their ongoing work.

Mr DRABSCH: The work on the master plan to date has primarily been driven by internal resources of the Office of Sustainable Energy. Some minor consultancies were undertaken in support of it. The master plan is on track to be considered by government in the near future. Once the government has an opportunity to consider the master plan there may be particular line items that relate to the hydrogen future of the Territory; we can talk about that in greater detail further if like. Primary, to get to the point: there is no particular line item for the hydrogen master plan because it is part of the ongoing work of the Office of Sustainable Energy.

Mr BURGOYNE: That is what I was trying to get to—there is no specific line item.

The Alice Springs Future Grid program you spoke about—how much money has been invested into that so far? What has the government been able to get out of that program to date?

Ms LAWLER: The Alice Springs Future Grid entered into a \$5m project funding agreement. The Northern Territory Government entered into a project funding agreement on 27 December with Desert Knowledge Australia to develop the Intyalheme Centre for future energy, which I have visited a couple of times. I presume you might have had the opportunity to visit as well, Member for Brainting.

The Alice Springs Future Grid is focusing on removing barriers to further renewable energy penetration in the Alice Springs power system. They have been fortunate and active about sourcing external funding for the project. That external funding is about \$12.6m. This project is a consortium of partners: Northern Territory Government; Power and Water Corporation; Territory Generation; DKA; and Ekistica. Some not-for-profit charities also put money into the project, as well as a \$2.172m grant through ARENA. They have five sub-projects. Would you like to know about those projects or are you across the five?

Mr BURGOYNE: I would like to know.

Ms LAWLER: The future grid has five sub-projects. I was there two to three weeks ago, touching base. Project 1 involves modelling to define the Alice Springs power system challenges and detail—the modelling work—and will consider consumer behaviour, investment drivers, system security and financial and technical variables, which is some of the survey work they are doing through Jacana customers. Sub-project 2 involves the installation and study of a battery storage system at a commercial site in Alice Springs to identify implementation and operational barriers.

Sub-project 3 is for the installation and study of aggregated residential batteries or virtual power plants in households. This is one I am very keen about and watching very closely. My electorate has a large number of public houses. We have seen a great take-up of the home and business battery scheme. I am also interested for people in public housing or rental properties—is there opportunities for a number of people to aggregate the residential battery scheme? It might be a cul-de-sac or a street, instead of having individual batteries having a virtual power plant or having a battery they can all share.

Sub-project 4 is a trial of shadow tariffs that incentivise consumer behaviour to support increased renewables into the Alice Springs power system. It is about the mechanics, hardware and consumer behaviour. It can be simple things like pool pumps—turning them on when solar is running—dryers or things like that. How do you change people's behaviour so we can have a more stable grid when there are power peaks?

Sub-project 5 is test in trial of power system control techniques based on the consolidation of work from the other sub-projects, which will be captured in the Alice Springs road map to 2030 report.

The bigger picture that I can back up and talk about is that we are unique in the Territory. We are not connected to the national electricity system or to the market, which is great, but it adds complexity. We have a relatively small standalone system—the Darwin–Katherine system plan that we will be talking more about. Alice Springs is a standalone; Yulara; Tennant Creek; Katherine; and 72 remote communities.

On the east coast if there are fluctuations in power they can be offset by the grid. We do not have that. The work we are doing on the Darwin–Katherine grid—we are very pleased to see the work being led by DKA on the Alice Springs Future Grid because it is mirroring that work. There are conversations between all of us because we want Alice Springs—we know how well Alice Springs embraces solar. Ever since the solar city projects in 2010, Alice Springs has been a leader in solar. The work being done by DKA it is important. It will provide information for the work we are doing with the Darwin–Katherine system and vice versa.

Desert Knowledge has accessed nice funding through ARENA, which is interested in that; the Australian Government Regional and Remote Communities Reliability Fund – Microgrids program; and the Northern Territory Government.

It is a great project and is one that the people in Darwin do not necessarily always hear about. It is important work to make sure that Alice Springs—as we have seen in the past with system blackouts, we do not want that to occur again.

Mr BURGOYNE: The current renewable percentage rate was spoken about a lot in the last estimates process. I believe you were hoping to get to 16% this year. What is the current renewable percentage rate?

Ms LAWLER: The current trajectory is about 16%. We are hoping to get to about 20%—or 21%—by the end of 2021. Things change very quickly. One of the good things is that government can move some of the policy levers; we have seen that with the Home and Business Battery Scheme.

I thought there would be about 200 people interested; all up there has been about 780 households and businesses interested in having solar PV. When we see a great uptake—I had that discussion with the Member for Nelson at the start of this conversation—and a project embraced by the community, that is when the government comes in to see how it can keep supporting it.

Originally I thought it would be a couple of hundred people and that it would peter out; that will be it. I thought that was what the interest levels were. It has been well and truly embraced. We will continue with an extra \$2.8m for the Home and Business Battery Scheme. We tweaked that grant; we can talk more about that later.

That target is moving. It is moving quickly at times because of big solar farms, but it is also moving because Territorians are embracing solar. Even if the government did not have a position of 50% by 2050, we are seeing it across Australia.

In the *Weekend Australian* I read an article—I encourage people to read it—which had a quote from the New South Wales minister for Energy. He said that people are literally knocking on his door regarding providing renewable energy. He said that he has had about \$58bn worth of inquiries for renewable energy in the three or four years that he has been Energy minister; and not had one person has knocked on his door to offer to build a coal-fired power station.

The reality is that Australians and the world are embracing renewables. Our target is 50%. It is moving from 16% to about 20% and we are hoping to get to 21%. That can change very quickly.

Mr BURGOYNE: Does the office have a KPI that it is hoping to reach by the end of the next financial year? We come back here—last estimates it was quite clear that 16% was what we were on track to reach now. We are talking about 20% to 21% by the end of the year. Is there a target or a figure that we are likely to reach by next estimates in June?

Ms LAWLER: Our target is 2050; that position can change quickly.

Mr DRABSCH: The target, as the minister said, is 50% by 2030. How we achieve that target is reliant upon a range of factors, which is why we are doing comprehensive work on a Darwin–Katherine integrated system plan. I am happy to get Jim McKay to talk about that; he has been leading the work.

In regard to the percentages we are talking about this year, that is the technology and investments being made at the moment in solar farms, for example, at Batchelor, Manton, Katherine and so forth—as well as the growth in rooftop solar, what they call ‘behind the meter’.

The work we have done indicates every possibility and good chance to make the 50% target by 2030. Precisely what percentage is reached at which point in time is reliant upon a range of factors. The important thing is to ensure there is an orderly process to reach that target of 50%, which maintains the reliability and affordability of the system for customers.

Mr MALEY: Do you have an estimate of the cost it will incur to government or private industry to reach that target by 2030?

Ms LAWLER: We had this conversation the last time we spoke about the cost of renewables. I said in my opening statement that the cost of renewables is lower. There is research from CSIRO and a number of other sources that talks about the cost benefit of solar.

The cost will not only be borne by government; industry is embracing solar. You can walk into big industries like Woolworths or Bunnings and see all the solar on their rooftops and how they are managing it. Industry and businesses are embracing solar.

The other issue is to do with the work on the Darwin–Katherine grid plan. The price of solar is changing quickly. The price of renewables and batteries are changing almost daily due to renewable energy. The price is variable; it changes literally year to year.

This feels like déjà vu because it was only December that we sat here and had this exact conversation. Part of the Darwin–Katherine system plan is Territory Generation’s work. Territory Generation has big plant generators at Channel Island. They also have a plan to replace the generators. You will have the opportunity to talk to the GOCs this time next week. There are opportunities to discuss the details of their plans.

The replacement of generators means—also part of our plan is looking at what the replacement needs to look like. It may be that we do not continue with large gas-fired generators. It might be that there are smaller quick-start generators that can pick up the fluctuations. If we keep seeing this growth in solar and renewables in the Territory, in the Darwin–Katherine grid in particular, we can have smaller quick-start generators that take up and provide spinning reserve.

We put \$30m into the 35-megawatt BESS. It was interesting that in its last budget the federal government announced two renewable projects that got funding. Only two projects got funding in Australia, and they were both in the Northern Territory. That was \$15m for the BESS, which is a big battery; and \$15m for our remote power system.

It says a lot when Angus Taylor, the minister for Energy, is putting dollars into the Territory for renewables. The answer is almost like, 'How much is a piece of string? How long is a piece of string?' We will have the Darwin–Katherine renewable plan and Alice Springs Future Grid will have its plan, but it is changing year on year.

The cost will be shared. Private enterprise is very interested in renewables; we have seen that in the Northern Territory with the solar farms. I gave the example of New South Wales, where private enterprise was looking at investing \$58bn into renewables in New South Wales. There is the \$22bn Sun Cable solar project in the Northern Territory as well.

When you talk about cost, to me it sounds small and petty, lacking understanding of the complexity in this renewable space. I know you go to black and white all the time—that is what lawyers do. You need to stay broad, wide and agile when you are talking about renewables because this space is changing very quickly. We talked about hydrogen. Who knows what will happen with hydrogen in the next couple of years? We need to be agile. The cost of renewables in the Territory will be variable.

Mr DRABSCH: The other important point to recognise is that we are talking about investment in productive capacity in consumable items which are purchased by consumers. The cost, ultimately, falls upon the consumer. The reality of renewable energy—and this has been demonstrated across the country and around the world—is that the cost to consumers of renewable energy is reducing on a regular basis due to the technological and scale advantages being delivered over time.

Who makes that investment? It may be the government, with TGen replacing its capacity. It may be Sun Cable in it investing in its \$22bn project, which is not seeking government investment or equity. It could be consumers buying solar panels for their roofs. We might make some contribution to that—or to batteries, more precisely at this point in time. We are talking about investment rather than a simple cost equation.

Mrs LAMBLEY: In terms of your renewable energy targets, more than two years ago your government was provided a report by Houston camp economics called 'Achieving the Northern Territory Renewable Energy Targets'. That would look familiar to you.

A journalist tried to get a copy of this report last year through FOI. Of 118 pages, I think he was given the front cover and the back cover. Two years on, we are still yet to be told what the contents of this report are. Why are you withholding this report from Territorians? What do you have to hide when it comes to strategies for achieving the Northern Territory renewable energy targets? Do Territorians not have a right to know what the plan is? You are not really giving us much detail this morning, minister, on how you will achieve these targets. This report was given to the department of the Chief Minister.

Ms LAWLER: Yes. That report was developed to provide policy direction and information for Cabinet. That is what happens sometimes. Reports are prepared for Cabinet, to provide directions and discussion in Cabinet. That is what it did. That has since provided direction for our 50% renewable plan, and the work we are doing on the Darwin–Katherine grid and the Alice Springs Future Grids project.

Mrs LAMBLEY: It is not unusual for documents that are given to Cabinet—that the public paid for—to be then provided to the public. What is in this document that remains such a secret? Real answers to the questions.

Ms LAWLER: That report was provided two years ago. We have had these conversations over the last two estimates. There are probably a number of reports that are developed that you and other people may not be aware of. They are prepared by government agencies to provide policy direction. That is what it did. It went to Cabinet and provided that policy direction.

We have been clear today about the cost of 50% renewable energy by 2030. The ones we have not spoken about—we have only talked about the dollar cost. As the Environment minister, I would be more than happy to have a long conversation about emissions reduction, greenhouse gases, our target on climate change and costs to Territorians.

Mrs LAMBLEY: Despite committing to net zero emissions by 2050, the Northern Territory Government is yet to release a plan that explains how the emissions generated by fracking at the Beetaloo and McArthur basins will be offset. The current draft of the large emitters policy only applies to proposals that go through a full EIS, which means no fracking activities to date would fall within the purview of the large emitters' policy.

Is it in the interest of the public to know how the Northern Territory Government and federal government propose to offset the lifecycle emissions of the onshore gas industry in the Northern Territory If they cannot be offset, the industry surely must not proceed?

Ms LAWLER: We will save that question for DEPWS, the department of the Environment, as they have the EPA.

Mrs LAMBLEY: It was mentioned in your opening statement and we can question you on things that you mentioned in your opening statement. If you are not ready for it ...

Ms LAWLER: I am more than ready for it. I am asked that question nearly every day or every time I do media. We will keep that question for DEPWS, that is the agency responsible for the offsets policy and your question was about the offsets policy and the large emitters. We will leave it.

Mrs LAMBLEY: What output group are you referring me to minister?

Ms LAWLER: The Department of Environment, Parks and Water Security, under the environment output. It is Output 15.1

Mrs LAMBLEY: You are probbaly hoping you will not get there.

Ms LAWLER: If you would like a briefing, I am more than happy—it is complex. If you want information ...

Mrs LAMBLEY: This is budget estimates and you have been asked a question. You mentioned this topic in your opening statement and now you are referring me to Output 15.0, which you are probably hoping we will not get to today, in my estimation.

Ms LAWLER: I am not hoping that we will not get to it, because we have done substantial work ...

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR: Order!

Mrs LAMBLEY: I am happy to have a briefing, but this is budget estimates. This is the opportunity for Territorians to hear from you ...

Mr CHAIR: Member for Araluen, please cease your interjections.

Mrs LAMBLEY: No, I am responding to the minister's ...

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR: The Chair is speaking, please cease. We are not here to debate questions back and forth, we are here to ask questions. The minister has the right to answer. Minister, have you completed answering the question?

Ms LAWLER: I have.

Mrs LAMBLEY: She does not want to answer that one. We will move on.

Ms LAWLER: That is incorrect. I am making sure we stick to the outputs.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR: You said you had completed the question. I will now go on, unless there a supplementary question?

Mr MALEY: Yes, it is relating to the cost. Minister, I heard your rant about me and my mind. You do not know what I am thinking and, to be honest, I do not care what you think about me. I care about what Territorians

have to pay in costs. We go on about costs. You cannot tell me, or are you telling me and Territorians, that you do not have any idea of what it will cost relating to your plan to get 50% by 2030. Is that correct, yes or no?

Ms LAWLER: I have spent half-an-hour going through the cost of the renewables.

Mr MALEY: Do you have an idea of what it will cost Territorians to reach 50% by 2030?

Ms LAWLER: When you say Territorians, we are seeing individual ...

Mr MALEY: To make it clear, taxpayers' money.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR: Member for Nelson, you have asked a question. Please allow the minister to answer.

Ms LAWLER: Territorians have embraced renewables. An example is the Home and Business Battery Scheme that they are embracing wholeheartedly. It means accessing a \$6,000 grant they are able to get rooftop solar, an inverter and a battery. Instead of poor Territorians—who may have a large family—having a quarterly power bill of \$1,200, the bill will go down. Our focus is to ensure Territorians have affordable, cheaper, green power.

There is an opportunity to talk to the GOCs on Thursday about the community service obligation—the money that the Northern Territory Government has paid for many years to keep the cost of electricity fair in the Territory. When we look at renewables, this is about being on a trajectory to more affordable power for Territorians.

Mr MALEY: Thank you for not answering my question. My question is, how much will it cost the government in taxpayers' money? I will break it down to make it easier. You spoke about the Darwin–Katherine renewable plan: how much has the government estimated to spend on that plan?

Ms LAWLER: Can you say that again? Which plan?

Mr MALEY: I am breaking it down to the Darwin–Katherine renewable plan. I am not talking about the whole 50%-by-2030 plan because you do not seem to be able to answer that question. We are in estimates and that is what you are here to do—answer questions—and you are avoiding those questions.

Mrs LAMBLEY: You are meant to get a briefing, apparently.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR: Order. I am speaking as Chair, which means you will sit and listen to my speech.

Mrs LAMBLEY: This is the briefing, minister.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR: I remind members that questions need to follow an order and have no imputation or insult direct to any members. We need to be cordial in these proceedings; it is quite simple. We ask questions of the minister and the minister has the opportunity to answer. Then we get to ask other questions. We have lots of time to ask questions. The more I have to interrupt and stop this proceeding, the less time we have to do that. I would like to get through all of the questions that everybody has prepared so that we can hear the answers from the minister.

Mr MALEY: What is the estimated cost of the Darwin–Katherine renewable plan?

Ms LAWLER: The Darwin–Katherine system plan, that we are referring to, will be completed in the third quarter of 2021. It is in the final stages. That is very soon. Again, we go back to examples, such as the BESS. The \$30m big battery is 35 megawatts and providing firming.

Mr MALEY: We are not talking about the battery.

Ms LAWLER: That battery will pay itself off; it will be a return on investment over six years. That \$30m will see savings year on year. It will provide a return on investment after five-and-a-half to six years. When you talk about examples of the cost of renewables, the cost of batteries is changing very quickly. We need to factor in those things.

Mr DRABSCH: I think that covers it. The savings that are available through things like the battery—the investment that would be implied by the Darwin–Katherine system plan involves investment in a range of

things, not just power production capacity but frequency control capacity to provide inertia in the system, transmission lines and renewable solar farms.

There is a range of potential solutions to the Darwin–Katherine system plan. That is why we are doing the work on it, to understand what that range of opportunities are and the best way to achieve orderly transition to the renewable target. It is not just to the renewable target. It is to a more sustainable electricity delivery system in the Territory, particularly in the Darwin–Katherine system.

Mr MALEY: To make the question even easier: you have said that plan will be finished by the third quarter of 2021. How much money has been spent on that plan so far?

Ms TAN: The Darwin–Katherine system plan is being developed in-house within the Office of Sustainable Energy. There are a couple of minor consultancies that have been led, primarily relating to modelling of opportunities and options. We are expecting that the total cost of that is probably—ignoring OSE internal resourcing—approximately \$50,000.

Mr MALEY: Are you saying the modelling is done? The minister said it would be finished by the third quarter of 2021.

Ms TAN: Yes, the modelling is happening to enable it to be completed by the third quarter of 2021.

Mr MALEY: Will that modelling have the estimated cost to implement the plan?

Ms TAN: The modelling will look the different options and pathways to achieve 50% by 2030. It will attempt to quantify the cost of each of those options.

We have to be mindful that the cost of renewable energy by 2050 does not start from a base of zero. There is already expenditure in terms of the gas generation that needs to be undertaken between now and 2030.

The real cost of renewables is the difference between what we would otherwise spend on the basis of a status quo position, compared to what we would spend based on a renewable energy trajectory. Our expectation, because of the reducing costs of renewables, is that the difference—that delta—will be a lower cost overall over the medium and longer term.

Mr MALEY: When we come back to estimates next year, will we be able to ask you what the quantum was and you will answer because it will be in this modelling?

Ms TAN: The modelling will indicate the potential cost of different options.

Mr MALEY: It will be in that modelling and we will be able to ask you about it next year in estimates?

Ms TAN: It is based on certain assumptions. If those assumption change between now and then, obviously the costs will be different.

Mr MALEY: But it will have costs in it?

Ms TAN: We will attempt to have costs.

Mr BURGOYNE: We are getting close to crossing over here. Are there cost analyses being done about the cost of replacing gas-powered generators and also the cost of—instead of upgrading those gas-powered generators—putting renewables in place? I know we are getting close to crossing over here, but is that essentially a lot of the work happening?

Ms LAWLER: Yes, we have been trying to explain that for the last hour. That is the Darwin–Katherine system plan; the work also needs to be mirrored in Alice Springs. Owen Springs in Alice Springs is gas-fired. That work is under way. As I and the deputy CE said, that is the modelling and work that will provide the information for that plan.

When you have the GOCs here next Thursday, you can talk to them—for example to T-Gen about their replacements and what they need to replace their generators with. In the middle of 2020, T-Gen always had to replace some of their generators because they are 30 to 40 years old and aging. We have said repeatedly, our government supports a 50% renewable energy target by 2030. If the CLP do not support that, you need to come out and tell Territorians that.

Mr MALEY: Where did that come from? That is nothing to do with what we are talking about.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR: Member for Nelson, the minister is allowed to continue her speech.

Mr MALEY: She is not allowed to just make stuff up.

Ms LAWLER: It just sounds like ...

Mrs LAMBLEY: I think we all support it, do we not? We just want to know how and the cost.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR: Members for Nelson and Araluen, again I am taking up time in this sixth estimates outlining how this works. The minister gets to answer the question. You get to ask another question. Let us please continue in a cordial manner because I do not want to have use the power I have to kick people out. I do not want to be talking all day.

Ms LAWLER: I have answered that question.

Mr BURGOYNE: Is the Office of Sustainable Energy working with T-Gen to implement solar forecasting technology in Alice Springs as recommended by the Utilities Commission report?

Ms LAWLER: The Office of Sustainable Energy provides overarching policy and policy advice and direction of government to T-Gen, Power and Water and Jacana—the government-owned corporations.

Solar forecasting is for the solar farms—the works coming out of the solar farms regarding providing information so Power and Water's system controllers can maintain the stability of the grid. With the generator performance standards we have in place, we need that solar forecasting—if there are clouds coming over and those sorts of things. The policy direction comes from the Office of Sustainable Energy and the actual work is from the system controllers and Power and Water.

Mr BURGOYNE: Has the office undertaken any sort of work to better understand how long it will take to transfer 72 remote communities and 79 homelands to solar?

Ms LAWLER: That is the work we are undertaking. It is \$1m this year; Budget 2020–21 has allocated \$1m. All up, it is \$2.3m. Research is being undertaken on the remote power systems, which I spoke about in my opening statement.

There are huge cost savings if we do not have diesel. Diesel heading to remote communities is substantial—whether by trucks or all those sorts of options.

The work being undertaken for the remote power systems strategy is an audit to look at what is out in the communities; negotiations and discussions with the community about land availability; and the workforce. We think there will be substantial private interest in that project and the remote power system. It will be fantastic work that provides 5% towards our target of 50% renewables if we can convert and have at least 70% of energy being produced in our remote communities through solar.

The federal government put \$15m into that project; it realised the importance of that project to the Territory.

Mr BURGOYNE: We have heard a lot about Wurrumiyanga of late and the pilot program there. You mentioned earlier that the tender was going out. Is there a completion date for this pilot project? It seems to have been spoken about for quite some time.

Ms LAWLER: It has been spoken about since just before the budget; I suppose that is three or four months.

Ms TAN: The Wurrumiyanga project was funded in the last budget, with \$4.3m allocated to it. We are at the initial planning stage and looking at the design of the hybrid generation assets. That will form the basis for going to the market and seeking expressions of interest for delivery. At this time we are expecting that it should be delivered by the end of 2022, but that hinges on the procurement process and the designs that come through.

Mr MALEY: What tender will be released in coming months, that you mentioned earlier? I thought that tender was not even in the design stage, that we are still looking at. In your opening statement, you talked about a tender being released in coming months. What tender are you talking about?

Ms LAWLER: For the work to be undertaken.

Mr MALEY: Are you talking about the design work?

Ms LAWLER: Yes.

Mr DRABSCH: An engineering firm has been contracted to work on the design, which will inform the tender documents that will go out later this year, for a contract to develop the facility, to be completed by the end of 2022.

Mr MALEY: Regarding the replacement of generators in the power stations throughout the Territory, I understand that Jim McKay put out a 10-year plan that they need to be replaced. Can Jim give us some information on that 10-year plan—or can you?

Mr McKAY: The plan that you are talking about is a presentation I provided to Engineers Australia. It outlines the needs in terms of power system needs—the needs for transitioning the system to 50% renewable. It includes ...

Mr MALEY: What is it called—power system needs?

Mr McKAY: It was a presentation on the renewable energy in the Darwin–Katherine power system.

Ms LAWLER: Which is the plan.

Mr McKAY: Yes. It is the information that feeds the needs-basis that informs the plan. It includes looking at generation retirement, frequency control, resource adequacy, operability and a bunch of other fun technical things.

Mr MALEY: Where are you up to in relation to the 10-year plan? Are you behind schedule, on schedule or ahead of schedule?

Mr McKAY: The 10-year plan is due in the third quarter for this year; we are on schedule.

Mr MALEY: The 10-year plans has not been released yet?

Mr McKAY: No, this is the one we have been talking about that the minister has mentioned previously.

Mr MALEY: When that is released at the end of the year will it be made public?

Ms LAWLER: Yes, definitely, it will be made public. The Member for Araluen will be pleased to know that we will provide briefings to opposition and Independents. We will also provide briefings to media because it is a complex plan, and one which people are interested in. We will ensure there are lots of opportunities for discussions and questions.

Mr MALEY: Are you doing any public consultation in relation to this, or is this more of a technical plan?

Mr McKAY: At the moment the work that we have done in terms of needs, to date, has been presented; we informed people. The consultation at the moment has been within the government and the GOCs; that is the extent of the consultation to date.

Mr MALEY: If you have given yourself a 10-year plan, do you think 10 years is long enough to be able to replace a major generator at one of the power stations—to work out what the new generation is, because technology changes quickly, what would suit and then get the design and spec and all that.

What I am getting at, is 10 years long enough? If this plans says, 'I need to replace the bigger generator in the power station', is 10 years enough to work out what is best to replace it with; get it from wherever you have to get it, because I am guessing you will not get it in the Northern Territory, it will have to come from down south or overseas; get it up here; and get it installed? Is 10 years enough?

Mr McKAY: Most of the retirement for TGen's fleet is scheduled starting around 2027, from memory. That is the time frame. Ten years is enough to procure and install a generation fleet, but the replacement generation for thermal plant will only be a subset of what is retiring because the other part is being replaced by solar.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR: As there are no further questions on the opening statement and the consideration of Output Group 1.0 is under Mining, we will proceed to Output Group 2.0.

OUTPUT GROUP 2.0 – MINING AND ENERGY
Output 2.4 – Office of Sustainable Energy

Mr CHAIR: The committee will now proceed to Output 2.4, Office of Sustainable Energy. Are there any questions?

There being no other questions this concludes consideration of Output 2.4 and Output Group 2.0.

Output Groups 3.0, 4.0, 5.0, 6.0 and 7.0 are the responsibility of other ministers. Are there any non-output specific budget-related questions?

This concludes consideration of outputs relating to Renewables and Energy. On behalf of the committee I thank the departmental staff who provided assistance to the minister today.

The committee will now move on to questions related to the Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Logistics. We will take a three minute break for changeover of staff. I ask Industry, Tourism and Trade staff to leave promptly so we can admit Infrastructure, Planning and Logistics staff.

The committee suspended.

DEPARTMENT OF INFRASTRUCTURE, PLANNING AND LOGISTICS

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR: Now that we have a quorum, minister, I invite you to introduce your officials and make an opening statement regarding the Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Logistics. I remind members that the order of question will be the shadow minister first, followed by committee members and other members unless somebody has a related supplementary.

Ms LAWLER: I would like to introduce Andrew Kirkman, Chief Executive Officer of the Department of the Infrastructure, Planning and Logistics; John Harrison, General Manager of Infrastructure, Investment and Contracts; and Fotis Papadakis, Chief Financial Officer.

In the interests of time and to stay to the outputs, I will not give an opening address.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR: The committee will now consider the estimates of proposed expenditure contained in the Appropriation Bill 2021 as it relates to the Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Logistics. Are there any agency-related whole-of-government questions on budget and fiscal strategy?

Mr MALEY: I am a bit confused in relation to—I do not know if you have your budget books here, about some figures in it—page 114 of Budget Paper No 3. On the bottom half of the page, it talks about budget highlights and goes through repairs and maintenance. It has the 2020–21 revised of \$154m and then the 2021–22 budget of \$213m. That is, effectively, a bit of a summary of your operating statement, I take it, because it talks about it.

If I go to the operations statements on page 119, where it presents the repairs and maintenance, the 2020-21 revised is \$162m, whereas the statement on page 114 is \$154m. There is a difference. The 2021–22 budget is \$229m, and on page 114 it is \$213m. I am a bit confused. Which is the truthful figure? How does it work?

Mr PAPADAKIS: The repairs and maintenance, in terms of the pure repairs and maintenance, is on page 114; that should also correspond with what is in Budget Paper No 4. Whereas, in the financial statements, a line called 'infrastructure-related expenditure' also gets mapped, which is also listed as a separate line in Budget Paper No 4. Those two lines sum up to one repairs and maintenance line.

Mr MALEY: For the average Territorian out there, how much will be spent on repairs and maintenance? Is it \$229m or \$213m for the budget?

Mr PAPADAKIS: Together with infrastructure-related expenses, it is \$229m.

Mr MALEY: How did you get the revised figure of \$154m?

Mr PAPADAKIS: The difference between the two years is mainly the machinery of government changes. From 1 July next year, the department is also incorporating all the former Housing repairs and maintenance. At the moment, that sits in the Department of Territory Families, Housing and Community Services. From 1 July, that will transfer into DIPL.

Mr MALEY: Effectively, there has been a cut of \$27m in relation to last financial year and then an overspend of \$33m in the next financial year. Is that right?

Mr PAPADAKIS: I am not sure where the cut is. There is an increase between years.

Mr MALEY: Yes, but in last year, if you look at what was budgeted, it was budgeted at \$181m and then \$162m was revised. It was not all spent? That is what I am getting at in that budget. This year, it has gone up to \$229m. Is that right? It has increased by—depending on which figure I use; I had both of them—at approximately \$30m.

Mr PAPADAKIS: On page 113, there is a bit of an explanation of transfers between years for the Infrastructure, Investment and Contracts outputs. That mainly covers a lot of the infrastructure-related expenditure. A lot of that is transferred between years. We have transferred approximately \$11m of infrastructure-related expenditure from one year to the other.

Mr MALEY: Why did you do that?

Mr PAPADAKIS: We received additional funding for projects.

Mr MALEY: What projects?

Mr PAPADAKIS: Projects that are not on—such as design money. We have re-looked at the timing of our expenditure profile and put that into the year we expect the expenditure to happen. We have effectively reviewed the timing and \$11m was infrastructure-related expenses.

Other changes have happened. When we review projects, we look at the Australian Accounting Standards and what it means to the finishing of an asset. When we do the review, we put an adjustment through to the Department of Treasury to move that money out of repairs and maintenance in order for us to do the correct accounting treatment.

Mr MALEY: Effectively, in the 2021 budget there was a reduction of \$21m. It was budgeted at \$181m and the revised figure is \$162m. Is that correct?

Mr PAPADAKIS: There was no cut to repairs and maintenance.

Mr MALEY: No cuts, but it was revised down?

Mr PAPADAKIS: There was a transfer between years and moves to capital in line with accounting standards. There is an increase between the two years on pure repairs and maintenance.

Mr MALEY: There was media from the minister, saying there was a reduction in the spending on repairs and maintenance due to COVID. That did not happen? You are saying it was a transfer? You said there were no cuts, but the minister said there was a reduction. It makes sense because of COVID and you were unable to get to communities. I am confused as to who is being truthful?

Ms LAWLER: I do not know why you always go towards 'truthful'.

Mr MALEY: Sometimes you stretch the truth, minister.

Ms LAWLER: No, I do not. As I said, your 'lawyer' keeps coming out.

Mr MALEY: I am not interested in your rant, minister. Could you just answer the question?

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR: Order!

Mr KIRKMAN: During COVID—the hardest hit time was the period of March to ...

Mr MALEY: In the biosecurity period where you could not move?

Mr KIRKMAN: Yes, during the biosecurity lockdowns. For the most part of the 2019–20 financial year, it was difficult to go to remote communities and regions while we were locked down in the Territory. That meant it was difficult to get some of the works done. This financial year, for the most part, we got out to communities and remote regions and do the required repairs and maintenance. It was not such an impact this financial year.

Mr MALEY: Why was the budget revised from \$181m down to \$162m?

Mr KIRKMAN: I will reiterate the Chief Financial Officer's comments. When you go through a repairs and maintenance program, it is often many small pieces of small value. Cumulatively, those works often end up being regarded as an asset if you spend over a certain amount. Under accounting standards you view those an asset.

Mr MALEY: Could you give me an example?

Mr KIRKMAN: If we were to undertake work on a road network, instead of that work being simply a repair—if we did multiple repairs on that network it might be viewed that the value of the road has increased because we have increased the amenity in that road—the accounting standards may view that work cumulatively as something that needs to be recorded on your asset register as capital instead of written off as an expense for repairs and maintenance.

In that case, Mr Papadakis, in his role as CFO, will transfer that expenditure into a capital asset. Whilst on the books it looks like you have spent less on repairs and maintenance, in fact you have spent as much on all those assets but some expenditure is transferred to the capital base. Repairs and maintenance looks like a lesser figure but you will also see extra expenditure on the capital side of the business.

Mr MALEY: Can you give me an example of where that has happened?

Mr PAPADAKIS: An example is the re-roofing at the Peter McAulay Centre, where the works were quite significant. Originally it started off as a repair job but it became quite significant, which then met the standards to be capitalised as an asset improvement. Other examples are where repairs to an air-conditioning system has ended up being a replacement. I do not mean a split system, I mean a big air-conditioning unit in a building. We have a couple of those but I cannot remember the exact building; it was that type of expenditure.

Mr MALEY: Regarding this year's budget for repairs and maintenance, it is now at \$229m. Is that correct?

Ms LAWLER: Yes.

Mr MALEY: That is an increase from \$181m from the 2020–21 budget?

Ms LAWLER: Yes.

Mr MALEY: What do you intend to spend that on? Do you have a plan for that money?

Mr PAPADAKIS: In Budget Paper no 4, under each department there is notional allocation for repairs and maintenance. That is the notional amount we have allocated to be spent.

Mr MALEY: Can you give me a page number?

Mr PAPADAKIS: Page 16 will list \$328,000 notionally allocated to the Department of the Chief Minister and so on. Every department listed will have the notional amount. When you get to departments like the Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Logistics on page 21, there is repairs and maintenance and infrastructure-related expenditure. That is the expenditure I spoke about earlier, which is also part of the \$229m.

Mr MALEY: That \$15m infrastructure-related figure would be the new roof at the McAulay Centre or the new air conditioner ...

Mr PAPADAKIS: No. The infrastructure-related expenses are more for studies, design—other general managers can maybe provide examples. They are not pure repairs and maintenance; they are related to infrastructure, which is why in the financial statements they are mapped to repairs and maintenance.

Mr MALEY: (inaudible—microphone off).

Ms LAWLER: The Chief Executive has talked about the machinery of government changes. DIPL is now responsible for all infrastructure across Housing. All housing builds are the responsibility of DIPL. Education—any staff involved with infrastructure are now employees of DIPL. That was from the machinery of government changes. Chief Executive, do you want to add to that?

Mr KIRKMAN: No, that is exactly what the move is.

Mr MALEY: Have there been any employee increases in DIPL this financial year?

Mr KIRKMAN: Yes. The program management office moved into the department from the Department of Territory Families, Housing and Community Services. Those folks are the team focused on the capital delivery of the remote housing and urban housing programs.

As the Chief Financial Officer mentioned, from next financial year all the property managers—those who are responsible for repairs and maintenance of housing—will come over to the department. There has been an increase from those involved in the capital delivery coming over to the department this financial year. From 1 July next the repairs and maintenance-related employees will come over.

Mr MALEY: You are anticipating next financial year there will be a further increase in the quarterly expenses?

Ms LAWLER: Yes, we anticipate that.

Mr MALEY: Have you employed an extra 44 people in anticipation of some federal money that may be coming across for roads?

Ms LAWLER: That matter is related to the logistics output. Because this portfolio is so complex we will try to stick to the outputs.

Mr MALEY: Can you give me an output number?

Ms LAWLER: Output 10.

Mr MALEY: What resources have you committed to reviewing current staffing levels and positions within DIPL that deliver infrastructure programs?

Ms LAWLER: Are you talking about a JES-ing process or ...

Mr MALEY: In general, how are you going about reviewing your staffing levels? Do you have a plan?

Mr KIRKMAN: We review staffing levels consistently, particularly at times of machinery of government change. We are reviewing what is required to ensure the housing program, for example, has sufficient resources to deliver on its large infrastructure commitments.

We did a detailed—what we refer to as—zero-based budgeting exercise 12 months ago which went down to the detail of each staffing position and where they were best prioritised. That set us up well for this financial year. Obviously, it is always a matter of reviewing staffing levels, seeing what the priorities are for delivery and prioritising staffing resources to line up with where the greatest need is. I hope that answers the question.

Mr MALEY: Have you done any audits of staff skillset within DIPL and the project team?

Mr KIRKMAN: As we look at the projects and programs—some of it is policy work as well—we look at the individual staffing skillset and what we require to deliver those projects. That will sometimes lead to a recruitment process where we seek the skillset and experience we feel we need to add to the mix of a team to make sure we can deliver well on commitments. That is an ongoing process for us.

Mr MALEY: Are you working on a plan to increase the skillset, capacity and capability of people staffed to support oncoming infrastructure programs?

Ms LAWLER: Yes, because we have a large Infrastructure budget. There is an increase in roads dollars from the federal government. It put considerable dollars into road safety for shovel-ready projects. The overpass at Berrimah Road/Tiger Brennan is a project we need to quickly spend Australian Government money on. That was a directive; it was a COVID stimulus. New dollars have come in for the roads in the Beetaloo as well.

Those are matters for the department. They are making sure they have the right people in the right job at the right time so we can deliver these projects.

Mr KIRKMAN: That largely covers it. The organisation thinks of itself as a learning organisation. It continues to evolve as the programs and priorities change. As the needs of the community and government change, so does the department in needing to adapt, learn and improve. We think of ourselves as a department that has continuous improvement in mind.

Mr EDGINGTON: Given there has been a massive failure on your behalf to deliver infrastructure projects in Tennant Creek and the Barkly, what is happening with staffing in Tennant Creek? Has there been an increase in staff or new skills added to the mix?

Ms LAWLER: There has not been a failure to deliver infrastructure in the Barkly. The only failure we saw was when you were Mayor of the Barkly and you blocked projects. We have this discussion often ...

Mr EDGINGTON: A point of order! I am offended.

Ms LAWLER: I found your comment offensive as well!

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR: Order! I found the question and the response had imputation. We have gone quite a while now without that occurring. Please go back to the cordial nature that we had before.

Mr KIRKMAN: The answer is yes, we are continuing to look at further recruitment in the Barkly. As you well know, it can be difficult to get the skill sets and experience in people coming to live and work in the Barkly. We have a fantastic new regional director in Damien Burton, who is making great inroads to the project and the team there.

We have been recruiting over a period of time for additional positions. It will be good to note that, like any regional office, a lot of support is provided from other areas and regions, particularly out of the Darwin and Alice Springs offices. There is key support in the Alice Springs technical and policy staff for the work happening in Tennant Creek and the Barkly more broadly. We will continue to work with Damien and his team to get that to be as robust a team as we can operate out of Tennant Creek.

Mr EDGINGTON: Two years ago the Chief Minister promised extra staff for the office in Tennant Creek. How many extra staff are there in Tennant Creek as part of this additional staffing complement you talking about?

Ms LAWLER: I do not recall the Chief Minister promising extra staff in the Barkly office.

Mr EDGINGTON: He promised it at a meeting that I was that.

Ms LAWLER: There are two more staff in the Tennant Creek DIPL office.

Mr EDGINGTON: Is that sufficient to complete the number of projects outstanding for a number of years?

Mr KIRKMAN: We continue to recruit further positions. We have a lot of support from other areas of the department and we bring in support through consultancy services. It has been a fairly continuous effort from our end to get the projects in Tennant Creek under way. It is good to see that a number of those projects are moving quite well.

Mr EDGINGTON: I want a good understanding of how many positions will be recruited. What is the current staffing complement in that office and how many extra positions will there be?

Ms LAWLER: We will take that question on notice.

Question on Notice No 4.1

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

Mr EDGINGTON: What is the staffing complement in the Tennant Creek DIPL office? With recruitment of additional positions, how many positions will there be?

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

Ms LAWLER: I am happy to accept the question.

Mr CHAIR: The question asked by the Member for Barkly has been allocated number 4.1.

Mr MALEY: You spoke earlier about federal dollars ready to go for shovel-ready projects. How much money were you referring to?

Ms LAWLER: When you are talking about roads, that is in Output 10.

Mr MALEY: I am just going on what you said and expanding on your answer. You made that comment about dollars ready and timing. I am asking about those two things.

Ms LAWLER: I can elaborate in Output 10.

Mr MALEY: What involvement does the acting Infrastructure Commissioner have to ensure there is a turnaround in the delivery of infrastructure projects?

Ms LAWLER: The Infrastructure Commissioner started in the last few weeks. Louise McCormick is the Infrastructure Commissioner. The work of the commissioner is broad, important and was one of the recommendations to come out of TERC.

Every other state has an i-body, as we call it—an infrastructure body—such as Infrastructure New South Wales and Infrastructure Australia. The commissioner's work is to liaise with Infrastructure Australia, which now has a number of Territory projects on their list. The Infrastructure Commissioner pushes for those projects, strategic infrastructure and economic enabling infrastructure. Basically, they make sure we can hit our target of a \$40bn economy by 2030. She will work with the Major Projects Commissioner and other commissioners to achieve that.

Ms McCORMICK: I have been in the job two weeks and had two jobs for about six weeks—that is why I have 'general manager' in front of me. It is exciting that Infrastructure NT has started. I will be working closely with the major projects and investments commissioners. We have already started meeting with proponents and talking to them about what government infrastructure will enable them to invest in the Territory. A big part of the role of Infrastructure NT is to coordinate enabling infrastructure. It is mainly roads and utilities, but there may be others to ensure that we get investment secured in the Territory.

The work I will be doing with Infrastructure Australia is to make sure that the major projects in the Territory's books are seen at a national level. They manage the national Infrastructure Priority List. We have several projects on that list but we want to see more. I will be working closely with Romilly Madew, who is the CEO of Infrastructure Australia, to make sure we have a more visible seat at the national table.

Mr MALEY: How do you think the commissioner's role will fast-track investment in the Territory?

Ms LAWLER: It is first and foremost about raising the profile and having someone lobbying at the federal level. Her sole purpose is infrastructure. We have the CE of the department, but that person is also running the operational side—half of your questions this morning were about HR and operations. The Infrastructure Commissioner's sole focus will be infrastructure.

She will be at the table with Infrastructure Australia and will be available for meetings with proponents who come to the Territory. In the past, as general manager, she was running projects such as our roads program. She will be the go-to person in the Territory for anyone who comes to town with specific projects they may have dollars for.

It is about facilitating and having a sole driver as the Infrastructure Commissioner, rather than managing big teams of people—which she has done in the past—and all the procurement processes she has had to oversee. It gives her the sole focus of infrastructure.

Mr MALEY: Will the Infrastructure Commissioner have any legislative power to make things faster? If you find there is a roadblock somewhere in a government department, will she have the power to fix it?

Ms LAWLER: You are aware we have the omnibus legislation coming in; there will possibly be future omnibus legislation. The commissioner's position came from TERC. All of this work is part of the overarching umbrella of TERC. The number one driver for TERC is streamlining and cutting red tape. If the commissioner sees blockages she would pass that work on to the processes of legislation. That is the work of TERC and her role has come out of it.

Mr MALEY: Can you give me specific examples of the power she will have in relation to fixing roadblocks? Will she report to somebody or can she do that herself?

Ms LAWLER: It is not about power. The commissioner reports to me, as the minister. When you talk about power, it is about her ability to have conversations with me and the department to identify blockages. That was also a recommendation of TERC; that is the work being undertaken by every agency. Every Northern Territory Government agency has been looking at how they can streamline new regulations and legislation; that is the omnibus legislation we will see in parliament in August.

Mr MALEY: Are you saying that if there was a roadblock in the organisation before the acting Infrastructure Commissioner was put in place, they had nowhere to go? She did not have the same power that she has now to move up to the minister and back down again?

Ms LAWLER: No, that is incorrect. I meet with a range of civil contractors, building contractors and industry representatives. I meet weekly with the department, the CE and key personnel. If there are any blockages, we are always looking for ways to make things easier for business in the Northern Territory. Work is always being done on improvements and driving improvements. The Infrastructure Commissioner's sole focus is on infrastructure in the Territory.

If you have examples of blockages you can feed into them and have meetings with me. We are happy to look at blockages and opportunities to cut red tape. Often, when people talk about cutting red tape, when I meet with them sometimes it is just one specific example. Sometimes it is not legislation that needs to be changed, it can be about facilitating something operational through the department. That is the work of TERC, which has given all government that direction—every government agency and CE. That is the work they are doing.

Mr MALEY: What you are saying is that the acting Infrastructure Commissioner does not have any new power or a role to do anything that was not already available to the department?

Ms LAWLER: When you talk about power—I do not like the word 'power'—she has the ability to set direction, meet with people, work with the minister and influence. That is the work of the commissioner.

Mr MALEY: What if I use the word 'delegation'? You delegate roles to her. There is nothing new that should be delegated to be able to fix this perceived red tape problem within government departments?

Ms LAWLER: The example you gave about red tape is the number one priority of the TERC report: how do we make things more efficient and streamline the work of government? That has been the work of every agency.

Mr KIRKMAN: The Infrastructure Commissioner role will be pivotal in our relations with the Australian Government, Infrastructure Australia and other jurisdictions. It was highlighted through the economic reconstruction review that we do this pretty well. We punch above our weight. Most of us believe in the Territory. It was clear that we needed a coordinated face for the Territory regarding infrastructure nationally, with our interstate colleagues and to provide additional strategic support when looking at our strategies and plans.

The Infrastructure Commissioner will not require specific legislative power to do that. Every chief executive has been clear with their teams, as I have been in DIPL. Louise has the ability to get resources where she requires them to deliver on the commitments she will be making as the Infrastructure Commissioner for the Northern Territory.

I do not believe that there is a legislative requirement; there is a commitment by all chief executives that we will be supporting the three new commissioners so they have the ability to delve into any of our organisations to get the support they need. If they do not, they come directly to us. That is why Louise, in her new role, is still very much part of the senior executive team of this department. She meets regularly with the other commissioners and senior bureaucrats to ensure that her role can be delivered. I have not seen any roadblocks to the work she is doing by any member of any government organisation. She has all the right delegation to get her job done.

Ms LAWLER: A good catchcry is about the commissioner building ‘the right infrastructure at the right time in the right place’. It is key for her to work with the Australian Government and Infrastructure Australia so the projects we have align with them. The projects on the Infrastructure Australia list are key works we need to do—to have relationships and for Infrastructure Australia to understand how unique the Territory is.

I have been battling for many years for road upgrades to Territory roads like Central Arnhem. The level of traffic on those roads is often small compared to the big highways in New South Wales—the Hume Highway compared to the Central Arnhem Road. It means that sometimes these other projects get priority over the Territory. One of the good things is that Infrastructure Australia has realised this and made changes to its criteria, which is why some of our projects got onto the list this year.

The commissioner’s role is about relationships, aligning with the Australian Government, delivering infrastructure with the right build at the right time and developing a new Territory infrastructure strategy. That will be the lead work the commissioner will do, incorporating annual infrastructure plans.

There is a huge amount of work to be done. I speak highly of Louise McCormick. If you spoke to anybody in the Territory—any contractor who has worked with Louise will know how exceptional she is. I trust that the direction we are going in through TERC will be delivered by the commissioner.

Mr MALEY: I am not doubting Louise’s ability to work. What I am trying to get at is that, as the General Manager of Transport and Civil Services, she had the delegation to go to Infrastructure Australia, build those relationships and align with the feds—in her previous role. She did not need any legislative changes to do that. What has changed in the new role? She already had the delegation to do all that previously. Is this new role just a new letterhead to keep your government in line with the TERC report and say that you have delivered on one of the recommendations?

Ms LAWLER: No, I explained that earlier. This frees up the commissioner. She will have a small team to do the work of the commissioner. As General Manager, she probably had one of the hardest jobs in all of government, apart from the CE roles, because she had complex work delivering huge programs.

Ms McCORMICK: Maybe the best way to explain this is to give you clarification between the two roles. The General Manager Transport and Civil Services role is heavily operational and strategic. It is time consuming. They deal with the entire Territory in a services, asset and delivery perspective, which does not leave a lot of time to pursue the federal government. The General Manager role only focuses solely on transport, which is economically enabling.

In the commissioner role it is not just about transport, it is about all different types of infrastructure. It could be utilities, buildings, land release—all those things that enable pieces of infrastructure to make it easy for people to invest in the Territory. It is much broader. There will be a lot of deep-dive thinking into the commission to look at continually improving how we do that and attract investment into the Territory.

We will be a small team because it is deep-dive policy-type work, rather than focusing on the operational day to day of what is happening on the road network, in MVR or any of those spaces. I will still have connections to what I did in the General Manager Transport role. As Austroads Deputy Chair, I will still be on the Australian Road Research Board. I already have established relationships with my colleagues in Canberra. I will be talking to them more about not just transport, but how we fund other pieces of common user infrastructure, for example at Middle Arm. We need to start talking with them about these things, providing strategic business cases about why they should invest in the Territory rather than down south.

It takes a lot of effort. Doing the two roles has been a bit challenging. Eventually, when we get systems and things in place, it may be that the two roles can combine. Right now, to give it legs, it needs my full attention.

Ms LAWLER: I pick up on a good point Louise made. A lot of people who come to the Territory do not know the way in. I often meet with people who are looking for a contact, to get started or how to invest in the Territory. Having the Investment Commissioner and the Major Projects Commissioner are part of the puzzle,

but Louise will be the legs on the ground and the person who understands how projects need to work and how we can get things moving. It is a way to open the door for people coming to the Territory who do not know which door to knock on, particularly a private enterprise coming.

Mr EDGINGTON: The Infrastructure Commissioner mentioned a small team. Can you tell me what the budget allocation is for the new office of the Infrastructure Commissioner?

Ms LAWLER: The budget is \$800,000.

Mr EDGINGTON: How many staff are working with the Infrastructure Commissioner?

Ms McCORMICK: At present there are only three of us, including myself, but we are hoping to get another five staff on board by the end of this year.

Mr EDGINGTON: Can you tell me what the current salary for the Infrastructure Commissioner is set at?

Ms LAWLER: It is an Executive Contract Officer 4.

Mr MALEY: Has the general manager role been filled by a new person?

Ms LAWLER: It is backfilled—John, in the corner there. The person who was underneath Louise McCormick is acting in the position.

Mr MALEY: What about his position? Is someone acting in that?

Ms LAWLER: Yes.

Mr MALEY: Has everyone gone up a level?

Mr KIRKMAN: We have a couple of acting positions while Louise is the Infrastructure Commissioner. John Harrison, whose substantive role is General Manager for Infrastructure Investment and Contract, has moved into the Transport and Civil Services role. Adam Walding, who is working for John in the Infrastructure Investment and Contracts role, has moved into the general manager role. I have faith in John and Adam to deliver on those roles. Moreover, it gives great experience and continuity for the agency for departmental staff to have different experiences.

Mr MALEY: You said there would be a budget of \$800,000 and the commissioner mentioned there will be eight staff. Is that enough money to manage eight staff? That is \$100,000 each, which does not add up?

Ms LAWLER: That is the initial budget but the budget will increase to \$2.8m. The \$800,000 is the initial budget but it will increase as the number of staff increases.

Mr KIRKMAN: Yes, those are the correct figures. As Ms McCormick pointed out there will be ongoing recruitment to those positions over the coming six months.

Mr MALEY: When do you think the permanent commissioner role will be advertised?

Mr KIRKMAN: We will be ensuring that Louise has time to set the foundation for the Infrastructure Commission in the NT. As Louise has pointed out, she has the right skill set to do that. I intend to allow for a period of three to six months. Within that six months we will be recruiting to the permanent Infrastructure Commissioner position. We will look to wrap that up by the end of this calendar year.

Mr MALEY: What other TERC report recommendations are you committing to in DIPL?

Ms LAWLER: It is not this output area; it is Output 10.6.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR: It may be a good time to take a comfort break, since it is 11 o'clock. We will have a three-minute comfort break.

The committee suspended.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR: Thank you, members. We will continue.

Mr MALEY: What time frame are you setting for DIPL to deliver the \$367m road upgrades for the Beetaloo?

Ms LAWLER: I understand we are on Output Group 8.0, Infrastructure Investment Program, Support and Delivery?

Mr MALEY: Output Group 10.0.

Ms LAWLER: These are so bulky. If we are all over the place, it does not work.

Mr MALEY: The government used to show graphs on how they compare to other tenders. Why did you stop doing that?

Ms LAWLER: As the minister, I keep out of procurement.

Mr KIRKMAN: The department had been running a trial on the graphs which provided a somewhat NAPLAN-type comparison of tenders. The feedback we had was that some tenderers found it confusing. We now provide more information by offering post-tender briefings to all tenderers; many of those offers are taken up. We can then go through scoring in more detail.

Mr HARRISON: The only thing I will add is that we also release the actual scores per category to contractors to assist them in understanding, not so much compared to others, but how they would compare to other tenders that were submitted previously.

Mr MALEY: In relation to Budget Paper No 3, page 113, in land development there has been a decrease of about \$1.9m. Can you explain that?

Ms LAWLER: We will deal with that in Output Group 9.0.

OUTPUT GROUP 8.0 – INFRASTRUCTURE INVESTMENT PROGRAM, SUPPORT AND DELIVERY **Output 8.1 – Infrastructure Investment and Delivery**

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR: We will now consider Output Group 8.0 Infrastructure Investment Program, Support and Delivery, Output Group 8.1, Infrastructure Investment and Delivery. Are there any questions?

Mr GUYULA: Could you advise what new works are in this budget for East Arnhem?

Ms LAWLER: First and foremost, with the Central Arnhem Road, we are continuing to work with the federal government to make sure we have the dollars to keep bituminising it.

They were in the regional highlights, but I can read some out:

- \$1m to construct two-by-three bedroom dwellings in Ramingining
- \$2.25m to construct two-by-three bedroom duplexes in Yirrkala
- \$1.3m for the Gove District Hospital to upgrade the imaging department
- \$475,000 for the Nhulunbuy Northern Territory emergency services shed.

The projects currently under way are:

- the government marine infrastructure, worth \$1.5m
- NTG co-funding an \$8m jetty at the boat club with DEAL and Gumatj
- Central Arnhem Road is receiving repairs to bulldust sections
- \$5m in Gapuwiyak for eight-by-three bedroom and one-by-two bedroom duplexes
- \$4.4m for Yirrkala's 30-lot subdivision, hoped to be completed in August this year

- money for the safe house
- \$15.82m for Maningrida police station—Northern Land Council has offered a letter of comfort so we can start moving on that
- \$5.7m for the Central Arnhem Road
- Umbakumba School has ablution blocks going in; that is in the Arnhem electorate.

There are a number of projects. They are on the Department of Treasury and Finance's website. There are budget highlights, which include all the highlights for East Arnhem. If you want to provide information to your constituents or people in your region, we can provide you with information.

Mr KIRKMAN: There is a lot of work under way and due to be under way in East Arnhem. The couple of contracts which stand out for me are the ones on mode housing that have gone out—and one has gone to Bukmak, a subsidiary of ALPA in Galiwinku, for years of housing work. That is a fantastic contract that we worked hard to set up to ensure ongoing continuity in the delivery of houses and to bring on trainees and apprentices. They can do their training and apprenticeship throughout the length of the contract.

This is the future of work and remote communities in the Territory, particularly large remote communities like Galiwinku, Maningrida and Wadeye. I am excited about that. The other contract was let to Delta Reef for Ramingining housing. They stand out.

Central Arnhem is a priority for us. It is not a simple solution; a lot of work needs to be done. There is a large design and investment strategy under way to advise us on the best way and priorities for completing that road. It is a huge project that has a couple of hundred million in commitments under the National Partnership Agreement on Land Transport, which Louise McCormick can speak to, if you would like. That is a key project for us.

Mr GUYULA: Is Delta Reef putting the housing subdivision in at Ramingining or some other contractor?

Mr KIRKMAN: Delta Reef has won the contract to deliver housing. I will have to check whether they also have the subdivision works. We have the Housing Program Office output a bit later if you would like to ask Dwayne McInnes. The general manager of that division would have the answer.

Mr GUYULA: Yes. I have been driving up and down past that section. I just thought I would ask.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR: Member for Mulka, do you want to take that on notice so that the minister can come back to you with the contractor? That needs checking.

Mr GUYULA: Yes, please.

Question on Notice No 4.2

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

Mr GUYULA: Is Delta Reef Gumatj working on the subdivision at Ramingining?

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

Ms LAWLER: Yes, I do.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR: The question asked by the Member for Mulka has been allocated number 4.2.

Mr MALEY: In relation to \$905m revote, we all know that it is the biggest one in history since last year's \$522m. What measures have you taken to rectify this level of underspend?

Ms LAWLER: You have had a briefing on revotes; you understand the difference between program and cash. First of all, just to clarify that we have a big program of works because we are delivering big projects. When you have big projects—I have explained this many times—they do not not necessarily get delivered in

12 months, particularly big projects. The difference between a program, cash and projects is important to understand.

A big project that we might have—Mandorah Jetty, for example, at \$50m—cannot be built in one year. We do the design work and put a couple of million dollars into one financial year; we put \$10m into the next financial year when some of the work starts; and we put the \$30m or \$40m into the second or sometimes the third financial year.

It is the same with roads. Your colleagues in the federal government, for example, have \$150m for some of our roads, for example the Stuart Highway. That money will not hit our ledger until 2024–25. The first lot of that money will only be \$4m. That is a \$150m program that the federal government has said it has for us, but we will only get \$4m in 2024–25. We have a big program of works. There is a lot of work to be done. That program transfers down to projects; they get spread over financial years. That is the reality of how things work.

We have had numerous opportunities—I put this on the public record previously. We are proud of what we have delivered. We have delivered on average a \$1.4bn infrastructure build every financial year since we came to government. Overall, \$7bn has gone out the door for projects in the Northern Territory under a Labor government. When times were tough in 2017, 2018 and 2019, Labor governments rolled out big dollars to keep industry going because they knew there were jobs for Territorians.

I know that you foo-foo the car park, the Keep River Road and the Arnhem Highway. For whatever reason—I do not know why—you do not embrace those projects. They provided jobs for Territorians. That is what we want to see, Territorians staying in the Territory.

There is a program of works. It is a large program of work. On the offset side, we have pulled out and delivered big, big dollars in infrastructure. You can go back and have a look at the history of infrastructure ministers since self-government, if you like. You will see that we have delivered \$1.4bn on average per year. This year, it is \$1.55bn. We are looking at \$1.6bn for the financial year ahead of us. We have been delivering. There is a program of works. It is a complex and big program of works.

Mr KIRKMAN: We have a massive program. Two key programs within that overarching capital works program relate to the National Partnership Agreement on Land Transport. That is gearing up and is already probably the largest roads programs we have ever had. Likewise, the National Partnership on Remote Housing is the largest partnership we have ever had with the Australian Government. We have two record programs in the overarching capital works program.

We are gearing up to deliver on our commitments under those two national partnerships. As we get under way, those projects within the programs come onto the capital works book. We have commenced the designs discussions on acquisitions, if need be, or alignment if it is roads, for example. There is a fair bit of work to do to get those projects under way. It is a massive program that we are undertaking.

There have been record programs for a number of years and that continues to grow, which is a great thing for the Territory. Ultimately, as the programs grow the revote will also correspondingly grow.

Mr HARRISON: I just add that there are a number of significant projects within this output group that will be revoted, the likes of: City Deals projects; youth justice construction projects; and remote police stations, which are delivered over multiple years. Depending on the size of the project there can be a project of \$1m that takes some 15 months to deliver through to \$50m projects and up that can be 36 to 48 months and more to deliver. That goes some way to explain why the revote system exists.

Ms LAWLER: The positive is it provides certainty to industry; it can see what is ahead. It is positive that it knows government is committed. It is not just on the 10-year plan, a promise, wish or whatever. It can see that it is on our program. Whether it is civil contractors or a heap of people, it provides them with that certainty because they know the project will go ahead. The community also knows that the design work is under way and those projects are in the pipeline of government.

Mr MALEY: Back to my original question. What measure are you taking to reduce the revote? Ultimately, when it revotes money is not spent. You might say there is \$1bn to go into infrastructure this year and then revote \$900m so you are only really spending \$100m. The money is there to be spent; it is committed. The program is in place. What is your agency doing to get more money to contractors, which is into the community and into mum's and dad's pocket—trying to reduce that revote so they get the work done. It is committed

and it might be a project that is designed and planned. Can we reduce that so that can be done in one year instead of three years? What measures has your agency taken to do that?

Ms LAWLER: I know you are a lawyer and you do not understand construction but ...

Mrs LAMBLEY: A point of order, Mr Deputy Chair! That is really offensive.

Ms LAWLER: ...we could put things not on the program at all. We could just say we will not put things on the program ...

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR: Order! Order, minister! We have a point of order.

Mrs LAMBLEY: I find that offensive—attacking the member for asking a question and saying he does not understand something.

Ms LAWLER: It is an obvious statement.

Mrs LAMBLEY: It is your opinion and we do not need it.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR: Order!

Mr MALEY: Your opinion is irrelevant, minister and, quite frankly, I do not care about your opinion.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR: Member for Nelson, I have the Chair and I am speaking, which means the committee and the members are not. We have had a point of order that I am deliberating on. I ask the minister to withdraw the imputation of her comment.

Ms LAWLER: I withdraw, but I am frustrated by the question.

We could get the program down to zero by not putting anything on it. That would reduce it. Your logic is not logical. The program is the program and there is not a way we could possibly do some of the examples, like 300 kilometres of the Tanami or 200 kilometres of Central Arnhem Road in 12 months. We cannot deliver that.

You talk about money out the door and in people's pockets. Some of those things are not feasible to do in one financial year. I do not understand how you do not understand that a project does not start on 1 July and end on 30 June. If we had that, your logic would mean that there would be, for example a \$50m build of the Mandorah Jetty in 12 months only. We would only build it then and would get that program done. No.

We could easily get that program listed down to zero, we just would not put things on it. Programs start and go over multiple financial years. We already heard from the CE and the general manager that there are big projects with a lot of dollars allocated. That is why there are dollars in revote.

Mr MALEY: I will not talk about your lack of intellect or understanding. I do not want to know about that because that is irrelevant to me. I want to know that if there is a project that could be designed and done quickly, perhaps you could do 10 or 20 kilometres of road this year, instead of five kilometres, which would get more money into the community—that is why am what I am talking about.

I am not talking about your example of having no money, because I accept and agree that we need a program that provides certainty to the community. Is there an opportunity or are you taking any measures to get the design construct work done? Are there any hold-ups in your agency against getting those programs happening? Instead of doing, for example 10 kilometres of road this year, you could do 20 kilometres of road this year and then next year you could do another 20. I accept that you cannot do 200 kilometres in one year, because we have a Wet Season and a Dry Season, which limits what can happen.

Off you go. I do not want to talk about your intellect. I want to talk about actual programs that your department can ...

Ms LAWLER: I take offence at that. If he is taking offence, I will take offence.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR: I remind everybody that imputation applies to everybody. The nature and tenor of your question is dabbling in that area. I ask you to stick to your question.

Mr MALEY: That is my question restated, minister. Hopefully you can understand it.

Ms LAWLER: I repeat that we have a big cash amount of money that is going out the door: \$1.55bn in the last financial year and \$1.62bn next financial year. That is substantial cash going out the door, which will go into the pockets—I wrote a note to myself that 100% of construction contracts went to Territory enterprises last financial year, which is money in the pockets of Territory businesses.

We are doing a lot of design work to have projects that are design ready. An example is the Tanami highway. About eight to 12 kilometres of the Tanami Road is being built by Exact Contracting, but GHD is doing the design work for another 60 kilometres on the Tanami. Once that design work is done we will roll out a bigger package on the Tanami.

Yes, there are projects where we are doing the design work so we have things ready to roll out.

Mr KIRKMAN: Most of it has been said. There are a couple of large programs under the Remote Housing and land transport areas. Ultimately we want to get as many projects as the government is willing to commit to onto the program as soon as we can, to start the design and consultation with local people. We can make sure that, when we are ready to put out construction contracts, we are as ready as we can be with design and land tenure sorted et cetera.

Ultimately, as the programs continue to grow, it is not unexpected that the revote will grow in line with it.

Mr MALEY: I am going through Budget Paper No 4 and you talk about the \$1.5bn, which I can see on page 21. If I take you to page 4, where it talks about the budget for 2021–22, it is only \$951m cash. When we talk about revotes in and revotes out, there might be a \$1.5bn infrastructure budget but if we take away the revotes completely—I know we have not finished with them yet—your budget paper says you will spend \$951m. Is that telling me that is how much cash will be spent this financial year?

Ms LAWLER: That is just DIPL, it does not include the government-owned corporations. It is also only capital, not repairs and maintenance and other things.

Mr PAPADAKIS: That is correct. The \$952m listed in Budget Paper No 4 for 2021–22 is the cash allocated for capital works in the general government sector. It is not for GOCs and does not include anything else such as repairs and maintenance, capital grants or infrastructure-related expense that then make up the total of \$1.6bn for next year.

Mr MALEY: You are saying you will spend—not including revotes—\$1.6bn next financial year?

Ms LAWLER: Yes, that is the aim. That is the cash. Every financial year we—one day you might get the opportunity to be part of a budget Cabinet process. I can tell you it is pretty vicious, but that is where we allocate the cash and where the dollars will go. It is a comprehensive process. That is where the cash has gone.

We are pushing to get that \$1.55bn out this financial year. I am sure a lot of invoices have been paid in the last couple of months. That is what I have been talking about.

Since Labor has been in since 2016, we have spent \$1.44bn a year on average. All the civil contractors, construction work done in the Territory—and most of it has been Northern Territory Government money—is what has kept things ticking over in the Territory. That is a fact. The program might be big, but the cash has also been very big. It is important work—that is why we keep talking about jobs, jobs, jobs.

The dollars going out mean truck drivers, grader operators and quarry workers are employed; the bitumen plant is working; and the designers are working. All of those people can afford to buy a new car and be out at our cafes and restaurants. Dollars we spend in infrastructure are important because they keep Territorians here and in work. Often in these industries, if people do not have work, they will pack up and move where there is work. There are big jobs across Australia now—mining is booming again in Western Australia with iron ore dollars.

We need to keep people here—so they know they have a continuous flow of work. That is the work the department does in liaising with our big contractors, whether it is Ostojic Group, Allan King & Sons, Aldebaran Contracting or Exact Contracting. All the big companies want to know they have a pipeline of work so they can keep people working for them. If people do not know where their next job is, they will pack up and work

in the mining industry in WA, underground in tunnels in Victoria or where ever it is. We are pleased and proud of the money we have spent.

Mr MALEY: In the budget books, when you said \$1.4bn on average—you estimate now it is \$1.5bn—where can we find what was spent last financial year? Let us say that last financial year was \$1.5m, how much do you spend versus the \$1.593m you have this year? Are you likely to spend all of it? Where can I get an example from last year of what you thought you were going to spend and what you did spend?

Ms LAWLER: If you go to the Treasury website you can look back at every year. You can look at the years the CLP were in government. All the budget papers are there.

Mr PAPADAKIS: The \$1.6bn, or \$1.5bn for the current year, includes whole-of-government numbers, which can be found in the Treasurer's annual financial statements listed on the Treasury website. They should show comparative figures.

Mr MALEY: Can you give me those examples for the last financial year?

Mr PAPADAKIS: I do not have those with me as we only have DIPL information; that would be Treasury.

Ms LAWLER: This is estimates; let us stick to the output.

Mr MALEY: In relation to the revotes, I understand that the Aboriginal art gallery in Alice Springs has been on the books on the program for four years and it gets revoted every year. How do you deal with something that continues to roll on like that?

Ms LAWLER: It is exactly as you said. It becomes a revote; it gets moved from one year to the next. At some stage in that process—and we can talk more about that later today—it goes on to become a project that is under way. The design tender went out and out of the \$50m bucket for the art gallery money has been spent to start on the design work. It is about one-point-something million or so that has been spent. That is exactly what happens. The art gallery gets on the program—just the program—then it will get to the stage where some money gets spent for the design work; and then it will get to the stage where the project is under way.

The first year of the project, depending on the timing—it might start in January—might involve head works, upgrading power systems or putting in new sewerage and things like that, but only \$4m or \$5m might be spent in that financial year. In the following financial year there will be more cash allocated for whoever wins the tender to start the physical build. That is how it works.

The total expenditure to 31 March for the national Aboriginal art gallery has been \$2.129m.

Mrs LAMBLEY: When did the allocation for the national Aboriginal art gallery first come on to the budget papers? It was before you came to government. It has been in the budget for almost six years. That is a good example of this government underspending and not delivering.

Ms LAWLER: The \$50m budget was approved in 2019–20 for the national Aboriginal art gallery in Alice Springs.

Mrs LAMBLEY: No, that is not correct. The former CLP government allocated \$70m. It was put into the 2016 budget. It was then split into the cultural centre and the art gallery, 50/20. The \$50m for the art gallery has remained on the budget papers for more than five years.

Ms LAWLER: I do not know if that is correct.

Mrs LAMBLEY: It is correct.

Ms LAWLER: I thought the \$70m was our Labor government but ...

Mrs LAMBLEY: Definitely not, it was the former Giles government.

Ms LAWLER: Somebody can message me and let me know. That is the difference between a program: we cannot spend the money if the site is not finalised. This is a different output that we can have conversations about.

Mrs LAMBLEY: The point the Member for Nelson is making is, yes, we can understand how projects take time but there are projects that you are simply not delivering on within a reasonable time frame.

The other project in Alice Springs is the CBD revitalisation plan. That has been in the budget since 2017–18, with not even half of it spent. There is a problem. I am not saying all projects that you preside over are not delivered, but there are many projects—I dare say most of them are in the regional areas—that simply are not being delivered.

Ms LAWLER: Was that a question or commentary?

Mrs LAMBLEY: It is a commentary.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR: Member for Araluen, is there a question?

Mrs LAMBLEY: If you have a response, minister—if you tell me I am wrong, I would like to hear why.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR: I am clarifying for the record, because I wanted to see how long before you commenced your question. I was waiting for your next question, for you to follow up.

Mrs LAMBLEY: My question is: tell me I am wrong, but I think I am right.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR: Which question?

Mrs LAMBLEY: Regarding the statements I just made.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR: Regarding the budget? I am asking for clarification on your question.

Mrs LAMBLEY: For years there are projects—for example, the national Aboriginal art gallery that was allocated \$50m by the former CLP government in 2016 that is, essentially, still in the budget because it has not been delivered by this government. Another example is the Alice Springs CBD revitalisation plan, where \$20m was put in the budget in 2017–18. Here we are in 2021 and not even half of that money has been spent.

The minister is telling us there are all sorts of logistical reasons why there was an enormous revote of \$900m. Some of it may be because of those reasons. I would like comment from the minister about the fact there are projects that are simply not being delivered by her government in a reasonable time frame. Irrespective of the logistics, there is not just an appetite to deliver them.

Ms LAWLER: The Member for Araluen is incorrect. There is a strong appetite to deliver the Aboriginal art gallery, I can tell you ...

Mrs LAMBLEY: Five years and nothing.

Ms LAWLER: We would have loved to have delivered it, probably three or four years ago. One of the complexities when you are in government is working with stakeholders. The issue, as we are all very aware, is that the Alice Springs Town Council controls the land at Anzac Hill. If the Northern Territory Government had had its approval to build the art gallery it would have been built by now.

Sometimes councils hold up projects; the Member for Barkly knows that very well. Sometimes there are complexities in remote areas, working with land councils to get approvals. Sometimes it is with roads, the difficulty of finding gravel pits. There are many complexities in delivering a project.

If you are not necessarily working in this area daily you think it is straightforward and simple. It is not. There are complexities. You need to deal with the Alice Springs Town Council to deliver an art gallery in Alice Springs. You need to work with a land council to deliver a logistics hub in Katherine. That is the reality of the Northern Territory. That is why we have fantastic public servants who are good at community engagement, who will continue to work through these projects.

Yes, there were projects we would have loved to have delivered quicker. The Aboriginal art gallery is one I would have loved to have completed in the last term of government. All of that aside, we still have a lot of cash going out the door now and over the last financial years.

Mr MALEY: Are you blaming the stakeholders for the delay in these developments?

Ms LAWLER: I am not blaming; it is a partnership. Sometimes there are holdups on projects. The Alice Springs art gallery is one where we have been very clear that there is an ideal spot to build an art gallery. We have run into disagreements with the Alice Springs Town Council. That is nothing new; that has been on the public record for a long time. It is at the stage where the Northern Territory Government is working through compulsory acquisition of the Anzac Hill land.

Mr MALEY: What about the Mandorah marina facility and the jetty? That has been on the books for a number of years. What works have been undertaken on it? As the Member for Araluen mentioned, can you speed it up? Why is it taking so long to deliver projects when you say in media releases how good they are and how quick they will happen? They just do not happen.

Ms LAWLER: That is in the logistics output.

Mr MALEY: You will not answer the question?

Ms LAWLER: I will answer it when we get up to the logistics output.

Mr MALEY: What output is that?

Ms LAWLER: Output Group 10.0.

Mr EDGINGTON: Picking up on the delays, if we look at the Barkly alone there was: a 2016 promise for a \$10m upgrade of the Nyinkka Nyunyu art gallery; \$2m for the entry statements; we have been waiting three years for a \$9m upgrade of Purkiss Reserve; there was \$5.5m Turbocharging Tourism promised in February 2018; and \$2.95m for the streetscaping project. None of these projects have been delivered. What is the reason for these delays in delivering infrastructure in the Barkly?

Ms LAWLER: Do you want to list them? I can go through them. You are well aware of some of the issues we have had with all of these.

With Purkiss Reserve, the Northern Territory Government provided a capital grant of \$9m to the Barkly Regional Council to develop the reserve.

Mr EDGINGTON: Can I correct that?

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR: Member for Barkly, the minister is answering. You can ask a follow-up question when she is finished.

Ms LAWLER: There were protracted negotiations undertaken with the Barkly Regional Council and stakeholders to agree on the scope of work, the procurement plan and the works package that carried over two years.

What with the other ones you had on your list?

Mr EDGINGTON: Firstly, the \$9m was a recoverable works program. The council may have been provided with it but the agreement was that it would be handed straight back to the department of Infrastructure to deliver the project. I do not accept that the money was given to the council to manage the project.

Mr HARRISON: I can confirm that the money was granted to council and it came back to DIPL as a recoverable works project. We are delivering it on behalf of the council.

Mr MALEY: You granted \$9m to a council and you had no idea what the scope of the work was?

Ms LAWLER: This is a capital grant. The council would have presumably had some idea about what they wanted to build with the \$9m.

Mr MALEY: You were just saying there were protracted negotiations about the scope of work—if you look at it step by step, you granted \$9m and then went into negotiations about what that would be used for. You effectively granted \$9m for no reason. Then you said, 'Here is \$9m; let's talk about what we can use it for.'

Ms LAWLER: The council would have had a ballpark figure; they would have done costings and estimates for what they wanted, such as perimeter fences, pathways and demolition of specific structures. They would

have presumably had some idea about what they would use the money for and approximate costs. That was the allocation granted for \$9m.

That is what happens sometimes. If the council believes it cannot deliver a project, it will come back to the department to deliver it. I am well aware of examples Palmerston, where sometimes the council delivers projects but sometimes it comes back to DIPL. There needs to be negotiations with councils and stakeholders to agree to what has to happen.

Mr HARRISON: Often in the briefing phase of a project an estimate is developed and money is allocated based on it. As you work through detailed design and scoping, it can be the case that end users and stakeholders desire to have a scope of works that is greater than the available budget, so you enter into negotiations as to what can be delivered within the budget.

There is also the complexity of the small community of Tennant Creek, working with the council and delivering works in packages that are appropriate for the community. The work took some time.

Mr EDGINGTON: It is important to correct the record. The \$9m was recoverable works. When you say 'grant', a grant with a condition, that is a recoverable works program. It is handing over \$9m, with an arm twisted behind your back to hand that money back to DIPL. I disagree with your interpretation of a 'grant'.

Where is the Purkiss Reserve project up to?

Ms LAWLER: To be clear, when the infrastructure is built it will be a \$9m council asset. The Northern Territory Government is giving council \$9m. I do not know about the 'hand up the back' story, but the \$9m will be on the Barkly Regional Council books as an asset. We can talk about semantics, but it will be \$9m given to the council for infrastructure.

Mr EDGINGTON: Ultimately, DIPL is responsible for the delivery of a \$9m upgrade of Purkiss Reserve. Where is this project up to and why has it not been delivered?

Ms LAWLER: In May 2019, a contract for \$357,000 to replace a perimeter fence and pathways was awarded to Harvey Developments. It was completed in April 2021. In January 2021, a contract for \$81,000 for demolition of specific structures was awarded to Remote Concrete; it was completed in late January 2021. In January 2021, a contract for \$218,000 additional fencing and paths around the sports field was awarded to Harvey Developments.

Mr HARRISON: The remainder of the Purkiss Reserve work will be tendered in the next month to subsequently be delivered.

Mr EDGINGTON: My recollection from the last estimates hearing was that we were told the tender would be out in February 2021. What is the delay this time? Did that tender go out? If it did go out, why has it not been allocated?

Mr HARRISON: These works were tendered previously. The tender process was cancelled. It will be re-tendered.

Mr EDGINGTON: What was the reason for that tender being cancelled and reallocated? It seems there is delay, after delay, after delay.

Mr KIRKMAN: There was probity advice in regard to that tender. The advice was to re-tender in the interests of procurement action. As Mr Harrison pointed out, it will go out in the coming month.

Mr EDGINGTON: What was the identified probity issue?

Mr HARRISON: During the process, the industry identified there were ambiguities and difficulty in understanding the tender documents. As a result, during the evaluation period, it became clear that the industry did have trouble interpreting the documents. Therefore, we decided to re-tender.

Mr EDGINGTON: Who prepared the tender that has been identified as having probity issues, meaning we have to go through the same process?

Mr KIRKMAN: Our staff and contractors prepared the tender, like we do all tenders.

Mr EDGINGTON: Was it prepared in-house or by a consultant?

Mr HARRISON: It would have been a combination of internal resources and external designers.

Mr EDGINGTON: Now there is a new tender being prepared, when will it go out to the market? When can we expect the work to commence on this part of the project in Tennant Creek?

Mr HARRISON: After subsequent work to redevelop the tender documents, we anticipate it will go out in the next month. That size of work would ordinarily take two to three months to move through the tender process, evaluation and award.

Mr EDGINGTON: Would it be fair to say that all the signage you have up saying this project will be completed in mid-2021 is clearly inaccurate?

Ms LAWLER: Sometimes there are issues. As you have heard from the department, there was an issue regarding probity. We are careful regarding probity. The department has to be careful regarding the billions in tenders that go out. We have to make sure things are done properly. Yes, that will delay the date.

Mr EDGINGTON: The people of Tennant Creek have been waiting for three years for that project.

Three years ago, the government promised it would free up 19 public houses in Tennant Creek and deliver a new purpose-built rehabilitation and transitional outreach accommodation facility. It committed \$5m three years ago. Where is that project up to?

Ms LAWLER: You are referring to the BRADAAG project?

Mr EDGINGTON: Yes.

Ms LAWLER: Yes, there needed to be consultation. You were probably involved with some of those consultations. My understanding is that land has been identified near the DIPL building in Tennant Creek.

The issue was—as you know—Fazaldeen Road, which was the original site that was chosen, was found not to be suitable by people in the community. Again, that is what sometimes happens with projects. People think it is an ideal site but when you consult with stakeholders that is what happens.

You were on the ground, Member for Barkly. You know the answers to this. I am not sure why you are wasting time in estimates on it. The Fazaldeen Road site was found not to be acceptable. That delayed things because we had to find another site. That site has been found near the DIPL office.

We would have loved to have delivered this project quickly because that it would have freed up 19 places for accommodation in Tennant Creek, but that did not happen. Sometimes there are complexities with projects. It does not always go simply or is not straightforward. For every project where there is delay, there is a project that goes smoothly and gets delivered on time and on budget.

Mr KIRKMAN: This is a particularly difficult project, as we have seen with a number of these sorts of projects. Rarely does a community want it in their backyard. There was extensive work done, including going through a development consent process for the facility on Fazaldeen Road.

The community was clear that it did not want the project to be undertaken and delivered on Fazaldeen Road, so it was back to the drawing board with the community for an appropriate site. I have to say thank you to the regional director, Damien Burton, for coming up with a solution that was a great compromise. DIPL is not unhappy to have this facility next to our office in Tennant Creek. Well done and thank you, Damien.

I am happy to say that a tender for the design is anticipated to be released over the next couple of months, to be delivered next year. I am not shying away from how difficult this was, and is, to get off the ground. We are under way. We have a place that the community is comfortable with for delivery of this important project next year.

Mr EDGINGTON: The reasons the first part did not go ahead was because you selected the site and then tried to do the consultation afterwards. The whole process was flawed. I wanted to provide feedback. Yes, the consultation on this project has been done properly, not like the first effort by the ...

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR: Member for Barkly, is there a question you are following up?

Ms LAWLER: That is all your opinion. I get in trouble for having my opinion and his is the same thing. That is his opinion. He was the mayor, he could have facilitated things. He could have been involved early ...

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR: Yes, thank you. Order! Order!

Mr EDGINGTON: That is in the record and ...

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR: Order! I should not have to say order three times as the Chair. I need clarification, Member for Barkly, whether you are finished on your original question and your follow-ups about the lists?

Mr EDGINGTON: Yes, thank you, Chair. That was all.

Mrs LAMBLEY: In August 2020, DIPL issued a media statement headed, 'TIO Stadium is safe and games will proceed as planned'. This statement further advised that DIPL had been working with building certifiers to finalise the building certification. Can you advise whether or not the TIO Stadium has obtained its appropriate occupancy certification? How much money is allocated for the maintenance and compliance of TIO Stadium?

Ms LAWLER: TIO Stadium has been talked about for quite a while. We have read many stories about this one. TIO was built in the 1990s. It has served the public well for a long time. I think it was the 1990s when they moved from Gardens. There has been work recently, replacing the roof and other work.

Mr HARRISON: A number of works have occurred on TIO Stadium since it was built 40 years ago. Works that have happened in recent times, under the current building acts, undertaken by this department, are compliant and have certificates of occupancy.

There was an issue with the base building. We continue to work through that issue. It must be noted that the building is safe to occupy. The fire systems, emergency lighting systems, the stairs, the electrical systems et cetera have all been tested and works that have been done by this department in recent years have been done with a certificate of occupancy.

Mrs LAMBLEY: How much are you spending on the repairs and maintenance of the stadium?

Ms LAWLER: We will take that on notice. There have been a number of upgrades to women's change rooms and things over the last little while.

Question on Notice No 4.3

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

Mrs LAMBLEY: How much money is allocated for the maintenance and compliance of TIO Stadium?

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

Ms LAWLER: Yes, I do.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR: The question asked by the Member for Araluen has been allocated number 4.3.

Mrs LAMBLEY: I have a question from the Member for Mulka. What new works infrastructure funding is there for homeland schools in his region? Many of these schools need visiting teacher accommodation and school building upgrades. Could you advise what is happening for homeland schools in East Arnhem and when these works will be completed?

Ms LAWLER: I can speak generally to this. The Northern Territory Government put \$1m per year in the last term of government towards upgrades to homelands. Laynhapuy homelands, which are in the Member for Mulka's electorate, received upgrades.

The work in homelands is complex because of land tenure issues, but there is ongoing work with the federal government. This is a good question to ask Chansey Paech, the Minister for Local Government, or Selena Uibo, the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs.

There have been upgrades to some of the homeland schools. Having travelled and visited most of those homeland schools in the Member for Mulka's electorate, I understand how complex and difficult it is there.

We could take some of that on notice, but otherwise—this was the election commitment we made about capital works and upgrades to homeland centres. There is Gochan Jiny Jirra, but that is not his electorate; the Yirrkala homeland schools; Laynhapuy; Apwere Mwerre where \$80,000 is planned for upgrades; Manmoyi has \$97,000; and Mungkarta in the Barkly.

It is better if we provide the Member for Mulka with specifics, rather than me trying to choose which are in his electorate from the list and which are not. We do not have it tied to electorates. There has been work. It was a 2016 election commitment from our government regarding upgrades to homelands. The Member for Arnhem is also keen to see upgrades in homelands schools.

Question on Notice No 4.4

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

Mrs LAMBLEY: What new works infrastructure funding is there for homeland schools in the East Arnhem region? Many of these schools need visiting teacher accommodation and school building upgrades. Could you advise what is happening for homeland schools in East Arnhem and when these works will be completed?

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

Ms LAWLER: Yes, I do. It is an important question.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR: The question asked by the Member for Araluen has been allocated number 4.4.

Mr MALEY: The budget has allocated \$8m to deliver new industrial land in Alice Springs. How many lots can be turned out for \$8m and where will they be located?

Ms LAWLER: That is an important question. In the greater Darwin area, the research shows we have about 21 years of industrial land available. In Alice Springs that is not the case. There are small areas of land available and there is a need in the future for more land.

About two years ago a consultant did work identifying land in the Alice Springs area and what we might need in the future. There is industrial land at the airport and the Brewer estate, but people in Alice Springs do not necessarily want to drive the distance out there. There is land available near the trucking yards. The work we did looked at a site called Arumbera. It is at the back of the trucking hall of fame. There is a lot of work to be done. The money allocated will support the development of that land. There needs to be AAPA clearances, for example, and work with the EPA. It was a lot of work to identify the land and then start the process on headworks.

All up it is probably a large amount of money to bring on new industrial land. It is a bit like your program and cash. There is \$8m and then \$6m to support the development. The process will be complex because there will need to be AAPA clearances and that can be a difficult process in Alice Springs.

In the meantime there is quite substantial land available at the airport and Brewer. We also want to have land closer to town. As Planning minister I have driven around the industrial area to look at what is available in Alice Springs. Pretty much every lot in the industrial area is developed or rented out. It is a good thing but we need more land.

Mrs LAMBLEY: How do you spell that, minister?

Ms LAWLER: A-r-u-m-b-e-r-a. We are looking at the zero to five years and 20 to 30 hectares of industrial land in the shorter term. Kilgariff is going in and developing well—it would be a good option for light industrial if you are an electrician or a plumber or somebody like that. Brewer Estate which is out further, is for heavier, dirtier industry. The airport has also made land available.

Mr MALEY: Regarding the \$31m the federal government have invested in Humpty Doo Barramundi, does the government have any plans to upgrade Anzac Parade, which is the road out to that facility?

Ms LAWLER: I do not think I have seen any mention of Anzac Parade upgrades, so not at this stage. Humpty Doo Barramundi is going from strength to strength. It might need to come onto the program. I am very aware of the road that goes past Middle Point School—it is a Litchfield Council road..

Mr MALEY: What about the Maryvale Road in Alice Springs, which was used for the Finke? The access road. I had reports that the road was rough this year and almost dangerous to a point where vehicles were driving up the race track after the race to stay off the road. Was there any maintenance on that road for the Finke, which is a big event in Alice Springs?

Ms LAWLER: That is in the logistics output. I could answer that one but we will wait until the logistics output.

Mr MALEY: In your department's construction snapshot in January 2021 you published a proposed City of Darwin project to install traffic lights at the turf club entrance on Dick Ward Drive. Why has this been promoted publicly as potential new construction work when the City of Darwin technical services state there has been no funding nor time frame identified to install those traffic lights?

Mr HARRISON: The construction snapshot is a snapshot of local government, private and Australian Government construction. We seek that information from those entities and they verify it. It is a question for the City of Darwin.

Mr MALEY: Have you earmarked funding for that proposal?

Mr KIRKMAN: Dick Ward Drive is a City of Darwin asset; it will be their decision as to whether they wish to invest in that particular intersection. As John Harrison mentioned, when we ask for information to collate the construction snapshot councils submit their forward works. It must have come from the City of Darwin.

Mr MALEY: Can you provide a breakdown of the \$4m expenditure for the Myilly Point playground project?

Ms LAWLER: The Myilly Point playground project has gone over budget. We would have loved it to come in under budget or on budget. It has been a headache; a difficult project. Initially, there was \$3m allocated to install the playground but when the work began it became apparent that there was considerable asbestos.

I spoke with the playground builders and the architects—I was on-site recently for the opening of the Friends of Kahlin sign—and was told that the asbestos on the site took them all by surprise. It was substantial and not just in the top layers. It is a reality and we understand all the places built before Cyclone Tracy had substantial asbestos.

The concern for me, more broadly—and not just about this specific project—is the cost to remove asbestos. We know how small that playground section is. In the future, when we want to develop the rest of the site—originally we were looking at an art gallery, which did not go ahead—there be considerable cost to remove asbestos. This project involved the EPA and costs were associated with consultation reports on the removal. It ended up being a project that cost more than originally thought. Asbestos is particularly an issue in the Top End and for people who are building or demolishing older homes—upstairs houses built in Nakara and Casuarina, before Cyclone Tracy, were full of it.

Mr HARRISON: There has been substantial work done to investigate and remediate asbestos on that site. We did a site-wide detailed investigation to understand the extent of the contamination, which cost us in the order of \$200,000. We did an extensive emu pick on the portion of the site that was not redeveloped to make sure it continued to be safe, at a cost of \$200,000. The asbestos remediation on the playground area cost us in the vicinity of \$1.4m.

Mr MALEY: What about stages 2 and 3 of the playground? Are they still going ahead and, if so, when will they commence?

Ms LAWLER: Most important is the Friends of Kahlin, which is a group of people—a subset of the Stolen Generation—who were taken from their families and housed or accommodated on that site. Many are from old Territory families.

I was there for the opening of the signage. People like Kathy Mills, Barbara Nassar, Barbara Cummings and Barbara Raymond, all old Territory and Darwin families, have strong memories and connections to that site.

They are keen for an area to provide a memorial for them on the opposite side to the playground, overlooking Kahlin, the oval and out to sea—which was the area where their compound was. It varies, but we are having ongoing conversations.

They talked about things the kids did there, like played marbles. They are looking at things like an area for kids to do activities like that. They want their story to be told and see whether there is a way to show the photos that are still around today. Kathy Mills has a strong musical background, so she wants an amphitheatre where there can be impromptu performances. It is an important next stage; something to commemorate key people, the Stolen Generations, who were taken to the site and who have amazing memories. It was heart-rending to hear their stories of things that happened on that site.

The site has a long history, having been a hospital—where you and I were born, Member for Nelson—and the NTU. The next stage we are committed to is for a commemoration memorial for Friends of Kahlin. John can talk about the time line, but at this stage it is about engaging with them and producing something sensitive that they would like to see on the site. We have to get it right.

Originally a running track and outdoor gym area was in the plan; that would be the next stage, further down the track. The issue of asbestos concerns me because substantial dollars will be needed to clear the spaces.

Mr HARRISON: We have worked closely with Friends of Kahlin, who have asked us to spread our net a little wider to capture the requirements of the broader community impacted by activities on that site over time. We are going through that process now to consult with the right people on the next stages for the site.

We have agreed that it is a multiple stage process. We have erected initial signage, which was opened recently. We are looking at doing similar interpretive work to help the community understand the history of the site. We will work with Friends of Kahlin and the wider group on what a memorial and remembrance of activities on that site might look like.

The minister mentioned the complexity of asbestos on the site. It is somewhat of an obstacle to when we can do that work because we will have to work through the cost of remediation in conjunction with the cost of memorial work. We have not established a time line; we will do that as part of the project.

Ms LAWLER: Charlie King has taken a leadership role with that group of people; he is keen to see the work done. We would like to do it sooner rather than later but it (inaudible – microphone off).

Mr MALEY: There was reported to be a \$7m blowout on the State Square car park. Can you give us a breakdown of what that blowout was and how it amounted to \$7m?

Ms LAWLER: We responded during the last estimates. I will give a quick appraisal. We do not have a written brief here because it was last financial year and the project was completed. The original tender price was \$19m. This project is dear to my heart because my window looks over the car park. I feel like I project-managed it.

Mr MALEY: (inaudible – microphone off).

Ms LAWLER: I think I did a damn fine job, Member for Nelson. You forget I was a teacher; I have good hearing.

Mr MALEY: (inaudible – microphone off).

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR: Member for Nelson, please allow the minister to answer.

Ms LAWLER: You are lucky I did not snap and point at you. That is what I used to do as a teacher.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR: Order! Please allow the minister to answer without imputation or interjection.

Ms LAWLER: I oversaw that project and the complexity of asbestos. That was the old Supreme Court site. When the Supreme Court and the old hospital site were demolished, some of our forefathers who worked in infrastructure may not have done the right thing regarding taking asbestos from the site and burying it. All they did was put a bit of dirt over the top. I hate to think that it might have been my father, who worked in construction, involved in that.

There are issues when things were not done as comprehensively in the past. The Supreme Court site had dirt and then a lovely bit of green grass, but once they started digging down the asbestos was revealed. You could still see some of the walls and things like that in the basement areas.

There were additional costs to bury the asbestos. The fix for the asbestos was the same at Myilly Point, to dig deeper and bury the asbestos in the bottom of the car park pit, cover it with concrete and then do the build.

I only hear positive things regarding the car park. Everybody that I speak to says it is a well-designed car park. It is great to have so much space; you can get out; and you do not have to go all the way down and all the way up to get out. I have had nothing but positive feedback. It can also be a cyclone shelter, which is another positive. The garden on top is beautiful. I do not always sit at my desk but when I do look out my office window I see people taking photos. It is a lovely addition to the Territory.

On the weekend, I was at Glenti and that car park was busy. It provided an extra 450 car parks. Lots of Territorians who were using that underground car park.

Mr HARRISON: The original project budget for the underground car park was \$32m. We awarded a design and construct contract for \$19m. The design evolved during the project and the Northern Territory Government—this department—made decisions regarding the scope that would be delivered within the contract. We made a decision to remove the simple landscaping included in the contract and replace it with the garden in accordance with the master plan, while we had the contractor on-site, for efficiency reasons. As everyone can see in the outcome of the garden, it was a substantial cost and contribution to the contract fee, as well as the asbestos management.

Mr MALEY: What is that cost?

Mr HARRISON: The native garden cost in the order of \$1.7m.

Mr MALEY: That is \$1.7m for that garden? How much does it cost to maintain each year?

Mr HARRISON: I do not have those details with me but we can take that question on notice.

Question on Notice No 4.5

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

Mr MALEY: What is the cost of maintaining the garden on top of the State Square car park?

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

Ms LAWLER: Yes, I do.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR: The question asked by the Member for Nelson has been allocated number 4.5.

Mr MALEY: In relation to the removal of the asbestos, have you made enquiries regarding selling it to the dump at Shoal Bay versus burying it? The cost analysis?

Ms LAWLER: Yes. I can assure you that has been well and truly looked at.

Mr HARRISON: While I do not have the particular details of the haulage rates et cetera on me, the work we have done would suggest that containment cells on-site is a more economical way of disposing of the asbestos, as opposed to haulage costs, in conjunction with the dumping cost.

Mr MALEY: In relation to the upgrade of the Alice Springs youth detention centre, it was originally \$12m and has now blown out to \$25m. Can you give us a breakdown of why that project has blown out so much? I think the sign says \$24m.

Ms LAWLER: The Alice Springs youth justice centre was originally two stages. Asbuild got the tender for stage one; that was awarded for \$11.9m. Stage two works have subsequently been included, which is \$8.3m. Asbuild is continuing to construct it and the aim is to have it finished by March 2022.

I am reluctant to talk about variations when projects are still under way because we do not know if there will be greater expenses. There might be savings. This projects is still hot and moving, along with the Holtze youth justice centre.

We will keep it broad because these projects are still developing and moving. There is no point in me talking about an overspend of \$2m because then you will come back at me and say, 'You said it cost \$2m when it will cost \$3m', whatever else or 'It only cost \$4m and blah, blah'. While there are projects under way I am reluctant to nail down something that is still a moving feast.

Mr HARRISON: During the tender process, it included stages one and two. We received prices for stage one and two. We awarded stage one of that contract; as budget became available, we awarded stage two. That accounts for the variation.

Mr MALEY: I also got the hint that your directive was to answer broadly, but \$11.9m and \$8.3m does not add up to \$24m or \$25m. You are saying that there have already been variations to that tender to add up to the \$24m or \$25m that it has blown out to?

Mr HARRISON: My records would not support a \$24m contract.

Mr MALEY: I can get a picture of the sign. I am sure the sign says \$24m. I can table a picture of the sign.

Ms LAWLER: Maybe we can check with the minister for Territory Families.

Mr HARRISON: I think you will find that the \$24m would have related to the overall budget for the project. That would have included design, delivery costs et cetera. The actual contract value is substantially less than \$24m.

Mr MALEY: Can you take that question on notice so we can work to what those figures are, not just 'maybe' or guess work?

Ms LAWLER: Yes, we can take that one on notice.

Question on Notice No 4.6

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

Mr MALEY: Can you give me a breakdown of the \$24m that is expected to be spent on the Alice Springs youth detention centre?

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

Ms LAWLER: Yes, I do.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR: The question asked by the Member for Nelson has been allocated number 4.6.

Mr MALEY: How much of the federal government's \$200m for the Darwin City Deal has been allocated to the development of the Civic and State Square? How many years is that program to go over?

Ms LAWLER: For Civic and State Square there is \$47m in this budget. All up, it was a \$200m commitment from the feds partnership, the City Deal, which is a great thing to have.

Budget 2021 announced \$30m specifically for the revitalisation, and that includes removal of the 90-bay parliament car park, which will have a native garden, and we have seen some of that design work; revitalisation of Liberty Square to provide improved pedestrian and vehicle access to the Supreme Court; consultation with all key stakeholders to progress and design the overall State Square revitalisation; and work on the art gallery. Do you want specifics on the dollars?

Mr MALEY: Of the \$200m for the City Deal, how much money has been allocated to the development of Civic and State Square?

Ms LAWLER: It is \$100m.

Mr HARRISON: Broadly, \$100m was allocated to CBD revitalisation projects. A further \$30m has been allocated to the State Square redevelopment in Budget 2021.

Mr MALEY: The \$30m was designated for the 90-bay car park?

Ms LAWLER: Of the \$200m, \$100m is Northern Territory Government money, as is the State Square work. Do not forget, there is the new university, which has federal government money and NAIF funding.

Mr MALEY: In May you announced \$30m to do design work and rip up the 90-bay car park. That seems like a lot of money to do design work and rip up a car park.

Ms LAWLER: I just read out six different items that the \$30m will go towards, as well as the art gallery. The art gallery will be beside the Supreme Court; that will take a substantial amount of money. Ripping up the car park—we are waiting for that tender to be awarded.

Mr MALEY: What amount was that?

Ms LAWLER: The 90-bay car park design work was done. The tender has gone out for the construction: ripping up of the asphalt; realignment of the road; and planting of that space is all part of the \$30m. The car park is just one component of it.

Mr MALEY: In relation to the Bullocky Point museum, what is wrong with it? Would it not be cheaper to upgrade it instead of having two museums?

Ms LAWLER: The Bullocky Point museum is an amazing facility. You are asking for opinions. The people at the Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory would like to see more of the beautiful art works that remain in their basement in storage put on display.

Mr MALEY: In relation to allocated funds for boat ramps, is any money allocated for new ramps in this year's budget?

Ms LAWLER: That is at transport—Output Group 10.0.

Mr MALEY: What was the total cost of the review in relation to the shade structure on Cavenagh Street? Was there a university review?

Ms LAWLER: We are looking backwards now, estimates is supposed to be looking forwards. Off the top of my head it was about \$80,000 to do the heat mitigation work. It was not just about the shade structure it was about all the heat studies throughout the CBD area. This has been talked about at length.

University professors who provide expert advice also deserve to get paid. That money was not just a one-off study, it was about long-term work to look at areas across the CBD that make it hot. Member for Nelson, I know you do not particularly agree or like that work but it is important. If you want people to come into the CBD you need to make it an attractive place and as cool as possible, otherwise people vote with their feet and go to the air conditioned shopping centres.

I am pleased and proud of the work this government has done. When you drive along Garramilla Boulevard or along Cavenagh Street and see the greenery, when you look at the art work throughout the CBD or see just how beautiful Cullen Bay is—the Northern Territory Government has done a lot of work to make sure our CBD is an attractive place.

I was out every night last week at a number of work functions. When I came out of the Engineers Australia executive board meeting my car was parked near the Mantra Pandanus. I looked along Cavenagh Street and it was stunning. The lighting over the shade structure and the trees were beautiful. Looking across at all the street art, the work we have done around State Square—that was important work. Darwin was looking tired and run down; now it looks like a vibrant capital city should. The money being spent on heat mitigation work is well spent.

If we can bring people into the Darwin CBD the proof is in the pudding. New coffee shops, restaurants and bars are opening. Almost every week there is a new option in the CBD for people to socialise. The heat mitigation work was important and is part of the big picture, which is about cooling the CBD.

Mr MALEY: Thank you for your round-about answer about what you think looks good and what does not. Are you going to pull the vines down from the shade structure and replace it with shade cloth?

Ms LAWLER: You asked me that question in the sittings. No, we are not pulling the vines down and replacing them with shade. The aesthetics would not be ideal. That said, the vines are growing well; they are flowing over. We need to ensure they are supported. There will be additional support to make sure they continue to cover the shade structure.

The shade structure was in last year's budget and last year's estimates; it would be a more valuable use of time to move on to other outputs.

Mr MALEY: In relation to the additional support for the vines you will put on the shade structure, can you give me more detail?

Ms LAWLER: It is support to make the vines continue to cover the whole vine structure.

Mr MALEY: How much will that cost?

Ms LAWLER: We will take that on notice.

Question on Notice No 4.7

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

Mr MALEY: Can you please provide the breakdown of the cost for the new supports for the vines on the shade structure on Cavenagh Street?

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR: Minister, do you accept the question.

Ms LAWLER: Yes. That work is part of the maintenance for the shade structure; it will be part of the maintenance budget.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR: The question asked by the Member for Nelson has been allocated number 4.7.

Mr MALEY: What will the maintenance cost for the shade structure be for the financial year?

Ms LAWLER: We will take that on notice too. We are looking backwards. This is estimates so we should be looking forward.

Mr MALEY: I am talking about the costs for this year, looking forward.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR: The minister has agreed to take this on notice.

Question on Notice No 4.8

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

Mr MALEY: What is the cost of the maintenance for the shade structure on Cavenagh Street?

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

Ms LAWLER: Yes, I do.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR: The question asked by the Member for Nelson has been allocated number 4.8.

Mr MALEY: In relation to an air conditioning tender in Katherine that closed in December, it is seven months later and it has not been awarded. I would like an explanation as to why that tender has not been awarded.

Ms LAWLER: We will take that on notice. Those nitty-gritties around tenders—as a minister, I do not get involved in tendering processes at all. It is fraught. With tenders, there is only ever one winner and there are plenty of people who do not win tenders. It is not a good space for a minister to play in.

Question on Notice No 4.9

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

Mr MALEY: Minister, in relation to the tender T20/1791 closed in December 2020, it is now June 2021. Can you please explain why it has not been awarded seven months later?

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

Ms LAWLER: Yes, I do.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR: The question asked by the Member for Nelson has been allocated number 4.9.

Mr MALEY: Can you give me a summary on why there are delays, when tender dates finish, before the tenders are released? The cost of materials such as timber and steel go up. If there is a six-month delay, who has to wear the cost of that increase in the supply of steel or timber for that tender? Presently, it is the contractor.

Ms LAWLER: We have KPIs for that.

Mr HARRISON: In the tender documents, we set a tender validity period. If the tender is awarded within the tender validity period then the contractor would wear those costs in accordance with the process contract established by the tender. If we go past the tender validity period, we give the contractor an opportunity to extend the tender and, at that time, they are given the opportunity to tell us whether they will revise their cost or leave it the same.

Mr MALEY: Why would there be such a delay in releasing the tender? Why would there be delays at all?

Ms LAWLER: Most tenders are done quickly but occasionally there are anomalies.

Mr HARRISON: There are often complexities in tender evaluations. It might be an admissibility issue where a contractor may not have CAL. They are given an opportunity, if they do not have the correct CAL category—they have some time to establish the right CAL level et cetera.

There are also instances where we need to clarify things regarding the tender's bid that can take time. Sometimes there are tender negotiations required. There are many reasons that it may go past the anticipated KPI of 30 days. The 30 days is an average. Some tenders that are awarded within days—low value, low complexity tenders—and then there are more complex tenders—large value, contracts, ECIs and managing contracts may take substantially longer than 30 days.

Output 8.2 – Infrastructure Planning and Governance

Mr MALEY: The TERC final report recommends you urgently deliver a significant program of infrastructure that enables industry growth by negotiating a 10-year infrastructure program with the Australian Government, quarantined from the Commonwealth Grants Commission assessment process. Is your first recommendation really to go to Canberra to get more money? How will you do that negotiation?

Ms LAWLER: It is part of the big picture of government to attract more private investment to the Territory and make things easier to do business. It is about our \$40bn target for 2030.

Ms McCORMICK: In terms of the first steps, it will be with the Australian Government. There are ongoing discussions. One of the things we need to explore with the Australian Government is the particular mechanisms they can fund us through. For example, with transport, it is through the National Partnership Agreement, under their National Partnership Agreement on Land Transport Act to make it legal for them to provide funding.

It is also for us to do a gap analysis. There are funding streams we may not have looked at before with the Australian Government. We will explore pursuing those and how to make it easier for them to invest in the Territory. Once those economic project—private sector investment will follow because the economic infrastructure is there to de-risk the project for them. It is a bit chicken and egg. We need the enabling infrastructure first before private sector come in behind and start their projects.

Mr MALEY: In relation to the 10-year infrastructure plan of 2019–20, there is a range of projects listed. Could I take you through a couple of those to see where they are for an update? For example, the Mount Johns Valley area plan is \$20m within three to five years. That three to five years is almost up. How is that going?

Ms LAWLER: It is the wrong output area, but I am aware that we are running short of time. My understanding of the Mount Johns one is there are negotiations with the traditional owners, Lhere Artepe.

Mr MALEY: How much of the \$20m has been spent so far?

Ms LAWLER: It is private investment.

Mr MALEY: The Northern Territory Government is not putting any money into it?

Mr KIRKMAN: There is quite a bit of work to be done on Mount Johns before it gets released to a developer. There are negotiations and discussions under way with Lhere Artepe about native title areas. Their support in the release of Mount Johns will be important. Headworks will be required. It will be a matter of how the development agreement is set out in terms of who funds those headworks. It could be government funding and then recouping money from the sale of properties or the developer putting in the infrastructure. It is important to note with the infrastructure plan that the figures listed sometimes will include government money, local government money or private sector dollars. That \$20m would also have private sector dollars.

Mr MALEY: This plan was released in 2019. There will be NTG work. We will ask for a breakdown of what that is but the plan says it will be done within three to five years and yet the negotiations have not even started. Do you think that project is on track as per your plan?

Mr KIRKMAN: The progress has been the discussions with Lhere Artepe. In terms of how much NT Government money goes into that site and development, it will be a matter of a development agreement with the market in terms of how that infrastructure will roll out. At times government will step in and do headworks and other infrastructure and then recoup funding via a percentage of lot sales from the developer. At other times we will have in the development agreement that the developer undertakes that work and then do not pass revenue to the NT Government for lot sales because they have already incorporated costs in terms of servicing the site.

Mr MALEY: Do you think you are on track to spend the \$20m in three to five years?

Mr KIRKMAN: It will depend on where the negotiations end up in terms of Mount Johns. It is possible to see dollars going out the door in that time frame.

Mr MALEY: If three years have gone by now, how far are the negotiations along?

Mr KIRKMAN: The negotiations are still with traditional owners on release of the site—when traditional owners are comfortable through the ILUA discussion process.

Mr MALEY: Then there are headworks that need to be done?

Mr KIRKMAN: There will be some headworks. I do not have the details here.

Mr MALEY: The next one is the infrastructure plan for Coolalinga and Howard Springs. This plan talks about \$42m, to be done within three to five years. How are we going with that? It has been a number of years already.

Ms LAWLER: I am not sure if you are referring to the roadworks at Coolalinga or the land use plan?

Mr MALEY: I am looking at your report and on page 20 there are a whole lot of projects. It says 'infrastructure plan and delivery Coolalinga Howard Springs.' The boxes are ticked under 'Northern Territory Government' and 'private'. The estimated cost is \$42m. The sequencing is medium, three to five years. Where are we at with that project?

Mr KIRKMAN: As you will note, against that item is a tick for 'NTG' but moreover for the private sector. As you said, there is a circle against the 'medium term, three-to-five years' in terms of sequencing. The developer, Gwelo, has continued to work. The \$42m is largely an estimate of what the private sector, Gwelo and those purchasing lots within the Gwelo development were anticipating to spend in that time frame. There has been work under way, but clearly there is further work to be done to finalise and fill the development entirely.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR: We have struck 1 o'clock; it is lunch time. I will see everyone back at 1.30 pm.

The committee suspended.

Mr CHAIR: It being 1.30 pm, welcome back to estimates hearings. We are currently on Infrastructure and Planning with Minister Lawler on Output 8.2.

Mr MALEY: Where we left off, we were talking about the 10-year plan. We got up to the infrastructure plans for Coolalinga and Howard Springs. Do you think you are on track to have that finished in three to five years, as per your plan?

Ms LAWLER: That was the cross-sector integrated land use and infrastructure planning. As the Chief Executive said, it is not just about government work, it is also about private enterprise. In future outputs, logistics, we can talk about the Coolalinga road upgrades as well.

Mr MALEY: Is that all part of it?

Ms LAWLER: Yes.

Mr MALEY: That is the \$23m we are talking about, with that?

Ms LAWLER: No, this was developed in 2019. The \$23m was new money from the federal government; that is not in there.

Mr MALEY: The \$23m is not included? That is not the road upgrade now where the traffic lights are going in? This plan we are talking about is separate to the Stuart Highway intersection upgrade out the front?

Ms LAWLER: Yes, that is additional.

Mr MALEY: The next one says, 'Provide infrastructure, including roads, to encourage agriculture development at Deep Well Station, \$40m, three to five years'. Where are we at in relation to that project?

Ms LAWLER: Deep Well is on the Titjikala road? That one is probably being pushed out further because of a couple of things. There are immediate dollars going into the Maryvale Road. That is the one currently under way. Aldebaran is doing 12 kilometres ...

Mr MALEY: It is 10 kilometres, is it?

Ms LAWLER: Yes, 10 kilometres at Maryvale. There are possibly questions for the Land Corporation on that land release, or DEPWS might be able to add to it.

The three areas that have been the immediate land release or expressions of interest that have gone out are Keep River, Larrimah and Wildman. We put out—I think earlier this year—expressions of interest about future agriculture and horticulture development on those three sites. There is Land Corporation land at Deep Well, but that was not in the initial expression of interest. This infrastructure plan was to be updated in 2020. We usually update it every year. It was not updated because of the work on COVID. Some of those projects like Deep Well might be pushed out further.

Mr MALEY: You are saying the Deep Well one will be pushed out past three to five years as per this plan?

Ms LAWLER: That is just from discussions now. I suspect so because the land was held by the Land Corporation. The Land Corporation put out the expression of interest for three sites. It also has land at the Deep Well site. That was not in that initial outlay. Part of the road upgrade we saw at Keep River is in relation

to that future land development there. That one might possibly go out. They are for discussion when it is reviewed.

Mr MALEY: (inaudible – microphone off).

Ms LAWLER: I will take that one on notice. I do not have the latest on the visitor experience at the Desert Park.

Mr MALEY: Can I also ask about the Alice Springs Telegraph Station?

Ms LAWLER: Sometimes it is better to ask the agency. We do the work and the infrastructure build but the agency puts them on the plan. Yes, we can take that on notice.

Question on Notice No 4.10

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

Mr MALEY: Could you please update the committee on the development in relation to the Alice Springs Desert Park visitor experience and the Alice Springs Telegraph Station visitor experience and provide an update of when they will be completed?

Mr CHAIR: Minister, do you accept the question?

Ms LAWLER: Yes.

Mr CHAIR: The question asked by the Member for Nelson has been allocated number 4.10.

Mr MALEY: In relation to the 10-year plan, do you feel that you are following the plan to schedule or are you running behind, considering three out of the four I asked you about are behind schedule?

Ms LAWLER: Sometimes agencies put these projects on their plan for the future and some get pushed out by a few years. It might be a policy decision from them, things do change; they might have accessed a VEEP grant or some smaller grants; or they might have changed the project. We usually review it every 12 months. That did not happen in 2020 as the department of Infrastructure was busy with many things to do with COVID. That work needs to be done. Most of the projects are there and being worked through.

Mr MALEY: To answer my question, you think the projects are behind schedule in relation to the 10-year infrastructure plan, as we have just gone through four?

Ms LAWLER: Yes, some projects are and some are not. John Stokes is happening.

Mr MALEY: Is that happening ahead of schedule or on schedule? What page are you on?

Ms LAWLER: I cannot remember, I just flicked through.

Mr MALEY: You said some are and some are not. Show me some projects that are going ahead before schedule.

Ms LAWLER: I am not going through every dot point in here.

Mr MALEY: You said it. I am asking you to clarify what you said.

Ms LAWLER: I am just saying that some projects are happening or have occurred already. There would be some that have not.

Mr MALEY: As per your schedule?

Ms LAWLER: Yes. That is why you have a plan. It is not set in concrete. A plan provides guidance and we review and come back to it.

Mr MALEY: You are saying your 10-year infrastructure plan is not set in concrete and you follow it as desired?

Ms LAWLER: A lot of the things on this infrastructure plan are from agencies, which may push a project out or bring it forward. They may have funding from elsewhere; it depends on the size of the project. It is a plan which is consulted on with industry—we cannot consult with other agencies. That is why you have plans: the ability to work through them, review and sometimes some things move to the right.

Mr MALEY: (inaudible – microphone off).

Ms LAWLER: I would hate to mention black and white again.

Mr MALEY: You still have not answered my question. Effectively, your plan is behind schedule?

Ms LAWLER: There might be individual projects that are behind schedule, but the plan continues to roll out. Since that plan was worked on in 2019, there are a number of new projects. For example, the Berrimah Road–Tiger Brennan intersection project, which has been brought forward.

There are examples of projects that would not have been on the plan or may not have been—the federal government has put in 80% and we put in 20% for the Beetaloo roads. Some projects provide a map or pathway but there are often different decisions that impact these. There is no more I can say.

Mr MALEY: Are you saying that you do not follow the plan?

Ms LAWLER: Yes, we follow the plan, but things will change. It is a plan that provides guidance. You can see where we have ticks and dots: that is short, medium and long-term plans. Occasionally, for whatever reason—it might be a very sensible reason—a program gets pushed out or brand-new projects are brought on.

Mr MONAGHAN: The billions of dollars that we spend on infrastructure for the Northern Territory provides jobs and futures for Territorians. At the core of that is your agency's KPI for buy local, about 97% for construction. Can you give us an indication of how that is tracking?

Ms LAWLER: Yes. We are very pleased. Our construction contractors are 100% local Territory enterprises. The KPI was 97% but in the last financial year 100% of our tenders were awarded to local companies. That means the flow-on effect is broad. It is jobs for Territorians, but it in the knock-on: if you have a job, you are possibly looking at buying a house, a car or a boat in the Territory; you are spending local or going camping; and you are doing all the things that keep the Territory vibrant.

We are pleased about the fact we are spending local and putting the dollars into local companies. About \$420 million has gone into local companies. I try to get out and about as much as I can. At least one day a week I am out talking to people besides people in my electorate. Last week or the week before I was on Maryvale Road with Aldebaran, looking at its project. I was talking to a young engineer, a born-and-bred Territory boy, Ben O'Shaughnessy, who is doing an amazing job. He worked for another company previously, but moved to the rural area. Aldebaran is based in the rural area. There he is being a civil engineer out on Maryvale Road. That is a great story. He wants to stay in the Territory and invest. That is what we want to see.

Output 8.3 – Building Asset Management

Mr MALEY: How many government buildings have asbestos remaining in them?

Ms LAWLER: We would have to take that question on notice. I do not know if we would be able to find that information because it is extensive. You could find it, but the audit of that—I was principal of Jingili Primary School, which was built before Cyclone Tracy. Any buildings built before the 1980s have asbestos in them. Pretty much every primary school from the Darwin CBD—not the new builds such as Darwin High School—through to Moil and Wagaman were built before Cyclone Tracy and have asbestos.

It is how it is managed. Every building that has asbestos must have an asbestos register. Before any contractor starts work they go to the front office and check the asbestos register. They have to make sure that any work is done correctly. Asbestos is a fact of life across the world, not just in the Northern Territory. Asbestos was used as a building product.

Mr HARRISON: The department manages a whole-of-government contract. We undertake assessments of government assets. We produce asbestos registers and management plans on behalf of agencies.

Mr MALEY: Your general manager said there is an asset register. Will you take it on notice to provide it?

Ms LAWLER: Yes, we can provide that.

Question on Notice No 4.11

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

Mr MALEY: How many government buildings currently have asbestos remaining?

Mr CHAIR: Minister, do you accept the question?

Ms LAWLER: Yes. Remaining? I think you could just say 'have asbestos', full stop.

Mr CHAIR: The question asked by the Member for Nelson has been allocated number 4.11.

OUTPUT GROUP 9.0 – LANDS AND PLANNING
Output 9.1 – Land Development

Mr MALEY: I am trying to work it out, it could be either a \$4m or a \$1.9m cut to the Land Development output in this year's budget. Your budget notes say it is due to a one-off land servicing capital related expenditure that cannot be recorded. Can you explain that to me?

Ms LAWLER: It is a one-off land servicing capital expenditure.

Mr PAPADAKIS: Within this output, in every budget paper there is a note that says we have expended items that we could not capitalise. That comes about towards the end of the development of the budget where we assess what projects are complete and review their accounting treatment. In this case, when we do land servicing a lot of those works are assets that eventually belong to councils or are Power and Water headworks such as sewerage works. We cannot capitalise those assets. Because they belong to the output of Land Development, we have to expense them on our books and that is where it shows.

Mr MALEY: Is that a common practice?

Ms LAWLER: Yes, it is accounting practice followed by the government.

Mr MALEY: In this year's budget, \$3.5m has been included for subdivision work to support the release of 35 residential lots in Borroloola. Can you tell us when that work will commence and when it is expected to be completed?

Ms LAWLER: I was recently out at Borroloola and it was great to see new houses going into Garawa, and new subdivisions, which was fabulous.

Ms CLIFFORD: One of the things we are working through at the moment with particular reference to Borroloola—similar to other projects across the Territory—is working with traditional owner groups in relation to native title. The Borroloola project remains ongoing.

Mr MALEY: Do you expect those blocks to be released freehold?

Mr KIRKMAN: That could be released as freehold. The rest of Borroloola is available as freehold—the township, not the community areas around Borroloola. It depends on what the arrangements are when the government comes to release that land, how best to ensure it gets houses on the ground and on those lots and also that it hits the market at the right spot in regard to who might have access to those properties.

There is every potential, given the rest of the township is freehold, that they will be freehold as well. That is the complexity in negotiating Indigenous land use agreements, having that land move from being Aboriginal freehold.

Mr MALEY: When do you expect the 35 lots to be released? Do you have a plan for that?

Ms LAWLER: As the deputy CE said, they are negotiating with the traditional owners. It will be once those negotiations are complete.

Mr MALEY: Can you give an estimate of how long that will take—years, months or weeks?

Ms LAWLER: No. It will be as long as those negotiations take.

Mr MALEY: You cannot give the committee any better idea than ‘as long as they take’?

Ms LAWLER: I know it has to be black or white, or yes or no. Negotiations are happening with traditional owners. It will take the time that it takes to come to an agreement with the traditional owners.

Mr MALEY: When did those negotiations commence?

Ms CLIFFORD: I do not have an exact date, but it was a few years ago.

Mr MALEY: When was the last time there was any movement on those negotiations?

Mr KIRKMAN: It has been a few years since the start of negotiations on freehold lots in the township. It is fair to say that the biggest need in Borroloola is to alleviate overcrowding in community areas—town camps—surrounding and inside Borroloola. That has been the focus of our work with traditional owners. We would love to turn off more township lots that are available to everyone, but the need is to alleviate overcrowding. It is pleasing to see that whilst discussions are continuing, there have been some inroads to housing needs in community living areas around Borroloola.

Mr MALEY: When was the last time there were discussions about this? When did they take place: last year, the year before, last month?

Mr KIRKMAN: We would have to take that on notice if you want exact time frames. It has been a couple of years since there was a serious discussion. Our focus and that of traditional owners in the area is to relieve overcrowding in community areas around Borroloola and not focus on township lots.

The other focus is making sure there is a cyclone shelter available for the people of Borroloola—we have been working closely with Roper Gulf; and the Rocky Creek bridge has opened, which means the community will not get cut off, as it has in several past Wet Seasons. There has been important work there.

We are keen to see the lots for the broader township become available over time, but our focus is to work closely with traditional owners in Borroloola and those living in community areas to ensure the overcrowding issue is alleviated.

Mr MALEY: I do not think you need to take it on notice because you answered my question.

Can you explain the difference between the Land Development Corporation and land development division? I understand they are two separate bodies; one is in DIPL and land development is by itself.

Ms LAWLER: Land development is an agency in DIPL, in the public sector, that does work for the development of land. The Land Development Corporation is a separate statutory body, an entity that develops land on behalf of the Northern Territory Government. For example, in Kilgariff or at East Arm, they have land and are like a developer, but are a statutory body independent of government.

Mr KIRKMAN: There are two different types of land corporations. One falls under the public service and the other operates as a corporate land development corporation with the focus of strategic industrial development and steps into residential as required—the Land Development Corporation is more in the agribusiness space.

Mr MALEY: Why is the land development division dealing with this particular lot in Borroloola and not the Land Development Corporation?

Mr KIRKMAN: There is also a land development division in the agency that is focused on broader land release. On occasion, the Land Development Corporation has been required to step in and work with the development industry to get residential lots onto the market. They are still doing that, obviously, in Zuccoli and in Kilgariff, Alice Springs.

The land development division in the Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Logistics looks more holistically across the Territory in terms of requirement, whether it is residential, industrial or commercial, and ensures there are plans in place to get land—greenfield land off Crown land—into the hands of developers.

Mr MALEY: Yesterday the Leader of the Opposition asked as a question of Minister Moss and she said to ask you. In 2016, there was a pre-election promise that every school in the NT would receive \$300,000 in upgrades. How many schools are still waiting for these upgrades?

Ms LAWLER: That should have been in the previous output, not this one. We are talking about Output 9.1, which is Land Development—infrastructure covers doing work to schools. The \$300,000 was an election commitment. Off the top of my head there are about 30 or so left. I thought the Minister for Education answered that question.

There are projects with ongoing negotiations with schools, school councils or communities regarding what they want to spend the money on. There are schools that are a looking at putting in more of their own dollars. There are a small number remaining, but we will get Mr Walding, who looks after Education.

Mr MALEY: Would you like to take it on notice? Would that be easier?

Ms LAWLER: He is coming. While that is happening I will tell you a good news story. In my electorate, it was wonder for Gray to upgrade their toilets. You would think that \$300,000 to upgrade toilets—it was very well received by the children. It was a 2016 election commitment.

Mr WALDING: We discussed this last night. We have 85 completed works and 34 are in planning construction stages as of now. There are 29 schools due to have works completed in 2021–22, with some of those works to extend into 2022–23.

Ms LAWLER: That leaves about five.

As we are allowing you to go back, could I go back? We just received a message that Claire Brown, the Regional Executive Director in the Katherine region, had negotiations on 16 April with the Borrooloola community and the traditional owners about the land.

Mrs HERSEY: Do you have a list of the schools still waiting for the \$300,000?

Ms LAWLER: Yes, we can get you a list.

Mr WALDING: Did we not take that on notice last night?

Mr MONAGHAN: Yes, I think we did, from memory.

Mr WALDING: I thought we were going to give you the list in writing instead of rattling them off.

Ms LAWLER: It has been a well-received project for schools—\$300,000 is not a huge amount of money when compared with infrastructure builds but it has been nice money for schools to do things that are important to them. A good project, Adam, thank you.

Mr CHAIR: A reminder that question on notice are due by 19 July 2021.

Mr MALEY: Who is the leader delivering the planning for the Middle Arm Precinct: DIPL, the Land Development Corporation or is it joint?

Ms LAWLER: It is a joint project.

Mr MALEY: Who is responsible for what, if it is a joint project?

Ms LAWLER: The land is Land Development Corporation; DIPL is cross-agency with the Department of Environment, Parks and Water Security; and the environment aspect is also involved.

Mr KIRKMAN: It is very much a cross-agency piece of work. It is a massive project. The master planning is being delivered with the Department of the Chief Minister and Cabinet. There are lot of inputs into this work, including gas feed stop, water and renewables. As the minister pointed out, Land Development Corporation own much of the land; they are a key part of the working group, working with the land development division

within this agency to map out and plan for the infrastructure requirements for the peninsula to enable downstream gas manufacturing to occur. That will include the road network requirements, the underground infrastructure requirements, doing airshed modelling to ensure there is a good handle on the environment focus and harbour studies.

Our intent is to do a strategic environmental assessment for the whole of Middle Arm so that when proponents come to the table the Infrastructure Commissioner, Major Projects Commissioner and Investment Commissioner can be clear: that we have a vast area of industrial land capable to take their development; what has already been done to make it as easy as possible for proponents coming in; and that we have already done much of the environmental work and thinking about the infrastructure requirements up front.

Mr MALEY: Essentially, that is what happened with TNG. They put in their EPA and it came back with 23 new issues that required addressing, one in relation to Middle Arm. Is that a sign that it is not open for business? That it is making it hard to do business in the area?

Ms LAWLER: No. This discussion should probably take place when I front estimates for the Department of Environment, Parks and Water Security. Suffice to say, the Chief Executive is talking about the broader precinct. Individual proponents coming onto the site still need to make sure the industry and manufacturing they have meet all the environmental impacts. We will talk more about that next. That is an individual project; Andrew is talking about the whole precinct.

Mrs HERSEY: Last year you demolished the old sport and rec club in Katherine on Giles Street. Now you are seeking interest from parties to redevelop the site as hotel accommodation. What consultation has been done with the community regarding redevelopment of that site? How much money is the government willing to put towards the proposal?

Ms LAWLER: The demolition was the work we undertook. Option Group (NT) Pty Ltd demolished it for \$257,000. It has now gone out as an expression of interest. We will wait to see what comes back through the expression of interest process; that will probably be managed by the Department of the Chief Minister and Cabinet. That work will happen through the expressions of interest.

Mrs HERSEY: Has there been any expression of interest so far? When does that process finish?

Ms LAWLER: It is still open.

Mrs LAMBLEY: I asked this question of the Chief Minister on Tuesday and he has asked me to ask you. It is about approvals for residential builds. In the 2019–20 financial year, how many approvals for new residential builds did you receive in the different locations of Alice Springs, Tennant Creek, Katherine, Darwin and Palmerston?

Ms LAWLER: Things have been going well lately. I was reading in the *NT News* that housing starts in the NT are the best in years and approvals for new houses are the highest in five years. Things are looking optimistic. The number of fidelity certificates going out month on month have been positive.

Ms CLIFFORD: The total number of building permits for Alice Springs issued up to 31 May for this financial year was 411; in Tennant Creek there were 36 building permits issued; in Katherine there were 99 building permits issued; in Darwin there were 515 building permits; and in Palmerston there were 1,107 building permits.

Mrs LAMBLEY: Where can people find that data? Is that publicly available?

Ms CLIFFORD: All this information would be from our Integrated Land Information System. I would have to check if this information is publicly available online.

Mrs LAMBLEY: Without comparing it to what the numbers were for the previous 12 months it is difficult to gauge whether that is high or low. I take your word for it that it is apparently impressive.

Ms LAWLER: It is the highest in the last five years. Would Master Builders have those things on their websites?

Mrs LAMBLEY: It is not necessarily publicly available data?

Mr KIRKMAN: As the minister mentioned, the Master Builders hold the number of fidelity fund certificates issued for buildings—only residential buildings—every year. They provide that advice to their members on a monthly basis.

Mrs LAMBLEY: How long does a building permit last? Does it expire?

Ms CLIFFORD: It is quite a detailed, technical question. I would have to ask the Director of Building Control how long the building permit would be valid.

Mr CHAIR: Ms Clifford, could I clarify the numbers for the residential building approval? Is it this reporting period? Just to confirm for the Member for Araluen. I think she asked for 2019–20, but the ones you provided are for the ...

Ms CLIFFORD: Are up until 31 May 2021.

Mrs LAMBLEY: You do not have those figures for the last financial year to compare it? The 2019–20 data?

Ms CLIFFORD: Yes. The total number of building permits issued for 2019–20 was 4,547, compared to a total of 4,058 for the 2020–21 period. That number is until March, whereas some of the data I read out earlier was to May. There might be minor discrepancies.

Mrs LAMBLEY: Do you have a breakdown for the different ...

Ms CLIFFORD: No, not for the 2019–20 financial year and not by region.

Mrs LAMBLEY: Could you provide that? Could I take that on notice?

Ms LAWLER: Yes. We have gone to Building Advisory Services; we are on 9.5 now. That is why the people are not here. We will take that one on notice.

Question on Notice No 4.12

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

Mrs LAMBLEY: In the 2019–20 financial year, how many building permits were issued in Alice Springs, Tennant Creek, Katherine, Darwin and Palmerston?

Mr CHAIR: Minister, do you accept the question?

Ms LAWLER: Yes, I do. Just to clarify, building permits can be for extensions as well. It is not just a brand new build.

Mrs LAMBLEY: Can that be broken down?

Ms LAWLER: Building Advisory Services can provide a more fulsome response and maybe answer some of your questions.

Mr CHAIR: The question asked by the Member for Araluen has been allocated number 4.12.

Mr MELDRUM: The building permit lasts for two years, but within that time you can apply for an extension.

Mrs LAMBLEY: Is the data broken down into what the minister referred to—extensions, new builds?

Mr MELDRUM: We can do statistics for building permits, but we cannot break them down into extensions. When we quote those numbers they include extensions and new builds—yes, they include everything.

Mr MONAGHAN: Can I have a supplementary question? Kilgariff is at an important stage. It is about supply of that land. We know how quickly Kilgariff took off and was taken up—I think 60 lots were taken up in the ballot. That happened at Zuccoli in Palmerston as well. What we are doing to ensure, in the greater Darwin area in particular, that we have a constant supply of new land coming on board so we can continue to make housing affordable?

Ms LAWLER: This relates to the question the Member for Nelson wants to ask about Holtze and Kowandi. I am aware that we are jumping around. We may as well go back to Output 9.1, which is land development. The Member for Araluen took us to 9.5. Let us go back to 9.1 and keep working through otherwise we will run out of time.

The Planning for a Vibrant Future document identified Holtze and Kowandi North as potential future urban development areas. Planning for a Vibrant Future came out in 2018. That was the work of our government, making sure there is a supply of land in the future. It talks about the Cox Peninsula—a saltwater living area. I have said before that Cox Peninsula would form the north shore of Darwin. It is a beautiful area. It talks about Weddell, the Darwin rural area, Katherine, Tennant Creek, Nhulunbuy and Alice Springs. Planning for a Vibrant Future sets the ground work for the Northern Territory Government for future development.

Prior to 2018 there was the Darwin Regional Land Use Plan 2015, which had detailed planning for the future. The selling of land and blocks was pretty steady in 2017, 2018 and 2019, but then through the federal government and our stimuli—the HomeBuilder and BuildBonus—everything took off in December 2020 and January and February 2021.

There has been strong interest in land and blocks we thought would never have houses built on them. The example I use is the block opposite the boat ramp at Nightcliff. That stood vacant for probably 30 or 40 years. We have all looked at that block and thought, ‘I wonder who owns it and who is going to ever build on it?’ It is being built on. There is infill across the greater Darwin area where there have been vacant lots for a long time. I have one in Cuthbertson in my electorate in Moulden. It stood vacant for probably 15 years and now it is getting a house on it.

Through the stimulus that we had, such as stamp duty, HomeBuilder and BuildBonus, there has been a big influx in the purchase of land. This also prompted decisions to be made—Holtze and Kowandi have always been on the plan—about bringing things to fruition. There is a time line between vacant land and the time it gets titled. That time frame needs to be worked through. It can be five years for a total greenfield site.

The work we are doing now is making sure there is a good supply of land. Dick Guit from Team Territory is working as a consultant to make sure there is a steady stream of land. You do not want to flood the market, but you do not want to choke it either. Dick Guit is making sure we can look to future population growth and what land we need to release.

There are still large numbers of lots across the greater Darwin area—Muirhead, Durack Heights, Northcrest and the next stages of Zuccoli. There is considerable land. Some of the land is not titled though, which has been the issue. The developers need to get to the stage of titling their lots so we have that land available for people to make a choice. That was the reason for the announcement at budget time about Holtze and Kowandi being ready in the future for a greater demand for land in the greater Darwin area.

Mr MALEY: In Planning for a Vibrant Future it talks about the city of Weddell. Can you give me a time frame for the planning of the city of Weddell?

Ms LAWLER: There is considerable work happening regarding Weddell. Work is under way, examples in the last 12 months or so include looking at biting insects, flood zones and things like that.

I have spoken many times about this. The point will be when the greater Darwin area has a population of about 220,000–240,000 people. At the moment we have 147,000. It is at least another 100,000 people before we would start to really look at Weddell.

There has been a lot of work done and dollars spent on Weddell. People know the Jenkins Road intersection has been upgraded—that was done years ago. It helped INPEX but it was also for Weddell. There has been upgrades to power stations, water and things like that.

To actually start the work there—I would have to hazard a guess but I think you would be looking at about a billion dollars to start work and develop the new township-like satellite city. We would end up with about 30,000 people living there.

Gerry Woods—God bless him, we miss him—says it is lazy planning and whatever else. It is not. The document put out by the CLP—this is a document put out by the ALP. It is nothing to do with politics. Good planning is done by the good people. We have an amazing Planning Commissioner, David Richie. Good planning is done by people who have a lifetime of experience and degrees in urban planning. It is not at the

whim of politicians. If it gets into the whim of politicians, God help anybody who wants to have sensible planning. It involves planners and consultation with the community—that is why these plans are here. Kowandi and Holtze were six or seven years of discussions. This is the next step we are doing as a government.

It is not about politics. It is about thinking about things such as: what are the services that are close by? Kowandi and Holtze have a hospital, a brand new police station, a fire station and all the services already in Palmerston: the libraries, shopping centres, the swimming pool and the community assets. To go to Weddell—I call it leap frog planning. One of the key reasons was—there were a number of reasons—regarding Noonamah Ridge. You do not want to leap frog your development; you stretch it out. The services are not there, so families would have to travel a long way; there is no public transport. There are so many reasons why you need to keep planning around centres and move out gradually as need be.

The population target for Weddell needs to be about another 100,000 people in the greater Darwin area. It will be a decision for future governments. This is what we want as a government. We want a \$40bn economy by 2030. We want more people making the Territory their home. If that happens, then yes; Weddell would be brought forward. We would put in a request to Infrastructure Australia about the possibility of a new urban development there.

In the meantime, we are putting out more lots at Muirhead, Lee Point, which has been controversial; Northcrest has more land; and there are 57 blocks in Zuccoli. It was a bit of a long answer but it is important to get on the public record. We want to see Weddell happen. There has been a lot of planning around Weddell. It will be a beautiful city and provide lots of options, but there are a lot of things that have to happen before we get to the stage of building it.

Mr MALEY: When you talk about planning, are people's lifestyles—people who live in the rural area for a rural lifestyle—one of the considerations you would take into account when you are planning how many and how small the blocks would be in Holtze and Kowandi, and the timing for Weddell? If you have five or 10-acre blocks, Weddell might come on a bit sooner. Is that one of the criteria you consider when you talk about planning and not leap frog planning?

Ms LAWLER: Absolutely. Lifestyle and amenity is one of the key cornerstones in planning. The planners have their concepts and the Planning Commission do the work going out, talking and listening to people, who have their say. Dave spends a lot of time on land use plans in the community, whether it is at the Coolalinga Shopping Centre on a Saturday morning, in the rural area having meetings with people or online, that is what the Planning Commission does. It is a diverse group of people who do an amazing job.

Dr RITCHIE: It is one of our objectives of good planning at a regional scale, which is my favourite sort of planning because it is the scale people live in. You might live in the rural area but work in Darwin or conversely and people cross. Once you get down into the finer grains of planning, which is more like your area plans, you are right down at the level of the specific community. If you look at the relationship between communities at the area level, it is the way they are linked together and what sort of infrastructure they have to share, which is things like hospitals and large-scale things.

It is important to avoid long, strung out blurring between those centres. We are looking at creating distinct zones that protect distinct choices in the way people want to live. It is important that there is a distinction between the intense developments around the urban centres, suburban surrounds, peri-urban and, as you go further out, people living in rural blocks of the old-fashioned five acres or larger.

The Holtze and Kowandi areas are ex-Commonwealth land purchased by the Territory and have always been slated potentially for suburban development of one kind or another. They are perhaps the only large tracts of land which are close enough to existing infrastructure trunk mains and power grid to build off them without involving substantial infrastructure costs. Before 2015, they have always been marked for that; there has never been a question about whether they get used as more intensive development.

Mr MALEY: What has not been marked is the size of those blocks.

Dr RITCHIE: Yes, that is still a question. Ultimately, once you start connecting blocks up to the full range of services you are trying to maximise the value of the services. That is the reality of planning.

Ms LAWLER: In the 2015 Darwin Regional Land Use Plan, which was developed under the CLP, the early estimates suggested the potential total yield of 9,500 dwellings. The work we have talked about is about 5,000. The CLP were talking about even smaller lots around Holtze and Kowandi.

Mr MALEY: Was \$20m paid to the Finke community just before the Finke Desert Race and, if so, what was the intention of that payment?

Ms LAWLER: No, not through DIPL. I do not know about that at all.

Mr MALEY: There was no Indigenous land use agreement negotiated between DIPL and the Finke community for this year?

Ms LAWLER: No, not through DIPL. I am sure we would have noticed if we had to write a cheque for \$20m.

Mr MALEY: I will talk about 35 Stevens Road. We discussed this last year, but it has been another year and the block is still in the government's name. Can you provide details of the purchase of the property?

Ms LAWLER: We discussed 35 Stevens Road in December. It is still held by the government because that area of Berrimah was before land use plans, so zoning did not apply to it—Rural Residential. Even though that area is residential—it is five-acre lots—the person who purchased the lot was able to have it as Light Industrial. They had large numbers of trucks, sandpits and a whole heap of things that were not suitable.

To change that we have to make sure it remains in that state as a rural lot for over 12 months. It is held by the Northern Territory Government. Once that period is up it will return to rural zoning and then we will look to sell the land. Fortunately the price of land in the Berrimah area has increased in the last 12 months, so it should work out quite well.

I am not sure if '100% Rural' or 'Keep Rural Rural' is your latest slogan, but we are keeping that lot rural.

Mr KIRKMAN: We acquired that lot to resolve a long-standing issue on its industrial use in, effectively, a rural residential setting. I do not have the exact cost of, but I am happy to take it on notice.

Mr MALEY: You do not need to take it on notice, but I would like to know what you have spent on it this financial year and the interaction between the purchase of it and the granting of the Crown term lease 2655 to City Homes, which is in Tivendale. They were all linked; it all transferred across on the same day. If you want to take something on notice, it is: how much you spent on it and the interaction between the purchase of 35 Stevens Road and the granting of Crown term lease 2655 to City Homes (NT) Pty Ltd.

Mr KIRKMAN: We awarded a contract for \$93,000 to revert that large lot back from an industrial/civil dust bowl to a nice urban property. We changed locks in the house and few other things, which was about \$4,000. We expect that works will be required on the house at about \$15,000 before we let it. We expect that to be finished at the end of June, before letting.

The interaction between the granting of the additional Crown land as a result of this transaction was done around the same time we acquired this property. There has been no interaction between our acquisition and that transaction, but they are broadly one part of the larger transaction.

Mr MALEY: When purchasing that property, was granting of the Crown term lease part of the negotiation for the purchase price?

Mr KIRKMAN: Yes. I will clarify; the granting of the purchase price was based on the value of the property. The purchase of the property was looked at in terms of the market value at the time. The granting of the additional Crown land was part of the overall transaction and negotiation.

Ms MALEY: What was the value of the Crown term lease at that time?

Mr KIRKMAN: I will have to take that question on notice. The piece of Crown land was effectively landlocked and there was no access to the road network or surrounding roads. It was not worth a lot, other than to the proponent, who had already bought the industrial land on that road.

Question on Notice No 4.13

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

Mr MALEY: What is the value of the land covered by Crown term lease 2655?

Mr CHAIR: Minister, do you accept the question?

Ms LAWLER: Yes.

Mr CHAIR: The question asked by the Member for Nelson has been allocated number 4.13.

Mr MALEY: In relation to the Katherine logistics and agribusiness hub, which we spoke about last estimates, we talked about the land on the corner of Manbulloo Station. The purchase agreement was signed but not settled. It was ‘signed, sealed and delivered’—these were yours or the CEO’s words. I am asking for an update in relation to the purchase of that land; there was going to be a cotton gin on the corner.

Ms LAWLER: A deed of acquisition by agreement has been entered into for the land for the Katherine logistics hub with the Manbulloo pastoral lease holder for acquisition of the pastoral lease interest. A non-exclusive native title also exists over the site and discussions with the NLC and claimant groups’ legal representatives are under way on this matter.

The Member for Katherine brought this up in Question Time a couple of months ago and it was discussed then.

Mr MALEY: Can you provide an update on the negotiations for the non-exclusive native title?

Ms LAWLER: Those negotiations are ongoing with the NLC and the claimant groups: the Jawoyn and Dagoman, which are the two family groups.

Mr MALEY: What was the purchase price?

Ms LAWLER: For the Manbulloo land, we will have to take that on notice.

Question on Notice No 4.14

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

Mr MALEY: What is the purchase price for the land on Manbulloo station?

Mr CHAIR: Minister, do you accept the question?

Ms LAWLER: Yes. It may be commercial in confidence but we will check with our legal people before we release it.

Mr CHAIR: The question asked by the Member for Nelson has been allocated number 4.14.

Ms PURICK: Can you confirm that the Kowandi land that has been packaged with the Holtze development is still under control of the Commonwealth?

Ms LAWLER: Yes, it is.

Ms PURICK: Can you tell us how the negotiations or discussions are going between the Northern Territory Government and the Commonwealth in regard to use of that land?

Ms LAWLER: My understanding is that we have written to the Commonwealth and are waiting to hear back from them.

Ms PURICK: How long ago did you write to the Commonwealth?

Ms LAWLER: Four to five months ago.

Ms PURICK: Can you confirm whether there are still two valid operational transmission licences on the Kowandi land that are held by the Commonwealth?

Ms LAWLER: I will take that on notice.

Question on Notice No 4.15

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

Ms PURICK: Please advise the status and the legality of two Commonwealth Defence transmission licences across the Kowandi land. What is their status and what discussions have the Commonwealth Government and the NT Government had in regard to those licences and their future?

Mr CHAIR: Minister, do you accept the question?

Ms LAWLER: I do. I am just getting further information from the Chief Executive Officer to say that Defence has handed that land to the federal Department of Finance, which shows that they have no further interest in it. We will continue to work with the federal government regarding it.

Mr CHAIR: The question asked by the Member for Goyder has been allocated number 4.15.

Ms PURICK: If it is transferred from Defence to Finance, what evidence do you have that says Defence has no more interest in that land?

Ms LAWLER: That is usually the process. We have seen that elsewhere.

Ms PURICK: Can you provide evidence that the discussions between the NT Government and the Commonwealth Government regarding the licences relating to transmission for military purposes have moved from Defence to Finance? Therefore, what is the current status?

Ms LAWLER: We will take that question on notice.

Question on Notice No 4.16

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

Ms PURICK: Could the minister provide evidence and facts regarding the transfer of responsibilities of land from the Department of Defence to the Department of Finance in relation to the current status of two transmission licences that operate across the land?

Mr CHAIR: Minister, do you accept the question?

Ms LAWLER: Yes, I do.

Mr CHAIR: The question asked by the Member for Goyder has been allocated number 4.16.

Mrs HERSEY: I will ask this question, seeing as I have been waiting for some time for a briefing from your department. The Katherine CBD has undeveloped sites and empty shopfronts. How does the government see the development of the Katherine East neighbourhood centre as complementary to the CBD and not in direct competition to it, being that it is on the Stuart Highway frontage?

Ms LAWLER: I do not know. I think you are asking my opinion on that.

Mrs HERSEY: No, that was a question.

Ms LAWLER: Katherine East is an area where there are subdivisions and houses being built. That is what happens across Australia and the Northern Territory. When new suburbs go in, you like to have amenities so people can walk to the shops. Sometimes people only have one vehicle. With Katherine East, there is land that will be used, whether it is a small shop—it depends on the interest.

The premise of your question is your concern that it will take people away from the CBD. If there are new houses, more people move in. Both of the sites will be viable. Woolworths is a big shopping centre in

Katherine. People go there for their big shops but they might go to their IGA corner store to buy milk, bread or whatever after school, walk there with the kids or whatever else.

I will not get into a debate regarding whether it is viable for the CBD or not. That is what happens the world over. We have seen it in all the suburbs where there is a small store and maybe another shop of some sort in a suburban area—you still have the CBD area. Katherine is growing; we see that with Katherine East. That is the pathway for the future.

Mrs HERSEY: Given that the development is being built out of the flood zone, there is underutilised area available in the town centre and there does not seem to be any priority, if this is about flooding is there a provision to move the hospital out of the flood zone, which is directly impacted if there is a flood?

Ms LAWLER: No, at this stage there is no plan to move the hospital. The ambulance centre was moved, but that is a question for the Health minister. Health has been doing master planning for its facilities; there might be long-term planning there.

I think the premise of your question is that people will not go where the Stuart Highway and Katherine CBD are. People will go where there are attractive shops and facilities that they want. You see that in Katherine; there are number of new coffee shops. There is one in the industrial area. If Katherine East goes ahead and peak businesses want to take the risk and put shops in, it will go ahead.

The CBD in Katherine will have to look at putting in new shops or other changes. That is what business does; it attracts customers to different areas. You are trying to say that we are leaving the hospital alone, but that would require long-term upgrade plans. It is substantial dollars when you look at new hospitals, as we saw in Palmerston.

Mr MONAGHAN: I am always cautious to ask this old chestnut about Richardson Park, but it borders my electorate in the Narrows. My constituents are interested in its redevelopment for community use, that the government has suggested. Can you update us on what is happening with it?

Ms LAWLER: The site has been cleaned up. NTEX is doing a fair bit of demolition work at the moment; they are a local company and they are doing a great job. They won a contract for \$689,000 to do the demolition work, which was completed at the end of March. We will look at starting to construct, with a detailed design tender going out in July.

Be assured there will be a field, not an oval, for rugby league; there will be ablution blocks; and we will consult with the rugby league community about the memorial garden. The facility could be managed by the school, as they may choose to use it. The community can use it as well. If the Brothers in Nightcliff want to use it for training that is up to them. That will be work in the future, but it will be a community space.

We are hoping to get a tender out to get moving on it as soon as we can. The demolition is done and cleaned up, which is a big step.

Output 9.2 – Crown Land Estate

Mr MALEY: Can you provide an update on the Larrakia cultural centre project?

Ms LAWLER: Negotiations regarding the land are continuing. The Larrakia Development Corporation is working with people like Andrew Kirkman. It received a grant from the federal government to build the site. We have seen, in the media, the work to have Indo Pacific Marine move out of the shed area. That work is under way as we speak.

Mr KIRKMAN: We have been discussing the land tenure component regarding the sites that the Larrakia cultural centre will sit on. That is almost finalised with the development corporation. They have a commitment from the federal government for the facility, which is great. There is still work under way with the current tenant of Indo Pacific Marine to free up the site.

Mr MALEY: The land transfer was from your department to them; this is not about the Larrakia corporation getting the money from the feds. When will the land transfer agreement take place?

Ms LAWLER: That is up for negotiation, which is occurring now.

Mr MALEY: How long have those negotiations been occurring for?

Ms LAWLER: About 12 months.

Mr MALEY: Is that transfer as a result of an agreement from when the rail corridor agreement was done?

Ms LAWLER: That is partially correct. When the rail corridor was done, Larrakia Development Corporation was allocated land at Bullocky Point; that was the original site for a Larrakia cultural centre. Now Larrakia Development Corporation believes it would be a much better site down near the wharf, near dolphin park; that negotiation is occurring.

I have answered this question in sittings. When it involves Crown land, there is a need to dot i's and cross t's. That is the process Andrew Kirkman and people in the department are working through.

Mr MALEY: Do you think this transfer will be treated differently because of the old agreement in relation to the rail corridor?

Mr CHAIR: Member for Nelson, can I ask you to rephrase your question rather than asking for an opinion?

Mr MALEY: Does this mean this transfer will be treated differently to other community land grants?

Ms LAWLER: I am not involved in the negotiations. Some of these are commercial; it is a major bit of land. We are not just talking about land anywhere; it is a valuable bit of Territory land.

Mr KIRKMAN: It is not a standard Crown land transaction. There was the element you mentioned, incorporating part of a long-term agreement regarding acquisition of the rail corridor. It resolves that element, which is one part of it, but the other bit is acknowledging that the tens of millions of dollars to be spent on the cultural centre is a significant project for the Darwin community and especially for the Larrakia people. It will be a key feature for city revitalisation as well as all the other work happening in that area. It is all part of the mix. It will be an important project and part of the activation of Darwin.

Mr MALEY: One of the delays is because Larrakia corporation changed its mind about where it wanted the site, from Bullocky Point down to the wharf?

Ms LAWLER: No, this is about negotiation regarding this site. It was you who mentioned the Bullocky Point site. That is the work the department is doing now.

Mr MALEY: Just to set the record straight, I did not mention Bullocky Point at all. I was not even aware that was there.

Ms LAWLER: You mentioned the rail.

Mr MALEY: My understanding is that site is where they wanted to be.

Ms PURICK: Given that Indo Pacific Marine is a world-class facility in regard to the work they do, and that they have been asked to vacate the premises, what plans has the government made to relocate the business to another location—in the words of the Chief Executive 'to revitalise the city' to have that kind of facility and attraction within our CBD? Or are they just being booted out?

Ms LAWLER: No, they have not been booted out. Since 2014 they have only been extending their lease a month at a time. I will not get into details about that but you can be assured the department has worked closely with them over a number of years. They are up to the stage where they need to find another place if they want to continue their business.

Ms PURICK: Is the department or government assisting them to find a new location, given the attraction and the people they draw into the city and, for lots of reasons, the Northern Territory? Or are they on their own? It sounds like they are on their own.

Ms LAWLER: They are not on their own. If you want to ask a question, just ask the question; you do not need to have your opinions in there about the viability of their business or anything about that.

Ms PURICK: Is the government helping Indo Pacific Marine, which is a longstanding business and tourist attraction in the Territory, to find a new location?

Ms LAWLER: Yes, they have been providing assistance.

Ms PURICK: Is there any evidence that you can provide where the government is providing assistance?

Mr KIRKMAN: We have been in discussions with Indo Pacific Marine since probably 2014, 2013 or perhaps earlier about what the future holds. It has been an iconic tourism area. I recall it at East Point many years ago. Those discussions have not resulted in the business making a decision about what its future is.

There is an offer of support if they would like to relocate the business. There are commercial discussions happening between Chief Minister and Cabinet and Indo Pacific about what the government is willing to help them with. They are ongoing. I can say over many years we have offered support; in the end the business needs to decide its own future.

Mr COSTA: The Territory is responsible for a vast amount of land held by the Crown. What resources are spent to control weeds, maintain fire safety and maintain these landholdings?

Ms LAWLER: Crown land management is important work. I often get inquiries about areas of Crown land that might have gamba grass on it or weeds, or needs firebreaks. The repairs and maintenance budget for 2021 for our Crown land is \$2.8m. DIPL is responsible for about 55,000 square kilometres of vacant Crown land across the Territory.

This government has had a bit push about gamba and managing it. Some of the best work, besides the on-the-ground work, has been the coordination across government agencies. The Land Development Corporation, DIPL, Parks—people are coming together to address the issue of weeds on our Crown land estate. Yes, it is a big Crown land estate. We need to have controlled burns, have firebreaks in place, make sure the drains, basins and things like that are cleaned out and make sure the weeds are managed.

All up, about \$2.8m of repairs and maintenance money, as well as about \$1.7m of property maintenance money, looks after the Crown land estate.

Mr CHAIR: Ladies and gentlemen, honourable members, we will have a comfort break.

The committee suspended.

Output 9.3 – Development Assessment Services

Mr CHAIR: The committee will now consider Output 9.3, Development Assessment Services. Any there any questions?

That concludes consideration of Output 9.3.

Output 9.4 – Lands Planning

Mr MALEY: Of the government's \$135m investment into Jabiru over four years, what is the program for this year?

Ms LAWLER: We are moving back to infrastructure there; it also the Department of the Chief Minister and Cabinet's work. The main one is the power station. EDL won the tender for the power station, which will have a component of renewables in it. I do not think there is anything more we can add. I am happy to give you a briefing on Jabiru; we can bring some DCMC people in too.

Mr CHAIR: That concludes consideration of Output 9.4.

Output 9.5 – Building Advisory Services

Mrs LAMBLEY: Does building advisory services employ any qualified and experienced building surveyors and structural engineers?

Ms LAWLER: Under the building reform work we are doing—we announced five key points, probably two months ago—one of the key points was to have a key position, which was either a structural engineer or a

building surveyor employed. I think it was in Saturday's *NT News* that I saw DIPL advertising for a building surveyor.

Mr MELDRUM: The department employs technical officers who have building surveying backgrounds but we do not have any registered building surveyors or certifiers on our staff. We are advertising at the moment.

Mrs LAMBLEY: Do you have structural engineers?

Mr MELDRUM: We do not have any structural engineers on staff at the moment in building advisory services but there are structural engineers in the department in infrastructure, investments and contracts that we consult from time to time.

Mrs LAMBLEY: Are investigations into matters of building compliance undertaken by qualified and experienced NT Government employees?

Mr MELDRUM: When we have an allegation that requires expert opinion, we would hire an expert like a structural engineer from the private sector. Our staff provide advice on building surveying and compliance matters; we have trained staff to do that. Where we need expert opinions we get them.

Mrs LAMBLEY: Are they qualified?

Mr MELDRUM: The staff we employ have technical backgrounds; some in building surveying. Would they be registered in the Northern Territory? Probably not.

Mrs LAMBLEY: Does the Director of Building Control, being a statutory officer, act at all times impartially and without influence from the department chief executives?

Ms LAWLER: You are speaking to the Director of Building Control, so I think the answer is yes; it is difficult to say otherwise. If you have any allegations that he is not, I suggest you report those to ICAC or something.

I can see that somebody has contacted you and you have specific issues. I always say it is a complicated issue and the work building advisory services does is complex. If there are allegations—let us not talk about Mark when he is right in this room.

Mrs LAMBLEY: It is a fairly objective question though.

Ms LAWLER: The answer is no. He is a man of integrity.

Mrs LAMBLEY: I am sorry. I am not questioning his integrity, I am questioning how he operates.

Mr MALEY: Silks at the Turf Club had two non-compliance issues before the Darwin Cup Carnival. It was reported that NT Building Advisory Services did not set foot on the premises of the lounge upon its completion despite receiving complaints 48 hours earlier. How was the non-compliance resolved?

Mr MELDRUM: When we investigated that allegation, Police, Fire and Emergency Services was on-site with the building certifier and the building owner. They were able to report the issues of non-compliance—issues that were alleged non-compliances at the time. Our officers were not on-site; the fire department assisted us with that inquiry.

Mr MALEY: How has that been resolved? Is it compliant?

Mr MELDRUM: Yes, it was compliant in June and is compliant now.

Mr MALEY: Regarding the grandstand, there are reports that the building permit expired in May and the Turf Club undertook unapproved works. How is that allowed to happen? How can people enter that building without having a certificate of occupancy, considering it failed fire inspections twice?

Mr MELDRUM: I am aware of the fire department working with the building certifier and the owner on that matter. It is not an open matter I am considering at this point in time.

Mr MALEY: Do you find it concerning that people were allowed on the premises despite it not having a certificate of occupancy and having failed fire inspections on two occasions?

Mr MELDRUM: I will seek advice from the fire department; I am not aware of those allegations.

Mr MALEY: You will take it on notice?

Ms LAWLER: Yes. You are talking about fire issues.

Mr MALEY: I am talking about a certificate of occupancy.

Ms LAWLER: You were specifically asking about fire issues. He said that he will take that on notice.

Mr MALEY: The first part of the question was: why were people allowed on the premises when it did not have a certificate of occupancy? Were you aware of that?

Mr MELDRUM: I think you are referring to part of the stand, but I am not sure which part you are talking about. I am not 100% sure you know that ...

Mr MALEY: Tell us what part you know; explain to us what you know about it being non-compliant. What parts are compliant and what parts are not?

Mr MELDRUM: I am not talking about the grandstand; I am only referring to the Ted Bailey stand. There was a room in the Ted Bailey that did not have a final certificate of occupancy. I am not aware of any other issues.

Mr MALEY: Can you expand on that? What room are you aware of?

Mr MELDRUM: It is called the Ted Bailey stand.

Mr MALEY: The Ted Bailey stand did not have a certificate of occupancy, is that what you are saying?

Mr MELDRUM: It had works done recently; that is all.

Mr MALEY: Do those works fall within a certificate of occupancy for the works that had been completed or undertaken?

Mr MELDRUM: Those works are being undertaken; it is between the certifier and owner to resolve that.

Ms LAWLER: Certifiers are private enterprise, not government. The building owner is working with the certifier where—is that clarity you are seeking? I am not sure what building you are talking about. If you have specifics we can take that on notice; there is a lot of innuendo and allegations here. Let us be sure about what you are talking about. I am happy to take something on notice.

Mr MALEY: The first part of the question was that it was identified from an NT Fire and Rescue Service report that the Darwin Turf Club Ted Bailey grandstand did not meet requirements. Are you aware of that?

Mr MELDRUM: Yes, I am aware of that.

Mr MALEY: What did you do when you became aware of it?

Mr MELDRUM: I have been talking to the fire department and the certifier about how they are resolving it.

Mr MALEY: Because it is unapproved, does it mean people are allowed on the premises?

Mr MELDRUM: It is up to the owner to ensure the safety of the people on the property. As I understand it, the room is not being used.

Mr MALEY: The grandstand is not being used?

Mr MELDRUM: It is a room within the grandstand.

Mr MALEY: Does that concern you, that the public were allowed into the building when it was not certified?

Ms LAWLER: I am not sure we are clear about what we are talking about. From what the Director of Building Control is saying, it is a room in the Ted Baily Stand that had not passed; that room is not being used. It is

up to the building owner to manage that with the certifier. As the Director of Building Control, he is overseeing that process. If there are allegations you can make a complaint to the Director of Building Control but ...

Mr MALEY: You are the minister. I am asking what you know about the unapproved works on the Ted Baily stand.

Ms LAWLER: I do not know anything; I have not been briefed. It is with the Director of Building Control and between the building owner and the certifier, which is a private business arrangement. It is not run by the government. I am not sure you are clear about which building you are talking about. We need to be clear if the Director of Building Control is to provide a clear response.

Mr MALEY: I have asked two questions about two different areas. If you have heard the press reports, have you reached out to anyone to find what is going on?

Ms LAWLER: I have not heard any press reports.

Mr MALEY: You have not heard any reports about Silks or the grandstand being uncertified?

Ms LAWLER: No, I have not heard those reports.

Mr MALEY: You have not heard any reports in the media about people allegedly going on to the premises without a certificate of occupancy?

Ms LAWLER: No, I have not heard about that.

Ms PURICK: A few years ago there were issues, as people in this room will recall, about the non-compliance of government buildings across the Northern Territory. A lot of work was done to build them up to compliance—and a lot of private residences, I admit. Can you let us know if all the government inhabited or owned buildings in the Territory are now compliant or have legitimate certificates of occupancy?

Mr KIRKMAN: We would have to come back in terms of any detail you need. There had been a practice for many years that significant government buildings do not get certified. It was assumed that they were built by government and therefore were okay. Obviously that is not the practice any more. There is still outstanding work to ensure all those buildings, which by all accounts are safe and well built, end up with a certificate of occupancy. That work is ongoing.

Ms PURICK: Can I take that question on notice?

Question on Notice No 4.17

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

Ms PURICK: Could you provide evidence and facts as to the number of government-owned and government-occupied buildings—which includes schools—across the Northern Territory which are still not compliant according to the legislation and how many are compliant?

Mr CHAIR: Minister, do you accept the question?

Ms LAWLER: Yes.

Mr CHAIR: The question asked by the Member for Goyder has been allocated number 4.17.

Output 9.6 – Land Information

Ms PURICK: How many private subscribers are there to ILIS as at the last calendar or financial year, whichever is easiest?

Ms CLIFFORD: The total number of private users of ILIS is 7,590.

Ms PURICK: How much revenue does that generate for the government?

Ms CLIFFORD: Access to the system is free of charge but there is a cost on title searches which amounts to \$224,000.

Output 9.7 – Northern Territory Planning Commission

Mr CHAIR: The committee will now consider Output 9.7, Northern Territory Planning Commission. Are there any questions?

That concludes consideration of Output 9.7 and Output Group 9.0.

OUTPUT GROUP 10.0 – LOGISTICS INFRASTRUCTURE AND SERVICES

Output 10.1 – Passenger Transport

Mr MALEY: What was the cost of delivering transport security to public bus services in the last financial year?

Ms LAWLER: The transport safety unit has an annual personnel budget of \$2.54m. As of 31 March \$1.97m was spent.

Mr MALEY: Do you have any record of how many antisocial behaviour incidents were reported on public transport in the last year?

Ms LAWLER: No, we do not have that at hand. I can take it on notice, if that data is available.

Question on Notice No 4.18

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

Mr MALEY: How many antisocial incidents were reported on public transport in the last year? 3.22.26

Mr CHAIR: Minister, do you accept the question?

Ms LAWLER: Yes.

Mr CHAIR: The question asked by the Member for Nelson has been allocated number 4.18.

Ms PURICK: If there is an incident at the park and ride facility—as there has been at the Humpty Doo one at 5.30 am, with antisocial behaviour; an unusual time—should the public contact the transit officers through the passenger system or go straight to the police?

Ms LAWLER: I would say to go straight to the police.

Ms PURICK: For reference, there is an issue I will be writing to you about. When people have issues on public transport, should they look for a transit office or go to the police?

Ms LAWLER: Without knowing what the issue is, if it is severe they should call the police by ringing 000.

Mrs LAMBLEY: Regarding the Northern Territory taxi industry—this has been a long road for many others and I in the community of Alice Springs. In November 2017 the Public Accounts Committee released the inquiry into taxi licensing and subleasing report, which came about through a motion I put to parliament.

At the time it was tabled in parliament, the response was that the government would accept or work on the eight recommendations. I have the report handy on top of my desk; it has been there for years. At the time Uber was coming about, you would remember. The minister for transport at that time, Minister Manison, said she would like to see the rollout of share riding in the Northern Territory and would undertake a review in 2021 and give direction as to what she would do with recommendation one of the report. This recommendation proposed to remove the cap on taxi licence numbers in Darwin and Alice Springs in a staged reform process.

I have written to ministers, including yourself, numerous times on this issue, and put written questions to the Legislative Assembly. In the last round you told me there was a review being undertaken—the commercial

passenger review, it is called. The consultancy tenders closed on 28 September, a contractor was selected in January 2021 and you are expecting to receive that report around now, mid-2021.

All the people who have been part of this process, including me, Ms McCormick and others, want to know where we are up to. What happens next?

Ms LAWLER: You have probably covered most of the things in my brief, almost word for word.

Mrs LAMBLEY: We are hanging on the edge of our seats.

Ms LAWLER: We did say exactly that: we need to look at how ridesharing is rolled out. It was an election commitment that has been strongly embraced in the Darwin area, a bit like the scooters—everybody loves them.

Ms McCORMICK: The consultant has done all the consultation with taxi drivers—and some of your constituents as well—as part of that process. We are waiting for the report from them with their recommendations, which we will send to the government for consideration—on the taxi cap in particular.

Mrs LAMBLEY: In the written questions you responded to, you talked about the fact you are drafting legislation. Can you give us a head's up on what that is about, given that the review has not been completed? Is this nothing to do with the review?

Mr CHAIR: We cannot ask questions about future policy or legislation.

Mrs LAMBLEY: Even though it is in answers to written questions? You have referred to it. It is on the public record.

Mr CHAIR: I am going by Standing Order 109.

Mrs LAMBLEY: I will read to you what it says: legislative changes to address the issue of subleasing are scheduled to be included in the proposed transport legislation—Commercial Passenger Vehicle Amendment Bill—which is proposed to be considered by government in the second half of 2021. You do not have to provide an answer to the question, but do you have any comments?

Mr CHAIR: It is just the way you framed the question.

Ms LAWLER: It is proposed legislation. Like we said, it was a proposal to look at those issues.

Mrs LAMBLEY: Does the government still have an appetite to lift the cap on taxi licence numbers in Darwin and Alice Springs?

Ms LAWLER: I will wait until I get the report.

Mrs LAMBLEY: Someone within the transport department has indicated to my constituents that there could be another round of consultation on this issue. Is that being considered?

Ms McCORMICK: Not that I am aware of. All the consultations have been undertaken.

Mrs LAMBLEY: Just to recap, the review will be completed when?

Ms McCORMICK: We were due to get the consultant up here recently, but Melbourne ended up in lockdown, unfortunately. It is close for them to come and brief us on the findings—within a few months.

Mrs LAMBLEY: Are you able to give any indication to this industry of when we are likely to know what the review recommends?

Ms LAWLER: I would be reluctant to, because I know that if I give an inch they will take a mile. I do not want to be leading people up the garden path. Just like you, a lot of my constituents work in the taxi industry and have varying views. I see photos and examples; they come and see me often, and I visit them. I will hold on that one.

Mrs LAMBLEY: Given that the government committed to completing the review and sorting this out in 2020, and we are now midway through 2021, can you at least say this year or next year?

Ms LAWLER: We will work as quickly as we can. The issue was COVID. Louise McCormick is the General Manager for Transport. Getting toilet paper into shopping centres and having the roads open took up most of her time last year, on logistics work. Some of this work, as was expected, took a back seat.

Yes, we are committed to doing the work. We know the industry is keen to see an answer. People are passionate about this.

Mrs LAMBLEY: What you just said exactly reflects how I see it. I have been ensconced in this issue for some time. It is emotional and controversial. I thank the department of transport for working with me and the stakeholders I am connected with. We all want what is best for the Northern Territory. I urge you to finalise this business as soon as possible.

Ms LAWLER: There are quite strong opposing views about this. It could be simple, but it is not.

Mrs HERSEY: If the Tennant Creek MVR is closed for a period of time, where is the nearest MVR people could use?

Ms LAWLER: They can go to the Post Office. The Post Office provides a lot of MVR services. A large amount of MVR work can be done online as well. That said, occasionally the MVR was closed. One employee there had to take personal leave at times.

Ms McCORMICK: An employee there had health issues and it was closed from time to time. Unfortunately, those health issues have led that employee to resign. We have employed two new people. They are two local Tennant Creek people; we are happy to have them on board.

Last year we launched our MVR for Business, which means pastoralists, for example, do not have to leave their station to register their fleet. Most of that can be done online, to help reduce red tape for business. Even contractors have told me that they used to spend a day a week going in to do their fleet. Now they can do it in their office.

Mrs HERSEY: Is there a total of two staff in that office in Tennant Creek?

Ms McCORMICK: Yes, that is correct.

Ms PURICK: Cattle road trains are prohibited from going to the Wishart area for work; there are big signs that say 'No road trains' if they have not been washed down. We do not have a wash-down facility for cattle road trains. They either have to wash down at a private property or scrape it out themselves. Other states have a wash-down facility.

Has the government given any consideration—and I will lobby for this if it has not—to a wash-down bay attached to either that facility or somewhere else, for biosecurity reasons and given how important the industry is to the Northern Territory and its economy?

Ms LAWLER: We have a wonderful facility at Truck Central.

Ms PURICK: Not for cattle road trains.

Ms McCORMICK: The Road Transport Association has contacted me about this issue and has given me examples of what they want. The next step is to look at where suitable locations for the facilities would be—perhaps truck parking bays. We need to do work on suitable locations.

Ms PURICK: The government is warm to this idea that the facility is much-needed in the Top End and elsewhere?

Ms LAWLER: Yes. The cattle industry is important to the Territory. The conversations have been held in Tennant Creek and Katherine, particularly regarding biosecurity and weeds. They are looking at other areas, too.

Ms PURICK: From my understanding, it is not limited to this subject. It is a fee for service, it is not a free service provided by government. The industry, operators or trucks pay for it. Thank you, that is good to hear.

Mr COSTA: The SeaLink facility at Wurrumiyanga is not open. Do you know why?

Ms McCORMICK: I had not heard that. We have been working with Tiwi Enterprises and not just SeaLink but all the barge operators that go into Wurrumiyanga. I would have to ask questions as to why it is not open. As far as I know it should be open.

Mr COSTA: I will be there tomorrow and will double check, but as of last week it was not open. A lot of tourists are coming in; not only that the locals do not have access to it. I think the issue might be OTL and Tiwi Enterprise.

Ms McCORMICK: I am happy to work with you on that one.

Output 10.2 – Registration and Licensing

Mr CHAIR: We will now consider Output 10.2, Registration and Licensing. Are there any questions?

That concludes consideration of Output 10.2.

Output 10.3 – Road Safety and Compliance

Mr CHAIR: I will now call for questions relating to Output 10.3, Road Safety and Compliance.

That concludes consideration of Output 10.3.

Output 10.4 – Transport Planning and Delivery

Mr MALEY: Can you please update us on the condition of the Maryvale Road in the Finke? I understand the first 10 kilometres is being sealed by Aldebaran but from then on people who were watching the Finke Desert Race, including the emergency vehicles decided to use the race track because the road was so poor. Can you explain when that part of the road was last maintained?

Ms LAWLER: From the conversations that were had, the Finke committee asked for a grade of the road just before the long weekend. The road was going to be graded. That said, I had reports that it was a huge weekend, there was so much traffic on that road and that may have been the issue.

Ms McCORMICK: Right before the Finke Desert Race we undertake maintenance because we anticipate quite a lot of traffic on the road. In addition to what we would normally do, we did an invert grade for \$8,500, which was from about the 60-kilometre point towards Titjikala; that was completed in mid-April. We also did targeted pavement repair work between 20 kilometres and 60 kilometres, re-compacting the gravel for \$124,000.

Mr MALEY: When was that? Mid-April?

Ms McCORMICK: Yes, the first one was completed mid-April; the \$124,000 targeted pavement repair was completed on 16 May; and the third one was an invert grade we did to the Ghan Heritage Road, which was completed on 4 June.

Mr MALEY: When was the last time the road from the sealed section down to Deep Well was graded?

Ms McCORMICK: That was the invert grade that was done in mid-April.

Mr MALEY: Even though you expected a lot of traffic, you did the last one in mid-April?

Ms McCORMICK: No, there was further one beyond then which was completed mid-May, and then the week before the ...

Mr MALEY: That was the intersection, was it not? Did you not just say the Ghan intersection? I am talking about the road.

Ms McCORMICK: No, that was the 40 kilometres worth of pavement repair works we did.

Mr MALEY: That was in May?

Ms McCORMICK: That was finished mid-May and then there was an invert grade done the week before the event.

Mr MALEY: Where was the invert grade undertaken?

Ms McCORMICK: I cannot pronounce this sorry, but it is from the turn off to the Ghan Heritage Road, from where the pavement repair work was.

Mr MALEY: How long was that grade, how many kilometres?

Ms McCORMICK: I do not have that information but it is roughly 20 kilometres.

Mr MALEY: That was in early June?

Ms McCORMICK: Yes, the week before the event.

Mr MALEY: In relation to the Weddell highway, can you provide us with an update on that road?

Ms McCORMICK: The Weddell freeway has been on our planning list for some time. It was originally there for when the Weddell satellite city is built, as a connection from Jenkins Road through to Tiger Brennan Drive, near Pinelands; roughly in that area.

We have not done a whole lot of work because, as the minister mentioned earlier, Weddell is years away. There is not a whole lot of point in doing much transport planning work unless there is something on the horizon. With the development of Middle Arm, we will potentially need to do that work sooner rather than later because it will generate a lot of heavy vehicle movements from the industrial area to East Arm Port. Weddell freeway becomes important from that perspective.

Mr MALEY: What time frame are you setting for DIPL to deliver the \$367m road upgrades to Beetaloo?

Ms LAWLER: Most of that money is federal government money. It is 80% federal government money and 20% Territory money.

Mr MALEY: You are in charge of it?

Ms LAWLER: Yes. It will be the rollout of those projects.

Ms McCORMICK: The \$367m is for the Beetaloo to be realised. We have been doing studies; the federal government has also done studies. In terms of the need for the roads to be done by 2026, there are a couple of reports that we have done—as well as the federal government through its gas studies—that want some of the roads sooner rather than later. Carpentaria Highway is one. There is \$150m in total for the Carpentaria Highway. The first package of works will be this year; a 50 kilometre section. We probably have another 100 or so kilometres to do.

The second on the priority list for Beetaloo is the Buchanan Highway. We have a large package of works that will go out early next year to start construction.

We have a lot of planning work to do yet on the Western Creek and the Gorrie Dry Creek Road, which are the other two roads funded under the Beetaloo program. We have money in this year's budget to undertake the planning and design work.

Mr MALEY: How much money is in this year's budget?

Ms McCORMICK: There is \$150m total for the Carpentaria Highway for us to commit to the contracts. There is \$56m for Buchanan and \$1m each for Western Creek and Gorrie Dry Creek Roads for the design and planning work.

Mr MALEY: We also receive complaints regarding the Sandover Highway and the Murray Downs Road. Can you give us an update on those roads?

Ms McCORMICK: There are no substantial works planned for the Sandover Highway. I am aware, with my Infrastructure NT hat on, that Ammaroo Phosphate will need access to Murray Downs Road in particular. We

will probably look at it with that proponent. At this point, there are no substantial works other than our normal maintenance grading.

Mr MALEY: What about the Wollogorang Road, or Savannah Way in the Savannah region?

Ms McCORMICK: It would be in a similar manner. We were looking at doing Robinson River crossing in the next couple of years.

Mr MALEY: There is nothing before that?

Ms McCORMICK: Not that I know of.

Mr MALEY: Is there a regular maintenance program for the King Ash Bay Road?

Ms McCORMICK: I do not have the figures but there normally is—particularly after the Wet Season—a full invert grade undertaken because of the damage that happens to the road. If you want further detail I would have to take it on notice.

Mr MALEY: I have a whole list of roads, but we are running out of time.

Ms LAWLER: The reality in the Northern Territory, and I have said this many times, is that 70% of our roads are dirt and not bitumen. As a government we are pushing to drop that by 5%; it would be a great achievement. We were just talking about the long list of roads' infrastructure. There is good money going out there.

Every week I get a couple of requests about grading, upgrading and bituminising roads, whether it is regional councils, cattlemen, the trucking association or individual people. Housing, bituminising roads and mobile phone access are the three things we constantly get asked in regional or remote communities.

Mr MONAGHAN: Having spent many years living in Jabiru, I am acutely aware of how often the Arnhem Highway flooded out at one end. I even lived through one where it flooded at both ends, which made it particularly difficult for businesses to operate. Can you update me about the access for residents, tourists and pastoralists around the floodplain and the work we are doing? How will this investment benefit businesses and Territorians who live there?

Ms LAWLER: When you talk about a project that comes in under, this project saved about \$10m from its original scope. Allan King & Sons won the original tender for the work upgrading the Arnhem Highway across the Adelaide River floodplains. It will provide that flood resilience.

It is not just about going to Jabiru; that is a point I often make. It is where all our quarries are, such as the Mount Bundy quarry. If you want sand, gravel or rock in the Darwin area to build a house or whatever else, you are more than likely getting those materials from Halkitis' or one of the quarries there. It is not just about tourists going to Jabiru, it is about keeping our construction industry moving.

The project was jointly funded with \$62m from the Australian Government and \$15.5m from the Northern Territory Government. Advance Civil are doing the substantial bridge work; it is going across a floodplain. The mud and slush goes from 3 to 24 metres deep—I have been out there a couple of times. Substantial pylons have to go down to get to rock so it can have a solid base.

As there were savings we were able to do the Beatrice Hill section, where you often see jabirus and birds hanging around—and a crocodile. It is uneven; we had to drop the speed limit there for a number of years. We did the initial work to have that consolidated. King & Sons won the stage to do the second lot of work. The end product will be a fantastic project when it is completed. All up it is \$31m for King & Sons, and \$23m for Advance Civil. They are two Territory companies doing a great job.

There was a nine-month consolidation period needed on the embankment area for the Beatrice Hill section. The mud under there varies between 9 to 24 metres; we had to allow it time to compress. It will be a good end result.

Mr MALEY: In relation to the consolidation area you are talking about, which is the Darwin side of Beatrice Hill, that is a separate bit of road?

Ms LAWLER: Yes.

Mr MALEY: How was all that work done? They drilled and put the rock there. How did that get done and paid for? Was there a tender?

Ms LAWLER: There was a \$10m saving.

Ms McCORMICK: We did undertake early works last Dry Season on the Beatrice Hill section while Allan King & Sons had the ground consolidation equipment there. If we had not done that, another year would have been added to this project. We saw it as an efficiency measure to go ahead and do the work while we had the specialist equipment here.

Mr MALEY: How did you go about getting that? Was it a small tender for that part, or was it a variation from another part? How did that bit get paid for and done without the whole tender?

Ms McCORMICK: They were head sub-contractor to Allan King & Sons and our contract was with Allan King & Sons. It was a variation from us to Allan King, but it was their sub-contractor.

Mr MALEY: It was a variation to the Adelaide River–Jabiru side, to do the bit in front of it.

Ms McCORMICK: Yes.

Ms PURICK: Given that we have experts in the room—I do not know if it is officially an NT Government road, but there is the road called the Humpty Doo Access Road which is off the Arnhem High to the Pudukul Cultural Centre. It is marked and it has a deep gully in the middle. Is it an NT Government-maintained road? Do I need to write to you to get it repaired? I am not sure of the status of the road.

Ms McCORMICK: I have a feeling that it is a Litchfield Council road but I might have to take it on notice and find out for you.

Ms LAWLER: Write a letter and we can chase it up.

Question on Notice No 4.19

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

Ms PURICK: Is the Humpty Doo Access Road, off the Arnhem Highway to the Pudukul Cultural Centre, an NT Government-maintained road and, if so, can repairs be undertaken?

Mr CHAIR: Minister, do you accept the question?

Ms LAWLER: Yes, I do.

Mr CHAIR: The question from the Member for Goyder has been allocated number 4.19.

Mr COSTA: Can I get an update in regard to the Tiwi roads and the ferry service up to Pirlangimpi?

Ms LAWLER: We will talk about the Tiwi roads first. There are five or six kilometres under way on the Paru road. There is a considerable amount—\$40m—out there for the Tiwi roads.

Ms McCORMICK: The early works package on the Paru road section is under way. We wanted to do a bigger package to start with; however, we found Typhonium. We need the Wet Season to do the surveys for Typhonium because it does not show itself during the Dry Season. That was a bit of a delay. We de-scoped the first package so we could get ahead with the works. We are looking at a bigger package this year of about \$15m and looking to work with Tiwi partners. We have \$75m in total for the entire road network.

We have been working with the Tiwis in terms of prioritisation of the funding. We have not finished the report yet but we have done all the consultation, which will inform what sections get done next.

Mr COSTA: Is that \$15m this financial year?

Ms McCORMICK: Yes.

Mr COSTA: What about the ferry?

Ms McCORMICK: We had allocated all of the remote passenger transport program and have been looking at an integrated transport plan for the Tiwis. The Tiwis have the inter-island ferry that the council runs; the ferry we do from Cullen Bay to the Tiwis; air services; and the bus service. We wanted to look at a more integrated model for passenger transport because we were getting feedback that a flight coming in does not necessarily connect with a bus. We wanted to look at it a more strategically before looking at further ferry services.

Mr GUYULA: I thank the minister for a recent email providing information on the expected works on the central Arnhem Highway. Parts of the Central Arnhem Highway see a heavy amount of local traffic. I would like to see it prioritised for upgrades. Your email refers to an investigation strategy. Has the investigation strategy been finalised, which will detail the parts of the road that will be prioritised for work? How do community elders and leaders have their say on this strategy?

Ms McCORMICK: Yes, the investment strategy has been going for the last 12 months or so. Throughout that time we have been doing the engineering assessments and surveys of the road to look at it from a road condition perspective. Now we need to look at how we package up the works. We are also working with the Northern Land Council on what is the easiest way—because there are so many stakeholders along the Central Arnhem route—to do the consultations, whether we do them separately or together, and the easiest way to do it.

We have done the engineering assessments to inform the investment strategy, but we would like to now do the consults on how to package up the works and work together on it.

Mr GUYULA: What was the expense this financial year, 2020–21, on the Central Arnhem Highway? What work was completed with this expenditure?

Ms LAWLER: To 31 March 2021 there was \$6.592m, which was federal government money as well as Northern Territory Government money.

Ms McCORMICK: We spent money and did early works on packages before we finished the investment strategy to get things rolling on the road. We had challenges on the Central Arnhem Road this year with the Wet Season. It was still closed not long ago, which we had not seen for a long time. That inhibited getting road crews out there, because there was still water over crossings. As soon as we had access we have been there doing work.

Maintenance-wise, we spent just over \$1m to 31 March, but a lot of disaster maintenance will be needed post the Wet Season on the crossings that have been washed away and that sort of thing, which we are still going through.

Mr GUYULA: What is budgeted to be spent next financial year, 2021–22, on the Central Arnhem Highway? The budget says \$78.1m. Where will this be spent?

Ms McCORMICK: It is \$77.1m. It is for the next packages identified in the strategy. Part of it will be in the East Arnhem region and towards the Katherine region. We are spreading out the work across the road.

Mr GUYULA: In August 2018, the minister advised there was \$4.9m to lift and seal a portion of the Ramingining link road. This work was not completed and was revoked. New funds are allocated to the Ramingining link road in this budget. What work will be completed over the course of the year?

Ms McCORMICK: That work through the Ramingining connection road is completed as far as I know, but if there is something you are concerned about I am happy to hear it. There is no capital works funding allocated to that road, but there is \$11m allocated for further work up on what they call the West Arnhem road, mainly to do with crossings and culverts to get people between communities in the Wet Season.

Mr COSTA: Between Maningrida and Ramo? Cadell and all of them?

Ms McCORMICK: That is right, yes.

Mr GUYULA: There is also the link from where this contract runs—the lifting and sealing of the bitumen that goes up to the sacred site halfway between Ramingining and the Central Arnhem Road. What is being considered for the rest of the road from the sacred site area towards Ramingining? That is the worst road.

Ms McCORMICK: We would have to take that on notice. We do not have any capital works, but it sounds like there is an issue there that you would like addressed. We can have a look.

Mr GUYULA: All the work has been done on the good roads, except this particular road. There could be issues with the Northern Land Council, the TO, the anthropologists—whatever it is. We would like to sort that out.

Ms LAWLER: Bruce Michael works under Louise. He has been working on the Central Arnhem Road; I have had meetings with him. Maybe we will organise for you to see him the next time you are in town. He has an office in Palmerston; you can go through some of those issues. It would be good for you to tell him some of these things; that would be more practical and a better use of your time as well.

Mr GUYULA: Thank you.

Mr CHAIR: Did you want to take it on notice?

Mr GUYULA: I do not know what I said now.

Mr CHAIR: It was about the Ramo road—which side.

Ms McCORMICK: Sorry, we ended up having a conversation.

Mr CHAIR: That is okay, we do not have to.

Mr MALEY: In relation to the Stuart's Tree realignment at Point Stuart, can you give me an update on the road?

Ms LAWLER: There is money in rec fishing infrastructure. There was a \$50m allocation for rec fishing and there are dollars in that; that is the Point Stuart roadwork. It is about doing critical areas on that road.

Mr KIRKMAN: We are going through the design of that road now, as it realigns through to the boat ramp at Point Stuart. The focus for initial works ...

Mr MALEY: It is Stuart's Tree boat ramp, near Terry Holtze's land.

Mr KIRKMAN: We are working through the design. The priority works at this stage will be to ensure we have realignment of the road on Terry Holtze's land, which we are doing a land swap on or acquiring. We are formalising that and will do the low-lying areas on the current road. It will be a road that gets upgraded over a number of years. What is important is that we sort out the alignment to Stuart's Tree.

Mr MALEY: When do you think the alignment will be done or 'sorted out', using your words?

Mr KIRKMAN: We already have a deed of agreement with Mr Holtze for the alignment. Once we do the work, then it will be formalising that. That will be done over the next 12 to 24 months.

Ms LAWLER: Andrew and I met with Terry Holtze on his property and had a good look at what was happening out there; we are across the issue.

Output 10.5 – Transport Assets

Mr CHAIR: The committee will now consider Output 10.5, Transport Assets. Are there any questions?

That concludes consideration of Output 10.5.

Output 10.6 – Strategy, Policy and Legislation

Mr CHAIR: The committee will now consider Output 10.6, Strategy, Policy and Legislation. Are there any questions?

That concludes consideration of Output 10.6 and Output Group 10.0.

OUTPUT GROUP 11.0 – HOUSING PROGRAM OFFICE
Output 11.1 – Capital Program Delivery

Mr CHAIR: The committee will now move onto Output Group 11.0, Housing Program Office, Output 11.1, Capital Program Delivery. Are there any questions?

That concludes consideration of Output 11.1.

Output 11.2 – Program Planning and Engagement

Mr CHAIR: The committee will now consider Output 11.2, Program Planning and Engagement. Are there any questions?

That concludes consideration of Output 11.2.

Output 11.3 – Housing Maintenance Services

Mr CHAIR: The committee will now consider Output 11.3, Housing Maintenance Services. Are there any questions?

That concludes consideration of Output 11.3 and Output Group 11.0.

OUTPUT GROUP 12.0 – CORPORATE AND SHARED SERVICES
Output 12.1 – Corporate and Governance

Mr CHAIR: The committee will now move onto Output Group 12.0, Corporate and Shared Services, Output 12.1, Corporate and Governance. Are there any questions?

That concludes consideration of Output 12.1.

Output 12.2 – Shared Services Received

Mr CHAIR: The committee will now consider Output 12.2, Shared Services Received. Are there any questions?

That concludes consideration of Output 12.2 and Output Group 12.0.

That concludes consideration of outputs relating to the Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Logistics. On behalf of the committee, I thank you, minister, and Mr Kirkman and his team, for your time and the advice you have provided today.

The committee suspended.

ENVIRONMENT
WATER SECURITY
CLIMATE CHANGE

DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENT, PARKS AND WATER SECURITY

Mr CHAIR: The committee will now consider output groups relating to the Department of Environment, Parks and Water Security.

Minister, I invite you to introduce the officials accompanying you and make an opening statement regarding your portfolio of Environment, Parks and Water Security.

Ms LAWLER: It is a pleasure to be here. I am accompanied by Joanne Townsend, CEO of the Environment, Parks and Water Security; Dr Alaric Fisher is the Executive Director Flora and Fauna; Luis Da Rocha, who is the Executive Director Rangelands; and the famous Paul Purdon, who is here to answer questions about

the EPA. I will do an introductory statement. I did not do one last year because we were short on time, but it is important that I get things on the record because the work of the EPA and the department is exceptional.

Since the machinery of government changes in August 2020, the department manages Territory parks and reserves, but those are questions for Minister Uibo next week.

As Minister for Environment, Climate Change and Water Security, I highlight that this government has long recognised and advocated that a strong economy relies on a healthy environment. The release of the Northern Territory Economic Reconstruction Commission report in December 2020 outlined opportunities for the Territory to increase private investment and accelerate economic growth in the Territory.

I am proud to say that the Department of Environment, Parks and Water Security is playing a vital, pivotal role in supporting this work by improving access to suitable land and water resources in a responsible way. We recognise that our focus on job creation must not be at the expense of our environment or to the detriment of the wider social, cultural or economic values our environment and natural resources provide, which is why we continue to implement measures to protect the environment.

A particular focus of the Territory Economic Reconstruction is supporting sustainable development precincts. Understanding the Territory's biophysical resources provides a foundation for enabling sustainable economic development, protects important environmental matters and de-risks investment decision-making. To facilitate this, the department is delivering land, water and biodiversity assessments across different land tenures of the Territory through a number of projects.

Of particular note, in the last term of government we committed almost \$10m to the Mapping the Future program to map and integrate land capability, water availability and significant environmental assets in strategic locations with immediate development potential. This has resulted in a number of comprehensive land, water and biodiversity assessments being finalised, including: the Gunn Point peninsula, Wadeye, Larrimah and Western Davenport regions; and work being finalised over the next 12 months for areas around Katherine, and Deep Well, near Santa Teresa.

This work is public and its data will be available to support project planning for government and private investors alike. In addition, the department is collaborating with other agencies and research bodies to undertake a strategic regional baseline assessment at Middle Arm to guide careful developmental planning in this area to reduce environmental impacts of the proposed industrial precinct.

One of our election commitments in 2016 was to restore trust and regulatory decision through the implementation of a robust, clear and transparent set of rules and guidelines for how the environment must be protected under a comprehensive environmental regulatory reform program. We delivered on this commitment by delivering a new *Environment Protection Act 2019* and regulations, significant reform to the *Water Act 1992* and through other legislative and policy reforms.

This has been an ambitious reform program, which I commend the department for, but there is more reform to come. Creating certainty through robust legislative frameworks creates confidence for investors. This is why, over the next three years, improvements to the regulative frameworks for managing environmental impacts of mining activities, waste and pollution will be progressed, commencing with improvements to the mining regulatory system and the transfer of responsibility for regulating the environmental impacts of mining to my department.

The department has also identified a range of efficiencies in the administration of the *Water Act 1992* and regulations, the *Waste Management and Pollution Control Act 1998* and regulations, the *Pastoral Land Act 1992*, the *Territory Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act 1976*, and the beverage, container and plastic bags legislation inclusion in the TERC omnibus bill to be introduced in May 2021.

The department will also undertake further work to deliver more efficient administration and timely decision-making consistent with the TERC recommendations. The department has also critically assessed its administration of regulatory approvals for matters such as water licences and permits, land clearing, waste licensing, environmental management plans for petroleum and non-pastoral use permits, and has set new performance measures and time lines for these decisions. This will insure resources are allocated in the most effective way to streamline decision-making while maintaining stringent oversight and compliance requirements.

In addition to the legislative reform, a number of key policies and projects have also recently been completed which reduce red tape, strengthen the data available to underpin decision-making and open up new avenues for mitigating the environmental impacts. These include:

- the new simplified pastoral land clearing assessment process, which commits to a decision being made within 30 business days for clearing applications on unconstrained areas of land
- an offsets framework to guide the development of offset programs for biodiversity and greenhouse gas emissions
- a draft greenhouse gas emissions offset policy and a biodiversity offset policy are being developed and expected to be released for public consultation later in 2021
- the SREBA framework, which sets out the scope in governance for comprehensive baseline studies in the Beetaloo Basin.

The scope of work for four of the baseline studies—water quality and quantity, aquatic ecosystems, terrestrial ecosystems and greenhouse gas—have been completed, approved and field work commenced. The scope of work for the final two, environmental health and social, cultural and economic studies are under development.

The Northern Territory is already experiencing the consequences of a change in climate, with a number of temperature records broken across the Territory during 2020. This government recognises that the community wants action on climate change to deliver low cost, clean energy, create jobs for Territorians and protect our natural assets.

To help facilitate implementation of our climate change response, released in July 2020, we have established an office of climate change within the department, which is progressing emission reduction strategies, helping to build the Territory's resilience to impact of climate change, identifying and developing opportunities in new low-carbon industries.

I could also talk about the office of water security, which is undertaking a feasibility and business study for the Darwin region. I would also love to talk more about the gamba army and the amazing work that is being done by the gamba team, but I will not go into those details, understanding the issue around time, as well as the outstanding work of the EPA.

I would hope that next year the opposition members might manage their time better so that we get the opportunity to fully address the issues of environment and water security. Given the advent of time we will go straight in questions.

Mrs HERSEY: Maybe next year we might have a longer time frame to ask more questions. Can you provide a summary of the AROWS off-stream water storage preliminary assessment? What were the key findings and recommendations?

Ms LAWLER: You are talking about the AROWS project? The pre-feasibility study is available on their website. I suggest you go there and have a read. Only because of the time; you have 10 minutes. I would suggest you have a read online and if there are issues you can come back and have discussions about that.

Mrs HERSEY: Does your government support the development of a water pipeline to the Middle Arm industrial area and, if so, what development has gone into it?

Ms LAWLER: Channel Island is a large user of water in the Northern Territory. There is already a substantial pipeline that goes past Middle Arm to Channel Island. That is a DIPL question, not a question for DEPWS.

Mrs HERSEY: The government has made significant noise about its gamba army's activities and its \$500,000 commitment. The budget does not contain any further funding for it to continue its work. What was that decision based on and how will the government judge its success in undertaking a review of its work?

Ms LAWLER: The \$500,000 for the gamba army at that time was about stimulating the economy, providing jobs for people out of work during COVID, such as in the hospitality industry.

Our government brought together a lot of work on gamba. I mentioned in the previous portfolio that it is about coordination regarding gamba, which includes work from DIPL, DEPWS, Parks, local government and land

owners. Besides that \$500,000—there will be evaluations before we make decisions about what we do in the future—there has been a range of other funding, including another nice project.

I was talking to an elderly lady in the Howard River Park area. There is a \$50,000 project where the department goes out and supports elderly or vulnerable rural landowners. A lot of the rural landowners in the greater Darwin area have been on their properties for a long time. They are willing and want to spray their gamba and address the issues but they are not always physically capable of doing it. That has been a useful program.

Ms TOWNSEND: The department is taking a multi-pronged approach to gamba in areas of infestation around Darwin and right down to Katherine because we recognise that we need to support landowners to do the right thing in being compliant with the *Weeds Management Act*. We also need to facilitate people who might not be able to comply with their requirements as a landowner through the Fire Ready Program, which was launched recently.

We are also doing work through the ranger grants program, which is in Minister Uibo's portfolio. That supports rangers to keep gamba out of areas towards Kakadu—keeping it out is a priority—and the Arnhem areas, where carbon projects are important for the local economy. The Gamba Action Program is a long-standing program; we continue to roll it out. Despite COVID, we had an increase in access to the Gamba Action Program last financial year. We updated the Gamba Management Plan, which was declared by the minister.

Finally, we are working with Charles Darwin University on revising our mapping extent and prevalence of gamba, which will help us plan for future works and priority hotspots we might want to target.

Mrs HERSEY: The government has a 10-year gamba plan. What resources are being allocated to ensure its success and what milestones and measurements of progress towards outcomes will the government be making publicly available?

Ms LAWLER: Do you have any important questions you would like to ask? That one could take up the last five minutes of your questions. There has been a lot of discussions about gamba and I can assure you that ...

Mrs HERSEY: They are all important. I am just going through a ...

Ms LAWLER: The CEO has provided a whole heap of information on gamba.

Mrs HERSEY: How much Crown land is estimated to have gamba grass? How much gamba grass has the gamba army destroyed? What is the reduction goal?

Ms LAWLER: We have been pleased with what we have done in regard to gamba. It is a difficult and complex issue in the Darwin and Katherine regions. We know it cannot be totally eliminated; it is about how we manage it. Key ones are regarding Crown land.

Mr DA ROCHA: In relation to the gamba army and the work they have achieved, there is an evaluation report by TNRM that will be submitted before 30 June that will provide evidence and data about the success rate. I do not have the figure of the exact amount on me. I can take that on notice, about how much has been sprayed on Crown land by the gamba army. That will be part of the report. I have a preliminary report at this stage but it is not finalised.

Mr MALEY: Will that report be made public?

Ms LAWLER: I am sure it can be made public. I am more than happy for it to be made public. It is by Territory NRM, which is an independent organisation. If you are interested in good statistics about gamba: 2,352 private land owners participated through the Gamba Action Program; there were 1,313 compliance inspections as of 31 March undertaken in areas of gamba with high bushfire risk; and 171 compliance orders issued for land owners to take action.

The Fire Ready Program—Ten Rivers and Stirling are working on that. Gamba is not just the government's responsibility, it is landholders, local government and, when we are looking at national parks, the federal government. It is all of ours and if we all do our bit we can continue to mitigate the big fire risk surrounding gamba.

Mrs HERSEY: The budget for the environment management policy has been cut from \$11.461m to \$10.958m, which is a reduction of \$500,000. How has this reduction in budget been achieved? Was the \$500,000 what you put in from the gamba army from last year? Is there any money to continue that?

Ms LAWLER: No, the DEPWS budget has not been reduced. What area are you referring to?

Mrs HERSEY: It is Budget Paper No 3, on page 125.

Ms LAWLER: Page 125. That was a change around. The variation in the output is due to additional external funding from (inaudible).

Ms TOWNSEND: The variation in the budget—if you are referring to the environment division—will be due to movement of funding regarding the onshore gas regulation—the interim cost recovery. There has been no overall reduction in budget for the department.

Mr MALEY: When will you be announcing this year's waterfowl hunting season?

Ms LAWLER: I usually announce the waterfowl hunting season by early July. We did the magpie goose management plan work; I announced that plan about 12 months ago. If you read that management plan it takes the guesswork and decision-making away from the minister. There is a grid that provides clear direction on the number of magpie geese each year and what the hunting season will be. It is not arbitrary. The magpie goose management plan provides factual and clear evidence about the numbers and what that equates to.

Dr FISHER: The management plan for magpie geese was reviewed, revised and released last year. It is a science-based document with a lot of analysis on the population dynamics of magpie geese that informs decisions about the amount of offtake that can be allocated to recreational hunting, pest mitigation and commercial use.

A key change in the management program last year was to introduce a fixed length to the hunting season. The hunting season is the same—15.7 weeks every year—and starts on the same date, which is the fourth Wednesday in September. The element that changes from year to year in response to changes in the magpie goose population is the bag limit. That is informed by a large aerial survey exercise we undertake each year to count magpie geese across the wetlands of the Top End. That work is being completed this year; the estimated population was 980,000 magpie geese.

Mr MALEY: Is that up or down from last year?

Dr FISHER: It is a significant decline on last year's numbers. It reflects the fact that, while the last Wet Season was a good one, the previous two were poor Wet Seasons and the amount of breeding in those seasons was low. As we would have predicted from that, the goose population has declined substantially.

Mr CHAIR: Honourable members, ladies and gentlemen, the time is 4.30 pm and that concludes consideration of outputs relating to the Environment and Water Security. On behalf of the committee I thank you, minister, for appearing today, and all the officers who have assisted you.

That concludes estimates hearings for today. Hearings will recommence on Monday at 9 am; we will have questions for the Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Services.

Ms LAWLER: Thank you very much to the Department of Environment, Parks and Water Security for all the work it has done. I thank you and the Members for Nelson, Katherine and Goyder for your time today.

The committee concluded.
