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PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMITTEE

Public Briefing Transcript

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Litchfield Room, Level 3, Parliament House

- Members:** Mr Clinton Howe MLA, Chair, Member for Drysdale
Mrs Laurie Zio MLA, Deputy Chair, Member for Fannie Bay
Mr Manuel Brown MLA, Member for Arafura
Justine Davis MLA, Member for Johnston
Mr Brian O’Gallagher, Member for Karama
- Witnesses:** Mr Patrick Bellot: Chair, Darwin Waterfront Corporation
Mr Alastair Shields: Chief Executive Officer, Darwin Waterfront Corporation

**PUBLIC BRIEFING INTO THE DARWIN WATERFRONT CORPORATION
Darwin Waterfront Corporation**

Mr CHAIR: Welcome gentlemen and everyone in the gallery. Thank you for being here today. On behalf of the committee I welcome everyone to this public briefing into the Darwin Waterfront Corporation.

I welcome to the table to give evidence to the committee Patrick Bellot, board Chair, and Alastair Shields, chief executive officer. Thank you for coming before the committee. We appreciate you taking the time to speak to the committee, and look forward to hearing from you today.

This is a formal proceeding of the committee and the protection of parliamentary privilege and the obligation not to mislead the committee apply. However, I note that parliamentary privilege does not extend to comments repeated outside of this hearing.

This is a public briefing that is being webcast through the Assembly's website. A transcript will be made for the use of the committee and may be put on the committee's website. If at any time during the hearing you are concerned that what you will say should not be made public you may ask the committee to go into a closed session and take your evidence in private.

Could you please each state your name and the capacity in which you are appearing.

Mr BELLOT: Patrick Bellot, Chair, Darwin Waterfront Corporation.

Mr SHIELDS: Alastair Shields, Chief Executive Officer, Darwin Waterfront Corporation.

Mr CHAIR: Mr Bellot, would you like to make an opening statement?

Mr BELLOT: Yes, I would, thank you, Chair.

Good afternoon, Chair and committee members. By way of introduction, my name is Patrick Bellot, Chairman of the Darwin Waterfront Corporation.

Thank you for the opportunity to make this opening statement on behalf of the Darwin Waterfront Corporation. The corporation welcomes this inquiry's forum to clarify the facts and seeks to provide a full and transparent account of our governance, operations and the online allegations that have prompted this process.

As Chair of the board, I take very seriously the obligation to ensure our organisation is governed with integrity, rigour and accountability. Let me state plainly: the Darwin Waterfront Corporation rejects in the strongest terms baseless allegations that have been publicly circulated online and repeated in parliament. These allegations have not only been misleading, but demonstrably false. We have sought to respond comprehensively to each, and beyond the terms of references, within our written submission.

The claim that a made-up job was created for the deputy CEO is entirely without merit. The role in question was documented in official annual reports, approved through government processes, and the higher duties allowance paid was modest, appropriate and in full compliance with NT Government policy.

The assertion that nearly a total of \$400,000 was paid in higher duties is simply untrue. The total allowance, as verified by the Department of Corporate and Digital Development, was at a total \$42,411.07 across separate roles for just over two years, not as per the alleged six years.

Equally inaccurate is the implication of inappropriate financial dealings between the corporation and the AustralAsia Railway Corporation. These are longstanding, audited cost-sharing arrangements dating back to 2006 that are entirely consistent with NT Government practice. The Auditor-General has never raised any concern regarding these transactions in our unqualified annual audit reports.

Additionally, the timing renewal of the deputy CEO contract followed standard NT Government processes, as outlined in our submission, and was fully compliant with the terms of his existing contract.

I also want to address the harm these falsehoods have caused. The corporation's staff and executives have endured distress and reputational damage due to repeated misrepresentations that lack context and applied due diligence. That is unacceptable.

Despite this, the corporation has sought to engage fully and constructively with this inquiry. We have provided detailed records, independent verifications and a commitment to openness. Our governance framework is robust. Our board includes members with AICD qualifications. We apply recognised corporate entity principles from the ASIC's corporate governance principles and the NT Government's own board handbook.

The corporation also fully consents to our written submission being published onto the parliamentary accounts committee website. I cannot stress that enough. We want this transparency.

Let me close here by reaffirming our core purpose. The Darwin Waterfront Corporation exists to serve the people of the Northern Territory, delivering economic, recreational and cultural value through world-class precinct management. Over a million people visited the precinct last year. We hosted 178 public events. We take this responsibility seriously.

I respectfully urge the committee to assess the facts as presented before it within our submission—the facts that show these allegations are not only unsubstantiated but harmful.

The corporation will continue to serve the Territory community with professionalism, transparency and integrity.

Both myself and Mr Shields are happy to take any questions. Thank you, committee.

Mr CHAIR: Thank you, Mr Bellot. I will state that the committee has unanimously resolved to publish all submissions, so we have already taken that step.

I will now open the floor to questions. I will start with the Member for Arafura, Mr Brown.

Mr BROWN: Before we get going, I would like to do an opening statement as well.

Thank you, Mr Shields and Mr Bellot, for turning up today.

We acknowledge the dedication and professionalism of the Northern Territory public servants. We are not seeking to undermine or discredit any individual. What we are seeking to do is understand whether there is any substance to the concerns that have been raised in relation to the Darwin Waterfront Corporation.

This matter has been raised with members of the opposition team by community members on many occasions. The opposition feels we would not be doing our job if we did not ask questions on behalf of the community to clarify the arrangements at the Darwin Waterfront Corporation, including hiring practices and the use of public funds.

These concerns are part of the broader community conversation around integrity and accountability of our public institutions. An example is there is a current independent investigation underway into hiring practices within the NT Police. It is important for the community that these matters are addressed transparently.

We thank you for your submissions which help to explain some reasonably complex hiring matters. However, we know the community would like to be reassured that public funds and conflicts of interest are being managed at the Darwin Waterfront Corporation and associated entities, as they would do for any public body.

In relation to the Waterfront Corporation and AustralAsia Railway it is clear that there has been an overlap in staff and board members over time. Your submissions go some way to explain that.

Given that we live in a relatively small jurisdiction, it is recognised that we have many personal and professional connections that are often interrelated. We are keen to understand how these conflicts of interest are actively managed at the Darwin Waterfront Corporation and AustralAsia Railway, and that there is transparency around recruitment practices in line with Territorians' expectations.

It is worth noting that when calls for the public inquiry were first made by the Member for Johnston, the Minister for Tourism and Hospitality said she had been briefed on the matter, but refused to make any details ...

Mr CHAIR: Mr Brown, we will bring this back to the inquiry. This is not a statement on wider things. If you could bring it back to the scope of what we are here for.

Mr BROWN: Okay. Well, just that last sentence. We are keen to understand how conflicts of interest are actively managed at the Darwin Waterfront Corporation, and transparency around recruitment practices are in line with Territorians.

I have questions around conflict of interest and integrity. What system and processes are in place at the Darwin Waterfront Corporation to identify, declare and manage conflicts of interest in hiring practices and remuneration decisions?

Mr BELLOT: The board runs an ongoing conflict register, which can be updated between board meetings, but ultimately, at the beginning of every board meeting, there is a request for declarations of conflicts of interest. That is kept up to date by way of—again, if something happens in between the board meetings we run bimonthly, a member can issue an instruct to the board saying, 'I declare this conflict of interest' and to have it located on the register. Hopefully that answers your question.

J DAVIS: Thank you both for coming. I appreciate that this is a really short time frame. I appreciate you coming and providing information, addressing the issues pretty comprehensively. Like the Member for Arafura, and I think everyone else on this committee, our job is to make sure that the public can trust public institutions, so we appreciate you being here and being willing to answer questions.

Following on from your answer, I just wondered, when you said there is a conflict register, whether that is something that is publicly available.

Mr SHIELDS: In common practice for boards such as the Darwin Waterfront Corporation, conflict-of-interest registers are not made public. I know they are made public routinely for members of parliament and so on, but it is not usual for it to be made public for an organisation such as the Darwin Waterfront Corporation or, for that matter, the AustralAsia Railway Corporation.

What I can say is that all board minutes, which include conflict-of-interest declarations, are provided to the auditor annually and are subject to review as part of the annual audit.

J DAVIS: That was my second question, whether or not declarations of conflict of interest in board meetings are publicly available.

Mr SHIELDS: Our minutes are not publicly available. As you can imagine, the board often considers matters that have commercial-in-confidence or staff-in-confidence material such that it would not be appropriate for them to be made publicly available. That also includes the discussion about people's personal conflicts of interest. Again, all the minutes and all of the transactions are available for the auditor and the Auditor-General to review.

Mr BELLOT: It is part of their scope.

J DAVIS: Understood. Are you able to tell us whether or not there have been declarations of conflict of interest in board meetings?

Mr BELLOT: Certainly. In my example it would be in terms of other placement on other boards—of that nature. That is a pre-entry into the board, so any other committees or boards or company directorships that you had would be on that register. That would be the expectation.

Mr SHIELDS: Chair, I can add a little bit to that, if you are happy for me to do that.

A lot of the items on our register of conflicts of interest are standing items of notification. For example, in my case, I have a declaration that I am also Chair of the AustralAsia Railway Corporation. That actually does not arise as a conflict in most meetings because it would be very rare, other than if we were talking about the sharing of costs and staff between the organisations. There are no real transactions between the two, but it is there as a standing notification.

Other board members who have other interests, such as they sit on other boards or have other employment, they are all in the standing register. The reminder at the start of each meeting is for board members to consider all of those in light of the agenda and say, 'Is there anything on today's agenda that might be caught?'

I can also give a specific example that might help with the understanding. This was something that was raised in some of the NT Independent material. The wife of a board member of AARC was employed for a short time by the Darwin Waterfront Corporation. There was a comprehensive discussion about that at the Darwin Waterfront Corporation, at which the board member who was the spouse of the employee was not present. At that meeting we resolved to put in place special measures so that the arrangement could continue with appropriate measures in place to make sure that any conflict or potential conflict was properly managed.

I can quote a couple of the things in that particular conflict-of-interest plan that was proposed to deal with that, just to give some context to it. We developed this by having regard to the Northern Territory Public Sector code of conduct, which is referenced in the board handbook for the Waterfront Corp and other boards to look at. We also looked at the AICD directors' toolkit to see how they managed it. We looked at the Australian Public Service Commission guidelines on how to deal with family arrangements at the workplace. We also looked at the ASX corporate governance principles. None of them say you cannot have a family arrangement where, say, a husband and wife, or spouses, could not be employed by the same organisation. But they all recommend that there are processes and procedures in place to deal with that.

Having reviewed that material, we put in place a plan that said that the board member involved was excluded from any discussion or decision-making concerning their spouse's employment, remuneration, performance and the like. He was totally excluded from all of that.

For any period that she remained an employee—bearing in mind it was only a temporary employee situation—the board resolved that the spouse would not be appointed to the audit

and risk committee because the employee had been employed to assist with the audit process.

We resolved that in the event that the spouse was to provide a presentation directly to the board that the board member spouse would not be present at that discussion, but would instead have the opportunity to review papers and provide questions to the Chair which could then be raised in the board meeting.

We also resolved to put in place a public statement about how we dealt with those conflicts, and we said we would review those processes to see if they worked at the expiry of six months.

J DAVIS: That gives a very good illustration of how that particular conflict was dealt with.

At the end where you said in order to ensure that the public felt reassured—in general, there have been many issues in the public space around concerns, which is why we are here. I understand from what you are saying, and I know, it is standard practice that minutes et cetera and declarations of conflict in commercial enterprises are often kept confidential.

What do you think you can or are doing to reassure the public that they do not need to be worried about these things?

Mr BELLOT: Effectively, abidance by the various standards. The NT public board standards, the various AICD standards—we take it very seriously. Conflicts, we are all very sensitive to it and we are all very mindful. It is always at top of mind. I cannot talk to the previous Chairs or the like, but for myself, personally, that is something that I have zero tolerance for—any sort of potential commercial conflicts or the like.

Mr SHIELDS: On top of that, Member for Johnston, as the Chair has said, we are very keen for our submission to be placed on the public website. We will also consider with our board, I think, publicly putting it on our website as well to give that reassurance to the public that we have properly worked through all of these issues.

J DAVIS: Obviously, we live in a place that is really small and there are conflicts all over the place. I noticed that you said in your submission that the CEO and DCEO had never socialised together. For me to be clear, my expectation is not that people do not go and play golf together or whatever—no issue with that—but if there are concerns about the way people in positions of authority are making decisions with public money and there may be a relationship that could compromise that, the public can feel reassured that there is not any conflict there.

Particularly given what we are talking about in terms of what can and cannot be revealed publicly—I appreciate your answer just then—is there anything else that you can see can happen?

Mr SHIELDS: Member for Johnston, I think you are right; the Northern Territory is a reasonably small jurisdiction. A number of people have been on the Darwin Waterfront Corporation board, have been involved in senior NTPS positions over a large period of time.

That has meant they have had professional working relationships. As you would expect with close professional working relationships, friendships do develop over time. That is why the code of conduct and other guidance material says that if there could be a perception that a friendship might influence decision-making that needs to be declared and dealt with appropriately.

It is the view of the corporation that the test to be applied is not whether there is a friendship or a friendship exists—it sort of feels like we are descending into the schoolyard again and deciding who is or is not a friend—it is the nature of the friendship. The test that we have looked at is whether a fair-minded observer who understood the relationship, the friendship relationship and collegial relationship between parties, would be led to reasonably conclude that the decision-maker making that decision could be perceived as not being able to make an objective decision.

The onus is on the person making the decision to consider the relationships and then make a judgement as to whether they can make an objective decision. Whether it is to do with employment, expenditure, in making a recommendation about that person to someone else, they need to consider each time whether they need to declare whether there is a risk that a fair-minded person would think they could not make an objective decision.

J DAVIS: I note that you quoted that—what you just quoted then—in your submission as well, in terms of what that definition of conflict of interest might be. We can keep exploring this. I do not think we will get anywhere.

Speaking as someone who hears a lot from people in the community about concerns about public integrity, what I can hear them saying in my head is, 'That's kind of not good enough for me'.

Sorry, Chair; I do not want to step over any boundary. It is the same question I asked before. What can we put in place to ensure that people are reassured that goes beyond saying, 'A fair-minded observed would reasonably conclude', when people have lots of questions about what that might look like? There is still a lot of information, for the reasons that you have explained, that is not in the public space. I am not sure if that is a question or it is just a concern that I want to place on the record.

Mr CHAIR: That is fine. I ask that we start bringing us to the actual terms of reference.

Mr O'GALLAGHER: My question is related to the conflict-of-interest discussion.

Just to put on the record again—I have declared it to the committee, but I will say it again here publicly—I do know Mr Shields professionally. I worked with him on a number of major projects, previously, probably going back 10 or 20 years ago, including the railway project and the INPEX project, so I just declare that. I do not believe it is a conflict of interest in my assessment of this, but openness and transparency, I think we are all into that at the moment.

Mr Shields, there is a couple of issues. I know it is in your submission, so I will probably get you to repeat some of the stuff that is in your submission out here.

I think for the average punter trying to understand the relationship between the AustralAsia Railway Corporation and the Darwin Waterfront Corporation could be a bit confusing because—correct me if I am wrong—the AustralAsia Railway Corporation is a joint body with the Northern Territory and South Australian Governments. From what I recall, at the moment it has two Northern Territory reps and two South Australian reps. Is that correct?

Mr SHIELDS: Yes, that is correct.

Mr O’GALLAGHER: It is a joint body to administer the concession deed of the railway project, from what I recall.

Mr SHIELDS: That is correct.

Mr O’GALLAGHER: The Darwin Waterfront Corporation is a totally separate Northern Territory body.

Mr SHIELDS: Correct.

Mr O’GALLAGHER: It is looking the Darwin Waterfront. So, we have a situation where there is some sharing of staffing, probably I think around expertise and efficiencies in some ways. Can you explain how that happened? Also, was the approval for that recruitment—was it approved by both boards? Because it is the boards that actually have the decision-making here. Am I correct?

Mr SHIELDS: Yes, that is right.

Thank you for the question, Member for Karama. I acknowledge our time working together on the railway project and other projects as well.

The co-location of the AustralAsia Railway Corporation with the Waterfront goes back quite some time. The railway corporation was established well before the Darwin Waterfront Corporation. The Darwin Waterfront Corporation was established in 2006. Prior to that there was a project team working on the project to get the waterfront project up and running, and it was co-located with AARC. Right back at the start there was a share of office space and resources, and staff helped each other to make something work.

When the railway corporation was established—it has to have at least two members from South Australia, at least two from the Northern Territory and a CEO that is appointed by the corporation on the recommendation of the Northern Territory and South Australian members, so there are five. When the corporation was set up it was underpinned by a legally enforceable agreement between the Northern Territory and South Australian Governments, and that was backed up at financial close for the railway project with a further one that had quite a bit of detail about how it worked together.

One of the big focuses of the agreement is to reduce costs—make the costs as efficient as possible—and explore the devolution of functions to other entities that might be able to take it on, so that was not creating a separate cost impost for the Northern Territory and South Australia, because the cost of running AARC is shared between the Northern Territory and South Australia equally on an annual basis.

That was the premise that was started—there should be some efficiency in costs and expenditure—and that continued when the Waterfront Corporation was created, so that co-location was maintained. Ultimately, when the Waterfront was constructed and the Waterfront Corporation proposed to move to new premises at the Waterfront, it was resolved and agreed by both boards that AARC would continue to be co-located there.

All the arrangements, including shared arrangements, cost sharing, the back-of-house work that is done—there is no separate finance team for the AustralAsia Railway Corporation and the Darwin Waterfront Corporation; it is a single team—the costs are apportioned. That has all been through our various boards.

There are, as you have said, common members. I am the CEO of the Darwin Waterfront Corporation but I am also Chair of the AustralAsia Railway Corporation. Andrew Kirkman was, until recently—he is a member of the board of the AustralAsia Railway Corporation. Until reasonably recently he was also on the Darwin Waterfront Corporation board.

That has gone back in history with people like Paul Tyrrell, who was instrumental in getting the railway project up. He became the Chair of the AustralAsia Railway Corporation after the first train was established and we went into ongoing mode once the construction had finished. He became the inaugural Chair of the Darwin Waterfront Corporation.

We have shared board members, staff, office accommodation and resources from the very beginning.

Mr BELLOT: Both organisations have their own annual audits as well—separate.

Mr O’GALLAGHER: Just confirming, both boards independently agreed to this.

Mr SHIELDS: Yes, that is correct.

J DAVIS: Thank you; I think that is helpful. As the Member for Karama said, it is pretty confusing to us laypeople how all these things work.

I understand at the moment, Mr Bellot, you have roles in both those organisations.

Mr BELLOT: No; I am strictly Chair of the Darwin Waterfront Corporation.

J DAVIS: In terms of how decisions are made about cost-sharing between the two—I know you put a lot of detail in your submission about percentages and things—how is that worked

out? What is the process for that, and is that publicly available? You may have the same answer to the second part of that question.

Mr SHIELDS: I am happy to provide a bit of colour around that. Our financial controller makes that assessment of the percentages, and then that is agreed by both organisations.

Going to the second part of your question on how we can provide reassurance to the public, one of the things that this review has done is made us have a very close review of the annual reports of both organisations. I think there is the potential to perhaps improve the understanding of the public about how these arrangements work.

Two things have come out of our review of the financial statements. There is a lot of misinformation in the public about the Darwin Waterfront Corporation continuing to operate at a loss, which is really to do with depreciation and amortisation. I think that is something that could potentially be better explained. Most of the revenue is a pass-through on behalf of the Northern Territory Government to meet Northern Territory Government obligations under our concession arrangement.

Mr BELLOT: For the Convention Centre.

Mr SHIELDS: For the Convention Centre—and we have started discussion with the Auditor-General about how that might be better presented in the financial statements.

Again, another topic we could perhaps explain in a bit more detail in both annual reports is that sharing arrangement, how it originated and why it creates efficiencies for both parties. For both the Darwin Waterfront Corporation and the AustralAsia Railway Corporation to have the equivalent set-up would cost much more if it was done separately, than by having the efficiencies of having a combination.

J DAVIS: Could you step us through what is the process of moving funds between those two organisations? I noticed you talked about money being transferred from one to the other in terms of employment for someone. Who makes those decisions? What are the delegations? How does that happen?

Mr SHIELDS: It is kind of a technical, financial accounting thing the way it actually happens. It is called an LTF, which is a ledger transfer something ...

J DAVIS: Yes, a ledger—can you explain? I did not know that word. What does that mean?

Mr SHIELDS: What it means I think in practice—I am not the financial controller, but I can give my understanding of how this works. It means, for example, in respect of our deputy CEO's salary, that is paid by one entity. In fact, all of the shared costs are paid for by the Darwin Waterfront Corporation. The Darwin Waterfront Corporation pays all of his salary and all the salaries for our back of house, it pays for the rent, it pays for the stationery and all of those things ...

J DAVIS: For both entities?

Mr SHIELDS: Because we are in a shared—so there is one account that is paid for everything. Then there is this LTF, which is a ledger transfer. Once they are all paid by one entity, a certain percentage of that is attributable to another entity—the AustralAsia Railway Corporation—so a ledger transfer happens that simply shows the amount of money attributable to the AustralAsia Railway Corporation, transferring across into the financial books of that corporation. All of that is subject to audit.

It is a very routine matter that does not just happen between corporations ...

Mr BELLOT: Between departments.

Mr SHIELDS: It happens between government departments all the time, when they might share the cost of doing something or there is a temporary use of one entity's facility or staff. Rather than move all the staff into the new entity and move them back, there is a temporary transfer. It is a pretty routine ledger transfer that is all subject to the normal annual audit.

J DAVIS: Is there transparency around it? Is that reflected in the annual reports?

Mr SHIELDS: What is reflected in the annual reports is the expenditure that is apportioned to each entity. You will see that in the Darwin Waterfront Corporation's annual audit. You will see what our expenditure on the Darwin Waterfront Corporation is. In the AustralAsia Railway Corporation annual audit, you will see the expenditure attributable to the AustralAsia Railway Corporation.

As I mentioned before, one of the things that I think this inquiry has probably done for us is to say that we might be able to explain a little bit better about why there is this co-location and how it happens.

Mr CHAIR: Thanks, gents. I will ask some pretty pointed questions now to make sure we cover off on the terms of reference. I will directly address the Leader of the Opposition's comments in *Hansard* made on Wednesday 21 May 2025. I will ask you the direct questions, so this is specifically relating to Mr Sam Burke.

I will ask the first one—the alleged creation of a made-up part-time job, reportedly unadvertised. Going through the other submissions it seems we have received information that—if you can correct me—the position was Executive Director, Major Projects. Is that correct?

Mr BELLOT: Yes. Strategic infrastructure and projects within the Department of Trade, Business and Innovation.

Mr CHAIR: We have been advised that position was established in August 2015. When did Mr Sam Burke go into that position?

Mr SHIELDS: The deputy CEO, whose job title was general manager at the time, went to the Department of Trade, Business and Innovation through two discrete periods of higher duties—one from 19 February 2018 to 30 June 2018 and the second from 1 July 2018 to 31 December 2018.

Mr CHAIR: I have two follow-up questions. That is obviously post-the establishment of the position. Was that a board decision, those higher duties?

Mr SHIELDS: The payment of higher duties is ordinarily a decision of the CEO, but the board was fully briefed on the arrangements and approved the arrangements under which Mr Burke would work 0.6 of his time with the Department of Trade, Business and Innovation and 0.4 of the time with the Waterfront Corporation, and they were aware of the salary that he was being paid.

Mr CHAIR: We have also been advised at the time the minister was made aware; is that correct? Do you share that same view?

Mr SHIELDS: Yes, two ministers were advised. The then Chief Minister, Mr Gunner, who was the portfolio minister for the Major Projects portfolio—the Department of Trade, Business and Innovation—was advised of it by that department. We, the Darwin Waterfront Corporation, advised Lauren Moss who was the then Minister for Tourism and Culture.

Mr CHAIR: I note in your opening statement you addressed the \$60,000 in higher duties.

Mr BELLOT: The alleged ...

Mr CHAIR: Yes, the alleged. You gave the correct figure, which I wrote down—\$42,411.07.

Mr SHIELDS: That is correct.

Mr BELLOT: Across two roles, just over two years.

Mr CHAIR: They were not all done together. Were they under the six months?

Mr SHIELDS: A couple of responses to those questions. Firstly, the DTBI— Department of Trade, Business and Innovation—role was a total of \$17,113.32 higher duties before tax. That was in two periods of HDA. One was 19 February 2018 to 30 June 2018. That is less than six months.

Whilst this is a consideration of the department, our understanding is that the department fully intended to advertise the role towards the end of that six-month period and then fill it on an ongoing basis at that time. But during that five-and-a-bit months of HDA the department started to undergo a bit of a restructure. They took on some additional responsibilities with the jobs plan which was then a government priority. That restructure meant that they were not ready to fill permanently the role at the end of June 2018 and they offered Mr Burke a

further opportunity of a new period of HDA for six months, from 1 July 2018 to 31 December 2018. So, both periods of HDA did not exceed six months.

Mr BELLOT: In terms of the \$42,411.07 it was verified by the Department of Corporate and Digital Development, calculated using payroll records covering 551 working days across DTBI and AARC roles, as detailed in the attachment B of our submission.

Mr CHAIR: That would also—allegation (b), being higher duties allowance allegedly continued for up to six years, long after the temporary role ended.

Mr BELLOT: That is vehemently false.

Mr CHAIR: Yes.

Mrs ZIO: To the best of your knowledge, is this a common practice across government agencies to do this kind of sharing arrangement and HDA practice?

Mr SHIELDS: Yes, I have a bit of an understanding. I would not say it is routinely commonplace, but it is not unusual. We were in a situation with Mr Burke in that there was not an obvious successor to take on all of the role while he was away, so an arrangement was negotiated with the CEO of the Department of Trade, Business and Innovation that would see the job split, the 60–40. In reality, Mr Burke probably spent way more than 100% of the normal working time. He would come in very early in the morning and do Waterfront Corporation business and then go to the Department of Trade, Business and Innovation and do a whole day's work there as well.

Having job-sharing arrangements is not unusual. It might not be commonplace, but it is not unusual in the Northern Territory Public Sector, in my experience.

Mr O'GALLAGHER: Going back to the terms of reference, the higher duties allowance allegedly continued for up to six years, long after the temporary role ended. I notice in the submission, I will quote from it:

Following AARC Board approval in late 2018 to delegate the functions of the AARC CEO to the DCEO of DWC, a new period of higher duties commenced for the period 1 January 2019 to 28 June 2019.

About five months, I think:

This was followed by further periods of higher duties ...

- *29 June 2019 – 30 September ...*

Which is about three months, I think:

- *1 October 2019 – 31 March 2020*

Another five months:

- *1 April ... – 5 April ...*

Four days.

Were those periods of higher duties approved by the CEO or by the boards? What is the go, in terms of the approval process?

Mr SHIELDS: There is a bit of a history to the multiple periods of HDA there. It came about because the then CEO of the AustralAsia Railway Corporation, Mr Brendan Lawson—a former colleague of both of ours—in preparation for retirement was planning to do a bit more travel and be away for extended periods. Being a very small office, he was the one person working on AARC matters the whole of the time; he needed someone as a backup to fulfil his role. Before Mr Burke went onto higher duties allowance, he effectively shadowed Mr Lawson for a period of time and got to know the board and its business, attended some board meetings. The board was comfortable and did approve him to act in periods of Mr Lawson's absence.

Around that time, as you will recall, COVID started. I think that played havoc a little bit with Mr Lawson's timeframe for both travel and deciding when to retire, which necessitated a couple of extra discrete periods of higher duties allowance to cater for that.

Ultimately, Mr Burke was appointed properly as CEO under the *AustralAsia Railway Corporation Act*, which required both the Northern Territory and South Australian ministers to recommend the appointment. It was approved by the board, and I executed the instrument.

Mr O'GALLAGHER: I note that some of the periods seem to be contiguous—one goes for three months, followed by five months and so on. It states:

Because none of the periods of higher duties exceeded 6 months, they were not required ...

Was the relevant minister aware of these, do you know? Or were they involved in these discussions or approvals?

Mr SHIELDS: It is a number of years ago, Member for Karama, so I cannot recall if the minister was actually consulted. I do know that the CEO of the department that had responsibility overall for AARC, the Infrastructure department, was well aware of the arrangement.

Mr O'GALLAGHER: So there is some sort of oversight?

Mr SHIELDS: Yes.

Mr BROWN: Just around the DCEO role, he was in higher duties for a period of about two years, as we can see here. Rather than re-evaluating, why did you guys not make it permanent at that level sooner?

Mr SHIELDS: First up, there were two completely separate jobs he acted in over the two-year period. One was the department of trade, business and infrastructure. As I said, they originally thought they would advertise in that first period of six months. There was a restructure in the department, so they extended it for another six months. Then they did advertise it on an ongoing basis. Mr Burke elected not to apply for it at that stage, so he came back to the Darwin Waterfront. There is one discrete period—one discrete role—of HDA, and I think that explains why that continued.

With the AustralAsia Railway Corporation CEO role, which is the second role involving HDA, as I just mentioned in response to the question from the Member for Karama, that was essentially—the timing of that was due to the desire of the then CEO to take some periods of extended leave to plan his retirement. There were some interruptions due to COVID that meant he was not able to travel necessarily when he intended to travel. Also, I think he may well have postponed his retirement decision for a period. That explains why there is a number of separate HDA periods in that case.

Mr BROWN: In regard to earlier last year—2024—and his contract obviously going permanently to ECO2, can you talk through the process of that, and was it advertised?

Mr SHIELDS: Sure. As we have discussed up to now, there are slightly different arrangements for the two different corporations. For Mr Burke's role with the Darwin Waterfront Corporation, it was an ECO1 position that had been through a job evaluation and had been publicly advertised. Mr Burke sat through an interview. I was not a part of the corporation at that point, but he was appointed to the role following that interview process.

The additional role that he took on in 2019 and 2020 with the AustralAsia Railway Corporation is a slightly different role. It is not a staff role as such; it is more a statutory role established under the *AustralAsia Railway Corporation Act*. Whilst the *AustralAsia Railway Corporation Act* is not subject to the *Public Sector Employment and Management Act*, we do generally follow the processes. We would generally follow those processes for an ongoing appointment, but even if PSEMA (the *Public Sector Employment and Management Act*) applied to the AustralAsia Railway Corporation it would not apply to statutory appointments like the CEO, like the board members.

It would not apply to other NTG boards that regularly adopt PSEMA. They are all a different process where most board members are appointed by ministers. The South Australian nominees for the AustralAsia Railway Corporation are appointed on nomination by a South Australian minister approved by a Northern Territory minister, but they are statutory processes, so we do not create a job description that then goes through an evaluation process and advertised; there is a different process.

What the Darwin Waterfront Corporation did when Mr Burke took on that additional statutory role, in addition to his previously advertised and applied for role, was create sort of a hybrid position which was at an ECO2 level. There was no requirement to advertise and no requirement to go through the job evaluation system because of that statutory nature of the CEO's role.

J DAVIS: Given that those two roles are held by the same person, how are potential conflicts of interest managed? What do you have in place? I am interested, pretty forensically, in what you have in place to manage potential and perceived ...

Mr BELLOT: Could you maybe identify an example of a conflict of interest between the two organisations?

J DAVIS: I do not know enough about it to do that, but I know they are two separate but enmeshed organisations ...

Mr BELLOT: They cost share in terms of their resourcing, but beyond that they are effectively two different organisations.

J DAVIS: You have one person in leadership roles across those two organisations. I am wondering if you see there is any need for separation between those roles or not.

Mr SHIELDS: I can perhaps add a little to what the Chair has said. As the Chair says, they are different organisations that do different roles.

The Darwin Waterfront Corporation is quite a dynamic role that manages the whole precinct. We look after the Stokes Hill Wharf as well. One of our really key roles is to manage and oversee the public-private partnership concession deed for the Convention Centre. We manage the payments with them. We set the budget with the Convention Centre operators on an annual basis. It is a complex, contract oversight role.

The AustralAsia Railway Corporation on behalf of the Northern Territory Government also has a contract oversight role, and that is with the operator of the AustralAsia railway, Aurizon. It is a concession deed arrangement, so we make sure they are maintaining it properly. We receive annual reports from them. We also work with the Northern Territory and South Australian Governments to maximise the benefits of the railway to both South Australia and the Northern Territory.

The potential for an operational conflict between the two is very slight; one is operating a railway between Adelaide and Darwin and the other one is managing a precinct and a Convention Centre in Darwin. So, the opportunities for operational conflicts are very, very slight.

The only real potential I think is in terms of the cost-sharing arrangements between the two. They are mutually agreed between the two so there is no conflict, argument or disagreement; they are fully declared to both boards. Both boards have accepted and approved those arrangements.

J DAVIS: I think the Member for Karama asked this, but who has the delegation to make those decisions? How does that happen—the decisions around cost sharing?

Mr SHIELDS: As CEO, I have certain delegations to approve expenditure for the Darwin Waterfront Corporation. In practice, the board does not approve, unless a contract is over a certain size ...

Mr BELLOT: Yes, there is a delegation.

Mr SHIELDS: There is a delegation. It is X number of million goes to the board, and below that it is with the CEO delegation. In practice, a detailed budget is provided to the corporation board on an annual basis and approved. I make expenditure decisions within that budget allocation. If it is going to significantly go outside that, I will go back to the board.

The AustralAsia Railway Corporation is a much smaller entity and it has that South Australian contingent as well. Our board is more actively briefed on the detail, I suppose, of the financial arrangements between the corporation and Darwin Waterfront Corporation. Annual budgets are approved, and the South Australian and Northern Territory Governments each make a financial contribution to meet the costs.

J DAVIS: To be clear, it sounds like you do not see any need for there to be anything formal in place to protect against any actual or perceived conflicts of interest when someone is holding those two roles across both those corporations?

Mr SHIELDS: Yes, that is right. As I mentioned before, there have been cross-appointments between the two organisations from the very beginning. Paul Tyrrell was on the board of both. Mr Lawson, the previous CEO of the AustralAsia Railway Corporation, also had a role as a project administrator with the Darwin Waterfront Corporation for some time. It is something that has happened for some time now. I recognise that is not necessarily a reason to say that there is good governance or anything like that ...

J DAVIS: You said it for me.

Mr SHIELDS: ... but it is fully detailed and approved.

I suppose the normal conflict-of-interest requirements apply at every stage to everything. If there ever was going to be an issue that came up before either or both boards that could give rise to a conflict, then both conflict-of-interest requirements would kick in, requiring those impacted to declare their conflicts of interest. There would be board discussions about how best to address those. That would be documented and that information provided to the auditor. Conflict-of-interest management is an ongoing thing. Every meeting, every transaction in the back of your head is, 'Is there something there that puts this in a different situation?'

Mr BELLOT: It is not restricted to the board meetings; it is in between the board meetings as well. If a conflict arises between, there is an expectation that it is referred to the board or the Chair to detail the conflict and place it onto the register, assess the conflict and then put in measures if it is perceived that it is a conflict that needs to be managed.

J DAVIS: Mr Bellot, I note that you said very strongly at the beginning—I wrote down—that you have no tolerance for conflict of interest. I am interested in—you are relatively new to the role—whether there is anything that you consider needs to change or could change. I took on board what you were saying earlier about perhaps communicating more clearly—or Mr Shields—through the annual report. That is something in response to public concern. This is something in the public space that is of concern. Is there anything that you can ...

Mr BELLOT: Member for Johnston, the process, as per when I started with the board, is similar to other boards that I have been on in terms of the standards in the ongoing register. To be quite honest, we have been a bit distracted since I have got on to the board. We have not had a lot of time to bed down and look into those side elements because we have been managing, as you could appreciate—in terms of this started, effectively, as soon as I got on to the board.

Given the opportunity, definitely—certainly would look to have a review. Happy to bring in an external reviewer for independence. That would be my view on it, but, yes, I welcome the opportunity.

Mr CHAIR: I will follow up on some of that. Coming back to the terms of reference, the claims of funds being moved between Darwin Waterfront Corporation, AustralAsia Railway Corporation and their appropriateness, I think you have given detailed responses on that.

Am I correct in understanding, I think you said both boards are aware. That means also we would have counterparts in South Australia that would be aware ...

Mr BELLOT: Individually audited too.

Mr SHIELDS: That is correct; both boards get annual detailed budgets, including cost sharing approved by both boards.

Mr CHAIR: Is that cost-sharing arrangement legislated? Is it in an Act or is there a memorandum of understanding? How is that relationship being forged?

Mr SHIELDS: The arrangement between the Northern Territory and South Australia for the AustralAsia Railway Corporation is underpinned by formal agreements which talk about maximising cost efficiencies by devolving to other entities as appropriate.

There is no formal MOU between Darwin Waterfront Corporation and AustralAsia Railway Corporation, and if it is needed the actual sharing of costs between the two organisations could change from year to year. For example, if the AustralAsia Railway Corporation had an enormous spike in the amount of work it had to do in a particular financial year because of a contractual issue that came up, and that took more of the resources at the corporation than it would normally take, then that might result in an adjustment of the sharing of costs between entities to cover for that.

I probably should mention that some costs are not actually shared; they are done separately—for example, legal costs. AustralAsia Railway Corporation has its own lawyer, and that gets paid for separately. Darwin Waterfront Corporation has its own need for legal services, and those bills are paid for exactly; they are not shared if the work is clearly delineated. It is more the shared things that you cannot say that all of that person worked on the finance for AARC and all of that one worked on the finance for Darwin Waterfront Corporation. They are the ones that become shared.

Mr CHAIR: I will go on to (d), signing of a new four-year executive contract that was not advertised, not subject to the required job evaluation system review and signed six months before the previous one expired. We have a submission from the Commissioner for Public Employment that states:

It is a requirement that an ECO will be advised if their contract will be renewed 6 months prior to the expiry. This renewal would not require the job to be re-evaluated, or re-advertised; and the new contract may be issued at any stage ahead of the expiry.

Is that what has happened here? Can you talk through the last point?

Mr SHIELDS: Yes, this is an entirely routine matter. Around six months—I think two or three days inside the six-month period I received an email from somebody who worked in the office of the Chief Executive of the Department of the Chief Minister and Cabinet. They sent me an email to remind me of the obligation to have a discussion with Mr Burke about the renewal of his contract and to advise when that occurred. I think within a day or so of that, Mr Burke and I sat down, in accordance with the contract, six months out before the expiry, to have a discussion both about whether the corporation wished to renew his contract and whether Mr Burke sought to have his contract renewed.

As a result of that discussion, a decision was made that the Darwin Waterfront Corporation would offer Mr Burke a further contract. I communicated that decision. As per the advice from OCPE, the actual contract itself can be entered into at any time. We entered into it when it was provided to us by the executive contract management services. From my experience in many years working at executive levels across a range of NT Government departments, it is entirely routine and consistent with the contract, NTPS rules and standard practice.

Mr CHAIR: I have two follow-on questions. What does it mean if you do not engage with someone six months out? What happens?

I also want to clarify, Mr Sam Burke did this one, and he did it again. When it was advertised, is that when he did not go for it?

Mr SHIELDS: That was the Department of Trade, Business and Innovation, which I might have inadvertently called the department of trade, business and infrastructure previously. The Department of Trade, Business and Innovation role was one where he elected not to apply for it when it was advertised, but actually to come back to the corporation.

Mr CHAIR: In keeping in line with the policy, if you do not engage with someone six months out, what does that mean?

Mr SHIELDS: If the employer—in this case the Darwin Waterfront Corporation—did not engage with an employee within the six months, we would be in breach of our contractual obligations to the employee. When you think about the rationale for that it is so that both the employer can plan if an employee says they did not want a new contract, but also so the employee can have a period of knowledge about whether the entity wants to offer a new contract. There is a rationale for that six months, and it enables both parties to plan. Failure to do it would put us in breach.

Mr O’GALLAGHER: Just to be clear, prior to the six months if you had the discussion, the corporation could say, ‘We are not going to renew the contract’ and vice versa the employee could also say, ‘I do not want to renew the contract’. But if you go within the six months, or getting closer, then you are in breach of not giving sufficient notice. Is that correct?

Mr SHIELDS: Yes, that is correct. You do not have to, at that six-month period, exactly decide, but you have to start having the discussion with the employee for those planning purposes and to make sure that you are not in breach of the contractual obligations.

Mr O’GALLAGHER: That is the conditions of the contract that everyone signs up to.

Mr SHIELDS: Exactly. In fact, the Northern Territory Government executive contracts of employment provide that through reference to a determination. The Darwin Waterfront Corporation adopts those same contracts in that respect.

Mrs ZIO: My question is in relation to your decision to extend his contract a further four years. What were your considerations in coming to that conclusion of deciding to extend for another four years? Did you have a think about the performance indicators and stuff? Can you explain how you came to that decision to offer another four years?

Mr SHIELDS: There are two main elements to that. Firstly, is there an ongoing need for the role? Clearly in this case, there is. The Waterfront Corporation continues to operate and we continue to oversight the contractual arrangements with the Convention Centre. We continue to manage Stokes Hill Wharf and the whole of the precinct. There is an ongoing need for that role to be filled. Then I gave consideration to Mr Burke’s performance in the role, his compliance with the expectations of him over the prior periods. I concluded that he had been an exemplary member of staff and that he would be an ideal candidate for a renewal of that contract at the same level for a further period of four years.

Mr BELLOT: That has been my observation of his performance since I have started too.

Mrs ZIO: Were there no performance management issues in the four-year period prior to give any reason for concern for a continuation of contract?

Mr SHIELDS: In the seven or so years that I have been CEO of the Darwin Waterfront Corporation, there have never been any performance management issues with Mr Burke. In fact, his performance has always been excellent.

Mr BELLOT: Yes.

J DAVIS: From my perspective, we are here talking about systemic issues, and that is what is really important in terms of how these issues are managed within our public institutions. In relation to this particular issue—I may not be understanding this properly—what was the basis for deciding that position would now be an ECO2, given that it does not sound like there was any formal evaluation process which would be normal public sector process?

Mr SHIELDS: The contract renewal—that is referred to in term of reference (d)—was a renewal of contract that was already at the ECO2 level. His previous four-year contract was at the ECO2 level; this was simply a renewal of that. There was no question of any job evaluation or anything like that at that point.

J DAVIS: Okay. The higher duties were in relation to the ...

Mr BELLOT: The DTBI ...

J DAVIS: Which was for two six-month periods. Then there is the ongoing higher duties—sorry, I have lost track.

Mr BELLOT: There were 11 months of DTBI across the 0.6 of the split. Then the balance of the 251 days was under the AARC arrangement.

Mr SHIELDS: Just to hopefully make it clear—because it can get a bit confusing with different periods and what have you—originally back in 2016, before my time, Mr Burke was appointed ECO1 following an advertised process with a formally assessed position. In 2018 he worked at the Department of Trade, Business and Innovation in those temporary transfers we discussed before. On his return to the corporation the opportunity arose with the AustralAsia Railway Corporation, which continued for a little less than a year, I think—from 1 January 2019 to 5 April 2020 in four discrete separate periods of higher duties. It was the conclusion of that period of higher duties that Mr Burke was formally appointed as the CEO of the AustralAsia Railway Corporation, which was a statutory role.

I explained this in response to the Member for Arafura's question a little while ago. It was a statutory role, so that even if PSEMA did apply to AARC, it would not apply to the appointment of the CEO because it was a statutory role.

Once he received that statutory role, Mr Burke then entered into a four-year contract at ECO2 level to reflect the additional duties and responsibilities from the CEO of the AustralAsia Railway Corporation role. It was that contract that expired which gave rise to the renewal of contract at the same level that is discussed in term of reference (d).

There are a lot of different movements in there.

J DAVIS: There are many.

Mr BELLOT: Yes, we appreciate that, Member for Johnston.

Mr SHIELDS: I hope I have explained that reasonably clearly.

J DAVIS: Sorry, just one little clarification. The higher duties were paid for the DBTI position, and then for the railways corporation position. Then when he was appointed full-time, when the four-year contract was renewed, no more higher duties because he was on the ECO2; is that correct?

Mr BELLOT: That is correct.

Mr CHAIR: I will put the last questions from the floor.

J DAVIS: I have more. I want to come back a bit to—I know I am going on about conflict of interest ...

Mr CHAIR: We have spent a lot of time on conflict of interest. I will give you the question, but I do not want it to get repetitive.

J DAVIS: I will ask another question. I think you mentioned in your report that you also undertook an independent audit as well as the external audit. Is that correct? In ...

Mr BELLOT: There is reference to having internal auditors appointed in the last financial year ...

J DAVIS: Internal audit, sorry. In 2023–24 you commenced a program of internal audits ...

Mr BELLOT: That is correct.

J DAVIS: Can any of that be made publicly available?

Mr SHIELDS: I have never considered that before. The internal audit is largely looking at processes and improvements—how we would deal with critical incidents at the Waterfront, for example. I doubt it would be of any particular interest to the general public; it is more about how we can strengthen our processes, have more policies in place that detail how we should deal with things. We have critical incidents where people fall off the wharf. People might be injured and obviously they are the sorts of things. We want to make sure that the Waterfront is the safest place it possibly can be, and when incidents occur that we are able to respond to them as quickly as possible. I cannot think of anything that is covered in any of those internal audits that would be of any particular interest.

J DAVIS: They would not be about financial matters or matters that would be in the public interest.

Mr BELLOT: Member for Johnston, if you could give an example, because we are clutching at ...

J DAVIS: I am happy to move on from that.

One more follow-up question in relation to the ECO2 job. In 2020 when that originally happened—have you explained the process of that? Did that originally go through public sector expectations? That is not the right phrasing, but ...

Mr CHAIR: Do you want to rephrase it?

J DAVIS: Do you understand my question? I could rephrase it if you do not.

Mr SHIELDS: I think so, Member for Johnston. It is the question I answered for the Member for Arafura a little while ago. There is kind of a mix between public service role—not the strictly public service roles, but ones where the Waterfront generally follows the public service process—and then the statutory part of Mr Burke’s role, which is the CEO of AustralAsia Railway Corporation, which is an unadvertised process because it is appointed on the nomination of the Northern Territory minister and the South Australian minister, then approved by the board.

There was a process where Mr Burke shadowed the previous CEO for a period of time ...

J DAVIS: You did explain it to me.

Mr SHIELDS: He acted for a while, then the board was happy with his performance. Both governments nominated him. He was appointed through that statutory process, which is not an advertised process.

J DAVIS: Just to be clear, his original appointment was not through an advertised selection process; it was through the process you are describing now?

Mr SHIELDS: Perhaps I have made it more confusing rather than clearer.

He originally did not work at either corporation. He applied for a publicly advertised role with the Waterfront Corporation in 2016. There was an interview panel—I think three or four members of a panel assessed him, presumably with other applicants, and recommended him for a role and he was appointed. He was originally appointed as part of a public advertised process with the Waterfront Corp.

It was some years later when the then CEO of the AustralAsia Railway Corporation, who was by then a part-time employee, started to think about retirement and how he might want to do some travel and take extended periods of leave. He wondered how he might fill that vacancy, introduced Mr Burke to the board, got board approval for the shadowing, which did

not cost anyone anything, then ultimately led to periods of HDA and his eventual appointment in the statutory role.

J DAVIS: That was in 2020?

Mr SHIELDS: That is the 2020—I think 2019 and 2020.

J DAVIS: That makes it clear, thank you.

Mr CHAIR: I will just clarify there is a very good sequence of events provided in one of our submissions.

Mr BELLOT: It is a lot of detail.

Mr CHAIR: Last question.

Mr BROWN: I have a question for Chairman Bellot. You stated earlier about the AICD qualification. Can you just talk about what that requires in regard to your board members?

Mr BELLOT: It is a qualification through the Australian Institute of Company Directors. I started the study—I did a Bachelor study—but I did not finish the qualification. But in the context, it is effectively the bible for directorships on boards. In the classic example, how you would approach a conflict of interest, what is the best way to do it, what is the best way to document it and the like? In terms of private elements too ...

Mr SHIELDS: It is colloquially called the company directors' course. It is an intensive course with AICD that involves a range of different assessments, including a multiple-choice exam, a written exam and an assignment. It involves three elements of different assessment, and it has all the attributes of being a company director. There is a big focus on governance, conflicts of interest and things like that. There is also a focus on how to manage the boardroom.

Mr BELLOT: Precedents of other situations with boards that navigated through sensitive elements and the best practice in that.

Mr SHIELDS: The role of directors on boards versus the role of the management and how they interact, and how they should be ...

Mr BELLOT: And the separation between them too.

Mr CHAIR: Thank you, gentlemen. I invite you both to make any closing statements, if you wish.

J DAVIS: I had ...

Mr CHAIR: That was the last question.

J DAVIS: We do have until 4.30 pm, Mr Chair.

Mr CHAIR: I will give you the question, but, please, as long as it is not repetitive.

J DAVIS: It is an invitation question, which may be similar to what you are saying. Given both your levels of expertise and experience, in the complex environment we work in, part of our role is to look at how we can make sure we can trust public institutions. I am interested in hearing from you whether there is anything you think we can learn or recommend to strengthen things and address public concerns.

Mr BELLOT: I am not sure—the context of the situation that has arisen.

Mr CHAIR: I will say it is standard practice for the committee not to ask public servants for their opinion, so I will bring us back. Gentlemen, any closing statements?

Mr BELLOT: Probably not for me; I think I will leave it at my opening remarks, Chair.

I could describe this situation for the corporation—I will add some words, actually. It has been a very stressful, demoralising experience for them, and we would like to see this—we are very keen to see our submission made online and put out there to the public, because we need to show for the record what are the actual true facts of the situation. I will leave it at that, because if I keep talking I will get worked up.

Mr CHAIR: Mr Shields?

Mr SHIELDS: Nothing from me, thank you, Chair.

Mr CHAIR: Thank you, gentlemen. We thank both yourselves and your team for the substantial work. I also publicly thank all public servants who have assisted in putting together the submissions and the quite substantial information that was provided to the Public Accounts Committee. I thank my colleagues and peers as well, and the secretariat. Thank you for the huge amount of work you have done in the last week.

I now close this public briefing.

The committee concluded.
